

Devotion, Week of August 16, 2026

Rev. Jeanne Simpson

I love birds, and I'm really bummed out that I can't use my feeder this summer because I have a squirrel who ignores the hot pepper baked onto the seeds and eats everything anyway. The cardinals, titmice, wrens, woodpeckers, finches, and sparrows get nothing. But my hummingbird feeder is hanging up high – I have to get to it from an upstairs window. And they're getting ready to migrate south now, so they're busy around the feeder.

And as I said in the children's sermon Sunday, that's a problem. They refuse to share. My feeder has 6 places where they can get to the nectar, but I have two that fight over it every time and essentially get nothing.

Birds are special gifts to me from God – they are just incredible flying machines. Hummingbirds are even more so. They are tiny, tiny birds – maybe 3 inches long, and most species weigh between 2 to 5 grams (often compared to the weight of a penny). Their rapid wing-beating (about 50+ times per second) creates a humming sound – hence, their name. They can hover; fly backward, forward, and upside down; and dive at speeds exceeding 60 mph. Their legs are tiny and underdeveloped, meaning they can perch but cannot walk.

Hummingbirds have the highest metabolic rate by weight of any vertebrate. Their hearts race as fast as 20 beats a second, and their resting body temperature is about 102 degrees Fahrenheit. It takes a lot of energy to maintain such an intense pace, which is why a hummingbird can consume up to three times its body weight in food in a day. They need to eat about every 10-15 minutes, but to conserve energy they go into a sort of torpor, especially at night.

Now, if they need to eat that often, why don't they learn to share, when there's plenty of nectar and space for them to perch on my feeder? That one goes in my book to ask God when I get to heaven (hopefully). I love watching them and I am occasionally rewarded with the flashing green and red of a ruby-throated male. I think God created them just for fun, so that we would be entranced with them. I hope you enjoy them at your house!

Jeanne