

January 11, 2019

Greetings,

Still waiting for a hard freeze to bring our winter hummers to the feeders. I've spent many hours watching my trap while hummers either ignore it or refuse to enter it and head to the flowers instead. We have had a few cold days and that has helped get some of the many birds in the area to use the feeders. I still have about 20 homes that have seen winter hummers, but they are too inconsistent to try and catch. If you are one of those people, please let me know if the bird is still around and I'll come by and check it out. They are often coming more often than you think so keep me updated.

Last year I had a great day in Valdosta when I banded three western birds, a Broad-billed, a Buff-bellied and a Rufous. At the end of November, I got word that the Buff-bellied has returned to the same house it has been for the last 5 years. It took me two years of trying to catch and band the bird and although I can not confirm 100% that this is the same bird, it is at the same two houses, a block apart, where it frequented I previous years, and it does have a band on its right leg, the same one I use when banding. Here is a great photo taken in Linda Most's yard by Marvin Smith of the Buff-bellied, truly a beautiful bird and he looks perfect despite all his travels.



On December 10th in Tallahassee's Killearn Estates I went to the home of Jody Elliott and Claudia Mason and banded two young male Ruby-throats, bird number 54 and 55 that have been banded there. I came back on December 21st and banded a beautiful male Rufous and recaptured a female Black-chinned that I had banded there on January 14, 2016. The Black-chinned is the same bird that I could not catch the following winter but did in November 2017. I also caught her in March 2018 about 6 miles south near Myers Park. Its always amazes me when such strange things occur that we would have no idea about if we didn't band them.

The next day, December 11th, I went to Gail Palo's house and very quickly caught and banded two young male Ruby-throats, her first birds that I have banded there since 2012. Quite a run of young male Ruby-throats this winter. On December 15th I made a second trip to Bob Mckee's house and was able to catch a female Rufous that I had banded there last winter. Its always a treat to have one of your birds return safe and sound after a long migration to and from its breeding grounds. This bird could have gone as far as Alaska to breed and was able to find its way back to its same wintering grounds.

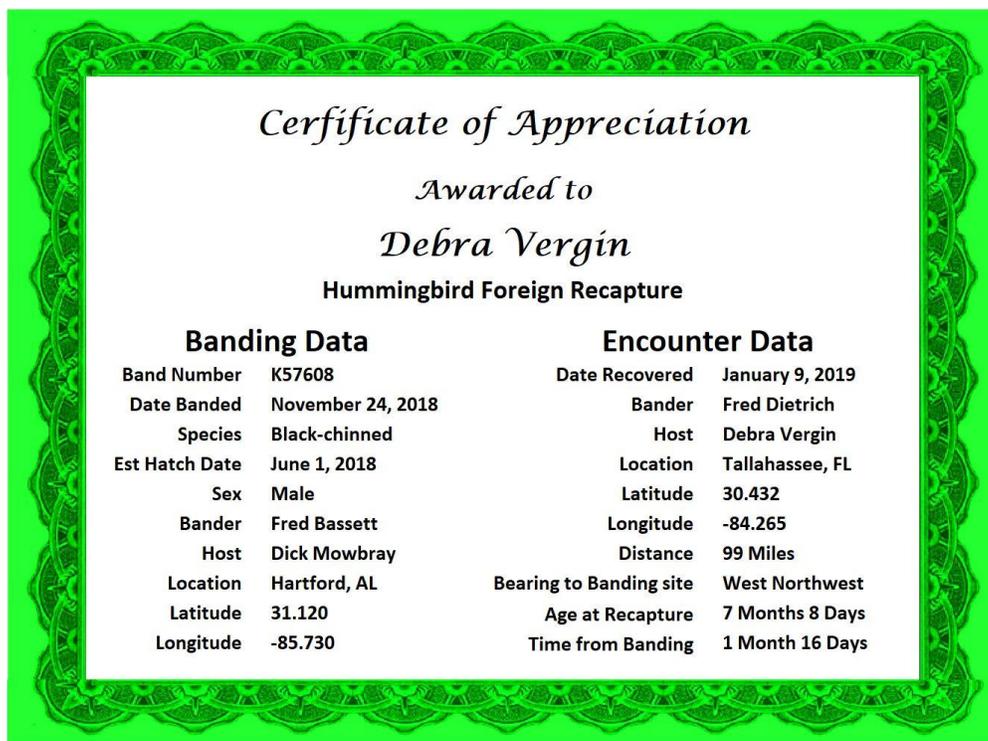
After a long break with rain, grand kids and a week in Colorado, I got back to banding and went to Wendy Adams' home near Havana and banded a young male Ruby-throated. I then went to Havana and banded an adult Female Black-chinned hummingbird at the home of Rhonda and Mark McEwen. This was their 7th bird banded there going back to 2008 and their third species after having Ruby-throated and Rufous. I came back to Tallahassee and went to Fran Rutkovsky's home where I caught yet another young male Ruby-throated. This was the 30th bird that has been banded in her yard including one morning in January 2003 when 6 birds were banded. Among those banded was Tallahassee's first Calliope. In all, Fran has had 5 different species of hummingbirds banded in her yard; Ruby-throated, Black-chinned, Rufous, Calliope and Allen's.

