

495-01-1994

See Videotape

RUFIOUS/ALLEN'S HUMMINGBIRD
(*Selasphorus sp.*)

On 20 August 1994 an immature Rufous/Allen's type hummingbird began to visit the yard of Randi and Gary Schaeffer of Perkasio, Bucks Co. They noted that the bird was unlike any of the other hummers visiting their yard because it contained a significant amount of brown on its flanks and tail. They concluded that it was a possible Rufous Hummingbird and notified their neighbors Jewel and Hart Rufe who were able to confirm the sighting.

Hart noted that when the bird was first observed it appeared stressed, as its feathers were puffed out and it bated heavily. Within a few days it was feeding aggressively, chasing the Ruby-throated Hummingbirds from the feeders and cannas flowers. It was also observed hawking insects over a small grove of sumac trees about fifty feet from the cannas bed. The bird established a series of 5-6 perches where it could be found when not feeding. These perches allowed it to be seen by approximately 125 birders and numerous photographs and video footage were taken. It was last seen on 18 September 1994.

The following description is from a report submitted to P.O.R.C. by Hart Rufe.

- HEAD: The head was dark on the top. The throat was white with very fine dotted lines running vertically from just under the bill to a necklace line across the top of the breast. In the center of the necklace was a small red dot that flashed red when it caught the light just right
- UPPERPARTS: The back was green with small flecks of brown.
- UNDERPARTS: The belly was white all the way to the vent, but there were distinct brownish flanks.
- TAIL: The tail was brown, with the feathers tipped very dark brown almost appearing black. Close up views of the tail as captured on video by Rick Wiltraut clearly depicted all of the tail feathers as evenly rounded and not narrow or pointed as might be expected in an Allen's Hummingbird. However this might not be as diagnostic as was first thought.
- BILL: The bill as seen through a Questar, disclosed very fine striations indicating the bird was a juvenile as suspected (Calder 1993).

Four superb photographs supplied by Ken Kitson confirm the above description.

SEPARATING RUFOUS/ALLEN'S HUMMINGBIRDS

ADULT MALES:

A bird that looks like an adult male Rufous can be confidently identified, but a bird that looks like an adult male Allen's might be also be a Rufous (Kaufman 1990). It seems that there is a rare variant of Rufous that can have the adult gorget and tail pattern and also have a nearly entire green back, thus resembling a classic adult male Allen's. Most sources feel that this variant is rare enough that it is probably safe to identify adult male Allen's in areas where they are known to occur commonly.

FEMALES AND IMMATURES:

As Hart hinted in his report, the tail patterns mentioned in some field guides as a possible clue to separating females and immatures of the two species is unreliable. Kaufman (Kaufman 1990) points out that the differences in the tail patterns within each species is so variable as to far outweigh the differences between the two species. He adds that the amount of detail necessary for a specific identification is impossible to see in the field and questionable even in the best of stop-action photos. Unless the bird is captured and measurements taken of the outside rectrix with digital calipers and compared to known age and sex keys as was done by Mulvihill and Leberman (Mulvihill and Leberman 1990) species determination becomes a well documented guess (Jeff Kingery and Robert Sargent pers.comm.).

RANGE IN NORTH AMERICA:

Both species are native to western North America, with the Rufous breeding from northern California, Oregon and Washington east through central Idaho and western Montana and northwest through southwest Alberta, most of British Columbia into southeast Alaska. Allen's on the other hand breeds on the coast from southwest Oregon to southern California.

Both species are notorious for their early breeding and migrations. Small numbers of Rufous have arrived in Washington as early as 26 February, while at the same time others of their species are still wintering in Mexico (Calder 1993). Fall migration begins in early July in the higher elevations of their ranges. Both species regularly occur on the Gulf coast in fall and winter with Allen's being the rarer of the two. An experienced bander in the southeast notes the ratio of Rufous to Allen's banded each winter in the Gulf states is approximately 40:1 (Robert Sargent pers. comm.) with both species appearing in the area as early as the first week of August. Florida had it's first confirmed record of an Allen's in 1993, when a female was banded in Pensacola on 25 August (Jackson 1994).

STATUS IN PENNSYLVANIA:

Casual fall migrant. There are six confirmed records of Rufous Hummingbird in PA.

1. 11/10/59 at Philadelphia, Philadelphia Co.
2. 11/6-14/75 adult male at Devon, Chester Co.
3. 10/17-11/21/90 imm. male captured at Ligonier, Westmoreland Co.
4. Late October- 12/1/91 imm. female captured at Latrobe, Westmoreland Co.
5. 11/10/91 adult male at Gibsonia, Allegheny Co.
6. 9/27/92-1/10/93 adult male at Edinboro, Erie Co.

There is no confirmed record of Allen's Hummingbird. This sighting at Perkasio represents the seventh record of a *Selasphorus* hummingbird in PA and the first for Bucks Co. It is hoped that the photos and videos will be viewed by experts in hummingbird identification so that a determination can be made as to species ID.

