

**FIRST RECORD OF THE CALLIOPE HUMMINGBIRD
(*STELLULA CALLIOPE*) IN ALABAMA**

Robert R. Sargent

On 5 October 1990 Elizabeth Williams of Mobile called to tell me that she had a hummingbird in her freezer that she found dead on 24 December 1989 at her neighbor's home south of Mobile. She said she found the bird on the floor of an outside alcove, apparently the victim of a severe cold spell that gripped Alabama for over a week and dropped the temperature in Mobile to near -18 C (0 F).

The specimen was delivered to me a week later, on 13 October, by Edith McClinton, who was attending the Alabama Ornithological Society meeting on Dauphin Island. My immediate impression upon seeing the specimen was that it was a Calliope Hummingbird (*Stellula calliope*). If after close study the bird turned out in fact to be a Calliope, it would be a new species for the state and the fourth species of hummingbird recorded in Alabama.

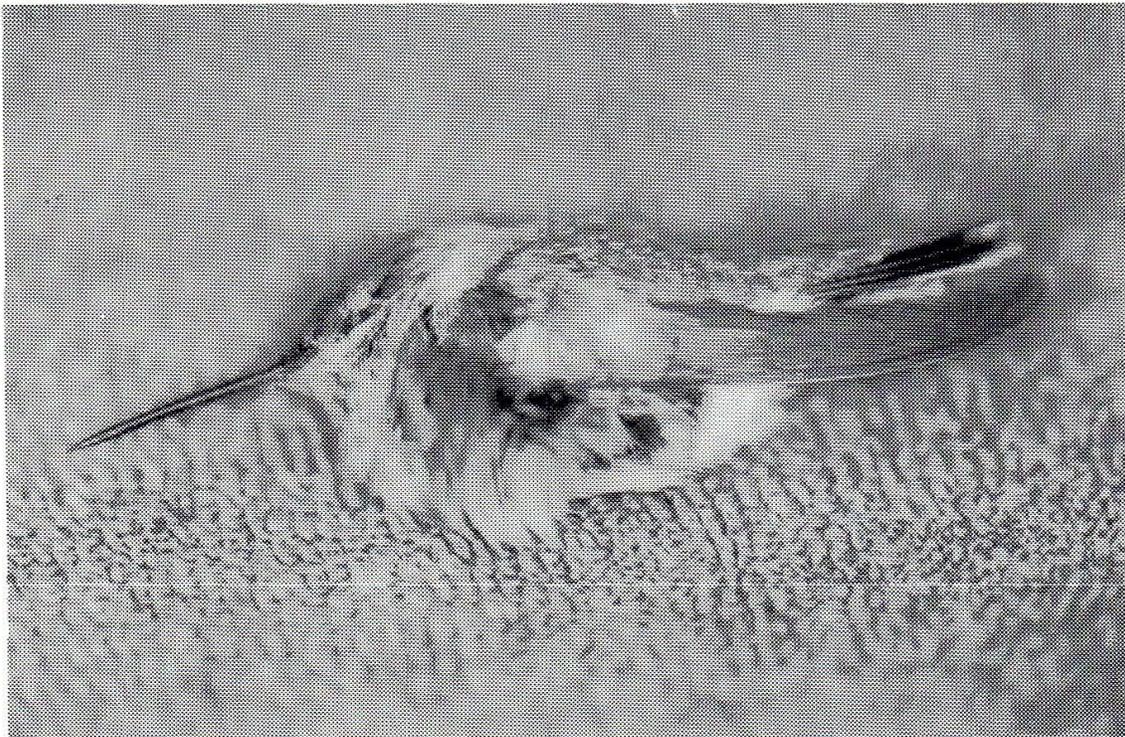


Figure 1. Calliope Hummingbird specimen found in Mobile 24 December 1989.
(Photo by Robert R. Sargent)

Back home, with the aid of texts and a technical key given to me by Nancy Newfield of Metairie, Louisiana, and information from an unpublished study of the Calliope by Dr. William Baltosser of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, I was able to confirm that my initial identification was correct, that the specimen was indeed a Calliope Hummingbird, and probably a sub-adult female.