On January 9th I went to Debra and Wayne Vergin's home near Myers Park where she had been seeing several hummingbirds this winter. Debra had found out about wintering hummingbirds last year on Audubon's Wildlife Friendly Yard Tour and had at least 5 hummers that spent the winter with her. If you haven't attended this tour you should plan to attend, it is well worth it and many of the yards have winter hummers which is no surprise. This year I banded still another young male Ruby-throated. I then trapped an adult male Ruby-throated and found it was wearing a band. It was a bird that I banded there last winter, as a second-year male that had a significant injury to its bill, likely from a run-in with a window screen. We evaluate each bird as soon as we capture it to make sure is in good health, and if not, we release the bird without banding it. Below is its bill last year, which I treated with Preparation-H, and how it looks this year. The injury has healed perfectly, and the bird is fine. The gorget looks dark due to the angle of the light hitting it, it is red at a different angle.



Its always nice to know that an animal you have treated has been able to recover and is back to normal.

Since she had been seeing at least three birds in her yard I waited a while and caught a bird that was not a Ruby-throated. This bird was a young bird, much less vibrant than a Ruby-throated and it too was wearing a band but this time not one from the series of bands that I am using. I checked my file of winter birds that we have banded in the southeast and there were some bands close to this one but not the same letter and number. I knew it had been banded this year since it was a young bird and likely was not in the Bird Banding Laboratory's (BBL) data base yet. I gave Fred Bassett a quick call to see if anyone in our organization was using this series. He said it looked familiar and checked his banding sheets. Sure, enough it was one of his bands and turned out to have been banded on November 24, 2018 in Hartman, AL, 99 miles west northwest of Tallahassee. Not a long distant migrant from where it was banded but a long way from its normal wintering grounds. One more interesting bit of information to store and maybe one day it will help us understand more about these tiny birds. This is referred to as a foreign recapture since it was far from its banding site. I prepare a certificate with the information about the banding and recapture site for each host and we report all recaptures to the BBL.



I finished the day by going to Susan Lorch's house nearby where all of her flower are blooming way out of season, likely due to the effects of hurricane Michael. I was able to band an adult female Ruby-throated to close out a most interesting day.

Please keep a feeder up all winter and don't give up hope because most western hummers don't begin to show up until mid-November. We band 50% of our winter birds after December so you still have a chance over the next 2 months and many of the birds are going to flowers for nectar and bugs rather than using feeders. Keep your feeders out and clean and let me know if you have a bird and I'll make arrangements to come identify and band your bird.

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