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Recent documentation restores the Broad-tailed Hummingbird to Oklahoma's state bird list

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On 3 September 1999, while birding in the Black Mesa area of Cimarron County in the western Oklahoma Panhandle, we stopped at the Kenton Mercantile around midday to observe the hummingbird feeders. We positioned ourselves to obtain good views of the feeders and began to watch approximately four to six Black-chinned Hummingbirds (*Archilochus alexandri*) that were actively seeking syrup. After some time, Puschock called our attention to a different hummingbird that had appeared. We each observed the bird with binoculars from the parking area in front of the store from a distance of about 10 m away with the sun overhead and providing good light even though the feeders were shaded under the porch of the store. The bird was observed perched on the feeder as well as hovering, and it flared its tail several times with its back towards us while hovering as it tried to displace a wasp from the feeder. The total observation time was about one minute, but we had close, unobstructed views in good light for the whole duration. The bird then flew away and did not return while we waited. A cold front came through that night. When we visited the store the following day, two Black-chinned Hummingbirds were the only hummingbirds we saw.

Immediately after our observation of the unusual hummingbird, we independently recorded descriptions of the bird, and only then compared notes and reviewed field guides. All observers noted green upperparts, including the crown, nape, back, and rump. Puschock and Gall each noted that the throat was off-white with a few dark feathers. Reinking described a broad, pale cinnamon wash on the flanks. Puschock described the flanks as the "diffuse burnt orange/rufous" color typical for *Selasphorus* hummingbirds, although less intense in tone than that seen on adult female Rufous Hummingbirds (*S. rufus*). He also noted that the demarcation of the flank color was less sharp than on adult female Rufous Hummingbirds. Gall described the flanks as buffy.

During the observation, Puschock suggested that we look carefully at the tail, and all observers independently noted white-tipped outer tail feathers with some rufous (less than half of the tail length) on the proxi-

mal portion of the tail. Puschock specifically noted three outer tail feathers with rufous. All observers described the central tail feathers as either green or "dark" in color, lacking either rufous or white. The tail features were seen well by all three observers, as the bird flared its tail several times while facing directly away from us. Reinking noted the relatively broad width of the outer tail feathers, a feature he had previously evaluated in the hand on Allen's (*S. sasin*) and Rufous hummingbirds while banding in California. All observers also independently noted that the bird appeared larger than the Black-chinned Hummingbirds which were present at the time of the observation. Reinking specifically noted the overall longer body length as compared to the Black-chinned Hummingbirds.

Several key features, including the presence of obvious rufous coloration on the flanks, the large size relative to Black-chinned Hummingbirds, the dark rufous in the tail being restricted to relatively small, proximal portions of three outer tail feathers, and the lack of any rufous in the back or rump all led us to conclude that this was in fact a Broad-tailed Hummingbird (*S. platycercus*). Immature *Archilochus* hummingbirds may occasionally show buffy coloration on the flanks but usually not to the extent and intensity of *Selaspohorus* hummingbirds (Kaufman 1990). *Archilochus* hummingbirds may rarely show some buffy or pale rufous tones in the tail, but not the more extensive, dark chestnut rufous of *Selasphorus* hummingbirds such as was observed in the tail of this bird. Both Allen's and Rufous hummingbirds would have more extensive rufous in the tail, often including some in the inner tail feathers, would show more intense rufous coloration on the flanks, and usually would show at least some rufous on the back or uppertail coverts (Pyle 1997; Sibley 2000; Williamson in press). Calliope Hummingbirds (*Stellula calliope*) have very little rufous in the tail (Williamson 1999; Sibley 2000), less than that observed on this bird. Finally, Broad-tailed Hummingbirds are larger than Calliope, Allen's, or Rufous hummingbirds (and *Archilochus* hummingbirds), due in part to a longer tail (Howell and Webb 1995; Pyle 1997; Sibley 2000; Williamson in press). While the tail length of this bird was not specifically described, two observers made generic note of the larger overall size, and one observer did specifically note a longer overall body length on this bird in relation to the Black-chinned Hummingbirds it was directly and closely compared with. This size difference alone is significant in helping eliminate other *Selasphorus* and *Archilochus* hummingbirds as possibilities. The fact that all three observers independently noted these multiple, important characteristics with great consistency is also significant in evaluating this record. The documentations submitted by the authors were subsequently reviewed and accepted by the Oklahoma Bird Records Committee (OBRC).

The Broad-tailed Hummingbird breeds in open woodlands and shrublands in the mountains of western North America and Mexico. In the parts of its range closest to Oklahoma, it nests in the mountains of

south central Colorado and northeastern New Mexico (Bailey 1928; Calder and Calder 1992; Boyle 1998). It is a rare but regular migrant in eastern New Mexico (J. Oldenettel and C. Rustay, pers. comm.). There are a number of substantiated Broad-tailed Hummingbird records in Kansas (Thompson and Ely 1989; Grzybowski 1989, 1992a,b). Seyffert (2001) considers the Broad-tailed Hummingbird an uncommon to fairly common migrant in the Texas Panhandle, having been seen in six counties. The American Ornithologists' Union (1998) describes the Broad-tailed Hummingbird as a casual migrant east to Nebraska, central Kansas, and eastern and southeastern Texas. Extralimital sightings to the east have also occurred in Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Georgia, Louisiana, Illinois, and Mississippi (Williamson in press; E. Womack, pers. comm.), and one specimen and one banding record during the year 2000 exist for Florida (G. Wallace and L. Duncan, pers. comm.). Williamson (in press) illustrates the eastern extent of most Broad-tailed Hummingbird migrants as passing through the eastern Panhandle of Oklahoma, presumably based on multiple records from Kansas and the Texas Panhandle.

In Oklahoma, Tate (1923) reported a nest with two eggs in Cimarron County in 1912 and a September sighting in Kenton in 1922. No supporting description of either sighting was provided. Based on the information from Tate as well as a specimen reportedly collected by Tate, Nice (1931) considered the Broad-tailed Hummingbird a "rare transient and summer resident in Cimarron County." The specimen has since been destroyed in a fire (Grzybowski et al. 1992). A 1932 hummingbird observation near Kenton by Sutton (1934) is later described by him as "probably of this species," and he also reported a 1953 sighting in Texas County (Sutton 1967). Baumgartner and Baumgartner (1992) do not provide any additional records of this species in Oklahoma.

In evaluating all reported Oklahoma records of the Broad-tailed Hummingbird for Grzybowski et al. (1992), the OBRC voted to delete this species from the Oklahoma bird list based on the absence of an existing specimen and the lack of supporting documentation for any of the reported sightings. The acceptance of this current record by the OBRC therefore restores the Broad-tailed Hummingbird to the Oklahoma state bird list in "hypothetical" status, meaning that the written documentations were convincing to at least a majority of committee members, although a specimen or identifiable photograph from Oklahoma does not yet exist (Oklahoma Bird Records Committee 2000).

Given the proximity of the Broad-tailed Hummingbird's breeding range to Oklahoma and the number of records reported from Kansas and western Texas, it is possible if not likely that this species is more common in the western Oklahoma Panhandle, at least during migration, than the existing records would indicate. The current availability of hummingbird feeders in the Kenton area provides an opportunity for careful observers to test this idea.

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