

THE TEXAS



HUMMER

SPRING 2007

A NEWSLETTER FOR TEXAS HUMMINGBIRD ROUNDUP PARTICIPANTS

HUMMINGBIRD ROUNDUP 2007

It was another great year of hummingbird watching in Texas, with 15 of the 18 species reported by observers who returned their 2006 surveys. Observer numbers were up, and more of the state was covered. There was a lot of excitement early in the year when a possible Amethyst-throated Hummingbird was reported in the Rio Grande Valley. At this time, it does not appear that this record, which would have been a first not only for the state but for the nation, will be accepted by the Texas Bird Records Committee. The photos were simply not diagnostic enough to rule out other species.

Diversity was high across the state, with some pleasant surprises for some counties. An observer in Bowie County reported and photographed a Green Violet-ear in September. High-diversity counts this year were found in Brewster and Hidalgo counties, with 11 species each, although Harris, Victoria, Bexar and

Jeff Davis counties were close behind with nine species each. North Texas was not left out with a diversity of six to eight species reported well into the Panhandle. Jeff Davis County would have fared much better, but at least two species that were reported to the Texas Bird Records Committee were not reported to the Roundup!

While reports are still coming in, to date we have 347 participants from 106 counties. This represents 58 percent of the surveys mailed out in 2006. These counties cover a good portion of the state, with data lacking from significant areas only along the Rio Grande just east of Big Bend (an area where there is potential for considerable, important diversity), the eastern portion of the Panhandle and the Rolling Plains west of the Dallas–Fort Worth area. We always welcome more participants from any part of the state. Tell your neighbors and friends about the survey! If you are traveling and see



Photo by Mark Klym
Black-chinned hummingbirds at feeder located in the Davis Mountains.

hummingbirds, let us know what you see, what county you were in and the dates. This data, while not a complete record of what was in the county year-round, is more information than we currently have from that county!

Once again, we have a mixed report where numbers are concerned. We can all be thankful that the hurricane season in 2006 was much quieter than in 2005, but the hummingbird numbers we saw between the two big storms that year were certainly missed! Several observers reported that both their numbers and their diversity were down this year. Other areas thought the numbers were up slightly, while much of the state reported a normal year.

More changes are coming to the Texas Hummingbird Web site at www.tpwd.state.tx.us/hummingbirds. We hope soon to have maps and charts reporting the 2006 results online. You can still get the 2007 Roundup surveys online, and if we start getting some exciting news, we hope to create an update column online that you can check for interesting observations. And don't forget to update everyone on your observations by registering (send a message with no title simply saying "subscribe TX-Hummer" to listserv@listserv.uh.edu) and sending an occasional note.

Grab your binoculars, fill your feeders and join the fun. As always, watching hummingbirds in Texas promises something for everyone.



Executive Director
Robert L. Cook

Editor, *The Texas Hummer*
Mark Klym

COMMISSION

Joseph B.C. Fitzsimons, Chairman
San Antonio

Donato D. Ramos, Vice-Chairman
Laredo

Mark E. Bivins Amarillo

J. Robert Brown El Paso

T. Dan Friedkin Houston

Peter M. Holt San Antonio

Philip Montgomery Dallas

John D. Parker Lufkin

Lee M. Bass, Chairman-Emeritus
Fort Worth

TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT MISSION STATEMENT

"To manage and conserve the natural and cultural resources of Texas and to provide hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation opportunities for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations."

You may view this publication through the TPWD Web site. Please notify us by completing a request form at www.tpwd.state.tx.us/enews/. Once verified, we will notify you by e-mail when a new version of your selected newsletter is posted at www.tpwd.state.tx.us/newsletters/. Your name and address will be removed from the printed version mail distribution list.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

All inquiries: Texas Parks and Wildlife Department,
4200 Smith School Rd., Austin, TX 78744,
telephone (800) 792-1112 toll free,
or (512) 389-4800 or visit our Web site for
detailed information about TPWD programs:

www.tpwd.state.tx.us



© 2007 Texas Parks and Wildlife Department PWD BR W7000-242J (4/07)

In accordance with Texas State Depository Law, this publication is available at the Texas State Publications Clearinghouse and/or Texas Depository Libraries.



