

BIRD IN THE HAND

Fuscous Honeyeater *Lichenostomus fuscus*

by S. G. Lane, Moonee, N.S.W. Drawings by Marina Bishop

AGEING

Adult (breeding season)

Bill: Black.

Gape flange: Black.

Eye ring:* Black.

Adult (non-breeding season)

Bill: Black tip, horn to yellow at base.

Gape flange: Yellow.

Eye ring:* Yellow.

Immature

This plumage is similar to the adult plumage in the non-breeding season except that the tail feathers are more pointed (see Disney 1976) and the rump feathers are buff. Also, the coverts have buff tips. Evidence of these characters is usually present for about nine months though the edging of the coverts is often lost earlier from wear.

Rump: Buff.

Coverts: Edged buff.

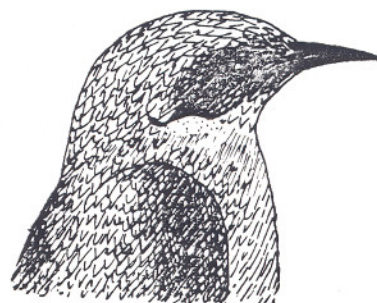
Bill: Dark brown tip, yellow at base.

Gape flange: Yellow.

Eye ring:* Yellow.

Juvenile

This plumage is similar to that of immature birds but the body plumage is soft and downy. The bill tip is brown and the yellow parts are very bright.

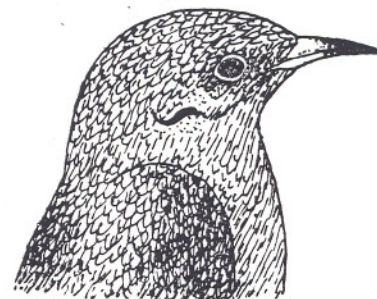


Adult (breeding season)

Bill: Black.

Gape flange: Black.

Eye ring: Black.



Adult (non-breeding season)

Bill: Black tip, horn to yellow at base.

Gape flange: Yellow.

Eye ring: Yellow.

* Scaly skin, not feathers.

SEXING

Most adult birds can be sexed by wing-span measurements (Lane 1974) but cloaca examination (see Disney 1976) during the breeding season is the most positive method. Measurements given for adults were confirmed by this method.

Adult

Males

Wing span: 251-268 mm (49 measured)

Females

Wing span: 237-252 mm (20 measured)

Immature

Some "first year" birds may be accurately sexed by wing span providing due allowance is made for the increase that occurs following the first primary moult. This increase is 5-12 mm (5 measured).

Males: Wing span > 248 mm

Females: Wing span < 235 mm

Note: These data were obtained from birds in the Sydney district, N.S.W. The plumage variations probably apply throughout the range of Fuscous Honeyeaters. However, the size is likely to vary. Near Townsville, Qld, measurements of nine adult males, confirmed by cloaca examination (in September) produced the following wing span data: Range 247-256 mm; Mean 250.8 mm; S.D. 3.2. This indicates that these more northern birds are smaller in size as might be expected.

References

- Disney, H. J. de S. (1967), 'Sexing Passerines by Cloaca Examination', *Aust. Bird Bander* 5(2): 36-37.
Disney, H. J. de S. (1976), 'Bird in the Hand — Golden Whistler', *Aust. Bird Bander* 14(3): 73-75.
Lane, S. G. (1974), 'Soft Part Colours in Fuscous Honeyeaters', *Aust. Bird Bander* 12(3): 55-57.