

NOTES

FIRST RECORDS OF XANTUS' HUMMINGBIRD IN CALIFORNIA

KEM HAINEBACH, 231 Eureka Street, San Francisco, California 94114-2436

On the afternoon of 30 January 1988, Art Edwards, Peter Willmann and I were birding at 157 Via Baja in Ventura, Ventura County, California. Virgil Ketner, of 169 Via Baja, was also there to show us the adult male Broad-billed Hummingbird (*Cyananthus latirostris*) that had been coming to his and his neighbor's feeders. The weather was clear, calm, hazy, the temperature about 60°F. About 1430, while waiting for the Broad-billed Hummingbird to reappear, I heard a buzzy chatter coming from a blooming bottlebrush tree, then saw an unfamiliar hummingbird in it. I called the others over to look at the bird, and Edwards and I saw it hovering in the shaded bottlebrush for perhaps 10 seconds before it flew off. I wrote the following description about 10 or 15 minutes after my observation: Moderate size hummingbird. All green back. All pale rufous-beige underparts. Green crown. White face with broad sooty eye line, much broader than the white borders above and below it. Dark bill. Feeding in bottlebrush. Low-pitched buzzy chatter.

Later that day, I discussed my observation with Richard A. Erickson, and he tentatively identified my brief initial description as being of a Xantus' Hummingbird (*Hylocharis xantusii*). In the meantime, Ketner had called James S. Royer, who came over, saw the bird, and also identified it as Xantus' Hummingbird. It wasn't until the next morning, after about 60 people had seen the bird at dawn, that I was able to consult Peterson and Chalif (1973), and I also identified the bird I had seen as very similar to their painting of a female Xantus' Hummingbird.

About 1300 that day, with the weather about the same as the previous day, we returned to 157 Via Baja, and all saw the bird. Much better views, some in bright sunlight, enabled me to write the following description.

The bill was about 1.5 head-lengths long, decurved near the tip, with some red at the base of the mandible, otherwise blackish. Viewed from below, the bill was a thin triangle. The throat, breast, and belly were pale orange; the crissum was whitish. A whitish "T" stretched across the base of breast and extended from the center of the breast down the center of belly. A dark eye patch was boldly bordered white above, but *not* below. Below the eye patch was just the pale orange of the throat. [A stunning photograph by Larry Sansone, Figure 1, shows a white patch below the dark eye patch and above the spotty orange of the throat and underparts. The supercilium is, however, more boldly white than the area below the eye. The appearance of white below the eye patch, described in my original observation, seems to depend on how the bird is holding its head.] The crown and back were green, the rump a dark gray, the same as the wings. The tail was rounded when folded, as seen from below. I saw pale orange outermost tail feathers when the tail was silhouetted against patches of open sky through the tree. All of the tail feathers I could see from below seemed of uniform color their entire length. I could see no black or white on the tail, just green and orange. [A photograph by Virgil Ketner, Figure 2, shows the bird hovering at a feeder with its tail fanned. The outer tail feathers are all orange. The inner ones have a subterminal patch of dark blue.] The bird perched occasionally for about a minute at a time. It also called as it fed, moving quickly a short distance (6 to 12 inches), staying a few seconds, and moving again. The call was a loud low buzzy rapid "zit-zit-zit-zit . . .," about five or six notes per second.

This description differs from Peterson's painting of an adult female Xantus' Hummingbird (in Peterson and Chalif 1973) in two ways: the gray, not green, rump, and the whitish, not orange, crissum. I don't know the significance of this.

NOTES

A conversation with Nita Ketner revealed that she may have observed the bird outside her window at 169 Via Baja as early as Thursday, 28 January 1988, two days before my initial observation. The bird later proved to be an adult female by building two nests, sequentially, and laying two eggs in each. All the eggs proved infertile. Virgil Ketner found both nests. The bird began the first on 3 February 1988 in a Catalina Cherry tree (*Prunus lyonii*), laid two eggs, and brooded them regularly until 1 March, when it began leaving the nest for an hour or two at a time. On 2 March, the nest was collected by Lloyd Kiff for the Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology. As Kiff was leaving, Ketner observed the bird beginning a new nest in a tree full of ripe avocados. It completed the nest despite harvesting of the avocados and laid two more eggs, the first on 7 March. Ketner observed it incubating the eggs through 26 March. He last observed it early on the morning of 27 March. No one reported seeing it after that.



Figure 1. Female Xantus' Hummingbird on the nest in Ventura, Ventura County, California, 1988.

