

Greetings,

Well, I was afraid I wouldn't get to write a second update for the 2015-16 winter hummer season, but a couple of cold fronts have finally pushed some birds into the area and there have been some very nice developments in our wintering hummingbird research project.

In late November I banded a first year male Black-chinned at Jody Elliott and Claudia Mason's yard in Killlearn along with a first year female Ruby-throated. Two days later I went to Pam Flynn's, home of the famous Ms. Alaska hummingbird, and banded a female Black-chinned. The next day I went out to Chemonie Crossing where George and Beth Lundsford had been seeing a male hummingbird. A couple of years earlier I had caught a male Black-chinned that was banded in Louisiana by Nancy Newfield so there was a chance this bird had returned. As it turned out this year's bird was a male Ruby-throated. From there I went to Bob Gorman's house east of Tallahassee and banded a female Black-chinned, bringing the total number of species caught in his yard up to 5. Another bird in his yard would not go in the trap. From there I headed toward Monticello where I banded a female Rufous for Edie Goldie at The Painted Pony. Then it was back to Jody and Claudia's where I banded a young male Ruby-throated. After several trips to Joy Moore's home off of Lakeshore Drive, I finally caught a female Ruby-throated that had been driving me crazy.

After almost 3 weeks of no birds I got a call from my neighbor Lisa Holland who was seeing her first ever winter hummingbird. I caught and banded an adult female Black-chinned there and finished the year off by banding a young male Ruby-throated at Ann Camp's home, the sixth bird that has been banded in her yard. It's always good to see Ann and enjoy all the birds that come to visit her yard and feeders.

I had gotten word that during the Christmas Bird Count a hummingbird was spotted at Annaliese Whipple's home in Killlearn. She had not called me yet since it was not going to the feeders, preferring the flowers in her yard. I stopped by on January 2nd to see if it might possible be her Buff-bellied back for its 3rd winter, but instead it was a female Rufous. On the 7th I went back to Bob Gorman's house and caught two second year male birds, a Black-chinned and a Ruby-throated. Yet again another bird would not go in the trap so I'll be back later on. On January 11th I was finally able to catch a female Rufous at Charlotte Watkin's house. Charlotte lives just down the street from me and I had made several visits but the bird would have nothing to do with the trap. I figured it was one I had banded there 2 years ago and when I checked the band it was wearing, it was in fact the same bird. Last year it took me about the same number of visits to catch her. I'm already looking forward to matching wits with her again next year. On the 12th I went by Amy Corin's house and banded a female Ruby-throated but could not catch a probable female Black-chinned. I'll be back there too.

In Panacea, Steve Parrish had been seeing a hummer at his home, his first winter hummer after trying for several years in Georgia, and now Florida. I went down early in the morning and banded a young male Ruby-throated. Hopefully this will be the first of many birds he gets at his home. Later that day I went back to see Jody and Claudia since they were seeing more new birds. They felt one of the new birds might be a Calliope since it appeared to be smaller than the others in the yard. Turns out they were correct as the first bird I caught was a second year male Calliope.



I Hope it stays around long enough to fill out his spectacular gorget. An adult male Calliope is quite the sight. With the ladies running the traps, I banded a female Ruby-throated and a female Black-chinned. We counted at least 6 birds of 4 species in the yard. With the 6 birds I have banded there this year, they now have had 46 birds banded in their yard and from 6 different species. The first bird that was banded in their yard was a Black-chinned that Bob and Martha Sargent banded long before Fred Bassett or I began banding birds in Tallahassee. We were talking later about how they had been a little reluctant to have their birds banded but now look how it has turned out. They were very gracious to allow visitors to come and see the wonderful birds in their equally wonderful yard.

