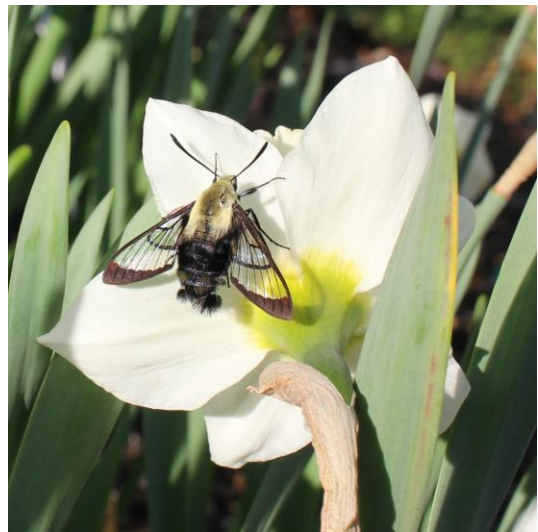


Pollinator Week: Introducing the Hummingbird Moth

By Wendi Epps

I was taking photos in [The Gardens of Southeastern North Carolina](#) a couple of months ago when I came across something I'd never seen before. It was black and yellow and furry with large, beautifully detailed wings like a butterfly. It was unmoving, nestled within the petals of a large white tulip. I wondered if it was a bee, but it wasn't shaped quite right and the wings were too big. I snapped some photos of it and asked my coworker Bee, who I have dubbed to be our resident bug and wildlife expert, what it was.

"It's a hummingbird moth!" she replied, smiling at me. I'd never heard of a hummingbird moth before. Have you?



Hummingbird Moths get their name from their fast moving wings, explains Tom Throgmorton in *Hummingbird Moths: From Pest To Pollinator*. Also known as Sphinx Moths, Hummingbird Moths are fuzzy, plump, and have tails that open up and fan out. Their large wingspan allows them to have a wingbeat of up to 70 beats per second and they can fly up to 12 miles per hour. Beatriz Moisset with the US Forest Service says, "They fly and move just like hummingbirds. Like them, they can remain suspended in the air in front of a flower while they unfurl their long tongues and insert them in flowers to sip their nectar. They even emit an audible hum like hummingbirds... Like most moths they have a very long tongue which they carry rolled under their chins and that they use to reach the nectar of long-necked flowers. Such nectar is inaccessible to many other flower visitors, so it seems that these flowers prefer long tongued pollinators and try to keep the others away."

Katie Femia explains in an article on [TheHomespunHydrangea.com](#) that Hummingbird Moths are also really hard workers in the pollinator world. They work all day and even after the sun goes down to collect nectar and pollen, unlike many other pollinators who go home at sunset (You know who you are!). They have an incredible sense of smell, allowing them to find flowers that bloom in the evening. And because they look like a bee or another bird, birds and other predators don't bother them. Although the one I found was black and yellow, they can also be shades of gray, white, orange and pink.

Want to attract Hummingbird Moths to your garden? Here's a list of plants that will draw them in and luckily, they come in all types, colors and habits, so you'll be able to find something that fits into your landscape: Bee balm: *Monarda* sp., Butterfly Bush: *Buddleia* sp., Cleome sp., Dogbane, *Echinacea purpurea* (purple coneflower), Honeysuckle: *Lonicera*, Impatiens, Jasmine: *Trachelosperma*, Lantana, *Liatis*, Lilac, Moonflower, Morning Glory, Petunia, Trumpet Flower, and members of the Rose family such as hawthorn, cherries, and plums. Don't be afraid to take

a look after the sun goes down to see if they are out working. Nature never ceases to amaze and delight me!

SOURCES

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<https://www.farmersalmanac.com/hummingbird-moth-32556>

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<https://www.kunc.org/arts-life/2014-06-28/hummingbird-moths-from-pest-to-pollinator>

The Homespun Hydrangea: How to Attract Hummingbird Moths by Katie Femia

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US Forest Service: Pollinator of the Month-Hummingbird Moth by Beatriz Moisset

https://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/pollinators/pollinator-of-the-month/hummingbird_moth.shtml

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SOCIAL MEDIA POST

“I was taking photos in [The Gardens of Southeastern North Carolina](#) a few weeks ago when I came across something I’d never seen before. It was black and yellow and furry with large, beautifully detailed wings like a butterfly. It was unmoving, nestled within the petals of a large white tulip. I wondered if it was a bee, but it wasn’t shaped quite right and the wings were too big.” Learn more about this mysterious and magnificent pollinator by visiting <https://johnson-nursery.com/blog-1/>.

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