

Body Masses of Birds of the World

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Bird being weighed.

Goals:

To provide a ready source for the best available data on avian body masses for all bird species worldwide.

Recent Publications:

Dunning, J.B. 2007. CRC Handbook of Avian Body Masses. Second edition. November 2007.

Updates (Feb. 2009):

Since the publication of the second edition of the CRC Handbook, I have compiled more data from published and unpublished sources. The links below provide updates to the body mass database, and the reference sources. The data update is an Excel file (so that it is compatible with the e-version published with the second edition) following the same format as the CRC Handbook with the following exceptions:

- A column on "Book Status" has been added. Data are labeled as N = species new to the database, B = better data than found in the 2nd edition, or E = taxonomic change, but data found in second edition.
- A "source" column is added to allow citations to be looked in attached Reference file.
- A "comments" column is added.

[Database update](#)

[Reference resource update](#)

Statement of Problem:

Many forms of ecological research use an estimate of body size as a critical metric for comparative research. Ecological studies of community structure often use body size as a measure of similarity among species, while allometry explicitly relates variation in life-history attributes to species size. For birds, the single most useful measure of body size is adult body mass. Although linear measurements have been routinely collected on birds for over 100 years, body mass is a truer measure of overall size in birds.

Unfortunately, data on body masses are often scattered in unpublished records such as banding reports, or on the tags of museum specimens. Ornithologists did not begin to collect body masses routinely until the mid-1970s, when convenient field scales became available. Therefore, the vast majority of museum specimens and most research projects conducted before 1970s are not a source of information for this critical measurement.

Current Activities:

Since the 1980s, I have compiled published and unpublished data on adult avian body masses and published a series of handbooks on the subject. A 1984 Western Bird Banding Association monograph had data for North American species, while a 1992 CRC Handbook of Avian Body Masses contained data for about 6300 species worldwide. These handbooks have been widely cited in a variety of ornithological and ecological research. I have continued to compile published data that has appeared since the publication of the 1992 handbook, as well as seeking out unpublished data for birds that are poorly represented in the literature. In 2007, I completed a fully revised second edition of the CRC Handbook of Avian Body Masses, with data for over 8700 of the world's @9800 birds. A large benefit of the second edition is that electronic, searchable version of the database is included as a CD with the handbook.