

Black-chinned Hummingbird *Archilochus alexandri*

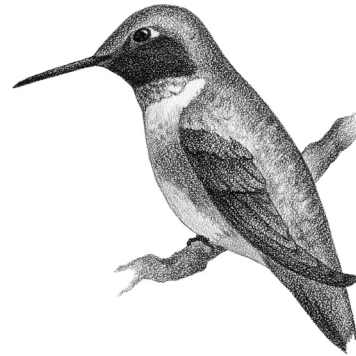


Folk Name: (none)

Status: Winter Vagrant

Abundance: Casual

Habitat: Hummingbird feeding stations and fall-blooming flower gardens



The Black-chinned Hummingbird is a western species very similar to the Ruby-throated Hummingbird and classified in the same genus, *Archilochus*. In winter, this species can be very difficult to distinguish from a Ruby-throated without examining the bird in hand or reviewing very detailed photos. One characteristic that may be useful in distinguishing the two is the Black-chinned Hummingbird's propensity for "constantly and vigorously spreading and pumping the tail" while hovering.

The possibility of the presence of the Black-chinned Hummingbird during the winter in the Carolinas was suspected by the late 1970s, but all *Archilochus* type hummingbirds present here in winter were "presumed" to be Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, unless proven otherwise. A Black-chinned Hummingbird was finally confirmed in North Carolina in 1994 and in South Carolina in 1995, and as with each of our other winter vagrant hummingbirds, the number of records has risen.

The first Black-chinned Hummingbird that was confirmed in the Central Carolinas is believed to have shown up in Charlotte sometime around Thanksgiving in 2000. The hummer was seen at a feeder at a home in the Beverly Crest neighborhood in south Charlotte. The family alerted local birders, and many people were able to visit and see this rare bird. On 13 December, Susan Campbell traveled to Charlotte and was able to capture, band, and safely release it. She confirmed the identification as a "hatch-year" female. The bird continued to visit this

feeder for the entire month of December and lingered into 2001. Fortunately, it stayed long enough to be tallied by observers conducting the Charlotte Christmas Bird Count on December 30, 2000.

The second confirmed record of a Black-chinned Hummingbird in the region was found on February 5, 2004. This bird showed up at the feeders of the Mellichamp residence, one block east of the Charlotte Country Club's golf course. Again, many birders were able to visit and view this bird, and Susan Campbell was able to trap and band the bird on February 19, 2004. After a detailed examination of its plumage, she confirmed its identity as an adult female Black-chinned Hummingbird. Campbell also color-marked the bird by placing a single dot of color on its head. The homeowner, Dr. T.L. Mellichamp, is a distinguished botanist and former director of the botanical gardens at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. His choice of garden flowers and landscape plantings may have helped attract this rare bird to the yard.

On February 13, 2004, Bill Hilton Jr. received a call about a strange hummingbird that was seen in Gaston County. He drove to a home in Gastonia and was able to capture the bird. He identified it as a second-year female Black-chinned Hummingbird and banded it, providing the third confirmation of this species in the region.

One more report of a possible Black-chinned Hummingbird in Charlotte was received on February 24, 2004. This hummingbird turned up at a feeder at a residence off Lilac Lane near Freedom Park. Susan Campbell responded and was able to trap the bird. When she had it in her hand, she immediately noticed it had a small colored dot on its head. The bird was the same one that she had banded at the Mellichamp yard, about 4 miles away. She released it unharmed, and the bird remained in the vicinity until 2 March when it presumably left to return to the western United States.



Black-chinned Hummingbird being banded in Charlotte. (Louise Barden)