



SHORT NOTE

Sexing Corn Buntings *Miliaria calandra* by discriminant function: a reply

F. CAMPOS^{1*}, M. HERNÁNDEZ², J. ARIZAGA², R. MIRANDA² and A. AMEZCUA²

¹Universidad Europea Miguel de Cervantes, Carretera de Segovia s/n, E-47012 Valladolid, Spain

²Department of Zoology and Ecology, Faculty of Sciences, University of Navarre, E-31080 Pamplona, Spain

Although, as Morgan (2006) points out, we cannot reject a systematic observer-associated error of 10 mm, we suggest that the existence of some female Corn Buntings (n = 5) with longer wing lengths than described in literature (Cramp & Perrins 1994) and the lack of a normal distribution of wing lengths in our female Corn Buntings are not sufficient to confirm that the long-winged females were a result of 'observer distraction'. Measurements of species are not constant with time since they evolve in response to environmental changes. For example, Nowakowski (2000) observed long-term variations of wing length in a population of Reed Warblers in Central Europe, due to the influence of year-on-year variations of meteorological events, such as rainfall. Furthermore, transsexual phenotypes (both plumage and structural), particularly male-like females, can occur naturally in bird populations and may have an ecological basis (Bleiweiss 2001). Observer distraction might be expected to occur with both sexes, yet we did not find male Corn Buntings larger than expected.

In conclusion, although Morgan's hypothesis (Morgan 2006) is one explanation of the larger-than-expected female Corn Buntings, other biological explanations are equally plausible. Clearly, further studies on wing-length variation in male and female Corn Buntings are needed.

REFERENCES

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*Correspondence author
Email: fcampos@arvo.net