

# Up Close For the Birds

COUPLE'S WEARABLE HUMMINGBIRD FEEDER MASK BRINGS PEOPLE CLOSER TO NATURE BY EDITH G. TOLCHIN

**M**ANY OF YOU have my same addiction—but it's not a bad thing! As a writer who interviews "Shark Tank" inventors, I watch every episode and rush to contact some of the inventors whose products pique my interest.

It doesn't matter whether they landed a deal with a "Shark"; it's the amazing exposure this show gives those brave enough to walk through those two doors that lead to the Tank.

Here's the story of an unusual invention that tugged at visiting "Shark" Daniel Lubetzky's heartstrings. It's called the "HummViewer" and was invented by John Creed of Loveland, Colorado.

**Edith G. Tolchin (EGT):** What is the backstory behind the HummViewer?

**John Creed (JC):** My wife, Joan, and I both grew up in Wichita, Kansas, and first met in middle school. We moved to Loveland, Colorado, in 1995. We both share a love for the outdoors and an appreciation for hummingbirds—which, for me, started when I

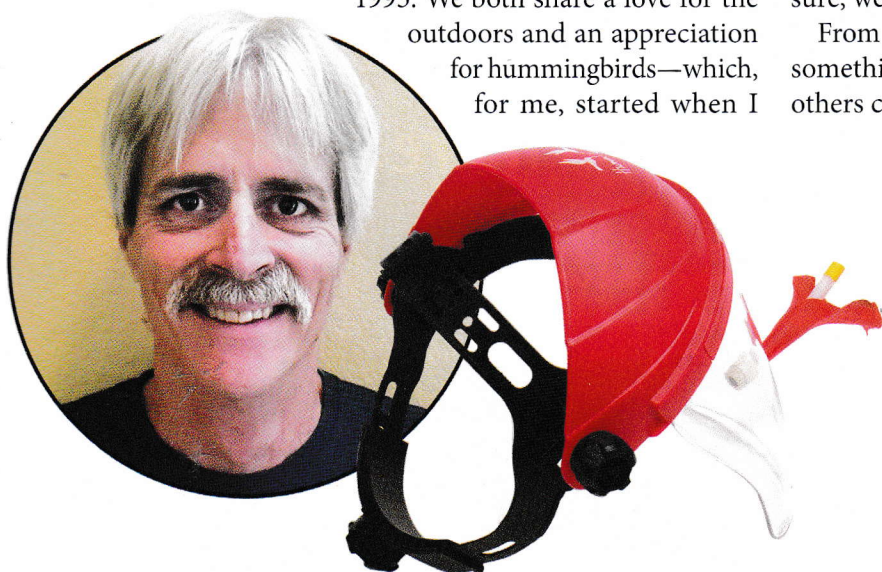
spent summers as a kid at my family's cabin in Westcliffe, Colorado. We had several bird feeders on the deck that attracted hummingbirds.

I have been in the electrical field for over 40 years and had my own company, Creed Electric, for about seven years. Joan also has experience starting her own company, including Once Upon Arrival, a food delivery service for resort areas in Colorado.

We both come from entrepreneurial families: My father was an entrepreneur, and Joan is one of four children in her family, three of whom have started their own businesses.

We created the first HummViewer—a wearable, hummingbird feeder mask—in September 2017 after growing interest in finding a better way to view the amazing hummingbird up close. After creating an initial prototype that we shared on social media, 9News Denver featured it as a "Most Inspired NEXT Guest." After that exposure, we received inquiries to buy the product.

From that moment on, we knew we were onto something and wanted to create a product that others could enjoy!



**"We hope to help make birdwatching more accessible and mainstream so that everyone can access the magic of hummingbirds."**

—JOHN CREED





**EGT:** Why the fascination and desire to get “up close and personal” with hummingbirds?

**JC:** We’ve always loved hummingbirds and have felt connected to them since a young age. They’re beautiful, curious creatures and a marvel to observe up close.

While birdwatching might seem a niche, it’s surged in popularity over the last few years as people are craving ways to disconnect from their hectic lives and connect with nature. With the HummViewer, we hope to help make birdwatching more accessible and mainstream so that everyone can access the magic of hummingbirds.

**EGT:** What type of patent(s) do you have? Was it difficult to obtain?

**JC:** We applied for and received a utility patent in 2021. It was a three-year process that included two resubmittals.

Our original submission was wide in scope. Once we narrowed it, we were successful in obtaining the patent. It is typically a one-year process, but we found out that it takes about a year to clarify and resubmit to a patent examiner.

**EGT:** Please tell us about your experience of “swimming with the Sharks.”

**JC:** Pitching in front of the “Sharks” was a surreal experience. We were able to complete our pitch and move on to the questioning.

Overall, the energy was very lighthearted, and it was a fun experience. There was lots of laughter from us and the “Sharks,” which made us feel at ease in a situation that could have felt quite intimidating.

