

First San Joaquin County Record of a Broad-billed Hummingbird

René C. Reyes

Stockton, CA. Rene.c.reyes@gmail.com

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The Broad-billed Hummingbird (*Cyananthus latirostris*) is a small hummingbird that breeds in Mexico and the southwestern United States (Powers and Wethington 2022). It occurs mainly in riparian woodland, low elevation wooded canyons, and shrub thickets (Williamson 2002).

The Broad-billed Hummingbird is a vagrant in California with few sightings reported along the coast and the southern part of the state. Only three other records exist for the Central Valley: an adult male in a residential yard in Davis, Yolo County, 31 January–4 February 2021; a molting male at a residence in Redding, Shasta County, 4–6 October 2023; and an immature male at the Clovis Botanical Garden, Fresno County, 8–24 November 2023.

During 4–9 March 2024, an adult male Broad-billed Hummingbird visited the water-wise and native plant garden at my home in an urban neighborhood in central Stockton, San Joaquin County, California. The bird is the first San Joaquin County record and only the fourth for the Central Valley. I describe the circumstances of its occurrence here.

The bird was observed in my garden in a neighborhood in central Stockton, just east of the University of the Pacific. The garden is 75 m² (800 ft²) in size and contains over 60 species of California native plants and shrubs, another 20 drought-tolerant non-native plants, and five bird baths. The weather in early-March 2024 was cool, ranging from 4–19° C (40–67° F), with sunrise and sunset occurring at about 06:25 and 18:07, respectively.

I and others observed the hummingbird daily during its period of occurrence using binoculars and cameras. Because the garden was small, the hummingbird was easily observed with and without binoculars. It did not skulk or show wariness, so observers could quietly walk around the garden to obtain clear views of the bird and observe its behavior.

On 4 March, the Broad-billed Hummingbird was first heard making a 3-note “tek tek tek” call like that of a Ruby-crowned Kinglet (*Regulus calendula*), followed by a buzz typical of hummingbirds, and a rapid tik-tik-tik

call. The unusual sounds directed me to a ceanothus tree (*Ceanothus* sp.) where a hummingbird with a bright reddish orange base to the bill was perched. I noted that the bird had a blue throat, green head with white supercilium and eyeline, emerald breast, and a forked tail (Figure 1). I sent an image to David Yee for species verification, who agreed that it was a Broad-billed Hummingbird.



Figure 1 a, b.

Broad-billed Hummingbird observed in a garden in Stockton, California, from March 4–9, 2024.

Photos by Steve Abbott.



The hummingbird exhibited a daily routine, arriving at the garden at sunrise (at about 06:30) and leaving the garden, presumably to roost, an hour before sunset (at about 17:00). Of the six days the hummingbird was observed, on two days (5 and 7 March) he remained in the garden for more than 10 hours, feeding regularly. On 6 March, the hummingbird came to the garden in the morning and then departed for an extended period (8.5 hrs) before returning. On 8 March, it came and went multiple times. On 9 March, it arrived at 06:20 and left at 07:30 and was not seen again throughout that day. Thus, the hummingbird regularly arrived in the morning and departed in the afternoon over its six-day period of occurrence, but its presence during the day was variable. Its night roosting location was not identified.

From the first observations, the hummingbird aggressively defended food sources including three hummingbird nectar feeders and flowering shrubs. It successfully chased two resident Anna's Hummingbirds (*Calypte anna*) away from the nectar feeders and he aggressively challenged the numerous Pine Siskins (*Spinus pinus*), Lesser Goldfinches (*S. psaltria*), crowned sparrows (*Zonotrichia sp.*), and a California Scrub-jay (*Aphelocoma californica*) that came close to any food source.

The hummingbird was most attracted to the Bladderpod (*Peritoma arborea*; Figure 2), a densely branching shrub with many bright-yellow flower clusters at the ends of its branches. Bladderpod is native to southern California, Baja California, and northwest Mexico, where it grows in a variety of habitats from coastal bluffs to desert arroyos. The individual also visited hummingbird sage (*Salvia spathacea*), pineapple sage (*S. elegans*), and 'hot lips' sage, a cultivar of *S. microphylla*. All these plant species are native to southern California and Mexico, so it was not surprising that it chose them over other flowering plants in the garden.



Figure 2. Broad-billed Hummingbird feeding on nectar of a Bladderpod flower.
Photo by Rene C. Reyes.

Possibly the long periods of feeding on certain days were to gain fat for its departure. The frequent arrivals and departures on the day before it permanently departed may have indicated restlessness related to an urge to migrate. On its last day, he fed early in the morning for a full hour and left

permanently at 07:30, consistent with hummingbirds' pattern of migrating during the daytime.

The reason for the vagrant occurrence of the Broad-billed Hummingbird in the Central Valley can only be speculated upon. Although the species is mostly sedentary, breeders in the northern portion of its range are migratory, moving northward in spring to breed as far as southern Arizona where they mostly occur from March to September (Powers and Wethington 2022, eBird.org). Male hummingbirds migrate earlier than females, so it is not unusual to see a male hummingbird in Arizona in March (eBird.org). Hummingbirds migrate solitarily, and this young male may have overshot in its spring migration, perhaps due to northeasterly trade winds.

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LITERATURE CITED

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