

Basics: Postjuvenile moult comprises body-feathers, lesser and most median coverts. The moult of the rest of the plumage is very limited. 60% renew no greater coverts, with a median of 1.4; only 0.7% of 1Ys moult them all (n = 1806). 3.4% moult the carpal covert, 9.5% AL1. 3% renew 1-3 tertials.

Adults have a complete post-nuptial moult.

1Y birds in autumn: A few 1Ys retain single juvenile median coverts, which are recognisable by their yellow (not rust-brown) tips. With experience, it is also possible to determine age from the colour of the tips of the greater coverts. But it should be stressed that this feature is individually variable, and depends on an in-depth experience of the species. On juvenile greater coverts the light tips are sharply edged, yellowish and at least on GCs 2-9 are clearly defined, and clearly visible across the inner web (and particularly on the inner web of GCs 8-10). The light tips of moulted greater coverts merge in a less well-defined way into the ground colour, are dull brown or greyish, and are often missing on GC1 and GCs 8-10. Thus any moult limit (in 40% of 1Ys) is difficult to recognise.

Iris colour: 1Ys typically have a grey-olive, and adults a red-brown iris. In most 1Ys the colour transition takes place in autumn. A brown colouration, intermediate between that of 1Ys and adults was found in 10% of 1Ys and 9% of adults (n = 788 1Ys, 160 adults). A red-brown iris-colour provides a very accurate determinant of an adult (only 0.4% 1Ys have the red-brown adult colour).

Ageing in spring: There is no pre-breeding moult. Due to bleaching, the difference in greater covert tips between 1Ys and adults can often be more easily seen.

Age determination is difficult and should only be undertaken by experienced observers. The tips of the unmoulted 1Y greater coverts are mostly bleached to pure white, while those of adults have a duller, greyish tone. Birds with clearly defined white tips on the outer webs of GCs 2-9 are 1Y; those with duller tips, and often scarcely visible tips on GCs 8-9 are adults. Moult limits (in 40% of 1Ys) can be determined on the basis of differential wear. The inner moulted greater coverts are less strongly abraded than the outer unmoulted ones. In summer the tips are often quite worn, Birds with very worn greater coverts with no proper light tips cannot be aged.