

Biometrics and mass data of Cape Siskins in the Karoo

Japie Claassen

PO Box 166, Koue Bokkeveld, 6836; claassen@cybertrade.co.za

I read the notes of Vincent Ward on Cape Siskins (Ward 2001) with interest and would like to report on birds I have caught in the Karoo.

Cape Siskins *Pseudochloroptila totta* were caught on the farm Scheepersrus (33°18'S 22°24'E), about 36 km east of Prince Albert. The farm is at the northern edge of their range on the northern side of the Swartberg Mountains. In autumn huge flocks grazed on weed seeds together with Cape Canaries *Serinus canicollis* and Swee Waxbills *Estrilda melanotis*.

On 12 May 1994, 18 birds (9 males and 9 females) were netted and ringed. Biometric and mass data were collected and this appears in Table 1.

A comparison of the measurements of the birds of the Swartberg Mountains (SM) with those of the Cedarberg Wilderness Area (CWA) shows:

1. Males of SM were heavier than those of CWA; female weights were the same.
2. Heads of both males and females of SM were longer than those of CWA.
3. SM birds had shorter bills than CWA birds.
4. Tails of SM males were longer while those of females were a little shorter than CWA birds.
5. SM birds had shorter wings and longer tarsi than the CWA birds.

The overall length of the birds compares favourably with those given in Maclean (1994).

Having moved to the Koue Bokkeveld in the southern Cedarberg, I hope to gather additional information on this poorly studied species in another part of its range.

Table 1. Mass and biometrics of 18 adult Cape Siskins caught at Scheepersrus, Swartberg Mountains

Measurement	Male (n = 9)		Female (n = 9)	
	Range	Mean	Range	Mean
Mass (g)	13-14	13.5	12-14	13.0
Head (mm)	24-29	26.5	25-29	27.0
Bill, base of feathers (mm)	9-10	9.5	9-10	9.5
Tail (mm)	49-58	53.5	42-57	49.5
Wing (mm)	67-72	69.5	65-70	67.5
Tarsus (mm)	14-18	16.0	14-18	16.0
Overall length (mm)	121-129	125.0	120-129	124.5

References

- Maclean, G.L. 1994. Robert's birds of southern Africa. Cape Town: John Voelcker Bird Book Fund.
- Ward, V.L. 2001. Notes on the ageing and sexing of Cape Siskins *Pseudochloroptila totta*. Afring News 30(2): 87-88.