

Another of Chapman's works which deals in greater descriptive detail with a selected group of birds in his The Warblers of North America, \$3.00, 323pp., Dover reprint of the third ed., of 1917, New York, 1968.

5. Regional Bird Books. Numerous state or regional works exist which give a local flavor to ornithology. Such works are too numerous to list with one exception. Banders can usually locate these works through word-of-mouth contact, local book stores, bird clubs, etc., Every bander would do well to have a reference dealing with his region. It contributes to a better understanding of local phenomena, and some of these works contain valuable descriptive information.

The one exception, and I mention it because its sage words apply beyond the confines of its title and involve a considerable number of EBBA members, is J. Bull's Birds of the New York Area, \$8.95, 554pp., Harper and Row, New York, 1964 (*An update to this work can be found in "Supplement to Birds of the New York Area" Proc. Linn. Soc., N.Y. #71, March 1970. Ed.*). Banders in southern New England, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and bordering areas will find much valuable information on when to expect various species, insight on some problems related to tricky identifications and ample justification for the case that must be exercised in making identifications. By reading it, one can appreciate more fully the care required in fully documenting identifications.

Costs

One can see that acquiring a library can be costly. Those texts listed as "essential" cost a minimum of about \$65, or as high as \$140 if one purchased all of the options. The "nice-to-have" ones add another \$200+ to the overall cost. Therefore it pays one to seek ways to economize on acquiring these. While some of these texts are specialized ones which are difficult to get and for which one can expect to pay list price, there are others of a more popular variety which may be obtained at discounted prices if one is willing to shop.

Some book shop operators are a little hungrier for business than the next fellow and will offer discounts. Sometimes large department stores or the discount giants will discount these items. There also are mail order houses specializing in books at a discount. The "New York Times" Sunday book section offers a partial listing.

One can achieve further saving by using the itemized deduction option on one's federal income tax form. Those banders who can prove to the IRS the seriousness of their banding as a research activity qualify to deduct direct, out-of-pocket expenses on their income tax form. This deduction is allowed because these

expenses are incurred in the gathering of data which are contributed to a non-profit organization, namely the Fish & Wildlife Service. (*EBBA News editors recommend that you ask the IRS for a copy of the publication concerning itemized deductions, to fully familiarize yourself with the laws involved. Ed.*) Therefore, texts, supplies, equipment, lodging away from home, etc., are deductible costs. In the case of texts, one can obtain a saving comparable to one's terminal tax rate.

To those of you who are beginners, I hope that these recommendations are of value, and that the list is not too overwhelming or frustrating. In my own case, it has taken me 10 years to acquire the bulk of these texts, and it is not expected that a beginner would rush out and purchase these in one brief spree. In addition, a library is no better than one's familiarity with it. With each text a bander must develop an intimate working understanding in order to derive full benefit from its printed words and illustrations. It takes time to acquire this familiarity, so keep trying, be patient, but don't be too easily pleased. There's always a better way for one who persists in looking.

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AN AGE-DETERMINING TECHNIQUE FOR FEMALE EVENING GROSBEAKS

Robert P. Yunick

A recent opportunity in November to compare simultaneously the plumages of two female Evening Grosbeaks (*Hesperiphona vespertina*) of different age revealed flight plumage differences which appear to be useful criteria for separating first-year females. I have not yet had the opportunity to examine these criteria on a large enough series of birds to ascertain their reliability. However, since a major flight appears to be in the making for this winter, and since I am not aware of any banders who are using these criteria, I would like to call attention to them so that more banders may use this upcoming flight as an opportunity to examine these criteria for reliability. The low degree of skull pneumatization of some of the birds handled in November suggests that at least some individuals of the year's crop of young will be recognizable by skull examination into January, or perhaps even February.

The bird with incomplete pneumatization of the skull (HY) differed from the bird whose skull was completely pneumatized (AHY) in the following ways: 1) Coloration and marking of the primary coverts; 2) Coloration of the primaries; 3) Coloration of the secondary coverts; and 4) Extent of white marking on the primaries.

