

Gerlach Nature Photography

3 Sessions in 2022

May 15 - 21 * May 22 - 28 * May 29 - June 4

HUMMINGBIRDS OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

PHOTO WORKSHOP

www.gerlachnaturephoto.com

With John Gerlach and Dixie Calderone



Figure 1 The male rufous hummingbird dives in to sip sugar water. By shooting thousands of images, capturing a pose like this is possible. This action is so fast that you don't see this pose until you view your images.

Join John Gerlach and Dixie Calderone for an exceptional hummingbird photography workshop experience at the secluded Bull River Guest Ranch amid the spectacular snow-covered Canadian Rockies.

Learn to photograph hummingbirds with multiple flash and natural light using cutting-edge techniques we developed over twenty years.

How this Workshop Came About

I looked for the perfect place to conduct hummingbird photography workshops beginning in 1998, and finally found Bull River in May of 2003. It all began while leading a polar bear photography tour in 2002. During a relaxing evening with my group, the conversation drifted to hummingbirds. One of my participants said, “my husband and I own the Bull River Guest Ranch that attracts hundreds of hummingbirds in May and June. The birds flock to our guest ranch to feed at the sugar water feeders, and at dusk, every feeder is swarming with hummingbirds like bees at a hive.” That statement started all this!



Figure 2 In addition to multi-flash, enjoy natural light opportunities. This male rufous hummingbird perched on everything we put out for him and he let us photograph him from only a few feet away!

I taught my first two hummingbird workshops at Bull River in 2003 and every year since. The photo opportunities are remarkable! The only complaint I hear is “how do I select the best hummingbird poses from the thousands of excellent

images I am shooting?” During our last season at the ranch, the participants averaged more than 20,000 images per person, and the all-time high is 65,000.

Hummingbirds are site specific. They fly the same migration pattern year after year and return to the Bull River Guest Ranch each May. Their arrival time only varies by a day or two. Most of the hummingbirds arriving at Bull River already know the photography stations and are comfortable with humans and flashes. In the evening, hold your hand over the feeder perches and soon hummingbirds perch on your hand.



Figure 3 In the evening, often two hummingbirds visit the feeder simultaneously! Here is a pair of rufous hummingbirds sharing the feeder! Surely you would like to make similar images!

Nine multi-flash stations are set up, plus some natural light spots. Hummingbirds are most active at the flash stations from 9am to noon, and between 3pm till dark. The last four hours before dark and any time on a cold rainy day are especially productive. In the evening, hummingbirds mob our stations. All flash

stations are covered with a tent to protect you and your photo gear from rain. Surprisingly enough, rain and cold produce astonishing shooting opportunities as hummingbirds swarm the feeders all day during bad weather! This may be the only photo workshop you ever attend where bad weather is great weather for wildlife photography!

Since we have a maximum of twelve participants, at least nine stations are set up, and we use the six most productive stations. Clients rotate through the stations as each are unique with different backgrounds, flowers, and feeder positions. When not on a flash station, you always have natural light stations to use anytime!

Every client has three 90-minute sessions on the flash stations each day. You can expect to shoot 4,000 to 8,000 images during your three daily sessions, and you will get a station that is especially hot where you shoot more than 3,000 images in only 90 minutes! That is more than 30 shots per minute. The three species of hummingbirds living at Bull River are the adorable calliope (45%), crimson rufous (45%), and charming black-chinned (10%). During the workshop, you shoot numerous images of all three - males and females alike. All males are wearing striking breeding plumage during this breeding season!



Figure 4 Calliope Hummingbird



Figure 5 Rufous Hummingbird



Figure 6 Black-chinned Hummingbird

What will you Learn?

- This is an incredible immersion into the lives of hummingbirds. Learn to identify rufous, calliope, and black-chinned hummingbirds. Watch their courtship flights right above and beside you and how they battle for feeder superiority.
- How to photograph hummingbirds with multi-flash setups using short flash durations to freeze wings, or long flash durations to blur wings.
- How to photograph hummingbirds with natural light in flight and perched.



Figure 7 Bright overcast and no wind is perfect for natural light hummingbird photography. Here is a male rufous hummingbird on the ranch owner's deck that you have full access to all week.

