

Fellow Hummer Lovers

December 31, 2017

Last winter was slow for hummers, but this winter has made it look good. The warm weather has made hummers hard to catch, but I hope the coming cold weather will be my turn to catch up. I'll head for the coast Wednesday, so please let me know if you get a hummer at your feeder.

Numbers are down, but I've caught some good birds. October 10 in Pensacola, I caught Kay Keigley's beautiful male Buff-bellied back for the third winter. I suffered from hummer withdrawal for more than a month before I banded a Ruby-throated November 27 for Charmaine and Tony Peterman south of Magnolia Springs. That day I also found out Robert Goss near Huntsville got pictures confirming his Rufous is back for the second winter.

December 5 I went to Gallion to band a Ruby-throated for Don and Judy Self. Their bird stuck around until the snow storm and then headed for the beach. Early the next morning on the Alabama River south of Millbrook, I banded a Black-chinned for Leslie Bingham. That bird has been nice enough to stay to be counted on the Montgomery Christmas Bird Count. I went to Dothan December 9 where I caught Leonard Gilley's third year return Rufous and banded a Black-chinned for Tallulah and David Snell.

My best day so far this winter was December 11 when I started in Foley banding a Black-chinned for Eva Barnett. Charmaine and Tony Peterman south of Magnolia Springs also had a Black-chinned. Across the bay in Mobile, I banded two Ruby-throated hummers for Velma Britain. Also in Mobile, I banded a Ruby-throated for Ron Rowell and then was surprised to catch an adult female Broad-tailed at the same home. That was Alabama's twelfth Broad-tailed, and Ron has enjoyed hosting lots of people who have come to see the bird.

December 12, I started in Enterprise where I caught Don Lassiter's female Rufous back for the third winter. In Dothan, I banded a Ruby-throated for Dennis Campbell. Near Hartford, I finally banded my first Rufous of the winter at Dick Mowbray's home. The next day I got my second Rufous at Bill Summerour's home in Silverhill. Bill had a yard full of hummers, but too many beautiful flowers for them to need feeders. That will change this week.

Early on December 27, I banded my second Buff-bellied of the winter for Jan Lloyd in Pensacola. I spent most of the day watching hummers ignoring feeders while feeding at flowers, before I finally banded a Black-chinned for Charmaine and Tony Peterman. Yesterday I went to Dothan to band a Rufous for Dell and David Oltmans and then to Santa Rosa Beach to band a Ruby-throated for Burke Baker.

Life is going to get harder for hummers with the approaching freezing weather. If you have a hummer, it is important it has access to a liquid feeder. Feeders will start to freeze at about 27 degrees and will freeze solid at about 20 degrees. The easiest thing to do is to have at least two feeders and switch them when one freezes. Don't fill your feeders to keep them from breaking as the liquid expands when freezing.

Happy New Year and keep warm this week,

Fred B