

Hummingbird Displays

Many male hummingbirds perform spectacular dive display for a female. All species also use short back-and-forth "shuttle" flight for close courtship.

All dive displays typically begin with male hovering close above female, then climbing nearly vertically (while looking down at the female) then diving steeply and accelerating rapidly, pulling out of the dive near the female. Some variation in behavior, but general shape and pattern of dives is distinctive, as well as associated sounds.

Display paths are diagrammed here: fainter lines indicate a slow upward movement, stronger lines indicate a rapid descent.



Lucifer Hummingbird
Steep dive usually ending with a short shuttle display.



Anna's Hummingbird
Steep dive ending with a sharp zawk sound near the bottom; often repeated several times.



Costa's Hummingbird
Series of steep dives each following quickly after the other without a pause at the bottom, producing a long shrill whistle during descent.



Calliope Hummingbird
Steep dive with muffled hum at bottom; and slow ascent with several pauses.



Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Series of short U-shaped dives with a short high rattle, relatively short and deep arcs.



Black-chinned Hummingbird
Series of short U-shaped dives with a soft stuttering sound; relatively wide and shallow.



Broad-tailed Hummingbird
Steep dive with short buzzy rattle at bottom; the male's wing trill is audible especially at the top of the ascent.



Rufous Hummingbird
Series of steep dives all following a similar path; each ending with a stuttering hum.



Allen's Hummingbird
Steep dive similar to Rufous dive but usually only a single dive, and humming sound at end of dive is not stuttering; often begins with shuttle display.