On January 16th I got an email from Susan Lorch who had two hummers and “one was quite large and very aggressive to all birds; titmice, chickadees and cardinals. I have never seen a bird this mean.” Susan has had hummingbirds in the past and her yard is loaded with flowers and lots of other birds. I was still thinking about what this bird might be as I pulled up and met Susan in her front yard. I took down one feeder and set up my trap on the feeder she said the bird was using most often, and sat down to wait. It didn’t take long before the mean one showed up, took a look at the trap and perched on a nearby vine. A quick look at the bird with my binoculars let me know why the bird was so mean. It was an adult male Buff-bellied, almost twice the size of the other hummers. After a few hesitant circles of the trap it went in and I shut the door behind it. After placing a band on its leg, taking measurements and photos, I put the bird in Susan’s hand for a final photo before it took off. Five minutes later it was back on patrol in the yard letting all the birds know who was in control of this place. Lots of people have come by Susan’s to get a good close-up look at the bird.



Early this week I went to Blountstown where Ray and Elsie Dennis were seeing a little brown bird at their feeders. Eight years before they had hosted a Broad-tailed hummingbird that caused a big stir among birders and they had hundreds of people come and observe the bird. This year’s bird would not go in the trap making me believe it is one of the three that I have banded there the last two years. While we were waiting for the bird to cooperate, Elsie got a call from one of her beauty salon customers who was looking at a hummer on her feeder. I decided to take a break from trying to catch Elsie’s bird and run over to the home of Montez Golden and see if I could catch her bird. That turned out to be a good decision. I got there and it didn’t take long before an adult male Rufous showed up and after a couple of visits went in the trap. After checking to see that the bird was in good shape, I checked to see if it was wearing a band. It turned out it was already banded and the band number was close to the ones that Fred Bassett and I are using. A quick check of our banding records did not find it so I called Fred Bassett to double check with him. We determined it was not one of ours and it appeared to be an older band, still in perfect condition, just a little less shiny than a new one.



I got on my iPhone and connected with the Bird Banding Laboratory and entered the band number, location and other information about the encounter and quickly got the reply that the bird had been banded as hatching year bird, on August 11, 2012 in Whiteburg, GA. This is about 200 miles north of Blountstown and makes the bird almost 4 years old. I knew that Julia Elliott, one of our banders in Georgia, lives in that area so I gave her a call and left a message that I might have one of her birds. She called back in a few minutes and was excited to let me know she HAD banded the bird. August is early for a Rufous, especially a young male, and as usual for that time of year, it did not stay around for long. I think there is a good chance that the bird has been coming to Blountstown the last few years. The host has had wintering birds in the past but did not know about our research project. This bird showed up at her house on October 24, 2015 and has been there ever since.

After all the excitement died down, I caught and banded a second Rufous, a young male. I'll let Mr. Bassett try his luck at Ray and Elsie's later this week as he makes his annual banding trip down through central Florida.

I had another good day yesterday as I went to Glenda Conley's home east of Tallahassee and banded a young male Black-chinned, her first winter hummingbird. From there I went to Thomasville, GA to visit Wylie Watt's great yard. In addition to winter hummingbirds, Wylie has more than a dozen of beautiful Baltimore Orioles.

Last week I had gotten a call from Fred Bassett who was returning from a banding trip in Georgia where he said he ran into an old friend of mine. I asked him who it was and he said L47070. This turns out to be the band number of a female Rufous I banded at Wylie Watt's home on February 10, 2015. Fred caught the bird in Sasser, GA about 75 miles north of Thomasville. I hoping the bird comes back to Wylie's again this February. Without a band, we'd never know.

Back to work at Wylie's I quickly caught and banded two adult female Ruby-throats. I finished the day back in Tallahassee at Marie and Guy Prentice's home in Waverly where I banded a young male Ruby-throated and missed out on a second bird that was in the yard.

You can visit our website for the latest events in our research – <http://www.hummingbirdresearch.net/>

With several frosts the past few weeks many of the flowers are no longer producing as much nectar and the birds should be showing up at feeders more often. Watch your feeders closely, and give me a call if you have a hummingbird show up. It's not too late to get one and no telling, it might already have a band on it.

Can't wait to hear from you,

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