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**

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**STATUS IN ARAGON**
Resident, with breeding pairs in plains of the Ebro Basin and Sistema Iberico.