

Quick guide to prepping bird skeletons

A list of steps for skeletonizing birds for the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology -
details found in the manual

Before you cut:

- 1) Set up your station completely
- 2) Identify your bird's species
- 3) Fill out what you can for top portion of the worksheet
- 4) Claim a PLC number and write it on your original data
- 5) Write your skeleton tag
- 6) Label your tissue vial
- 7) Take pictures of specimen with tag and ruler
- 8) Weigh the bird
- 9) Check for wing and tail molt

Ready to cut–skinning: *check in before doing so

- 1) Remove all primary, secondary, and tail feathers (rectrices)
- 2) Push away the breast feathers to reveal the skin and cut from the top of the keel down to the cloaca
- 3) Remove the skin from the body
 - Check for fat and molt
- 4) Check the skull windows/ossification (only in passerines)

Ready to cut–the body cavity *Have the class coordinator open your body cavity and sex your bird

- 1) Cut into the body cavity, avoiding bones and organs*
- 2) Sex your bird by identifying the gonads*
 - Take pictures of gonads with completely labeled tag and ruler
 - Measure and describe gonads
- 3) Label your worksheet, tags, and vials with the sex
- 4) Put the barcode on the tissue vial
- 5) Take your tissue samples and note if degraded
- 6) Place the tissue vial in the correct box in the chest freezer
- 7) Check the stomach contents and describe
- 8) Check for parasites
- 9) Collect the syrinx

Finishing up:

- 1) Remove remaining skin and excess muscle, feathers, tissue, and organs (body cavity should be empty)
 - DO NOT remove eyeballs**
- 2) Attach the skeleton tag through the ribcage/keel
- 3) Place in the soak bucket *if necessary* (if any difficult to remove tissue or the brain remains)
 - If not and time permits, blow brains and hang up the specimen
- 4) Clean your station
- 5) Fill out your prep lab catalog entry
- 6) Paperclip your original data to your worksheet and place it in the bin
- 7) Sign out of the log
- 8) Clean this worksheet!