

# «BIRD IN THE HAND»

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## Separation of female - plumaged Leaden and Satin Flycatchers

Problems of differentiating female-plumaged Leaden Flycatchers *Myiagra rubecula* and Satin Flycatchers *M. cyanoleuca* have been discussed by Liddy (1977) and Reid and Cox (1978). Plumage differences include darker colour of the dorsal surface, throat and breast of the Satin Flycatcher. In the hand the most reliable method of separation is by size. The Satin Flycatcher is considerably larger than the Leaden Flycatcher in measurements of wing, tail and bill (to base of skull). There is little overlap with only exceptionally large Leaden Flycatchers or small Satin Flycatchers falling within the range of the other species. Leaden Flycatchers from the Northern Territory and Western Australian average smaller than eastern birds although there is a large overlap of measurements in these populations.

Adult males of each species can also be separated by measurements as well as plumage. Males tend to be slightly larger than females but there is too much overlap to allow reliable separation of the sexes by this method. The following points may prove valuable guides to sex and age; it is suggested that banders record the appropriate features.

Possibly immature Satin Flycatchers of both sexes can be distinguished from adult females. The adult female has some gloss on the crown feathers which is lacking in immatures. The young birds also have pale rufous-buff edging to some secondaries and upper wing coverts. Further specimens must be examined to confirm these methods.

There are too few reliably sexed female-plumaged birds to suggest further means of determining ages and sexes. Wingspan may prove valuable for separating sexes of both species.

### References

- Liddy, J. (1977), 'A note on the female plumage of the Leaden Flycatcher', *Corella* 1: 73-76.  
Reid, N. and J. B. Cox (1978), 'The status of Satin and Leaden Flycatchers in South Australia with a note on female plumages', *S. Aust. Orn.* 27: 277-279.

Measurements of female-plumaged birds (mm)

	Satin Flycatcher			Leaden Flycatcher		
	number	mean	range	number	mean	range
<b>Wing</b>	14	86	77-92	35	73	68-81
<b>Tail</b>	14	77	74-84	35	66	61-75
<b>Bill</b> (to base of skull)	13	18.7	17.4-19.2	33	16.4	14.1-17.6