

## **How to Get a Hummingbird Out of Your Garage**

I don't know what it is about hummingbirds and garages – or any enclosed spaces. Other birds like mockingbirds, Blue Jays, cardinals, swallows, and wrens can get into these same enclosed spaces and have little or no trouble finding their way out. But hummingbirds seemingly cannot. In my experience, they want to fly upwards and keep brushing the ceiling. They do not seem to be able to understand open windows and doors.

Here is a suggestion from Kerry Denison, one of my fellow Illinois Master Naturalists: If a hummingbird becomes trapped inside a garage, open the garage doors and then hang the hummingbird feeder from one of the doors. It usually does not take long for the bird to see the feeder and most often it will immediately come to it, feed, and then it will almost always leave the garage. If you cannot hang your hummingbird feeder at the garage door – or you do not have a hummingbird feeder - then place anything red at that open space – a red towel or a red hat or scarf will work. Just place anything primarily red on the ground at the door and then stand back well away from the door or leave the area. Most often the hummingbird will see the red within a few minutes, fly towards it, and then exit.

Hummingbirds trapped in our garage always make Cleon and me very nervous – we can feel our anxiety level rising. We know these birds must sip water or nectar regularly. Their metabolisms run quite high and so they can get dehydrated and hungry quickly. It takes a steady amount of calories to keep them functioning. And we are always so afraid with that constant brushing of the ceiling, constant motion, and no liquid or nectar, they will die. Thankfully that has never happened. Something large and red on the ground at the garage door seems to work – and works best when Cleon and I leave the garage and allow them to be alone. If we stay in the garage, it seems it takes the hummingbirds longer to see the red object. It could be the hummingbirds are focusing on the ceiling and also on us. When we remove ourselves from their field of vision, they seem to perceive the red much quicker. So it would be my advice to leave the garage or enclosed space for at least ten minutes and then check to see if the hummingbird is still there.

Do not try to net these birds – this often results in broken wings. Do not use a broom to try and 'sweep' them towards the open door – this can also fatally injure the birds. Luring them with red is the safest way – and give them time to see the red.