

General Field Notes

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General Field Notes briefly report such items as rare sightings, unusual behaviors, significant nesting records, or summaries of such items. Submit manuscripts to the appropriate state editor.

First, second, or third sightings of species in either state must be submitted to the appropriate Bird Records Committee prior to publication in The Chat.

First Broad-tailed Hummingbird (*Selasphorus platycercus*) Record for North Carolina

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On November 11, 2001, I visited the home of Ms. Monte Tickle in Gibsonville, Guilford County, North Carolina, to investigate a hummingbird that had been present for approximately three weeks at her feeder. Ms. Tickle was unsure what species of hummingbird she was hosting since it did not seem distinctive to her in any way. To her it did not look dissimilar from the Ruby-throated Hummingbirds (*Archilochus colubris*) she saw each summer. However, when it approached the feeder, it was clearly a large hummingbird with both a long and broad tail (Fig. 1). I could also see a buffy wash on the bird's underparts, green feathering along the flanks and a small amount of rufous at the base of the tail as the bird hovered to feed. It was certainly not a Ruby-throated Hummingbird nor was it a Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*), the most common overwintering inland hummingbird species in the state.

Suspicious that this might be a Broad-tailed Hummingbird (*Selasphorus platycercus*), I set up my wire cage to try to catch, identify and band this hummingbird. I was successful in only a few minutes. As I approached the cage, I sensed the bird was a Broad-tailed by its vocalizations. This



Figure 1. Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Gibsonville, NC. Photo by Wayne Irvin

hummingbird was making a distinctive high-pitched three-syllable alarm call. I immediately applied US Bird Banding Laboratory band number 4000-35568 to its leg and proceeded to examine its plumage. The hummingbird indeed had all the characteristics of a Broad-tailed (Pyle 1997). Its tail was very wide and long (30 mm) and extended 5 mm past the end of the folded wing. The outer two primaries on the wing were equal in length. Wing whistling was not audible during flight so it is assumed that these were immature flight feathers. It was a big hummingbird, with a wing chord of 50.12 mm and weight of 3.60 g. However, it had a short bill of only 15.97 mm. There was a bold white ring of feathers around each eye. The rufous in the tail was limited to the base of the outer two feathers. This Broad-tailed had corrugations on the basal 10 percent of the bill and one rosy gorget feather on the left side of its throat identifying it as an immature male. Overall the throat was speckled with green (Fig. 2). Many pin feathers were evident where more iridescent pink-red adult feathers would be coming in. There was also noticeable molt across the back and belly.

Broad-tailed Hummingbirds breed at higher elevations from Wyoming and central Idaho south into Guatemala. They winter within the resident range in Mexico and in limited numbers along the Gulf Coast. And though they have been found using feeders in fall and winter in the US, Broad-taileds are relatively rare vagrants in winter across the Southeast.

This banded individual is the first record of Broad-tailed Hummingbird in North Carolina. The NC Bird Records Committee accepted the written descriptions and photographs of this bird, placing Broad-tailed Hummingbird on the Official List (North Carolina Bird Records Committee 2002).



Figure 2. Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Gibsonville, NC. Photo by Susan Campbell.

Literature Cited

- North Carolina Bird Records Committee. 2002. 2001 Report of the North Carolina Bird Records Committee. *Chat* 66:1-6.
- Pyle, Peter. 1997. Identification Guide to North American Birds. Part I. Bolinas, CA. Slate Creek Press.