

TOTAL HEAD LENGTH

by G.H.Green

Nigel Clark wrote a note on page 2 of WSG Bulletin 28 (April 1980) asking for measurements of this parameter which may well be a more valuable differential feature than the measurement of bill length alone. Certainly in some gulls it gives a clearer differentiation of the sexes than bill length and depth. Neil Duncan, Susan Kearsley and others at Durham University have devised the gauge shown in Figure 1 for measuring large gulls. Obviously a more light-weight model built to a similar design could be used for waders.

Nigel Clark has been using the callipers shown in Figure 2 in which the fixed jaw has a block of tufnel attached (2b) to make positioning of the instrument behind the head easier. We (Celtic Wader Research Group) have been using the same style callipers for measuring the heads of gulls and also for measuring bill length in waders. We have found that re-shaping the jaw tips makes them easier to use (figure 2a).

The unmodified plastic callipers shown in Figure 2 are available from CAMLAB Ltd., Nuffield Road, Cambridge CB4 1TH. The ones with the dial readout are AR/CAL6921 model C plastic callipers, cost £7.00 + 15% VAT + £1.20 post and packing. We have used them for about four years and they are quite satisfactory. They will probably not last as long as metal instruments but the latter are extremely expensive - especially in dial-form. The plastic ones are less expensive to lose in the field!

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(Drawings by R.M. Bishop)

