

been sexed by dissection and correctly recorded as a male by Van Heugal. With a tarsus measurement of 112 mm, this value lies well outside the range reported here for females.

Unfortunately not all of the collected specimens had complete sets of morphometric data. Nevertheless, Table 1 presents the mean weight, total length, wingspan, wing, tail, bill and tarsus length for male and female Lyrebirds. An analysis of the data clearly indicates that male lyrebirds with a mean tarsus length of 111.4 ± 3.4 mm can be distinguished from females with a mean tarsus length of 95.5 ± 3.8 mm. (see Fig. 1).

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FLEDGING DATE AND POST-FLEDGING PERIOD OF THE SOOTY OWL *Tyto tenebricosa*: A COMMENT ON PAGE (2000)

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Page (2000) reported two dependent juvenile Sooty Owls *Tyto tenebricosa* in northern New South Wales in April 1997, and speculated on the basis of their dark plumage that they were 10 months old. Reference to Higgins (1999) and recent studies cited therein reveals that there is no basis for such a conclusion. Sooty Owls can lay in almost any month of the year; Sooty and other large forest *Tyto* hatch after 5-6 weeks' incubation, fledge at 2-3 months, and have lost visible traces (in the field) of pale natal down, to reveal full (dark) juvenile plumage, within a month of fledging (Higgins 1999). Therefore, all one can say is that dependent juvenile Sooty Owls, past the downy stage and therefore fledged at least a month, were seen in early April, with no conclusions possible on hatching/fledging dates or length of post-fledging dependence period. I also have two records (from different territories) of dependent juvenile Sooty Owls in April and May in northern New South Wales, in the Border Ranges in 1990. The post-fledging period has been estimated at 3-5 months for the Sooty Owl (Higgins 1999), although further study is needed on this and other aspects of the breeding cycle of large *Tyto*.

Some other statements by Page (2000) also require updating in the light of recent studies cited in Higgins (1999). The Sooty Owl's northern limit is Eungella National Park near Mackay; with appropriate survey techniques in suitable habitat it is frequently detected, and

in some parts of northern New South Wales is the most frequently encountered large forest owl; there have been several comprehensive dietary studies in the 1990s.

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REPLY

I wish to thank Steve Debus for his comments. I agree since the article was first written in early 1999 there has been more relevant references published (Higgins, P. J. (Ed.), 1999. *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds*: Vol. 4. Oxford University Press, Melbourne). The aim of the article was to publish an interesting breeding record and stimulate debate on the species as well as increasing our broader knowledge of threatened avifauna. One of *Corella's* aims is to publish these types of interesting observations with the goal of exchanging data and I encourage others to use this Journal for this function. Active debate and sharing of ideas is important.

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