A close examination of the tail feathers revealed that the central rectrices were subspatulate in shape and the margins of the basal one-third reddish in color. The distal two-thirds was dark metallic green and the entire shaft red. It is the subspatulate shape that distinguishes the Calliope from all other hummingbirds, as shown below in Fig. 2.

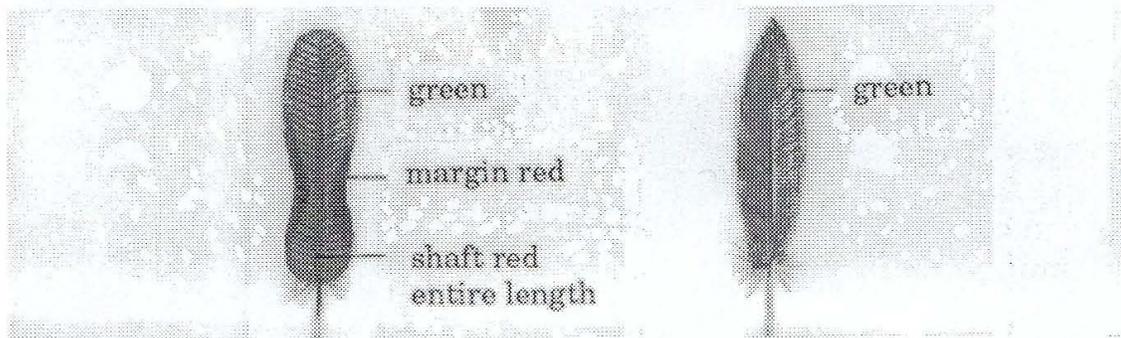


Figure 2. Comparison of a central rectrix of a Calliope Hummingbird (left) with that of a Ruby-throated Hummingbird. (Illustrations by Bill Summerour)

In hummingbirds, the presence of striations in the upper bill indicates a hatching year bird. If the striations are deep and extensive, the bird is a juvenile. In transverse section the upper bill of this specimen had a rounded appearance with shallow striations near the base, indicating the bird was a sub-adult. By the first spring following hatching, all striations have disappeared and the bill is smooth (Baltosser, *North American Bird Bander*, 1987).

Since the specimen represented a first state record, the following description is given to document the record: *wing* 40.5 mm; *tail* 22.3 mm; *culmen* 15.3 mm; *weight* 2.37 grams; *bill width* at feather impingement 1.9 mm, short, straight and thin; *head* dull gray-green; *back* metallic bronze green (heavily bronzed); *tail* short, with arc-shaped reddish rufous color on the outside of the basal one-third (hidden by the tail coverts); *retrices* nos. 2, 3, 4, and 5 with some white on tips; *retrix* no. 1 black at tip; center of retrices green; shafts of retrices reddish; *breast and sides* bright buff with a cinnamon cast; *throat* grayish white, heavily spotted with bronze-green spots; *belly* cinnamon buff; *crissum* faint cinnamon buff. An additional observation was that the specimen's weight was near

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normal although it had been frozen for nine months. A photo of the specimen, compared with that of a Ruby-throated Hummingbird, is shown in Fig. 3, below.

