

159 Little Bustard



LITTLE BUSTARD (*Tetrax tetrax*)

IDENTIFICATION

41-43 cm. In **breeding** plumage, **male** with buff crown streaked black and grey head; black neck with white bands. In **non breeding** plumage similar to **female**: upperparts and wing coverts buff with black streaked; white underparts; wings with flight feathers white with black tips; bill with black tip and greenish or grey legs.

SIMILAR SPECIES

This species is unmistakable.

SEXING

In **breeding** plumage, **male** unmistakable due to pattern of neck and head. In **non breeding** plumage with upperparts with a regular pale vermiculated; white underparts without dark marks; sides of breast vermiculated like upperparts; sometimes with a pale buff semi-collar; 7th primary short. **Female** with upperparts with an irregular dark vermiculated; white underparts with dark marks on breast, flanks and lateral undertail coverts; 7th primary long. **Juveniles** cannot be sexed till their **2nd year**, when **males** acquire some black breeding feathers on neck.

AGEING

4 types of age can be recognized:

Juvenile similar to **female** but with more streaked head and darker upperparts; wing coverts pale buff barred sepia; primaries short and pointed with sepia tinge on outer webs; outer primaries and secondaries with subterminal dark marks; pointed tail feathers without white tips; iris brown or grey; bill grey with yellow base.

1st year autumn/2nd year spring with retained **juvenile** outer primaries and a variable number of **juvenile** feathers on wing coverts and body.

2nd year autumn/3rd year spring only in some birds which can retain the **juvenile** outermost 10th primary.

Adult without moult limit on wings; primaries pure white with a wide subterminal black band and rounded tips; tail feathers with rounded tips; iris yellowish, red in breeding season; grey bill with black tip.

MOULT

Complete **postbreeding** moult; usually finished in September; **prebreeding** moult in **adults** is partial including only feathers on body and neck. Partial **postjuvenile** moult changing, till December, body feathers and wing coverts, retaining some of them; in **prebreeding** moult in spring change all **juvenile** body feathers and wing coverts and sometimes some flight feathers; all plumage is changed in the 1st **postbreeding** moult with rare birds still retaining the **juvenile** 10th primary.

PHENOLOGY

I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI	XII

STATUS IN ARAGON

Resident, with breeding pairs in plains of the Ebro Basin and Sistema Iberico.