

Black-chinned Hummingbird

Archilochus alexandri

A small green-backed hummingbird of the West, with no brilliant colors on its throat except a thin strip of iridescent purple bordering the black chin, only visible when light hits it just right. Black-chinned Hummingbirds are exceptionally widespread, found from deserts to mountain forests. Many winter along the Gulf Coast. Often perches at the very top of a bare branch. Low-pitched humming sound produced by wings.



Keys to Identification

Size and Shape

A small, fairly slender hummingbird with a fairly straight bill.

Color Pattern

Dull metallic green above and dull grayish-white below. Males have a velvety black throat with a thin, iridescent purple base. Females have a pale throat. In both sexes, the flanks are glossed with dull metallic green. Female's three outer tail feathers have broad white tips. The bill is black.

Behavior

Hovers at flowers and feeders, darts erratically to take tiny swarming insects, perches atop high snags to survey its territory, watching for competitors to chase off and for flying insects to eat. During courtship and territorial defense, males display by diving 66-100 feet.

Habitat

Most often seen at feeders or perched on dead branches in tall trees. The Black-chinned Hummingbird is a habitat generalist, found in lowland deserts and mountainous forests, and in natural habitats and very urbanized areas as long as there are tall trees and flowering shrubs and vines.

Cool Facts

- At rest, heart beats an average of 480 beats per minute. On cold nights they go into torpor, and the heart rate drops to 45–180 beats per minute. Breathing rate when resting is 245 breaths per minute at 91 degrees Fahrenheit; this rises to 420 breaths per minute when temperature drops to 55 degrees Fahrenheit. Torpid hummingbirds breathe sporadically.

Measurements

Both Sexes

- Length - 3.5 inches
- Wingspan - 4.3 inches
- Weight - 0.1 ounces