

Muscle score:

Beside fat which is the primary energy fuel for migrating birds, migrants also use muscle proteins in flight. The size of the breast muscle is a further valuable indicator for body condition in migrants.

In birds whose flight muscles are not covered by fat the shape of the breast muscles can be easily recorded and scored. Muscle score is assessed visually and by sweeping your thumb over the sternum. Please see figure 3 for the place where to determine muscle score.

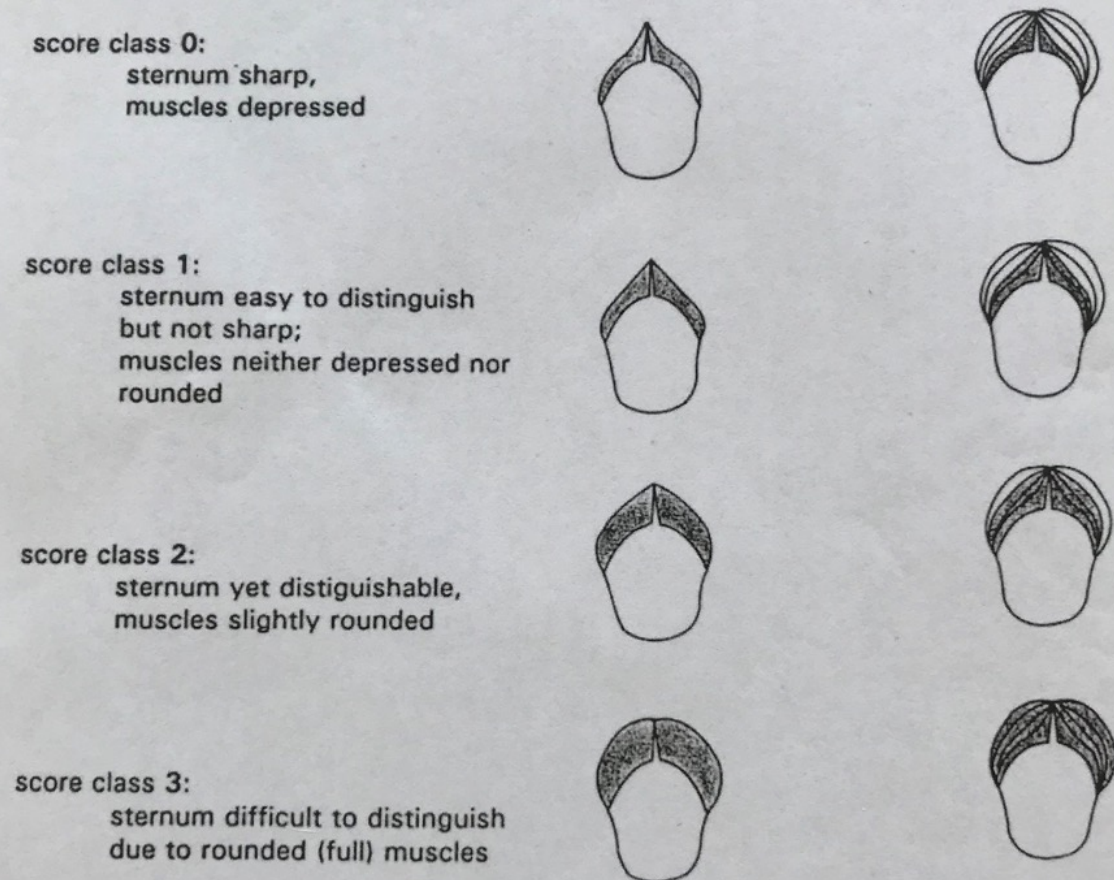


Figure 4: Taking the muscle score. The right column shows the relative difference between the scores. The stippled areas are the muscles.

Drawings by Göran Walinder, Falsterbo B.O., based on studies on live birds trapped for ringing and a few dissected ones.