TPWD receives federal assistance from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other federal agencies. TPWD is therefore subject to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, in addition to state anti-discrimination laws. TPWD will comply with state and federal laws prohibiting discrimination based on race, color, national origin, age, sex or disability. If you believe that you have been discriminated against in any TPWD program, activity or event, you may contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Division of Federal Assistance, 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Mail Stop: MBSP-4020, Arlington, VA 22203, Attention: Civil Rights Coordinator for Public Access.



Photo by Mark Klym
Ruby-throated hummingbird.



Photo by Mark Klym
Black-chinned hummingbird among penstemon.

HUMMINGBIRD GARDENS

While fall is the best time to plant new additions to the hummingbird garden, many garden centers will be full of tantalizing temptations at this time of year. If you choose to add perennials or other plants, at this time of year, be prepared to have to use more water to keep them through the summer than you will need with your fall additions.

Tropical sage (*Salvia coccinea*) is easier to grow from seed in the fall and summer but can be purchased in pots in the spring. This is the plant we provide some seed from with the Roundup and is easy to grow, and fun to watch the hummingbirds on. It will suffer quickly from the heat, though, with the roots that have not had time to develop before the summer sets in. Using it in the shade, and mulching it well, will help reduce the impact of drying.

Autumn sage (*Salvia gregii*) is often easier to obtain in a greater color variety at this time. I find that plants added in the spring often struggle through the first summer, causing disappointment and sometimes even sacrifice of the plant. Nurse it through that hot summer, though, and you could be in for a pleasant surprise in the fall.

It is best to plant in early fall, but if you must plant now, choose wisely, be prepared to provide a few extra resources and some extra care, and encourage your nursery to bring in the perennials in the fall!

IDENTIFICATION TIPS

“The Green Violet-ear that showed up in Bowie County was originally reported as a Magnificent Hummingbird. This points out the difficulty in field identification of the three large species in Texas. And since we are hoping a few of you will make the trip into some of the very diverse regions of the state, we thought we might take a moment or two to discuss the different identifiers.”

— Mark Klym

MAGNIFICENT HUMMINGBIRD OR GREEN VIOLET-EAR?

Any large, dark green bird with a green breast in East Texas is more likely to be a Green Violet-ear than a Magnificent Hummingbird. To date, we have two records of a Magnificent Hummingbird east of the Pecos River in state. There are also records of this bird to the east of Texas. All records of the Green Violet-ear in Texas, except one, have been east of the Pecos River. This said, neither bird can be eliminated solely on the basis of range.

Size can not be used effectively in diagnosing these two species—both birds are the same size. The Green Violet-ear, a 4.5- to 5.25-inch bird, is a large dark hummingbird with a slightly down-curved bill. This grass-green bird becomes more bronze on the rump and upper tail. The slightly notched to square tail is blue-green above and deep blue below. There is a broad, deep blue band running through the tail. The adult male has a large, deep blue central breast spot which is slightly duller on the usually smaller female. The female has a

narrower violet blue band on the chin. Both genders will have a distinct violet-blue patch on the side of the face—the “violet ear.” Juveniles are much duller than adults and the blue central breast spot is often absent or broken.

The Magnificent Hummingbird, on the other hand, is a 4.5- to 5.25-inch long, slim bird with a long neck and tail. The adult male is a dark emerald to bronze green color above, but due to the habitat it frequents, it is often seen only as a large, dark bird. The male has a violet crown, bright green gorget, long black bill, and large, notched dark green tail. The female has an ash gray belly and breast that often appears scaly. Adults display a distinct

