

**ARIZONA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT  
HERITAGE DATA MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

**Animal Abstract**

**Element Code:** ABNUC29150

**Data Sensitivity:** No

**CLASSIFICATION, NOMENCLATURE, DESCRIPTION, RANGE**

**NAME:** *Amazilia violiceps* Gould  
**COMMON NAME:** Violet-crowned Hummingbird  
**SYNONYMS:** *Amazilia verticalis*; *Trochilus verticalis*  
**FAMILY:** Trochilidae

**AUTHOR, PLACE OF PUBLICATION:** *Trochilus verticalis* "Lichtenst." W. Deppe, Preis.-Verz. Saugeh ...Vog. ... Mexico, 1830, p. 1. (No locality given = Veracruz.) (AOU 1957).

**TYPE LOCALITY:** *Trochilus verticalis*: "No locality given = Veracruz."

**TYPE SPECIMEN:** Unknown.

**TAXONOMIC UNIQUENESS:** The name *A. verticalis*, often used for this species, has been relegated to the synonymy of *A. cyanocephala* (AOU 1983). *A. violiceps* and *A. viridifrons* are sometimes considered conspecific. (NatureServe 2001). According to Phillips et al. (1964), "Arizona birds belong to the widespread, greenish-tailed west Mexican race *elliotti* Berlepsch, although long referred to as "*Amazilia salvini* (Brewster)." The type of the latter name has been examined by several ornithologists and proves to be a hybrid with *Cynanthus latirostris*; no such hybrid has yet been taken in Arizona, however."

**DESCRIPTION:** A rather large hummer measuring 4.5 inches (11 cm) in length, and 5.2-6.0 g in weight. Sexes are similar, but the crown is violet-blue in males, and dull greenish-blue in females and immatures. No iridescent gorget present on male. Underparts are entirely white; upperparts gray-brown to bronze green; tail greenish to gray-brown. The long bill is mostly red to livid pink with a black tip.

**AIDS TO IDENTIFICATION:** No other North American hummingbird has pure white underparts.

**ILLUSTRATIONS:**

Color drawing (National Geographic Society, 1999: p. 265)

Color drawing (Peterson, 1990: p. 221)

Color photo (Farrand, 1988: p. 313)

Color photos (Dan True, <http://www.hummingbirds.net/violetcrowned.html>, 2002)

Color photo (Tim Zurowski, eNature.com, 2002)

Color photo (accessed 2002: <http://www.sabo.org/photoalb/hbsfaz.htm>)

Color photos and B&W drawing (Tyrrell and Tyrrell, 1985: pp. 34-35)

**TOTAL RANGE:** Northern Sonora, southern Arizona (local), southwestern New Mexico (local) and western Chihuahua south to Oaxaca, Puebla and Hidalgo, Mexico. Casual or accidental in southern California, west Texas, and central Arizona. Northern breeding populations may move south for winter. (NatureServe 2001).

**RANGE WITHIN ARIZONA:** Breeds in Ramsey Canyon (Huachuca Mountains, Dixie Canyon (Mule Mountains), Cave Creek (Chiricahua Mountains), Guadalupe Canyon (Peloncillo Mountains), and Sonoita Creek (near Patagonia). A few individuals may overwinter, but many move south into Mexico.

### **SPECIES BIOLOGY AND POPULATION TRENDS**

**BIOLOGY:** The common call is a loud chattering, somewhat like that of a Broad-billed Hummer. Male's song is a series of sibilant *ts* notes (National Geographic Society, 1999). It is a conspicuous bird and behaves aggressively toward other hummers.

A hummingbird's brush tipped tongue is tubular at the tip. They also have the unique ability to hover and feed at the same time, storing their food in a small crop for sustenance overnight. They have the ability to endure temporary cool weather or cold nights by becoming dormant. Hummingbirds in their northern range, migrate in the winter to warmer climates. Because of their small size, they have one of the highest metabolism of any warm-blooded vertebrate animal in the world. They must feed almost continuously all day to remain alive. In order to search for the food need to supply such a high metabolism, they are able to fly forwards, backwards, shift sideways, and fly straight up and down.

**REPRODUCTION:** Nesting observed late June - early July in Arizona and New Mexico (NatureServe 2001). Nest composed of plant down, twigs, lichen, bound with spider's silk, and lined with plant down (Ehrlich et al., 1988). As in other hummers, the female builds the nest and raises the young, with the male departing after mating occurs (BISON 2001). Two white, unmarked eggs comprise the clutch; eggs size 0.6 inches (14 mm).

**FOOD HABITS:** Invertivore, Nectarivore. Violet-crowned hummingbirds feed on both nectar and a variety of small arthropods.

**HABITAT:** The array of habitats used by this hummingbird in Mexico is quite varied, but in the United States the species is found primarily in riparian woodlands at lower elevations (2,800-5,500 ft). In Arizona, they breed primarily in sycamore and some cottonwood-willow riparian habitats along several canyons and creeks. (BISON 2001). NatureServe reports habitats used as "Scrub, open woodland, forest edge, riparian groves and plantations, generally in arid or semi-arid situations (Subtropical and lower Temperate zones) (AOU 1983). In Guadalupe Canyon, Arizona and New Mexico, nests have been found in sycamores,

7-12+ m above ground. Nests in Oaxaca were 1-2 m above ground in small oaks (Johnsgard 1983).”

**ELEVATION:** 2,800 - 5,525 ft. (854 - 1685 m).

**PLANT COMMUNITY:** Shrubland/Chaparral, Riparian Woodland. In Guadalupe Canyon, these woodlands are characterized by Fremont cottonwood (*Populus fremontii*), Arizona sycamore (*Platanus wrightii*), Arizona white oak (*Quercus arizonica*), and netleaf hackberry (*Celtis reticulata*) (BISON, 2001).

**POPULATION TRENDS:**

### **SPECIES PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION**

**ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT STATUS:** None  
**STATE STATUS:** WSC (AGFD, WSCA in prep)  
[State Candidate AGFD, TNW 1988]  
**OTHER STATUS:** Forest Service Sensitive (USDA, FS  
Region 3 1999, 2007)

**MANAGEMENT FACTORS:** Threatened by urban development and grazing (AGFD 1988, AGFD in prep). In New Mexico, the loss of low-elevation broadleaf riparian habitat in Guadalupe Canyon and elsewhere in southwest New Mexico would threaten this tiny population (NMDGF 1994 *in* BISON 2001).

**PROTECTIVE MEASURES TAKEN:**

**SUGGESTED PROJECTS:**

**LAND MANAGEMENT/OWNERSHIP:** USFS - Coronado National Forest; State Land Department; TNC - Patagonia-Sonoita Creek and Ramsey Canyon; Private.

### **SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION**

#### **REFERENCES:**

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**MAJOR KNOWLEDGEABLE INDIVIDUALS:****ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

**Revised:** 2002-02-14 (SMS)

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