

BIRD IN THE HAND

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RUFOUS SONGLARK *Cinchorhamphus mathewsi*

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The Rufous Songlark can be aged and sexed using a combination of measurements, plumage characters and soft part colours. For a more detailed discussion, see Smedley and Boles (1988), from which this scheme is taken.

Sexing

Males are larger than females once adult size has been attained (late juvenile onwards) and separation of sexes can be made using the following measurements.

	Males	Females
Wing	86-105 mm	71-86 mm
Wingspan	288-318 mm	241-266 mm
Tail	72-91 mm	61-73 mm
Weight	29-40 g	19.5-25 g

The best separation is provided by wingspan, males having values greater than 285 mm and females less than 270 mm.

Females with eggs in the oviduct ("about to lay") may approach the lower end of the male's weight range (up to 28.5 g). Care should be taken to identify these using other measurements, brood patches and condition of the cloaca.

Ageing

JUVENILE (J)

The inside mouth is orange-yellow with dark markings on the barbs of the tongue and tips of the bill and surrounding the internal nares. The breast is heavily spotted or mottled, the markings forming broken streaky lines. The plumage is laxer and more fluffy than in older birds and the tail feathers are pointed.

It is not known if sexes can be separated on plumage features at this age.

IMMATURE (1 to 2- in spring following fledging)

In comparison to adults, immatures have the gape brighter yellow, the crown paler, the rump duller rufous and the breast more heavily marked.

Birds with transitional inside mouth colours should be scored as 2-.

Males

The best characters on which to separate from adults are the yellow or intermediate (turning black) inside mouth, the retained tongue spots and the pale bill and claws.

Females

The inside mouth, which is yellow or intermediate (turning to pink), and the brighter yellow gape are the best characters for distinguishing immatures from adults.

Separation of post-juvenile female age classes is more difficult than in males and if there is doubt, birds should be scored as 1+.

ADULT (2+)

In comparison with immatures, the following characters can identify adults.

Males

The bill, inside mouth, gape and claws are black.

Females

The inside mouth is pink and the gape is pale yellow.

REFERENCES

- Smedley, D. I. and Boles, W. E. (1988). Sex and age characters of the Rufous Songlark *Cinchorhamphus mathewsi*. *Corella* 12: 14-18.