
News, Notes, Comments

The First Banding of Rufous Hummingbird In New York State

On 3 December 1994, I banded an adult male Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*) at a feeder in Cambridge, Washington County, New York. This bird represents the first banding in New York, and is one of six reports submitted in the past three years to New York State Avian Records Committee (J. Lowe, pers. comm.). It may represent only the second confirmed state report, following an Ulster County bird harbored over the winter of 1993-94 and referred to later herein. The other reports under consideration by NYSARC are one from Ulster County in 1992, the 1993 Ulster County bird referred to above, and the 1993 records from Orange, Bronx, and Queens Counties.

While exact details of its first appearance at Mary Vitello's feeder at 80 W. Main Street are lacking, the bird was present as of October following departure of the more usual Ruby-throated Hummingbirds (*Archilochus colubris*). Through a circuitous informational network, it became known to Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club's Bird Line telephone service and was seen by many observers. Richard Guthrie of HMBC contacted me about capturing the bird to save it from exposure to severe upstate New York winter weather. He had made arrangements for the bird to be harbored over the winter at Saugerties, New York, where the state's first confirmed individual of this species was harbored in a 12 X 15 foot residential sunroom the previous winter by Arnette Heidcamp.

I mist netted this bird at 14:47 on 3 December after nearly two hours of netting effort at this feeder. Unusually mild weather (air temperature in the low-mid-50's F), total overcast, and nearly calm air aided this capture effort.

Plumage characteristics and measurements compared favorably to those in Johnsgard (Johnsgard, P.A. 1983. *The Hummingbirds of North America*. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, D.C.) as follows (Johnsgard's measurements in parentheses):

Wing chord (unflattened and unstopped) 42.5 mm (38-41.5 mm; ave. 40.3)
Exposed culmen 16.6 mm (15-17.5 mm; ave. 16.5)
Fat class (0-3 scale) 3
Weight 4.79 g (2.9-3.9 g; ave. 3.22)
Tip of tail - undertail coverts 7.0 mm
Tip of tail - outer rectrix 8.5 mm

The bird had exceptional fat deposits, and its weight was 48.8% above Johnsgard's average male weight. Plumage characteristics were noted under a heavily overcast sky without the benefit of exposed sun. In this light, ASA 64 film at f-3.5 required a 1/8-second exposure, making close-up photography nearly impossible.

It had a dull, dark-olive pileum, a non-iridescent rufous back, an iridescent orange or orange-red throat that was brown when not iridescent, a clean white bib under the throat, and a darker grayish-rufous abdomen and flank. The vent area was whitish. The outer three primaries were pointed and incurved at the tips. The sound of the bird's flight was not the lower-pitched hum of a Ruby-throat, rather higher pitched and more metallic.

The rectrices were diagramed and were rufous and brown in color. The outer rectrices were slim and pointed, compared to the much wider central pair. The next-to-central pair had the distinct notch to the inner vane, uniquely characteristic of this species. The inner three pairs of rectrices were tipped with dark brown, while the outer edges of the outer two rectrices were dark brown.

Following banding and processing at 15:13, the bird was immediately transported by Rich Guthrie and released in Arnette Heidcamp's sunroom with access to flowering plants, feeders, and a waterfall. According to Arnette Heidcamp, the bird's feeding behavior seemed reserved; and for unknown reasons, did not readily take to using feeders with a balanced-diet, artificial nectar solution. These feeders were refilled and disinfected daily to assure freshly prepared solution. Inquiry to the nectar powder supplier by Arnette Heidcamp indicated

nothing unusual about the freshly ordered lot she used. The solution, which is a standard of some professional institutions, had been successfully used the prior winter.

Six days later, on 9 December, the bird died and was given to Prof. Bill Cook at Columbia-Greene Community College for examination and preparation as a study skin. His observations indicated the following: weight, 3.5 g; no visible fat deposits; extraordinarily full crop (ballooned) of fluid; shrunken breast muscles, protruding sternum; no apparent injury; one-mm diameter testes of an adult male.

While it was not apparent whether this bird may have been diseased, its death in an accommodating captive environment where other hummers have been successfully housed raises another possible hypothesis about its demise, and about certain practices used in late-season feeding of wild hummers in northern climates.

It is possible that given the killing frosts of September-October in upstate New York, the availability of essential protein and nutrients from insect life and natural flowers diminished or totally disappeared, thus putting this bird on a monolithic diet of sucrose. While such a diet could possibly build fat deposits, it was most likely nutrient deficient. It is possible that this bird could not adopt to the dietary change in captivity.

