

2015/2016 WINTER HUMMINGBIRD BANDING SUMMARY

Fred Bassett

Our Hummingbird Research banding crew has completed another winter hummingbird banding season in the Southeast. Fred Dietrich, Mary Wilson, Donna Carroll, and I combined to band 132 hummingbirds of eight species. Those include 75 Ruby-throated, 26 Rufous, 22 Black-chinned, 4 Buff-bellied, 2 Calliopes, 1 Allen's, 1 Broad-tailed, and 1 White-eared. The lower than average number of banded birds was driven by the lowest number of Rufous since 1999/2000. Without the highest number ever of Ruby-throated, it would have been a dismal season. Good news was the number of different species which ties our record for the most in a single season. Best bird of the winter was Alabama's first White-eared banded in Mobile in November.

We had 31 of our previously banded hummingbirds return to or near the original banding locations. 27 Rufous returned including 12 back for the second winter, 11 back for the third winter, and 4 back for the fourth winter. Four Ruby-throated hummingbirds returned including 1 back for the second winter, 2 back for the third winter, and 1 back for the fourth winter.

Six previously banded hummingbirds were recaptured at locations other than where they were banded:

December 16, 2015 – At Jill and John Redington's home in Enterprise AL, I caught a female Rufous banded in January 2013 in Diamond Head MS. 215 miles between banding and recapture.

December 19, 2015 – At Norris and David Wooten's home in Sasser GA, I caught a female Rufous I banded December 2012 at Blake and Jody Hardison's home in Niceville FL. That bird has wintered at the Wooten's home the past three winters. 150 miles between banding and recapture.

December 30, 2015 – At Lynn and Bill van Twuyver's home in Dothan AL, I caught a male Rufous I banded December 2013 at Shirley and Jim Sandoski's home near DeFuniak Springs FL. 55 miles between banding and recapture.

January 2, 2016 – At Jeanette and Doug Eden's home in Spanish Fort AL, I caught a male Ruby-throated I banded three weeks earlier at Jim and Diane Dickerson's home in Lillian AL. 35 miles between banding and recapture.

January 13 2016 – At Norris and David Wooten's home in Sasser GA, I caught a female Rufous Fred Dietrich banded February 2015 at Wylie Watt's home in Thomasville GA. 65 miles between banding and recapture.

January 18, 2016 – At Montez Golden's home in Blounstown FL, Fred Dietrich caught a male Rufous banded February 2012 near Whitesburg GA. 210 miles between banding and recapture.

Comparisons with the five previous seasons are:

2010/2011 - 172 banded with 34 returns and 5 foreign recaptures
2011/2012 – 402 banded with 20 returns and 6 foreign recaptures
2012/2013 – 311 banded with 20 returns and 4 foreign recaptures
2013/2014 - 289 banded with 46 returns and 11 foreign recaptures
2014/2015 – 121 banded with 47 returns and 6 foreign recaptures
2015/2016 – 132 banded with 31 returns and 6 foreign recaptures

I think the decrease in Rufous over the past four winters is part of a natural cycle I have observed twice in the past 20 years. I'm looking forward to an increase next winter. The increase in Buff-bellied hummers this winter after three sparse winters was welcome to see. Every winter is different, and I look forward to what next winter brings.

Long term continuing studies such as our winter banding in the Southeast provide valuable information about hummingbird population cycles and trends. We can only get that data because of the many hosts who allow us to add their winter visitors to our research. It is wonderful each winter to see old friends with their winter birds and to introduce new hosts to the fun of winter hummingbirds

Thanks
Fred