

BOISE BASIN

“Fat” Hummingbirds are Flying Through

By Eileen Capson

There is such an increase in the number of hummingbirds; the Intermountain Bird Observatory team with Boise State University was just amazed! Many of the birds seemed to be migrating through and were “fat” with fuel to get them to their destination, presumably to Mexico, for the winter. One hundred and fifteen birds were trapped, banded and released on Saturday, August 1st. This was an all-time record for the wildlife biologists, engaged in this science, over the past 4 years, studying hummingbirds in Boise County. This singular Hummingbird Banding Station is world famous and attracts visitors from all over to Jennifer Alban’s home in Idaho City to view this phenomenon.

Just 10 weeks prior, wildlife biologists with Boise State were very concerned due to the decreased hummingbird activity, for that time of the year. They theorized that it could have been due to nest-mortality or an early migration, but there just wasn’t enough data yet.

In the month of June, they recorded only 18

birds during one session of 5-hours. During the month of May, the area had had a record amount of rainfall and severe storms that could have caused these small bird’s nests to fail. However, the hummingbirds progressively began to come back in numbers, shortly after the 4th of July.

The onslaught of migrating birds this past weekend told a different story. Jessica Pollock explained that these were migrants, Black Chinned, Calliope and Rufus Hummingbirds that were “extremely fat.” These were the babies that had come down from, perhaps, Alaska or British Columbia. She observed, “They’re not coming from around here.”

The Intermountain Bird Observatory (IBO) hopes to gather more long-term data to see the trends and to determine the -- *whys*. As for now, the team will continue to take hummingbird data, such as age, length measurements and to determine their body fat. This data helps to further their research. The banding station depends largely on the hummingbird’s need to eat constantly, drinking ap-

proximately its own body-weight in a 24-hour period.

Jennifer Alban says, “It’s a real blessing to own this property, and I like to share it with people who come to visit. They’re so delighted so see these hummingbirds up close. I also encourage most of them to go into Idaho City to check out the museum and the many wonderful businesses we have here.”

Hummingbird Nectar Recipe: 1 part sugar to 4 parts water; start with washing and rinsing the feeder thoroughly, then:

Boil water

Stir in sugar to dissolve

Let it COOL and then fill the feeder

Store remainder in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks

Do not use Red Dye in Hummingbird Syrup, it has no purpose and is made from petroleum. This is not good for any animal to ingest! The dye stains the bird’s excretions red, an indicator that it’s not being metabolized through the kidneys. Most hummingbird feeders have enough red color on them to attract these birds. If there is not, simply tie a piece of red flagging, rope or fabric to the feeder.



Jaelynn Lane smiled as the hummingbird stood for a very long time on her warm little hand. Photo by Eileen Capson



Each hummingbird is refueled prior to their release. Photo by Eileen Capson



Rob Miller has newly joined the IBO and is a Research Biologist. Photo by Eileen Capson

Thorn Creek VFD Breaks Ground

By Eileen Capson

This past week, ground was finally broken for the new Thorn Creek Fire Station. The land had been donated by subdivision developers, Sandy Sims and Barry Marcus. At its beginning stages, the footers are being poured, which could not have been possible without the generosity of one local man, Mark Rice. He had donated all the forms and his cement skills to get the work done. Clear Creek Fire Dept. Chief, Sam Bo-

novich, is also helping with labor. More skilled volunteer labor and help is still being sought for this project. The building is expected to house all the Thorn Creek VFD trucks, equipment and will also provide for a training area.

The Thorn Creek/ Valley of the Pines VFD hopes to have a “barn raising” this Saturday, to raise the walls. David Haney, project manager and volunteer firefighter, said they are still in need of money and skilled

volunteer labor to complete this project. He is available by phone at (208) 392-4998.

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1099 S. Wells St, Suite 200
Meridian, ID 83642