At 6:00 a.m. on August 27, we discovered the bird sitting along highway 32 on a state highway sign. After watching the owl make sorties over the field both north and south of the highway, we finally had the opportunity to see the prey it was hunting. At approximately 7:00 a.m. the bird hit something on the road and jumped about as though chasing, just as it had done in the fields. We were sitting only 50 feet away, watching intently. In five minutes the bird went from the pole or sign onto the highway at least three times. We could then clearly see that the bird was taking grasshoppers. I used my 8 mm movie camera to record the bird taking grasshoppers off the highway.

On September 9, I was again in the area with Edward Dupee. We observed the owl hunting again in the field north of Highway 32. On September 16, Jim Scheunemann and I attempted unsuccessfully to capture the bird. At that time the owl was seen, for the first time, with a large vole (Microtus sp.).

On a trip to the area on October 1, I heard of a Barred Owl (Strix varia), being killed on the highway, but I could not track down the location of the carcass. The Great Gray Owl was not observed in this area again by nearby resident observers that lived right there. It is my suspicion that the so-called Barred Owl roadkill was the Great Gray Owl.

I am grateful to Robert W. Nero for encouragement and assistance in preparing this article.

LITERATURE CITED


Follen, D.G. 1980B. Great Gray Owl--summer record Forest County. Passenger Pigeon 42:


Route 1, Box 96
Arpin, WI 54410

Sex and Age Characteristics of American Tree Sparrow

By A. Marguerite Baumgartner

In recent years a number of banders have asked me to reprint or rewrite my Tree Sparrow sex-age characteristics, originally published in Bird Banding (1936) and in the Bent Life Histories (1968). With some editorial nudging I submit the following.

These studies were based on 129 specimens which we collected methodically during two winters at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York. Of many characteristics scrutinized (plumage coloration, leg and eye color, various measurements) most proved to be variable; a few were diagnostic. Birds
were measured, color patterns noted, and a tentative sex-age designation assigned. Birds were then dissected, gonads and ossification of skull recorded (discernible until March), and positive designation established.

Results of this practical test were as follows:
Male adult: 36 birds, tentative identification 100% correct
Female immature: 31 birds, tentative identification 100% correct
Male immature: 43 birds, tentative identification 5 incorrect.
Female adult: 19 birds, tentative identification 7 incorrect.

Degrees of Veiling on Crown of Tree Sparrow

There was a 9.3% error due to overlapping measurements in these last two groups.

There was no U - U (unknown) designation.

With a U - U option for birds that cannot be positively sexed or aged by the combination of measurements and crown pattern, it should be quite possible to classify Tree Sparrows with more than the required 95% accuracy.

My personal files contain hundreds of Tree Sparrow records over the years that fit very compatibly into the geographical sex ratio we established through museum specimens in 1935. In the southern part of their range (Oklahoma), winter females outnumber males by a wide margin. Of a total of 430 Oklahoma banding records between 1948 and 1965 (some years 0, one year almost 200), there were 301 females, 129 male or unknown designation. Females comprised 70%, males and unknowns the remaining 30%.

Since 1975, when we returned to Oklahoma, I have been using the proposed formula, based on the same criteria as the original publications. With conscientious attention to the designation U, my results read as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60 Males (age U)</td>
<td>27% of total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 U - U</td>
<td>12 + %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48 Females (age U)</td>
<td>21 + %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89 Females (definitely HY-SY)</td>
<td>40 - %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>225</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
With care, other banders can also expect to sex (and sometimes age) Tree Sparrows with assurance by noting the following wing - tail measurements, the width and pattern of veiling of the crown:

The H - B Formula (Heydweiller-Baumgartner)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ad M</th>
<th>U M</th>
<th>U U</th>
<th>U F</th>
<th>im. F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>wing</td>
<td>81-80mm</td>
<td>79-77mm</td>
<td>76-75mm</td>
<td>74-72mm</td>
<td>71-70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tail</td>
<td>76-73</td>
<td>72-71</td>
<td>70-68</td>
<td>70-67</td>
<td>66-65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>veiling</td>
<td>sparse,</td>
<td>scattered</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>heaviest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crown</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>centrally,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>feathers at</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>rear with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>dark shafts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ad. = AHY fall, ASY Jan. 1 - spring
im. = HY fall, SY Jan. 1 - spring
U = unknown age or sex fall, AHY Jan. 1 - spring

Route 2, Box 51A
Jay, Oklahoma 74346

Save the Wetlands for the Cranes

Mary and Charlie Nelson