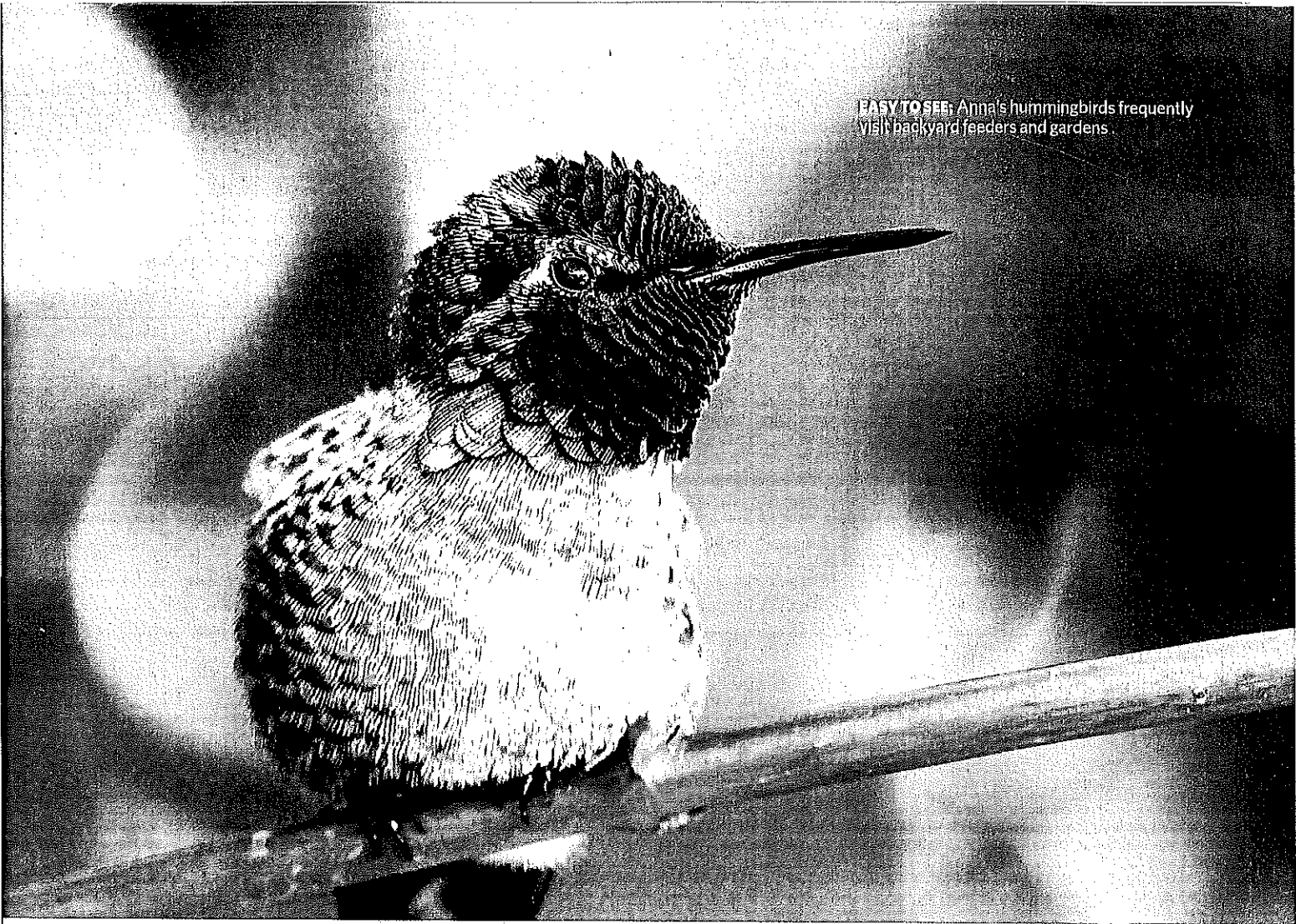


EASY TO SEE: Anna's hummingbirds frequently visit backyard feeders and gardens.



Fall Gems

Keep your hummingbird feeder topped off as the year winds down

MOST HUMMINGBIRDS IN THE UNITED STATES HEAD SOUTH IN WINTER, BUT NOT ALL.

Some rufous hummingbirds, which typically summer on the West Coast and winter in Mexico, in recent years have instead migrated east, taking up residence between southern Texas and North Carolina. The Southeast's warming weather and late-blooming flowers appear to be enough to sustain the hummers. California birders still can rely on Anna's hummingbird (above) to stay put year-round. And any time of year, people hankering for a hummingbird extravaganza can visit The Nature Conservancy's Ramsey Canyon Preserve in southeastern Arizona. No matter the season, birders can count on seeing at least a few of the more than 15 species documented at the preserve—including Anna's and rufous hummingbirds. —M.B.

RULES OF ATTRACTION

The key to seeing autumn and winter hummingbirds in North America is to feed them with late-blooming flowers or a feeder full of a sugar-water mixture, says Bruce Peterjohn, who heads the U.S. Geological Survey's Bird Banding Laboratory.

1

MIGRATION MYTH

Taking down your feeder won't encourage hummingbirds to migrate. Leaving it up won't encourage them to stay—but it can provide much-needed fuel for migration.

2

FLOWER POWER

Forget the red ribbons, plastic lawn ornaments and red dyes: It's flowers that attract hummingbirds to your yard, so plant some late-fall bloomers.

3

PROTEIN PLUS

If hummers stay even after flowers fade, they'll depend on your feeder and insects, which they eat year-round. If they cannot find bugs, they'll likely move on.

4

FIGHT THE ICE

Protect your feeder solution from freezing by bringing it inside overnight. Some people position incandescent light bulbs near feeders to help keep ice at bay.