Greenfinch CR Project

The project has been started in summer 2009. The main aim is to recognize migrations and movements of Greenfinches in Europe, but there are more specific questions hopefully to be answered, which concern e.g. how moult is related to latitude and longitude in different populations (including age and sex differences), how moult stage is related to condition, how wing morphology (pointedness, convexity) is related to migratory behavior and so on.

Tests carried out by us showed that the code on colour rings can be read on good quality digital photographs taken at a distance of 20 m from the bird. Rings on birds perching on a tree (as they usually do) could be read from even 70 m using a scope (when tested with 30x eye-piece, we were successful with 50 m distance), so we should obtain ring readings also from people not involved in the project – observers can read rings during usual birding trips.

We hope that 10-15 thousands of Greenfinches will be colour-ringed this autumn and winter in Poland. We offer special, cheap rings for the project. If you want to cooperate, please write the project leader, Marcin Faber (info@colour-rings.eu).

Instruction

Catching and ringing

Catching of Greenfinches can be done at any time and at any place. In general, the more birds we catch and colour-ring, in various places and at various times, the better.

Data collection

All the data listed below should be collected for each caught individual and then placed into the Excel database. It is important to use the same file design (proposed here), so that later joining data sent by different ringers is straightforward.

If possible, please try to collect all data. Note that length of primaries (P1_L...P8_L) is to be measured only when birds are not moulting.

Standard data:

Metal_ring_cen – metal ring centrale;

Metal_r_nmb – number of metal ring;

Cr_col – colour of colour ring (use one of the following: WHI, RED, BLA, BLU, YEL, GRE, etc.);

Cr_pos – colour ring are to be placed on tarsus anyway, so please note only 'L' (left) or 'R' (right). Default is the right tarsus. The first letter of the colour ring code should be placed down so that colour rings read upwards;

Cr_code – code of the colour ring;

Date – use the typical format (eg 2009-07-30), make sure that Excel recognizes the entered value as the date;

Place/locality – put the name of place or locality;

Province & **Country** – give name;

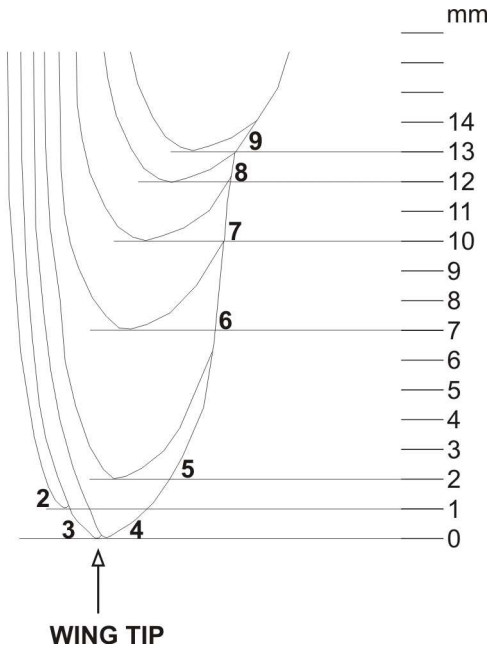
Latitude – put the coordinates (find your locality in e.g. Google Earth if you don't know coordinates); required accuracy is to one ' (minute) but you may also put more exact values, eg, from Google, like 53°00'45.03''N)

Longitude – as above;

Status – use one of the following: 'B' – breeding, 'M' – migrant, 'W' – wintering, 'U' – unknown. 'B' is to be used for birds breeding at the locality in a given year (eg, with brood patch, food etc.), 'M' – for birds ringed elsewhere and 'W' – during winter (1 Dec – 29 Feb). Note that you may combine codes to produce sth like 'MW' (bird ringed elsewhere but caught during winter) or 'BW' (local breeder caught during winter) for example.

Measurements:

Sex – follow Svensson when sexing;
Age – follow Svensson when ageing;
B_mass – weight the bird, preferably using a digital balance (required accuracy is 0.1 g);
Fat_score – use the scale 0-8 (following Busse method; see - http://www.seen-net.eu/index.php?id=24#x);
Wing_l – wing length (maximum chord, following Svensson). As a default, measure left wing (only if the primaries are broken or casually absent, measure the right one and put respective note in the Comments column; the same applies to moult scoring);
Tail_l – tail length (following Svensson, Fig. 13, p. 25);
Fork – measure a distance between the tip of the longest and the shortest tail feathers (to be measure if tail is not in moult);
Bill_f – bill length (tip to feathering, following Svensson);
Bill_dep_at_f – measure bill depth at feathering (following Svensson);
Moult_score_wing – if bird is not moulting, put '0'. If there is active moult, put the values according to standard system (codes are the same as in BTO moult card): e.g. $5^5 4^1 1^1 0^2$ (in Excel notation: 5^5 4^1 1^1 0^2) where the base denotes the stage and the exponent - the number of primaries in that stage. The above-example translates as: five primaries fully grown, one grown in 2/3 of length, one missing and two old; summing across exponentials gives 9 primaries. For further details see http://www.seen-net.eu/index.php?id=29. Next columns (**P2** ... **P10**) are optional and are to be used when bird has complicated moult stage which makes it difficult to denote moult according to standard system. Just put the codes for each primary separately;
Moult_score_tail_L and **Moult_score_tail_R** – tail moult scores. To be applied in immatures (as some 1cy Greenfinches replace tail feathers) and adults. If there is active moult, put the score as in the case of wing: e.g. $3^1 1^1 0^4$ (3^1 1^1 0^4 in Excel notation) means innermost tail feather grown between 1/3 and 2/3 of its length, next one missing, and four outer old. Measure moult in left and right sides of tail separately when time allows, otherwise measure only left side. In case of complicated moult, use columns **R1** ... **R6**, putting codes for each feather separately (as in wing above; tail feathers numbered from inside, so **R_1** is for innermost left feather and **R_6** for outermost left feather);



Wing formula (P2_L to **P9_L)** – shape of the outer wing described with the distances between the tip of each primary and the tip of the longest primary (accuracy 1 mm). In consequence, we obtain a sequence of eight measurements, for the longest primary/ies the measurement obviously equals zero. Note numbering is ascending as on Fig. 1, page 15 in Svensson 1992 (that is, from outermost to innermost). The 1st primary is not measured. The measurement is conducted on the folded wing. It is recommendable to use a transparent ruler;

Wing formula as on drawing in Excel notation:
| -1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 7 | 10 | 12 | 13 |

Trapping_method – any details on trapping method ('N' - mist netted, 'O' – other [specify in Comments column]).
Other – column for other important information, provide if you believe sth needs to be noticed.
An Excel-database is prepared and sent to ringers to unify data entering. Database will include all Goldfinches caught, including retraps. Recoveries obtained by observations and reading colour rings from a distance are to be processed in a traditional way, by respective ringing centres.

Publicising of the colour-ringing project

Please inform your local or regional birding mailing list that the project is going on, to ensure that observers will search for colour-ringed Greenfinches in your (and any other) area. Any other ways of making the project widely known are welcome! We'll update the project website on a regular basis from autumn ownwards so that people can look up to see news and current results.
Good luck!

Grzegorz Neubauer *– Ornithological Station, Gdańsk, Poland*
Piotr Minias *– Department of Teacher Training and Biodiversity Studies, University of Lodz, Poland*
Marcin Faber, Tomasz Iciek *– colour-rings.eu*