

Introduction to Bird in the Hand (2nd Edition)

IDENTIFICATION, AGEING AND SEXING OF BIRDS IN THE HAND

Until the 1970s there was a dearth of published information available to assist with field identification of many Australian bird species and of course there was even less information available for researchers, such as bird handlers, to age and sex birds in the field.

In 1974 the Bird Banders' Association of Australia, now the Australian Bird Study Association Inc. (ABSA), published its iconic first edition of *Bird in the Hand*. This booklet brought together some 40 articles covering the field identification, ageing and sexing for almost 80 Australian bird species that had been published in its journal *The Australian Bird Bander (ABB)* since March 1963. The original *Bird in the Hand* booklet has been reproduced on this website. Since 1974 a further 18 papers in the *Bird in the Hand* series format have been published in *ABB* and its successor *Corella*.

There have been many field guides published in recent decades and these have provided exceptional references for field identification. Large numbers of additional reference books have also hit the shelves, but none of these have been suitable for quick reference in the field.

Since *Bird in the Hand* was published, the only references specifically designed to identify sexual and age differences in Australian bush birds for field workers were Ken, Annie and Danny Rogers' *Bander's Aid - A Guide to Ageing and Sexing Bush Birds* and *Bander's Aid - Supplement Number One* that were published in 1986 and 1990 respectively. These books are available for free download from this website. An ABSA compiled composite is also available for download. Birdlife Australia holds copyright to these publications.

There have been numerous "field friendly" identification, ageing and sexing guides published over the years that covered many of the non-passerines. A prime example is the *BTO Guide 17 - Guide to the identification and ageing of Holarctic Waders*. However there remains a substantial need for a more comprehensive and up-to-date guide to the ageing and sexing of Australian bush birds that can be utilised in the field.

In the period from 1990 to 2006 the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union/Birds Australia (now Birdlife Australia), compiled and published the seven volumes (in nine parts) of *The Handbook of Australian, New Zealand & Antarctic Birds (HANZAB)*. These publications include virtually all of the currently available identification, plumage, morphometric, ageing and sexing data for all Australian birds. However, the cost and bulk of *HANZAB* precludes its availability for use as a field tool.

In 2014 the ABSA was granted permission, by Birdlife Australia, to extract the data and

artwork from *HANZAB* to produce a new series of "Bird in the Hand" field information sheets. These will make available to field workers, and particularly bander trainees, data that are available in *HANZAB*, to age and sex many Australian bush birds. For want of a better name, the new series is called *Bird in the Hand - Second Edition*.

The ABSA will utilise the HANZAB data and illustrations to compile new information (field data) sheets and update the information previously published in *Bird in the Hand*, *Bander's Aid* and other documents. These new information sheets will be published as free downloads from this website. They will be updated as new published data become available or from advice provided by users (by email or through the Forum on this website). Notification of new and updated sheets will be published in our Newsletter.