

February 22, 2005

Larry Brown
RR #2 Box 187
Millerton PA, 16936

Larry

Thank you for sending the video and description of the hummingbird in your yard on 13 August, 2001. This report essentially had the committee stumped. We arrived at a vote of 3-4 to not accept the documentation as conclusive, but sent the description to hummingbird banders Tom Sargeant and Nancy Newfield for a more expert opinion. Copies of their responses are included with this letter. Nancy's opinion was especially informative to me and I believe her conclusions are most likely correct and explain all the features apparent on this bird. The fact that young hummingbirds replace missing feathers with adult-types feathers and that they routinely show the dark necklace from damage due to being in the nest is the kind of rare info only truly expert individuals can provide.

Sincerely

Matt Sharp
Chair: Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee.



Subject: Video and photos

Date: Sat, 7 Dec 2002 17:31:57 EST

From: RubyThroat@aol.com

To: nickpul@bellatlantic.net

Hi Nick

Martha and I have watched the video a dozen times and here is my (our) best opinion. We cannot say for sure what species is on the video. Although my gut feeling is that this is probably an adult male Black-chinned, the color of the gorget on the video is not that clear to me.

To me, the forked tail looks short as I would expect in Black-chinned and not in Ruby-throated. I did not see white in the tail as the narrator describes. There should be no white in the tail of an adult male of either species. I do see very prominent white anal tufts on this bird. That is more common on Black-chinned, but can occur in fat migrating Ruby-throated.

The date is certainly earlier than anything I have seen away from the normal range in my 15 years of banding.

Sorry I was not more help. I will ship the video and photos back to you this week. Thanks and God Bless.
Bob

Nancy L. Newfield
Casa Colibri
3016 45th Street
Metairie, Louisiana 70001
504-835-3882
<colibri@webdsi.com>

5 August 2003

Nick Pulcinella
Secretary, The Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee
613 Howard Road
West Chester, Pennsylvania 19380

Re: 489-01-2000

Dear Nick,

Let me begin by stating my qualifications to comment on this evidence. I have studied hummingbirds since 1975 and have banded them since 1979. I have extensive experience with Black-chinned Hummingbird [*Archilochus alexandri*] in Louisiana, Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. I have observed several thousand of them and have banded perhaps 2000 individuals. My experience spans the entire calendar year. My experience with Ruby-throated Hummingbird [*Archilochus colubris*] is likewise very extensive and also covers all 12 months of the year. I have observed and banded many thousands of them in Louisiana and Texas, as well as a few in other states, and I have observed numerous members of that species on their wintering ground in Costa Rica.

Regarding the supposed Black-chinned Hummingbird reported by Larry Brown, Sr., at Jackson Township, Tioga County, Pennsylvania, on 13 August 2000, I have viewed and reviewed the video a number of times and find that the image is too blurry to make out the fine details necessary to identify this bird with certainty. The photographs, though somewhat more clear, are also not sufficiently detailed for me to see the critical identification marks. The written documentation is good, but it cannot compensate for the poor quality of the other evidence. Photographs, videotapes, and voice recordings are always more compelling than written descriptions, which can be influenced by the author's experience and research into a species. I would not want a first [or second, third, etc.] state record to rest upon evidence that was not 100% conclusive.

In his written report, Larry Brown, Sr. noted that the bird did not fit all the expected characteristics for Black-chinned Hummingbird. I believe I can explain the discrepancies.

In the written account, the tail is described as deeply forked, but as having more white than would be expected. In the photographs and to a lesser degree in the video, the tail appears deeply forked, a characteristic of adult males of both *Archilochus* species. Females of all ages and immature males have tails that are slightly notched and broadly rounded on the corners.

The tail of this bird appears to be that of an adult male though clearly the bird is not fully adult because its gorget is not complete. The tail appears to be all black in the photographs, but seems to have white edges in the video. Adult males of both species have all black tails while females and immature males

have white corners to their tails. Neither species exhibits white edges in any plumage under normal conditions. To my eye, the white appears to be backlighting.

It is not unusual for an immature male to have an adult-type tail. If an immature hummingbird loses one or all of its immature rectrices, they are always replaced with adult-type feathers. Rectrices come out easily and that characteristic enables birds to escape predators that may have just caught the tail. The subject bird no doubt had a very close encounter with a predator a few weeks before appearing in Larry Brown, Sr.'s yard.

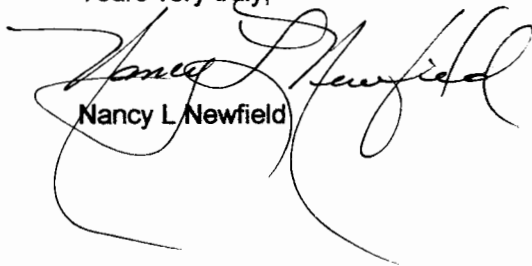
The dark spot on the throat, described as "black in some light and deep violet-purple in others" might well be missing feathers. In both *Archilochus* species, the base of each individual feather is blackish. The skin is translucent or semi-transparent while the underlying muscle tissue is dark purplish red. I have seen a number of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds misidentified as Black-chinned Hummingbirds on this basis. Missing feathers are not readily apparent in the photographs, but it was my impression that a large chunk of feathers was missing from the throat and upper chest when viewing the video.

The black spots that form a "broken necklace" on this individual are most certainly broken and abraded feathers. I call it a nest mark because it is caused by constant contact with the edge of the nest. One can often see such a mark on adult females and on young of both species in late summer and in early fall.

