

EARLIEST RECORDED NESTING ATTEMPT OF RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD (*Archilochus colubris*) IN NEW YORK CITY – SPRING 2016

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Data presented in DeCandido and Allen (2015) show that in the last decade, Ruby-throated Hummingbird (*Archilochus colubris*) nests in New York City (NYC) each year, likely in at least three boroughs (Bronx, Queens and Staten Island). Prior to 2016, the earliest known nesting of this species in NYC related to a female observed on a nest on 24 May 2012, in Prospect Park, Brooklyn, by R. Manian:

<http://citybirder.blogspot.com/2012/06/brooklyn-hummingbirds.html>

On 14 May 2016, one of us (JMW) observed a female Ruby-throated Hummingbird building a nest at the New York Botanical Garden (NYBG) in Bronx County. The almost complete nest (Fig. 1) was built facing southeast in the outer branches of a 7.5m tall, non-native alder tree along the south edge of the more southern of the Twin Lakes. The location of this nest is approximately 50 meters from Boulder Bridge where Ruby-throated Hummingbird also nested in 1924. See Williams 1924 for detailed information about that nest; see Britton 1907 for information about Boulder Bridge.

Subsequent visits by JMW to the nest tree on 21 May and again on 28 May suggested that the nest had been abandoned, because no hummingbirds were seen on, in, or near the nest. The nest itself remained intact, and we were able to photograph it in June. On 25 June 2016, while leading a bird walk at NYBG, we found and Deborah Allen photographed an adult female Ruby-throated Hummingbird approximately 50 meters from the abandoned nest and returning to the same perch on the west side of Boulder Bridge. Her behavior suggested to us that she was nesting somewhere else in that same area.

Historical and contemporary breeding records of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds presented in DeCandido and Allen (2015) show that the hummingbird nest discovered by JMW at NYBG on 14 May 2016 is the earliest attempted nesting of this species in New York City: “Females have been seen sitting on nests as early as 24 May 2012; (Prospect Park, Kings County); 30

May 1924 (NYBG, Bronx County); 1 June 2014 (Central Park, New York County); and as late as 14 June 2011 (Richmond County). Young have left the nest from approximately 19-23 June 2012 (Prospect Park, Kings County) and 30 June to 2 July 1924 (NYBG, Bronx County).



Figure 1. Female Ruby-throated Hummingbird at her nest in the New York Botanical Garden (Bronx County) on 14 May 2016. Photograph © Jeffrey M. Ward.

Female Ruby-throated Hummingbirds usually lay eggs before their nest is 100% complete (Robinson et al. 1996). Judging by the size of the nest in Figure 1 on 14 May 2016, it seems to us that this female would have laid eggs in the next few days. Robinson et al. (1996) give 12-14 days as the incubation period, with eggs “hatching asynchronously by 1-3 days.” Assuming the eggs were laid on 16 May, the young would have fledged approximately 15 to 20 June, a few days earlier than the young from the 2012 nest in Prospect Park, Kings County.

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