

Female Anna's Hummingbird Kills Male

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My wife, Alice Dotson, and I maintain four hummingbird feeders at our yard in Sacramento's Land Park neighborhood, one in the front and three in the back. Many Anna's Hummingbirds (*Calypte anna*) feed there year-round. In the few days prior to 18 March 2020, the hummingbirds appeared to have become more antagonistic toward each other. At about noon on 18 March, we were preparing to sit at a table under one of the backyard feeders and observed three Anna's Hummingbirds engaged in an aerial display that appeared to be aggressive. They flew off, but in a few minutes two were interacting aggressively again and flew off again.

A few minutes later, a female Anna's Hummingbird came to the feeder, about 1.3 m above where we sat. The female fed for 15-30 seconds, when a male Anna's flew rapidly in toward the feeder. The female Anna's flew from the feeder and met the male about 1.6 m from the feeder. We heard noise of wing beats and the two birds appeared to be locked together. They went to the ground about 3 m from me. It was unclear who took whom to the ground. Our view of them as they hit the ground was partially obstructed by a small branch. I moved and then observed that the female was on top of the male and was spearing him repeatedly. After 5-10 seconds, the female flew off. We waited a few seconds for him to fly off, and when he didn't, we went to look. He was positioned right-side-up and not moving. I looked closely and he did not appear to be breathing. We waited a few minutes to see if he would recover, then I picked him up and he appeared to be dead. I placed him in a small clear container for a while to make sure he did not recover, and he did not.

The Birds of the World Anna's Hummingbird account reports that chases are common in the species, but fights that result in injuries are rare (Clark and Russell 2020). The account includes no reports of one Anna's Hummingbird killing another. This observation, while interesting, appears to be highly unusual.

LITERATURE CITED

Clark, C.J., and S.M. Russell. 2020. Anna's Hummingbird (*Calypte anna*), version 1.0. *in* Birds of the World (A. F. Poole, Editor). Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, NY, USA. <https://doi.org/10.2173/bow.annhum.01>