

Greetings,

Hummer Update 2 December 30, 2017

So far, the number of birds banded this winter is running well behind previous years but there has been a recent uptick with the arrival of some colder weather. Hopefully, the cold start to January will be much better than December was. While low in numbers it has been an interesting season. I have only banded 6 birds so far but that includes 5 different species. In addition, while I only had 1 return bird last year, I have already had 5 this year. Nearly every home where I have caught a bird has had another bird in the yard that would not come to the feeder. I think that is the result of more nearby feeders and a mild winter that has kept the flowers blooming longer.

On November 27th I went to Bill Preston's home on Carr Lane and caught a female Rufous that was back for her second winter with him after I had banded her on January 23, 2017. The next day I caught a female Black-chinned at Jody Elliott and Claudia Mason's home that had eluded me last year. She was one of three birds I banded there on January 14, 2016.

I went to Susan and Clayt Thompson's new home off Lake Shore Drive where I caught and banded a hatching year male Black-chinned. They had moved across the street from their previous home and now are on a pond with a great view of the birds. While waiting for a second bird to make an appearance we were treated to a wonderful flyover by a flock of about 100 white pelicans. Its always nice to watch these flocks as they gather in the winter time. The next day I went out to Bob Gorman's house off Buck Lake Road and caught one of his two birds. This one was a hatching year male Calliope that was sporting a single magenta gorget feather. It will be fun watching him develop the full gorget that Calliope's are noted for.

The next day I made my second trip to Judy Neel's home in Huntington Woods and banded an adult male Ruby-throated. This was an interesting bird since it had both adult and juvenile characteristics. It goes to show that not all birds follow the rules, but that is good since otherwise we would be waiting for March to get here so we could see hummers again. The next day I went to Tom and Helen Roth's home where I banded a young male Ruby-throated. There had seen a female Ruby-throated as well but it did not visit while I was there.

Things got real interesting on December 15th when Fred Bassett received photos of a male Broad-billed hummingbird that was visiting a feeder near Lake Jackson. After a few telephone calls I arranged to come to Rachel Flemming's home and see if I could catch the bird to positively identify it. It was several days before we could get our schedules together and I hoped the bird would stay around. The morning I got there the bird showed up several times but would not go into the trap. After two hours I gave up for the day and said I'd come back at first light the next morning to see if I had any better luck. I got there at 7:00am to set up my trap in the dark and immediately heard the bird buzzing behind me. I backed away from the trap that I could barely see in the dark and about two minutes later I heard the bird buzzing behind me, so close that I could feel the wind from its wings blowing my hair. The next thing I knew the bird came up and pecked my head before taking off. That was a first for me, I guess it didn't appreciate me being in his yard. Twenty minutes later the bird came back and went into the trap. It was indeed an adult male Broad-billed hummingbird, only the 8th one ever seen in the state of Florida. This is a species that is usually only seen in the very southwest portion of the United States, so it is a long way from home.

The hosts very graciously allowed birders to come and see this very rare bird and it has put on a good show for those that came to see it. Rachel took some video of the bird and here is a link to watch it: <https://vimeo.com/248536684> The bird shows up in the video at :04, 1:19 and 1:32. It is a much larger bird than a Ruby-throated and you can see that it flies differently as a result.



The next day I went back to Jody and Claudia's and recaptured a male Black-chinned that was one I banded there on January 4, 2017. The day after Christmas I went back again and caught a male Rufous that was one of two that I banded there on January 15, 2017. There is still another bird in the yard that won't cooperate. I will be back for it later on.

There are several more reports of birds that have recently shown up so keep your feeders clean and filled with fresh sugar water and watch for them. The next two weeks are usually the busiest weeks of the season so let me know if you have a bird and we'll make arrangements to come and band it. Remember, you don't have to identify the bird, if you have a hummer this time of the year we want to include it in our research project. We are coming close to the twenty-year mark for our project and hope to publish our results as a follow-up on our earlier 10-year paper.

I will be speaking at Native Nurseries on January 20th at 10:00 if you are interested or have a friend that would like to learn more about hummingbirds, especially those that spend the winter here in the southeast.

Fred Dietrich

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