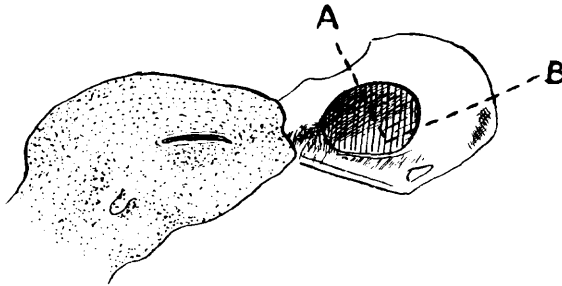


seeds were taken one at a time to a suitable crevice and the fragments of meat were fed to the young.—Helmut C. Mueller, Dept. of Zoology, 205 Wilson Hall, Univ. of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, N. C. 27514.

Removal of Cranium During Preparation of Study Skins for Later Ossification Studies. A knowledge of the degree of ossification of the cranium is essential when doing age criteria studies for many passerines. The cranium condition, if recorded, is usually marked on the specimen label but the degree of ossification is often unknown and the experience and accuracy of the preparator in judging skulls is often questionable. However, the fresh specimen can be prepared as a study skin in the normal manner with the cranium detached and tied to the legs beside the specimen tag for permanent reference.

Figure 1. Cuts made to remove cranium.



The bird is skinned in the usual manner with the skin inverted over the head. The ears, eyes, tongue, base of the skull, and the brain are removed in the normal manner. Now three cuts need to be made to remove the cranium. The first cut (see A in figure 1) is across the roof of the orbits (between the eyes) and the next two cuts (see B in Figure 1) are on a line parallel to the lower mandible through the squamosal bones. The cranium is now free from the skull and should be attached later to the legs of the specimen by pushing threaded needle gently through the side region (squamosal bone) and tying to the legs. While turning the skin right side out over the remaining parts of the skull, two balls of cotton should be held in the normal position of the eyes and a smaller ball of cotton held behind these to replace the cranium that was removed. With a little practice the study skin will turn out as well as one with the cranium intact.

Specimens prepared in this manner will greatly increase our knowledge of the ossification process in passerines and can be extended to other orders so that aging methods may be worked out in later studies.—Gilbert S. Grant, Rt. 1, Box 363, Sneeds Ferry, N. C. 28960.

Recovery of Foot-Pox Diseased Red-Winged Blackbird.—S. Prentis Baldwin (*Auk*, **39**: 219) reported that nearly 10% of the Chipping Sparrows (*Spizella passerina*) which he trapped in 1921 at his Thomasville, Georgia station were infected with foot-pox. T. E. Musselman (*Auk*, **45**: 137) reports that in 1922 L. R. Talbot, banding at Baldwin's station, found that nearly 25% of Chipping Sparrows he banded had foot-pox. The following year, 1923, Musselman (*ibid.*) banded 519 Chipping Sparrows and had 44 returns. Of these 563 sparrows, 23% were suffering from foot-pox and 19% showed evidence of the disease in previous years but had healed entirely. John B. May (*Auk*, **41**: 456) banding at the same station in 1924 found the Chipping Sparrows very scarce and almost none with active foot-pox disease but they did have evidence of healed old cases. He was unable to collect an active sample.

C. Brooke Worth (*Auk*, **73**: 230-234) found foot-pox occurring naturally in the Blue Jay (*Cyanocitta cristata*), Chimney Swift (*Chaetura pelagica*) and Slate-colored Junco (*Junco hyemalis*). He conducted experiments with "Junco Virus" taken from a foot-pox lesion and found it infected some but not other birds introduced artificially. Herman, Locke and Clark (*Bird-Banding*, **33**: 191-198)

reported that foot-pox infections were found in the Patuxent Research Refuge in natural populations of the Mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottis*), Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*) and Common Grackle (*Quiscalus quiscula*). Gordon M. Meade, M. D. (*Bird-Banding*, 16: 38) described the foot-pox disease as a virus infection, *epithelioma contaagiosum* and stated that it was particularly common in Chipping Sparrows . . . other sparrows, finches, thrashers, flickers, and others. Paul A. Stewart (*Bird-Banding*, 34: 199) found that 0.9 percent of the 77 Brown-headed Cowbirds (*Molothrus ater*) he banded had bird-pox on the legs, feet and beak (1 case). Of the females, 1.7 percent were infected but only 0.8 percent of the males.

The only reference I found pertaining to the Red-winged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) was by John R. Olive and Vincent Schultz (*Auk*, 69: 90-91) who trapped a male at Arkansas whose leg and feet infection they described as "scaly-leg" the result of a burrowing mite (*nemidocoptes*). The photograph showed long fringe-like scales not similar, to me, to foot-pox lesions.

At my Pennington, New Jersey station on 31 March 1967, I trapped an adult male Red-winged Blackbird. As I banded it (702-88925) I observed and recorded that both feet were covered with large and active foot-pox sores. This male returned to my station 1 May 1970. Examination showed no active foot-pox lesions. Both feet and legs had healed completely. This bird's recovery and that suggested by some Chipping Sparrows at Baldwin's Georgia station (above) suggest that at least some birds suffering from foot-pox disease do recover, and in the case of my Red-wing without adverse effect. Many writers (above) mention loss of feet and toes which was, apparently, the result of previous foot-pox infections.—Kenneth W. Prescott, New Jersey State Museum, Cultural Center, Trenton, New Jersey 08625.

A Melanistic Blue Jay (*Cyanocitta cristata*). Alfred O. Gross (*Bird-Banding*, 36: 240) listed 29 species of melanistic North American birds but the Blue Jay was not included. Lester L. Short (*Bird-Banding*, 40: 145-46) describes a melanistic Hairy Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos villosus monticola*) which exhibited a reduction of white on the back, wings, sides, flanks and, of particular interest, the facial pattern was abnormally black.

On 8 November 1969, I banded (# 1083-43848) an HY Blue Jay which had an abnormally black head and throat. The general appearance of the head is predominantly blue with black markings with the blue replacing "normal" white. The blue head feathers are a dull blue and not the richly dark blue of the back feathers. The "normal" white throat is bluish with some black feathers intermingled. A narrow arc of black feathers extend from base of lower mandible along the auricular line to the black nape. The "normal" thin black line behind the eye is abnormally wide and almost equal to the width of the eye itself. The black band extending down the nape of the neck is 2½ to 3 times as wide as "normal." A broad black band across forehead at base of upper mandible replaces "normal" blue and there is black in front of the eyes. The black band on the throat is approximately 4 - 6 times as wide as "normal", extending down to the buffy-white breast. The remaining plumage is characteristic of an HY Blue Jay.

Subsequent weights and fat class may be of interest:

Date	Weight (gms)	Fat (0-3)
8 November 1969 (banded)	88.3	1
16 November 1969	95.6	1
6 December 1969	96.5	0
22 December 1969	96.9	0
25 December 1969	97.2	0
31 December 1969	92.8	0
22 February 1970	99.5	0
20 March 1970	98.1	0

To date, 8 Feb. 1971, this Blue Jay has not reappeared at my banding station.—Kenneth W. Prescott, New Jersey State Museum, Cultural Center, Trenton, New Jersey 08625