

2016/2017 WINTER HUMMINGBIRD BANDING SUMMARY

Fred Bassett

Our Hummingbird Research banding crew has completed another winter hummingbird banding season in the Southeast. We combined to band 100 hummingbirds of seven species. Those include 39 Rufous, 38 Ruby-throated, 12 Black-chinned, 5 Calliopes, 3 Buff-bellied, 2 Allen's, and 1 Broad-billed.

We had 21 of our previously banded hummingbirds return to or near the original banding location. 15 Rufous returned including 2 back for the second winter, 6 back for the third winter, and 7 back for the fourth winter. Four Ruby-throated returned including 2 back for the second winter, 1 back for the third winter, and 1 back for an amazing eighth winter at Chris and David Cock's home near Brooksville, FL. Another excellent return was a Black-chinned that returned for the 6th winter at Eva Barnett's home in Foley, AL. One Buff-bellied hummingbird also returned for the second winter at Kay Keigley's Pensacola home.

Three hummingbirds were recaptured at locations other than where they were originally banded:

January 18, 2017 – At Pat Hopper's home in Saraland AL, I caught a female Rufous banded January 26, 2015 in Lafayette, LA. 240 miles between banding and recapture.

February 2, 2017 – At Catherine Jones' home in Selma AL. I caught a female Rufous I banded January 4, 2014 at Susan and Allen Livingston's home in Dothan, AL. 150 miles between banding and recapture.

February 3, 2017 - 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 four winters. 150 miles between banding and recapture.

Comparisons with the five previous seasons are:

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
2016/2017 - 100 Banded with 21 Returns and 3 foreign recaptures

Banding totals were the lowest since I started winter banding in 1998. There are so many variables about hummingbirds, that determining why numbers have been down the past three winters is anybody's guess. A couple of things that I think affected numbers this season were weather and number of hummingbird feeders. The warm winter meant natural food sources were available almost all winter, and many hummingbirds were reported feeding only at plants while ignoring feeders. The other factor is the number of feeders available for wintering hummingbirds. A few years ago, I could be sure when I went to a home that it was unlikely that another feeder was nearby. Now in many neighborhoods multiple feeders are maintained, and fewer hummingbirds settle in at one home. That means they are not seen as often and are more difficult to catch. I won't complain because more feeders mean we have been successful educating people about winter hummingbirds, and it makes life easier for the birds. Each winter is different, and I look forward to seeing 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