Project Background
The Rufous hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*) is a widely-distributed bird that breeds in the Willamette Valley. While common, the local Rufous population has declined substantially. To determine the cause of the Rufous decline, we asked 4th and 5th graders from schools in Corvallis, Philomath, Woodburn, and Albany to place hummingbird feeders around their homes and schools. We hoped to gather information on when, where, and in what quantity Rufous hummingbirds are seen in our area.

Procedures for Students
After distributing feeders, students were asked to refill the feeder (with homemade sugar water) every few days. Upon refilling, students measured the difference in sugar water level since the last refilling. Also, students were asked to observe their feeders and note if and when they saw a hummingbird, as well as what species. We analyzed their data to determine what types of environments are frequented most by hummingbirds.
Results from Last Spring’s Observations
The figure below shows the relationship between how much ‘nectar’ (sugar water) was removed from each feeder and how much forest cover was within 500 meters. While not a strong upward trend, there is a slight relationship between hummingbird visits, evidenced by nectar depletion, and forest cover. Outlying data may be caused by leaky feeders or ants.

Hummingbird Sightings
Along with monitoring the amount of nectar in the feeders, students were asked to observe their feeders and make note of any hummingbirds present. In this case, we also wanted reports of ‘no sightings’, as this is important information for our study. Figure 2 on the next page illustrates these sightings in terms of local land cover type (i.e. developed or forested).
The map provides a fairly good idea of areas hummingbirds like to frequent. While there were not many reported sightings, the lack of hummingbirds in developed areas demonstrates the hummingbirds’ preference for forested, undeveloped areas.
Thank You
Thanks to all of the schools and teachers who participated.

Chris O’Connell-Albany
Mark Gullickson-Albany
Cindy Drouhard-Timber Ridge Elementary
Pamela Morrison-Garfield Elementary
Claudia Argo-Garfield Elementary
Karine Calhoun-Corvallis Waldorf School
Jonathan Pope-Woodburn Elementary
John Patterson-Philomath Elementary
Paul Bradley-Wilson Elementary

Participation
These pictures show students in Albany performing feeder-filling duties and hanging them around school grounds. With your help, we hope to learn more about our local hummingbirds.

Photos: Albany Democrat-Herald, May 14th, 2012

Newsletter by Mary Grant