

# How To Chain A Bird

BY BRIAN BURBANK

**T**here was red dust all over the chain and the rear wheel. The chain didn't hang straight, and the links stayed kinked as they came off the rear sprocket. Finally, when I went to adjust it, the indicator marks clearly stated it was time to replace the chain. All the signs were there, so maybe it was time for a new chain. After 24,600 miles, I couldn't complain.

I started out by doing my homework, checking on different Internet message boards to see what chains others had purchased, and if they would purchase that brand again. I also looked to see if there were any pitfalls to beware of in tackling this project. For example, it says in my manual to remove the clutch slave cylinder assembly first, but people online stated that the assembly comes off with the cover, and by skipping this step you can avoid having to purchase a gasket and brake fluid, and bleeding and refilling the clutch. Avoiding these steps made the process simpler and quicker, they said. Was it true? There was also a debate about master-link vs. rivet-style chains for large displacement



**1** JT sprockets and RK chain make nice replacements for the war-torn factory parts.



**2** You can't argue with this gauge. Factory axle adjusters on some bikes have indicators to tell you when it's time for a new chain.



**3** In case there was any doubt, this is what a bad chain looks like. This one is way past its prime.

**With the rear wheel still mounted on the bike, use a breaker bar and socket to loosen the nuts holding the rear sprocket on while the rear brake firmly holds the wheel. This is easier than wrestling with the wheel while it's lying on the ground. Do not remove the nuts at this time — just loosen them.**

bikes. The owner's manual and my local service manager both agreed — for an 1100cc sportbike, a rivet-style chain is the way to go.

I started by making sure that I had proper tools and any other items that I needed, including a Dremel tool with grinding disk, chain breaker/riveter tool with properly sized pins, torque wrench, sockets, breaker bar, and assorted wrenches.

I chose JT sprockets with the original gearing; many members of the message boards said they had used these with excellent results and would use them again. For the chain I chose an RK GXW Series XW-Ring chain. It features three lubrication pools to protect against abrasion, heat, torsional flex, and loss of lubricant. And it comes with a 20,000-mile warranty, so all you have to do is fill out the enclosed postcard and mail it in.



**While the rear wheel is off, you should inspect your brake pads and wheel bearings, applying grease to the axle and any other area specified in the manual.**



**4**

It's easier to leave the clutch slave cylinder attached to the sprocket cover so you don't have to bleed the hydraulics later.



**5**

Engage the transmission in sixth gear, remove the sprocket cover, and hang it out of the way. The center sprocket bolt from the factory will be extremely tight, so apply the rear brake to hold the wheel and chain steady while loosening the center bolt.



**6**

Compare the old sprocket with the new sprocket. The manual states that the numbers stamped on the sprockets should face out when installed.



**7**

Use a Dremel tool to grind down one of the rivet heads so it can be pressed out using a chain breaker tool. You only need to push one pin out to break the chain. Set up the tool as per the directions and push the pin out so that the chain can be removed.



**8**

You may have to use a mallet to tap the sprocket into place. Torque the nuts using a star pattern, and keep snugging them equally until the proper torque is reached.



**9**

Now count the links on the old chain and check it against owner's manual. Mark chain to length, measure, and count again. Use the same process as when you took the old chain off. Grind down the head of a pin and press it out in order to obtain the correct length. The chain needs to have two links exposed, as you will be putting a master link into the chain to hold it together.



**10**

Put the bike in neutral so that the front sprocket will turn freely. Thread the chain through and around the front sprocket, bringing the two halves together on the rear sprocket. Use the teeth on the rear sprocket to help hold the chain in place. Make sure that O-rings are in place on the back side of the master link, and slide it through the chain to connect the ends together. Grease the pins so that they slide through easily. Now place the O-rings on the exposed pins and place the side plate over them.



**11**

This Motion Pro chain tool comes with appropriate fixtures to press on a new chain side plate. Measure the space between the side plates and links. Leave the side plate slightly loose on the master link, as it will draw in a bit when you flatten the ends of the pins. Rotate the wheel so the connecting link is between the two sprockets, and check to make sure that the link moves freely.



**12**

Adjust the rear axle, set the proper chain tension, and correctly align the rear wheel. We showed you how to do that in the last two issues. Put the clutch cover back on, making sure that the clutch operates smoothly. Take a test ride to listen for noises and to check for any vibrations.



**13**

Ready to fly. With proper maintenance the new RK chain will take this Bird far. **RB**

**hard data**

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