

## STRANGE BEHAVIOR OF A RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD

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On 2 August 1982, the weather at Victoria Beach, Manitoba was dreary and overcast with occasional showers. At about 1830 h I was looking out the cottage living room window when a hummingbird came to check the impatiens flowers. The window flower box is 5 feet long and the bird visited several flowers along it.

I was very intrigued with this small bird as I had never been that close to one before. After the bird left the flower box it flew over and landed on a branch of an evergreen tree; its wings were still humming. After about thirty seconds, its wings stopped moving and it tipped over backwards, still hanging on to the branch.

After a few seconds, I thought it must be in trouble, so I went out to investigate. It seemed dazed and offered very little resistance when I picked it off the branch. Its eyes were still partly open but it appeared to be in convulsions. Every 2-3 seconds its whole body jumped.

My mother-in-law said that a friend of hers at Wanasing Beach had seen a hummingbird in difficulty and thought that there was an excess of nectar built up on its beak. She thought that this was causing its beak to be gummed up. It appeared to recover after they cleaned it off.

This bird had a moderate amount of nectar about 2/3 the way up the beak but it did not appear to be causing any problem. I cleaned the beak off and put some water in a teaspoon to offer it a drink.

The little bird's eyes were closed, its feet were totally relaxed now but the

body continued to jump every 2-3 seconds. It did not look good. After holding it for a few minutes, I thought it may be more relaxed in a natural setting. I placed it on the warm ground beside a plant in a small flower pot just outside the door. We checked it intermittently for about eight minutes. The above symptoms continued.

We were sitting chatting when my father-in-law said "There's another hummingbird in the flower box." I jumped up to check the one in the plant pot and it was gone. So it was probably the same one. Seven other people witnessed this incident.

## EASTERN BLUEBIRD NESTBOX REPORT

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There were 122 nestings documented. Of those, 110 fledged some young. This was five more than were successful in 1981. We found boxes where the bluebirds had come and gone and the nest was used, with no disease or attacks by mammals. Boxes used were 126 out of 500.

Raccoons are the greatest problem. We can stop their attacks by using posts 100 inches long and digging them in for the full depth of a garden spade. About 200 posts need to be replaced. Thus, it may be May of 1984 before everything is perfect in this regard.

Blowflies can be controlled by Fossil Flower insecticide, if the weather is dry. We may have to use paper towels in wet weather, or as a back up system.

The failure rate was about 8%. The desertions and disappearances of eggs and newly-hatched young is a great puzzlement. I would gladly listen to your theories.