

VAGRANT HUMMINGBIRDS IN NEW YORK STATE: AN UPDATE

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I was motivated to write this article when Diane Day of Westbrookville, Sullivan County found an adult male **Rufous Hummingbird** (*Selasphorus rufus*) at her feeders on 22 July 2023. This was a long overdue first record for Sullivan County and we were excited that it had finally happened. This encounter was just the first of several vagrant hummingbirds in 2023. In the 14 years since my last article (Haas 2010), an update to an article that Shai Mitra and Michael Bochnik had written (Mitra and Bochnik 2002), there have been 68 records of hummingbirds that weren't Ruby-throated Hummingbirds (*Archilochus colubris*). Of these, 32 were positively identified as Rufous, with another 11 probable Rufous still in review. For another 13 individuals submitted as Rufous, Allen's Hummingbird (*S. sasin*) could not be ruled out; these were accepted as Rufous/Allen's. Seven reports submitted as Rufous/Allen's have not been reviewed. It should be noted that most of the birds accepted as Rufous/Allen's were likely Rufous and not strongly suspected as Allen's. The remaining records involve the most unusual occurrences, including two long-anticipated firsts for the state.

I will highlight some of the significant records here. One notable record occurred when **three** *Selasphorus* hummingbirds frequented a feeder at a private residence in Aquebogue, Suffolk County beginning in November 2016, remaining throughout the winter, with at least two of them to 2 April 2017. In this very complex case, the New York State Avian Records Committee (NYSARC) solicited the help of expert Sheri Williamson, sending her a set of 64 checklists, many with photos of one or more of the birds. Her analysis concluded that three individuals were documented in these checklists, with only Sean Sime's 15 February 2017 checklist identifiable to species. As such, NYSARC accepted the bird in Sean's checklist as a Rufous Hummingbird and the remainder of the reports as Rufous/Allen's.

Another notable record was an immature **Anna's Hummingbird** (*Calypte anna*) which made a single day's appearance at the home of Celeste Morien on 20 October 2017 in Orleans County. This represents the third verified record for New York State. New York's fourth record (and fifth individual) **Calliope Hummingbird** (*S. calliope*) was observed at a private residence in Water Mill, Suffolk County, November-December 2016, but seen by only a few. When an adult male **Calliope Hummingbird** turned up in November 2022 at the home of Darlene Massey in Eastport, Suffolk County, this very cooperative bird was seen by an abundance of observers during its two weeks stay. A very significant find this year (2023) was an immature **Allen's Hummingbird** frequenting *Salvia* plantings in Marybeth Zilnicki's yard in Riverhead, Suffolk County, from 21 October 2023. This will establish the first record of this species for New York State, pending approval by NYSARC. Finally, on 15 November 2023 Barbara

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Davaros, Randall's Island Park Alliance horticulturist at the Urban Farm there, spotted a hummingbird coming to the flowers in the garden near the restrooms. She took some video and circulated it which ultimately led to it being identified as a **Black-chinned Hummingbird** (*A. alexandri*)! This will also be the first New York State record for this species pending NYSARC approval. It continued through 17 December 2023.

So, what should we expect next? The very fact that we have had only one Allen's Hummingbird, and one Black-chinned Hummingbird in New York is surprising. With many records of both species in our neighboring states, it is quite likely we'll see more in the future. For the real optimists among us, we can't forget the exceptional records that have taken place nearby during this same period. Both Connecticut and Vermont have had Mexican Violetears (*Colibri thalassinus*) in the last few years, two of a dozen records now for the northeastern USA and eastern Canada. Then there's that real surprise, Pennsylvania's Bahama Woodstar (*Nesophlox evelynae*)! Further, though there have been no additional Broad-billed Hummingbirds (*Cynanthus latirostris*) in New York during this period, there have been several recent records in adjoining states. Keep watching those feeders and plantings!

