

AGEING & SEXING GUIDE

CAPE WEAVER *PLOCEUS CAPENSIS*

SPECIES

In the southern and southwestern Cape may be distinguished from the Masked Weaver *Ploceus velatus* by culmen length which is 20 - 24 mm for the Cape Weaver and 15,5 - 17 mm for the Masked Weaver. Newly fledged Cape Weavers have short bills, however, and the culmen may fall within the size range of the Masked Weaver until the birds are about two weeks out of the nest.

SEX

Immature males (older than 8 months) may be distinguished by their pale-whiteish iris which in the adult male becomes bright yellow. The iris of the female is deep, warm-brown.

Males less than eight months old (i.e. with equivocal iris colouration) cannot be separated from females on plumage characteristics, but 95% of fully-grown males are likely to have a maximum cord wing length of 88 mm or more.

AGE

Males do not adopt adult breeding plumage until about 22 months old, or in time for the second post-fledging breeding season.

N.B. The above details have been extracted from "IDENTIFYING AND SEXING THE CAPE WEAVER" by Clive Elliott. Safring News 2(1): 22-23. 1973, in order to aid new ringers in the southwestern Cape. The ageing data is obviously difficient and could be improved by the addition of skull-ossification data. Furthermore, measurements are based on Cape Weavers caught in the southwestern Cape and on measurements in Roberts' Birds of Southern Africa for the Masked Weaver. Ringers in the Transvaal and Natal should obtain mensural data for their local populations so that the guide for this species can be comprehensively expanded.

Editor.