

2019/2020 Winter Hummingbird Banding Summary

Our Hummingbird Research banding team has completed another winter hummingbird banding season in the Southeast. We banded 139 hummingbirds of six species. Those include 85 Ruby-throated, 27 Rufous, 20 Black-chinned, 4 Allen's, 2 Calliopes, and 1 Buff-bellied.

Fourteen of our previously banded hummingbirds of two species returned to or near the original banding location. Ten Ruby-throated returned including three back for the second winter, five back for the third winter, and two back for the fourth winter. Four Rufous returned including two back for the second winter, one back for the sixth winter, and one back for the seventh winter.

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

September 26, 2019 – Emma Rhodes caught an adult male Ruby-throated at Franklin Chalk's home on the Fort Morgan Road near Gulf Shores, AL that was banded May 17, 2019 near Chestertown, MD. 1070 miles between banding and recapture.

October 17, 2019 – Emma Rhodes caught an adult male Rufous at Toni Ellis' home in Mobile that Fred Bassett banded January 6, 2019 in Atmore, AL at the home of Paula and Ralph Wright. 55 miles between banding and recapture.

December 10, 2019 – Fred Bassett caught an immature male Ruby-throated at Burke Baker's home in Santa Rosa Beach, FL that he had banded November 4, 2019 at Cindy Walker's home in Foley, AL. 95 miles between banding and recapture.

December 27, 2019 – Fred Bassett caught an adult female Rufous at Sondra Stokes's home in Laurel Hill, FL that he banded November 20, 2018 at Sharon and Tom Maxwell's home in Choctaw Beach, FL. 40 miles between banding and recapture.

January 5, 2020 – Fred Bassett caught an adult female Rufous at Jim Dickerson's home in Lillian, AL that he banded January 15, 2015 in Pensacola, FL at Powers and Rosann McLeod's home. 15 miles between banding and recapture.

January 25, 2020 – Fred Bassett caught an adult male Ruby-throated in Dothan, AL at the home of Karen Brookshire-Jackson that had been banded November 12, 2019 in Chattanooga, TN. 320 miles between banding and recapture.

February 7, 2020 – Fred Bassett caught an immature male Ruby-throated at Evelyn Wilson's home in Pensacola, FL that was banded November 15, 2019 in Lafayette, LA. 310 miles between banding and recapture.

Comparisons with the five previous winter seasons are:

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

2018/2019 – 151 banded with 19 returns and 3 foreign recaptures

Total banding numbers this past winter were about average for the past five years, but we continue to see big changes in the species banded. Ruby-throated hummingbirds now are about 60% of the birds we band which is a huge change from about 10% the first ten years of our research. Rufous were less than 20% of birds banded this winter in contrast with an average of about 70% the first ten years. Numbers of Black-chinned and Allen's did increase this winter, which gives us some hope Rufous numbers will rebound.

Returns continued to decrease this winter as a direct result of the continuing decrease in Rufous hummingbirds. Rufous have always provided the bulk of returns, and their dwindling numbers provide fewer birds that can possibly return.

This winter marks 22 years of our continuing research about wintering hummingbirds in the Southeast providing valuable information about hummingbird cycles and trends. We don't always get the data we want, but it is important to document the changes. We can only get that data because of the many hosts who allow us to add their winter visitors to our research. We thank you and look forward to seeing you and your special winter hummingbirds again next winter.