

A Re-appraisal of the Dimensions of Male Forest Ravens

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In an earlier paper (Debus 1980), I pointed out that there was confusion over the identity of a raven collected by CSIRO at Barrington Tops, New South Wales. A specimen of the Little Raven *Corvus mellori* was included, apparently on geographical grounds, with those specimens designated in Rowley (1970) as the Forest Raven *C. tasmanicus boreus*. An unfortunate result of this was that the *C. mellori* specimen has contaminated the measurements of male *C. t. boreus* as given in Rowley (1970, Table 3, Fig. 16). The relevant sections of Rowley's paper are here amended, based on a recalculation of the original specimen data.

Methods

Data sheets for the relevant specimens (one male *C. mellori*: no. 1140; five male *C. t. boreus*: nos. 1144, 1146, 1147, 1149, 1266) were obtained from CSIRO Division of Wildlife and Rangeland Research. The mean, range, standard error and standard deviation for the dimensions of the *C. t. boreus* specimens were calculated according to Rowley (1970). Combined bill is calculated as (length x width x depth/1000),

and bill length is exposed culmen (measurement A of Rowley 1970).

Results

The results are shown in Table 1, together with values from Rowley (1970, Table 3) for males of *C. mellori* and *C. t. tasmanicus*. Measurements of CSIRO specimen 1140 are also shown for comparison. Figure 1 is redrawn from Rowley (1970, Fig. 16) to show the amended values for male *C. t. boreus*.

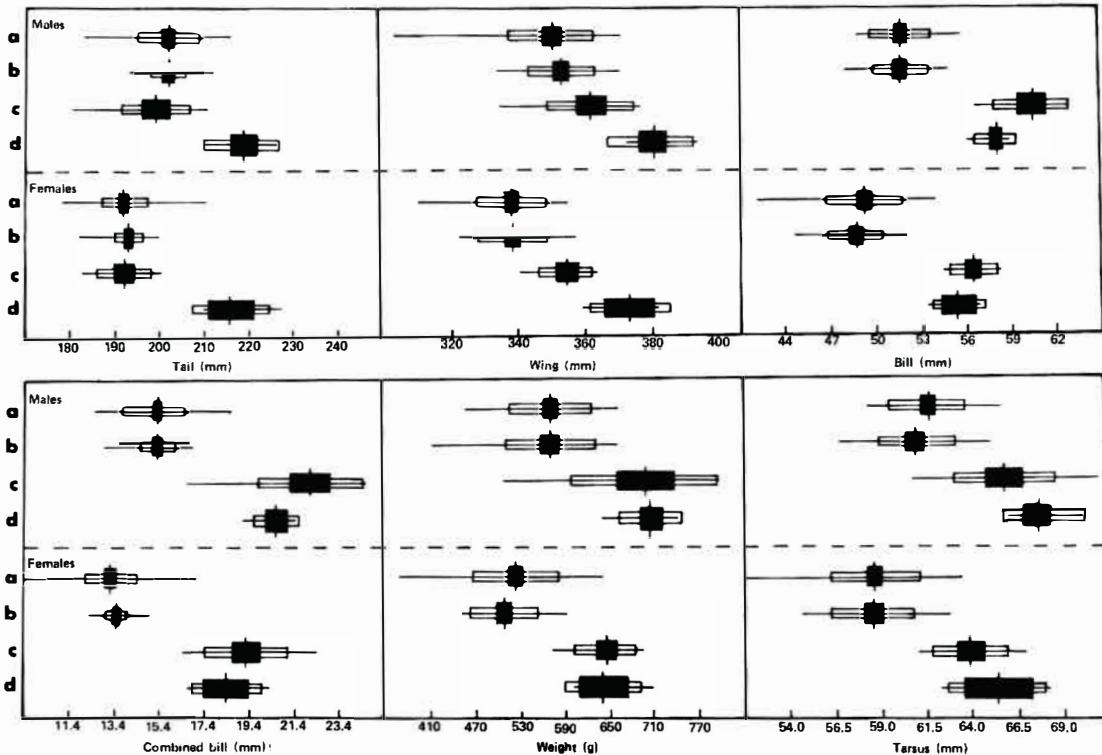
Discussion

The six raven specimens considered here were of the type with short throat hackles and well feathered inter-ramal area. One (no. 1140) stood out as being much smaller in all dimensions, and was also smaller than the six female specimens of *C. t. boreus* (Rowley 1970, Table 3). This bird was confirmed by the collector G. Chapman (*in litt.*) as "quite clearly" *C. mellori*. In further support of this diagnosis, no. 1140 has a slender bill. Its combined bill measurement (14.3 mm) is slightly below the mean for

TABLE 1

Means and ranges of measurements of male Australian corvids. Values for *C. t. tasmanicus*, *C. mellori* and *C. coronoides* from Rowley (1970, Table 3); those for *C. t. boreus* recalculated from CSIRO data sheets.

Number	Length (mm)					Weight (g)
	Central Rectrix	Wing (closed)	Bill	Tarsus	Throat Hackle	
	<i>C. t. boreus</i>					
5	219.4 (211-227)	379.6 (373-394)	58.0 (56.5-59.0)	68.0 (66.0-70.0)	43.7 (41.0-46.0)	709.0 (645-740)
	<i>C. t. tasmanicus</i>					
24	198.7 (180-211)	361.8 (333-377)	59.9 (56.5-63.0)	66.3 (60.5-69.0)	38.0 (32.0-43.0)	712.0 (500-800)
	<i>C. mellori</i>					
138	202.1 (183-216)	349.2 (303-370)	51.8 (47.5-56.0)	61.2 (55.5-65.5)	37.9 (33.0-43.0)	567.0 (407-660)
	CSIRO specimen 1140					
	199	336	53.0	62.5	39.0	550
	<i>c. coronoides</i>					
216	213.5 (193-238)	373.0 (337-397)	56.2 (50.0-66.0)	64.4 (58.5-69.0)	50.5 (41.0-59.0)	675.2 (540-820)



● Figure 1. Measurements of *Corvus* spp.: (a) *C. mellori* from inland New South Wales and South Australia (87♂, 93♀); (b) *C. mellori* from Kosciusko National Park (51♂, 60♀); (c) *C. t. tasmanicus* from Tasmania, Otway Ranges, and Wilsons Promontory (24♂, 25♀); (d) *C. t. boreus* (5♂, 6♀). The vertical line represents the mean, the horizontal line the range, the black rectangle 2 x S.E., and the white rectangle 1.3 x S.D. (redrawn from Rowley 1970, Fig. 16).

male *C. mellori* (15.4 mm), and well below the minimum for even female *C. t. boreus* (18.4 mm) and *C. t. tasmanicus* (19.4 mm) (Figure 1).

The removal of the misidentified specimen from the calculations sharpens up the diagnosis of *C. t. boreus* and it can be seen from Table 1 and Figure 1 that male *C. t. boreus* are closer to *C. t. tasmanicus* in bill massiveness and body weight, and larger than *C. mellori*, than would appear from Rowley (1970). There is also scarcely any overlap in tail measurements between males of each subspecies of *C. tasmanicus*; Rowley (1970) found none between females. *C. t. boreus* averages slightly larger than the Australian Raven *C. coronoides* in all dimensions except hackle length (Rowley 1970, Table 3).

Five male and six female specimens of *C. t. boreus* are a very small sample. A larger series

of specimens would better indicate the size range of this subspecies, and might enable more valid comparisons to be drawn.

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References

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