

## **Second Winter Record of Ruby-throated Hummingbird in South Carolina**

Bob and Martha Sargent  
The Hummer/Bird Study Group, Inc.  
7570 Mack Hicks Road  
Trussville, Alabama 35173

On 29 January 1998, we visited the residence of Dennis and Donna Forsythe at 748 Swanson Avenue, James Island, South Carolina. The Forsythes requested that we capture, band, and document an *Archilocus* hummingbird feeding at their hummingbird feeder. Prior to our arrival, they had field-identified this bird as an immature male Ruby-throated Hummingbird (*A. colubris*) based on the presence of red feathers in the gorget.

Arriving at the residence at 0930 hrs, we were promptly greeted with the bird's sharp scold notes that positively identified it as a male Ruby-throated. We deployed our cage-trap at the feeder location, and the capture was quickly accomplished without incident. In the hand, this second-year male Ruby-throated was banded with band number 3000Y30284.

The following measurements were taken: wing-40.51mm, tail-25.1mm, exposed culmen-16.41mm, and weight-3.06 gr. There were no traces of any fatty deposits as the lean weight indicated. Close examination of the upper mandible with a 16X jeweler's loupe revealed deeply incised striations along 85% of the length of the bird's soft bill. These deep wrinkles were strong indicators that this bird was a very late hatchling, probably out of the egg near the end of September or early October, 1997. We based this estimate on our ten-year study of Ruby-throateds. This study involved the aging and sexing thousands of immature birds. The only indications of molt were the presence of new tertials and part of the secondaries, and fresh feathers on the underparts. The lustrous feathers of the crown, nape, and rump still had the buffy edging associated with very young immature hummingbirds. A count of the red reflecting feathers in the gorget yielded only seven in a random pattern. Again, this was more supporting evidence of the unusually young age. At this point, some appropriate feather samples were taken, and a series of macro photos was taken to complete the documentation. Copies of these photographs have been submitted to the South Carolina Bird Records Committee.

The immature male Ruby-throated Hummingbird was hand fed, color-marked on the crown, and released at the capture site. As is our custom, we stayed on site long enough to observe it return to the feeder and resume its normal foraging activities.

This is the second documented occurrence of a wintering Ruby-throated Hummingbird in South Carolina. The first was a female salvaged at Surfside Beach on 11 January 1988. It is now in the Charleston Museum. We also saw but did not capture another Ruby-throated and another hummingbird of unknown species in a yard about 200m from the Forsythes' home.

These observations clearly indicate the need for additional information on wintering hummingbirds in South Carolina much like the studies we have conducted elsewhere in the eastern United States.

#### **Literature Cited**

McNair, D B and W Post. Supplement to status and distribution of South Carolina birds. Charleston Museum Ornithological Contribution No. 8. Charleston, South Carolina, 1993.

---

---

## **CAROLINABIRDS**

Carolinabirds is an Internet e-mail discussion group about birds and birding in the Carolinas. Subscribers frequently post sightings to it similar to those found in Briefs for the Files, but unusual behavior receives more attention. Subscriptions are free. To subscribe, address an e-mail message to <majordomo@acpub.duke.edu>. Don't fill in the subject line. As your message, simply put, "subscribe carolinabirds" (without the quotes). You will receive a confirmation and more information shortly. Submissions for Briefs for the Files should be sent directly to Ricky Davis.

---

---