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In The Path Of Hummingbirds

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a big life lesson from a tiny bird



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I was seated at my make-shift desk, a holdover from the pandemic lockdown, thinking about what I would write if I were to write about migration, when a hummingbird flew by, circled back, and hovered outside my back parlor window. I sat stock still, not moving, and barely daring to breathe, not wanting to scare it away with any sudden movements. I observed each of its tiny features - long black beak, narrow face, slender tail, shimmery brown and green body, wings beating in a humming whir, so fast that I could barely see them, as the snow fluttered down.

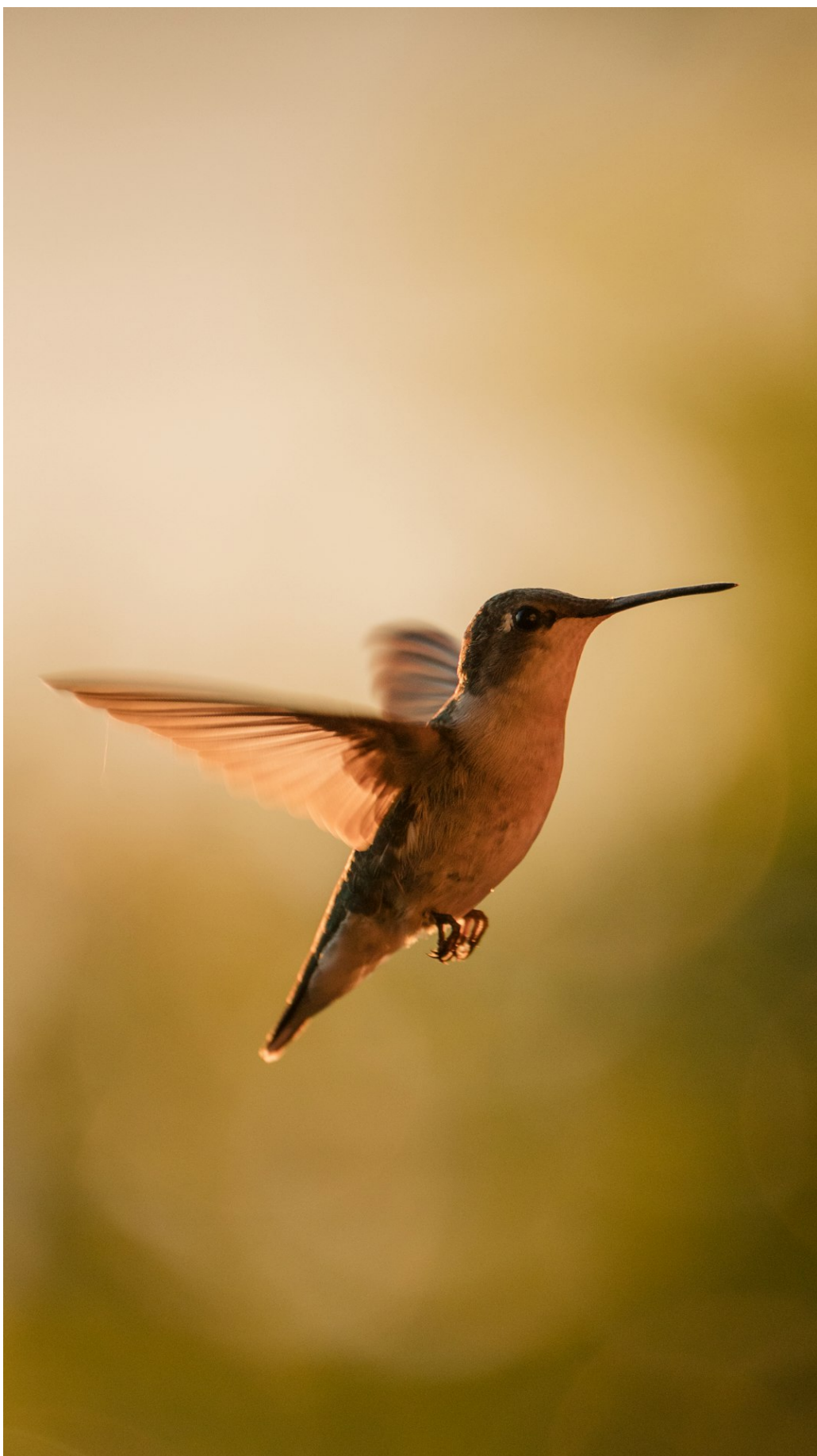


Photo by [Mark Olsen](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Watching this hummingbird, I thought about the hummingbirds back home in Jamaica. After all, the swallow tail hummingbird, or what Jamaicans affectionately call the “doctor bird,” is the national bird of Jamaica, endemic to the island, beloved for its iridescent plumage, and immortalized in the island’s folklore and culture. It is said that the Arawaks, first inhabitants of the island, believed the doctor bird had magical powers and was the reincarnation of a dead soul.

This hummingbird outside my window was not a doctor bird, so at least I did not have to entertain thoughts of reincarnation. But what was a *hummingbird doing in Brooklyn? And more to the point, it was February - what was a hummingbird doing in Brooklyn in the dead of winter?*

As quickly as the bird appeared, it flew away. I immediately texted a birdwatcher friend. She said the bird must have been migrating south, but that it was rare to see one in winter. I was so intrigued that I spent the morning reading about hummingbirds.

unlike other species, hummingbirds don't migrate in a flock...they fly alone.

on average they weigh less than a nickel,

They have a far range of habitats from deserts to rainforests.

And they are the only birds that can fly both forwards and backwards.

All day I thought about the tiny bird and wondered where it was going. Later that evening as I shoveled snow from the sidewalk, it suddenly dawned on me. Maybe I was no different from the hummingbird (save for weighing less than a nickel).

The bird was migrating south, I moved north.

And how many times have I had to look backwards in order to find a path forward? Too many to count.

Maybe I am in the path of hummingbirds.

Wishing you all things good,

Tamara

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