

# the NATURALIST CORNER

Brought to you by Peggy Potts  
Coastal Master Naturalist

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As a graduate of the Coastal Master Naturalist Program offered through the Clemson University Cooperative Extension, I would like to share my excitement and enthusiasm about the many wonders of nature that can be enjoyed and experienced in the lowcountry. Through this monthly column, I will share my observations, sightings, and characteristics about a variety of nature topics, such as common insects, migrating birds and butterflies, wildflowers and plants and more. Basically, anything in nature is fair game to learn about and explore.

I also encourage you to share your observations and experiences so that we can learn about our natural world together. Please feel free to send in pictures and/or information of anything you find interesting by emailing me, Peggy Potts, at [ppotts@charlestoncounty.org](mailto:ppotts@charlestoncounty.org).

## Summer is here and so are the Hummingbirds



Summer brings with it the buzz of the hummingbirds and they are fascinating to watch. They dart around blooming flowers or feeders faster than you can blink an eye. The Ruby-throated Hummingbird is the species found in the eastern part of the United States and is this area's only breeding hummingbird. Most of the birds migrate to the tropics in winter, but some remain in the southeastern states. The male has a brilliant ruby red marking on its lower throat. They like wooded areas, meadows, orchards and backyards. They feed on the nectar from flowers or feeders and are especially attracted to red and orange colors. They tend to love flowers such as hibiscus, honeysuckle, trumpet vines, geraniums, and morning glory, preferring tubular flowers the most. I have also noticed them on the red blossoms of my Bottlebrush trees and blooming Confederate Jasmine. Most of the hummingbird feeders available for purchase are red and it's not necessary to dye the sugar water red to attract the birds. In fact, the dye can be harmful to the birds. It is recommended to make your own sugar water using one quarter cup of sugar per cup of water. Also, be sure to change the water regularly before it turns cloudy or discolored as it can become toxic to the birds. Hummingbirds also enjoy insects such as fruit flies, mosquitoes, gnats and spiders. They have been known to pull insects right out of spider webs. According to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, some cool facts about the Ruby-throated Hummingbirds include: They beat their wings about 53 times a second; they have extremely short legs which prevent them from walking or hopping; they have good color vision and can see into the ultraviolet spectrum, which humans can't see; the males give a courtship display to the females that enter their territory, making a looping, U-shaped dive starting from as high as 50 feet above the female; and, they can be quite bold as the males aggressively defend flowers and feeders leading to spectacular chases and dog fights.

In summary, the Ruby-throated Hummingbirds are tiny, entertaining, and beautiful little birds that you can enjoy and easily lure to your own backyard.



### Charleston County Greenbelt Program

With the many flowers and vegetables planted in raised beds at Magnolia Park and Community Garden you might spot a few Hummingbirds checking out the plantings. Magnolia Park and Community Garden is the Charleston Parks Conservancy's newest and largest community garden to date and promotes many eco-friendly gardening methods. It is located in West Ashley near Avondale at the corner of Magnolia Road and Sycamore Avenue. For information visit: <https://www.charlestonparksconservancy.org/park/magnolia-park-and-community-garden>. The Greenbelt Program provided funding for this property. For a list of all greenbelt properties, visit the Greenbelt website at <http://charlestoncountygreenbelt.org> and follow us on Instagram and the County's Facebook page. Don't forget you can earn "Lifestyle Loot" through the Wellness Program when you visit a Greenbelt site and post pictures using #ccgreenbelt.