- Learn every part of the multi-flash setup and how to do it on your own. You get the benefit of John's twenty years of improving the hummingbird flash stations as he continually develops new strategies. New equipment that has recently become available allows us to advance the art and science of hummingbird photography.

- Learn to use your camera gear to best advantage! Using the best autofocus practices, AF microadjusting your lens and camera, exposure, composition, and more are all part of this course. During the hummingbird quiet time of noon to 3pm, we enjoy a group lunch and then John conducts instructional programs after lunch.
- Learn the art of hummingbird photography. Learning to work with flowers, backgrounds, and hiding the sugar water are all key elements of hummingbird photography. We have at least 40 different backgrounds to choose from in various colors and if you would like to try some artistic shots with white backgrounds, we are happy to help you do that.

Group Size

Limited to **only twelve** photographers. Non-participating spouses and friends are encouraged to join us, and many do. Non-participants can join us for everything we do, except photograph hummingbirds at our stations as that is reserved for participants.

Viewing Your Photos

We view your digital images on a high-definition TV. We hope you bring up to 15 images from home to share, and perhaps share 15 hummingbird images you shoot at the ranch on the last night we are together. Give us JPEG images on a jump drive so we can load them into the slide program. It is optional, of course, but fun to do.

What Photo Gear do you Need?

We provide all flash gear. All you need is your camera that has a flash hotshoe on top (most cameras do). It is wise to bring a second back-up camera too.

We do all our flash photography without a blind from six feet away. John's favorite combination is the Canon R5 with the Canon 100-500mm lens. Dixie's Nikon 200-400mm lens is terrific. Many lenses work! The key is it is helpful to have a reasonably fast lens of at least f/5.6 that is 300mm or longer and can focus close enough to fill the image with a 3 x 4 inch subject. Depending on your gear, you may need an extension tube of about 25mm to focus close enough.



Figure 8 This male calliope hummingbird "owned" a group of bushes that he vigorously protected from all others. Using natural light, my group members shot at least 20,000 images of him from ten feet away. I shot this image with a Canon 600mm lens, 1.4x teleconverter, and 25mm extension tube. The whole combo is AF microadjusted to +5. Now I use a Canon R5 mirrorless camera that does not require AF microadjusting.

Image Storage

Bring plenty of image storage space! If you edit your photos on a computer, then you can delete many rejects shot during the day to make room for more images. Since you can't see the position of a hummingbird's wings when you shoot, many photos are deleted because the wings are in a poor spot. Conversely, flash at short power levels freeze all motion so if the focus is accurate, your image is sharp, and exposure is super easy too. External hard drives of 1TB are inexpensive and splendid for storage. Using high-capacity memory cards in the camera is wise. We use 256GB cards in the camera.

Bring a tripod. The tripod does not need to be heavy, since flash produces sharp images even when handholding the camera. However, you want the tripod to hold the camera while you wait for the hummingbird's arrival. A ballhead with a

Wimberley sidekick or a Wimberley gimbal head is super for all wildlife photography and that includes hummingbirds. We use Wimberley Sidekicks.

What is the typical day like?

8:00 am - Group Breakfast

8:30 am – The warming sun makes the hummingbirds more active

9:00 am - First morning shift begins at their flash stations

10:30 am - Second morning shift begins

12:30 - Group Lunch

1:30 – Teaching program presented

3:00 pm – First afternoon shift begins

4:30 pm – Second afternoon shift begins

6:00 pm – Third afternoon shift begins

7:30 pm – Fourth afternoon shift begins

Note: Since late in the day is the prime time for hummingbird action, we split the dinner time. The group that begins at 4:30 pm and ends at 6pm eats dinner at 6pm and is on again at 7:30 pm. If your scheduled time for a flash station is 6 pm, then you eat dinner at 5pm. This shooting schedule rotates each day.

9:15 or so – Hummingbird photography ends when you lose autofocus, because without autofocus, you do not get sharp images due to poor focus.

The flash stations are mostly between cabins 4 (Whitetail) & 5 (Buffalo) where there are many bushes for “hummingbird cover” and on several of the cabin porches. Walking is minimal.



Figure 9 Male rufous hummingbird with four flashes at 1/64th power.



