

BIRD IN THE HAND

by H. J. de S. Disney, drawings by Celia Tanner, Australian Museum, Sydney.

Grey Shrike-Thrush *Colluricincla harmonica*

Sexing and Ageing

This guide is based on these birds taking three years to obtain adult plumage. In some instances it may be difficult to identify second year birds, but adult and first year birds are easily distinguished. The plumage phases given here are definite but the actual time period may vary due to delayed moult.

Note: The summary of diagnostic features proposed by P. N. Reilly (1966, *Aust. Bird Bander*, 4:75) is basically correct, but the superciliary eye stripe is a juvenile character. It may completely or partially disappear in the first year; also adult females may have black palates. The bird described by S. & D. Wilson (1965, *Aust. Bird Bander*, 3:70) would appear to have been a first year or a first/second year male and not an immature female.

JUVENILE

Both sexes: Similar; body feathers soft and loose textured, quickly moulting into first year plumage.

Underparts: Whitish; feathers loose and fluffy with broad dark brown centre streaks.

Face: Broad rufous superciliary eye stripe above and behind eye.

Eye ring feathers: Rufous.

Wing: Coverts and secondaries edged rufous and sometimes a slight rufous also on the primaries; pale rufous tinge on the inner edges of the underwing feathers.

Tail: Grey; ends pointed (cf. Regent Bowerbird, vol. 9, no. 1, page 14).

FIRST YEAR

Both sexes

Face: The juvenile rufous superciliary eye stripe may be partly or fully replaced by feathers similar to the crown feathers.

Eye ring feathers: Generally still rufous.

Wing

Primary coverts: Rufous; still juvenile (unmoulted).

Secondary coverts: Being replaced; the innermost may be new and the outer still juvenile (shorter and rufous).

Primaries and secondaries: Still juvenile (unmoulted) but the rufous edging mostly lost due to wear.

Tail: Still juvenile with pointed ends to the feathers.

Male

Bill: Generally black, but sometimes the upper mandible is dark blackish grey and the lower grey like the female.

Iris: Chocolate brown.

Lores: Grey.

Chin, throat and upper breast: Greyish white with very narrow dark grey centre shaft streaks.

Lower breast and flanks: Buffy grey without centre shaft streaks.

Female

Bill: Generally the upper mandible dark grey-brown and the lower mandible grey, but sometimes the bill may be black like the male.

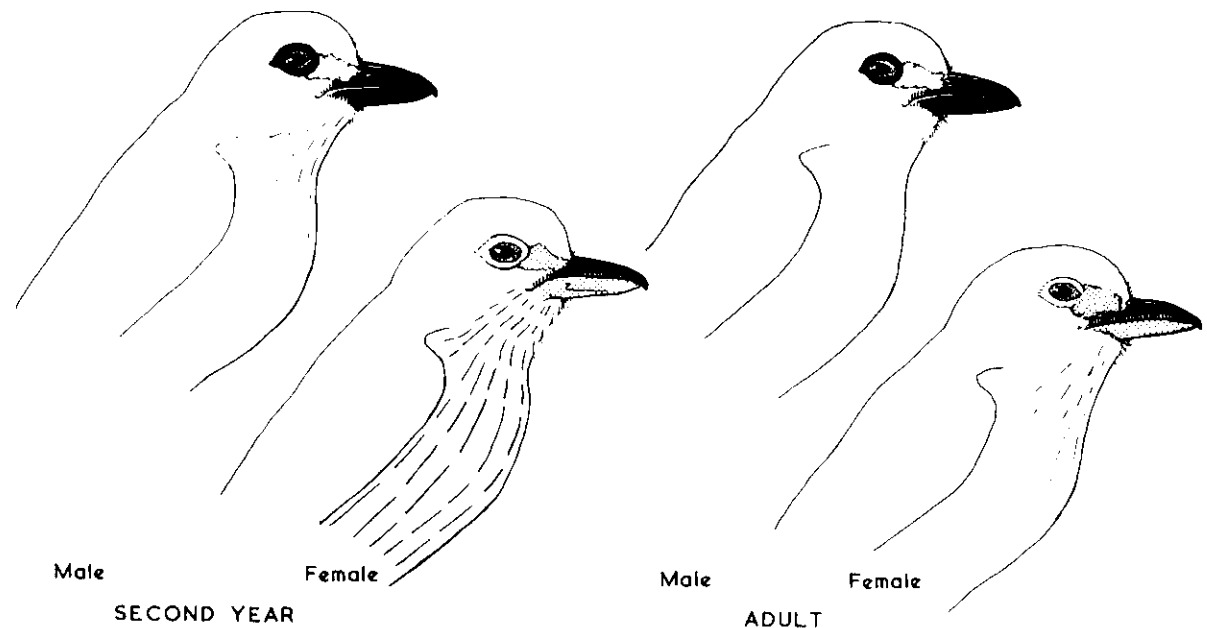
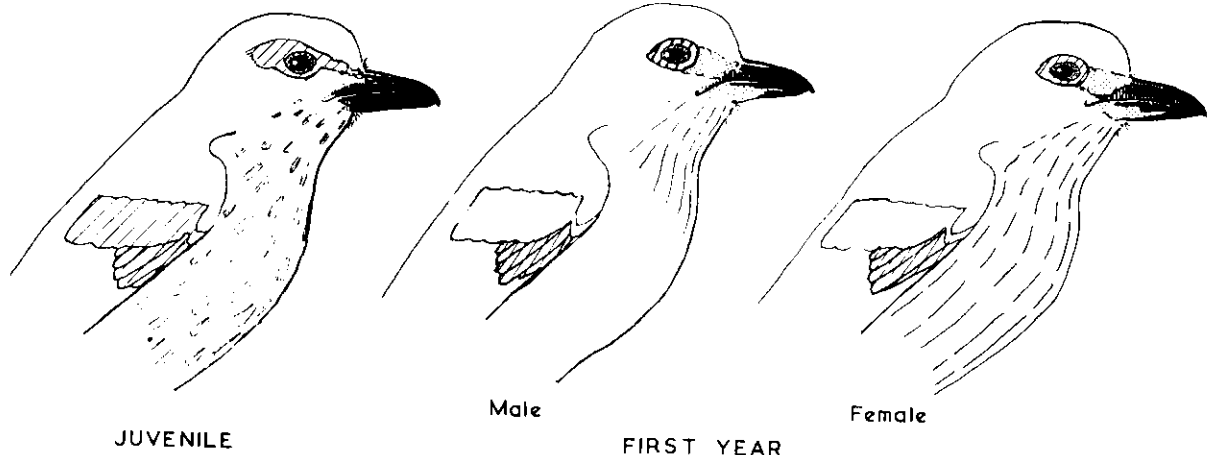
Iris: Dark grey-brown.

