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Banders' Forum

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First Documented Banding of a Rufous Hummingbird in South Carolina

The banding of a Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*) took place in Greenville on 3 April 1990. This is the first documented banding of a Rufous in South Carolina. The bird was seen in mid-December 1989 trying to drink from a feeder where the liquid was frozen. Several birders were called to identify the bird, but no one was positive, suggesting either a Ruby-throated, Rufous or Allen's.

Finally, on 18 December 1989, after a couple days of moving the feeder closer and closer to the sliding glass door and into the den of Mrs. Freeman's home, which had been decorated with poinsettias and other highly colored plants, the hummer flew into the room and then into a parakeet cage. It was taken next door to a greenhouse and released. It was fed a special formula ordered from Florida to make sure it received proper nutrients along with the regular sugar formula.

On 3 April 1990, we trapped, measured, took pictures, and banded the bird. It was indeed a Rufous Hummingbird, AHY-F, and was in excellent health. Measurements were:

wing: 45 mm; weight: 3.3 grams; maximum width of rectrix #5: 3.2 mm; maximum width of rectrix #1: 8.1 mm; culmen length: 16mm; and tail length: 26 mm. Plumage: back - metallic green with bronze highlights and dull cast on head; wings - dark brown-slate (in strong light they had a slight purplish cast); tail feathers - middle pair metallic bronze-green; both broadly edged with cinnamon-rufous; next pair with more than basal half cinnamon-rufous, then metallic bronze-green; three outer pairs broadly tipped with white; chin, throat, and chest - white, small patch in middle of throat with metallic orange-red tips; rest of under parts - cinnamon-rufous laterally, fading to dull buffy white on breast and abdomen; under tail coverts - light cinnamon-rufous or cinnamon-buff centrally, with broad margins of buffy white; bill - black; iris - dark brown; feet - dusky. Plumage description, pictures, slides and measurements are on file in the Charleston Museum, Charleston, SC.

Dorothy Foy
P.O. Box 457
Oriental, NC 28571

Banders' Forum

Kinglet Banding with Modified Size 0 Bands

The recent plea by Wallace (*NABB* 15:66-67) for the manufacture of a size 00 band must have been welcomed by all who have the opportunity to band our smallest songbirds, especially kinglets and gnatcatchers. Indeed, the presently recommended band readily slips over the toes of some individuals and is prone to physically harm these birds unless it falls off.

Wallace is not hopeful that the Bird Banding Laboratory (BBL) can take any action on behalf of a smaller bird size in the near future, and my correspondence with them confirms this. Consequently, we must deal with the obvious problem as best we can and, at the very least, follow Wallace's and the Ontario Bird Banding Association's advice of exercising caution when banding kinglets and gnatcatchers. I wish to suggest a more practical solution and one which I have used with excellent success during many years of banding kinglets on their wintering grounds here in northern Florida.

With a small triangular file, I carefully remove a little from both ends of the partially opened size 0 bands. Care is taken to do this evenly across the whole width of the band. When, in the process, the ends are given a slight slant toward the inside, the inner diameter of the closed band can be reduced from the original 2.15 mm (my measurement) to 1.95 mm without damage to the engravings. The BBL has given my method its blessing with the understanding that the integrity and, hence, legibility of the numbers are maintained. The relatively high return percentage of my banded Ruby-crowned Kinglets indicates to me that the modified bands wear very well.

The filing procedure may appear cumbersome and poorly suited for those who have to handle many birds in a short period of time. However, with a little experience, the preparation of the bands does not take longer than any of the other procedures commonly associated with the proc-

essing of a bird; e.g., skulling, measuring, etc. Of course, one also has the option to keep a number of those home-constructed size 00 bands ready for the big haul.

Peter H. Homann
117 Ridgeland Road
Tallahassee, FL 32312-1906

A Case for Credibility

On 12 November 1988 we banded a Swainson's Thrush (*Hylocichla ustulata*) as a HY-U and on 13 December 1988, a Ruby-throated Hummingbird (*Archilochus colubris*) as an AHY-F at our home in Oriental, North Carolina. Both of these birds were questioned by the Bird Banding Laboratory.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird

In June 1989 the Banding Laboratory advised us that they had changed the sex of the Ruby-throated Hummingbird to "unknown" and requested a detailed description of the bird. They also sent along extremely outdated material on aging and sexing and the winter distribution of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds.

The criteria we used for aging and sexing at the time of banding included:

Baltosser, W.H. 1987. Age, species and sex determination of four North American hummingbirds. *NABB* 12:151-161.

Leberman, R. 1972. Identify it, sex and age it. *Inland Bird Banding News* 44:197-202.

Johnsgard, P.A. 1984. Hummingbirds of N. America. Smithsonian Institute, Washington, D.C.

This particular bird had been observed around the area for approximately seven months and was easy to identify because of the white feathers on the forehead and crown. A previously banded (20-08-88) Ruby-throated Hummingbird, categorized as a HY-F, was caught at the same time as the AHY-F was being banded, so there was an opportunity to compare the two, which left no doubt as to the age and sex. This species has been documented on Christmas counts six times from 1985 through 1986 in SC, NC, and TX.

Discovered later, another record of a Ruby-throated Hum-

mingbird banded between 21 and 25 December 1983 in Louisiana was accepted by the Banding Laboratory as an AHY-F, which appears to be inconsistent with their statement that "there are no characteristics that are 95% reliable for aging AHY-F at this time of year (December)."

Swainson's Thrush

A thrush was observed in our back yard on 11 November 1988, identified as a Swainson's Thrush and banded on 12 November 1988 as a HY-U. It repeated on 31 December 1988 and 4 January 1989. The bird fit the 1A and 2A description in the Bird Banding Manual; and since we have banded 454 Swainson's Thrushes over 20+ years of banding, identification for us was never in question.

However, on 13 July 1989, (about seven months later) the Banding Laboratory sent their form letter requesting a detailed description and a picture. Further correspondence (12-04-90) from BBL stated that "our requirements for documentation are no more rigid than those of a state rare bird committee, Breeding Bird Survey or American Birds Christmas count and we cannot put this bird into our files without documentation..."

Again, we find that the literature used by the Banding Laboratory appears to be out of date since on Christmas census lists in the period 1985-87, Swainson's Thrushes have appeared on seven different occasions, five in North Carolina and two in South Carolina. There have also been two verified December sightings: 1985 in Massachusetts and 1987 in New Jersey.

With all of the above documentation, the criteria for acceptance seems ambiguous.

The reason for this note is to suggest it is time for the Bird Banding Laboratory to update their literature especially for species aging, sexing and distribution. What better resource for the most current information than from the records of banders who have the knowledge and expertise from years and years of banding.

Dorothy and Roger Foy
P.O. Box 457
Oriental, NC 28571