Figure 10 Editing thousands of images takes time. John teaches how he sorts through several hundred images per hour to find the best! The wings and body position make this a pleasing pose of a female rufous hummingbird.

Meals

The ranch hires a chef to cook for our hungry group of hummingbird photographers. The meals are delicious. We enjoy a group breakfast at 8 a.m. each morning (6 in all). Beginning with the first full day at the hummingbird workshop, the group lunch is at 12:30 p.m. and dinners are served in shifts due to the hummingbird photography schedule. Some eat at 5 p.m. and others at 6 p.m.

Workshop Fees (in US dollars)

Single Occupancy (1 person/1 cabin) \$2900 for one person

Includes single supplement for cabin

Double Occupancy (2 people/1 cabin) \$2300 each person

Both are participants

Double (2 people/1 cabin) \$3500 for both

One participant and one non-photographer spouse or friend. Meals for both are included.

What is Included:

- Six nights lodging at the Bull River Guest Ranch
- 16 scrumptious meals (6 breakfast, 5 lunches, 5 dinners)
- The use of all flash gear
- John's detailed notes on hummingbird photography
- Unlimited help with your photography from John and Dixie
- The opportunity to shoot so many images that you will wear your camera out. For those who try every time they have a session on a flash station, and work the natural light stations too, it is possible to shoot more than 50,000 images.
- John's detailed explanation on the best way to set up a flash station that he demonstrates after breakfast on the first morning. We will assemble a station piece by piece to teach you how it is done.

What is not included:

- Transportation to the ranch
- Special drinks not provided with meals
- Any other personal costs

Tips for the Ranch Staff

We believe in giving tips for a job well done and the staff at Bull River is amazing. Bring about \$100 for tips (single person is \$100, and a couple is \$200 of course). We pool tips and give a group tip to the staff.

Non-photographer Spouse or Friend

Non-photographers are encouraged to attend the workshop. The cabins and the bunkhouse are wonderfully comfortable, and the porches are great for enjoying the view and hummingbirds. Bull River is a magnificent place to enjoy nature, read, or relax. Many non-photographer spouses join us, all have a splendid time at Bull River, and may participate in the activities during the week. Non-participants do not photograph hummingbirds on the flash stations as those are reserved for participants.



Figure 11 The lady black-chinned hummingbird is the most elegant of the ones we have at Bull River. She is sweet, does not fight, and continually spreads her tail and flips her wings producing a higher percentage of nice poses than all others. Notice I made the backlight flash stronger to make the wings glow more!

Workshop Location

(Note: Do not follow GPS or you will “enjoy” far more adventure than you bargained for.)

Bull River Guest Ranch in the Canadian Rockies

Anna Koch

P.O. Box 133 Station Main

Cranbrook, BC Canada

VIC-4H7

Tel 250-429-3760

E-mail info@bullriverguestranch.com

www.bullriverguestranch.com



Figure 12 A workshop member photographs hummingbirds with four flashes, a hummer feeder hidden behind flowers, and a background. I think you should be in that chair next year. Can you see the two hummingbirds buzzing around her setup? Look between the fence boards just to the right of the flower for one, and the second is to the immediate left.

How to Get to the Bull River Guest Ranch

From Cranbrook, British Columbia

Fly into the Cranbrook airport. Then rent a car and drive about 30 miles to the ranch.

From Kalispell, Montana

Fly into the airport in Kalispell. Rent a car and drive about 130 miles to the guest ranch.

Pre-departure Information

Once your reservation form and deposit are received, we will send information that covers everything you need to know, such as clothing suggestions, camera gear, and detailed directions to the Bull River Guest Ranch. You must have a Passport to enter Canada and return to the US.

Enroll Now

Each workshop is limited to 12 participants. We keep the size of the group small to allow everyone plenty of time at each photo station. You will shoot thousands of spectacular photos. A deposit of **\$1000** is required to reserve your space.

Please contact John or Dixie to make sure space is available first!

How to reach John Gerlach and Dixie Calderone

We are on the road much of the year. You can reach us most quickly by email.

John and Dixie's contact info:

johngerlachphotography@gmail.com or (Tel) 812-350-0799

Submit Payment by Check or Credit Card

Send check to John Gerlach/PO Box 318/Island Park, ID 83429. Make check payable to Gerlach Nature Photography. You may use a credit card by calling

Dixie at 812-350-0799. If you should cancel, though, you will lose the fees paid to the credit card company as they do not make refunds.

