

**Purple-backed Fairy-wren *Malurus assimilis* Species No.: 537, but for ABBBS**

**records use CAVS subspecies codes as shown below Band size: 01 AY**



**Status:**

Separated from Variegated Fairy-wren *Malurus lamberti* in 2018. Four subspecies are recognised within *M. assimilis*, but only *M.a. assimilis* and *M.a. bernieri* (Bernier and Dorre Islands near Shark Bay WA) are dealt with in this species profile sheet – for the remaining two subspecies *M.a. dulcis*, and *M.a. rogersi* see the profile sheet for the Lavender-flanked Fairy-wren.

**Morphometrics:**

|         | nominate <i>M.a. assimilis</i><br>(mainland Aust – CAVS code 9989) |                   | ssp. <i>M.a. bernieri</i><br>(Bernier & Dorre Islands - CAVS code 8132) |                 |
|---------|--|-------------------|---|-----------------|
|         | Adult Male   | Adult Female      | Adult Male  | Adult Female    |
| Wing:   | 43 – 51 mm   | 45 – 48 mm        | 46 – 47 mm  | 45 (one record) |
| Tail:   | 61 – 77 mm   | 61 – 76 mm        | 63 – 70 mm  | 70 (one record) |
| THL:    | 27.4 – 28.3 mm   | 28.0 (one record) |   |                 |
| Bill:   | 9.7 – 13.7 mm  | 10.6 – 12.7 mm    | 11.9 – 13.5 mm  | 11.5 – 13.0 mm  |
| Tarsus: | 19.4 – 23.0 mm   | 18.7 – 22.7mm     | 20.7 – 22.4 mm  | 20.5 – 21.5 mm  |
| Weight: | 6.0 – 10.0 g   | 6.9 – 9.0 g       |   |                 |

**Ageing:**

- fairy-wrens moult all body feathers twice every year;
- male “breeding” plumage is first attained at approximately one year old, but then males moult back to “brown” plumage for their second Autumn / Winter, before again moulting to “breeding” plumage in late Winter / early Spring;
- males moult through successive breeding plumages from their third year;
- males in brown plumage in Winter will be either (1) or (2-);
- males in breeding plumage in mid-Winter are thus aged (3+).

**Sexing:**

- post-juvenile moult results in identifiable male and female immatures based on bill colour – males grey/black and females orange/rufous;
- males attain black bill, lores and eye-ring within about six months of fledging;
- female does all incubation, so females with an active brood patch will be at least in their second year (2+).