

Mourning Dove (MODO)
Zenaida macroura

**A North American Banding Council
Guide to Age and Sex Determination**

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**All specimens courtesy of University of
Washington Burke Museum (UWBM).
Specimen numbers are indicated in
photo captions.**

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This is one of a series of species accounts produced by the North American Banding Council. These accounts use live and specimen material to illustrate photographically age- and, where possible, sex-related criteria described in other references, especially Peter Pyle's *Identification Guide to North American Birds*. No attempt is made here to validate those criteria or describe new criteria.

Although skull, gonad, and/or bursa data are known for many of the birds depicted, in many cases age or, less often, sex was deduced from external characteristics. It is possible that some errors were made in age or sex determination of the birds depicted in these accounts due to published information being either inaccurate or misapplied.

Every species exhibits individual and/or geographic variation in coloration, molt extent, feather shape, etc. It is not possible to illustrate the full range of variation in a work of this nature. Where possible, the birds depicted represent the majority of individuals (as per Pyle) for the characters shown. However, they were selected because they show these characters especially well and the norm may be more ambiguous. Month and location of capture/collection are indicated for each bird shown.

New material for these accounts is always welcome. If you have photos that show criteria or plumages not depicted here, or better examples, or wish to write an account yourself, please contact the Chairman of NABC's Education Committee (see <http://www.nabanding.net/nabanding/nabcoff.html>). Thank you for your assistance.



Figure 1. Dorsal view. From left: Fledgling (UWBM #65173, WA, Sep), juvenile (UWBM #31185, WA, Aug), basic female (UWBM #14506, WA, May), basic male (UWBM #34510, WA, Aug).

The fledgling shows the uniform brown crown and nape and the “scaly” appearance of the back and wings created by the pale feather edging characteristic of juvenal plumage. The older juvenile shows the scaling to a lesser degree since most of the pale edges have worn off. Note that though both birds are from the same state, the younger bird is from a later date, indicative of this species’ prolonged breeding season. Juvenile males and females are alike. Basic-plumaged birds lack the pale feather tips. Some females, as shown here, have a bluish tinge to the nape and crown, but not as pronounced or extensive as that shown by males. The apparent difference in the size of the black spots on the wings of the basic birds is merely a function of the way the wings were positioned during specimen preparation.

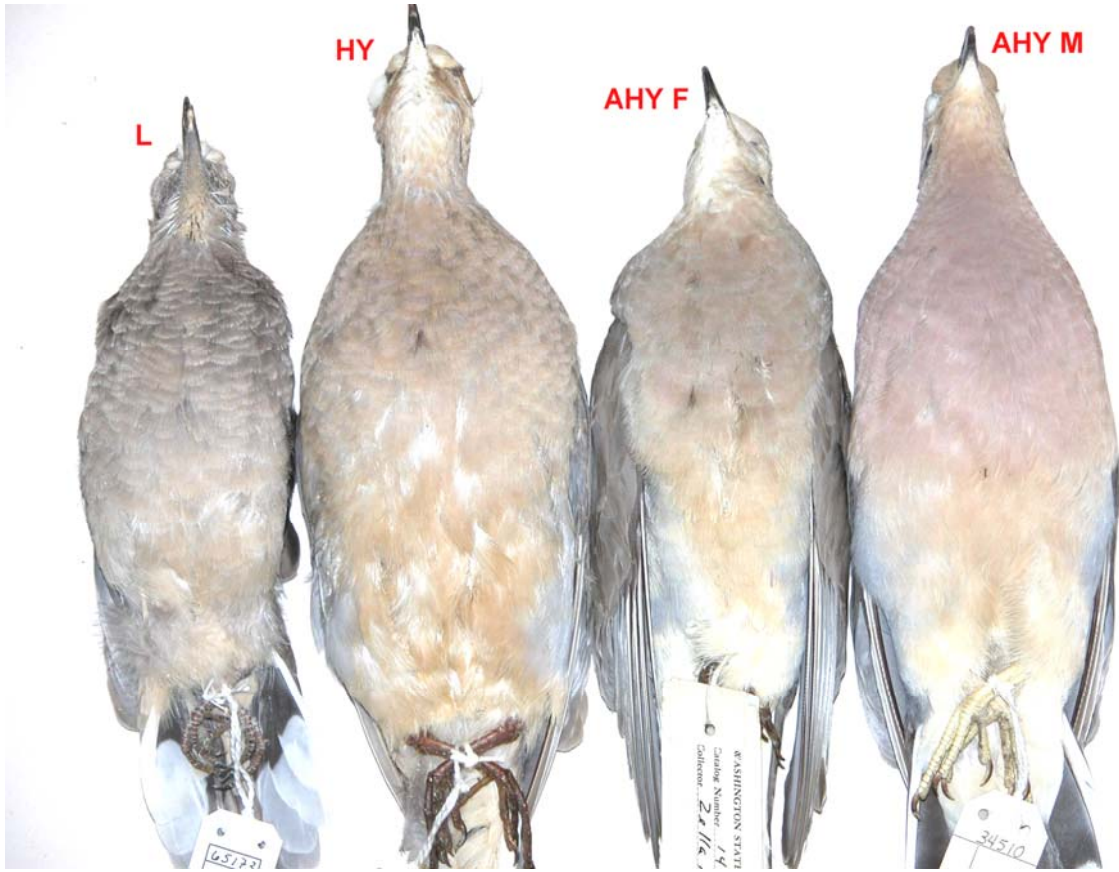


Figure 2. Ventral view. Same specimens as in Figure 1.

Note that the scaled appearance of juvenal plumage is evident on the breast as well and becomes less apparent with age. Basic females may show a rose tinge on the throat and/or breast, both of which are distinctly pink or rose in the male.



Figure 3. Juvenal (HY) wing (UWBM #37053, MT, Jul).

All feathers juvenal (see Pyle Fig. 25A).

The coverts are pale-tipped, resulting in the scaled appearance seen in Figure 1. The remiges are very fresh; a basic-plumaged bird would show considerably more wear on at least some feathers at this time (Fig. 5). Note the prominent white tips on the outer primaries; fresh basic primaries (Fig. 4) show less white at the tips (southwestern juveniles, which may hatch early and be exposed to considerable abrasion, can lose these white tips before the 1st PB).



Figure 4. Fresh basic (AHY) wing (UWBM #59117, MI, Feb).

All feathers basic (see Pyle Fig. 25B).

The pale covert tips seen on the juvenile are lacking. Note also the near lack of white on the outer primary tips; contrast with Fig. 3. Prebasic molts, regardless of age, are typically complete in this species; thus, MODO seldom shows molt limits.



Figure 5. Worn basic (AHY) wing (UWBM #42221, WA, Jul).

All feathers basic (see Pyle Fig. 25B).

The degree of wear in the primaries is much greater than that on the juvenile in the same month (Fig. 3).



Figure 6. Wing in 2nd PB (SY, UWBM #59082, WA, Jun).

s6 juvenal; p1-p2 2nd basic; all other feathers 1st basic (see Pyle Fig. 25C).

This bird was beginning its 2nd PB and shows three feather generations. Occasional MODOs retain juvenal secondaries, usually within the s4-s6 range, during the 1st PB; this bird retained s6, which is contrastingly worn and faded and has a paler rachis than do the adjacent feathers from the 1st PB. (Subsequent PBs rarely are incomplete, but the resulting molt limits are subtler.) The first two primaries are growing; they are only slightly darker and fresher than the older primaries from the 1st PB.