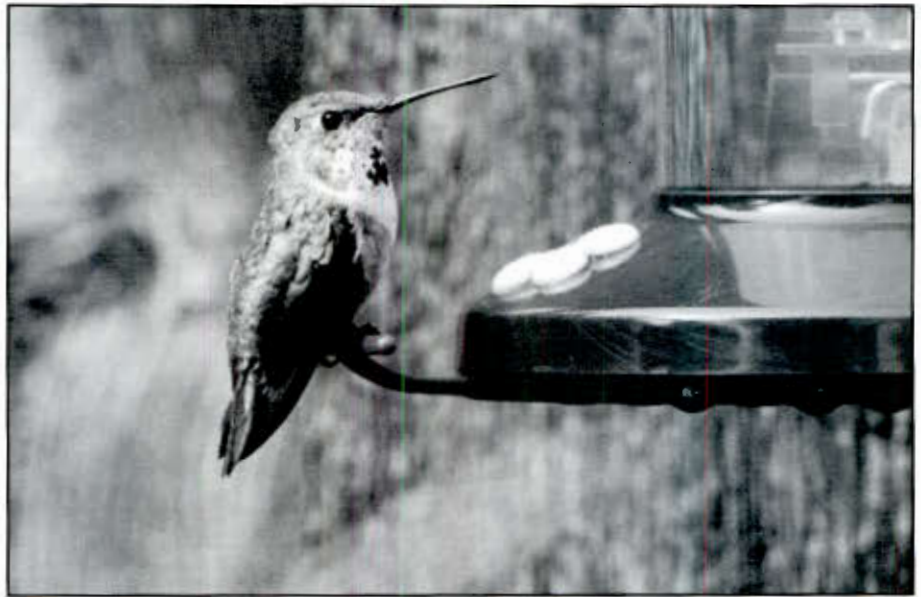


Champaign County's First Rufous Hummingbird

On 6 October 1996, I received a telephone call from Urbana resident, Ernest Walker, who wanted to report a "female Rufous Hummingbird" for inclusion in our local Audubon Society's newsletter field notes. Since there have only been five other records of the Rufous/Allen's superspecies (two confirmed as Rufous), my interest was peaked, but so was my skepticism.

I arranged to visit Walker's yard with Elaine Regehr. We met Walker at 7:15 the next morning. He had already seen the bird once that day. After a five minute wait, the bird flew to the feeder. I was immediately impressed by the amount of rufous on this bird. All the observers noted the extensive rufous wash on the sides and undertail coverts and extensive rufous on the lower back and upper sides above the wings. Through a telescope trained on the bird at 25X, rufous flecking could be seen in the upper back. There was also extensive rufous in the face. There was considerable speckling on the throat, converging into a patch in the center of the throat. This patch reflected orange red in the sun.

We were quickly able to conclude that the bird was either a Rufous (*Selasphorus rufus*) or Allen's Hummingbird (*S. sasin*). The extent of rufous in the upperparts and the throat patch made the initial observers speculate that the bird was more likely an immature male than a female. During this time, the bird never displayed its tail in a way that could lead us to determine the extent of rufous in the outer tail feathers. However, on a subsequent visit, the bird was observed preening its spread tail, revealing a great deal of rufous, especially on the outer rectrices. After observing the bird for 45 minutes, we spread the word, contacting local birders and the Central Illinois Rare Bird Alert. That same day and on 8 and 9 October 1996, the bird was observed by birders from Champaign, Vermilion, Macon, and Sangamon Counties. Several of these birders witnessed the hummingbird display aggressive behavior towards a Ruby-throated Hum-



Rufous Hummingbird, Urbana, Champaign Co. 9 Oct. 1996. Photo by Dennis Oehmke.

mingbird (*Archilocus colubris*) and a Ruby-crowned Kinglet.

Most observers thought the bird was more likely an immature male than a female, but could not be certain. Although photographs were obtained by Helen Parker and Dennis Oemke, determination as to whether this bird was a Rufous or Allen's Hummingbird could not be ascertained. But, on 25 October, Steve Bailey of the Illinois Natural History Survey, who has a permit to do so, netted the hummingbird and pulled and measured the second and fifth rectrices. The rectrices were then presented to the Illinois Ornithological Records Committee. The measurements and in-hand observations confirmed that this was a female Rufous Hummingbird.

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