

Greetings,

It has been a while since my last update and things really picked up after the New Year. I was out of town for a couple of weeks and we had our only really cold weather of the season and I was swamped with more than 20 reports of new birds that were brought to the feeders in search of sugar water to give them energy and help them make it through the cold nights. A lot of birds didn't stay around or were infrequent visitors as the temperature quickly rebounded. With the cold weather and storms that came through, a lot of flowers were knocked back and as a result lots of honey bees found the hummingbird feeders. Bee guards helped some but often there were too many bees for the birds to be able to get to the feeders. One solution to keep the bees from dominating the feeders is to give them a source of stronger sugar water. They will go to the strongest source so if you mix up some 1:1 ratio sugar water and place it in a flat plate near your feeder and put a small washcloth in it to give them a place to land, hopefully they will find it and leave your feeders to the hummingbirds.

Before Christmas I stopped by Marie Prentice's house where she had a hummer that would not go in my trap. After an hour I gave up but left a "trainer trap", simply a rectangular piece of ½" hardware cloth, on the feeder. After trying a couple of other places with no luck I went back and was able to catch a young female Ruby-throated that quickly went in my trap. These trainers have really helped get the birds used to having something around the feeder and they are much easier to catch. Two days later I went out to Killlearn Lakes and caught an adult female Rufous at Don and Linda Gerteisen's home, their first bird after a 6 year wait.

After returning from a week in Colorado, I stopped by the home of Jodie Elliott and Claudia Mason where they were hosting 3 more wintering hummers. What a great yard they have and the birds were cooperative for a change. First I caught a second year male Black-chinned, which brought this season's number of species banded to six, a pretty good season. Next up was a second year male Ruby-throated followed by an adult female Ruby-throated. While there I got a phone call from Charlotte Cooksey, a new host who was seeing two hummingbirds at her feeders. I packed up and headed to her home and once there quickly caught two more birds. The first was another second year male Black-chinned and the second an adult female Ruby-throated.

There were a lot of birds around after the cold but I had to go to West Virginia to attend a funeral and was gone for another week. When I got back I stopped by Amy Corin's house and caught a female Black-chinned, probably the one I could not catch last year. Amy showed up just and I was bringing the bird to my truck to band so she got to release the bird after I was finished. I reset my trap out front and before long caught another hummer, this time a second year female Ruby-throated. The next day I went to Yvonne Zola's home in Indianhead Acres, one of the best areas for winter hummingbirds. There I caught two birds in her back yard, a second year male Rufous and an adult female Ruby-throated. There are three homes within a couple of blocks that have birds and I bet they are sharing birds.

On January 15th I went back to Jody and Claudia's and caught two more young male Rufous, they were like twins and when I caught the first one, the second one buzzed the one in the trap. It didn't take too long to catch him after that. On January 17th I went to another new home, where Lois Engels, a friend of Wendy Johnston was seeing a bird. Wendy led me to her house at first light and the bird came up and went right in the trap. It was an adult female Rufous that was very cooperative and everybody got to feel its heartbeat and hold it in their hand.

The next morning I headed up to Havana to two homes that were seeing hummers. The first was Nancy Brown who hosted a Ruby-throated last year. This year I caught a second year male Rufous. From there I went to Wendy Adams where I had banded a Rufous four years ago and this year I caught an adult female Ruby-throated. It was nice to show the bird to Wendy's yard man and ever better when I let the bird sit in his hand for a while before it flew up into a nearby tree to readjust her feathers.

Back at my house I had been seeing a young male Rufous for the last few days and had placed the feeder in a “trainer” trap to get it used to something different around the feeder. The bird had been very regular, about every 20 minutes and once I set up my trap it came up and quickly figured out where the door was. It was nice to have a Rufous at my house again. It is still here, slowly getting more adult gorget feathers and getting closer to time to head to the breeding grounds in the far west.

On January 23rd I went to Jane Jordan’s home in Foxcroft where workers were constructing a deck. She was worried all the commotion might keep the bird away but they were taking a break to get supplies so I set up in the back yard. With my trap table fully extended, the feeder was about 4 feet below where it normally hung. I found a large bucket and placed it on the table and the trap on top of that. It was still a little below where it had been but the bird showed up and didn’t seem bothered by the new location one bit and went in my trap. Jane’s bird was an adult female Rufous and she got to hold it in her hand before it flew off. Since I was out that way I called Bill Preston and headed to his house to see if I could catch his winter visitor. He left work and met me there as I was getting ready to band his adult female Rufous. It had been 4 years since I banded a male Ruby-throated at his house.

