

257 Pin-tailed Sandgrouse

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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.

SIMILAR SPECIES

Recalls a **Black-bellied Sandgrouse**, with black 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 characters till autumn, when the first wing coverts are growing.

AGEING

3 types of age 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; grey-brown primaries, with pale mottled; 10th primary dark and pointed; secondaries with buff edge; the largest underwing coverts brown.

1st year autumn/2nd year spring similar to **adult**, but with the **juvenile** three outermost primaries and their primary coverts retained, so old primaries are more decolorated and pointed than the neighbors and primary coverts have 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; grey primaries with brown inner web and pale edge; 10th primary similar to the neighbours, with inner web brown-grey and outer web grey; secondaries with pale edge; the largest underwing coverts white or grey.

MOULT

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

PHENOLOGY

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

STATUS IN ARAGON

Resident. Breeds in the most arid areas of the Ebro Basin.