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Correct band size for Zenaida Doves

David W. Nellis & Richard A. Dewey

The Virgin Islands Dept. of Conservation and Cultural Affairs has been banding Zenaida Doves (*Zenaida aurita*) as part of a Pittman-Robertson funded project to study the population size and movement patterns of these doves.

The North American Bird Banding Manual (1976), published by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, specifies the use of band size #2 on *Z. aurita*. In 1975 when our program began, we discovered this band to be too small for application on chicks. We then began the regular use of band size #3. In an attempt to band an adult in September 1976, it was found that band size #3 was too small. During the September-October 1977 hunting season, we measured 243 right and left legs of recently killed doves with dial calipers. No discernable changes were detected in leg diameters of crippled doves measured both while alive and again 2 to 4 hours after death.

The mean diameter of the anterior-posterior axis of the tarsus was 5.86 mm with a 99% confidence interval of 5.82 to 5.9.

In this sample of dove legs, four birds were recovered which had been banded one year previously as chicks with a size 3 band. Two of the bands fit the leg snugly and could not be easily moved. One of the bands was deeply embedded and had provoked the growth of considerable proud flesh (Fig. 1).

A histogram of tarsus diameters compared with available band sizes (Fig. 2) would indicate that the preferred band for *Zenaida aurita* should be band size #4 (6.35 mm). This band size will usually stay on a squab which is 13 to 16 days of age and older. ☐

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Figure 1. Size 3 band on Zenaida Dove tarsometatarsus after one year.

Figure 2. Dove tarsus diameter distribution compared with inside diameter of standard bands.

