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**DATA EXCHANGE**


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## Age of attaining male plumage in the Golden Whistler *Pachycephala pectoralis*

Disney (1976; p. 74) in the 'Bird in the Hand' on the Golden Whistler *Pachycephala pectoralis* stated that: "It is not known when the males attain full plumage. However there is no evidence to show that they moult directly from first-year plumage into that of the adult (see also Galbraith 1967). Galbraith (p. 293) quoted S. J. Wilson who, from banding data, suggested that the male third-year plumage was similar to that of the second year, and the full adult plumage was not attained until the fourth year."

The Handbook of Australasian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds, Volume 6 (page 1115) states in the plumage description of Golden Whistlers that: "Third immature male. (third basic). Most probably as adult male. There is some evidence that at least some males moult from second immature plumage into another female-like plumage (see Galbraith 1967) but not known what proportion of males assume this plumage. Little is known of this plumage, but those attaining female-like plumage probably not separable from second immature males."

Bird banding has been carried out on a monthly basis at Mount Annan Botanic Gardens, Campbelltown, NSW (34° 03'S 150° 46'E) since June 1986 and during the 22 years, 285 Golden Whistlers have been banded with 62 (21.7%) being recaptured 103 times. A large percentage of the birds banded 165 (57.9%) were 1<sup>st</sup> year birds compared to only 13 (4.6%) males in full adult plumage.

The 1<sup>st</sup> year birds were aged using the characters given in Disney (1976), the most obvious being the unmoulted juvenile secondary feathers, which stand out as a distinct rufous patch on the wing, juvenile pointed tail feathers and brown bill.

Two banded birds, aged as being in their 1<sup>st</sup> year, were recaptured in full male plumage in their 3<sup>rd</sup> year – details below.

**034-37299.**

Banded 13/09/2003, 1<sup>st</sup> year plumage, unsexed.

Recaptured 14/05/2005, full male plumage, aged 3<sup>rd</sup> year.

**035-26484.**

Banded 6/05/2007 1<sup>st</sup> year plumage, unsexed.

Recaptured 11/08/2007, age 1<sup>st</sup> year, unsexed.

Recaptured 18/05/2008, age 2<sup>nd</sup> year, unsexed. Noted as having all black bill, dark brown iris and had completed full moult, unsexed.

Recaptured 24/08/2008, plumage not changed.

Recaptured 19/04/2009, full male plumage, age 3<sup>rd</sup> year.

During an earlier long-term banding study near Appin, NSW (Leishman 1994, 2000) a Golden Whistler banded as 1<sup>st</sup> year and recaptured in full male plumage in its 3<sup>rd</sup> year was recorded - details below.

**031-96020**

Banded by S.G. Lane on 24/08/1980, 1<sup>st</sup> year plumage, unsexed. Noted as bill brown, pale at base, iris brown (reddish).

Recaptured (AJL) 6/06/1982, full adult male (3<sup>rd</sup> year). Noted as bill black, some light flecks on crown, iris bright red brown, male plumage rest of body.

These three series of recoveries demonstrate that at least some Golden Whistlers in the Sydney region do moult into a 2<sup>nd</sup> year immature plumage and then into full male plumage in their 3<sup>rd</sup> year and not the 4<sup>th</sup> year as reported by Galbraith (1967) from banding studies carried out in the Canberra region.

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