

RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD ASSOCIATING WITH A FORAGING HAIRY WOODPECKER

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On 20 May 1983 a female Hairy Woodpecker was observed foraging on the trunk of a Green Ash on the forested dune ridge, about 5 km west of Delta, Manitoba. A male Ruby-throated Hummingbird flew to within a few cm of the woodpecker then withdrew until it was about 2 m away and hovered. It repeated this sequence three more times over the next minute or so. The woodpecker then moved abruptly toward the hummingbird, by sidling on a branch. The hummingbird flew to and perched on a branch in the same tree, about 3 m from the woodpecker. A few seconds later, the woodpecker chased the hummingbird out of my sight. I did not see the woodpecker or hummingbird again at the woodpecker's original foraging site.

Numerous workers have reported hummingbirds feeding on sap from holes drilled by Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers at northern latitudes,^{1 7 9} and in the tropics at holes drilled by Acorn Woodpeckers.² Evidence is mounting that hummingbirds actually associate with sapsuckers,⁵ and that Ruby-throated Hummingbirds may follow them as they forage, thus facilitating locating drilled holes where sap may be obtained.³

The association between the Ruby-throated Hummingbird and Hairy Woodpecker that I described raises some interesting questions. Was this association merely coincidental? Ruby-throated Hummingbirds occur in the dune-ridge forest during spring migration (Sealy, unpubl. data), and I have observed such individuals foraging on leaf buds, including

those of Green Ash, possibly ingesting exudate or insects that have become entangled in it. The hummingbird and woodpecker may have just come together in the same tree, and the described interactions ensued.⁴ On the other hand, the hummingbird may have associated the woodpecker's foraging mode with a possible source of food, regardless of whether the woodpecker was a sapsucker, or it possibly mistook the foraging Hairy Woodpecker for a sapsucker, a bird about the same size, and investigated it. Hummingbirds are known to investigate various colors, including red,^{6 8 10} and they might be expected occasionally to cue into the red patch on the back of the head of male Hairy Woodpeckers. However, female Hairy Woodpeckers lack the patch of red feathers.

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