

Another Rare Hummingbird in Illinois: First State Record of The Allen's Hummingbird

by H. David Bohlen

Late fall has become notorious for rare birds and recently especially rare hummingbirds. Many of these hummingbirds are from the genus *Selasphorus*, (see addendum). Most that have been identified have been Rufous Hummingbirds (*Selasphorus rufus*). The sequence of events that lead to finding out about these birds is often as rare as the bird itself. Usually the people with the feeders are interested in the welfare of the bird and this case is no exception. Mary Rotz, a bird rehabilitator, contacted me that a probable Rufous Hummingbird was still attending a feeder at the home of Mary and Chad Stamm in Niantic, Macon County, Illinois. Arrangements were made with the Stamns to view the bird. I called Myrna Deaton of Decatur and she met Beckie Dyer and me at the Stamm residence on the morning of 16 November 1997.

The Stamm yard has a variety of trees including a cedar, which we soon learned was the chosen spot where the hummingbird perched. It was also attending feeders in the front and back of the house. It was cold, 17 F, that morning and overcast with scattered snow on the ground, and when ice covered portions of the feeders periodically, the Stamns had to bring the feeders inside to thaw the nutrient solution. As we watched the bird, we could see it was definitely a *Selasphorus* by the extensive cinnamon coloration on the face, underparts, and upper tail coverts. We also noted a solid green back and the bird's small size. It was apparent that it was an immature male by the presence of some larger reddish metallic spots spread along the lower throat



Immature male Allen's Hummingbird, First State Record. Macon County, IL. 17 November 1998. Photos by Dennis Oehmke.

(females have central spots). It is almost impossible to see the tail feather configuration and colors because these birds are so quick. Since I had brought a mist net, we decided, with the Stamm's permission, to catch the bird. After a couple of near misses, we captured the bird when it was on its way to its perching spot in the cedar.

Once extracted from the net I took it in the house where it was measured with a millimeter ruler: exposed culmen = 16mm, wing chord flattened = 39.5mm, tail length = 25mm. I also pulled tail feathers one and five which are now in the Illinois State Museum's bird collection, (ISM #660484). Myra Deaton took a

series of photographs of the bird in the hand, concentrating on identification features. The hummingbird in the net bag gave a soft "tchup" call, as well as a series of these calls. Within minutes we released the bird so it would not become traumatized. At this point we were fairly certain it was an Allen's Hummingbird (*Selasphorus sasin*). We based our tentative identification on the all green back sharply turning to rufous at the upper tail coverts, the measurements of tail feathers one and five, and the lack of emargination of tail feather two.

Within the next few days, I sent the tail feathers and photographs to hummingbird expert Nancy Newfield

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