

FEATURED PHOTO

A HYBRID HUMMINGBIRD IN SOUTHEAST ARIZONA

MATT HEINDEL, 11118 Auburn Woods, San Antonio, Texas 78249

STEVE N. G. HOWELL, Point Reyes Bird Observatory, 4990 Shoreline Highway, Stinson Beach, California 94970

Hybridization in hummingbirds is relatively frequent (e.g., Banks and Johnson 1961, Short and Phillips 1966, Wells et al. 1978, Pyle 1997), posing potential pitfalls for banders and other field ornithologists working with the Trochilidae. Adult males excepted, most North American hummingbirds are similar enough that most hybrids will almost certainly escape detection, even in the hand; moreover, only males showing a markedly “wrong” combination of characters are likely to stand out as hybrids. Just as hybrids must be considered prior to the identification of a rare gull, so must they be with hummingbirds.

Heindel photographed the hummingbird on the back cover in August 1999 in Miller Canyon, Huachuca Mountains, southeast Arizona. Even a quick glance suggests the subject is not one of North America’s regularly occurring hummingbirds. This hummingbird appears large and lanky; in the field it looked similar in size to the Magnificent Hummingbirds (*Eugenes fulgens*) with which it shared the feeder. The crown, face, and back are moderately bright green. There is an obvious white postocular spot. The bill is of average length, appears to be all dark (but the base of the mandible appeared pinkish from directly below), and is generally straight and thick, with perhaps the slightest droop. The lower throat and the sides of the upper breast and lower neck are a deep green, noticeably richer and more intense than the surrounding color. In some lights, there was a bluish tinge to this color. The remainder of the underparts are paler, with a green lower breast merging into a grayish brown belly and gray undertail coverts. The angle of this photograph does not allow the middle of the back, rump, or tail to be assessed. Barely visible is some bronzy tone to the upper tail coverts. An important feature (often hard to see in the field) is a limited area of pale rufous across the secondaries, just inside the primary coverts. The tail and upper tail coverts were entirely bronzy, a stunning feature made all the more attractive by its absence from hummingbirds normally found north of Mexico. In the field, the throat appeared brighter and the wings more rufous than is evident in the photo, and the underwing coverts were laced with rufous brown. Because it does not conform with any expected species, one must ask if the bird is a hybrid. If so, what were its parents? Where would interbreeding of the parental species occur? How prevalent is hybridization among hummingbirds?

This bird’s characters suggest a hybrid Magnificent × Berylline Hummingbird (*Amazilia beryllina*). The size, postocular spot, and general plumage color are those of a Magnificent Hummingbird, and its vocalizations were similar to that species’. The pale rufous in the wings, the bronzy tail and upper tail coverts, pinkish-based mandible, and the intensity of color on the lower throat and sides of the neck are marks in favor of the Berylline. Determining parentage of hybrids can be exceedingly difficult. Hybrid offspring may resemble either parent, show a blend of characters, demonstrate a mosaic of the parents’ characters, or show features absent in either parent. Usually, conclusions must be tentative unless the parents’ breeding was monitored. Even so, in this case the combination of characters fits rather nicely with the hypothesized parentage, and other potential combinations seem unlikely. Among the few hummingbirds with rufous in the wings, only the Berylline has reached the

FEATURED PHOTO

United States; the rest are southern species extremely unlikely to get here. Similarly, few North American hummingbirds approach the size of a Magnificent, and no giants occurring north of the tropics share the male Magnificent's distinctive postocular spot. The extensive throat and neck patch and the occasional tinges of blue might suggest a Broad-billed Hummingbird (*Cynanthus latirostris*), a species reported to hybridize with the Magnificent (Phillips et al. 1964, Short and Phillips 1966), but both of these species lack rufous in the wings and on the upperparts.

Given that the Berylline Hummingbird has bred in the U.S. (Anderson and Monson 1981), one might speculate that a wandering Berylline paired up with a Magnificent somewhere near the international border; alternatively, these two species could have paired in Mexico and their offspring wandered north to the U.S. What is presumed to have been the same bird returned to Miller Canyon late in the summer of 2000, looking much as it does in the featured photo, and was banded at that time (George West pers. comm.).