The biggest issue with vagrant hummingbirds is confirming them to species. Measurements are often the only way to make a positive identification as immature and female birds are most frequently encountered. Having more hummingbird banders in New York State would certainly help the situation. That said, banding can be difficult for several reasons including distance from the bander, permission from property owners, brevity of hummingbirds' stays—and then there are hummingbirds that just defy capture. While banding is the best way to confirm a bird as to species, the tremendous number of birder/photographers with state-of-the-art equipment are doing a great job. Additionally, videography used in digiscoping has proved equally productive in confirming identification. A combination of these practices has gone far to confirm the birds to species in the cases of both the Allen's Hummingbird and the Black-chinned Hummingbird.

As late fall and early winter records of *Selasphorus* hummingbirds have continued to increase in the Northeast, it is notable that no such increase has been observed for Ruby-throated Hummingbirds. As has already been observed in the Southeast, *Selasphorus* hummingbirds are increasingly surviving through the winter in New York. The first was a Rufous Hummingbird that persisted through 12 March 2012 in Central Park, New York County. This was followed in 2016-2017 by the long-staying *Selasphorus* hummingbirds in Aquebogue, Suffolk County mentioned above, at least two of which remained through 2 April 2017; a Rufous inland at Carmel, Putnam County through 10 April 2023; and three birds still present on Long Island as this article goes to press on 27 March 2024: a Rufous at Springs, East Hampton, the Allen's at Riverhead, and a Rufous in Brooklyn, this one first detected in February of 2024.

Rufous Hummingbird is abundant, with an estimated population of 22 million individuals, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List (IUCN 2020), and it is by far the most frequently encountered non-breeding species in the state. Even so, its overall abundance is declining, evaluated as "Near Threatened" by IUCN, citing a "moderately rapid decline in population." The

Table 1. Vagrant Hummingbirds in New York State Fall 2010 through Spring 2024, reviewed by NYSARC unless otherwise noted.

Species	Location	County	Dates	Age/Sex	Citation
RUHU	Ballston Spa	Saratoga	10/05-11/02/2010	I/F	2010-64-A/C, D, KB 62-2, 64-3
RUHU	Hidden Ponds Trail	Suffolk	08/30-09/18/2011	A/F	2011-206e, in review
RU/AL	Cornwall	Orange	10/16-10/22/2011	I/F	2011-107-A, KB 62-1 ¹
RUHU	Lenoir Nature Preserve	Westchester	11/06-12/18/2011	I/F	2011-109-A/C, KB 63-3
RUHU	Cove Hollow Farm	Suffolk	11/08/2011-02/01/2012	A/F	2011-131-A, KB 63-3
RUHU	Southampton	Suffolk	11/23-12/17/2011	U/U	2011-207e, in review
RUHU	T.R. Park/Central Park	New York	12/14/2011-03/12/2012	I/U	2011-114-A/D, KB 63-3
RUHU	Phoenix	Onondaga	09/16-12/26/2012	A/M	2012-72-A/D, KB 64-3
RUHU	Brooktondale	Tompkins	10/01-10/02/2012	I/M	2012-206e, in review
RUHU	Pleasant Plains	Richmond	10/03-10/06/2012	I/F	2012-205e, in review
RUHU	Interlaken	Seneca	10/14-11/06/2012	I/F	2021-87-A, KB 64-3
RU/AL	Henrietta	Monroe	10/24-11/11/2012	U/U	2012-83-A, KB 64-3 ¹
RUHU	Wappingers Falls	Dutchess	11/09/-12/05/2012	I/F	2012-88-A/B, KB 64-3
RU/AL	Fort Tryon	New York	11/11/2012	I/M	eBird, not reviewed
RU/AL	Ellenville	Ulster	11/14/2012	I/U	2012-124-A, KB 67-4 ¹
RUHU	Central Park	New York	11/14-11/21/2012	I/M	2012-204e, in review
RUHU	Watermill	Suffolk	11/29/2012-01/06/13	U/U	2012-121-A, KB 67-4
RU/AL	Charles Schurz Park	New York	12/20/2012	U/U	eBird, not reviewed
RU/AL	Colonie	Albany	09/18/2013	I/U	eBird, not reviewed
RUHU	Southold	Suffolk	10/04-12/28/2013	I/U	2013-69-A/B, KB 67-4
RUHU	Seneca Falls	Seneca	10/13-12/04/2013	A/F	2013-102e
RUHU	Bainbridge	Chenango	11/09-12/07/2013	I/F	2013-84-A, KB 67-4
RU/AL	Annadale	Richmond	11/09/2013-01/01/2014	I/U	2014-91e ¹
RUHU	Smyrna	Chenango	09/25-10/01/2014	I/F	2014-38-A, KB 68-4
RUHU	Fort Jackson	St. Lawrence	07/22-23/2015	A/M	2015-42-A/B, KB 69-1

