**Grey Wagtail**

**GREY WAGTAIL** (*Motacilla cinerea*)

**IDENTIFICATION**

17-18 cm. Grey upperparts; white and yellow underparts. Male in breeding plumage with black bib and deep yellow underparts; female very similar but with blackish bib; pale legs.

**SIMILAR SPECIES**

Recalls a Yellow Wagtail, which has yellow greenish upperparts and dark legs.

**SEXING**

In spring, with breeding plumage, adult male and few 2nd year males with black bib (sometimes tipped whitish); usually with forehead and crown grey, with some feathers tipped green; underparts deep yellow. Adult female can have white throat, sometimes with a blackish tinge, or black throat with a whitish mottle; underparts no so yellow like in males; forehead and crown green-grey; 2nd year male usually with a white mottled on throat similar to adult female; 2nd year female always with whitish throat (CAUTION: some females have black throat like adult males and few 2nd year males can have whitish throat similar to adult females). In winter, although males tend to be more yellow than females, both sexes have similar plumages and there is overlap so sexing is not possible using plumage characters. Juveniles cannot be sexed.

**NOTE:** due to variability in this species, sexing is very complicated using only plumage characters, so techniques such checking the brood patch or cloacal protuberance can often be a decisive help. Sex of 2nd year birds can be determined only confirming before the age using the study of moult.
AGEING
4 types of age can be recognized:

**Juvenile** with fresh plumage; small supercilium; tips of greater covers white.

1st year autumn/2nd year winter with moult limit between moulted fresh greater coverts and worn paler juvenile retained; if none greater covert has been moulted then moult limit is between median and lesser wing coverts; if all greater coverts have been moulted then moult limit is between tertials, in alula feathers or tail (CAUTION: the inner greater coverts have a different pattern and may simulate a moult limit); flight feathers will be always juvenile and more bleached than in adults.

2nd year spring only in birds retaining juvenile feathers or with three ages of feathers.

Adult in autumn without moult limits on the wing; in spring, after prebreeding moult, have two ages of feathers (CAUTION: the inner greater coverts have a different pattern and may simulate a moult limit). CAUTION: after pre-breeding moult ageing is not always possible; birds with two generations of feathers can be adults or 2nd year birds.
MOULT
Complete **postbreeding** moult, usually finished late September. Partial **postjuvenile** moult including body feathers and lesser and median coverts; there are birds moulting none, most or all greater coverts and tertials; finished in September. Both types of age have a **prebreeding** moult acquiring **breeding** plumage and changing inner greater coverts and tertials.

PHENOLOGY

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STATUS IN ARAGON
Resident, breeds in rivers from montainous areas; widespread in winter.


Grey Wagtail. Spring. 2nd year. Male (05-V).

Grey Wagtail. Spring. 2nd year. Female ().


Grey Wagtail. Spring. Adult. Female with dark throat (27-IV); bottom female with pale throat (05-V).
Grey Wagtail.
Spring.
Adult.
Pattern of head: top 2nd year male (05-V); middle 2nd year female (); bottom juvenile (05-V).

Grey Wagtail.
Spring. Pattern of throat: top left 2nd year male (05-V); top right 2nd year female (); left juvenile (05-V).

Grey Wagtail.
Spring. Adult.
Pattern of throat: top left 2nd year male (27-IV); top right female with dark throat (27-IV); left female with pale throat (05-V).

Grey Wagtail.
Spring. Crown pattern: top left 2nd year male (05-V); top right 2nd year female (); left juvenile (05-V)

Grey Wagtail. Spring. Breast pattern: top left 2nd year male (05-V); top right 2nd year female (); left juvenile (05-V)

Grey Wagtail. Spring. Upperpart pattern: top left 2nd year male (05-V); top right 2nd year female (); left juvenile (05-V).

Grey Wagtail. Spring. Underpart pattern: left male (27-IV); right female (27-IV).

Grey Wagtail. Spring. Adult. Tail pattern: left male (27-IV); right female (27-IV).
Grey Wagtail. Spring. Pattern of tertials: top left 2nd year male (05-V); top right 2nd year female (); left juvenile (05-V).


Grey Wagtail. Spring. 2nd year. Female: pattern of wing coverts ().


Grey Wagtail. Spring. 2nd year. Female: pattern of wing ( ).


Grey Wagtail. Winter. 2nd year (02-II).

Grey Wagtail. Winter. Head pattern: top adult (08-XII); bottom 2nd year (02-II).

Grey Wagtail. Winter. Crown pattern: left adult (08-XII); right 2nd year (02-II).

Grey Wagtail. Winter. Back pattern: left adult (08-XII); right 2nd year (02-II).
Grey Wagtail. Winter. Underpart pattern: left adult (08-XII); right 2nd year (02-II).

Grey Wagtail. Winter. Pattern of undertail coverts: left adult (08-XII); right 2nd year (02-II).

Grey Wagtail. Winter. Tail pattern: left adult (08-XII); right 2nd year (02-II).

Grey Wagtail. Winter. Pattern of tertials: left adult (08-XII); right 2nd year (02-II).
Grey Wagtail. Winter. Adult; pattern of wing coverts (08-XII).

Grey Wagtail. Winter. 2nd year; pattern of wing coverts (02-II).


Grey Wagtail. Winter. 2nd year; pattern of wing (02-II).