

Breeding takes place mainly from December to March. I also have one record from May and two from September. Several females with well-developed brood patches appeared to be in partial juvenile plumage with yellow and swollen gapes, apparently breeding in their first year. One captured male (sex confirmed by dissection) had a very well-developed active brood patch suggesting that both sexes incubate – a trait known in at least one other Serine, *S. albogularis*.

Moult, with exception of the partial moult of juveniles, takes place from September to December, exceptionally continuing into January. It proceeds in the usual passerine order, with the tail being dropped piecemeal and body moult beginning when the moult of the flight feathers and coverts is about two-thirds complete. The juvenile partial moult is usually in June through

August. Products of a September breeding carry out a partial moult the following January.

The song is a variable very high-pitched penetrating whistle with tunes reminiscent of the Blackcapped Tchagra. Citrils are generally seen in Malawi in pairs or small family parties, but larger flocks gather at food sources, and up to 20 have been netted simultaneously.

**Mensural data (min-mean-max):**

Wing: 60-62-67 mm; Culmen: 9,5-11,1-12,5; Tarsus: 11,5-14,5-16; Tail: 37-47-56; Mass: 10,6-13,3-16,2 g.

**Acknowledgments**

I would like to acknowledge with thanks the records, suggestions and photographs from R D Medland.

---

**AGEING AND SEXING OF EUROPEAN SWALLOW *HIRUNDO RUSTICA***

**William Scott**

*P O Box 2680, Potchefstroom 2520*

The following guidelines for attempting to age and sex European (Barn) Swallows *Hirundo rustica* were supplied by Professor Anders Møller and I trust this information will encourage ringers to record more details on Schedule 1 forms. Please note that the sexing criteria apply only to adult birds. Other constraints are listed with the relevant criteria.

**AGEING**

**Colouration of back and top of head**

*Adult:* blue/black.

*Juvenile:* dull brown.

**Forehead and chin badge**

*Adult:* chestnut as per field guides.

*Juvenile:* white to dirty white, gets darker towards end of summer as bird matures.

**SEXING**

**Tail length of outer retrices**

*Female:* 75 mm – 104 mm.

*Male:* 95 mm – 150 mm.

Due to moult, this will only apply after arrival on old feather and before departure when new outer retrices are fully developed.

**Tail markings**

White patch length on underside of outer retrices.

*Female:* 12 mm – 25 mm, tends to be shorter and broader.

*Male:* 28 mm – 45 mm, tends to be elongated and thinner.

Feather needs to be approximately 60% developed to show full length of patch.

**Belly colouration**

*Female:* white to cream.

*Male:* often darker with rust-coloured colouration.

NB. This method cannot be used in isolation as many males do not have a darker belly.