

HUMMINGBIRD BANDING AT POWDERMILL - 1963

By Robert C. Leberman

(From Research Report No. 11, Powdermill Nature Reserve,
Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania.)

Ruby-Throated Hummingbirds, *Archilochus colubris*, were unaccountably abundant in 1963, particularly during the fall. Of the 360 individuals banded, 310 were netted between August 1 and September 22. Peak numbers moved through the Reserve from mid-August through the first week of September, with 28 netted on September 6 alone. This heavy migration is difficult to explain; perhaps an unusual abundance of attractive wild plants contributed to the phenomenon. That the situation was not confined to the Ligonier Valley was suggested by a letter from Dr. George A. Hall (regional editor for *Audubon Field Notes*) who reported better than usual numbers at several points in West Virginia.

Handling these large numbers of hummingbirds gave us a rare opportunity to obtain a good series of weights and wing measurements for the species. We found that the males both were lighter in weight and had shorter wings than the females, and also that immature males were heavier and had longer wings than adult males; immature and adult females were indistinguishable from each other (Tables I and II).

Table I.

Weights of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds

Class	Number of Individuals	Average Weight of Class	Range of Weights in Class
Males, adult	32	3.1 grams	2.4--3.6 grams
Males, immature	128	3.2	2.4--3.8
Females, adult and immature	146	3.3	2.8--4.5

Table II.

Wing Lengths of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds

Class	Number of Individuals	Average Wing Length of Class	Range of Wing Lengths in Class
Males, adult	48	40.4 mm.	38.0--43.0 mm.
Males, immature	128	42.9	40.5--45.0
Females, adult	59	46.4	45.0--50.0
Females, immature	65	46.8	44.0--49.5

Only one male had a wing measurement of as much as 45 mm. while all females measured 44 mm. (one bird) or more. In the very few instances where the sex of young hummingbirds could not definitely be determined by plumage characteristics alone (immature males usually have flecks of iridescent red in the throat) this gauge was extremely useful. As the season progressed we also found feather wear, in combination with the amount of buff of the sides, could be employed to indicate the age of females. Young birds of the year appeared to have a greater amount of brown edging on the feathers of the head, neck and back than did adults with more worn feather tips.

One female Ruby-throated Hummingbird that had been banded on June 24, 1962, was recaptured in the Headquarters area on July 13, 1963. This seems like a remarkable homing to the same breeding ground for such a diminutive bird which winters in the tropics.

YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD
1st New Jersey Banding

Betty Knorr writes: "This morning I caught and banded a male Yellow-headed Blackbird! I took the bird down to Newark Museum to let Irving Black check it over and then took it to Rutgers."

The bird was a magnificent male in gorgeous plumage. The wing measured 134 mm. and the bird weighed 84.5 grams. Tom Crebbs was reluctant to skull the bird surgically, and actually it would have been completely unnecessary anyway. I suppose in many cases it is necessary to slit the skin to age a rarity but this bird was in such beautiful plumage that nobody even wanted to spit on his lovely head!

The presence of the white wing patch was sufficient to separate the bird from all females and first year males which lack this mark. The plumage alone indicated that the bird was at least a second year bird.

Unless there is an unpublished record, this is the first Yellow-headed Blackbird to be banded in New Jersey.

BANDING RECORDS NEED A HOME

The Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, Pa. has stated that it can no longer provide room for storing the banding papers and records of the late Horace Groskin, former EBBA president. The records are in several large paper cartons.

Anyone interested in these records is urged to get in touch with EBBA member William Pepper, 20 E. Bells Mill Road, Philadelphia 18, Pa.