



The rapidly beating wings of a hummingbird make a humming sound. That's why it's called a *humming* bird.

### Think About It

Why do you think male bee hummingbirds are more colorful than the females?

## ACE FLYER

The world's smallest bird weighs less than a U.S. penny. The bee hummingbird tips the scales at just 2.3 grams (0.08 oz.).



It may be small, but this tiny bird has some amazing moves. Strong flight muscles account for up to one-third of the bird's body weight. The shoulder joints in the bird's skeleton allow the wings to turn in all directions. With wings that beat about 80 times per second, a bee hummer is able to hover, back up, and zip around as fast as 48 kilometers (30 mi.) per hour!

You might think flying is easy for such a lightweight bird. But a bee hummingbird's body systems work hard to keep it moving. It spends most of the day eating and digesting food. Nectar from flowers and insects make up most of its diet. It may visit as many as 1,500 flowers in a day!

The bee hummingbird has a large brain for its size. Its brain helps the bird remember which flowers have nectar. Then the brain sends messages to the bird's muscles through nerves, and the bird flies to those flowers.



female bee hummingbird



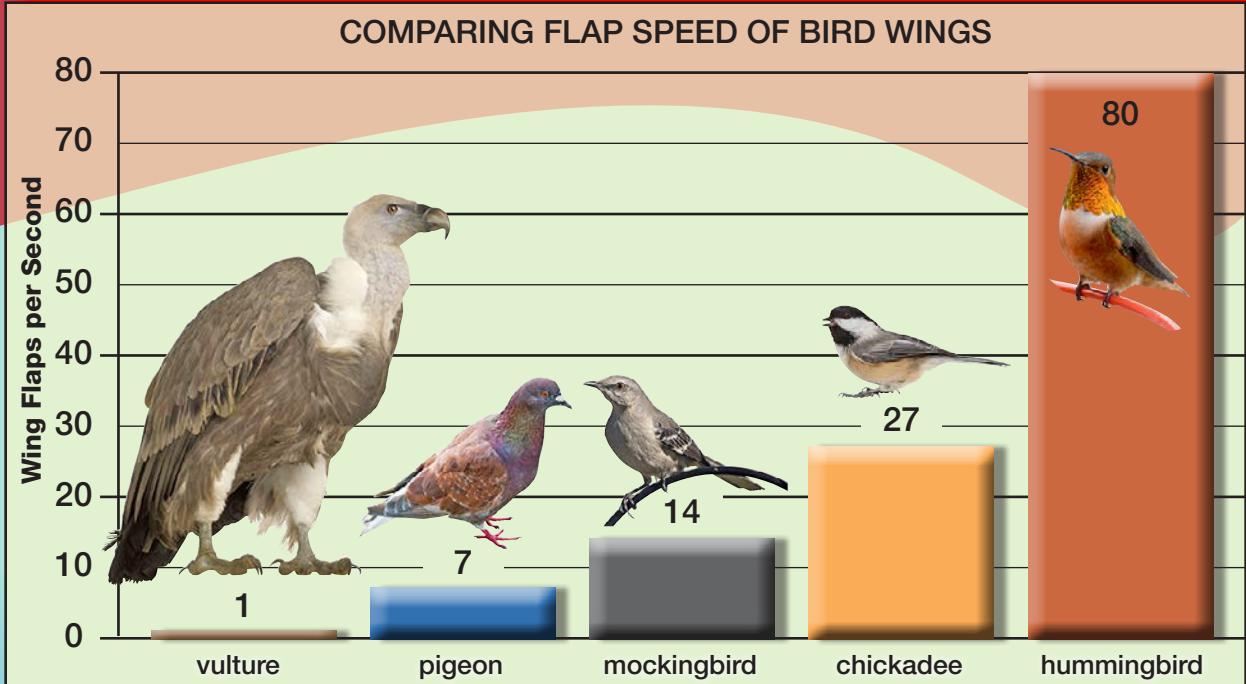
male bee hummingbird

# LIVE FAST, REST HARD

Much of a bee hummingbird's life is on the fast track. To fly as rapidly as it does, a hummingbird has a very fast respiration rate. In fact, it takes about 500 breaths per minute while flying! The hummingbird's fast breathing rate helps it get enough oxygen to fly.

In relation to its size, the bee hummer's heart is large. It can beat up to 1,200 times a minute, or 20 beats per second! That's what's needed to circulate enough oxygen-rich blood throughout the bird's tiny body.

In order to keep up such a pace, a bee hummingbird must eat up to one-half its body weight each day! But on cold nights, a hummingbird may go into a deep sleep called *torpor*. In this state, the bird's circulation and breathing slow down, and its body temperature falls. Torpor helps the hummer save energy since it is unable to feed at night.



## Math Moment

How many more times will a hummingbird flap its wings in one minute than a vulture?

## WHERE BEE HUMMINGBIRDS LIVE



Bee hummingbirds live only on the island of Cuba, shown in red.