The primary coverts and the primaries themselves of the HY bird were subtly paler and not intense, velvety black of the AHY bird. The difference is not quite as noticeable as is the black of a male vs. female American Goldfinch (*spinus tristis*) but is of that order. Similarly, the middle and greater secondary coverts of the HY bird were not as richly black as those of the AHY bird. These relative differences could be difficult to discern initially unless specimens of both color variations were available for a side-by-side comparison. No doubt one's eye could be trained to distinguish this difference.

However, the one characteristic that appeared very noticeably was the white marking of the inner vane of the primary coverts. Below I have illustrated this in figure 1. In the AHY bird these coverts were entirely black. In the HY bird, as illustrated, the first, second, seventh and eighth primary coverts were edged with slight amounts of white. The third through sixth coverts were markedly edged. The ninth covert, which is very rudimentary, was entirely black. It is this edging characteristic of the primary coverts that I feel banders should heed.

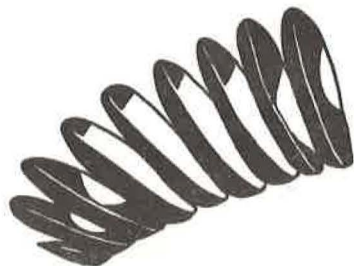


FIGURE 1. Primary coverts of the Juvenal and First Basic Plumage of the Female Evening Grosbeak.

After noting the differences in the birds in question, I later consulted Dwight (J. Dwight, Jr. 1900. *Annals N.Y. Acad. Sci.*, 13: 169-170) and found that he alludes to these characteristics for differentiating females in first basic plumage (first winter plumage) from those in subsequent basic plumages. However, his description is a subtle one that can be easily overlooked, and apparently has been for years.

The last difference, and perhaps this is a variable one, was the extent of white in the primaries. The HY bird had extensive white on both vanes at the base of the first seven primaries. The eighth primary had a white base on the inner vane and a small spot of white on only the inner vane at the base. The AHY bird lacked white altogether on the 7th, 8th and 9th primaries. Based on the molt sequence of the Evening Grosbeak, these characteristics should identify young females for the first fourteen or fifteen months of their lives. -- 1527 Myron Street, Schenectady, New York 12309.

AGEING OF OVENBIRDS BY RUSTY-TIPPED TERTIALS AND SKULL OSSIFICATION

By Walter Kingsley Taylor

The Ovenbird (*Seiurus aurocapillus*) is one of the most common wood warblers that migrates through peninsula Florida. In the past few years, large numbers of Ovenbirds have been recorded killed at several tall lighted structures in the Central Florida area. As a consequence, considerable data on this species have been amassed. In a previous paper (Taylor, 1972), I discussed several aspects relative to the Ovenbird's autumn migration through Central Florida. Since that time almost 300 individuals have been analyzed with particular attention being given to evaluating the techniques for ageing Ovenbirds by skull ossification and by the rusty-tipped tertials.

Methods

Of 277 freshly-killed specimens examined for the presence of rusty-tipped tertials, 188 were autumn migrants that hit the WDBO-TV tower, near Bithlo, Orange County, Florida. The remaining 89 were spring migrants that hit the Vertical Assembly Building, Brevard County, Florida on 4 May 1972.

First, the specimens were examined for rusty-tipped tertials. This was then followed by checking the skull for the presence of or absence of ossification. In addition, the individuals were checked for molting feathers in the wings and tail.

Results

The results obtained from the 188 autumn migrants are in Table 1. A correlation exists between the presence of or absence of rusty-tipped tertials and the presence of or absence of an ossified skull. All 53 individuals that were chosen because of having rusty-tipped tertials had unossified skulls and evidently were HY (immature) birds. In the 135 individuals assigned to the lacking-rusty-tipped-tertial category, nine were missed; that is, the skulls were unossified. A reexamination was made of the tertials for those individuals that were missed. If the tertials were rusty-tipped at all, they were faintly so.

Of the 89 spring migrants examined, eleven had rusty-tipped tertials and completely ossified skulls. The rusty color was not as intense in any of the eleven individuals compared to that of most autumn immatures.

Discussion

Assuming that the presence of an unossified skull indicates an HY bird, the technique of ageing Ovenbirds on the basis of rusty-tipped tertials seems reliable even though a certain amount