News, Notes, Comments

An Unusual Adult Female Ruby-throated Hummingbird Showing Partial Immature Male Plumage

On 15 Jun 2007 I captured and banded an adult female Ruby-throated Hummingbird *(Archilochus colubris)* having six rows of heavy green streaking on chin and throat, typical of an immature male in August. This female was recaptured again on 31 May 2008 and photographed showing the same green streaks (photograph below as Fig 1.).

Both captures occurred at Jenny Lake, 7 km west of the village of Corinth, Saratoga County, NY, within the Adirondack State Park. Other than for the bird's unusual chin and throat markings, all other aspects of its plumage and various measurements were either consistently in the female range, or definitively female. Both capture dates occurred well before the reported first appearance of newly fledged young in New York on 12 Jul (Andrle and Carroll 1988) and on both captures the bird lacked bill corrugations of a juvenile (Baltosser 1987).

The following measurements in mm (2007 data followed by 2008 data) were consistently female when compared to those in Baltosser (1987), Robinson et al. (1996) and Pyle (1997): Wing chord, 45.0-45.0; tail length, 28.0-27.0; tail fork, 1.5-2.0; exposed culmen, 18.5-18.6. Other criteria which were exclusively female, differing from male, were: white-tipped outer three rectices, both following a complete molt; and primary six (P6) outer web of uniform width, not emarginated (Baltosser 1987, Robinson et al. 1996 and Pyle 1997). Additionally, male and female ruby-throats differ in the distance from the tip of P1 to the tip of P6. After-hatching-year females averaged 13.38 mm (range 12.0-14.5, n=64), hatching-year females averaged 13.74 mm (range 12.0-16.0, n=40), while hatching-year males averaged 10.88 mm (range 8.5-12.5, n=60; R. P. Yunick, unpublished data, measurements made to nearest 0.5 mm). This bird's P6-P 1 measurement was 13.5 mm at both captures, putting it in the female range.

Two recent hummingbird field guides (Williamson 2001, Howell 2002) do not illustrate or describe any female Ruby-throated Hummingbird plumage matching this bird. Baltosser (1987) also makes no mention of a female plumage as shown here. He describes adult female throat markings as "virtually absent (> 95%) or when present (< 5%) very faint," while juvenile male markings are "moderately to heavily streaked in most (76%) birds." Robinson et al. (1996) also do not refer to streaks of this sort on an adult female; instead mention the typical "usually more decidedly whitish on chin and throat."

Based on my experience handling Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, I have seen considerable variability in the intensity of streaking on the chin and throat of hatching-year males, and far less variability in the much lesser amount of this streaking on females. This female, however, has green streaking that exceeds that of most hatching-year males in August and is as intensely streaked as the most heavily streaked males I have seen.

Fig. 1. Photograph of 31 May 2008 of adult female Ruby-throated Hummingbird, band number N-58367.

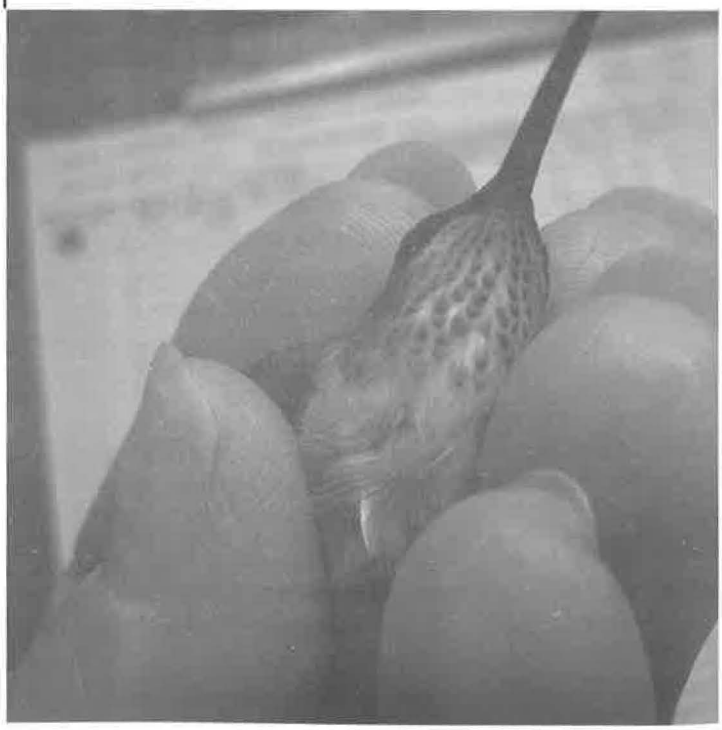

Photo by Robert P. Yunick

LITERATURE CITED

Andrle, R.F. and J.R. Carroll, eds. 1988. The atlas of breeding birds in New York State. Cornell Univ. Press, Ithaca, NY.

