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From: "Don and MT" <dmitchell@pressenter.com>

To: suefinnegan@comcast.net

Sent: Monday, November 9, 2009 11:53:16 PM GMT -05:00 US/Canada Eastern

Subject: Re: Hummingbird

Sue:

Thanks for contacting me and giving me the opportunity to take a look

at the measurements and photos of the bird.  Whatever the bird may be,

it is an exceptional bird for Massachusetts. This seems to be one of

those handful of Selasphorus that don't fit unequivocally into a tidy

age/sex/species category.  While a suite of characters should be

looked at to distinguish Selasphorous hummingbirds, I think width of

R5 is the single most reliable character to distinguish between Rufous

and Allen's, and the extremely narrow width of R5 in your bird seems

to point to Allen's, no matter which sex and age class the bird fits

into.  The shape of R2 is a somewhat helpful character in

distinguishing Allen's from Rufous, but less reliable in females in my

experience.  I can't say with certainty that the bird is an AHY

female.  Allen's have an extremely early breeding season (beginning

early Feb for migratory sasin, and sedentarius may nest and January

and earlier, much like Anna's); therefore any bill corrugations in a

HY bird might be very faint by this time of year.  Although adult

female Allen's may show some rufous color on the rump, it seems much

more extensive than is typical in this individual.  The throat pattern

is somewhat ambiguous.  The iridescent  feathers seem grouped together

as is typical in adult females, but otherwise the throat is very

heavily marked as is typical of HY males.  I find the culmen

measurement to be troubling.  I've never come across a Selasphorus

sasin sasin specimen or live bird with such a lengthy culmen, clearly

within the range of sedentarius.  Any out of range Allen's would be

expected to be the migratory S. sasin sasin rather than S. s.

sedentarius.  One possible explanation for the aberrant plumage and

measurements of this bird is that this bird is a hybrid sasin/ sedentarius or rufus/sedentarius.   The breeding ranges of sasin and

sedentarius now have met in Southern California, and both sasin and

rufus migrate in Spring through the breeding range of sedentarius at a

time when sedentarius is breeding, so there are opportunities for

interbreeding.

In summary, the ambiguity of the plumage and measurements would make

me hesitant to definitively call this bird an AHY female Allen's.

Also, the same ambiguity raises the possibility that the bird is of

hybrid origin, including Rufous/Allen's.

I hope this helps, and if I can be of any more assistance, please

don't hesitate to contact me.

Donald Mitchell

On Nov 5, 2009, at 3:03 PM, suefinnegan@comcast.net wrote:

> Hi Don,

> Nancy Newfield suggested I contact you. If you have time, could you

> look at some pictures I have and measurements of a hummer I banded

> last week. Measurements point to Allen's and also AHY female but

> plumage looks male. Photos aren't that great so I understand if this

> is a problem. I will mention that the tip of r1 looks black in

> photos but was actually green. I have experience with only a handful

> of Rufous and no Allen's. I went by measurements and lack of

> striations on the bill to age/sex the bird. Any thoughts would be

> appreciated.

>

> Thanks,

> Sue

>

>

> Sue Finnegan

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