

Greetings,

After getting skunked on my first 7 banding attempts this winter I was beginning to think it would be a very bleak season. Finally I broke the spell when I banded a young male Rufous at Tom and Helen Roth's house off of Lakeshore Drive on December 2nd. I had actually trapped the bird earlier but didn't notice a small gap on the back side of the trap that this smart little bird quickly found. With the hole patched, this time he didn't escape.

After not hearing from John Armstrong last year, where we have banded 47 birds of 5 different species in the past, he let me know that he was hearing a Ruby-throated in his yard. I went over the next day and banded an adult male Ruby-throated at his home in Indianhead Acres.

Three days later I got a message from one of our banders in Georgia that there was a potential Broad-billed hummingbird in Eastman, GA. She was not able to take time off during the Christmas season and asked me if I could go up there. It didn't take long to say yes and as soon as the rain storms passed through the area I was on my way. The hosts, Donny, Cindy and Chris Screws were very accommodating and had invited all birders to come and see this rare visitor to the southeast. They even left a cooler with drinks and snacks for visitors. I got there at 8:15 and saw the bird sitting on one of his two front porch feeders. It took off when it saw me and I quickly set up my trap on one feeder and took down the other one. In about 15 minutes it came back and couldn't figure out where his feeder went. After a couple of more visits it came to the feeder in my trap, circled once and went right in. It was indeed an adult male Broad-billed hummingbird. I quickly banded, measured and photographed the bird then released it back in the yard. It flew up into the tree beside me and began preening. By the time I had put away my banding gear, the bird was back at the feeder. It has remained at its winter home and been seen, photographed and videoed by many birders. For many this is a life bird and only the 3rd or 4th time it has been seen in Georgia. If you Google "Broad billed Eastman" you can find videos and photos of this great looking bird.



On December 9th I had several places where they were seeing hummingbirds. At Bob Gorman's home out of Buck Lake Road, I caught a young male Ruby-throated while I was waiting for a Buff-bellied to go in my trap. Since it was timid about going to the feeder in my trap, I set up a second trap where the bird had found a feeder that had been taken down and placed on the ground. After I set up the second trap the bird quickly found it and went right in. Eight years ago, before I had my banding permit, Bob had a Buff-bellied in his yard. Scott Weidensaul, outstanding nature writer

and part of our banding crew, was in town to give a talk to Audubon and since he had never had a chance to hold a Buff-bellied, Fred Bassett had agreed to let Scott band this bird. When Scott checked the bird's leg for a band, he found that it had already been banded. It turned out it was banded by Fred Bassett a month earlier in Fairhope, AL, about 225 miles west of here. Fred was happy to see the bird again but sad that Scott didn't finally get a chance to band a Buff-bellied. That sadness didn't last long, however, as we soon got a call about another Buff-bellied hummingbird bird in a different part of town. I trapped the bird for Scott and this time it was not banded so he got to add Buff-bellied to his list of hummingbird species he had banded.



From there I went to Rosalie Flummer's home near Myers Park. She met me but said she had not seen the bird yet but hadn't been able to watch too closely. Her young daughter Zuri was there and eagerly showed me how she was going to hold the bird after I had banded it. Her mom had been showing her how she was supposed to hold her hands for the last few days. I felt sorry that it didn't look very promising for me to catch the bird. I set up the trap and in about 15 minutes the bird showed up and flew right into the trap. I took the trap down and gently caught the small hummingbird and placed it in a mesh bag until I could get my banding gear set up. As I pulled the bird from the bag, it seemed to be smaller than most hummingbirds and about half the size of the Buff-bellied I had just banded. A quick measurement of the tail and look at its gorget feathers told me that this was in fact the smallest bird in North America, a hatching year male Calliope! After taking my measurements and recording the data, I took a few photos for documentation. Now it was time to see if Zuri remembered what mom had told her. What do you think? Very proud of this pair.



Well, it is still slow but with 6 birds of 5 different species it is hard to complain. As the weather continues to cool there should be more and more birds coming to feeders. Keep at one feeder out and watch it at first light for the best chance to see if you have a winter visitor. Give me a call or email me and we can set up a time for me to come identify and band your bird. No telling where it may show up next. If you had a winter bird last year, there is about a one in five chance it will return so keep a close watch on your feeders. We are making new discoveries each year, none of which would be possible without your willingness to share "your" birds with us.

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

Hope to hear from you soon,

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