

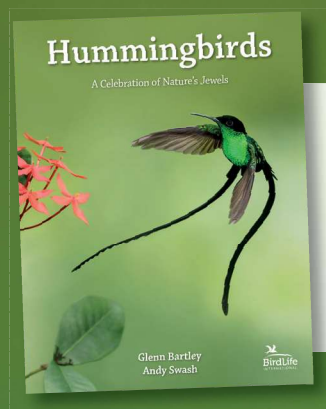
# Hummingbirds: conservation of the Neotropics' avian jewels

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*Last year Princeton University Press, in collaboration with BirdLife International, published Hummingbirds: a celebration of nature's jewels, a monograph showcasing one of the best-loved bird families in the Neotropics. Three of the book's collaborators share some insights into the conservation status of these avian jewels.*



**1** Male Sapphire-bellied Hummingbird *Amazilia lilliae*, Colombia, November 2014 (Andy & Gill Swash/ Princeton WILDGuides). This Endangered species is restricted to a small area of Colombia's Caribbean coast.



With the kind permission of Princeton University Press, this article is adapted from material published in *Hummingbirds: a celebration of nature's jewels* by Glenn Bartley and Andy Swash. The book is reviewed on pp72–73 of this issue.



Colombia harbours almost half (161) of all hummingbird species, and no country holds more hummingbirds of conservation concern (23). Eleven of the latter are endemic, including: **7** Glittering Starfrontlet *Coeligena orina* (Endangered), male, Colombia, November 2018 (Jim Lawrence); **8** Sapphire-bellied Hummingbird *Amazilia lilliae* (Endangered), male, Colombia, November 2014 (Andy & Gill Swash/Princeton WILDGuides); **9** Black Inca *Coeligena prunelli* (Vulnerable), male, Colombia, November 2014 (Andy & Gill Swash/Princeton WILDGuides); **10** Chestnut-bellied Hummingbird *Amazilia castaneiventris* (Near Threatened), male, Colombia, November 2014 (Andy & Gill Swash/Princeton WILDGuides); and **11** Black-backed Thornbill *Ramphomicron dorsale* (Endangered), Colombia, January 2016 (Glenn Bartley: [glennbartley.com](http://glennbartley.com)).



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last 75 years, however, this hummingbird had been encountered only once, in 2010, until being relocated in 2022; almost nothing is known of its biology.

For more than 50 years Glittering Starfrontlet *Coeligena orina* (Endangered) was known only from a single specimen collected in 1951. After its rediscovery in 2004, this hummingbird was immediately assessed as Critically Endangered on the assumption that fewer than 250 breeding birds remained. Since then, however, research suggests that its population may be as much as ten times larger and, as a consequence, the species was recategorized as Endangered in 2020. It occurs in 270 km<sup>2</sup> of transitional habitat associated with páramo–elfin forest in the western Andes of Colombia, where it is under severe threat of

habitat loss owing to continuing deforestation for farming and the potential expansion of mining operations. Its habitat is likely to be highly susceptible also to the impact of climate change, including an increased frequency of droughts and subsequent forest fires.

Sapphire-bellied Hummingbird *Amazilia lilliae* (Endangered) is restricted to a stretch of around 100 km<sup>2</sup> along the Caribbean coast of Colombia, an area that has been subject to a range of significant development pressures over recent decades. This hummingbird particularly favours coastal mangroves, but is also known to make local seasonal movements, occasionally occurring in xerophytic scrub and sometimes showing a preference for forests of Coral Bean Tree *Erythrina fusca* while they are in flower, possibly acting as a