

NOTES, NOTICES & LETTERS

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.

- o 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?
- o At what age do bills become completely red in the Pintailed and male Shafttailed Whydahs? 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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