Given this, it seems advisable to alert operators of feeders of late-season hummingbirds of the need to offer nutritionally balanced nectar substitutes after insect and flower dieoff, and to avoid sole use of sucrose solutions. Failing that, it suggests that if lingering hummers on sucrose diets are discovered and are intended for winter harboring, they should be taken into captivity as soon as possible, preferably before the disappearance of natural insects and flowers.

The Rufous that Arnette Heidcamp successfully harbored in winter 1993-94 was being fed a balanced nectar solution while in the wild and was harbored as of early November. In so doing, this bird did not experience a sudden dietary change and was successfully released the following May.

I thank Rich Guthrie for allowing my participation in this attempted rescue; Mary Vitello and others at the scene for assistance with the capture; Arnette Heidcamp for her efforts to harbor this bird; and Rich Guthrie, Barb Putnam, Bill Lee, Arnette Heidcamp, and Bill Cook for shared information on this and last year's Rufous Hummingbird; and Jim Lowe for information on NYSARC records. I invite comments from banders and/or rehabilitators, who have experience with winter harboring of hummingbirds, or about the birds' dietary needs and timing of harboring.

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Inexpensive Poles for Mist Nets

Finding inexpensive poles for mist nets can be a problem for banders (Jackson and Schardien 1982, Keyes and Grue 1982, McClure 1984, Trichka and Varza 1982). Poles made especially for mist nets are available but they can be quite heavy and fairly expensive.

For the past three years, I have been using poles called "Sturdy Stakes" which come in lengths as short as one foot, but banders will find the six- and eight-foot lengths most useful. The poles are made of a steel tube completely covered with green vinyl. They are studded with small bumps, which help nets and guy lines stay in place. The dull green finish makes them blend into the background and also makes them waterproof. The poles are quite light and can be carried without too much effort.

One end is pointed and the other is fitted with a flat plastic plug, so they can be driven into most soils with a hammer, rubber mallet or even a flat rock. Since the poles are waterproof, I have used them on pond margins and in stream bottoms.

Since eight feet is not particularly tall, I have successfully taped two poles together with duct tape, making a longer pole. This technique is especially

useful when the bander would not be able to reach the top of a longer pole with a hammer. I have also taped these poles upside-down to the sides of highway bridges; the vinyl bumps helped prevent nets from slipping off.

These poles are manufactured by California Plastic Products Co., 1422 Walnut Ave., Buena Park CA 90620 (714) 994-5670, and are available at garden supply and hardware stores nationwide.

References

- Jackson, J.A. and B.J. Schardien. 1982. On the use of electrical conduit for mist net poles. *N. Am. Bird Bander* 7:15.
- Keyes, B.E. and C.E. Grue. 1982. Capturing birds with mist nets; a review. *N. Am. Bird Bander* 7:2-14.
- McClure, H.E., 1984. Bird Banding. Boxwood Press, Pacific Grove, CA.
- Trichka, C.J. and D. Varza. 1982. Another mist net variation. *N. Am. Bird Bander* 7:16.

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The Western Bird Banding Association Announces Two Annual \$500 Awards

The Research Award is for individuals engaged in research using marked birds. Applicants are requested to submit a project proposal (including methodology and budget) and two letters of reference stating the qualifications of the applicant(s). Applicants may increase their chances by having smaller project budgets or detailing the use of requested funds within larger projects. Students, including undergraduates are encouraged to apply. Awardees will be expected to submit results for publication in *North American Bird Bander*.

The Monitoring Award is intended to help individuals or institutions establish (or continue) monitor-

ing programs that investigate changes in bird populations. Applicants should submit a description of the monitoring program that includes objectives, methods and budget detailing how requested funds will be used. Awardees will be expected to present results at future Western Bird Banding Association meetings.

Applicants for either award are requested to send the information described above (no forms or information packet available) by July 1, 1995 to:

Geoffrey R. Geupel
WBBA Awards
Point Reyes Bird Observatory
990 Shoreline Highway
Stinson Beach CA 94970.

Award winners will be announced at the WBBA annual meeting in the fall with funds awarded by mid-December.

ABOUT 43 FIELD BIOLOGIST INTERNS are needed to operate constant effort mist-netting, banding and point counting (MAPS) stations in Washington, Montana, Oregon, California, Kansas, Missouri, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland and Virginia.

Internship dates are **20 April - 18 August** or **1 May - 28 Aug**, depending on location. Applicants should have some birding experience; internship includes an intensive two week training course in the above mentioned monitoring techniques. Applicants with good field vehicles are especially needed. Stipend of \$400 or \$600 / month (depending on location) and housing provided. For further information and application materials contact: The Institute for Bird Populations, P.O. Box 1346, Point Reyes Station CA 94956. Phone (415) 663-1436; fax (415) 663-9482.

Please pass this announcement on to anyone else who might be interested in such a position.