



Merlin. Adult. Male (27-X).

MERLIN (*Falco columbarius*)

IDENTIFICATION

26-33 cm. **Adult male** with grey slate upperparts, reddish and streaked underparts; dark grey tail, with narrow bands. **Female** and **juvenile** with brown grey upperparts; head and upperparts streaked black; pale underparts, streaked brown; banded brownish tail.

SIMILAR SPECIES

Grey upperparts recall a **Sparrowhawk**, with yellow or orange iris. **Kestrel**, has similar size but upperparts are buff and tail is longer.



Sparrowhawk.



Kestrel.

SEXING

Adults and **juveniles** can be sexed by size; **male** with wing shorter than 206 mm; **female** with wing longer than 212 mm. Differences in plumage pattern are seen in **AGEING**.

AGEING

2 age groups can be recognized:

Juvenile resembles a **female**, but with upperparts strongly edged buff; median coverts, greater coverts, primary coverts and tertials with rufous spotted; outermost tail feather with regular dark barred reaching the edge. **Juveniles** can be sexed in extreme birds: **male** with central tail feathers with subterminal pale band not interrupted by a dark patch near the centre; tail feathers with pale bands broad and tinged grey. **Female** with central tail feathers with subterminal pale band interrupted by a dark patch near the centre; tail feathers with pale bands narrow and rufous. (**CAUTION:** there are some **juvenile males** without grey on tail feathers).

Adult male with grey upperparts, with dark shaft streaks; buff underparts; upperwing coverts and tertials grey without buff marks; grey tail with a soft dark barred and dark subterminal band.

Adult female with brown grey upperparts, feathers slightly edged buff (**CAUTION:** some **females** have a grey pattern similar to **males**); pale underparts; upperwing coverts and tertials grey brown, sometimes with buff spotted; outermost tail feather with irregular dark barred which usually doesn't reach the edge; central tail feathers with broad pale bands.

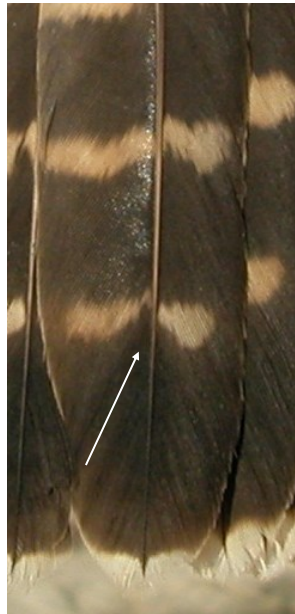


Merlin. Ageing. Pattern of dark barred on the outermost tail feather: left adult female: right juvenile.

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Merlin. Sexing in juveniles. Width and tinge of light bands: left male; right female.



Merlin. Sexing in juveniles. Pattern of subterminal band on central tail feather: left male; right female.

MOULT

Complete **postbreeding** moult, usually finished in October. Partial **postjuvenile** moult confined to scapulars and some body and tail feathers between February and May of 2nd year.

PHENOLOGY

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

■ Summer visitor

■ Resident

■ Wintering

■ On passage



Merlin. Adult. Female (28-III).



Merlin. Adult. Male-like female (15-XI).

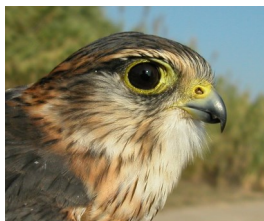


Merlin. Male. Juvenile (22-IV).



Merlin. Female. Juvenile (31-X)-

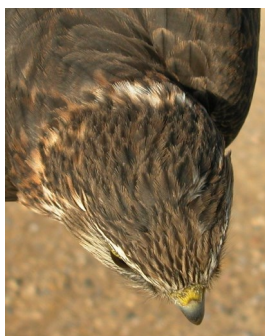
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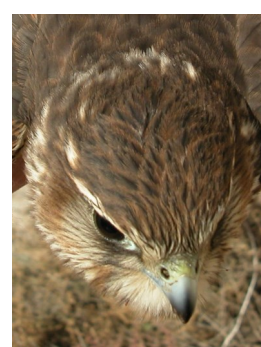
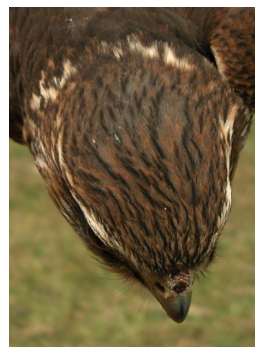
Merlin. Adult. Head pattern: top left male (27-X); top right female (28-III); left male-like female (15-XI).



