

## Sexing Juvenile Spinebills

S. G. LANE

It is important that banders are able to sex accurately as many birds as possible. With adults of some species, the plumage provides a simple means of sex determination. This is not always so with the juveniles or even with adults of many other species.

H. J. de S. Disney (1966) has shown that the sex of New Holland Honeyeaters (*Meliornis novaehollandiae*), unable to be determined by plumage, in most cases can be determined by wing span measurement. There is some overlap and other factors must be applied in these instances or the overlap cases ignored.

Adult Eastern Spinebills (*Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris*) can be sexed by plumage (Disney, 1963). As soon as the first "adult" crown feathers are visible, immatures can be sexed likewise (Wilson, 1964) but, until these crown feathers show through, juveniles cannot be sexed by plumage alone.

Wing span measurements (stretched) will permit accurate sexing of Spinebills in most instances. The measurement is taken stretched as shown by Disney (1966). The length measurement (stretched) will provide confirmation in doubtful cases. With juveniles however, the total length is not a satisfactory criterion because the bill and tail vary too much according to age.

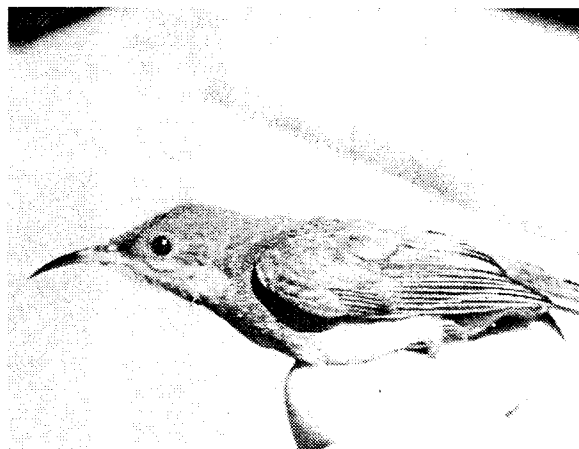
The following measurements (excluding bill lengths) were taken from Spinebills sexed by plumage (all measurements are in millimetres).

Table 1.

	Range	Av.	Number Measured
Males			
Wing span	200-225	213.2	115
Length (stretched)	162-178	170.8	30
Bill*	25-30	—	45
Females			
Wing span	184-208	192.3	159
Length (stretched)	146-161	153.4	46
Bill*	21-25	—	22

\*Bird in the Hand, Vol. 1, No. 6, p. 137

The wing span of only two males was less than 203 mm. while that of only two females exceeded this measurement.



• Juvenile Eastern Spinebill.

Thirteen juveniles have been measured and in the following tables these have been grouped using 203 mm. as the division between sexes.

Measurements of juveniles unable to be sexed by plumage:

Table 2.

Group A		Group B	
Bill	Wing Span	Bill	Wing Span
19	193	24	214
19	195	22.6	220
20	195	—	212
19	190	18	207
20	189	23	217
—	185		
20	197		
17	191		

One bird (Group B) with a bill length of only 18 mm. had a wing span of 207 mm. which is only one millimetre shorter than the largest female wing span. The bill, tail and plumage of this bird indicated that it would have been out of the nest probably no more