



Anna's Hummingbird: Illinois' First Record

*By Vernon Kleen
with details from Ann Hayes*

This story begins anecdotally with Frank and Donna Sturm, of rural Chillicothe (Peoria County), Illinois, returning from a mid-November vacation only to discover that one, possibly two, hummingbirds were still visiting their feeders. When Ann Hayes, who lives within a mile of the Sturms, learned of this, she emailed me the following message on 20 Nov. 2010, "...A neighbor of mine is still seeing hummingbirds at her feeder. Mine has been down since Oct. 15. I have done some reading, and places on-line state that any birds at the feeders after late October are inferior or sick ruby-throats. Or they may be Rufous Hummingbirds. I am going to ask the neighbor what she is seeing. I have also read that some people leave a feeder up all winter – in Illinois? Would that make any sense at all? How long do you leave your feeders up?" The reason Ann contacted me is because I have been banding Ruby-throated Hummingbirds (*Archilochus colubris*) – 164 to date – at her place each August the past five years.

My email response back to Ann that same day was, "I always encourage people to keep their feeders out until at least Thanksgiving – it's during the months of October through January that the unusual species show up. The Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*) is the most expected of the unusual species (there's been one down near Charleston, Illinois, the past three weeks). However, other species have been observed here in Illinois.... I'd be interested in hearing more about the hummingbird(s) at



your neighbor's feeders. If they are Ruby-throated, that does not mean anything is particularly wrong with them (after all, if there was something seriously wrong with them they wouldn't have survived this long). If they are something other than Ruby-throats – would you be willing to let me know right away?"

The message continued, "At this time of year these hummingbirds tend to stay at the same feeders for several weeks (since those are usually the only feeders available – because most are taken down before Thanksgiving). People with such birds either bring the feeder in at night and put it out before dawn the next morning, or, they have two feeders and alternate them to keep the juice from getting too cold. Birds coming to feeders at this time of year occasionally stay into January (or all winter) before they finally leave (or disappear). So, again, please let me know if your neighbor thinks she has something other than a Ruby-throat – which is

**Photos of Anna's
Hummingbird taken
in Peoria County
on 2 December 2010.**

Photos by Ann Hayes.

a great possibility. If a photo could be taken and sent down to me – that would be helpful."

On receipt of my note, Ann responded late that night (still 20 November), "...I am going to put a feeder out here in hopes that I may attract some hummers and I will speak with the neighbor down the street tomorrow about her hummingbirds."

To Ann's surprise, a hummingbird came to her newly placed feeder almost immediately (21 November). Then, in mid-afternoon on 24 November (the day before Thanksgiving) she emailed me back indicating, "I just called Donna and the hummingbird was at her feeder. She was unable to get a picture – but will keep trying – she does think it is a rufous, and said you would be more than welcome to contact her about coming to band. Now to my hummer – yes, I put out a feeder and immediately got one. We were not home yesterday – but did see it in the a.m. before we left. It is definitely an immature male ruby – I could see a few red feathers peeking through on his neck. I have not seen him yet today ...however, since Donna just saw hers, mine should show soon.