

# Tiedonantoja • Brief reports

## Frequency of tail-moult in immature Finnish Greenfinches

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The criteria for ageing live birds can be improved by collecting data on the moult patterns of immature individuals. In fairly many passerine species, the form of the tail-feathers is vital for ageing, e.g. in the Greenfinch *Chloris chloris*. In this species there are also other possible criteria: the colour of the outer webs of the alula feathers, and of the edges and tips of the primary coverts, and the possible presence of unmoulted juvenile greater coverts (SVENSSON 1975). Immature birds may change some or all tail-feathers and greater coverts during their postjuvenile moult, but more precise data are needed on the extent of the moult, as the females may be hard to age according to the primary coverts alone. In Central and Southern Europe the Greenfinch sometimes has a complete postjuvenile moult (SVENSSON 1975, WESTPHAL 1976), but this has not been observed in Finland.

We studied tail-moult of Greenfinches while netting passerines in Turku, SW-Finland, in two autumns and one winter in 1975–77. In 1975 netting was performed from the beginning of July to the beginning of September, but Greenfinches were trapped only between 25 August and 8 September. In 1976 netting started at the beginning of July and lasted till the end of October. Yet Greenfinches were caught only between 14 September and 26 October. The winter sample covers the whole of winter 1976–77 (November–March). On average, the first sample presumably represents earlier broods than the second one, while the winter sample reflects the moulting situation in that part of the Greenfinch population

TABLE 1. Extent of tail-moult in immature Greenfinches in SW-Finland.

		Moulted tail-feathers (pairs)								
		6	5	4	3	2	1	0	N	
<i>Autumn 1975</i>										
♂♂		5	—	—	1	3	2	25	36	
♀♀		5	—	—	1	3	3	18	30	
<i>Autumn 1976</i>										
♂♂		3	—	—	—	1	6	17	27	
♀♀		—	—	—	—	1	2	9	12	
<i>Winter 1976–77</i>										
♂♂		6	—	2	—	1	1	13	23	
♀♀		2	1	—	1	2	1	5	12	
<i>Total</i>										
♂♂	<i>n</i>	14	—	2	1	5	9	55	86	
	%	16	20						64	100
♀♀	<i>n</i>	7	1	—	2	6	6	32	54	
	%	13	28						59	100

which overwinters in Finland. As the first sample was possibly too early to include the entire moulting period of the Greenfinch (NEWTON 1972), the percentages calculated from it may be too low.

About 15 % of the immature Greenfinches moult the entire tail (Table 1). The percentage may actually be even higher, as most of the data were collected during the moult period and some birds may not have completed the tail-moult when checked. This is in fact indicated by the winter sample. The sexes do not seem to differ greatly in the tail-moult, but clearly more data are needed.

The autumn samples (especially ♀♀) seem to differ clearly, due to either annual differences or differences between early and late broods (see NEWTON 1972).

Roughly 20–25 % of immature Greenfinches change one to five pairs of tail-feathers during their postjuvenile moult (Table 1). These birds are easy to age, as the retained juvenile tail-feathers are readily distinguished. According to our material, partial tail-moult is nearly always centrifugal and involves the same number of feathers on the two sides. Occasionally birds with an odd new (moulted) intermediate tail-feather have been caught, but they have most probably lost its predecessor accidentally.

The frequency of tail-moult may naturally vary annually and geographically. In addition, the results may be biased by the long breeding season of the Greenfinch. Anyway, the results prove that ringers should not age Greenfinches solely on the basis of tail-feathers. In some rare cases ageing of male immature Greenfinches on the basis of the alula is even impossible (one bird in our material). Generally, when several characters for ageing are available, they should all be checked, starting with those which are most important or easiest to use.

## Helmipöllö pesinyt kahdesti samana kesänä

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Jo HORTLING (1929) arveli, että helmipöllö voisi pesiä kahdesti samana kesänä. Asia on kuitenkin pysynyt hämäränä, ja esim. Pohjolan linnut värikuvin (v. HAARTMAN ym. 1963–72) toteaa, että uusintapesimistä ilmeisesti tapahtuu pesyeen tuhouduttua. Tähän viittaavat kesäkuun keskivaiheilla löydetyt munapesyeet ja heinäkuun lopulla tavatut pesäpoikueet. Seuraavassa esitetään laajempiakin ornitologi-piirejä kiinnostava havainto, josta on jo toi-

## Selostus: Nuorten viherpelppojen pyrstösulkasato

Vuosina 1975–77 Turussa kootun aineiston (86 ♂♂ ja 54 ♀♀) mukaan vähintään 15 % nuorista viherpeipoista sulkii koko pyrstönsä ensimmäisenä syksynään. Tämä on ilmeisesti yleisempää koirailta ja aikaisten pesyeiden poikasilla (taulukko 1). Noin neljännnes nuorista viherpeipoista sulkii vain osan pyrstöstään, miltei aina symmetrisesti keskimmäisestä parista alkaen. Kaikki pyrstösulkansa vaihtaneet linnut voidaan tunnistaa nuoriksi (1) vaihtumattomista isoista peitinhöyhenistä (jos on), (2) alulan höyhenten reunojen väristä (koiraat, elleivät vaihtaneet, tässä aineistossa yksi lintu) tai (3) käsisulkien peitinhöyhenten reunojen ja kärkien väristä SVENSSONIN (1976) ohjeita noudattaen. Koskaan ei iänmäärittystä tulisi tehdä pelkästään yhden kriteerin nojalla, ellei tämä ole ehdoton. Käytettävissä olevat määrittelykohdat tulisi tarkastaa tärkeys- tai helppousjärjestyksessä.

## References

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 SVENSSON, L. 1975: Identification guide to European Passerines. — Stockholm, 2nd edition.  
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saalla kirjoitettu laajemmin (HEINONEN ym. 1970).

Risto Saarinen rengasti toukokuun lopulla 1967 helmipöllöpoikueen 2 km SSW Tuurin asemalta. Poikueen ainoa lento on selvinnyt poikueen (H-72954) tavattiin 2.5.1968 emona helmipöllönpöytästä Virtain Nevalassa, lähellä kirkonkylää (syntymäpaikalta 36 km SSE). Sama emo kontrolloitiin 5.5.1969 edellisen vuoden pesimäpaikalta 2.7 km ESE. Pesäpaik-