

ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRD (*CALYPTE ANNA*) FIRST FOR ALABAMA

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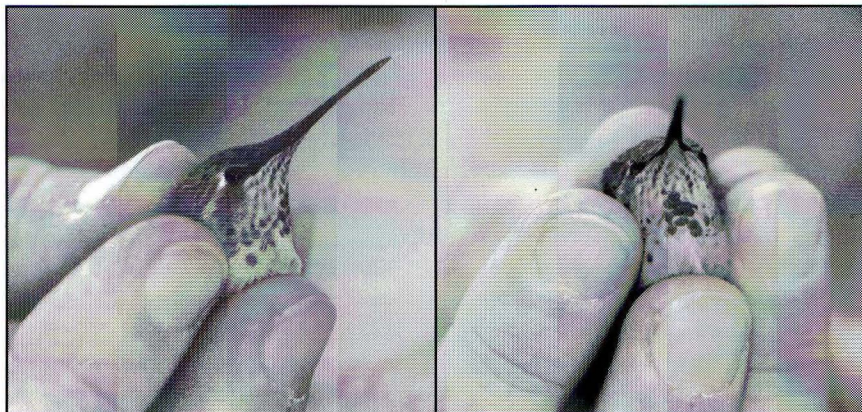


Figure 1. Left, lateral view showing relatively short heavy bill of Anna's Hummingbird. Right, ventral view of throat showing central cluster of iridescent, magenta feathers characteristic of adult female Anna's. (Photo by Martha B. Sargent)

On 15 November 1992 Martha and I received a telephone call from Ernie and Carol Blair of Huntsville, notifying us of a hummingbird at the residence of Frank Brown of 6304 Trailwood Drive in Huntsville. The call was in response to our request to be notified of any hummingbird seen in Alabama after 15 November. This date generally assures that any hummingbird still present will be some species other than a Ruby-throated (*Archilochus colubris*), which by this time should be on their wintering grounds in Central America.

On 19 November we visited the Brown residence and were immediately confronted by a very stocky hummer as we approached the feeder. As we prepared our trapping gear the bird continued to scold and call and Martha quickly recognized it as an Anna's hummingbird (*Calypte anna*). Even though the identification had been made, proper documentation would require capturing, weighing, measuring, and photographing the bird in-hand. The bird perched in a nearby apple tree as we set up our banding trap and called repeatedly between forays to hawk insects. The call was a loud, sharp "chink" or "chick" note, one we had heard many times when observing Anna's hummingbirds in California and southeastern Arizona. Once our trap was in place, the bird was captured immediately when it returned to feed.

A U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service band (#8000T17964) was attached to the right tarsus and the following measurements were taken: wing, 48.21mm; tail, 30.60mm; exposed culmen, 18.86mm; weight, 3.87 grams.

After taking an extensive series of photographs, the following in-hand observa-

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tions were noted: post-nuptial molt complete except for primaries #8, 9 and 10 on the right wing and primary #10 on the left wing. The bill was short and heavy, adding to the big-headed robust appearance characteristic of this species (Figure 1). The upper mandible was fully rounded, smooth and shiny, and under a 16x jewelers loupe showed no striations, indicating an adult. The forehead and crown were dull emerald green contrasting sharply with a shimmering green back. The long upper tail coverts and four central retrices were the same brilliant emerald green as the back. The tail structure was square and rather stubby, despite being over 30mm in length. The terminal end of retrices #3, 4, and 5 were tipped with white, the basal one-half grayish-green, and the central portion velvet black.

The primaries were long and pointed, extending just past the tail, and the newly unsheathed ones had an iridescent metallic purplish sheen that contrasted noticeably with the old worn outer flight feathers. The chin and throat were light gray with the individual feathers having darker gray centers. These dark gray feathers radiated outward from the chin to the lower throat. There were nine somewhat muted iridescent magenta feathers clustered near the center of the throat (Figure 1). This central cluster of feathers confirmed the bird as an adult female. In addition to the magenta feathers, this individual had many large bronze-green spots on the throat. The emerald green of the back extended laterally behind the posterior margins of the wings down to the anterior portion of the flanks. The underparts were dull whitish-gray, the feet and legs dull black, and the iris dark brown. This adult female was in almost complete postnuptial plumage.

The breeding range for the Anna's hummingbird is generally west of the Sierra Nevada and southern coastal mountains of California. They winter over most of their breeding range and eastward across Arizona and southwestern New Mexico. In the winter of 1992-1993 Anna's hummingbirds were also recorded in Louisiana, Arkansas, and Georgia, indicating an apparent expansion of their eastern wintering limits. This winter record in Alabama was not unexpected. In fact, it was the next species we anticipated would be recorded here.

There are many misconceptions about the nectar requirements of hummingbirds that winter in the southeastern United States. Hours of observations of this Anna's and seven other species we banded this winter indicate that their primary food appears to be insects caught on the wing or gleaned from leaves, limbs and sapsucker holes. However, they continue to be efficient at exploiting hummingbird feeders during the colder winter months. We urge those who enjoy feeding hummingbirds to leave at least one feeder out year-round and to notify us of any hummingbird present after 15 November.

We gratefully acknowledge the use of a paper by Dr. William Baltosser published in *The North American Bird Bander*, December 1987, which was very useful in our identification of this Anna's hummingbird in Alabama. **Robert R. Sargent and Martha B. Sargent**, 7570 Mac Hicks Road, Trussville, AL 35173.