

Observers: Mark Hullinger, Charlene Hullinger
Phone: (719) 594-6555
Location: 2415 Courtney Dr., Colorado Springs, CO 80919

31-96-42
Accepted on resubmission 7-0
Original 5-2

Description of sighting:

On June 16th, 1996 at approximately 2:00 p.m., I was sitting on the deck of my home (6700 feet elevation) in west Colorado Springs (El Paso County) Colorado. I was watching broad-tailed hummingbirds feed at my hummingbird feeder which was approximately 6-8 feet away from me. It was a sunny day and the sun was positioned behind the feeder. My wife was also present. A larger, male hummingbird appeared at my feeder which I believe to be a blue-throated hummingbird (*lampornis clemenciae*).

The bird fed at my feeder for approximately 30 seconds and left without returning. I am very familiar with broad-tailed and rufous hummingbirds that feed regularly at my feeder. The first thing that struck me about this bird was a dark throat that appeared to be almost black with undertones of purple. It was definitely not red or green. The color did not change as it moved about around the feeder. My initial thought was that this bird was a black-chinned hummingbird since I know that they are found regularly in Colorado and periodically in this county. My experience with both black-chinned and blue-throated is limited. I have seen black-chinned hummingbirds in Arizona and Colorado. Prior to this sighting, I had seen blue-throated hummingbirds in Arizona.

I tried to identify as many features as I could in the short time the bird was at the feeder. These are the features I am absolutely certain of: male, significantly larger than the broad-tailed hummingbird, green on top of the head and back, dark throat at all angles and large white tips on dark outer tail feathers. I believe the bird had a gray chest, but I am less certain about that feature. I did not look for or note black and white stripes near the eye (which would be a key field mark) since I was relatively unfamiliar with blue-throated hummingbirds. My wife (who is not a birder) claimed to see white eye stripes.

After the bird left, I immediately consulted four different field guides (Peterson, Golden, National Geographic, Audubon) that I own. I found no other hummingbird besides the blue-throated hummingbird that met all four of the features that I am certain of: large male, dark throat, green head and back, large white tips on dark tail. Certainly, the black-chinned hummingbird did not meet this criteria. I concluded immediately after the observation that I had seen a blue-throated hummingbird.

The day after my sighting, I contacted and consulted with Brandon Percival and also posted my sighting to the COBIRDS e-mail discussion group. I also held some private e-mail discussion with Steve Bouricius. Based on the key descriptors that I provided, no one was able to provide me with an alternative to the blue-throated hummingbird.

I was motivated to document this sighting after seeing it mentioned in the most recent edition of the Journal of the Colorado Field Ornithologists. This report is based on memory, but the event I have summarized here was documented on e-mail the day after the sighting. I would be happy to have any follow-up discussion needed to verify this sighting.

Best Regards,

Mark Hullinger