

Summary of Wintering Hummingbirds in Pennsylvania

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In recent years, efforts have been made to document wintering hummingbird species in Pennsylvania. These efforts begin with sightings by homeowners and birders; and continue with trapping, banding, and identification of the birds by licensed banders.

In the 1980's, Nancy Newfield of Louisiana and Robert and Martha Gail Sargent of Alabama began documenting the diversity and abundance of wintering hummingbirds in the southeastern states. With occurrences there on a regular basis, came the question for Pennsylvania banders of whether our state might have wintering hummingbirds also; and if so, what species?

The first Pennsylvania record archived by the Bird Banding Lab is from 1997. Bob Mulvihill, then working as the bird bander for the Powdermill Avian Research Center in the Laurel Highlands of southwestern Pennsylvania, caught and banded a Rufous Hummingbird near Delmont, Westmoreland County. But digging deeper, research shows that it wasn't the first to be banded in the state. In the March 1991 issue of *Pennsylvania Birds*, an article describes how Mulvihill and Bob Leberman visited a home north of Ligonier, Westmoreland County on November 14, 1990 where they caught, confirmed, and banded a Rufous Hummingbird. Their review of literature at that time showed it to be the first banding record of a non-Ruby-throated Hummingbird in Pennsylvania.

While at Powdermill, Mulvihill went on to band five more Rufous Hummingbirds through 2004, in Westmoreland, Erie, Indiana and Fayette counties.

In 2001, Scott Weidensaul began to investigate and band wintering hummingbirds, followed by Nick Pulcinella in 2003. Both trained by the late Robert Sargent, they began to reach out to homeowners who indicated they had a hummingbird at their feeder, after October 15th. Wayne Laubscher and Sandy Lockerman were trained and licensed as hummingbird banders in 2007 and 2009, respectively.

As of January 1, 2017, a total 163 non-Ruby-throated Hummingbirds have been documented in Pennsylvania by these five banders, which includes six species of hummingbird in 43 of the 67 counties (Figure 1) as of April 2017. The species are: Allen's, Anna's, Black-chinned, Calliope, and Rufous Hummingbirds in addition to the Bahama Woodstar banded in Lancaster County in April 2013 (Figure 2) as of April 2017.

Other interesting tidbits gathered from the Bird Banding Lab and the five Pennsylvania banders are:

1. Six homes have hosted the same rufous hummingbird returning the next year. (Cumberland, Fayette, Lancaster, Montgomery, Northampton and Westmoreland)

2. Four homes have hosted a foreign recovery of a rufous hummingbird. (Maryland, Mississippi and two from Louisiana)

3. One home hosted a foreign recovery of the same rufous hummingbird two years in a row. (Washington)

4. Seven homes have hosted two hummingbirds in different years. (Allegheny, Dauphin, Delaware, Lancaster (3), and Lehigh).

5. Three homes have hosted three different hummingbird species in different years. (Chester, Lancaster and Montgomery)

a. The Chester Co. home: Ruby-throated, Rufous, Calliope.

b. The Lancaster Co. home: Ruby-throated, Rufous Bahama Woodstar.

c. The Montgomery Co. home: Ruby-throated, Rufous, Calliope.

The increased use of social media (email, text, and Facebook) has greatly facilitated the banding of wintering hummingbirds. A decade ago, weeks or months may have passed before notice of a hummingbird reached a bander. Now, contact between a hummingbird host and a bander may occur within hours or even minutes following discovery of the bird.

Caution should be exercised while examining these statistics. Readers should be aware that catching and banding of these hummingbirds is done by volunteer banders working during their free time and at the convenience of the homeowner. Lengthy and sometimes multiple trips are made to these homes in the attempt to document and band a hummingbird. Second, the disproportionate number of records from the heavily populated and birded southeast is not necessarily an indication that there are more hummingbirds in this area; there are, of course, more observers in the southeast and banders have been active there for a longer period of time.

The future is bright in Pennsylvania for documenting hummingbird species other than our own native Ruby-throated Hummingbirds. We encourage homeowners to keep feeders up into the fall and winter (at least until Thanksgiving) and to forward information about hummingbird sightings between October 10 and April 1, whether first-hand and indirectly received, to the closest hummingbird bander.

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Documenting these non-Ruby-throated species will add to the richness and diversity of Pennsylvania birds and help us gain a fuller understanding of bird migration through this state.

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References

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Figure 2 Non-Ruby-throated Hummingbirds Banded in PA

Allen's Hummingbird	4
Anna's Hummingbird	1
Bahama Woodstar	1
Black-chinned Hummingbird	2
Calliope Hummingbirds	2
Rufous Hummingbird	153
Total	163

Figure 1: Counties with Banded Non-Ruby-throated Hummingbirds

County	# Banded	County	# Banded
Adams	2	Lackawanna	1
Allegheny	5	Lancaster	16
Armstrong	0	Lawrence	1
Beaver	1	Lebanon	2
Bedford	0	Lehigh	7
Berks	16	Luzerne	2
Blair	0	Lycoming	6
Bradford	0	McKean	1
Bucks	5	Mercer	2
Butler	1	Mifflin	0
Cambria	1	Monroe	1
Cameron	0	Montgomery	11
Carbon	1	Montour	0
Centre	3	Northampton	8
Chester	18	Northumberland	2
Clarion	2	Perry	2
Clearfield	0	Philadelphia	0
Clinton	0	Pike	0
Columbia	1	Potter	0
Crawford	1	Schuylkill	3
Cumberland	2	Snyder	0
Dauphin	8	Somerset	3
Delaware	3	Sullivan	0
Elk	0	Susquehanna	1
Erie	3	Tioga	1
Fayette	1	Union	0
Forest	0	Venango	1
Franklin	5	Warren	0
Fulton	0	Washington	0
Greene	0	Wayne	0
Huntingdon	0	Westmoreland	2
Indiana	1	Wyoming	0
Jefferson	1	York	7
Juniata	2	TOTAL	<hr/> 163