

AGEING AND SEXING

BRONZE MANNIKIN
Spermestes cullatus

AGE

Juvenile Bronze Mannikins may be classified according to seven classes based on mandible colour, gape colour and head plumage (Table 1 overleaf).

About 20 days after fledging, the mandible starts to change from black to light grey, taking about 55 days. During this time, between 20 and 35 days from fledging, the gape changes from yellow to black. After the gape has changed, but before the change in the mandible is complete (namely, 35-55 days after fledging), the head plumage starts to change from brown to black with a greenish-purple gloss. The change in head plumage takes 80-100 days and adulthood is reached after 130 days from fledging (Scogings unpublished MS).

The above ageing criteria resulted from analysis of 319 capture/recapture cases around Durban over the period 1978-1983 and compare favourably with Woodall's observations in Zimbabwe (*Ostrich* 46: 55-86. 1975).

TABLE 1

AGE CLASSES APPLICABLE TO BRONZE MANNIKINS *Spermestes cucullatus*

CLASS	MANDIBLE COLOUR	GAPE COLOUR	HEAD PLUMAGE	DAYS SINCE FLEDGING
1	black	yellow	all brown	<20
2	starting grey	yellow	all brown	20
3	starting grey	black	all brown	35
4	starting grey	black	<20% black (predominantly brown)	55
5	nearly grey	black	20-80% black (mixed)	75
6	light grey	black	20-80% black (mixed)	100
7	light grey	black	>80% black (predominantly black)	130
Adult	light grey	black	all black with greenish-purple gloss	>130

P. F. Scogins, Department of Zoology, University of Pretoria, PRETORIA, 0002.