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WHOOO-O-O-O IS FEARLESS?

By Beverly A. Litchfield

Fearless is a red-phased screech owl (Otus asio) who has lived with us in Norwell, Mass., for the past four years. We were told Fearless was a two-year old male, probably. We know better, now. Three months ago, Fearless got very sick, would not eat, developed a brood patch and passed a broken mass resembling a leathery turtle's egg. After a telephone conversation with Dr. Margaret Petrak at the Angell Memorial Hospital, we were told to bring Fearless in for an examination. An X-ray showed she was egg-bound with an egg 1-1/2" to 2" in diameter which she could never pass. An operation was performed and was very successful.

To prevent any further egg-laying, she is now on male hormones. This is in pill form and wrapped inside a piece of beef kidney every other day. After a complete molt, she is now looking beautiful and can fly freely once more in our house.

We have a sub-permittee bander's license from the Manomet Bird Observatory and therefore have a permit to show Fearless for educational purposes to local schools. We should welcome any correspondence pertaining to screech owls in captivity.

--373 Winter Street, Norwell, Mass. 02061

NUMERICAL COLOR SPECIFICATION FOR BIRD BANDERS

by

D.L. Wood and D.S. Wood

Introduction

The colors of soft parts have long been used in aging criteria for bird banding. But only recently has attention been drawn to the means for rendering color criteria quantitative (Wood and Wood, 1972), and only recently have any numerical color criteria been established (Wood and Wood, 1973). We wish to present here a further discussion of the numerical system and its potential for bird banders as well as some tentative results on eye color in several species. It is hoped that other banders might be persuaded that the method is valuable, and expand the results presented here into full-fledged criteria for age, sex, or species.

The method

The method is based on the Munsell Color System, and has been used for many years in other contexts. Its use for bird banding data has been described before in detail (Wood and Wood, 1972), and an example of its application to iris color in Downy Woodpeckers (Dendrocopus pubescens) has been published (Wood and Wood, 1973). Only a brief sketch will be given here. The method depends on a direct comparison in full daylight between the colored surface and a set of carefully prepared numerical color standards (the Color Atlas) manufactured by the Munsell Color Company. We have found that the abridged set of standards designed for soil color determination in agriculture and related disciplines contains a suitable set of reference standards in the reds and yellows for iris color in most species. This is fortunate, as the full set of standards contains over 1500 color "chips", and is rather expensive, while the soil color book can be obtained for about \$35.00. Also the soil color charts are normally prepared with holes in the pages on which the reference chips are mounted so that the area to be compared (the bird's eye, for example) appears next to the standard when held behind the page. This greatly facilitates the comparison.

The Munsell color system specifies three attributes of the color. Hue relates to the redness, yellow-ness, green-ness of the color with the whole spectrum divided into 100 equal parts from red (0 to 10) through green (40 to 50) to purple (80 to 90). Value relates to the