Cancellation Policy

There is a \$200 cancellation fee. The remaining unpaid balance is due **March 1, 2022**. The \$1000 deposit becomes non-refundable 60 days before the start of the workshop. All fees are non-refundable if you cancel the workshop thirty days or less before the start of the workshop since the ranch has a no-refund policy at 30 days. Naturally, if your spot can be refilled, then refunds will be made, but do not count on us being able to refill your spot close to the time the workshop begins. Even though we usually have a waiting list, normally we cannot fill a spot with so little time left before the workshop. Trip cancellation insurance is advised.

View the hummingbird photos!

If you are a member of Flickr, we have a site set up for folks to post images shot at these workshops. Visit:

<https://www.flickr.com/groups/bullriverhummers/>

And John's personal image sharing site is next!

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/142501139@N02/>



Figure 13 The male calliope hummingbird hovers above a hum-button. Bright overcast light brings out the color.

The bull River Guest Ranch lies in a secluded valley surrounded by nearby mountains. Though I know the way, just for fun I turned on the GPS in my truck and it showed me wandering straight up untracked mountains. An interesting idea perhaps, but I knew I was on a decent dirt road, so do not go by GPS!

DIRECTIONS FROM CRANBROOK TO BULL RIVER GUEST RANCH

1. DRIVE NORTHEAST ON CROWSNEST HWY/VAN HORNE ST N/BC-3 E/BC-95 N TOWARD 1 ST. N. Continue to follow Crowsnest Hwy/BC-3/BC-95 N approx. 9 km
2. Merge onto Kootenay Hwy/BC-93 N/BC-95 S via the ramp to Invermere – Radium
3. Turn right onto Kootenay Hwy/BC-93 N/BC-95 N (follow signs to Invermere/Radium/Golden) approx. 7 km
4. Turn right at the Fort Steele Esso station onto the Fort Steele/Wardner Road and drive for about 22km.
5. Turn left onto the Bull River Road and drive approx. 15 km to the Bull River Guest Ranch on the left. You will see a nice wooden sign for the ranch.
6. Rejoice! You have entered this magical hummingbird haven.

<http://www.bullriverguestranch.com>



Figure 14 The protective male rufous awaits you. We call him the "red baron" and you will likely find out why!

Our First Meeting

The group gathers on the first day at 7pm. Please meet down by the flash stations between Cabin 4 (Whitetail cabin) & 5 (Buffalo cabin). Look for the big white tents we put up to cover the photo stations and keep you dry should it rain. We will introduce everyone and take a leisurely tour of the ranch. No meals are included on the day we meet, so eat in Cranbrook BC ahead of time or bring some food with you. We do not plan a group meal the first day to better accommodate different travel schedules. There is a restaurant about ten miles from the ranch. After the first day we meet, all meals are included.

Please bring 15 images from home to share with everyone. Load the JPEG images on a Jump Drive and give them to Dixie to let us begin loading them right away into our computer for showing later in the week.

On the first full day of the workshop, we eat a breakfast together at 9am. After breakfast, John teaches you how to set up a flash station for hummingbirds. You are getting the details from his twenty years of experience!

