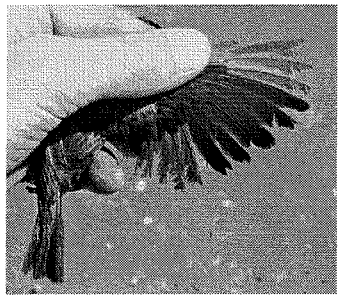

Fig. 4. (left) Open right wing showing moult and significantly worn flight feathers.

Table 1. Masses of Amethyst Sunbirds showing minimum, mean and maximum mass (g). Sample size in parentheses.

Reference	Male	Female
Maclean (1993)	9.2 – 13 – 17 (157)	8.2 – 12 – 16.9 (112)
C.T.S. unpubl. data	13.3 – 15.2 – 17.6 (12)	12.6 – 13.9 – 16.1 (9)

"old" primaries were extremely worn, as were the secondaries (Fig. 4). Mass was low (11.6 g) and approximately 25% lighter than the average mass of male Amethyst Sunbirds in my ringing database (Table 1). The bird was not ringed due to its unfortunate condition. When released it flew off in good form. If caught again it could certainly be identified as the same individual.

Ringers may seldom face the decision of whether such a bird should be ringed or not, and should not take such a decision lightly. It can be argued that the only way of knowing whether an injured bird survives is if it is caught again with a unique ring. However, applying a ring to an already handicapped individual may hinder its success further, possibly resulting in its demise. Such a decision therefore rests on the individual ringer and the unique situation of each case.

Reference

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Body moult in Cape Weavers

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Introduction

Body moult in birds is generally considered to occur simultaneously with primary feather moult (Underhill 2003). In my Ph.D. on primary moult in weavers I have data on timing and duration of primary moult in Cape Weavers *Ploceus capensis* in the Western Cape, based on my own and other ringers' data (Oschadleus 2005). In 2002 I started recording body moult in weavers and here compare this with the primary moult data for adult Cape Weavers.

Methods

Body moult was scored in three areas: head, upperparts, and underparts. Body moult was checked by blowing across the three areas and looking for sheaths at the base of the body feathers, indicating growing feathers. Scores ranged from 0 (no body moult), 1 (a few or several sheaths seen), to 2 (large number of growing feathers seen). Tail moult was often scored for each rectrix, but the analysis here is simplified to tail moult present or absent.

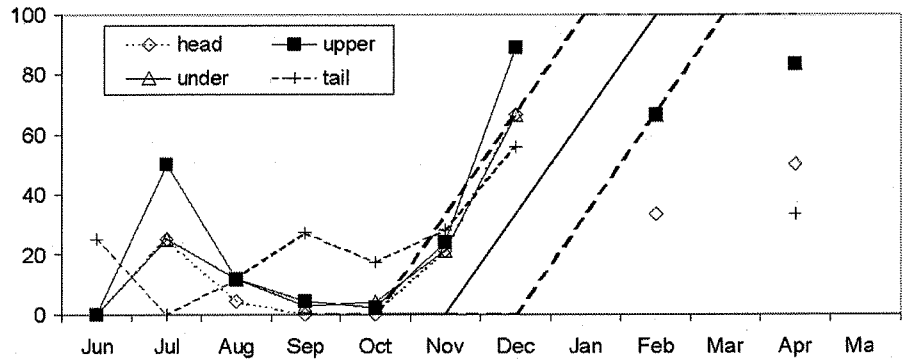

Fig. 1. Primary, body and tail moult in Cape Weavers in the Western Cape. The solid diagonal line joins the estimated mean start and end dates of primary moult, while the diagonal dotted lines show the approximate 95% confidence intervals of primary moult scores on any given date. The percentage of birds with moult present on the head, upperparts, underparts and tail are shown.

Results

Two hundred and forty-five adult Cape Weavers were captured, mostly in summer, providing data for the start of moult. Fifty-two birds showed body moult in at least one body area. Most weavers were captured on Robben Island (118 birds) and De Hoop Nature Reserve (61). The rest were caught at various localties, largely on the Cape Peninsula.

The percentage of birds showing body moult in July is high (Fig. 1), but the sample sizes are low (4 birds). In mid November half of the birds had started primary moult and a quarter started body moult. Birds caught in November and December had a high intensity of body moult scores, i.e. often score of 2, while birds caught before November all showed scores 0 or 1.

Tail moult was often irregular, probably due to tail feathers that fell out randomly. Often, however, the usual pattern of tail moult was observed (moult starting centrally outwards). Regular tail moult was observed from August onwards, indicating that tail moult may precede primary moult. Tail feathers are relatively large and the start of tail moult could be an important energetic constraint in the timing and duration of moult in passerine birds.

Conclusion

Some individual birds may moult some body feathers throughout the year, but the majority of body moult appears to start after primary moult has started. Tail feathers are relatively large and the start of tail moult could be an important energetic constraint in the moult timing and duration of birds.

Acknowledgements

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