

ALABAMA BIRDLIFE

canyons. The Varied Thrush is known for its distinctive song, a series of five or six long haunting, vibrating whistling notes of several different tones. It also has a weak *tschook* call note. Most vagrants, however, tend to be silent away from their normal range.

Nearly every year a few strays are found as far east as New England and farther south. For the last two years, one has been observed near Chattanooga, Tennessee. The habitat in Chattanooga and Red Mountain in Birmingham is reminiscent of the ravines it winters in on the west coast.

This rare visitor remained until 7 April, and thanks to the generosity and hospitality of John and Helen Bruce, over 100 birders were fortunate enough to see it. – **Ann L. Miller**, 530 Yorkshire Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209.

FIRST RECORD FOR THE ALLEN'S HUMMINGBIRD (*SELASPHORUS SASIN*) IN ALABAMA

Robert R. Sargent and Martha B. Sargent



Figure 1. Allen's Hummingbird banded by the Sargents in Mobile. Note the narrow outer rectrix. The width of this tail feather is critical in the identification of this species. (Photo by Martha B. Sargent)

On 30 November 1991 my wife, Martha, and I received a call from Mary LeGault of Mobile notifying us of a very small hummingbird coming to her feeder. After questioning her in detail on the telephone, we were convinced the bird was in the *Selasphorus* genus. In the

United States this would include the Rufous (*S. rufus*), Allen's (*S. sasin*) and Broad-tailed (*S. platycerus*). Although Mrs. LeGault's experience with hummingbirds was limited to the Ruby-throated (*Archilocus colubris*), her description of the bird warranted immediate investigation. A complicating factor was her description of a second hummingbird at the same feeder, another *Selasphorus* with considerable brown in the back, indicating an immature male Rufous.

Upon arriving at the LeGault residence on 3 December we were greeted by a tiny *Selasphorus* at the feeder. Our first impression was of a very small hummer with a very short bill, short tail and solid green back and head. Although adult male Rufous and Allen's Hummingbirds can be identified in the field, the presence of white tips on the tail feathers indicated this bird was an adult female or an immature male or female. The small size, short tail composed of narrow rectrices, and all green back convinced us that the bird was probably an Allen's. If so, it would be the first state record.

Although wary, we soon had the tiny hummer in-hand and banded (8000 T17505) (Figure 1). A quick set of measurements proved the bird to be an adult female Allen's. The measurements taken were: wing, 41.33 mm; tail, 23.90 mm; exposed culmen, 17.20mm; weight, 4.00 gms; rectrix #1, 6.64 mm wide; rectrix #5, 2.24 mm wide. The criteria used in identifying the specimen was based on Stiles (1972, Age and Sex Determination in Rufous and Allen's Hummingbirds. *The Condor*, 74: 25-32) which is the accepted standard used by hummingbird banders.

In addition to the measurements, extensive in-hand photographs were taken using a Minolta 9000 camera with a 100 mm-F 2.8 lens and ring flash. An additional in-hand observation was the absence of striations on the upper mandible, indicating an adult bird. The lack of striations plus the white tips on new rectrices, three, four, and five, told us the bird was an adult female. The upper mandible had extensive pitting on the bulbous tip that is characteristic of known age Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, but only after they are at least three years old. Much wear was noted on the throat, belly and sides. The tertials were new, but the remaining wing feathers were badly worn and brownish in color. The crissum was a pale cinnamon-rufous. There were some pin feathers in the throat, along with scattered bronze and green-tipped feathers.

Our study of hummingbirds in Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee, Florida and Mississippi continues to reveal new species. This exciting work would not be possible without the reports of wintering hummingbirds forwarded to us by AOS members and the public. We are grateful and urge you to continue to monitor your hummingbird feeders for the late or the unusual bird. Any hummingbird in north Alabama after 1 November, or in south Alabama after 15 November, is probably NOT a Ruby-throated. Time permitting we will investigate any bird occurring after these dates.

Acknowledgments

We would like to acknowledge the assistance of Steve and Ruth Russell of Tucson, Arizona and Nancy Newfield of Metairie, Louisiana for sharing their expert knowledge about Allen's hummingbirds. I would also like to thank my partner in this work, Martha Sargent, for her skill as a photographer, so important in documenting this first state record. – **Robert R. Sargent and Martha B. Sargent**, Rt. 1, Box 558G, Trussville, AL 35173.