

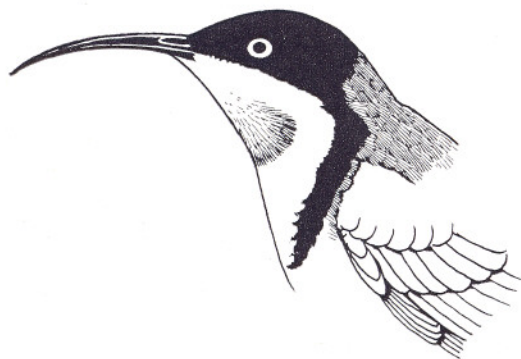
## EASTERN SPINEBILL



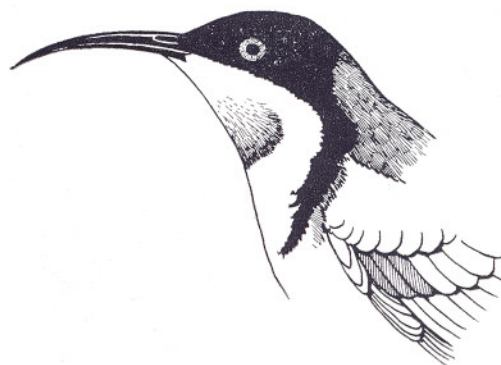
• *Eastern Spinebill (female) at nest.*

Photo: N. Chaffer

## Eastern Spinebill *Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris*



Adult Male



Immature and First Year Male

### MALE

#### Adult

*Iris:* Red to bright red.

*Bill:* Black.

*Crown and forehead:* Glossy black feathers, sometimes edged glossy green.

*Lores and ear coverts:* Dark brown, merging with black of crown and forehead.

*Breast:* Black crescent broad and well defined.

*Secondary coverts:* Outer webs a clear bright grey contrasting with blackish inner webs.

#### Measurements

*Wing span:* 200-225 mm (Lane 1967).

*Wing:* 67-73 mm

*Tail:* 60-66 mm

*Bill:* 28-33 mm

As in most honeyeaters the male is larger than the female.

### Immature and First Year

*Iris:* Changing with age, grey through light brown and red brown to red.

*Bill:* Black with yellow base to lower mandible, becoming all black.

*Body plumage:* Similar to adult.

*Secondary coverts:* Still juvenile, or inner three replaced by greyer, larger feathers more like those of adult.

*Flight and tail feathers:* Still juvenile until the first full moult (after about a year); if accidentally lost, replaced by adult-type feathers.

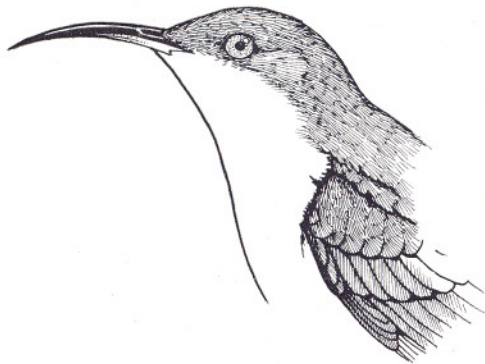
#### Measurements

*Wing span:* 205-220 mm

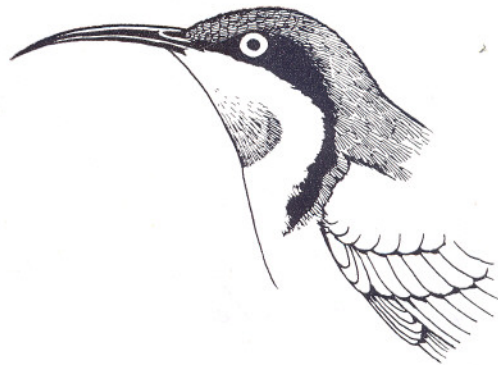
*Wing:* 64-68 mm

*Tail:* 56-61 mm

*Bill:* 27-33 mm



**Juvenile**



**Adult Female**

### **Juvenile**

*Crown and forehead:* Dark olive.

*Lores and ear coverts:* Similar to crown.

*Underparts:* Olive fawn.

*Secondary coverts:* With rufous edges and tips which are lost or greatly reduced through wear. Outer web, dull greyish with brownish tinge; inner web darker and blackish, not contrasting strongly with outer web.

#### *Measurements*

*Wing span:* 205-220 mm (Lane 1967).

*Wing:* 64-68 mm

*Tail:* 56-61 mm

*Bill:* 27-31 mm

### **FEMALE**

#### **Adult**

*Iris:* Red.

*Bill:* Black.

*Crown and forehead:* Greyish olive, feathers edged pale glossy green.

*Lores and ear coverts:* Dark brown clearly defined from crown and forehead.

*Breast:* Black crescent not so well defined.

#### *Measurements*

*Wing span:* 184-208 mm (Lane 1967).

*Wing:* 60-63.5 mm

*Tail:* 52-58 mm

*Bill:* 25-29 mm

### **Immature and First Year**

Resembles adult female except bill, iris and secondary coverts as in immature male.

#### *Measurements*

*Wing span:* 184-197 mm

*Tail:* 52-57 (usually 52 or 53 mm); if longer generally due to replacement of lost tail feathers.

*Bill:* 25-28.5 mm

### **Juvenile**

As for juvenile male but with the following measurements:

*Wing span:* 187-197 mm (includes results of Lane, 1967).

*Wing:* 59-62 mm

*Tail:* 52-57 mm (usually 52, 53 mm)

*Bill:* 25-27 mm

### **DIAGNOSTIC CHARACTERS**

The differences in crown colour clearly separate the sexes in adult and immature birds. A brown to red brown eye indicates an immature bird. The sex of most juveniles can be determined by the wing span.

### **Reference**

Lane, S. G. (1967), 'Sexing Juvenile Spinebills', *Aust. Bird Bander* 5:6-7.

Drawings by W. T. Cooper