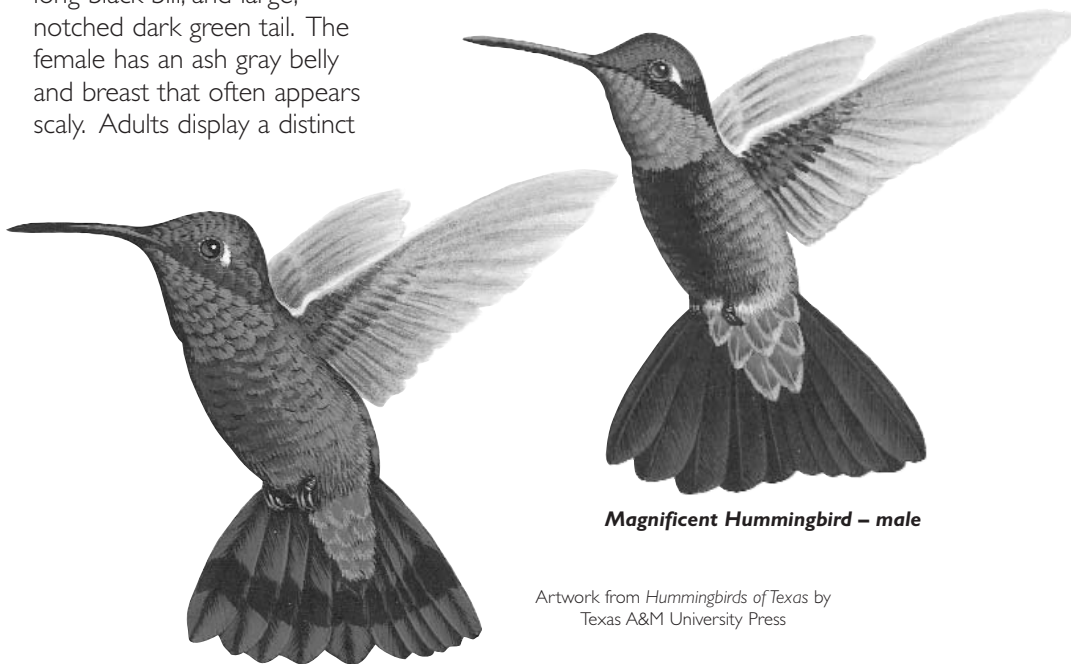
triangular spot behind the eye which may be elongated to a stripe in females.

Some distinctions to look for include the subterminal (near the end) tail stripe on the Green Violet-ear; the unusually long bill of the Magnificent, the distinct eye stripe of the Magnificent and the “violet ear.”

A third species that can sometimes be confusing in this mix is the Green-breasted Mango. This bird has not been documented in Texas north of the Nueces River, although one lone juvenile has been recorded in

North Carolina. This is a 4.5- to 5-inch dark emerald green bird above, becoming golden green on the upper tail coverts and rump. The male has a broad, velvety black line extending into the breast from the throat. The tail is distinctive, being square with coppery feathers in the middle and violet feathers to the outer rectrices. Most Green-breasted Mangos in Texas have been juveniles, with a distinct green, white, black vertical striping pattern on the breast.

These big birds can be fun, but challenging, to identify.



