GUIDES TO MEASURING LIVE BIRDS

By Frank P. Frazier, Sr.

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Measure in millimeters -- weigh in grams -- whenever possible. But weigh and measure live birds, at any rate. Banders have a unique opportunity to get these statistics and add important details to the study of live birds.

Always measure the direct distance - not the curvature.

WING - from the bend of the wing - to the tip of the longest primary

TAIL - from the point between the middle rectrices where they emerge from the skin - to the end of the longest rectrix

BILL (Culmen) - from the tip of the upper mandible - to base of feathers on forehead

TARSUS - from the point of the joint between tibia and metatarsus - to the point of the joint at the base of the middle toe in front

CONVERSION FACTORS

Multiply	By	To Obtain
Inches	2.54	Centimeters
Feet	30.48	Centimeters
Centimeters	0.3937	Inches
Centimeters	10	Millimeters
Grams	0.03527	Ounces
Ounces	28.35	Grams
Ounces	16	Pounds
Temperature -(^{o}C) 17.78	1.8	Temp. (^{o}F)
Temperature -(^{o}F) -32	5/9	Temp. (^{o}C)

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SOME DIFFERENCES BETWEEN JUVENILE, FIRST YEAR, AND ADULT WRENS

By Ike Hawthorn

(We thank Robert Spencer, Editor of The Ringers' Bulletin, organ of the British Trust for Ornithology, for allowing us to reprint Ike Hawthorn's paper, which appeared in Volume 3, No. 9, on pages 9 - 11. Ed.)

On Thatcham Marsh, Berkshire during August to October 1970, I handled about 60 Wrens (Troglodytes troglodytes). These were mainly juviniles undergoing post-juvenile moult, but there were also some adults, and it seemed that certain differences could be categorised which could lead to a reliable method of ageing. After testing this throughout the winter of 1970-71 on a population of about 180 Wrens, also on Thatcham Marsh, I have been able to set out the following details:

Juvenile/Post Juvenile

The juvenile has uniform brown undertail coverts, but during post-juvenile moult (August to October) a pattern of white spots is produced, indicating a post-juvenile wren.

First Year/Adult

Greater Covert differences

During post-juvenile moult, Wrens can moult a variable number of greater coverts. These may range from "none" through "some", to "all". One trend amongst those caught from August to October on Thatcham Marsh in 1970 appeared to be to moult the inner five and keep the outer four so that the contrast between the gingery colour of the unmoulten outers and the more fawny brown colour of the moulted inners made ageing easy. However, when only one or perhaps two inners had been replaced, the difference was difficult to detect; a large number of birds seemed to fall into this category.

Most of the juveniles disappeared from the Marsh after completing post-juvenile moult and were replaced by a wintering population in which only ten out of 100 new birds caught had greater covert differences sufficiently noticeable to warrant definite ageing by this method.

Bastard Wing differences

The pattern of marking on the outer web of the large bastard wing feather appears to fall into three groups. It should be noted that the patterns below are not absulute and serve only to illustrate the general case.