

HUMMINGBIRD SURVEY RESULTS - 2006

The Wildlife Diversity Program of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation first began requesting hummingbird data from Oklahomans in the 1988 *Watchable Wildlife Newsletter*. In 1991, the brochure "Oklahoma's Hummingbirds" was published, complete with an Oklahoma Hummingbird Survey Form. Data gathered since that time are compiled and an annual summary of the results are prepared and sent to survey participants. The information provided through the survey allows the Wildlife Diversity Program to learn more about the state's hummingbird population and how long these migrants reside in Oklahoma each year.

Hummingbirds belong to a group of birds called neotropical migrants – birds that winter from northern Mexico to the tip of South America and migrate to North America to breed. Scientists in North and South America have initiated a partnership for the conservation of neotropical migrants called Partners in Flight/Aves de las Americanas. Efforts on behalf of neotropical migrants are currently focused on habitat preservation and restoration, monitoring of wintering and breeding populations, and promotion and public awareness. Oklahoma has 66 breeding songbird neotropical migrants, including the Ruby-throated Hummingbird, and in more recent years, the Black-chinned Hummingbird. Your continued participation in the Oklahoma Hummingbird Survey will help the Wildlife Diversity Program develop a quality database that will further the conservation effort directed toward these neotropical migrants. We can't thank you enough!



2006 RESULTS

In 2006, **44 Oklahomans** from **27 counties** participated in the Oklahoma Hummingbird Survey, as opposed to 52 participants from 33 counties in 2005. This reflects a decrease in the number of participants and counties represented. The earliest Ruby-throated Hummingbird sighting reported statewide was on **March 29** from **Jefferson County** and the latest sighting reported was on **October 27** from **Sequoyah County**. A map is provided (Figure 1) showing earliest and latest recorded dates of hummingbird observations by county, as well as the number of reports for each county. The most frequently reported date for putting up hummingbird feeders was April 1. Sixty percent (60%) of participants put their feeders up before April 15th. The most frequently reported date for removing hummingbird feeders was November 1. Sixty-six percent (66%) of participants took their feeders down between October 15 and the end of November.

Participants were divided into western, central and eastern regions. Alfalfa County south to Cotton County defines the eastern boundary of the western region, and Osage County south to Bryan County defines the western boundary of the eastern region. In 2006, the eastern region had the most participants with 24 followed by the central region with 12 and the western region with 6. Regional results and comparisons are presented in Table 1.

The list of other wildlife species visiting hummingbird feeders continues to be quite diverse. Wildlife species reported are as follows:

BIRDS

Baltimore Oriole
Oriole sp.
House Finch
Wren sp.
Downy Woodpecker
American Goldfinch
Red-bellied Woodpecker
Carolina Chickadee
American Robin
Barn Swallow
House Sparrow
Northern Cardinal

INSECTS

ants
honeybees
wasps (red & black)
Yellow jacket
House Fly
moths
praying mantis
Monarch
Dirt Dauber (mud wasps)
Unidentified Butterfly sp.
Hummingbird Moth

OTHERS

spider sp.

Recorded observations of the use of plants by hummingbirds resulted in a diverse plant list. However I've only listed the top 15, in order of the most frequently listed.

Red Honeysuckle
Salvia sp.
Petunias
Lantana sp.
Cannas
Morning Glory
Rose of Sharon

Four'o'clocks
Trumpet Vine
Cypress Vine
Crepe Myrtle
Mimosa Tree
Zinnias
Impatiens sp.
Cardinal climber

Comments

Comments that are provided by survey participants reflect a variety of sentiment ranging from joy to frustration – from wonder to bewilderment.

- Most of the summer I have had 75 to 100 hummingbirds here. I have to fill 4 large feeders every day – sometimes twice a day. (Okfuskee)
- We only had 4 birds this year. Very low compared to last year. (Dewey)
- Toward the end of August there was a sharp reduction in the # of hummers. (McIntosh)
- I do not think I had as many birds as last year. I only saw three at a time a few times. We always enjoy watching the birds. Visitors to our home also are interested in watching them. I had some neighbors put up a feeder this year. (Ellis)
- Not many early – but many from mid-June to late September – counted 25 at one time. (Cherokee)
- Note: this survey participant enjoyed watching several adult & immature downy woodpeckers feeding at the hummingbird feeders. The participant goes on the

add: hummingbirds wouldn't come as long as a downy woodpecker was there – tried to dive bomb it off but downy stayed & ignored the buzzing. I'm guessing the downy visiting is why we never saw more than 3 hummingbirds at one time. (Washington)

