

Musings on Yoga and Nature: Practice of Hummingbird

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Sitting, coffee in hand, watching and listening to the field of shifting energy that is my backyard of blossoming cherry and lilac, rich green of ceanothus, daffodils, and purple grape hyacinths and bluebells. Moments of quiet punctuated by the movements of birds through the spaces between branches, while crow and gull talk overhead. Breathing this space in both energetically and literally, taking in its oxygen, and reminders of deep interconnection between beings. Sparkling vibrant iridescent green catches my eye. A tiny shape flashing through space to lightly perch on an upper limb, gently floating on to the bird feeder, then darting to various blossoms on bushes, finally perching to sip from a drop of dew on a leaf. Crossing in some other direction, then hovering full stop in the middle of the air... I am transfixed yet again as the local Anna's Hummingbird visits, and

lives a moment of its life with me, stirring my sense of beauty and wonder. I let myself drop into the cultivated deep observational curiosity of an ecologist⁺ opening to the many facets of interconnection, engaging in play of yin and yang, listening, seeing more than a taxonomic species there for our use, created through our definition only. And then, seeing perhaps what can be learned, relevant to life in this time.



The Anna's Hummingbird has adapted well to our urban spaces of gardens, throughout the whole year over these last decades, moving purposefully at speeds up to 48kph, wings flapping up to 70 times per second, heart beating 1200 beats per minute, and then hovering in space seemingly still or even moving backwards if needed. Searching out the nectar from flowers or feeders that provide energy, along with mosquitoes and other bugs that provide protein and other nutrients. Small, yet powerful, challenging the jays, crows or hawks that infringe on their territory. They are capable of reaching a speed of 90 kph in a dive as part of a courtship ritual. Kerry Banks, writing in the Tyee offers a vibrant, playful, comprehensive storying of the life of this wee bird that is well worth the read (<https://thetyee.ca/News/2020/01/02/Anna-Hummingbird>). He notes that while some describe the Anna's as “ ‘classy, urbane and stylish, with the heart of a tiger’,” he feels that, “A more truthful description would be ‘tough, pugnacious, beautiful, smart, sex-crazed, sugar junkies’.” Perhaps not exactly the image that comes to mind of yogis, though engaging rigour of playing the edge in yin, or riding the vigour of *vinyasa* seeking that sweet nectar of joy or mindfulness presence and calm, could be part of what draws us back again and again to practice!

Remembering too that many Indigenous peoples in North and South America have their own complex paradigms of living their embeddedness in these lands, often seeing all beings as relations who offered teachings on how to live well in the world. Images, and

stories of Hummingbird can be seen in cultures throughout the Americas. Stories of *Sah Sen* (Hummingbird) told in Haida culture see this powerful small bird as a feminine symbol representing beauty, intelligence, peace and love. It can be seen as a teaching to appreciate and love the miracle of living, and to help one focus on the positivity one's life. The Pacific Opera Victoria's *The Flight of the Hummingbird*, to be streamed at 10:00am on Tuesday May 19th 2020 (<https://pacificopera.ca/event/the-flight-of-the-hummingbird/>), offers another story of Hummingbird from the Quechuan people of South America along with the artwork of a Haida-manga artist. As each of us creates, or remembers our own place in the fabric of life, I find importance in integrating respectfully my Western ecological paradigm/s with Indigenous views, especially as I am gifted with living and practicing on the territories of Songhees, Esquimalt and WSAANICH peoples.

Grateful and inspired by these wee beings living their lives energetically and fully, in one might say, their '*dharma*,' or 'purpose of life', reminding me of the ongoing powerful actions of our those in society manifesting deep community care for others in the '*dharmic*' capacity of human beings in this time of change. Remembering as well, from a different view of constantly seeking nourishment, those in our society, vulnerable, needing to be ever moving, ever vigilant to find the ways to nourish selves, which is often simply finding ways to be safe.

Yet also stirring me, sitting at times in my relative isolation stilled from regular routines of work and care and feeling the arising of aimlessness at times, into seeing inspiration in the way Anna's Hummingbirds sustain themselves throughout the day leading me to create a daily '***practice of hummingbird***'. A practice I have been exploring these last weeks - flow that many of us may already live or have intuitively created over these last weeks. Watching an Anna's nourish itself in a cluster of lilac flowers, resting on a branch for a minute or two, then moving to the feeder, onwards to a low swath of blossoms, pausing, hovering in stillness...began to shape my movements throughout the day. Beginning day with an intention of practicing ***hummingbird***, has led me to remember to craft small moments of nourishment, while listening inside myself: dropping into a yin pose of butterfly for five minutes; moving on to work, then flowing through a favourite sun salutation; or flipping up into a handstand at my one bit of free wall space; or simply hovering, breathing mindfully as I washed my dishes as I learned many years ago from Thich Nhat Hanh's book, *Peace in Every Step*. How amazing it has become to come to a stop, hover and settle into bridge pose, with or without a block. Or to flow through warrior 2 to humble warrior to exalted warrior, or settle into the deep ground of goddess, one of my favourite poses open to dance! I have taken my practice with me outside as well from standing in tree pose waiting in line at the grocery, to offering gratitude to the bus driver as I watch a passing bus on the street.

Possibly, someone might figure out how to make a *Hummingbird Practice App*, stirring us with a chime to shift into some yin or yang posture, or focus on our breath, commit some act of random kindness, but for now, working to start each day with the intention to craft opportunities to sip nectar throughout the day feels enough. Scanning the body, settling into the ground of the breath, remembering the deep joy of practice even if only for a second or two. And then the day flows on, with its busyness, and stimulations to feel all the concerns of the world, real and imagined. At least until the flashing iridescent green of

hummingbird bubbles up again into consciousness, or shapes intuitive body movement generating the sweetness of awakefulness through pose and breath and mindfulness practice. Until the need to again nurture both self, and society care gathering by Zoom, weaving community together via threads of energy. Seeing ourselves playfully, as a group of hummingbirds may be called – as a charm, a glittering, or shimmer.....of yogis.