Magnificent Hummingbird – male

Green Violet-ear – male

Artwork from *Hummingbirds of Texas* by Texas A&M University Press

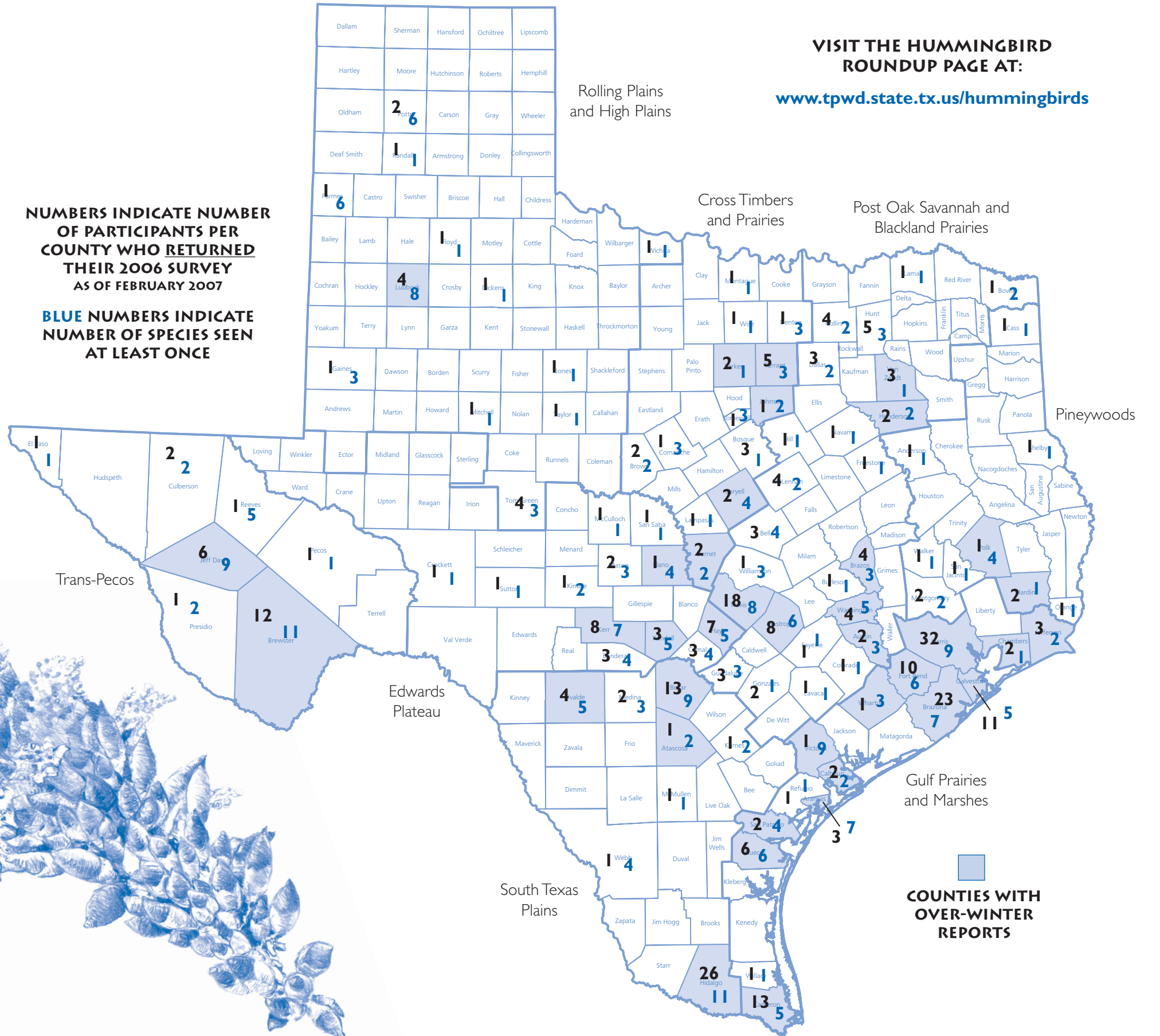
WINTER OBSERVERS AND DIVERSITY
JANUARY, FEBRUARY, NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER 2006

County	Observers	Species
Aransas	1	4
Atascosa	1	1
Austin	2	2
Bastrop	3	2
Bexar	3	3
Brazoria	2	3
Brazos	2	1
Brewster	2	1
Burnet	1	1
Calhoun	1	1
Cameron	1	2
Chambers	1	1
Coryell	1	1
Fort Bend	5	6
Galveston	4	4
Hardin	1	1
Harris	7	8
Hays	2	2
Henderson	1	1
Hidalgo	11	5

County	Observers	Species
Jeff Davis	1	2
Jefferson	1	1
Johnson	1	1
Kendall	2	4
Kerr	1	2
Llano	1	1
Lubbock	1	1
Nueces	1	2
Parker	2	1
Polk	1	1
San Patricio	1	3
Tarrant	1	1
Travis	4	2
Uvalde	2	2
Van Zandt	1	1
Victoria	1	6
Washington	2	4
Webb	1	1
Wharton	1	1

NUMBERS INDICATE NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS PER COUNTY WHO RETURNED THEIR 2006 SURVEY AS OF FEBRUARY 2007