- I had over 30 birds (or more) at one time – I filled feeders twice daily – 10 lbs. sugar a week. (Lincoln)
- We tried to keep bees & wasps from hummingbird feeders by supplying their own feeders – it was so extremely hot and a lack of moisture most of the summer that I had a hard time keeping them filled. (LeFlore)
- We only had 2 birds this year. For the last month only saw the female. Don't know if the male had already left or if something happened to him. (Tulsa)
- We have had a significant increase in hummingbirds this year even though there are few flowers in the yard – so my feeders are depleted quite rapidly. (Jackson)
- August was my busiest month since August 2003. (Okmulgee)
- Lots of activity around feeders in August. We had 2 pair of hummers and their young. (Payne)
- Lots of birds fed because of the dry spring and summer. Used 5 ½ -10 lb sacks of sugar. (Jefferson)
- Hummers came through for about 1 week in May. Came back in July about the 10th. (Tulsa)
- Normal Season! (Washington)
- April 12 had a Broad-billed for one day only. Had a red bill with a black tip, gorgeous in the sunlight. August 3 had a female Rufous, one day only. (Payne)
- Averaged about 6 a day because of no flowers or plants, however my neighbor sometimes had around 60 to 80 and had to refill 6 feeders almost daily. (McCurtain)
- Hummingbirds love my evergreen. I would watch them land and sit for several minutes. (Cleveland)
- The little hummers stayed longer this year. They went through some cold nights before moving on south. (Sequoyah)
- Hummingbird population very small this year. Usually see at least 6 at a time at feeders. This year most was 3. (Comanche)
- I used 45 lbs. of sugar this summer for hummingbird food. (Okmulgee)
- Did not have as many as some years but they did remain in area consistently. We enjoyed them. (Osage)
- Numbers were up this year; I had to fill the feeders daily. "Regular" males left 8-28-06, leaving females and juveniles. Up until 9-30-06, "travelers" came through and stayed a few days before going on. I had what I am sure was a black-chinned male come through early in the season. (Osage)

Special Report

Oklahoma is fortunate to have **Ned & Gigi Batchelder** visit Oklahoma from their home in Montana. Ned & Gigi band hummingbirds in their own home state as well as southwest Utah, east Nevada, and, happily, Oklahoma. In 2006 they visited several homes in northeast and southwest Oklahoma. Below are excerpts from reports received from the Batchelders. We thought you would find them not only informative, but inspirational!

We are learning much about these tiny birds!!!

The one most dominant feature of our research is that there are more hummers out in the wild than homeowners realize. We stay at banding locations for about an hour or two. The homeowners (when we band through a full SEASON), have a hard time dealing with how MANY we band, and never thought they had that many hummingbirds visiting their feeders. These banding locations yield several hundred hummers banded when just setting up for only an hour or so, about every

2-4 days during the hummer season. We have several yards with 3 or more feeders with over 500 hummers banded during a 120 day season, Mothers Day - Labor Day. Then there are the ones we don't capture!!

Some yards have what we call breeding populations with male display dives, and gravid females with visible egg membranes, nesting material on feet, wings, bills, etc, and some are recaptured several times. We call these birds resident or local breeders. Some other locations have early migrant populations, (May) here today, gone tomorrow and later (July-Aug) with noticeable fat on body (fat for fuel) during southern migration. Some yards may have both breeding and migration hummers with action all season long.

A feeding location with multiple hummers like this usually has a history of many well maintained feeders and years of feeding with generations coming back. Homeowners here learn much about the "Hummer Season" when we do this with breeding, nesting, juveniles, migration, etc. with in hand study of these small birds. We also learn from the homeowners on their observed hummer behavior through the season, and habitat.

During the short time banding with only spot checks in Oklahoma, we all learned much about breeding and migration dates. For example, from homeowners reports, the black-chinned hummers seemed to arrive early in SW and central OK, and Ruby-throated hummers later. This is a bit reflective in our few days of recorded Oklahoma research. As you know the majority of adult males show up first, and are the first to leave after breeding season ends.

Generally, we tell folks the hummers you see at one time (depending on the time of the season).....multiply by 4. Many times we may see 4 and will band 15. Since they all look the same, only by banding do you get a feel for how many individuals are using the feeders for that day.

The Oklahoma banding locations had a good mix of habitat, with the homeowners keen on the bird interest. Some with many good flowers, some not. The best overall location in Oklahoma for our 2006 hummingbird information was in a yard just west of Chickasha. They also grow a great flower patch for hummers including a load of Turks cap!!

For 2006, we also banded 4 species in Utah (381 total), and Montana (3623). Our total this year was over 4000 individuals banded. That also included the most ever Montana banded juveniles (936) in our 6 years of research. Let us hope that means a good hatch in western Canada and here, or this area, Bitterroot Valley, is a migration corridor.

Breeding Evidence of Oklahoma Hummingbirds – 2006

By Ned and Gigi Batchelder – Hummingbird Banders

While in hand during banding, visual egg membrane may be observed in gravid (pregnant) female hummingbirds. Abdominal swelling and corresponding weight helps to confirm a local breeding bird. Between 4/21/06 through 4/30/06 we banded gravid female Black-chinned hummers, observing a total of 29 eggs. Only one gravid female Ruby-throated hummer was banded and she had 1 egg in the same period.

We would welcome digital images of your hummingbird visitors. If you would like to submit one or more images, please send them to my email address: mhickman@zoo.odwc.state.ok.us. Please be sure that the images are high resolution (prefer 300 dpi) and provide me with how you would like the image to be credited. Sorry but we cannot provide remuneration for your images.

Again, we would like to thank all the participants for your contribution to the hummingbird database. All of the information you provide is beneficial to understanding the habitat requirements of the Ruby-throated and Black-chinned Hummingbirds.

Table 1. Data Comparison for Survey Results by Region

Region	# of Reports				Earliest Sightings				Latest Sightings			
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2003	2004	2005	2006	2003	2004	2005	2006
Eastern	20	27	28	25	22-Mar	30-Mar	27-Mar	31-Mar	13-Oct	30-Oct	10-Nov	27-Oct
Central	10	10	14	12	6-Apr	29-Mar	15-Mar	29-Mar	15-Oct	14-Nov	2-Nov	15-Oct
Western	7	7	10	7	29-Mar	31-Mar	26-Mar	30-Mar	6-Oct	19-Oct	20-Oct	1-Oct
Total # reports	37	44	52	44								

