

## BIRD IN THE HAND

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### Topography of a Bird

The Bird in the Hand can only be accurately described if the topography of the bird and the standard methods of measurements are known.

Fig.A. This shows the name for the different parts of the

Secondary coverts	= Greater wing coverts of other plumage.
Outer	= Furthest from the bird's body.
Inner	= Nearest to bird's body.
Bill	= Upper and lower mandible.
Culmen	= The ridge along the top of the upper mandible.
Rectices	= Tail feathers.
Remiges	= Flight feathers (Primaries and Secondaries.)

### Measurements

Measurements of the wing, bill, tail and tarsus are used to indicate differences between similar species, geographical races, sexes, growth in juveniles, growth of wings and tails before and after moult.

The measurements given in books are from museum specimens (except total lengths) and live measurements must be made in such a way that will allow for the slight shrinkage that takes place in the dry specimen.

#### BILL

Fig.B. The normal procedure is to measure as follows:

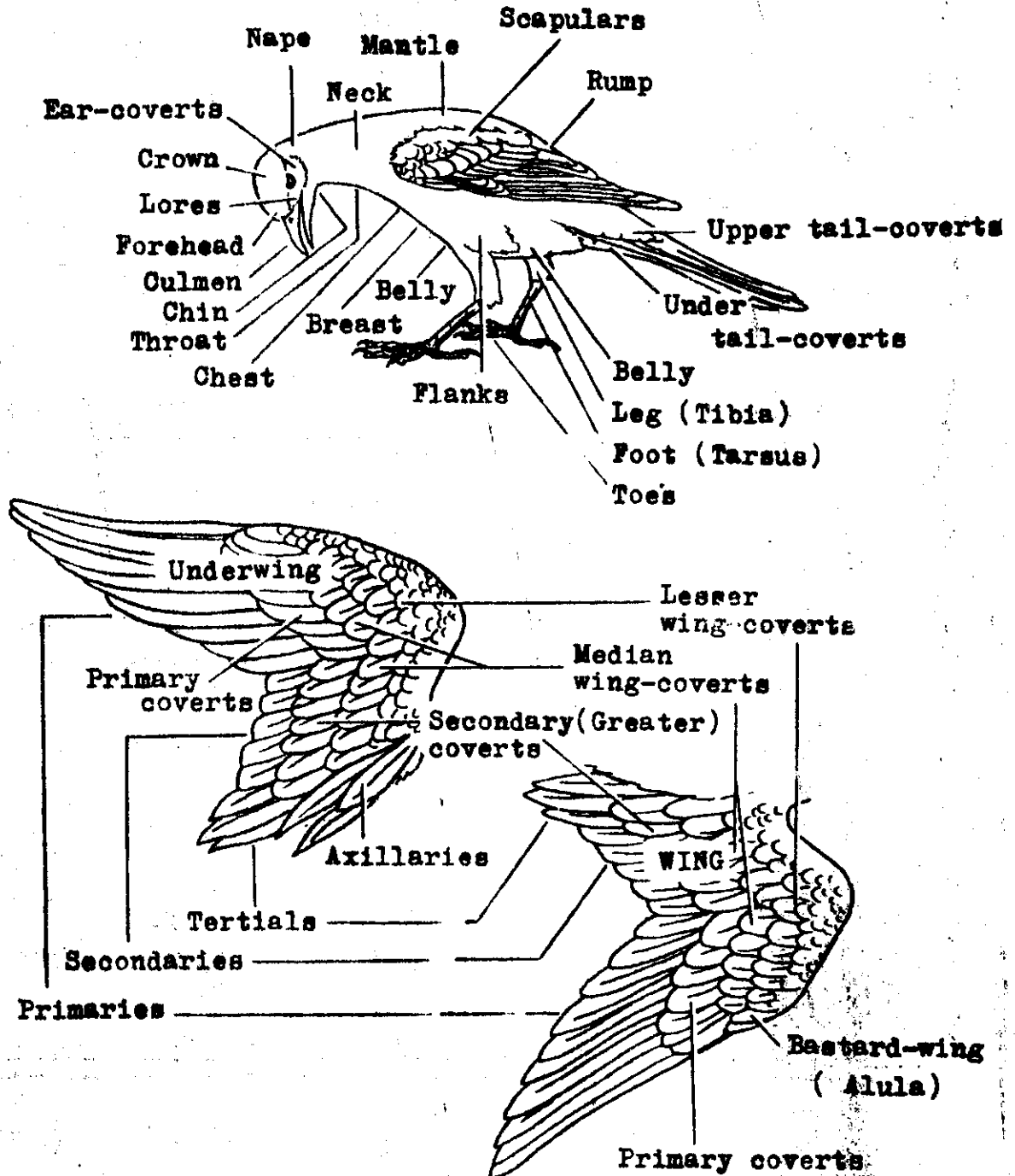
- Small birds from tip of bill to where it joins the skull. This may be hidden by bristles and feathers.
- Birds of prey from the cere to tip of bill.
- Waders and long billed birds from feathers to tip of bill. The dividers must be held so that the sides of the points bear on the bill tip and skull, so as to avoid injuring the bird.

#### WING

Fig.C. This is best done by the method laid down in the Handbook of British Birds. To compare a wing measurement from a life bird with a museum measurement, it is necessary to take the minimum chord between the carpal joint and tip of longest primary. A ruler with a stop at the end makes measuring easier. A tape is

TOPOGRAPHY OF A BIRD

FIG. A



used for very large birds and the measurement made along the upper surface of the wing.

- a. Put ruler under closed wing with the stop pressed gently against the carpal joint.
- b. Press gently down with thumb on median and secondary coverts.
- c. The primaries should lie naturally in their normal curve and not be straightened along the edge of the ruler.

### TARSUS

Fig. D.

This is the measurement of the tarso-metatarsal bone. This is from the middle of the back of the heel to the lowest edge of the last complete scale before the toes separate

### TAIL

Fig. E.

When measuring live birds the tail should be measured from below to avoid injuring the preen gland. One end of the dividers is placed under the tail coverts and against the base of the tail, the other end against the tip of the longest feather.