Merlin. Juvenile. Head pattern: left male (22-IV); right female (31-X).



Merlin. Adult. Crown pattern: top left male (27-X); top right female (28-III); left male-like female (15-XI).



Merlin. Juvenile. Crown pattern: left male (22-IV); right female (31-X).



Merlin. Adult. Breast pattern: top left male (27-X); top right female (28-III); left male-like female (15-XI).



Merlin. Juvenile. Breast pattern: left male (22-IV); right female (31-X).

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Merlin. Adult. Upperpart pattern: top left male (27-X); top right female (28-III); left male-like female (15-XI).



Merlin. Juvenile. Upperpart pattern: left male (22-IV); right female (31-X).



Merlin. Adult. Pattern of tail and the outermost tail feather: top left male (27-X); top right female (28-III); left male-like female (15-XI).



Merlin. Juvenile. Pattern of tail and the outermost tail feather: left male (22-IV); right female (31-X).

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Merlin. Adult. Pattern of the longest alula feather: top male (27-X); bottom female (28-III).



Merlin. Juvenile. Pattern of the longest alula feather: top male (22-IV); bottom female (31-X).



Merlin. Adult. Pattern of rump and uppertail coverts: top left male (27-X); top right female (28-III); left male-like female (15-XI).



Merlin. Juvenile. Pattern of rump and uppertail coverts: left male (22-IV); right female (31-X).



Merlin. Adult. Pattern of primary coverts: top male (27-X); middle female (28-III); bottom male-like female (15-XI).

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Merlin. Juvenile. Pattern of primary coverts: top male (22-IV); bottom female (31-X).



Merlin. Juvenile. Pattern of scapulars and tertials: left male (22-IV); right female (31-X).



Merlin. Adult. Male: pattern of primaries (27-X).



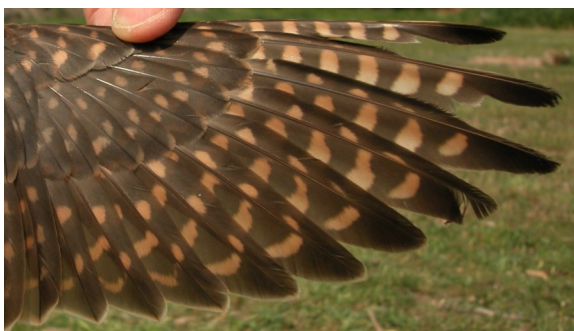
Merlin. Adult. Pattern of scapulars and tertials: top left male (27-X); top right female (28-III); left male-like female (15-XI).



Merlin. Adult. Female: pattern of primaries (28-III).



Merlin. Adult. Male-like female: pattern of primaries (15-XI).



Merlin. Juvenile. Male: pattern of primaries (22-IV).



Merlin. Juvenile. Female: pattern of primaries (31-X).



Merlin. Adult. Male: pattern of wing coverts and secondaries (27-X).



Merlin. Adult. Female: pattern of wing coverts and secondaries (28-III).



Merlin. Adult. Male-like female: pattern of wing coverts and secondaries (15-XI).



Merlin. Juvenile. Male: pattern of wing coverts and

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Merlin. Juvenile. Female: pattern of wing coverts and secondaries (31-X).



Merlin. Adult. Male: pattern of wing (27-X).



Merlin. Adult. Female: pattern of wing (28-III).



Merlin. Adult. Male-like female: pattern of wing (15-XI).



Merlin. Juvenile. Male: pattern of wing (22-IV).



Merlin. Juvenile. Female: pattern of wing (31-X).