

AGEING & SEXING

MIOMBO DOUBLECOLLARED SUNBIRD IN LIMBE

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The Miombo Doublecollared Sunbird, *Nectarinia manoensis* is a fairly common resident in southern Malawi, with local movements governed by the available food supply. This study is based on 312 captures (198 male and 114 female) from August 1987 to May 1992, in my garden at 1224 m altitude on the northeastern edge of Blantyre, where it is present all year round, though most abundant from May to September - the aloe-blooming season.

Sunbirds in this area would appear to be best assigned to the race *N. m. pintoii*, although this represents a considerable extension to the south and east of the hitherto established range of this form.

The adult male of *N. manoensis* is unmistakable. The head, throat and back are metallic green, with black lores. The back and rump are grey-olive. The upper tail coverts are olive with a scattering of from 1 to 8 metallic or metallic-tipped feathers. Those in the uppermost row are metallic green, those lower metallic

green/blue, blue or sometimes purple. Non-metallic covert feathers have dusky centres. The wings are dusky brown, the tail primarily dark drab. The two outermost tail feathers are grey-brown, the outer web and tip finely edged with white or light dusky, and the next two are usually white-tipped and sometimes edged white on the outer web. The pectoral tufts are bright yellow. The breast has a bright red band 10-13 mm wide, bordered above with a narrow band of bright metallic blue. The belly is grey olive shading to grey with a variable amount of yellow wash on centre of the lower abdomen. The undertail coverts are very light grey. Legs and feet are black, the eye dark brown and the orbital ring dark horn.

The adult female has a grey-olive mantle; the rump is yellowish olive. The feathers of the crown have darkish centres, which give it a spotted appearance like the Spotted Flycatcher. There is a faint cream-coloured eyebrow, beginning just in front of the eye and not extending behind it.

Measurements

| | ADULT (M) | JUV/IMM (M) | ADULT (F) | JUV/IMM (F) |
|--------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-------------|
| WING | 57,0-54,5 | 56-64 | 52-60 | 46-59 |
| BILL | 21-27 | 21-25 | 19-23 | 17-22 |
| TARSUS | 14-19 | 14-19 | 14-20 | 15,0-19,5 |
| MASS | 8,5-11,0 | 8,4-10,6 | 6,5-10,9 | 6,8-10,0 |
| TAIL | 37-45 | 40-44 | 35-42 | 42 (1) |

The tail is primarily dark drab; the outermost tail feathers are lighter, with the outer web edged white and a white tip. The next two are variably tipped with white, with the outer web occasionally light or white. The wings are grey-olive. The underparts are grey or grey-olive with a yellow wash which can be quite extensive or merely cover a small area around the cloaca. The undertail coverts are very light grey. The feet and bill are blackish, the eye dark brown and the orbital ring dark horn.

Juveniles and immature females resemble the adult female, with a perceptibly swollen gape - at first white, then darkening through yellow to olive-orange - persisting well into the second year. The juvenile female is generally more olive than the immature or adult. The

outer webs of the primaries of the immature female are olive, contrasting with the grey-olive of the inner webs. The underparts have a strong yellow wash.

Males may acquire vestiges of adult plumage before the end of the first year, but do not achieve 100% adult plumage before the end of the third year. Until then there are many dull olive feathers on the head, back and breast, and the red and blue chest bands are irregular.

The only breeding record I have is for February-March, with fledging occurring on 24th March. Adults moult in November-December. Sub-adults start earlier and continue later; a post-juvenile partial moult of flight feathers sometimes occurs.

