

LOUISIANA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

REPORT FORM

This form is intended as a convenience in reporting observations of species on the Louisiana Bird Records Committee (LBRC) Review List. The LBRC recommends the use of this form or a similar format when submitting records for review to assure that all pertinent information is accounted for. Attach additional pages or files as necessary. Please print or type for hard copy. For electronic copy, be sure to save this file to your computer before entering text. Attach field notes, drawings, photographs, or tape recordings, if available. Include all photos for more obscurely marked species. When completed (if hard copy), mail to Secretary, Louisiana Bird Records Committee, c/o Museum of Natural Science, 119 Foster Hall, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA 70803-3216, or e-mail electronic copy as an attachment to Paul Edward Conover at <zoiseaux@lusfiber.net> .

1. English and Scientific names: Mexican Violetear; *Colibri thalassinus*
2. Number of individuals, sexes, ages, general plumage (e.g., 2 in alternate plumage):
1, possibly immature
3. Parish: Bienville Parish
Specific Locality: 2624 Jot Em Down Drive, Arcadia
4. Date(s) when observed: 11-12 July, 2016 (seen by homeowner first on 10 July; last seen on 14 July)
5. Time(s) of day when observed: 11 July: 7:30 - 8:15pm. 12 July: 5:50 - 10:00am.
6. Reporting observer and address: John Dillon 183 Dance Road, Athens, LA
7. Other observers accompanying reporter who also *identified* the bird(s): homeowner, Donna Butler.

8. Other observers who independently identified the bird(s): Charlie Lyon and Rosemary Seidler both visited separately and saw the bird. Donna Butler posted 2 photos of the backside of the bird on the Facebook Hummingbirds Anonymous page either 10 or 11 July. Kevin Morgan in Baton Rouge saw the photos and notified Nancy L. Newfield, who then called me late Monday afternoon, noting that the tail pattern in the photos was suggestive of Mexican Violetear. Nancy and Kevin went to band it 15 July, but it never showed.

9. Light conditions (position of bird in relation to shade and to direction and amount of light): evening of 11 July: poor light. All feeders hanging from porch roof on east side of house, and the sun was setting, so all observations were in the shade of the porch roof. 12 July: quite good light. Rising sun gave plenty of light to observe the bird as it visited feeders, however the bird usually faced away from the sun, causing its anterior side to be in some shade. It did switch sides of one feeder for a decent amount of time to get excellent looks facing the sun, however.

10. Optical equipment (type, power, condition): Alpen 8X42 bins in good condition. Fujifilm ultra-zoom camera in good condition.

11. Distance to bird(s): While it was at the feeders, I was seated about 12 feet away. But on a couple occasions I was standing as it flew and hovered 5-6 feet away.

12. Duration of observation: Most feeder visits were extremely brief, maybe 2-10 seconds. But it finally stayed at least a full 2 minutes on the morning of 12 July.

13. Habitat: Coming to feeders on porch of trailer home. Immediate surrounding woods were almost all hardwood, much of which was oak, with a creek bottom. All other near woods surrounding the property were pine plantations.

14. Behavior of bird / circumstances of observation (flying, feeding, resting; include and stress habits used in identification; relate events surrounding observation): Coming to feeders, usually chased by RTHU. Preferred feeder had no perches, so it usually hovered when feeding, but during the 2-minute feeding the morning of 12 July, it perched at an adjacent feeder several times. After leaving the feeders, it would fly into an oak tree at the south side of the trailer, change perches about every 5-10 seconds for a period of less than 1 minute, then fly over the trailer to a pear tree and stay there, presumably until it fed again.

15. Description (include only what was actually seen, *not what "should" have been seen*; include if possible: total length/relative size compared to other familiar species; body bulk, shape, proportions; bill, eye, leg, and plumage characteristics. Stress features that separate it from similar species, *or for species that are known to hybridize frequently, stress features that help eliminate possible hybrids*):

