

PRESS RELEASE
April 11, 2022

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SB Museum of Natural History Presents the Art of *Hummingbirds*

New Exhibit Features Victorian Lithographs of Exotic Hummingbirds

- Exhibit open May 6–September 5, 2022
- Included in Museum admission
- More information at sbnature.org/hummingbirds

SANTA BARBARA, CA—A new exhibit featuring 20 original nineteenth-century hand-colored lithographs of exotic hummingbirds is opening at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History on Friday, May 6.

Lining the walls of the Museum’s Maximus Gallery, the exhibition’s 20 lithographs represent a sample of 360 plates by the British ornithologist and publisher, John Gould. Part of his five-volume monograph *The Family of Hummingbirds* (1849–1861), these stunningly beautiful, intricate, and colorful antique prints represent the definitive reference for these “living gems” during the Victorian era.

As a trained taxidermist, Gould did not see a living hummingbird until a decade through creating his monograph. However, he was able to study taxidermy specimens and developed a technique to capture the reflective iridescence of hummingbird feathers.

After a trip to the U.S., he was finally able to observe these unique birds’ blurry, dynamic wings in real life. Nevertheless, Gould continued to publish illustrations with birds in poses that evoked his romantic dreams more than their bumblebee-like physicality. The exhibition counterbalances these mythic “gems” with high-speed photography and the zipping sounds of living birds.

“Hummingbirds have captivated gardeners and bird watchers alike for their delicate beauty and avian maneuvers,” notes Maximus Gallery Curator Linda Miller, who has been waiting to share this exhibition since 2020.

Native to the Western Hemisphere, there are over 320 species of hummingbirds, mostly found in Central and South America. Of the 17 species found in North America, only six are routinely found on the Central Coast. Prints of two of these six will be on display as new Museum acquisitions: The Black-chinned and Costa’s Hummingbirds.

The summer exhibit is open May 6 through September 5 and is included in Museum admission. For more information, visit sbnature.org/hummingbirds.



Trainbearer by John Gould

About the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History

Powered by Science. Inspired by Nature. Founded in 1916, the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History inspires a thirst for discovery and a passion for the natural world. The Museum seeks to connect people to nature for the betterment of both, and prides itself on being *naturally different*. For more information, visit sbnature.org.



White-throated Daggerbill by John Gould



Costa's Hummingbird by John Gould