

# Sexing Common Snipe: linear regression instead of plucking feathers – a method for estimating the total length of the outer tail feather

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Meissner, W. & Sciborski, M. 2005. Sexing Common Snipe: linear regression instead of plucking feathers – a method for estimating the total length of the outer tail feather. *Wader Study Group Bull.* 108: 57–59.

Keywords: Common Snipe, *Gallinago gallinago*, sexing criteria

The length of the outermost tail feather is one of the most useful criteria for sexing Common Snipes *Gallinago gallinago*. The parameter is usually given as the total length of the plucked feather. However, removing outer tail-feathers may have a detrimental effect on the birds, as these are particularly important to males for “drumming” display flights. In this paper we present a linear equation converting the vane length of the outermost tail feather to total feather length. This enables total feather length to be estimated without removing feathers. Moreover vane length is best suited to the examination of museum skins and to other cases where feather removal should be avoided.