Lores: Grey.

Chin, throat and upper breast: Greyish white with well marked dark centre streaks, obviously broader than the centre shaft.

Lower breast and flanks: Greyish buff with streaks similar to the upper breast.

NOTE: The main diagnostic difference between first year males and first year females is the extent of streaking on the breast and flanks.



SECOND YEAR

(sexes can be clearly distinguished)

Male

Bill: Black.

Iris: Red brown.

Lores: White.

Eye ring feathers: Dark grey, forming a dark ring around the eye.

Chin and throat: Greyish white with very faint streaks.

Upper breast: Grey with faint centre streaks.

Lower breast and flanks: Grey to buffy grey without streaks.

Tail: Ends squarish, not pointed.

Female

Bill: Upper mandible: dark grey to blackish brown. Lower mandible: grey.

Iris: Red brown.

Lores: Grey with dark centre streaks to the feathers.

Eye ring feathers: White, forming a white ring around the eye.

Chin and throat: Greyish white with well marked dark centre streaks.

Upper breast, lower breast and flanks: Similar to chin and throat with well marked centre streaks.

Tail: Ends squarish, not pointed.

ADULT (third year and older)

Male

Bill: Black.

Iris: Dark red-brown.

Lores: White.

Eye ring feathers: Dark grey giving the effect of a black eye ring.

Chin and throat: Buffy white (no streaks).

Upper breast: Pale grey (no streaks).

Lower breast and flanks: Buffy grey.

Female

Bill: Upper mandible—dark grey. Lower mandible—grey.

Iris: Red brown.

Lores: Greyish white (not obvious like male).

Eye ring feathers: White.

Chin and throat: Whitish grey with distinct centre streaks.

Upper breast: Grey with distinct slight centre streaks.

Lower breast and flanks: Buffy grey (no streaks).

Summary of Diagnostic Features

JUVENILE: Soft plumage.

FIRST YEAR: Unmoulted juvenile rufous primary coverts.

Male: Slight streaking to the upper breast.

Female: Heavy streaking on chin, all of the breast and the flanks.

SECOND YEAR

Male: Lores white; black or dark eye ring; faint streaking on the upper breast.

Female: Lores grey with dark centre streaks, eye ring white; well marked streaks from the chin to the breast and flanks.

ADULT

Male: Lores white; dark eye ring; no streaks on the underparts.

Female: Lores grey; white eye ring; slight streaks from the chin to the upper breast. Separated from second year males by the white eye ring, and from first year males by the absence of the juvenile rufous primary coverts.



• Juvenile (fledgling) Grey Shrike-Thrushes.



• Nest and eggs of the Grey Shrike-Thrush.

Photos: A. J. Elliott