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## HANDLING AND EXAMINATION OF LIVE BIRDS

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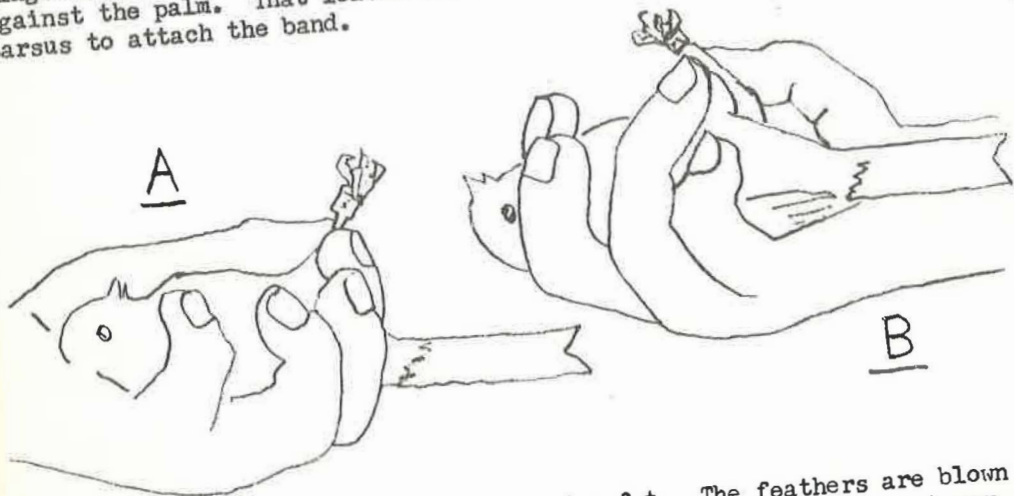
(Reprinted from the Workshop Manual, Vol. I, 1962)

Many bird banders, including those who band only a few birds as well as those who band in large volumes, are performing more and more studies upon each bird that is handled; therefore the techniques themselves and the time element become increasingly important. Following are some of the procedures which we have found helpful:

## HOLDING THE BIRD CONVENIENTLY FOR BANDING

A. Grasp it firmly by the thighs with the right hand, turn it around into the left hand so that its back is against the palm of the hand. Close the little finger over the neck gently and the other fingers firmly around the body. The thumb and index fingers are left free to hold the tarsus while attaching the band.

Or B. Grasp it so as to pinion its neck between the index and second fingers, and the wing tips, tail and feet by the little finger closed against the palm. That leaves the thumb and ring finger to hold the tarsus to attach the band.



FAT

The next operation is to examine for fat. The feathers are blown gently to expose the following regions: (a) area of upper breast surrounding the wishbone (furculum) where the trachea (windpipe) enters it; (b) axilla (side of body near attachment of wing on its underside); (c) the lower back; (d) the abdomen (posterior to ribs). Fat deposits will show through the skin as yellow areas contrasting with the red color of the muscles.

Fat Class 0 (none)

Fat Class 1 (little)

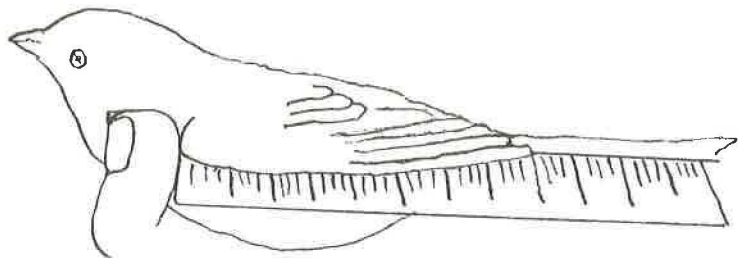
Fat Class 2 (medium)

Fat Class 3 (heavy)

Fat not readily visible anywhere; deep furculum cavity.  
 Fat visible in furculum but does not fill it; small amounts present in other areas.  
 Furculum full; increased fat in the other areas; skin in axilla and lower back "mounded" from excess fat.  
 Furculum area so swollen that clavicles and lower neck vertebrae are completely covered; all other areas swollen, especially abdomen.