BLUE NUMBERS INDICATE NUMBER OF SPECIES SEEN AT LEAST ONCE

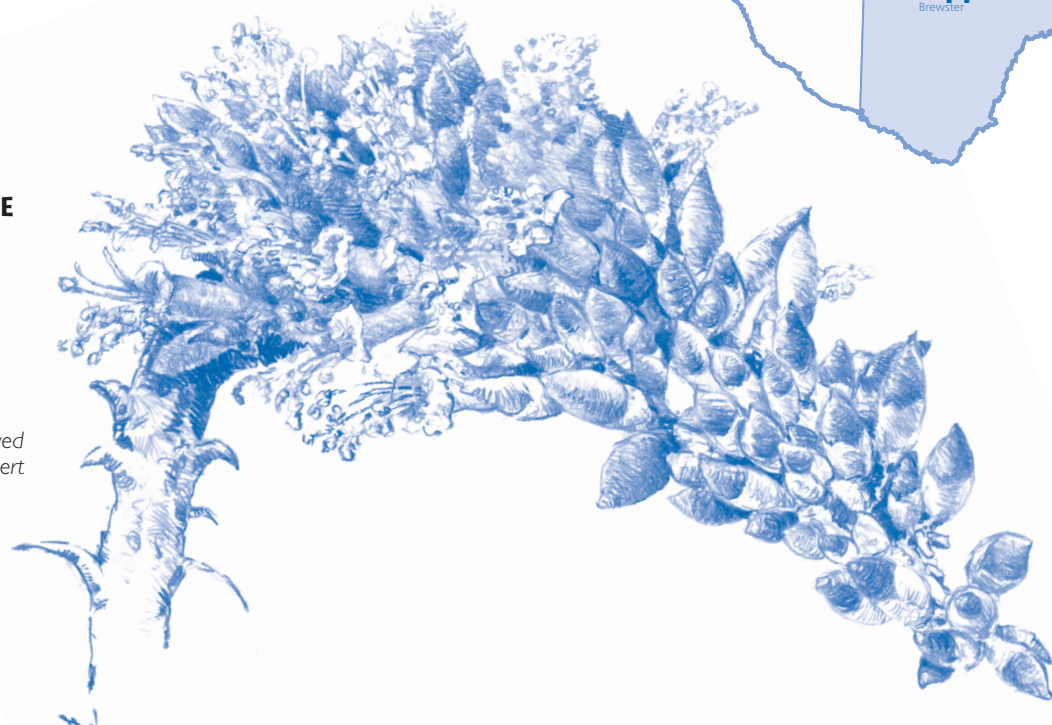


VISIT THE HUMMINGBIRD ROUNDUP PAGE AT:
www.tpwd.state.tx.us/hummingbirds

PLANTS MOST FAVORED BY HUMMINGBIRDS IN 2006 STATEWIDE

- Salvias 10.33% of all reports
- Lantana 5.33%
- Turk's Cap 5.00%
- Trumpet vine 3.67%
- Coral Honeysuckle 3.00%

(This year, for the first time, shrimp plant, a non-native, showed very high at sixth position with 2.33%, even higher than desert willow or flame acanthus)



OBSERVERS' COMMENTS

This is the page we set aside in each newsletter for comments from those of you who are participating, as well as answers from the Roundup staff.

From Hill County:

I believe I have the same hummers every year. What is a good book to learn more about these birds?

Many researchers have shown that these birds are extremely loyal to the habitats they are found in each year, so it is very possible that you are seeing the same birds each year. I may be slightly prejudiced here, but in my opinion the best book to read to learn more about hummingbirds in Texas is *Hummingbirds of Texas*, produced using information from the Hummingbird Roundup. The book is published by Texas A&M University Press and can be found at most bookstores and garden centers in Texas.

From Burleson County:

I had so many hummers the last of September and first of October. There were 25 to 30 at each of my three close feeders. What a treat!

We got mixed reports again this year, with some people saying they had lots of hummingbirds and others saying, "Where are the birds?" It is important to remember not to compare one year to the next. Last year for many of us was a huge anomaly, and if that is what we are basing our comparison on, we are in for some disappointment.

From Bexar County:

Hummingbirds stopped coming in early December, maybe due to drought?

Some of you are probably saying, "I wish I had hummingbirds until early December." Hummingbirds can be enjoyed all year round in any county in Texas. We really do not know what impact the extended drought is likely to have on the birds, but with 11 years data now in the computers, that may be a question that is worth exploring.