Baltosser, W.H. 1987. Age, species and sex determination of four North American hummingbirds. *N. Am. Bird Bander* 12:151-166.

Howell, S.N.G. 2002. Hummingbirds of North America, the photographic guide. Academic Press, San Diego, CA.

Pyle, P. 1997. Identification guide to North American birds. Part I. Slate Creek Press, Bolinas, CA.

Robinson, T. R., R.R. Sargent, and M.B. Sargent. 1996. Ruby-throated Hummingbird *(Archilochus colubris)*. *In* The birds of North America (A. Poole, ed.). Ithaca, NY: Cornell Lab of Ornithology, retrieved from The Birds of North America Online: http:/bna.birds.cornell.edu.bnaproxy.birds.cornell.edu/bna/species/204

Williamson, S.L. 2001. A field guide to hummingbirds of North America. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, MA.

Robert P. Yunick
1527 Myron Street
Schenectady, NY 12309-4223
anneboby@aol.com

Recent Literature

BANDING HISTORIES AND BIOGRAPHIES

First European Starling in North Dakota. C. S. Houston. 1997. *Prairie Nat.* 29:274. 863 University Dr., Saskatoon, SK S7N 0J8 (As previously documented in *Bird Banding Notes* 2[13]:206, G. C. M. Bierens of Fairmont, ND, banded a starling on 1 April 1935, three years prior to the first state record mentioned in Robert E. Stewart's 1975 book on breeding birds of North Dakota. Houston also lists Bierens' banding totals for three years.) MKM

In memoriam Myrtle Agnes "Bud" Biggs (1912-1998). R. Kildonk. 1999. *Pica* 19(4):53-54. Address not included. (Brief biography of naturalist in Rosebud, AB, area, whose contributions included hawk banding "as early as 1938.") MKM

A tribute to Myrtle Agnes Beynon Biggs (1912-1998). B. Storms. 1999. *Pica* 19(4):55-57. Address not included. (additional biographical details). MKM

EQUIPMENT AND TECHNIQUES

Effect of radiotransmitters on Northern Bobwhite annual survival. W. E. Palmer and S. D. Wellendorf. 2007. *J. Wildl. Manage.* 71:1281-1287. Tall Timbers Res. Stn., 13093 Henry Beadel Dr., Tallahassee, FL 32312 (The authors used five years of telemetry data and band recovery data to compare annual survival rates of Northern Bobwhites [*Colinus virginianus*] fitted with a radio-transmitter with those fitted with a leg band only. They found that annual survival rates did not differ between birds fitted with the two types of markers. Bobwhites wearing transmitters were not any more likely to be harvested than were bobwhites without markers. Female bobwhites appeared to be slightly more vulnerable to harvest than were males regardless of whether or not they were wearing a transmitter. Thus, annual survival estimates based on telemetry data are reliable estimates and not biased due to any effect of the transmitters themselves.) SG

Factors influencing survival of radiotagged and banded Northern Bobwhites in Georgia. T. M. Terhune, D. C. Sisson, J. B. Grand and H. B. Stribling. 2007. *J. Wildl. Manage.* 71:1288-1297. Albany Quail Project, D. B. Warnell School of Forestry & Nat. Resources, Univ. of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602 (Data from >6,500 banded Northern Bobwhites [*Colinus virginianus*] [>2,500 of which were also fitted with radio-transmitters] were used to investigate effects of radio-tagging and the influence of gender, age, season and location on annual survival rates. The two study sites both consisted primarily of low-density pine forest with scattered small agricultural fields. Both sites have been managed intensively for bobwhites for >50 yr through the use of frequent burning, timber thinning, predator control and supplemental feeding. More than 1,100 birds were recaptured [n = 597] or recovered [n = 356] over the eight-year study. Annual survival rates of radio-tagged birds ranged between 0.143 and 0.297 and were similar to survival rates estimated from band recovery