Little Bittern

LITTLE BITTERN (*Ixobrychus minutus*)

IDENTIFICATION
33-38 cm. **Adult male** with black upperparts, wing and tail; buff neck and underparts; wing with a white patch. **Adult female** similar to **male**, but no so dark. **Juveniles** chestnut and streaked.

SIMILAR SPECIES
This species is unmistakable.

SEXING
In **adults**, **male** with crown, upperparts and tail black with green gloss; withe or grey buff greater coverts. **Female** with brown upperparts, sometimes tinged rufous, with buff margins; buff greater coverts. In **2nd year** birds, **male** similar to **adult male** but with less grey on sides of head and neck, more streaked underparts and with brownish inner secondaries.

AGEING
3 types of age can be recognized: **Juvenile** similar to **females**, but feathers of crown have broader and paler brown edges; upperparts dark brown, with broad buff margins; dark brown wing coverts, with broad buff margins. **2nd year** with inner brown secondaries brown, not black; some birds can retain juvenile wing coverts, mainly the outer greater coverts. **Adult** with black inner secondaries, all with similar pattern; greater coverts white or grey-buff in **male**, uniform buff in **female**.
**MOULT**
Complete *postbreeding* moult starting in July, suspended just before the migration and finished in winter quarters. Partial *postjuvenile* moult confined to body feathers.

**PHENOLOGY**

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**STATUS IN ARAGON**
Summer visitor, breeding in a few number of lagoons in the Ebro basin.

Little Bittern. Female. Adult.


Little Bittern. Ageing. Pattern of upperpart: left adult female; right juvenile.

Little Bittern. Ageing. Pattern of greater coverts: left adult female; right juvenile.

Little Bittern. 2nd year. Female.
Little Bittern. Juvenile (08-IX).

Little Bittern. Adult. Pattern of head and neck: top male (30-VI); bottom female ( ).

Little Bittern. Adult. Crown pattern: left male (30-VI); right female ( ).

Little Bittern. Pattern of head and neck: top 2nd year male ( ); middle 2nd year female ( ); bottom juvenile (08-IX).

Little Bittern. Crown pattern: top left 2nd year male ( ); top right 2nd year female ( ); left juvenile (08-IX).

Little Bittern. Adult. Nape pattern: left male (30-VI); right female ( ).
Little Bittern. Nape pattern: top left 2nd year male (); top right 2nd year female (); left juvenile (08-IX).

Little Bittern. Breast pattern: top 2nd year male (); middle 2nd year female (); bottom juvenile (08-IX).

Little Bittern. Adult. Breast pattern: top male (30-VI); bottom female ()

Little Bittern. Adult. Upperpart pattern: left male (30-VI); right female ().
Little Bittern. Upper part pattern: top left 2nd year male (); top right 2nd year female (); left juvenile (08-IX).

Little Bittern. Tail pattern: top left 2nd year male (); top right 2nd year female (); left juvenile (08-IX).

Little Bittern. Legs pattern: top left male (30-VI); middle female (); bottom juvenile (08-IX).

Little Bittern. Adult. Female: pattern of wing coverts (15-X).

Little Bittern. 2nd year. Male: pattern of wing coverts ()

Little Bittern. 2nd year. Female: pattern of wing coverts ()

Little Bittern. Adult. Pattern of tertials and scapulars: left male (30-VI); right female ().

Little Bittern. Juvenile: pattern of wing coverts (08-IX).
Little Bittern. Pattern of tertials and scapulars: top left 2nd year male (); top right 2nd year female (); left juvenile (08-IX).


Little Bittern. 2nd year. Male: pattern of secondaries.

Little Bittern. 2nd year. Female: pattern of secondaries ().


Little Bittern. 2nd year. Male: pattern of primaries ()

Little Bittern. 2nd year. Female: pattern of primaries ()


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Little Bittern. 2nd year. Male: pattern of wing ( ).

Little Bittern. 2nd year. Female: pattern of wing ( ).