From Mason County:

Enjoyed watching them bathe on jimson weed leaves while the sprinkler was on early morning and late afternoon. Would like information for low-usage water hummingbird bath.

You have found one of their favorite low water use baths—the leaves of nearby vegetation when it gets wet. You might also try using a mister instead of a sprinkler; it uses less water and is gentler on the birds. Bird baths for hummingbirds generally involve shallow water (add a rock to the traditional bird-

bath) and moving water. This is easily accomplished by placing a very slow drip over the birdbath.

From Kendall County:

The rufous spend as much time in the Hill Country as they do in migration and in their breeding grounds.

How true. I guess we consider a bird to be in its home range when it is nesting. Many of "our" songbirds spend more time outside the state than they do here; yet we consider them "our" birds.

Photo by Mark Klym
Female Black-chinned hummingbird at feeder located in the Davis Mountains.





TREASURES OF THE TRANS-PECOS

From our observers in extreme West Texas

From south Brewster County:

On May 5, a male BCHU pinned a male LUHU to the ground until I intervened.

We are hearing more and more frequently about how aggressive these birds can be. In early May, the BCHU was almost definitely protecting territory in which to court the young ladies. The Lucifer may have been seen as an interloper, threatening his success in these endeavors. Hybridization between these species is known.

From Jeff Davis County:

An average hummer year.

We in East Texas wish we could enjoy your "average" year! I count six species reported from your garden alone!

From south Brewster County:

In August I observed a LUHU (male) with broken bill.

As these birds are reported to be very aggressive, occasional injuries are inevitable. Hummingbirds are extremely difficult to work with in rehabilitation, but if you choose to intervene with an injured bird of any species, we encourage you to take the bird to or arrange for transportation to a wildlife rehabilitator certified to handle them. Keeping these birds in your possession, as some have written glowing books about, is a violation of federal law.

WINTER HUMMINGBIRD CHALLENGE

By Brent Ortego as posted on Texbirds Listserv just after the ice storm in January 2007.

Winter temperatures not only cold enough to freeze sugar water but also just cold enough to freeze light rain can pose a danger to feeders. Your feeders, both hummer and grain, can be covered with a sheet of ice that the birds can not penetrate.

I was afraid of this. So, I checked my six dozen hummer feeders outside this morning, and those that were exposed to the drizzle late yesterday were covered with ice and had to be taken in to thaw before being put back out for the birds to use. Light freezing rain is much harder on the birds than a dry mid-20s day. Moisture saps the birds' heat quickly, and if the flowers and feeders are covered with ice, wintering hummers are going to need to be very strong to make it through the day.

Brent is a licensed master hummingbird bander who operates a hummingbird banding station at his home in Raisin (Victoria County). Brent also bands at a number of facilities in the Texas Hill Country and as part of the program at the Hummer-Bird Festival in Rockport.



FEELING FESTIVE?

Hummingbird festivals are a great way to learn more about these amazing aerial artists of the bird world. Festivals offer opportunities to interact with experienced field birders, hummingbird banders and other researchers, and with homeowners and gardeners who have been successful in attracting not only large numbers but also a great variety of hummingbirds to their properties.

This year, the Davis Mountains Hummingbird Festival is being moved ahead a week in an effort to provide more opportunity to see some rarer birds. Join us in Fort Davis August 8 through 12 for a real treat. Three weeks later (September 8) join us in Lake Jackson for the Xtreme Hummingbird Xtravaganza. While the Ruby-throated Hummingbird is the star of the show, other species can often be seen in this great river-bottom habitat. Just up the coast in Rockport September 13 through 16, you can participate in the Hummer-Bird Celebration. Last year, this event recorded four species (banded or photographed in each case).