A second possible Rufous Hummingbird was observed this quarter in Cherry Valley, Monroe Co. on the very early date of 7-9 August. All of us who love to feed hummers have known to keep the feeders going into October and November because that has been the best time to attract a western straggler, but the early dates of the two sightings this quarter should impress upon us the possibility of these species showing up much earlier than we normally expect.

LITERATURE SIGHTED:

Calder, W.A. 1993. Rufous Hummingbird. The Birds of North America, No. 53 (A. Poole and F. Gill, Eds.). Philadelphia: The Academy of

Kaufman, K. 1990. A field guide to advanced birding. pp. 166-170. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, MA.

Jackson, G.D. 1994. Central Southern Region. American Birds V48:119.

Mulvihill, R. and Leberman, R. 1990 Rufous Hummingbird in Westmoreland County. Pennsylvania Birds V4:139-141

REFERENCES:

Johnsgard, P. 1983. The Hummingbirds of North America. Washington, D.C., Smithsonian Institution Press.

Santner, S., Brauning, D., Schwalbe, G. and P. 1992. Annotated List of the Birds of Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania Biological Survey Contribution Number Four.

Stiles, F.G. 1972. Age and sex determination in Rufous and Allen's Hummingbirds. Condor 74:25-32.

RUFOUS HUMMINGBIRD IN BUCKS COUNTY

On Sunday, August 20, 1994, Randi and Gary Schaeffer of Schwenkmill Road, Perkasio, PA, located in East Rockhill Township, Bucks County, observed an unusual hummingbird among their customary flock of Ruby-throats. This bird sported a significant amount of brown on its flanks and tail, unlike any of the other hummers. The Schaeffers concluded from their bird books that it must be a Rufous Hummingbird. They then called their neighbors, Jewel and Hart Rufe, to check it out for confirmation. Within minutes of their call the Rufes arrived and agreed with the Schaeffers conclusion.

The bird was dark on the top of the head, green on the back with small flecks of brown, and the tail was brown, with the feathers tipped very dark brown almost appearing black. There were also white tips on the outer tail feathers. The throat was white with very fine dotted lines running vertically from just under the bill to a necklace line across the top of the breast. In the center of the necklace was a small red dot that flashed red when it caught the light just right. The belly was white all the way to the vent, but there were distinct brownish flanks. Questar looks at the bill disclosed very fine striations indicating the bird was a juvenile as suspected. (Calder, The Birds of North America, No. 53, Rufous Hummingbird, page 2.) Rick Wiltraut succeeded in obtaining close-up views of the bird on video tape, including diagnostic views of the tail which clearly depicted all of the tail feathers as evenly rounded and not narrow or pointed as might be expected in an Allen's Hummingbird. However, this might not be as diagnostic as was first thought. (Kaufman, Advanced Birding, pages 168-170.)

The day the bird arrived it spent considerable time sitting on a clothes line near the Schaeffer home. It appeared to be stressed as its feathers were quite puffed out and it bated heavily. Within a day or two it seemed to recover and became very aggressive, chasing the Ruby-throats from the feeders and the profusion of cannas flowers that undoubtedly attracted the large number us hummers to this particular property. It also established a series of five or six favorite perches which Randi Schaeffer came to know well so that she was able to direct birders to the bird very quickly, even when it was not active. The Rufous was also observed hawking insects over a small grove of small sumac trees perhaps fifty feet from the cannas bed.

Within hours Frank and Barbara Haas arrived on the first day to record the bird, and they were only the first of perhaps 125 birders who came to see it. Over 100 signed the log book the Schaeffers maintained. Many took photos and several attempted to take video footage, and still others recorded the bird as a life bird. The numbers were limited because the Schaeffers specifically asked that the bird not be reported to the Rare Bird Alerts as they did not mind a handful of birders at a time, but did not want to be inundated.

The Rufous remained until Sunday, September 18, 1994, and was seen on all but two or three of the intervening days, although it was less cooperative the last week or so that it remained. It is believed to be a first record for Bucks County, although it has been recorded previously in Pennsylvania.

W. Hart Rufe

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round # 1 of

Species: Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*)

Date of Sighting: 20 August 1994 to 18 September 1994

Location: PERKASIE

County: BUCKS

Observer(s): W. Hart Rufe (W)

Rick Wiltaut (V)

Date of Submission: 1994

Submitted by: W. Hart Rufe

Written Description: YES Photo: YES Specimen: NO

Recording: NONE

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV	Class V			Abstain
					A	B	C	
F. Haas				X				
N. Pulcinella				X				
E. Kwater				X				
R. Ickes				X				
G. McWilliams				X				
P. Schwalbe				X				
S. Feldstein				X				
TOTALS				7				
DECISION				X				

Comments:

Send for second Round with new info about grooves in bill.

Signature (Secretary):

J. C. Haas

Date:

9-17-95