RU/AL	Poland	Chautauqua	10/14-18/2015	A/F	2015-148e ¹
RUHU	Baiting Hollow	Suffolk	11/22/2015-01/16/2016	I/U	2015-149e, 2016-77e
RU/AL	Watermill	Suffolk	11/27/2015	I/U	eBird, not reviewed
RU/AL	E. A. Morton NWR	Suffolk	08/28-29/2016	A/M	2016-33-A, KB 70-3 ¹
RUHU	Greece	Monroe	10/?-12/17/2016	I/F	2016-54-A, KB 70-3, 71-2
RUHU	Oceanside MNSA	Nassau	10/07/2016	I/U	2016-76e
RU/AL	Robert Moses SP	Nassau	10/23/2016	U/U	eBird, not reviewed
CAHU	Watermill	Suffolk	11/15-12/09/2016	I/M	2016-58-A, KB 70-3
RU/AL	Poland	Chautauqua	11/16/2016	A/U	eBird, not reviewed
RUHU	Aquebogue	Suffolk	11/25/2016-04/02/17	A/F	2016-78e ²
RU/AL (2)	Aquebogue	Suffolk	11/25/2016-04/02/17	A/F	2016-78e ^{1, 2}
RUHU	Southards Pond	Suffolk	08/17-18/2017	A/M	2017-60-A, KB 73-3
ANHU	Medina	Orleans	10/20/2017	I/U	2017-48-A, KB 71-2
RUHU	Kinderhook/Rosendale	Columbia	11/08/2018~Jan 2019	I/F	2018-45-A, KB 72-2
RU/AL	Factory Brook	Cortland	09/17-10/23/2019	U/U	2019-70e ¹
RU/AL	Forestville	Chautauqua	10/06-10/20/2019	I/U	2019-69e ¹
RUHU	West Valley	Cattaraugus	11/07/2019	I/F	2019-68e
RU/AL	Babylon Village	Suffolk	11/11-11/20/2019	I/U	2019-38-A, KB 73-3 ¹
RUHU	Baldwinsville	Onondaga	10/14/2020-01/23/2021	I/F	2020-48A ³
RUHU	Kent	Putnam	10/10-12/17/2020	I/F	2020-47-A ³
RUHU	Glenwood	Erie	10/23/-11/04/2020	I/M	eBird, in review
RUHU	East Amherst	Erie	10/17-11/01/2020	A/F	2020-78e ³
RUHU	Greenwood Lake	Orange	10/25-10/26/2020	A/M	2020 29-A/B ³
RUHU	Bayard Cutting Arbo.	Suffolk	10/31-11/25/2020	I/U	2020-79e ³
RU/AL	East Hampton	Suffolk	12/03/2020-01/28/2021	I/F	2020-80e ^{1, 3}
RU/AL	Sodus	Wayne	12/16/2020	I/U	eBird, not reviewed
RUHU	East Quogue	Suffolk	08/05/2021	A/M	2021-21-A/B ³

