

BIRD OF THE MONTH - NOVEMBER 2022

Photos by James Kendall

HUMMINGBIRD

ALLEN'S HUMMINGBIRD



Each day throughout the year, observant visitors to the Urban Forest and its surrounding gardens are treated to the fascinating spectacle of tiny dynamic aerialists that suddenly appear as hovering iridescent jewels as they dart from blossom to blossom, urgently seeking and sipping life-sustaining nectar.

Two species of hummingbirds make this park their year-round home. The Anna's Hummingbird is recognized by its flash of shimmering magenta at the gorget/throat and forehead contrasting with its shiny green body. That flash of magenta/red and green are unmistakable field marks of the male Anna's.

Allen's Hummingbirds present as coppery rufous and green overall. Adult males have a coppery rufous-brown tail, eye patch, and belly that contrasts with their bronze-green back and deep reddish, golden-orange shimmering gorget. The startling jewel-like flash of color at the throat relies on capturing rays of sunlight in order to display its vibrant visual magic. Adult male of the species command this alluring attention-capturing display capacity. The drabber female is in fact the sole intended audience of his vivacious choreographed presentation that artfully combines rapid aerial feats with a vibrantly colorful light show and burst of sound.

Once successfully courted, the female constructs her ingenious tiny cup nest from resilient spider-silk, lichen and leaf matter, a stretchy thimble-like cradle to protect two coffee bean-shaped and -sized white eggs. She will diligently incubate for two weeks before hatching, then nurse the growing nestlings with nectar and insects for three weeks more before they fledge the nest and forage on their own.

Due to our mild coastal climate, Anna's and Allen's Hummingbirds can continuously breed year-round in our local parks and yards. Watch for this fascinating spectacle of nature as they busily thrive amidst our flowering trees, bushes and flowering plants cycling throughout the seasons. These airborne jewels act as highly efficient and key essential pollinators as they hover, sip nectar and then zip rapidly from blossom to blossom in this reciprocally beneficial cycle of life.

ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRD