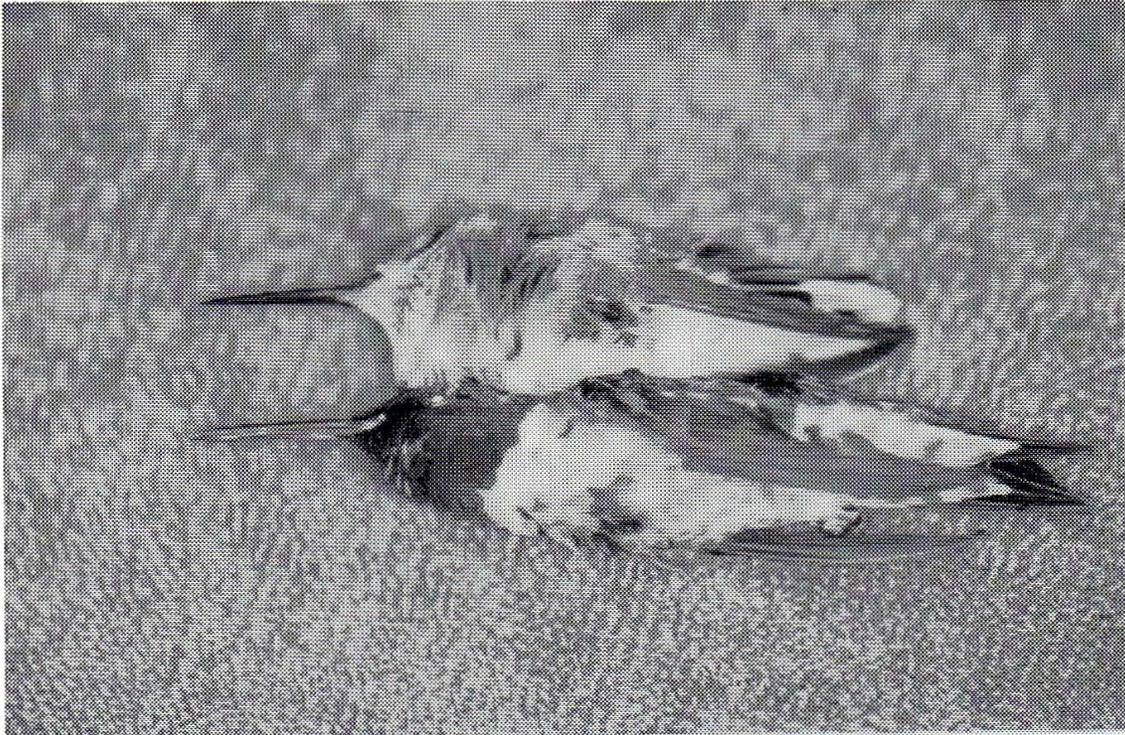


Figure 3. Comparison of Calliope Hummingbird (top) with a Ruby-throated Hummingbird. (Photo by Robert R. Sargent)

At a feeder, or in the field, a Calliope would appear noticeably smaller than a Ruby-throated Hummingbird (*Archilochus colubris*) and would have a reddish color at the base of the retrices. However, since the reddish color is difficult to see, and because female and immature Ruby-throated may also have buffy sides as does the Calliope, positive identification can be difficult. Adult males should be no problem, but female and immature Calliopes are best verified in hand.

In the winter of 1989–1990 there were three records of Calliopes wintering in the Southeast (*American Birds* Volume 44, No.4). On 18 December 1989 I banded one of these that was coming to a feeder in Fort Walton Beach, Florida. Another was in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and the third was in Alabama and is the subject of this paper.

The Calliope, like the Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*) summers in the northwestern United States and western Canada. In many locations, both species are nesting when snow is still on the ground and nighttime temperatures are well below freezing. We now have

enough banding records of Rufous Hummingbirds (over 50 in the Southeast) to know that they regularly winter here. The Calliope may be an occasional winter visitor also. These birds are well suited to cold weather, so leave your feeders up and watch closely, especially between September and April.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Nancy Newfield and Dr. William Baltosser for their help in identifying the specimen.

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FIRST NESTING RECORD OF THE SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER (*TYRANNUS FORFICATUS*) IN ALABAMA

Paul D. Kittle and Dee C. Patterson

Imhof (1976) considered the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus forficatus*) to be rare on migration and occasional in summer for inland Alabama. Nesting of this species in Alabama, however, had not been recorded. Successful nesting records in nearby southeastern states include those at Murfreesboro, TN (Jackson, 1984), Catersville, GA (LeGrand, 1989), Laurens Co., SC (LeGrand, 1982), and Tupelo, MS (Jackson, Howell, and Werschkul, 1975). An unsuccessful nesting attempt by this species occurred in Hardin Co., TN, during the summer of 1990 (Damien Simbeck, pers. comm.).

The junior author and Dee Patterson observed a pair of Scissor-tailed Flycatchers constructing a nest on 30 June 1990. This nest was located 7.2 km west of Florence, Lauderdale Co., AL, and was checked approximately every other day for the next six weeks by the authors and other local birders. The nest was built in a slippery elm (*Ulmus rubra*) at a height of approximately 10–12 m. This tree contained many dead branches, measured 40 cm in diameter, and was in a small grove of trees surrounded by open agricultural land. Approximately half of the surrounding land was cropland (cotton and soybeans) and half was a fallow field overgrown with thick weeds and grasses.

Nest building was observed on 30 June and 1 July. The female was observed sitting on the nest from 2 through 21 July. Feeding of nestlings