

"To enumerate all the flowers of which this little bird is fond, would be to repeat the names of half our American flora. From the blossoms of the towering poplar or tulip-tree, through a thousand intermediate flowers, to those of the humble larkspur, he ranges at will, and almost incessantly. Every period of the season produces a fresh multitude of new favourites. Towards the month of September, a plant with a yellow flower grows in great luxuriance along the sides of creeks and rivers, and in low moist situations, to the height of two or three feet, and the flower, which is about the size of a thimble, hangs in the shape of a cap of liberty above a luxuriant growth of green leaves. It is the *Balsamina noli me tangere* of botanists, and is the greatest favourite of the Humming-bird of all our other flowers. In some places where these plants abound, you may see, at one time, ten or twelve Humming-birds darting about, and fighting with and pursuing each other. About the 20th of September they generally retire to the south. I have, indeed, sometimes seen a solitary individual on the 28th and 30th of that month, and sometimes even in October, but these cases are rare. About the beginning of November they pass the southern boundary of the United States into Florida."

"No sooner," says Audubon, "has the returning sun again introduced the vernal season, and caused millions of plants to expand their leaves and blossoms to his genial beams, than the little Humming-bird is seen advancing on fairy wings, carefully visiting every flower-cup, and, like a curious florist, removing from each the injurious insects that otherwise would, ere long, cause their beauteous petals to droop and decay. Poised in the air, it is observed peeping cautiously and with sparkling eye into their innermost recesses, whilst the ethereal motions of its pinions, so rapid and so light, appear to fan and cool the flower without injuring its fragile texture, and produce a delightful murmuring sound, well adapted for lulling the insects to repose. This is the moment for the Humming-bird to secure them. Its long delicate bill enters the cup of the flower, and the protruded double tongue, delicately sensible, and imbued with a glutinous saliva, touches each insect in succession, and draws it from its lurking place, to be instantly swallowed. All this is done in a moment, and the bird, as it leaves the flower, sips so small a portion of its liquid honey, that the theft, we may suppose, is looked upon with a grateful feeling by the flower, which is thus kindly relieved from the attacks of her destroyers."

"The prairies, the fields, the orchards and gardens, nay, the deepest shades of the forest, are all visited in their turn, and everywhere the little bird meets with pleasure and with food. Its gorgeous throat in beauty and brilliancy baffles all competition. Now it glows with a fiery hue, and again it is changed to the deepest velvet-black. The upper parts of its delicate body are of resplendent changing green; and it throws itself through the air with a swiftness and vivacity hardly conceivable. It moves from one flower to another like a gleam of light, upwards, downwards, to the right, and to the left."

When speaking of their migrations, Audubon states that "they pass through the air in long undulations, raising themselves for some distance at an angle of about 40°, and then falling in a curve; but the smallness of their size precludes the possibility of following them farther than fifty or sixty yards without great difficulty, even with a good glass . . . They do not alight on the ground, but easily settle on twigs and branches, where they move sideways in prettily measured steps, frequently opening and closing their wings, pluming, shaking, and arranging the whole of their apparel with neatness and activity. They are particularly fond of spreading one wing at a time, and passing each of the quill-feathers through their bill in its whole length, when, if the sun be shining, the wing thus plumed is rendered extremely transparent and light. They leave the twig without the least difficulty in an instant, and appear to be possessed of superior powers of vision, making directly towards a Martin or Blue-bird when fifty or sixty yards from them, before they are aware of their approach . . . Their food consists principally of insects, generally of the coleopterous order, these, together with some equally diminutive flies, being commonly found in their stomachs. The first are procured within the flowers, but many of the latter on wing."

The male has the whole of the back, upper part of the neck, flanks, tail-coverts and two middle tail-feathers of a rich golden green; wings and tail purplish brown; under surface of the body white tinged with green; throat ruby-red, changing, according to the position in which it is viewed, from deep black to fiery crimson or burning orange; bill, eyes, legs and feet black.

The female resembles the male in her general plumage, but is destitute of any brilliancy on the throat, and has the tail tipped with white.

The young birds of both sexes during the first season have the tail tipped with white, and the whole of the under surface dull white. The ornamental feathers on the throat of the young males begin to appear in the month of September (Wilson).

The figures represent the two sexes of the size of life.