

Calliope Hummingbird *Selasphorus calliope*



Folk Name: (none)

Status: Winter Vagrant

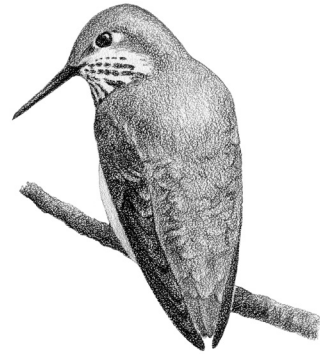
Abundance: Very Rare

Habitat: Hummingbird feeding stations and fall-blooming flower gardens

The Calliope Hummingbird might be best described as “tiny,” even for a hummingbird. It is the smallest hummingbird in the United States. It is a western species that nests primarily west of the Rocky Mountains. In recent years, like our other vagrants, Calliope Hummingbirds have begun to turn up sporadically in the East during the winter. The first vagrant Calliope Hummingbird confirmed in North Carolina appeared on the coast in New Bern in October 1995. The first one confirmed in South Carolina was found in a yard in the town of Greer in December 1999. Unlike its close relative, the Rufous Hummingbird, the Calliope shows little, if any, rufous coloring on its tail, and its flanks are pale rufous in color.

On December 22, 2001, Bill Hilton Jr. banded a Calliope Hummingbird in the town of Bethany in York County, SC. A few weeks later, he banded an immature male in Gaston County on January 5, 2002. Later that year, on December 15, 2002, Harriet Whitsett noticed a hummingbird visiting her backyard feeder in the Myers Park neighborhood in Charlotte. She had just returned home from a lengthy hospital stay and wondered how many days the hummingbird had already been feeding there. At first, she thought it was a Rufous Hummingbird, a species she had hosted at her feeders for several years. She invited local birders to see it. The bird was later identified as a “hatch-year” female Calliope Hummingbird, and it was banded by Susan Campbell. The bird remained until January 3, 2003, and was seen on the Charlotte Christmas Bird Count. By the end of 2004, there had been more than 10 reports of Calliope Hummingbird in North Carolina.

In recent years, there have been reports of Calliope Hummingbirds showing up in Cleveland County, Gaston County, and Union County (two instances), and there have been two more banded in Mecklenburg. An adult female Calliope Hummingbird arrived at the feeder at a residence in the University City area of Charlotte on November 7, 2013. Once again, many birders traveled



to get a look at this rare bird. Jeff Lemons photographed this Calliope on 29 November. Dwayne Martin, a local hummingbird bander, was able to capture, band, and successfully release the bird on January 21, 2014. The following year, an immature male Calliope Hummingbird showed up at a hummingbird feeder at another Charlotte home, where it was captured and banded by Dwayne Martin on January 7, 2015. This bird continued to visit the feeders there for over a month. An apparent Calliope Hummingbird was well photographed in a yard off Sardis Road in Charlotte on November 27, 2017.



Immature male Calliope Hummingbird in Charlotte. (Jeff Lemons)