

## General Field Notes

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### First Record of Calliope Hummingbird in North Carolina

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During the last two weeks of October, 1995, the senior author noticed an immature male hummingbird at his feeder that was different from the Ruby-throated Hummingbirds (*Archilochus colubris*) which had frequented his yard earlier in the fall. On the morning of 1 November the three authors were able to view this bird at leisure for about two hours while it was perched, flying, and feeding. We watched it with 9X and 10X binoculars and a 20-45X spotting scope at a distance of 5 - 15 m. Meanwhile, multiple color slides were made of the bird at the feeder with a 50 mm lens. To assist in size determination, a photograph was made with a ruler held at the perch from which the bird fed.

By observing the bird and viewing the projected slides, we felt that this was an immature male Calliope Hummingbird (*Stellula calliope*). It was a small hummingbird with a relatively short bill that appeared little if any longer than the head. The tail was short, with wings extending about 3 mm beyond its tip when the bird was perched. The throat showed multiple short dark streaks. More striking was a single iridescent magenta gorget feather that was elongated rather than rounded and which protruded at an angle from the other feathers. The under parts were white except for the flanks, which were a color between buff and a pale apricot. The back was green without any rufous color. The retrices were dark, with their proximal third being a rich brown or mahogany. The bird did not vocalize.

Slides were sent for review to Nancy Newfield of Metairie, LA. Ms. Newfield has extensive experience with hummingbird identification, including having seen several dozen Calliope Hummingbirds and having banded 15 of that species in Louisiana. After studying the photographs Ms. Newfield was kind enough to write a detailed letter in which she concurred in our identification of the bird as a Calliope Hummingbird. The following is excerpted from her letter:

In summary, we can see that the small size of the bird eliminates the larger species such as Anna's Hummingbird (*Calypte anna*) or Broad-tailed Hummingbird (*Selasphorus platycerus*), both of which have gorgets and backs of similar colors. The shortness of the bill and tail also eliminates Broad-billed Hummingbird, as that species has a very long tail. The magenta color of the gorget feather eliminates all other species except Anna's Hummingbird and Broad-tailed Hummingbird, which have been eliminated because of their larger size, longer bills and longer tails (Broad-tailed Hummingbird). Actually the gorget color of Anna's Hummingbird and Broad-tailed Hummingbird is more rose red, but structural colors, such as those of hummingbird gorgets, are subject to a certain amount of interpretation by any observer. The single gorget feather clearly identifies this individual as an immature male.

We believe that this photographically-documented identification of a Calliope Hummingbird represents the first record of that species in North Carolina and probably the most easterly record in the United States.

#### **Literature Cited**

Scott, Shirley L. et al. (eds.). Field Guide to the Birds of North America, National Geographic Society, 1983.

Nancy Newfield, Metairie, LA. Letter to Fred Thompson dated 26 February 1996. Available from Fred Thompson.

*Editor's Notes: Harry LeGrand, chairman of the North Carolina Records Committee, believes that the Committee will be able to act on this report in 1997.*

*Field identification of female and immature hummingbirds can be difficult. Please call to report any hummingbird seen in the late fall or winter in the Carolinas to your Bird Records Committee Chairman, the Editor of Briefs for the Files, your Field Notes Editor, and the Carolina Bird Club's Rare Bird Alert. This way others can help identify and document the bird.. BW*