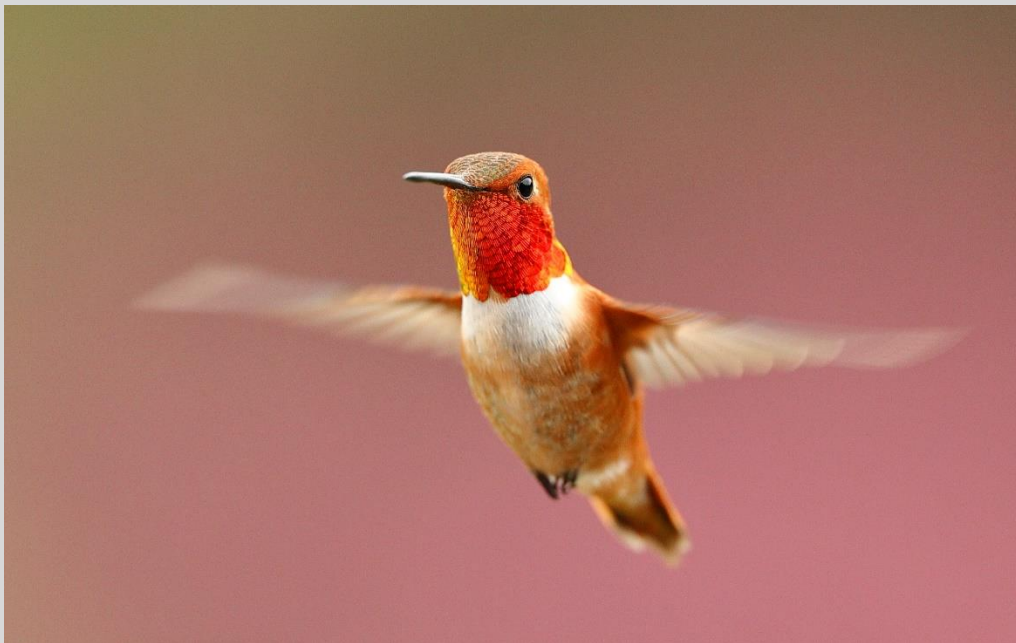


Figure 15 You do not have to freeze hummingbird wings. The wings of this male rufous hummingbird are blurry by using natural light. You can also use flash at 1/4 power to let the wings blur too.



Figure 16 Two female rufous hummingbirds share the same feeder that is barely hidden behind the flowers. For this image a zoom lens is handy! I am set up at 400mm for one bird at the feeder and zoomed to a slightly shorter focal length to accommodate two birds!

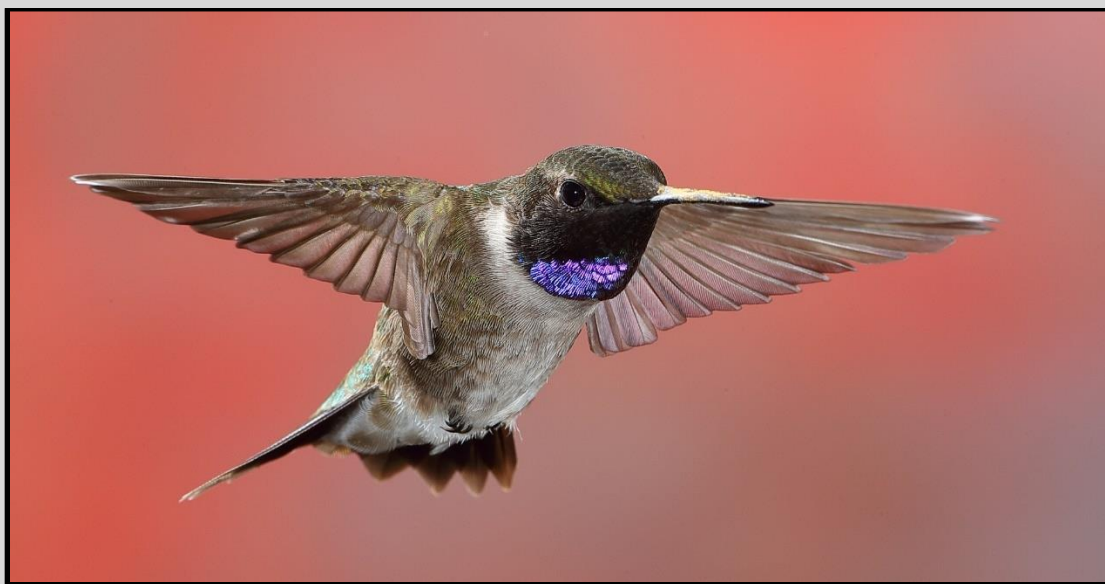


Figure 17 The male black-chinned hummingbird has some color on the throat.



Figure 18 This male calliope hummingbird delighted my groups in 2019. I will regularly check the small group of rose bushes he "owned" to see if he returned so you can photograph him too. All images are made with natural light and a 600mm lens, 1.4x teleconverter, 25mm extension tube, and AF microadjusted to +5. As always, I teach the skills necessary to shoot superb images with flash or natural light!