We thank Michael A. Patten and George West for discussions of this bird and for other interesting conversations about hummingbirds. Robb Hamilton significantly improved this paper, and we thank him for his input.

LITERATURE CITED

- Anderson, J. O., and Monson, G. 1981. Berylline Hummingbird nests in Arizona. *Continental Birdlife* 2:56–61.
- Banks, R. C., and Johnson, N. K. 1961. A review of North American hybrid hummingbirds. *Condor* 63:3–28.
- Phillips, A. R., Marshall, J., and Monson, G. 1964. *The Birds of Arizona*. Univ. of Ariz. Press, Tucson.
- Pyle, P. 1997. *Identification Guide to North American Birds*, part 1. Slate Creek Press, Bolinas, CA.
- Short, L. L., and Phillips, A. R. 1966. More hybrid hummingbirds from the United States. *Auk* 83:253–265.
- Wells, S., Bradley, R. A., and Baptista, L. F. 1978. Hybridization in *Calypte* hummingbirds. *Auk* 95:537–549.

THANKS TO WESTERN BIRDS' REVIEWERS AND ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Peer review is one of the cornerstones of a scientific journal. I thank the following people for generously taking their time to provide this service and sustain the scientific quality of *Western Birds* for volume 31: David G. Ainley, Daniel W. Anderson, Patricia H. Baird, John M. Bates, Bryan T. Brown, Kurt F. Campbell, Troy Corman, Charles A. Drost, Jon L. Dunn, Chris S. Elphick, Richard A. Erickson, William T. Everett, Sam Fitton, Kimball L. Garrett, Tom Gatz, Robert F. Gill, Jr., Stanley W. Harris, Matt Heindel, Steven C. Heinl, Janet Hodder, Janice M. Hughes, Joseph R. Jehl, Jr., Charles T. LaRue, Stephen A. Laymon, Jerry Liguori, Jeffrey L. Lincer, Gerry McChesney, Robin Restall, Terrell D. Rich, Don Roberson, Stephen I. Rothstein, Spencer G. Sealy, Theodore G. Tobish, Gary A. Voelker, Ian Warkentin, and Helen Yard. I also thank our hard-working associate editors, Daniel D. Gibson, Robert A. Hamilton, Ron LeValley, Tim Manolis, Kathy Molina, and Mark K. Sogge, who also function as reviewers and have so kindly helped shoulder the tasks of editing the journal.

Philip Unitt



WESTERN FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS 26TH ANNUAL MEETING

27-30 September 2001 • Reno, Nevada

Registration over the Internet will be available on the WFO website, www.wfo-cbrc.org, by 1 June 2001. For conference information, contact Lucie Clark at luclark@sierra.net; 335 Ski Way #300, Incline Village, NV 89451; 775-831-2909)

Call for Papers and Poster Presentations

Guidelines:

1. Oral and poster presentations should reflect original research, or summarize existing unpublished information, and be presented in a manner that will be of interest to serious amateur field ornithologists. Talks and posters relating to the following general themes are especially solicited for the current meeting, but other topics are also welcome.

- Systematics, biogeography, and geographic variation of birds of the Pacific Coast region, the North American interior, and the interface between the two
- New information on field identification problems relevant to the birds of western North America and the eastern Pacific Ocean
- Techniques for field study of birds, including censusing, monitoring, and other studies; results of studies resulting from the application of such techniques
- Ecology, population biology, and conservation of birds in the state of Nevada or any of the bioregions or habitats it represents (Great Basin, Mojave Desert, Sierra Nevada, Columbia Plateau)

2. We expect to allot 20 minutes per oral presentation, which should include 5 minutes for questions and discussion; longer time slots (30 minutes) are negotiable.

3. Posters should fit within a width of 6 feet.

4. An abstract of your presentation or poster should be submitted electronically to Ted Floyd (tedfloyd57@hotmail.com) or as hard copy (Ted Floyd, Great Basin Bird Observatory, 1 East First Street, Suite 500, Reno, NV 89501), no later than 30 June 2001. All abstracts should be submitted in the following format:

- Your Last Name, Your First Name. Your affiliation (if any), complete mailing address, e-mail address (optional). Title of Your Talk. Brief (300 word maximum) summary of the goals, results, and conclusions of your study.

We look forward to seeing you in Reno!