

Call for information:

Night-time Raiders at Hummingbird Feeders



Were your hummingbird feeders mysteriously drained during the night last summer? Did you know the midnight raiders were bats? Most of Arizona's 28 bat species eat insects, but two species drink nectar and eat pollen from plants such as the saguaro and agaves. These bats are becoming common visitors to southern Arizona hummingbird feeders in late summer and early fall. If you enjoy watching wildlife, we need you help monitoring the wildlife in your backyard!

In southern Arizona we have two bat species which are considered nectar bandits; the lesser long-nosed bat, which is listed as federally endangered, and the Mexican long-tongued bat, an Arizona species of concern. These gentle, beneficial pollinators live in caves and mines. During summer nights, they travel in search of food, and, over time, have found their way to hummingbird feeders in southern Arizona. These nectar bandits are migratory and return to Mexico in the fall.

The use of hummingbird feeders by bats has been documented in southern Arizona for many years. Around 2006 we noticed large numbers of bats were foraging on hummingbird feeders in the urban areas surrounding the Tucson basin. We are now detecting bats visiting feeders more widely in southern Arizona and we have current volunteer monitors from as far north as Dove Mountain near Pinal County and as far south as Nogales in Santa Cruz county.

Habitat conservation planning by the City of Tucson and the Town of Marana have spearheaded these efforts to evaluate potential effects to these bat species in the Tucson basin. In conjunction with these municipalities, bat biologists at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Arizona Game and Fish Department and Bat Conservation International as well as local bat researchers want your help to document seasonal use of hummingbird feeders by nectar-feeding bats throughout southern Arizona. We would like to invite you to assist this effort by monitoring wildlife in your urban or rural backyard.

If you are willing to participate in the hummingbird feeder monitoring project this year, please contact Ted Fleming, Adjunct Professor, University of Arizona, at ted@sonaura.net with your name, address (cross streets are fine if you would prefer not to give your street address), zipcode, and the general dates that you noticed your feeders drained. Any photos of the bats using the feeders are also extremely useful. If you don't have access to email, please leave a message at (520) 797-5609. We will provide you with information about this year's monitoring protocol. Additional information can be found at the projects official website sponsored by the Town of Marana. The 2010 hummingbird feeder monitoring program website can be located at the following link: <http://marana.com/bats>.

