European Bee-eater

**EUROPEAN BEE-EATER** (*Merops apiaster*)

**IDENTIFICATION**
27-29 cm. Reddish chestnut crown and upper mantle; rump golden yellow; green tail and underparts; yellow throat and eyes covered by a black band; black and curved bill; reddish iris.

**SEXING**
Male with central greater, median and lesser coverts rufous chestnut on both webs of the feather; chestnut reddish upperparts. Female without chestnut on wing or with only a little (usually confined to greater and median coverts); central greater coverts with chestnut only on outer webs which have greenish blue edge, inner webs green; chestnut green upperparts (CAUTION: some birds cannot be sexed due to colour overlap; in summer, after post-breeding moult, both sexes have greenish body feathers). Some extreme juvenile birds can be sexed: male with chestnut crown and nape; golden upperparts; central wing coverts and secondaries tinged chestnut. Female with greenish crown and nape; greenish upperparts; central wing coverts and secondaries dull green.

**SIMILAR SPECIES**
This species is unmistakable.
AGEING

3 age groups can be recognized:

**Juvenile** with dull green feathers on nape and upperparts; all tail feathers with the same length, so the central pair without elongated tips; dark brown or red brown iris.

**2nd year** similar to **adults** (including elongated central tail feathers), but can be recognized by their retained **juvenile** primary coverts, which will be worn and bluish contrasting with the greenish neighbouring feathers; always all primaries with the same wear and colour.

**Adult** with chestnut feathers on nape and upperparts; central pair of tail feathers with well developed elongated tips; greenish primary coverts without contrast with neighbouring feathers; reddish iris; primaries of birds which started their moult in breeding areas with differences in wear and colour.
MOULT
Complete postbreeding moult, starting in July with body feathers; some birds change some inner primaries in their breeding areas, suspended before migration and then finished in wintering sites; others do not start wing moult until arriving in winter quarters. Postjuvenile moult is almost complete but all juvenile primary coverts remain unmoulted; flight feathers are never moulted in breeding areas. Both age classes have a prebreeding moult confined to body and wing coverts acquiring breeding plumage.

PHENOLOGY

STATUS IN ARAGON
Summer visitor. Widely distributed throughout the Region, absent from the highest zones of the Pyrenees and the most deforested areas of the Ebro Basin.

Bee-eater. Ageing. Pattern of primary coverts: top adult; bottom 2nd year.

Bee-eater. Spring. Adult. Female (09-V).

Bee-eater. Spring. 2nd year. Male (07-V).

Bee-eater. Ageing. Pattern of primaries: top adult with suspended moult; middle adult with no suspended moult; bottom 2nd year.
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Bee-eater. Spring. 2nd year. Female (07-V).

Bee-eater. Spring. Adult. Crown pattern: left male (07-V); right female (09-V).

Bee-eater. Spring. Adult. Crown pattern: left male (07-V); right female (07-V).

Bee-eater. Spring. 2nd year. Crown pattern: left male (07-V); right female (07-V).

Bee-eater. Spring. 2nd year. Breast pattern: left male (07-V); right female (09-V).
Bee-eater. Spring. 2nd year. Breast pattern: left male (07-V); right female (07-V).

Bee-eater. Spring. Adult. Tail pattern: left male (07-V); right female (09-V).

Bee-eater. Spring. 2nd year. Tail pattern: left male (07-V); right female (07-V).

Bee-eater. Spring. Adult. Upperpart pattern: left male (07-V); right female (09-V).


Bee-eater. Spring. 2nd year. Upperpart pattern: left male (07-V); right female (07-V).

Bee-eater. Spring. Adult. Female: pattern of primary coverts (07-V).
Bee-eater. Spring. 2nd year. Male: pattern of primary coverts (07-V).

Bee-eater. Spring. 2nd year. Male: pattern of primary coverts (07-V).

Bee-eater. Spring. 2nd year. Female: pattern of primary coverts (07-V).

Bee-eater. Spring. 2nd year. Female: pattern of primary coverts (07-V).

Bee-eater. Spring. 2nd year. Male: pattern of primaries (07-V).

Bee-eater. Spring. 2nd year. Male: pattern of primaries (07-V).


Bee-eater. Spring. Adult. Female: pattern of primaries in bird without suspended moult (09-V).


Bee-eater. Spring. Adult. Female: pattern of wing in bird without suspended moult (09-V).

Bee-eater. Spring. 2nd year. Male: pattern of wing (07-V).

Bee-eater. Spring. 2nd year. Female: pattern of wing (07-V).

Bee-eater. Spring. 2nd year. Female: pattern of secondaries (07-V).
Bee-eater. Summer. Adult. Male (20-VIII).

Bee-eater. Summer. Adult. Female (16-VIII).

Bee-eater. Summer. 2nd year. Male (16-VIII).

Bee-eater. Summer. 2nd year. Female (16-VIII).


Bee-eater. Summer. Adult. Head pattern: top male (20-VIII); bottom female (16-VIII).

Bee-eater. Summer. 2nd year. Head pattern: top male (16-VIII); bottom female (16-VIII).
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Bee-eater. Summer. Juvenile. Head pattern: top male (16-VIII); bottom female (16-VIII).


Bee-eater. Summer. Adult. Crown pattern: left male (20-VIII); right female (16-VIII).

Bee-eater. Summer. Adult. Breast pattern: left male (20-VIII); right female (16-VIII).

Bee-eater. Summer. 2nd year. Crown pattern: left male (16-VIII); right female (16-VIII).

Bee-eater. Summer. 2nd year. Breast pattern: left male (16-VIII); right female (16-VIII).
Bee-eater. Summer. Juvenile. Breast pattern: left male (16-VIII); right female (16-VIII).

Bee-eater. Summer. 2nd year. Upperparts pattern: left male (16-VIII); right female (16-VIII).

Bee-eater. Summer. Adult. Upperparts pattern: left male (16-VIII); right female (16-VIII).

Bee-eater. Summer. Adult. Tail pattern: left male (20-VIII); right female (16-VIII).
Bee-eater. Summer. 2nd year. Tail pattern: left male (16-VIII); right female (16-VIII).

Bee-eater. Summer. Juvenile. Tail pattern: left male (16-VIII); right female (16-VIII).


Bee-eater. Summer. Adult. Female: pattern of primary coverts (16-VIII).

Bee-eater. Summer. 2nd year. Male: pattern of primary coverts (16-VIII).

Bee-eater. Summer. 2nd year. Female: pattern of primary coverts (16-VIII).


Bee-eater. Summer. Adult. Female: pattern of secondaries and wing coverts (20-VIII).


Bee-eater. Summer. 2nd year. Female: pattern of primaries (16-VIII).
Bee-eater. Summer. 2nd year. Male: pattern of secondaries and wing coverts (16-VIII).


Bee-eater. Summer. 2nd year. Female: pattern of wing (16-VIII).


Bee-eater. Summer. 2nd year. Male: pattern of wing (16-VIII).

Bee-eater. Summer. 2nd year. Female: pattern of wing (16-VIII).