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Species	Location	County	Dates	Age/Sex	Citation
RUHU	Delmar	Albany	08/05/2022	A/M	2022-125e ³
RUHU	Goshen	Orange	08/09-08/11/2022	I/U	2022-128e ³
RUHU	Chenango Valley SP	Broome	08/19-08/31/2022	A/M	2022-126e ³
CAHU	Eastport	Suffolk	11/06-11/23/2022	A/M	2022-22A ³
RUHU	Great Valley	Cattaraugus	11/18-12/14/2022	A/F	2022-127e ³
RUHU	East Hampton	Suffolk	12/10/2022-01/10/2023	U/F	2022-131e, in review
RU/AL	Babylon	Suffolk	11/21/2022	I/U	2022-291e ^{1, 3}
RUHU	Rocky Point	Suffolk	11/22-11/28/2022	I/M	2022-130e ³
RUHU	Carmel	Putnam	12/01/2022-04/10/23	I/U	2022-129e ³
RUHU	Westbrookville	Sullivan	07/22-07/24/2023	A/M	2023-20-A, in review
RUHU	West Saugerties	Ulster	07/24-07/27/2023	A/M	eBird, in review
BCHU	Randall's Island	New York	11/15-12/17/2023	I/U	2023-36-A/D, in review
ALHU	Riverhead	Suffolk	10/21/2023-3/27/2024+	I/F	2023-34-A/D, in review ⁴
RUHU	Springs	Suffolk	12/16/2023-3/27/2024+	U/U	eBird, in review ⁴
RUHU	Prospect Park	Kings	02/10-03/27/2024+	U/U	2024-5-A, in review ⁴

ALHU – Allen's Hummingbird; ANHU – Anna's Hummingbird; BCHU – Black-chinned Hummingbird;

CAHU – Calliope Hummingbird; RUHU – Rufous Hummingbird; RU/AL – Rufous/Allen's Hummingbird.

A – adult; F – female; I – immature; M – male; U – undetermined.

Citation: NYSARC report#, when followed by an “e” indicates eBird report(s) reviewed; *The Kingbird* Volume-Issue (e.g., KB 62-2).

¹ report submitted as RUHU accepted as RU/AL.

² three birds present; see text.

³ accepted by NYSARC; not yet published.

⁴ still present 27 March 2024, as this article goes to press.

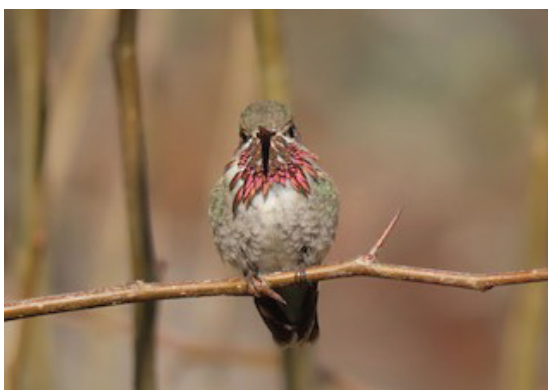
American Bird Conservancy attributes declining populations to habitat loss on breeding and wintering grounds, threats on migration such as feral cats and other predators, and window strikes. Thus, it is possible that the colonization of new wintering areas in the East, including even New York State, might be important for these birds. Let's hope that close tracking of the species and protection of its preferred habitats help them rebound, so that more and more of us can enjoy these spectacular little birds!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

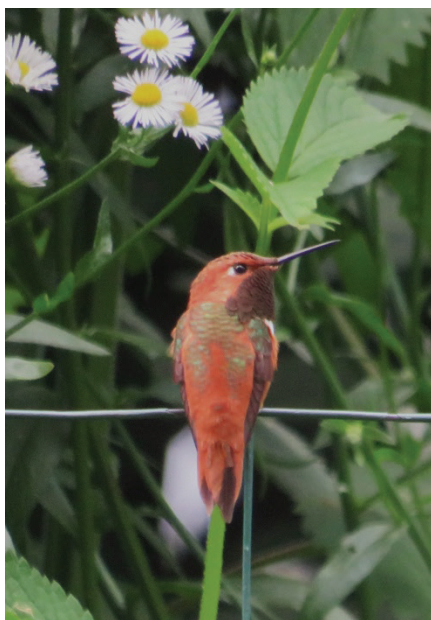
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Calliope Hummingbird, Eastport, *Suffolk*, 20 Nov 2022, © Cheryl Orlowski.
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Top: Allen's Hummingbird, Riverhead, *Suffolk*, 24 Oct, 2023, © Marybeth Zilnicki.
 Bottom left: Rufous Hummingbird, Upper Pine Kill, *Sullivan*, 23 Jul 2023, © John Haas.
 Bottom right: Black-chinned Hummingbird, Randall's Island, *New York*, 19 Nov 2023,
 © Ashley Pichon; See article pp. 270-275.