PIN-TAILED SANDGROUSE (Pterocles alchata)

IDENTIFICATION
30-32 cm. In breeding plumage, male with upperparts with yellow spots; rump with black and yellow streaks; yellowish head with black throat; breast with a chestnut band with black edges. Female with yellowish upperparts with transversal black, chestnut and grey streaks; white throat. Both sexes with white belly.

SEXING
In breeding plumage, male with intense chestnut on breast and sides of head; black bib; grey-greenish upperparts with yellow spots; breast with a dark line; inner secondaries without barred; brown and grey greater coverts with yellow and black lines. Female with pale chestnut on breast and sides of head; white bib; upperparts with yellow, grey and black bars; breast with two dark lines; inner secondaries barred; yellow and grey greater coverts with dark lines. In non breeding plumage, male similar to female, but with different pattern on wing coverts. Juveniles cannot be sexed using plumage pattern till autumn, when the first wing coverts are growing.

AGEING
3 age groups can be recognized:
Juvenile with a pale stripe behind the eye; buff upperparts and wing coverts with cream edge and a brown line “V” shaped; short central tail feathers; primary coverts with pale tips.
1st year autumn/2nd year spring similar to adult, but with the juvenile three outermost primaries and their primary coverts unmoulted; retained primaries more decolored and pointed than the neighbouring feathers; retained primary coverts with white tips.
Adult without a pale stripe behind the eye; upperparts and wing coverts without brown line “V” shaped; very long central tail feathers; primary coverts without pale tips.

MOULT
Complete postbreeding moult, usually finished in October, acquiring non breeding plumage. Quite complete postjuvenile moult, including all feathers except the outermost three primaries and their primary coverts. Both age classes have a prebreeding moult, between November and March, involving body feathers to acquire the breeding plumage.

SIMILAR SPECIES
Recalls a Black-bellied Sandgrouse, with black belly.
Pin-tailed Sandgrouse. Summer. 2nd year. Male (17-VII).

Pin-tailed Sandgrouse. Summer. 2nd year. Female (17-VII).


Pin-tailed Sandgrouse. Summer. Adult. Bib pattern: left male (17-VII); right female (17-VII).

Pin-tailed Sandgrouse. Summer. Adult. Head pattern: top male (17-VII); middle 2nd year female (17-VII); bottom juvenile (17-VII).
Pin-tailed Sandgrouse. Summer. Bib pattern: top left 2nd year male (); top right 2nd year female (); bottom juvenile (17-VII).


Pin-tailed Sandgrouse. Summer. Adult. Nape pattern: left male (17-VII); right female (17-VII).

Pin-tailed Sandgrouse. Summer. Nape pattern: top left 2nd year male (); top right 2nd year female (17-VII); bottom juvenile (17-VII).


Pin-tailed Sandgrouse. Summer. Crown pattern: top left 2nd year male (); top right 2nd year female (17-VII); bottom juvenile (17-VII).
Pin-tailed Sandgrouse. Summer. Breast pattern: top left 2nd year male (); top right 2nd year female (17-VII); bottom juvenile (17-VII).

Pin-tailed Sandgrouse. Summer. Upperparts pattern: top left 2nd year male (); top right 2nd year female (17-VII); bottom juvenile (17-VII).

Pin-tailed Sandgrouse. Summer. Adult. Upperparts pattern: left male (17-VII); right female (17-VII).

Pin-tailed Sandgrouse. Summer. Adult. Tail pattern: left male (17-VII); right female (17-VII).
Pin-tailed Sandgrouse.

Summer. Tail pattern:
top left 2nd year male (); top right 2nd year female (17-VII); bottom juvenile (17-VII).


Pin-tailed Sandgrouse. Summer. 2nd year. Female: pattern of primary coverts (17-VII).

Pin-tailed Sandgrouse. Summer. Adult. Pattern of scapulars and tertials: left male (17-VII); right female (17-VII).

Pin-tailed Sandgrouse. Summer. Pattern of scapulars and tertials: top left 2nd year male (); top right 2nd year female (17-VII); left juvenile (17-VII).


Pin-tailed Sandgrouse. Summer. 2nd year. Female: pattern of primaries (17-VII).


Pin-tailed Sandgrouse. Summer. 2nd year. Female: pattern of secondaries (17-VII).


Pin-tailed Sandgrouse. Summer. 2nd year. Male: pattern of wing ()

Pin-tailed Sandgrouse. Summer. 2nd year. Female: pattern of wing (17-VII).