

Card 28: **Hummingbird: Shaman's Messenger**

*"When we watch the hummingbird,
the living symbol of the spirit of the sun,
we embrace the joy of spirit."*

Americo Yabar, Andean Mystic and Paqo



One of the most magical birds in the Andes is the Hummingbird. Like a jewel suspended in space, its tiny body catches all of the sun's iridescence: ruby, emerald, turquoise. Its feathers glint a radiance that bedazzles.

To the indigenous Andean peoples, Hummingbird symbolizes the Upper World, the Hanaq Pacha. This is the world of refined energy, the celestial realm of the Creator (see Card #8). From this dimension, Hummingbird brings the *paqo* shaman messages for his or her community that give hope, inspire action, and offer enlightenment.

The Mountain Spirits, or *Apus* (pronounced *ah poo*), often act as intermediaries between Hummingbird and the paqo. A mountain Apu lives in direct union with the Upper World. Because an Apu can not be seen or known directly, it communicates with the paqo through selected animals, one of which is Hummingbird. Once an Apu receives a message from the Upper World it discloses it to Hummingbird who then delivers it to the paqo. The paqo, in turn, reveals the information to his or her community. On occasion, the paqo asks Hummingbird to carry a reply back to the Apu, who then brings it to the Upper World.

The quality of Hummingbird's communication between Apu and paqo transcends time. Because Hummingbird flies backwards as well as forwards, it can deliver messages that relate to the past or to the future. Because Hummingbird also flies in circles, or poises perfectly still, hoisted by its fast flapping wings, it may bring news about the present time. Because Hummingbird lifts directly up as well as down, it can retrieve information from the stars or from the earth. Thus, as Hummingbird travels through all dimensions of time and space, including the timeless place of silence, its power to illuminate knowledge from these worlds seems expansive.

The paqo's relationship with Hummingbird typically begins in childhood. The paqo's local Apu sends Hummingbird to attract the pre-initiate into spiritual service. After years of initiation, the new paqos learn how to receive Hummingbird's messages by listening to its voice "speak" directly to them, or speak through their *mesas*, their traveling altars (see Card #13). Hummingbird additionally communicates through another paqo's mesa as well. In this case the second paqo hears Hummingbird's information, then tells the first.

Most paqos carry what is called the *k'ara*, or essence, of Hummingbird in their energy fields. Spiritually, Hummingbird symbolizes joy, blessings, and the highest consciousness, or *sami*, from the Upper World. In kind, the majority of paqos themselves radiate joy, give blessings, and consistently evoke a high state of consciousness.

Paqos further resemble Hummingbird in their solitary natures. Seventy percent of the time Hummingbird defends its territory of nectar, exerting strong pressure to gather the flowers' sugar as rapidly as possible. In between forays it sings, sunbathes, self-preens, and basks in the sun alone. Similarly, paqos spend quite a lot of time in solitude for self-reflection and deep communion with nature.

Like all indigenous people living in the high Andes, Hummingbird has larger lungs and a larger heart than its relatives across the planet. The giant Peruvian Hummingbird, the *Patagonia gigas*, in fact, is the largest Hummingbird of its species, as big as a swallow.

The Incas honored Hummingbird by referring to it as the god *Q'enti*. *Q'enti* showed many similarities to the Roman god Mercury. Both served as messengers from the Upper World and were respected for their speed and accuracy. The Incas, moreover, built Machu Picchu in the shape of a Hummingbird, a mystery yet to be understood.

Another enigma surrounding Hummingbird concerns its presence as one of the Nazca line animal figures imprinted on the southern desert of Peru. Over a thousand years old, these enormous drawings are intelligible only by air. The bill of the Nazca Hummingbird ends at a group of lines that point to the rising sun on December 21, the Summer Solstice. December 21 also marks the important Inca feast of *Capac Raymi*, the Festival of the Dead, when the deceased ancestors return to earth to reanimate communication with the living. By its placement on the desert floor, Hummingbird seemingly acts as a messenger between the worlds of the living and the dead.

An animal of both mystery and magic, Hummingbird travels in many directions, through all dimensions of time and space, a bejeweled wonder deeply loved by the Apus, by the paqos, and by the people themselves.

Divinatory Meaning

An understanding exists in the Andes that if Hummingbird hovers around the top of one's head, he or she has a strong and open connection to the Upper World, the realm of celestial energy. If Hummingbird has flown into your life today, consider that such a relationship exists for you. A message from the Upper World about your issue at hand has recently arrived, or will be given to you quickly. In order to receive this message, however, you must remain open and welcoming, like a flower.

Once the message is received, you might want to question whether you need to move forward or backward in time concerning the matter; remain in present time; or simply enter into the motionless space of silence for deeper reflection.

Whatever the answer, Hummingbird expresses mastery of movement and advises us to act quickly. In other words, something is being awakened now and with it, a call to action.

The presence of Hummingbird may also invite you to consider a path of spiritual service, or to develop a more focused state of shamanic consciousness. Hummingbird urges us to celebrate the joy of who we are in our highest potential. As one of the Nazca figures, Hummingbird's bill faces the Summer Solstice's rising sun. The glory of your own spirit may now be ready to rise to its zenith in the heavens, awakening to full manifestation.

Deepening the Connection

The Hummingbird's life depends on, and has co-evolved with, flowers. For this exercise, gather three vibrantly-colored flowers that attract you. In either an indoor or outdoor setting, place them in a round bowl of water, the round shape representing the sun.

Now examine all three of the flowers closely, and choose one flower to be with. Observe all of the nuances of its shading, texture, veins, petal formation, stamen shape, how and where it attaches to its stem, the width and color of its leaves, and so on.

After "being" with the flower for a time, gaze deeply into its center where its nectar awaits the Hummingbird. Now close your eyes and allow the aroma and/or energy of its nectar to fill you, first entering your eyes, nose, throat, then slowly coming down into your lungs, heart, and into the rest of your body.

Open your heart to "listen" to any messages that may be forthcoming at this time, especially as they pertain to the matter at hand. You might receive this information in a variety of ways, not only as words, but perhaps as pictures, symbols, feelings, colors, sounds, intuitions, aromas, and other sensations.

In response to your original question, the messages you have been given allow Hummingbird to reveal the most appropriate movement at this time. That is, Hummingbird may advise you to go forward into the unknown; to go backward into the past; to go up to the stars; to go down to the earth; or to remain motionless for now with your question.

After the mediation is complete, thank Hummingbird and the Upper World, thank each flower, then return all of the flowers to Pacha Mama, thanking her as well for her beauty and gifts.