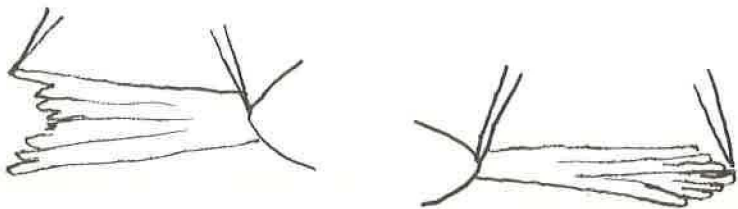
#### WING MEASUREMENTS

With very little practice wing measurements can be taken easily with a small millimeter ruler (a wooden or plastic one -- a small wooden block may be attached to the "0" end, or use thumb as "0"). Measure the chord, which is the straight line distance of the unflattened wing from the shoulder to the tip of the longest feather.



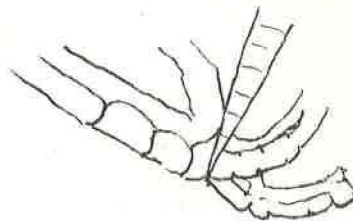
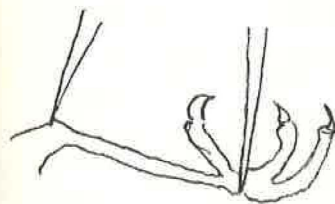
#### TAIL MEASUREMENTS

For this purpose a pair of dividers and a millimeter ruler are necessary. Measure from point between middle pair of feathers at their insertion to tip of the longest feather.



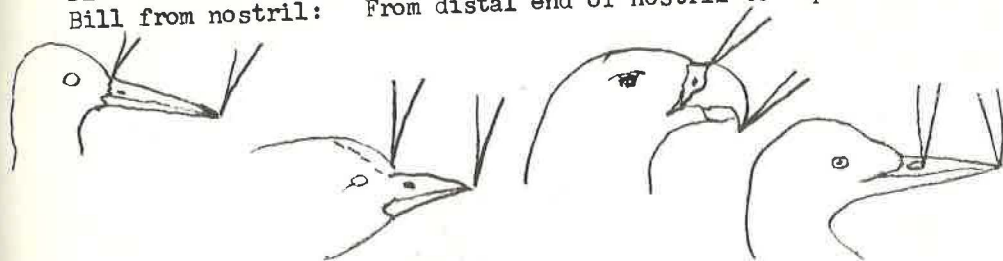
#### TARSUS MEASUREMENTS (see illustration at top of next page)

Measure from the middle joint (behind) between the tibiotarsus and "tarsus" (tarso-metatarsus) to end of tarsus in front (which often corresponds to lower edge of last undivided scute). Actually a diagonal of the tarsus.



#### BILL MEASUREMENTS

Bill from feathers: End of feathering on top midline to tip.  
 Bill from base: Chord of culmen, from tip of bill to base of skull (which is exposed in few species.)  
 Bill from cere: See sketch.  
 Bill from nostril: From distal end of nostril to tip.



#### BODY WEIGHT

With the banding, fat checking and measuring completed, it is a simple matter to place the bird into a small plastic bag (in which holes have been punched for ventilation) or a cone, for the weighing process. Place the bird in the bottom of the plastic bag and then roll the bag up in such a manner as to hold it firmly. It is important that the roll be reasonably firm in order to eliminate struggling which makes weighing difficult.

The birds are weighed to the nearest tenth of a gram on an Ohaus triple beam balance which has compensated weights to balance the plastic bag or other container in which the bird is held.

Care should be taken to keep the weighing bags or cones clean and dry. Otherwise, inaccurate weights will result.

When the weight has been taken, simply remove the roll from the scale pan and release the bird.