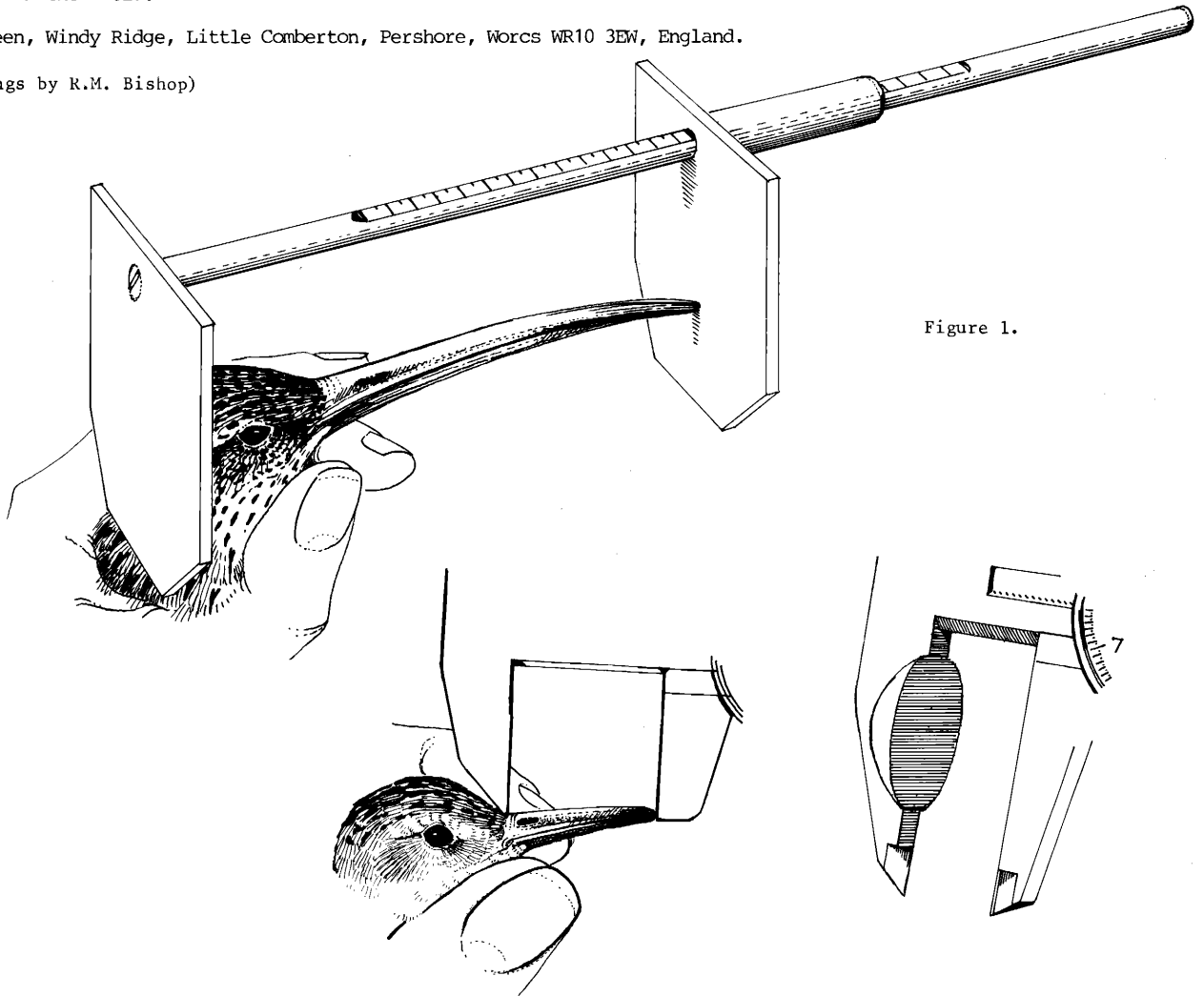


Figure 1.

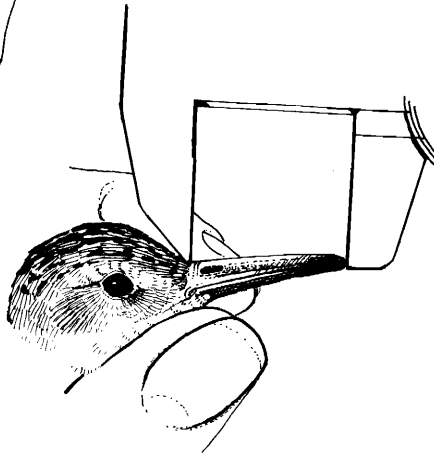


Figure 2a

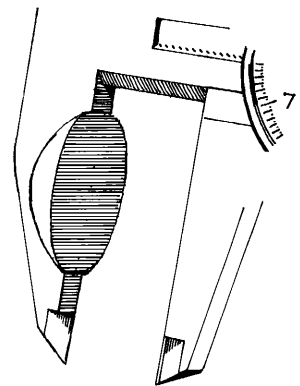


Figure 2b

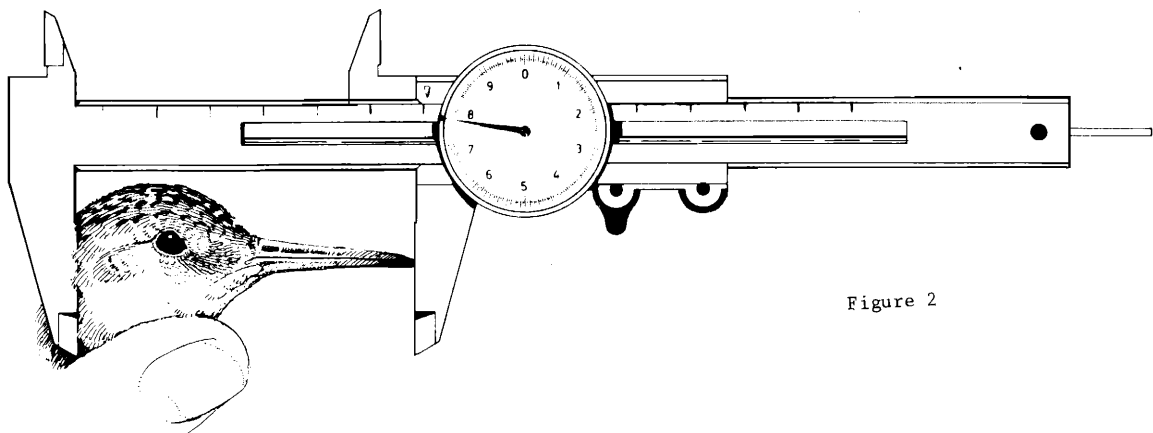


Figure 2