

Rufous Hummingbird Strikes Again!
(twice yet)

Ed Pierce

Two years and one week later, Ohio had its second record of a Rufous hummingbird. On August 22, 1987, Rusty Hodgekiss' brother reported to Rusty that he had seen a red hummingbird while mowing Rusty's yard. Rusty made little note of this as he "knew nothing like this was around" since he had two active hummingbird feeders with five or six ruby-throateds on the average and up to fifteen maximum. But his wife, Sarah, saw the bird the next day and confirmed it as a Rufous with a field guide. Two days passed with the bird as regular as a clock at the feeder (every twenty minutes) (see photo in this issue for type) until Rusty could find the name of a local birder who he remembered had written an article in Bird Watcher's Digest. He called Larry Rosche, who called me, and on August 27, 1987, about 10:30 o'clock a.m., we were sitting on Rusty's open back porch waiting on the bird while his small children and dog played with the neighbor children in the yard next to the porch. Suddenly, there was the bird, a colorful sight, perched on a branch in the maple tree that shaded the porch and the playing children. The bird's orange back was more prominent than I remembered from the Columbus Rufous. It's orange belly was also apparent, but I never got the gorget in the correct light needed to change the black to orange; what a beautiful little bird.

Rusty would use this same branch as a focusing point for subsequent observers (30 the next day) to watch for the arrival of this bird. It used the exact spot when arriving to feed at the porch feeder and while resting between feeds. Occasionally, the bird would use the second feeder attached to Rusty's garage about 50 feet away.

As the report circulated, Rusty estimates about 150 observers made their way to his house in Southington, Ohio (Trumbull County) appropriately known as Delightful, Ohio, on the map. Rusty and Sarah arranged benches and chairs, just outside the picket fence that confines their children to their back yard play space, about 100 feet and in full view of both feeders. On Saturday, August 29, 1987, Cheryl and I sat in the warm morning sun on such a bench and lazily awaited and then watched this pretty hummer.

Rusty, a carpenter, working then on bridges on the Ohio Turnpike, and Sarah, a school teacher, both in their twenties, enjoyed the bird and its fame, making efforts to be sure that each new observer saw it. Our thanks to them for such wonderful hospitality that must have been disruptive to their lives.

They had been using humminbird feeders for three years. Rusty liked a feed solution product called Nature's Spring which he could purchase in a half gallon jug and merely add sugar. He had switched to this at the end of 1986, and felt it increased the number of birds he attracted.

Disappointment first came Sunday, August 30, when the bird didn't appear until dusk, eluding most observers. Monday, it was not regular and at the only Tuesday, September 1st sighting at 3:00 o'clock p.m., the Hodgekisses said goodbye and the Rufous was gone.