BIRD IN THE HAND

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NOISY FRIARBIRD *Philemon corniculatus*

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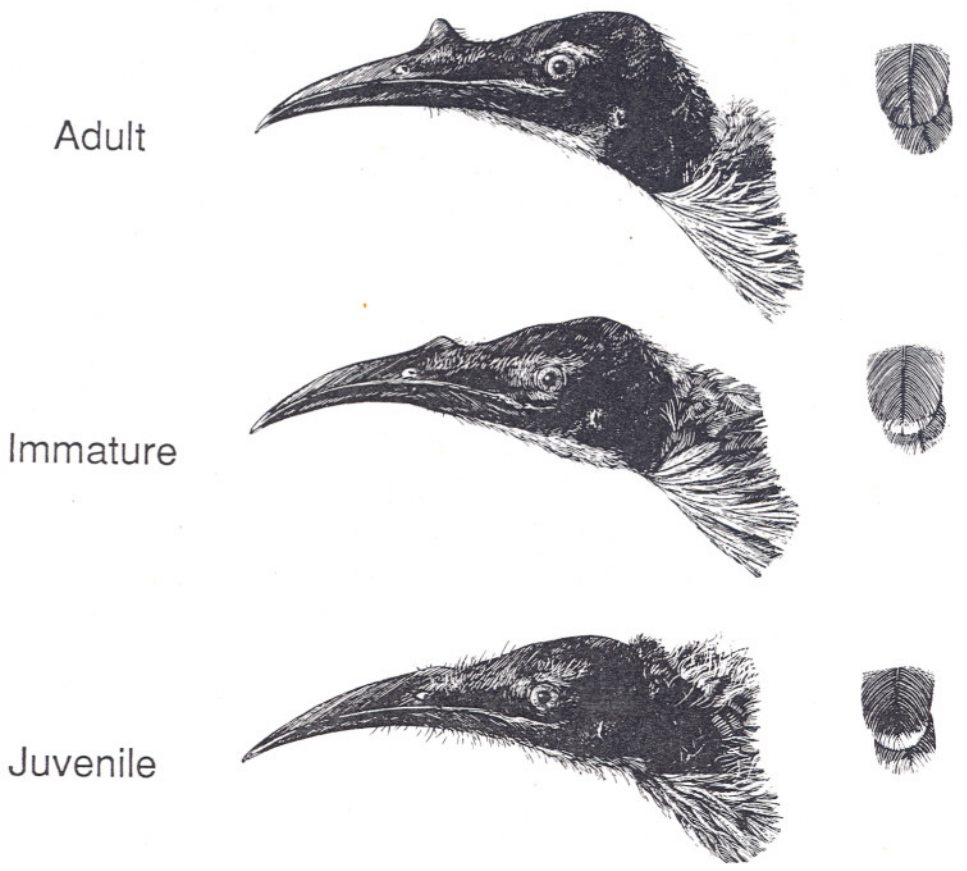

Figure 1. *Age indicators for head and back feathers of the Noisy Friarbird* Philemon corniculatus.

AGEING

Three plumage stages can be identified in the Noisy Friarbird: juvenile, immature, and adult; each is readily distinguished (Fig. 1, Table 1). The first two plumages are easily identified by the heavily scalloped back, resulting from white fringing on buff, brown or grey feathering. Another characteristic is the low or under-developed knob or casque over the nostril. The worn plumage of the Noisy Friarbird shows a tendency towards the development of a brownish colouration.

The white feather fringing on the upperpart of immature birds approaching maturity can abrade towards the 'all grey' adult plumage. Likewise, the adult birds often have a paler silvery grey colour caused by abrasion of the fringing. The iris colour of adult birds is often difficult to assess: the red iris so often encountered in captured or handled birds appears to be caused through distress and cannot be used to age the species.

SEXING

Both sexes exhibit similar plumage characters with respect to age. Table 2 gives measurements which indicate that males are larger. Unfortunately to date there is little information recorded on the total head measurement, but indications are that the measurement is consistant with other honeyeaters (Rooke 1976) in being larger in the male. This could be complicated by the report on the Eastern Spinebill *Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris* by Jordon (1987), who found seasonal differences in total head measurements of banded individuals.

The few data available indicate that the northern subspecies *P. c. ellioti* (northwards from about Bowen, Queensland) is generally smaller. Available data on sexed immature birds are too meagre for comparative study.

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TABLE 1

Feather coloration for ageing *Philemon corniculatus*.

Juvenile	
Head:	
forehead/lores	well feathered
nape	well feathered
casque	small and flattened
Upper breast:	feathers short, distal one-third edged lemon
Back/rump:	rump buff to grey-brown; upper tail coverts and feathers of back broadly fringed white
Immature	
Head:	
forehead/lores	buff feathers
nape	often bare
casque	small and reduced in size
Upper breast:	feathers elongate, tipped lemon
Back/rump:	feathers light brown, broadly fringed white
Adult	
Head:	
forehead/lores	bare
nape	bare or only a few feathers
casque	well defined
Upper breast:	feathers elongate, tipped white
Back/rump:	feathers mid-grey, fringed silvery grey, often with darker central shafts

TABLE 2

Biometrics for sexing adult *Philemon corniculatus*.

	Weight g	Wingspan mm	Wing mm	Tail mm	Tarsus mm
Male					
Range	86–143	434–492	141–166	109–141	30.5–34.3
Mean	112.2	472.5	155.5	128.6	32.2
S.D.	15.18	17.17	5.34	6.02	0.97
No.	16	10	39	40	39
Female					
Range	90–111	420–457	139–158	112–134	28.8–34.2
Mean	100.3	439	148	123.2	31.2
S.D.	7:63	14.64	5.29	5.66	1.51
No.	6	6	22	22	21

REFERENCES

Jordan, R. (1987). Seasonal variation in head-bill length for the Eastern Spinebill *Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris* at Barren Grounds Nature Reserve, New South Wales. *Corella* **11**: 118–120.

Rooke, I. J. (1976). A measurement for sexing New Holland Honeyeaters. *Aust. Bird Bander* **14**: 72.