

Guest Speaker – John Pillans gave a fascinating talk on Hummingbirds

Hummingbirds belong to the avian family *Trochilidae*, and their closest relatives are the equally fascinating swifts. Hummingbirds are small (weighing 2 to 20 grams), with long, narrow bills and small, saber-like wings.

Males (and occasionally females) often have a colourful gorget—small, stiff, highly reflective, coloured feathers on the throat and upper chest. These shiny feathers and others around the head may look sooty black until a hummingbird turns its head to catch the sun and display the intense, metallic spectral colour.

The almost 340 species of hummingbirds are entirely restricted to the New World, where they can be found from Tierra Del Fuego to southern Alaska and from below sea level deserts to steamy tropical forests at elevations of up to 16,000 feet in the Andes of South America.

Most species live in the tropics, and while 17 species regularly nest in the United States, many of these are found close to the Mexican border. Most areas in the U.S. have one or two breeding species, and only the ruby-throated hummingbird nests east of the Mississippi.

