

after sunset, when the Goat-suckers are beginning their search after insects over the rivers, I have seen Humming-Birds come out of the forest and remain a long time on the wing—now stationary, now darting about with the greatest rapidity, imitating in a limited space the varied evolutions of their companions the Goat-suckers, and evidently for the same end and purpose.

“Many naturalists have noticed this habit of feeding on insects, but have generally considered it as the exception, whereas I am inclined to think it is the rule. The frequenting of flowers seems to me only one of the many ways by which they are enabled to procure their insect-food.”

“Wilson, Audubon, Mr. Gosse, and several others gifted with the ‘pen of a ready writer,’” says Mr. Alfred Newton, “have so fully described, as far as words will admit, the habits of different members of the family *Trochilidæ*, that it is unnecessary to say much upon this score. Their appearance is so entirely unlike that of any other birds that it is hopeless to attempt in any way to bring a just conception of it to the ideas of those who have not crossed the Atlantic; and even the comparison so often made between them and the *Sphingidæ*, though doubtless in the main true, is much to the advantage of the latter. One is admiring the clustering stars of a scarlet *Cordia*, the snowy cornucopias of a *Portlandia*, or some other brilliant and beautiful flower, when between the blossom and one’s eye suddenly appears a small dark object, suspended as it were between four short black threads meeting each other in a cross. For an instant it shows in front of the flower; an instant more, it steadies itself, and one perceives the space between each pair of threads occupied by a grey film; again another instant, and, emitting a momentary flash of emerald and sapphire light, it is vanishing, lessening in the distance, as it shoots away, to a speck that the eye cannot take note of,—and all this so rapidly that the word on one’s lips is still unspoken, scarcely the thought in one’s mind changed. It was a bold man or an ignorant one who first ventured to depict Humming-Birds flying; but it cannot be denied that representations of them in that attitude are often of special use to the ornithologist. The peculiar action of one, and probably of many or all other, species of the family is such, that at times, in flying, it makes the wings almost meet, both in front and behind, at each vibration. Thus, when a bird chances to enter a room, it will generally go buzzing along the cornice: standing beneath where it is, one will find that the axis of the body is vertical, and each wing is describing a nearly perfect semicircle. As might be expected, the pectoral muscles are very large; indeed the sternum of this bird is a good deal bigger than that of the common Chimney-Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*, L.). But the extraordinary rapidity with which the vibrations are effected seems to be chiefly caused by these powerful muscles acting on the very short wing-bones, which are not half the length of the same parts in the Swallow; and accordingly, great as this alar action is, and in spite of the contrary opinion entertained by Mr. Gosse (Nat. Sojourn in Jamaica, p. 240), it is yet sometimes wanting in power, owing doubtless to the disadvantageous leverage thus obtained; and the old authors must be credited who speak of cobwebs catching Humming-Birds.

“On the 3rd of May, 1857, a bird of this species” (*Eulampis chlorolæmus*, Gould) “flew into the room where I was sitting, and, after fluttering for some minutes against the ceiling, came in contact with a deserted spider’s web, in which it got entangled and remained suspended and perfectly helpless for more than a minute, when by a violent effort it freed itself. I soon after caught it, still having fragments of the web on its head, neck, and wings; and I feel pretty sure that had this web been inhabited and in good repair, instead of being deserted and dilapidated, the bird would never have escaped.”

In his ‘Notes on the Humming-Birds of Guatemala,’ Mr. Salvin says, “During the months of August and