

Age and moult coding for juvenile Passerines

The tables below show the progression of moult and the codes to use for juvenile passerines, both for species which undergo a partial post juvenile (PJ) moult and those species which have a complete PJ moult. The extent of PJ moult varies between species and also between individuals in a species; for a more detailed description of the extent of PJ moult for individual species, see 'Moult in Birds' by Ginn and Melville.

Age – an age code of 3J should be used for a young passerine until it has less than 10% juvenile plumage, i.e. until it has almost completed its post juvenile moult. After this, use age code 3.

Moult – the moult codes below can be used to define the moult stage of a young passerine from fledging until completion of the PJ moult.

For species that have a partial Post Juvenile Moult

If a young bird of a species that does not undergo a complete PJ moult appears to be moulting flight feathers, check both wings to guard against replacement of feathers lost accidentally.

Age	Moult code	Comments
3J	J	A young, recently fledged bird with bare underparts, the breast is usually shiny and smooth without wrinkles. The bird will also have very bare areas on the under wing, legs and flanks etc. There may be some slight feather growth on the breast, but the <u>belly remains bare.</u>
3J or 3	P	A young bird in the process of <u>actively</u> feathering over its bare parts and <u>belly</u> , including head and wing coverts but <u>not</u> including tertials and tail.
3J or 3	T	As for moult code P above but also <u>actively</u> moulting tail or tertials. If the bird has completed moult of tail or tertial feathers, moult code T should <u>not</u> be used. Any such bird will probably be age 3 and moult O. Not all birds moult tail and tertials.
3	O	A juvenile bird which has completed its PJ moult i.e. has replaced many of its juvenile feathers, feathered its <u>belly</u> and no longer has any signs of <u>actively</u> growing feathers. The flight feathers are old.

For Species that have a complete Post Juvenile Molt

A few species of passerines undergo a complete PJ moult. In the UK, these species include House Sparrow, Tree Sparrow, Starling, Larks, Corn Bunting, Long-tailed Tit and Bearded Tit.

Age	Moult code	Comments
3J	J	A young, recently fledged bird with bare underparts, the breast is usually shiny and smooth without wrinkles. The bird will also have very bare areas on the under wing, legs and flanks etc. There may be some slight feather growth on the breast, but the <u>belly remains bare.</u>
3J	S	A young bird in the process of <u>actively</u> feathering over its bare parts and belly , including head and wing coverts but moult of the primaries and secondaries <u>has not started.</u>
3J	M	A juvenile bird which is <u>actively</u> moulting the primaries or secondaries.
3	E	A juvenile bird which is finishing its PJ moult i.e. has replaced <u>most of</u> its juvenile feathers, the primaries and secondaries are new and fully grown, but there are <u>still signs of actively</u> growing feathers, possibly on the head.
3	N	A juvenile bird which has completed its PJ moult i.e. has replaced <u>all</u> of its juvenile feathers, including the primaries and secondaries and <u>no longer</u> has any signs of <u>actively</u> growing feathers.