We received an offer from Daniel Lubetzky, the founder of KIND Snacks. Daniel is someone we’ve always admired and when we found out he was going to be in “The Tank” for our filming, we hoped we’d have a shot at making a deal with him!

Daniel felt a personal connect to our brand and mission, which we knew would be important for a “Shark” to want to do a deal with us.

After Daniel’s father—who was his biggest role model and inspiration—passed away, Daniel and his family were seeing birds outside of his parents’ house and felt the birds were his father’s way of being there after his death. Since then, Daniel has had an increased appreciation for birds. Daniel also believes in our vision of more people using time spent in nature and birdwatching as a way to disconnect.

We closed a deal with Daniel for \$75,000 for a 35 percent stake in our business. We’re really looking forward to partnering with Daniel and his team at Equilibra to grow HummViewer.

The unconventional appearance of the HummViewer led to some light moments on “Shark Tank.”



**EGT: How are you selling the HummViewer?**

**JC:** As of now, we sell the HummViewer on our direct-to-consumer site, hummviewer.com. In the future, we hope to expand to selling on Amazon and at retailers. This is an area where we're looking forward to receiving support and guidance from Daniel.

**EGT: Do you sell any accessories?**

**JC:** Each HummViewer comes with all the items you need to see hummingbirds up close—including three flower feeder tubes, one nectar bulb, one cleaning brush, three snap-in hole covers and a cotton bag for storage.

**EGT: Have you had any obstacles in developing the HummViewer?**

**JC:** Our biggest setback was not being able to find an American company to make a shield in a red helmet. We also didn't expect the patent process to take three years.

Inventing a product always comes with obstacles, but I've always been someone who has

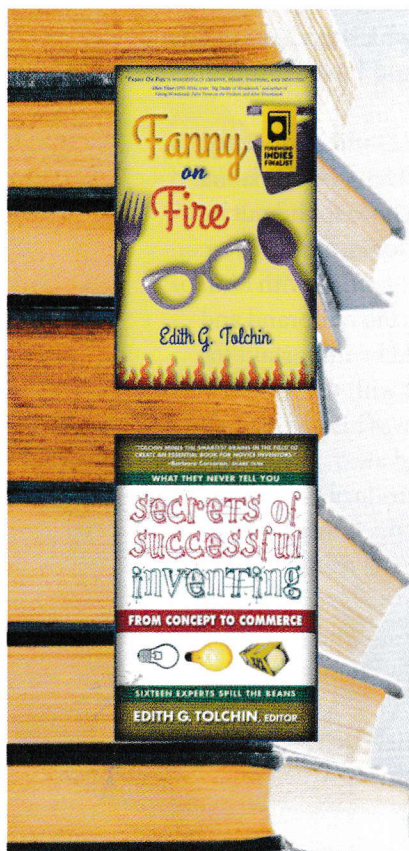
loved to tinker with products and find ways to improve items I use in my life. So, figuring out how to make the HummViewer come to life was a fun challenge for me!

**EGT: Do you have any new products planned for launching?**

**JC:** Not at this time, but we are always looking to optimize and improve the current version of the HummViewer. Right now, we've focused on making the most of the awesome exposure we gained from "Shark Tank." Our goal is to take birdwatching mainstream and get the HummViewer in the hands of as many consumers as possible. ☺

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**Edith G Tolchin** has written for *Inventors Digest* since 2000. She is an editor (opinionatededitor.com/testimonials), writer (edietolchin.com), and has specialized in China manufacturing since 1990 (egtglobaltrading.com).



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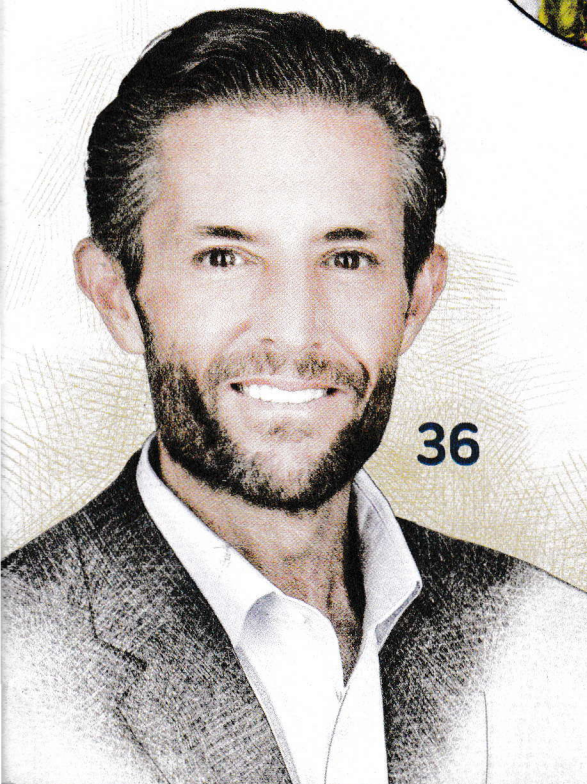
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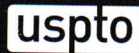


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