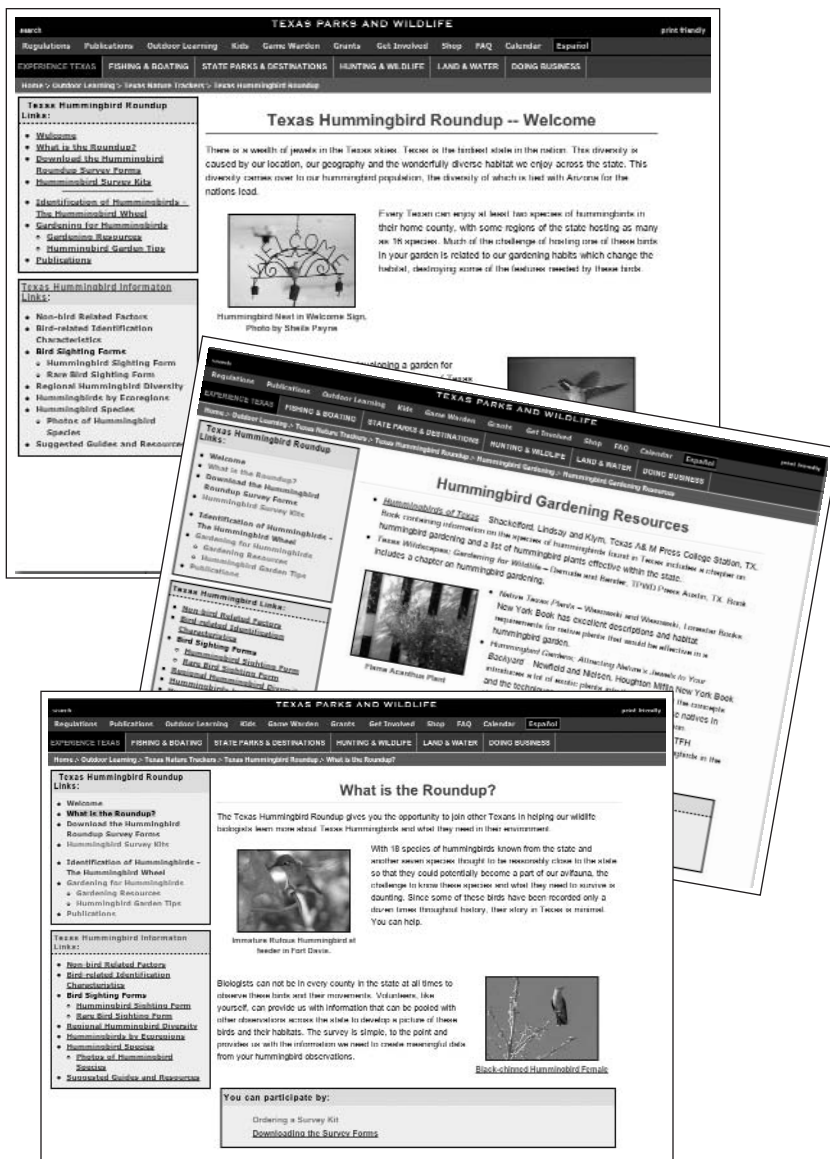
Come on out and celebrate the birds!

WATCH FOR BIG CHANGES!

One of my mandates when I took on the Hummingbird Roundup nearly eight years ago was to use the Internet, and the opportunities it offers, to provide more information to our volunteers and the community. Some of these changes are already in place. I hope you find the new Web site easier to use, and helpful whether you are looking for data sheets or information on gardening. If you have not visited the site recently, make it a point to check out www.tpwd.state.tx.us/hummingbirds

In the near future, the changes will continue with the addition of files containing reports much like those you see on the center pages. They will convey more information than we can in a single print document, and give you opportunity for feedback — not placing it right on the charts but allowing you to give me information based on the charts.

Future plans are to allow electronic returns for your data sheets and possibly a map that would show species presence as reported for rarer birds. Watch the web for big changes at the Roundup.



MISSION STATEMENT



The mission of the Hummingbird Roundup is to improve the conservation of hummingbirds by gathering information about their distribution and providing information to the public. The survey encourages Texans to maintain natural habitat for the birds, properly care for hummingbird feeders and record sightings. Your observations further our knowledge of the hummingbirds of Texas, guide new research efforts and help the Wildlife Diversity Program in its mission to keep these tiny visitors returning each year.



To join the Hummingbird Roundup, please send a \$6 donation with your name, address, county, telephone number and e-mail address to:
Hummingbird Roundup, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department,
4200 Smith School Road, Austin, TX 78744

Please remember to return your Roundup 2007 survey forms by **Jan. 18, 2008**, to the address above.