

Greetings,

Well, this has been a very different year with a slow start, a big pause and then a rush of birds. Hopefully the forecast cold weather will get more birds to the feeders. I have reports from quite a few people that have seen hummingbirds in their yards, but they prefer all the flowers and bugs rather than the feeders.

I did not band a bird until mid-November when I banded 10 birds, highlighted by a visit to Bill and Pat Libby's home near Carrabelle. My first bird was a female Ruby-throated on November 17<sup>th</sup> at Jody Elliott and Claudia Mason's home in Killbuck. This was bird number 57 for them, such a great yard. On the 20<sup>th</sup> I went to Harry Hooper's new yard out east of town where he and Lynn Reynolds were in the process of making it wildlife friendly. They had seen a hummingbird in their yard and were hoping that it was a black-chinned to add to their yard bird list in addition to the Ruby-throats they had during the summer. I set up my trap and waited and waited and waited (as has become too common lately). Finally, after an hour and a half their bird showed up and went in my trap. As I went to the trap, I saw that it wasn't a Black-chinned as they had hoped. I told them I was sorry, but it wasn't the hoped-for bird, but I said it also wasn't a Ruby-throated. It took a second, but they said, "what is it?" It turned out to be a young male Calliope. Such a tiny bird.



Next, I went to Tom and Helen Roth's home off Lakeshore Drive and banded a young male Black-chinned hummingbird. That weekend we travelled to Pensacola to watch Florida High play in the state football playoffs where they won an exciting game on their way to the state championship game. I stopped at our long-time supporters Bill and Pat Libby's home where they had seen a couple of hummingbirds. I set up my trap about 10 feet away from their round patio table and quickly caught a hummingbird and then a second soon afterward. As a third bird circled my trap, I had to get to work banding. I gave my wife Pat the fishing reel and she kept catching birds. It didn't take long and we had caught five hummers. They were all females, two Rufous, two Ruby-throats and a Black-chinned. That brought the number of species banded this year up to four.

I kept following Highway 98 toward Panacea there Bruce Bodjack and his wife were seeing a Buff-bellied hummingbird at their feeders. I pulled up and saw the bird flitting around near the feeder. I quickly set up the trap and backed about 5 feet away and the bird flew in the trap. It was a beautiful adult male Buff-bellied hummingbird. That made it 9 birds and species number five now.



On the 25<sup>th</sup> of November I went to Altha where Burke Baker was seeing a couple of birds at his home on the Chipola river. No more quick results this time as we waited well over an hour before a male Ruby-throated came up and went into the trap. After I banded the bird, I took it to the feeder where it readily fed until I had to let him fly off. Didn't see any other birds there.

Back in Tallahassee I went to John and Peggy Armstrong's home in Indianhead Acres where they have had 48 birds banded over the years. This time I banded a female Ruby-throated and then we were treated to a return male Ruby-throated that I had banded at their home three years earlier, in 2016 as an adult, making him at least 4 ½ years old.

It was a long break as I came down with the flu and a long spell of warm weather that kept me from catching any birds. On December 30<sup>th</sup> I banded a young female Ruby-throated at Fran and Paul Rutkovsky's yard. Over the years this has been one of our favorite yards and this was the 32<sup>nd</sup> one banded there. A mile away I returned to the Roth's house and banded another young male Black-chinned. I ended the year by banding a female Ruby-throated at Sharon and Joe Agosta's home east of Tallahassee and then at their good friend Emily Jennings home in town I banded a male Ruby-throated.

I began the new year by banding a young female Ruby-throated at Marie and Guy Prentice's home in Waverly Hills on January 3<sup>rd</sup>. The next day I went out to the Agosta's neighbor George Lunsford's house and banded a young female Rufous. On the 6<sup>th</sup> I was back at Jody and Claudia's house where I put Claudia to work catching birds while I banded four hummingbirds upping their yard total to 61 of 6 different species. They had a young male and three adult female Ruby-throats this time. I went from there and caught a female Black-chinned at the home of Barbara and John Andras. Three days later I returned there and banded a female Ruby-throated.

Back to Indianhead Acres on January 6<sup>th</sup> I made a visit to Linda Meadow's home where I had not been able to catch her hummingbird three weeks earlier and after a long wait, I banded two Ruby-throats, an adult female and a young male. I saw on Facebook that Janice Mazza had posted a photo of a hummingbird on her feeder so I asked her if she would like for me to identify and band her bird. Janice used to teach with my wife Pat at Kate Sullivan Elementary, so it was good to see her again. It took some time and a couple of visits, but I finally caught and banded a female Ruby-throated. She is seeing a second bird, so I'll be back for it later. After that I was back to Jody and Claudia's where I banded a young male Black-chinned and a female Ruby-throated. Now they are up to 63 birds and still have a couple more that are around there.

On January 8<sup>th</sup> I went back to Fran Rutkovsky's home I caught the female Ruby-throated I had banded earlier and noticed that it still had some of the pink mark I had put on its head to identify that it had already been banded. Shortly afterward I caught and banded a second female Ruby-throated. As I looked at it I noticed there was a little bit of pink on the tip of its bill. Obviously, she did not like having to share Fran's yard and had hit the other bird on the head the day I banded it and gotten some of the pink on her bill. I have seen this before where a Rufous pecked at a newly banded Ruby-throated. Later that day we caught the same Ruby-throated at a home a mile away. They are very territorial birds as you see during the summer "wars" as they defend feeders during migration.

On January 13 I banded a really neat bird at the home of Peg and Gary Griffin in mid-town. It was sharing the yard with a Ruby-throated but was feeding on flowers more often than their feeder. It took a while but the Ruby-throated came to the feeder in my trap and I caught him. Immediately, the second bird came up to the trap and for several minutes it desperately tried to get to the other bird and chase it away. It was so determined to get to the other bird that I was tempted to open the door and see if it would go in. My better sense told me that I most likely would lose both birds if I tried that. I took the Ruby-throated out of the trap and placed it in a mesh bag and reopened the trap. I waited a short time to see if the second bird would come to the feeder in the trap and soon enough it returned, figured out how to get in and I closed the door behind it. As I was removing the bird from the trap I sensed that there was something slightly different about it. On closer examination I noticed that the bird had no tail feathers, only the over and under tail coverts. It also seemed to be a slightly smaller bird.

I banded the Ruby-throated and released it so I could get back to the mystery bird. My feeling was that it was not the more common Rufous but could be an Allen's hummingbird. Unfortunately, the best way to differentiate between the two is by looking at the tail feathers. Since those were missing, I needed to look at other parts of the bird. This bird had an all green back, shorter wings and culmen, all features of an Allen's.

One of our banders in West Texas has developed a Size Indicator table that combines the Wing, Culmen and Tail measurements to produce minimum, maximum and average values by Species, Age and Sex. Lacking a tail measurement, I used the average length for a young male Allen's and the result was a perfect match for Allen's. Thanks to cell phones, I called fellow bander Fred Bassett in Montgomery and we discussed the bird and the measurements along with the photos I had taken. Everything pointed to Allen's and we agreed that this was indeed a young male Allen's, the 14<sup>th</sup> banded in Florida. Great bird Peg and Gary!



Let me know if this cold weather brings your birds to the feeders. Hope to see you soon.

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