

Greetings,

It has been a while since my last update, and I have not been able to get to all the places that have reported hummers to me. If I did not get to you, and you are still seeing your bird, let me know and I will try and get to you in the next week or so. Many birds have already departed for their breeding grounds and we should be seeing the first northbound Ruby-throats as they pass through our area. The first ones will be bright shiny males in their brand new adult plumage.

We are only studying those hummingbirds that winter in the southeast, so we only band Ruby-throats between November 15th and March 1st. If you have a Ruby-throated that has been around for a while, let me know and I will try and get to you before it leaves.

On December 30th I banded 4 young male Rufous at different homes near Myers Park. The first was at Gail Palo's home then a couple of blocks away at Debra Vergin's home and finally at Susan Lorch's home.

On New Year's Eve I started at Emily Jennings's home on Raa Avenue and finally caught an adult male Ruby-throated that I could not catch earlier. It turned out to be a bird I had banded there exactly one year earlier and now was back to spend the winter with her (and torment me) again. From there I went to Walt Land's home east of town and caught two birds. The first was a male Rufous that I banded there in February 2020 and the second bird was a female Ruby-throated that I quickly fitted with a band.

On January 4th I went to Danielle Stanek's home in Arbor Hill where I banded a second year male Black-chinned but could not catch a second bird that was in her yard. I went up to Havana on January 8th for a second try at Rhonda McEwen's house and I caught a female Black-chinned I had banded there on the same date two years earlier. I also caught and banded a young male Rufous there. Several times I have brought my 4-year-old granddaughter River with me and she gets to play with their dogs and eat satsumas from the tree while I am waiting for Rhonda's hummingbirds to show up.

We took our new camper up to Brunswick, GA for a few days to visit Jekyll and St Simon's Island. I had been corresponding with Yve Morrell on Facebook who was seeing a hummingbird in her yard. As I set up my trap, a hummingbird was flitting around in the bushes waiting for me to let her get to her feeder. As has been too common this year the bird would not go in the trap and finally moved on. I waited for quite a while and finally a male Ruby-throated showed up and went in the trap. This was not the same bird that was there at first, so I decided to come back earlier the next morning and try my luck again. I quickly caught a young female Ruby-throated and let Yve watch the trap while I banded the bird. By the time I finished banding the bird Yve had caught a Ruby-throated, another female.

Back in Tallahassee I went to see Guillermo Wibmer who had called me about a hummer that was coming to his feeder. I saw the bird come to the feeder as I was getting my trap ready, unfortunately it never returned during an hour long wait. His house was within sight of Mary Geringer's home near Lakeshore Drive where I was unsuccessful earlier this year. I called and set up over there. After a long wait I finally caught her bird. It was not the Ruby-throated I had seen next door; it was a female Rufous.

I went back to Danielle Stanek's home to see if I could catch the other hummer I had seen there before. It was not too long before the bird showed up and went into the trap – a female Black-chinned. After that it was off to another place where I had been unable to catch a bird. Again, it took an hour before the bird showed up, but instead of going in my trap, it went to a decorative feeder that I had left up because I thought it was

empty. It turned out not to be empty, so I took it down to eliminate that option. The host, Susanne Hunt, had to run out on an errand and two minutes after she left, the bird, an adult female Rufous, showed up and went in the trap. It had been 13 years since she had a bird banded there and this was her first Rufous. I hope I do not have to wait that long for the next one.

Anna Vickery, out on Lake Talquin, said her mother Elizabeth Cullen, told her to call me to come and band her hummingbird. Several years earlier I had banded a bird at her mother's home and now it was Anna's turn. This time it did not take long before a bird showed up and went in the trap. It turned out to be a second year male Rufous that was just starting to get his adult plumage. I banded the bird and went back to the trap and it was not long before another second year male Rufous went in the trap. After I banded it, I told Anna not to be too hard on her mom now that she had TWO winter birds. I got a message from Anna a week or so ago and she was seeing a bird with a rufous back, not the ones with the green backs. I told her that was the same bird, but the adult bird replaces the green back feathers with rufous ones. Adult male Rufous are spectacular birds.

I came back to Tallahassee and went to Linda Massey's home where I had caught a Rufous in November, but she was seeing a different bird now. I ended up banding two more Rufous there, a young male and an adult female. On February 19 I went to Helen Roth's home off Lakeshore Drive and caught a female Rufous and a male Ruby-throated. Back in November I had banded a Ruby-throated and a Rufous there. Tom Roth sent me some photos of another bird at their house and I went back to see if I could catch it. I set my trap up about a foot from where the feeder normally hangs, and the bird came at least 6 times but would not even acknowledge the feeder in the trap. I forgot who was really in charge, so I went back and set the trap exactly where the feeder hangs. This time the bird came 8 times before deciding to go in the trap. It turned out to be a young male Calliope with just a few iridescent gorget feathers starting to pop out. It will be interesting to see if the bird stays around long enough to complete his molt. We don't get to see many adult male Calliopes and they really are a sight to be seen.

I checked all our banding records for Calliopes, and this was the 4th one banded at Helen's home. That is the most in Florida and second only to Jim Dickerson in Lillian, AL where we have banded 8 Calliopes. Interestingly, Fran Rutkovsky, who lives half a mile from Helen has had 3 Calliopes banded at her house. From 2010 to 2014 I caught a female Ruby-throated four times between Fran and Helen's homes.

One year, before I started banding, I had a female Rufous that spent 5 winters with me and I could find her perched in an azalea bush behind "her" feeder 80 percent of the time. That fifth year Fred Bassett tried several times to catch her and verify that it was the same bird, but she always refused to enter the trap. Finally, after several visits to Tallahassee, we caught the bird and determined it was the same bird. On his way out of town, Fred Bassett stopped by Fran's, who lives about 3 miles from me, to see if he could catch a bird she had been seeing at her house. Shortly after he set up his trap at her house, the bird flew up and went right in the trap. The bird was already wearing a band and it turned out to be the bird from my yard. Fred texted me and 20 minutes later she was back in my yard sitting on her perch. Who knew they would have such a wide range in the wintertime?

If you are still seeing a bird at your feeder let me know and we can find a good time to try and catch it before they head back to their breeding grounds. Maybe we can catch one of the birds Fred Bassett banded in central Florida as it moves through here. I hope to see you soon.

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