

2017/2018 WINTER HUMMINGBIRD BANDING SUMMARY

Fred Bassett

Our Hummingbird Research banding team has completed another winter hummingbird banding season covering Alabama, Florida, and South Georgia. We combined to band 145 hummingbirds of seven species. Those include 69 Ruby-throated, 43 Rufous, 22 Black-chinned, 4 Buff-bellied, 3 Calliopes, 2 Broad-tailed, and 2 Broad-billed.

Twenty of our previously banded hummingbirds returned to or near the original banding location. Eleven Rufous returned including 2 back for the second winter, 2 back for the third winter, 2 back for the fourth winter, 4 back for the fifth winter, and 1 back for the seventh winter. Four Ruby-throated returned including 4 back for the second winter, 2 back for the third winter, and 1 back for the fifth winter. One Buff-bellied returned for the third winter, and one Black-chinned set a new record for us by returning for the seventh winter.

We recaptured three hummingbirds at locations other than where they were originally banded

January 5, 2018 – Fred Dietrich caught a female Black-chinned at Fran Rutkovski's home in Tallahassee that I banded January 14, 2017 at Pam Stine's home near High Springs, FL. 110 miles between banding and recapture.

February 1, 2018 – At Evan Walker's home in Niceville, FL I caught a female Rufous I banded January 6, 2018 at Larry Bennett's home in Navarre, FL. 30 miles between banding and recapture.

March 28, 2018 – At Niki Johnson's home in Auburn, AL, I caught a male Ruby-throated banded March 24, 2018 in Covington, LA. That bird was banded Saturday and was first seen in Auburn on Monday. It moved 310 mile in two days which is amazingly fast movement during spring migration.

Comparisons with the five previous seasons are:

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
2017/2018 – 145 banded with 20 returns and 3 foreign recaptures

Total banding numbers increased this winter to the most in the past four winters, but those numbers can be a bit misleading. Almost all of the increase was due to the rise in Ruby-throated from 38 last winter to 69 this winter. That increase might have been caused by an increase in Ruby-throated hummers wintering in central Florida, or because I banded there right after cold weather which brought more hummers to feeders there.

Numbers were looking grim during fall and early winter when most reports of hummers were birds using flowers exclusively due to the warm weather. We had banded less than 25 hummingbirds at the end of 2017. The extended freezing weather in January brought hummers to feeders, and we banded 100 in

January. Hummers were very healthy during the cold proving again they are fine as long as they have access to a feeder during freezing weather. We appreciate hosts who made sure their special winter visitors always had a liquid feeder.

This winter marks twenty years of our continuing study of wintering hummingbirds in the Southeast providing 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 a treat each winter to see old friends with their winter birds and introduce new hosts to the wonderful world of winter hummingbirds.

Thanks

Fred