CALL FOR INFORMATION ON AGEING AND SEXING WHYDAHS

In beginning a study of some long-tailed viduines of southern Africa (Pintailed Whydah *Vidua macroura*, Shafttailed Whydah *V. regia* and Paradise Whydah *V. paradisaea* in particular), I have found it exasperating to age, and less so to sex, immatures. If any Safring News reader in southern Africa has first-hand ringing experience with these birds, and can help me out with the following questions, I would be extremely grateful.

- At what age do immatures of each species (excluding Paradise Whydahs) begin to show red in the bill? Does this seem to vary much among individuals, or by sex?

- At what age do bills become completely red in the Pintailed and male Shafttailed Wydahs? How are female Shafttaileds distinguished from immature males and Paradise Whydah females?

I would be interested to hear from anyone locally who keeps (or has kept) whydahs under aviary conditions, and from anyone who has repeatedly resighted known-age whydahs ringed as nestlings or fledglings.

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Dear Mr. Oatley

My main reason for writing is age and sexing in Afrotropical passerines. Whilst I do not expect to see an 'Afro Svensson' for a few years, surely someone is collecting information towards that goal. I am keen to keep up-to-date in this field and wish therefore to be placed on the mailing list for Safring News. If you know of anyone working on the genera *Phyllastrephus*, *Andropadus*, *Cossypha* and *Sheppardia*, I would be pleased to correspond with them.

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