Photo by Larry Sansone

NOTES

This nesting time is consistent with that observed by Chester Lamb (1925) at Comondú (Mission San José de Comondú, in the interior of Baja California Sur, northwest of Loreto) in the northern part of the species' usual range. He inferred from his observations that nesting began in early February and continued at least through April. Two eggs were usually found in a nest, though sometimes only one was found. Further south, in the Sierra de la Laguna, his observations led him to infer a later nesting period, mid-July to mid-September.

During its stay, this Xantus' Hummingbird was seen by countless birdwatchers and thoroughly documented by photographs, now in the files of the California Bird Records Committee at the Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology, Los Angeles. The record was accepted unanimously by that committee (Pyle and McCaskie, this issue).

Xantus' Hummingbird is endemic to southern Baja California, nesting as far north as San Ignacio in northern Baja California Sur. It is sedentary, but known to occur outside its breeding range. In Baja California (Norte), it has been recorded reliably only from Santa Gertrudis, a mission about 8 km north of the border with Baja California Sur, by Huey (1940). As an aside, Huey noted, "The presence of Xantus Hummingbirds (*Basilinna xantusii*), several of which were observed, definitely



Figure 2. Female Xantus' Hummingbird at feeder in Ventura, Ventura County, California, 1988.

Photo by Virgil Ketner

NOTES

records this Cape species from a locality near the northernmost extremity of its range." The report by Martin Cody, cited by Wilbur (1987), that this species is "common" at San Telmo, appears to be in error. I visited there in November 1986 with Philip Unitt, and he also visited there in June 1986, May 1987, and February 1991, without seeing any Xantus' Hummingbirds. San Telmo, just south of latitude 31°N and just east of Mexico Highway 1, is frequently visited by birdwatchers in search of Gray Thrashers (*Toxostoma cinereum*). If Xantus' Hummingbird were common there, there would be some confirmation of the fact. However, there is no other record from San Telmo.

Richard Klauke of St. Paul, Alberta, Canada, reported seeing an adult male Xantus' Hummingbird at Yaqui Well, Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, San Diego County, on 27 December 1986 (in McCaskie 1987). After a delay in being submitted, this record has now also been accepted by the California Bird Records Committee (Pyle and McCaskie, this issue). An excerpt from Mr. Klauke's description, taken from his submission to the Records Committee, follows.

"Looking at its side I could see the reddish black-tipped slightly decurved beak attached to a face totally unlike that of a Broad-billed Hummer. There was a broad white streak running from above the eyes down the sides of the neck, leaving a narrow black mask through the eyes and black running from the beak up over the crown. Sizewise, it was larger than a Costa's and smaller than an Anna's Hummingbird. When it turned its back toward me I noticed immediately that the tail feathers were a dark reddish brown.... The black mask and crown revealed no purplish or other iridescent reflections, even as it turned its head, being totally black. The gorget was a solid brilliant green, and immediately below and sharply demarcated from the gorget was an orangy-buff belly and chest."

The bird Mr. Klauke saw was frustratingly uncooperative, and he was unable to refind and photograph it. Although he promptly reported his observation to other area birdwatchers, they too were unable to refind it. The Ventura bird, appearing a little over a year later, amply redressed the frustration for North American birders. Virgil Ketter's guest book lists over 1000 visitors who saw the bird during its nearly two-month stay.

These are the only records of Xantus' Hummingbird outside Baja California.

I thank the reviewer of this note, Steve N. G. Howell, for the reference to Lamb's article on the nesting of Xantus' Hummingbird, and for pointing out that the Lucifer Hummingbird is not at all similar to Xantus' and that no comparison is required. I also thank the editor for encouragement and guidance in preparing this article.

LITERATURE CITED

- Huey, L. M. 1940. A new Cardinal from central Lower California, Mexico. *Trans. San Diego Soc. Nat. Hist.* 9:215-218.
- Lamb, C. C. 1925. Observations on the Xantus Hummingbird. *Condor* 27:89-92.
- McCaskie, G. 1987. The winter season. Southern Pacific Coast region. *Am. Birds* 41:327-332.
- Peterson, R. T., and Chalif, E. L. 1973. *A Field Guide to Mexican Birds*. Houghton Mifflin, Boston.
- Pyle, P., and McCaskie, G. 1992. Thirteenth report of the California Bird Records Committee. *W. Birds* 23:97-132.
- Wilbur, S. R. 1987. *Birds of Baja California*. Univ. of Calif. Press, Berkeley.

Accepted 8 February 1991