So, my best guess is that the hummingbird reported to be a Black-chinned Hummingbird in Jackson Township, Tioga County, Pennsylvania, on 13 August 2000 is really an immature male Ruby-throated Hummingbird that has replaced its immature rectrices with adult-type rectrices and it is missing a large quantity of feathers from its throat and upper chest revealing the bases of the contour feathers and the underlying muscle tissue. However, the supporting evidence is insufficient for me to be 100% certain of that.

I am returning the two photos, the video, and the rare bird report. Hopefully, this critique is of value to the committee. Please pardon the delay.

Yours very truly,



Nancy L. Newfield

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489-01-2000

RARE BIRD REPORT

Species: Black chinned Hummingbird Date of this Observation: 13 AUG 00

Date Found: 13 Last Date Seen: 13

Location: Behind house in Hawthorne

Township/City: JACKSON County: TIOGA

Person Writing this report: Larry Brown SR.

Address: RR #2 Box 187

Millerton, PA 16976 Phone: 570 533 2730

Other Observers: NONE

Who found the bird first: Larry Brown SR.

Other documentation Included: (Circle all appropriate items)(Make sure all attached items are fully labeled)

Photograph

Audio Recording

Video Recording

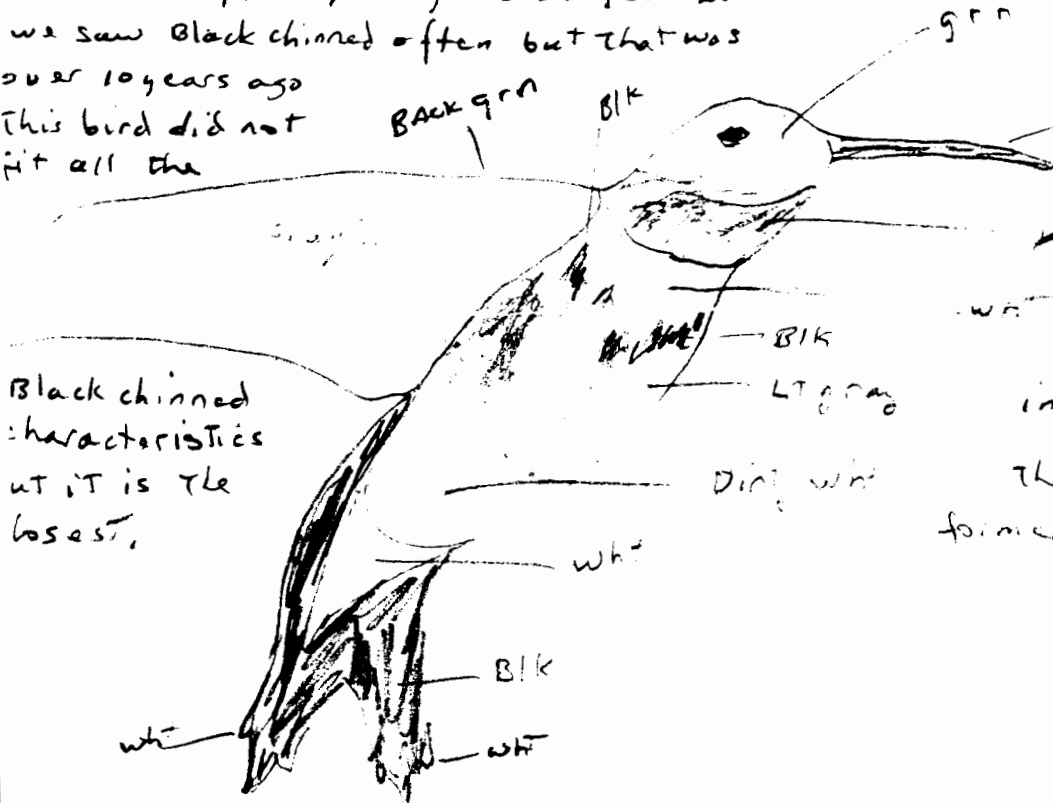
If a Specimen, where is it stored? _____

Description: (Attach additional pages as needed — Please do not write on back of this form)

Observed from Deck Looking SW. Time 1700 - 1712 Video 1702 - 1707 good
Took still photos, range to subject 25' while living in California

we saw black chinned often but that was over 10 years ago
This bird did not fit all the

Black chinned characteristics
at it is the closest.



~~wh~~ This area looked black in some light and deep violet-purple in others

The black spots on breast formed a broken necklace.

Deeply forked Tail
from the back Tail has more white than would be expected

Larry Brown

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Tabulation Form - Round One

Species: Black-chinned Hummingbird (*Archilochus alexandri*)

Date of Sighting: 13 August 2000 to 13 August 2001

Location: JACKSON

County: TIOGA

Observer(s): Larry Brown

Date of Submission: 2000

Submitted by: Larry Brown

Written Description: Yes

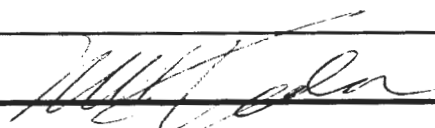
Photo: Yes

Specimen: No

Recording: Video

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A				Abstain
					Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	
G. Armistead			X					
D. Couchman			X					
P. Hess				X				
J. Stanely				X				
B. Reid			X					
P. Rodewald <i>R. Lieberman</i>				X				
M. Sharp					X			
TOTALS			3	3	1			
DECISION				X				

Comments: 3/4

Signature (Secretary): 

Date: 3/3/02