

TWO FAIRY WRENS



• *Variegated Wren (male) with food.*

Photo: N. Chaffer



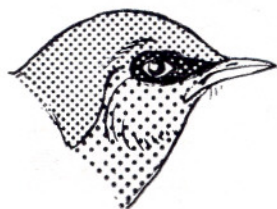
• *Superb Blue Wren (male)*

Photo: A. J. Elliott

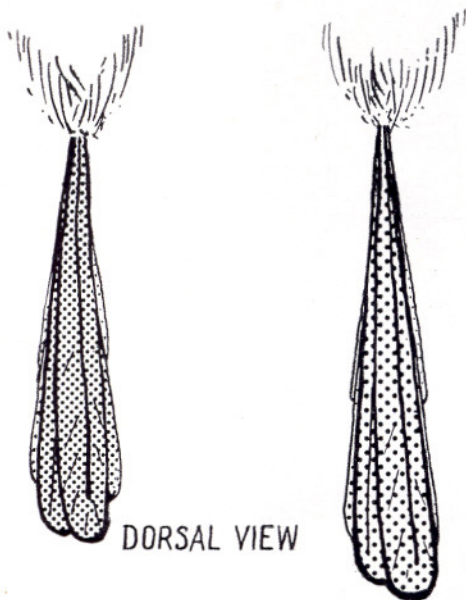
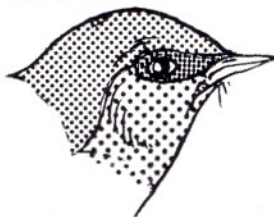
Two Fairy Wrens *Malurus* spp.

Certain phases of the eastern form of the Superb Blue Wren (excluding the Tasmanian race) and the Variegated Wren (excluding the Purple-backed and other forms) are described and compared. The adult male breeding plumages have been omitted because they are so distinctive and are well illustrated by Cayley (1968).

M. LAMBERTI



M. CYANEUS



DORSAL VIEW

Drawings by S. Beresford

SUPERB BLUE WREN *Malurus cyaneus*

Male

Adult in winter or non-breeding plumage: Similar to female except bill black, lores and circle around eye buff, and tail deep blue.

Immature: Similar to adult female with red-brown bill and orange brown lores and eye circle, but tail deep blue.

Juvenile: Similar to immature but tail brown.

These plumage differences are well illustrated by Rowley (1965).

Female

Adult: As illustrated by Cayley (1968), with bill orange brown, lores and circle round eye orange brown, and tail brown with blue tinge on inner webs of all but the centre feathers. Tail feathers of breeding birds have greenish blue lights (Rowley 1965).

Immature: Not known if distinguishable from adult.

Juvenile: Similar to male juvenile.

VARIEGATED WREN *Malurus lamberti*

Male

Adult in winter or non-breeding plumage: Similar to Blue Wren. Bill black, lores and circle around eye greyish and similar to ear coverts, and tail dull greenish blue as in breeding plumage.

Immature: Similar to female.

Juvenile: Similar to immature, but tail brown (North 1904).

Female

Adult: As illustrated by Cayley (1968), with bill reddish brown, lores and circle around eye rufous, and tail dull greenish blue as in male.

Immature: Similar to adult.

Juvenile: Similar to juvenile male.

DIAGNOSTIC CHARACTERS

Brown birds of the Superb Blue Wren have orange brown lores and circle around eye, and brown or deep blue tail of 53-62 mm (39 measured), whereas those of the Variegated Wren have rufous lores and circle around eye, and brown or dull greenish blue tail of 63-81 mm (29 measured)

References

- Cayley, N. W. (1968), *What Bird is That?* (Fifth Edition), Angus and Robertson. Sydney.
North, A. J. (1904), *Nests and Eggs of Birds Found Breeding in Australia and Tasmania*, 1:222.
Rowley, Ian (1965), 'The Life History of the Superb Blue Wren *Malurus cyaneus*', *Emu* 64:251-297.

DATA EXCHANGE

This section has been included in the Journal at the request of a number of members of the Association. It is designed to allow the inclusion of material of a brief and possibly preliminary nature with a very short publication time. Suitable subject matter would include Weights and Measurements, Moults, Plumage changes, Colour of soft parts, Ageing and Sexing methods and Requests for information, etc.

It must be emphasised that material in 'Data Exchange' will, in some cases, be of a preliminary and possibly of an unconfirmed nature and is included to assist workers in the field and also for trial and/or comment by others. All correspondence in respect to material published in this section should be directed, in the first instance, to the quoted author.

Members are invited to submit brief papers or notes for inclusion in 'Data Exchange', such material should be forwarded to the Hon. Editor for appraisal.

It is recommended that material from 'Data Exchange' be referenced as, e.g.:

Lane, S. G. (1983), 'Weights and Measurements — Eastern Spinebill', *In Data Exchange, Corella 7: 22.*

Hon. Editor

Weights and Measurements

The tables below illustrate the size differences between the two species of Fairy-wrens which occur in the Sydney Region. The Superb Fairy-wrens, *Malurus cyaneus*, were captured and banded at Scheyville which is located about 41 km north-west of Sydney. The Variegated Fairy-wrens *Malurus lamberti* were banded at Winmalee in the lower Blue Mountains, about 65 km north-north-west of Sydney.

It has been suggested by A. J. Leishman (pers. comm.) that differences in bill width may also provide a reliable characteristic for separating brown birds of these species, but data are presently not available to substantiate this possibility.

Superb Fairy-wren *Malurus cyaneus*

Scheyville, N.S.W., 33°36'S., 150°54'E.

All year (1971-1983).

		RANGE	MEAN	SD	n
Wing (mm)	A ♂	47-53	50.0	1.3	33
	A ♀	47-50	48.2	1.1	8
	AMB	45-54	49.3	2.3	69
Wing Span (mm)	A ♂	153-165	159.1	3.0	41
	A ♀	153-160	155.5	3.4	14
	ABM	147-165	157.4	3.5	79
Tail (mm)	A ♂	53-64	58.6	3.3	38
	A ♀	54-61	57.7	2.4	11
	ABM	53-64	59.0	3.0	72
Weight (g)	A ♂	8.5-10.5	9.4	0.5	46
	A ♀	8.0-10.0	9.1	0.6	15
	ABM	7.75-10.5	9.0	0.6	100

Variegated Fairy-wren *Malurus lamberti*

Winmalee, N.S.W., 33°40'S., 150°37'E.

All year (1977-1983).

		RANGE	MEAN	SD	n
Wing (mm)	A ♂	47-49	48.0	0.7	5
	A ♀	44-49	45.6	1.4	11
	ABM	42-49	46.3	1.7	23
Wing Span (mm)	A ♂	147-153	150.4	2.3	7
	A ♀	143-148	144.7	1.7	13
	ABM	142-153	146.0	3.0	32
Tail (mm)	A ♂	73-85	78.5	3.7	10
	A ♀	71-80	75.1	2.8	9
	ABM	71-85	76.4	3.8	30
Weight (g)	A ♂	7.0-9.5	8.4	0.7	10
	A ♀	7.5-8.5	7.8	0.4	9
	ABM	7-9.5	8.0	0.6	29

Determination: Adult males by plumage;
Adult females by cloaca.

ABM = All birds measured — includes sexed adults as well as unsexed brown birds.

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