

**The problems and rewards of radio-tagging nestling passerines –  
testing harnesses that accommodate growth.**

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The young of most passerines leave the nest before they are fully-grown. This causes problems when fitting radio tags to nestlings. We broached the problem for research into post-nestling mortality and dispersal in blackbirds and song thrushes. We established that a backpack design was the only practical method of attachment. Five criteria were considered - I) accommodating growth, ii) preventing entanglement, III) ease of fitting, IV) predictable detachment and V) structural simplicity. A range of materials was tested. Over 100 nestling thrushes were tagged at a field site in Dorset, UK. Our solution uses controlled elastics in a wing loop harness. It is discussed with regard to *Turdidae* but should be applicable to other passerines.

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