Bill: all dark, about same length as head from front to back or maybe slightly longer, down curved but not extremely. Eyes: dark. Overall appearance in flight was an all-dark, fairly large hummingbird, with a fairly large wingspan. Even in poor light, much of the green breast feathers would shimmer to blue. Head coloration: crown and nape green; careful examination of photos shows that the violet patch began about the lores and extended at a downward angle below the eyes and then in the lower auriculars, not in the post-loral area. At least one photo clearly shows a green throat, with no violet in the throat. Other photos can show blue, not violet, in the throat, which seems to be consistent with the green feathers on the breast that are iridescent and flash blue. It is fairly difficult to distinguish between the blue and violet even in photos, but there is a clear delineation in some photos. There is a chinstrap of violet present so the chin itself is not green, but the throat is. The violet chinstrap is consistent with most photos of Mexican Violetear. Back: all emerald green. Wings: all dark. Breast, belly, flanks, under tail coverts: As mentioned, the breast was mostly green but would flash a deep blue in the upper central region of the breast. Flanks appear to be bright green, as well as lower breast. Just above the legs, the green becomes very pale and faded to a somewhat pale buff color - honestly difficult to tell in photos how much is just glare or compensation by the camera for shade. There are still plenty of green feathers there, too, though. This may point to an immature, but I don't know that it's certain enough to judge. The under tail coverts were also like this. Tail: The tail was a dark, steel blue (quite beautiful) with a fairly broad black subterminal band all the way across the top side and under side and just below the coverts. Tail was also broad when closed and square.

Size: bird was fully an inch larger than RTHU (8-10 there at once for comparison) and about twice the body mass. The red base of the perchless feeder in several photos is 1.75" from top to bottom (I have feeders just like them and measured). In one photo in which the bird is very near to the feeder and is hovering and completely upright, the body of the bird (body only - excluding the bill) appears slightly less than twice the length of the red base. That would make it at least approximately 3.5" without the bill. Even if you consider the bird is to the rear of the feeder instead of lined up for a literal side-by-side size comparison, it still comes out to under 4 inches without the bill. The bill itself does not appear to be an inch long. That puts the bird somewhere in the 4.5" to 4.75" range, again about a full inch longer than the RTHU. This is consistent with Mexican Violetear and helps to rule out Sparkling Violetear, which is near 6 inches long and whose body mass would appear to be at least 3 times that of the RTHU. The tail of a Sparkling Violetear is also supposed to be at least 2 inches long, which is much longer than the tail on this bird when framed next to the 1.75" feeder base.

Behavior: The bird was often chased away by RTHU. Over the course of the 5 days it stayed, the homeowner said she finally saw it chase away a RTHU only once, sometime Tuesday evening. It was very skittish. When it approached while RTHUs were present, which was almost constantly, it would attempt to feed maybe only half the time and would leave after 2-4 seconds without feeding the other half. This also helps eliminate Sparkling Violetear, which is notoriously brutish at feeders and intolerant of other hummers.

16. Voice: Never vocalized as far as I know.

17. Similar species (include how they were eliminated by your observation):

The most likely other species would be Sparkling Violetear, which is apparently the Violetear species that is common in aviaries and the pet trade. Sparkling is eliminated here, though, given 1, this bird is at least a full inch shorter and not nearly the mass of Sparkling; 2, this bird was very skittish and almost always chased away from RTHU, whereas Sparkling is notably intolerant of other hummers at feeders, and 3, 1 or 2 photos of this bird show the green throat of Mexican Violetear, which would be violet in Sparkling Violetear. I'll also say that the bill on Sparkling seems heavier or thicker when compared to Mexican in photographs, and Sparkling's bills is usually not down curved at all, although some individuals can show a slight downward curve. Mexican Violetear's bill is apparently always down curved, though not heavily. This bird's bill is certainly not straight, nor does it seem as thick as what photos show for Sparkling. Overall, I think the size of this bird puts it squarely as a Mexican Violetear. The fade between where the violet in the face ends and where the blue begins and where the blue ends and where the green begins could be picked to death in photos, and although it does point toward Mexican and away from Sparkling, I think the size is the most clear-cut way to separate them.

Lesser Violetear is also very similar but shows all green lores, whereas this bird's blue or violet facial coloration clearly begins in the loreal region. Lesser also shows little to no blue in the breast, but blue is highly noticeable in this bird. I think Lesser is separated easily by both points.

Broad-billed Hummingbird is mostly green and blue like Mexican Violetear, but the bird has an all-dark bill, and its tail was square with a large dark subterminal band.

18. Photographs or tape recordings obtained? (by whom? attached?): Yes. Will send my photos and Charlie Lyon's separately.

19. Previous experience with this species: None.

20. Identification aids: (list books, illustrations, other birders, etc. used in identification): National Geographic, 6th ed. Peterson's Guide to Mexican Birds. Sibley Guide. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/tzunun/galleries/72157647246577506/>

a. at time of observation:

b. after observation: all used after.

21. This description is written from: study of images

22. Are you positive of your identification? If not, explain: Yes, positive.

23. Date: 23 July, 2016

Time: 1:00pm

24. May the LBRC have permission to display this report or portions of this report on its website? _____yes_____

If yes, may we include your name with the report? _____yes_____