

2 SPECIES YOU'LL SEE

Ruby-throated Hummingbird

Kentucky's only breeding hummingbird, and by far the only one you'll see spring through summer.

BREEDER

Rufous Hummingbird

The state's most regular winter rarity. Not common, but the one to actually expect after a Ruby-throated leaves.

WINTER

Genuine rarities also turn up in winter — Black-chinned, Anna's, and even a one-time Allen's (Kentucky's first state record, a single bird in Pulaski Co., Oct 2023–Jan 2024). None occur regularly.

▼ A REAL WEST-TO-EAST GRADIENT

COUNTY	RELIABLY COMMON BY
McCracken (Paducah, far west)	Mid-April
Pulaski (south-central)	Late April
Jefferson (Louisville)	Early May
Fayette (Lexington)	Mid-May

A genuine month-long spread, west to east. We also checked Harlan County in the Appalachian southeast for an elevation delay — the data was too thin to use, and the one relevant study found no such effect.

♀ FEEDER CARE BASICS

Nectar ratio	4 parts water : 1 part sugar
Red dye or honey	Never — honey ferments and molds
Feeder up statewide	By mid-April
Change nectar (above 90°F)	Every 1–2 days
Change nectar (below 70°F)	Every 5–6 days
Pest control	No insecticide — use HummGuard™ tips

✿ TOP NATIVE PLANTS

BEST STATEWIDE

- Red Columbine
- Red Buckeye
- Trumpet Creeper
- Scarlet Bee Balm
- Cardinal Flower

UK Extension's own words: cardinal flower is "the very best hummingbird flower" native to Kentucky, and trumpet creeper provides roughly 10× more nectar than any other hummingbird flower — but give it room, it's an aggressive spreader. Red columbine and red buckeye are the earliest bloomers, timed almost exactly to spring arrival.

⚠ SOLD AS HUMMINGBIRD PLANTS — USE CAUTION

Japanese honeysuckle — rated a "severe threat" by the Kentucky Exotic Pest Plant Council, and easily confused with native coral honeysuckle at the garden center. Check the botanical name before you buy.

Bush honeysuckle — also flagged invasive in Kentucky.

Butterfly bush isn't confirmed invasive here specifically, but offers little value to native insects.

★ PERFECT LITTLE SANCTUARY® — TOP KENTUCKY PERFORMERS

- ✓ Purple Coneflower — *Kentucky native*
- ✓ Black-Eyed Susan — *Kentucky native*
- ✓ Lance-Leaved Coreopsis — *Kentucky native*

Sow the cold-stratifying perennials in **October**. Painted Daisy is the one annual in the blend — it actually prefers spring sowing, after the last frost.

❄ WINTER RARITIES WORTH DOCUMENTING

After November 1, any hummingbird in Kentucky is worth a photo. Most years bring one to a dozen or so reports statewide — Rufous is the likely candidate, but Black-chinned, Anna's, and Kentucky's one-and-only Allen's have all shown up too.

Injured hummingbird? KDFWR's rehabilitator search (app.fw.ky.gov/rehabilitatorNew) is the place to start — hummingbirds need a rehabber with both state and federal migratory-bird permits.