

AGEING & SEXING GUIDE

CAPE SUGARBIRDS *Promerops cafer*

SEX

WING LENGTH:

Wing length proved to be the most reliable method of sexing birds which had neither long tail nor brood patch. Some overlap between the sexes occur but generally speaking males had a longer wing ($\bar{x} = 93$ mm) than females ($\bar{x} = 82,8$ mm). Details of this and other biometric data are given in Table 1

TAIL:

Birds with tail >200 mm are male (see Table 1) and unmistakable in the field and in the hand. This feature is diagnostic at any time of year as males retain the long tail in both breeding and non-breeding seasons.

BROOD PATCH:

As only females incubate they may be sexed by the presence of a brood patch in the breeding season.

TABLE 1

Mensural data for adult *Promerops cafer*

	MALE	N	FEMALE	N
Wing (mm) (Flattened chord)	93,6 ± 3,2 (86 - 101)	60	82,8 ± 2,6 (77 - 87)	42
Tail (mm)	258,9 ± 58,7 (121 - 360)	59	124,8 ± 24,0 (85 - 188)	40
Culmen (mm)	31,4 ± 1,2 (28,3 - 34,7)	52	30,1 ± 1,0 (28,0 - 32,2)	40
Weight (g)	37,5 ± 3,0 (30,5 - 43,5)	57	31,5 ± 2,6 (26,0 - 37,8)	40

AGE

PLUMAGE:

Underparts. The underparts of first-year birds were rather 'washy' in appearance and showed no distinct border between the brown of the upper breast and the greyish, streaked lower breast and belly.

UNDERTAIL COVERTS:

Pale brown in fledglings, bright yellow in adults after the second moult (this feature can be seen in the field). One first-year bird, having fledged in May, displayed an intermediate stage by September.

TAIL:

Tails of fledglings are very short but reach the length of the adult female within a year (refer Table 1). They may be separated from the latter by gape colours (see below).

GAPE:

Juvenile birds retained a bright yellow gape until the beginning of their second year.

This note is based on measurements taken from Cape Sugarbirds mistnetted during 1985 at Kirstenbosch Botanic Gardens and the Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve, both in the Cape Peninsula.

H. W. Seiler & M. W. Fraser, Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology, University of Cape Town, RONDEBOSCH, 7700.

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