

HUMMINGBIRDS – SO MANY RETURNS

Last year my article entitled, “Two surprisingly exceptional days: 720 hummingbirds” was printed in *North American Bird Bander* (Kleen 2020). Those 720 hummingbirds caught at two sites included 413 new bandings, 163 returns, 141 repeats and a foreign retrap. The Zwicker site, about 80 km southwest of Springfield, IL, accounted for 589 (81.8%) of those birds. Banding 50 to 100 or more hummingbirds in one day at single locations is not that unusual, at least in Illinois; however, few sites achieve what has become a standard at the Zwickers. From 2015 through 2021 there have been 16 banding days at the Zwickers with 14 days including a 3-hour session in the early morning and another 3-hour session in mid-afternoon. More than 100 birds have been banded there each day on all but the two single-session days. This year (2021) there were 106 birds banded on 2 July, 108 birds on 13 August and 172 birds on 10 September. But, it was not the number of new bandings that was so impressive this year, it was the number of recaptured returns.

In last year’s “exceptional” report, 86 (37.6%) of the 229 birds captured at the Zwickers on 31 July 2020 were returns that had been banded between 2015 and 2019. In that report it was noted that “A more traditional rate of return at sites where I have banded for three or more years is 15-25% (and that is primarily for adult birds banded early each season rather than young birds banded later in the season (which have a low survival rate their first year and neither hatched at nor is necessarily expected to return to the capture area).” This year (2021) the percentage of birds captured that were returns (from 2015 through 2020) on the first two banding dates was even higher: 2 July, 88 of 194 (45.4%) and 13 August, 107 of 215 (49.8%) (see table below). From the table it is evident that returning females were more frequently captured than males; the same has been overwhelmingly true in Michigan as well (Chartier et al. 2021). Perhaps breeding site fidelity is more significant for females than males in the breeding season just as it is for winter sites for hummingbirds that winter in Florida and Alabama (Bassett et. al 2021),

Banding Session	Sex	Returns of birds banded in:						
		2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
2 Jul	Male	--	2	--	5	13	--	20
	Female	1	11	11	23	22	--	68
13 Aug	Male	--	2	--	6	4	12	24
	Female	1	16	7	19	24	16	107
10 Sep	Male	--	--	--	--	--	--	0
	Female	1	3	2	6	2	3	17

In another comparison, Chartier et al. (2021) had a return (or re-encounter) rates of 11.6% to 17.6% of the birds banded in previous years at three summer banding sites. Return data for the Zwicker site from 2020 to 2021, the only year data are available,

Literature cited

- Bassett, F., and F. Dietrich. 2021. A second decade of overwintering hummingbirds in Florida and Alabama. *Wilson Journal of Ornithology* 133: 132-136.
- Chartier, A., B.S. Keith and R.S. Keith. 2021. Ruby-throated Hummingbird movements in southwestern Michigan. *North American Bird Bander* 46:3-8.

show that there were 34 returns (18.0%) of the 189 birds (nearly all adults) banded there in June and July 2020.

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Kleen, V. 2020. Two surprisingly exceptional days: 720 hummingbirds. *North American Bird Bander* 45:168-169.

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