On January 27th I went back to Glenda Simmons’s house where she had been waiting 8 years for another winter hummingbird and I had already been skunked earlier in the season. I had left a trainer trap there and Glenda had been recording the bird’s visits on a game camera by the feeder. This time the bird, an adult female Ruby-throated, showed up and flew right into the trap. It was back at the feeder in minutes after I left her home. I had been emailing Leslie Robinson who had been given a hummingbird feeder and suddenly had a bird coming to her feeder. I headed out to her home in Golden Eagle and set up my trap off the corner of her screened patio and sat down to wait to see what bird she had been seeing. We sat and talked, and waited and waited but no bird. She tried going inside, that didn’t work. Took the dogs for a walk, still no luck. She tried everything that she could think of to get the bird to at least show up but after two hours I finally gave up. I packed up but left a trainer trap on the feeder in case the bird decided to show up. Two minutes after I left my phone rang and it was an excited Leslie saying her bird had come back and was at her feeder. I told her to shoo it from the feeder and I would turn around and try again. I got there and the bird was trying to get to the feeder as I was setting up my trap. I think this bird had just shown up and was not the same bird she had sent me a photo of earlier. It looked really small and turned out to be an adult female Calliope, the second Calliope in Tallahassee this season.

I went to Helen King’s house on January 30 and banded a second year male Rufous. Helen was at work but Chris was there to watch me catch and band the bird. On February 17th, I caught Helen’s bird at Pam Flynn’s house that is a mile away by car but only a couple of streets as the hummingbird flies. Both are seeing the bird so it goes to show that they have a wide range of feeders that they keep track of. The bird has made good progress in developing his adult gorget feathers and you can see the difference in the 2 ½ weeks between captures. Left is 1/30/17, right is 2/17/17.



I stopped by Rosanne Gervasi's house next and caught a second year male Ruby-throated. Rosanne has lots of birds at her home and I had to wait for a Yellow-rumped warbler to finish taking a drink in my trap before the hummingbird would go in. The next day I went back to Rosalie Flummer's home where I had already banded a young male Calliope and she now had 3 hummingbirds in her yard. It took a while but I banded an adult female Rufous and saw another bird briefly but it would have no part of the trap. The Calliope is still there in her yard and getting more and more adult like. Hope he stays until he completes his gorget, it will be spectacular.

I made my third trip to Laninda Sande's home near Havana and this time her birds cooperated. I caught and banded an adult female Ruby-throated and a second year male Ruby-throated. While I was banding the second bird, the first one went back in my trap and her husband Don, who was watching the trap caught it. Before I left both birds had gone back into the trap to feed. On February 7, I made another third trip, this time to Ezzie Goldman's home on Mitchell Avenue and banded a second year male Black-chinned. She is having trouble with so many bees at her feeders that the hummers and orioles are having a hard time getting a chance to feed. The cold weather knocked down the flowers and the bees have quickly found a ready and easy replacement at the hummingbird feeders. There is not too much that can be done to reduce the number of bees, some bee guards work but most of the time there is enough spilled nectar on the guards that the bees can feed right from them. You don't want to hurt the bees since they are struggling already, but sometimes providing a source of extra strong sugar water will keep them away from the feeders. Mix up some that is 1:1 and place it in a plate near the feeder with a washcloth in it, to give the bees a place to land and feed. Sometimes this works and is worth a try if you have a lot of bees.

I banded my last bird at Emily Jennings home on Raa Avenue, where her birds have been giving me fits the last three years, usually a male Black-chinned. This time I banded a second year male Ruby-throated and was very happy to have finally shown it who was the boss. That was until Emily called me and said she had two birds and I only caught one. I guess I need to re-pack and head back over and take my punishment, again.

I have only had one return bird this year, a female Rufous back for her third winter at Susan Lorch's home near Myers Park. As I was taking photos of the bird, her neighbor Nico Wienders drove by to take a look. He asked if it would be ok for him to go get his girlfriend so she could see the bird. It was just around the corner and they were back just as I was finishing up with the bird. She got to hold the bird as it sat in her hand a long time then was gone in a flash when she realized she was free.

I know that there are several places where I've not been able to get to or couldn't catch your bird. It's been hectic this winter since I was out of town after our only cold weather spell and lots of birds showed up. Please email or call me if you are still seeing a bird and I will try and get to you. Hard to believe it will be 84 in a couple of days,

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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