
WHINCHAT (*Saxicola rubetra*)

IDENTIFICATION
12-13 cm. Brown upperparts, spotted dark; head with white supercilium, white in male, yellowish in female, brown wing, with white patch on inner coverts; dark tail with white base.

SIMILAR SPECIES
Similar to female and juveniles Stonechat, without white supercilium and lacks white patch on base of the tail feathers.

Stonechat. Female

Whinchat. Spring. Adult. Pattern of head of male (top) and female (bottom) and tail.


Stonechat. Juvenile.
SEXING
In breeding plumage, male with brown-black ear-coverts; pure white supercilium; tail feathers with a distinct separation between white base and dark tip; without dark spots on breast; one or more inner median coverts and one or two inner greater coverts pure white. Female with brownish ear-coverts; buff whitish supercilium; tail feathers with a diffuse separation between white base and dark tip; most of birds (but not all) with dark spots on breast; inner median and greater coverts never completely white, often edged or tipped white. In autumn, both sexes with quite similar plumage but can be sexed at any age by pattern of inner greater coverts and tail: male with one or a few inner median coverts all white (CAUTION: sometimes only white edged); 3-5 inner greater coverts much white basally. Female with inner median coverts never all white; inner greater coverts less white basally or whitout white; tail pattern like in breeding plumage. (CAUTION: some bird have intermediate wing and tail pattern and cannot be sexed).

Whinchat


Whinchat. Sexing. Pattern of breast: left male; right female.


Whinchat. Sexing. Pattern of tail feathers: left male; right female.

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AGEING

5 types of age can be recognized:

- **Juvenile** with fresh plumage; inside of upper mandible pinkish or yellow.
- **1st year autumn** with moult limit within darker moulted inner greater coverts and paler retained juvenile outer (CAUTION: if none greater covert moulted, then limit is within median coverts); iris colour dark grey; pale colour inside of upper mandible. **Male** with moulted inner median coverts almost all white; inner greater coverts buff-white but sometimes limited to shaft streak. **Female** with median and greater coverts without white or only at base.
- **Adult in autumn** without moult limits on wing; iris colour brownish to clear brown; dark colour inside of upper mandible. **Male** with one or more inner median coverts completely white. **Female** sometimes with some white on inner median coverts but then not completely white.
- **2nd year spring** with worn flight feathers; iris still grey with only a trace of brown; some birds keep pale colour inside of upper mandible; both **adult** and **2nd year** have wings with two generations of feathers due to *prebreeding* moult, but in **2nd year males** moult contrast between moulted inner greater coverts and juvenile retained outer and primary coverts is very distinct (CAUTION: in **females** this moult limit is very difficult to see).
- **Adult in spring** with flight feathers slightly worn; both sexes have moult limit between inner greater coverts and outer and primary coverts but is only slight in **males** and very difficult to see in **females**. **CAUTION**: ageing **females in spring** is sometimes impossible.


MOULT
Complete postbreeding moult, usually finished in September before migration. Partial postjuvenile moult very variable involving body feathers, all or part of lesser coverts, all or part of median coverts, none to 7 inner greater coverts and, exceptionally, some tail feathers; generally finished in September. Both age classes have a prebreeding moult including body feathers, lesser and median coverts and often some inner greater coverts.

PHENOLOGY

STATUS IN ARAGON
Scarce breeders in Central Pyrenees; widely distributed on passage.

Whinchat. Spring. Adult. Female (16-IV)
Whinchat. Spring. 2nd year. Male (16-IV)

Whinchat. Spring. 2nd year. Female (16-IV)

Whinchat. Spring. 2nd year. Head pattern: top male (16-IV); bottom female (16-IV).

Whinchat. Spring. Juvenile. Male ()

Whinchat. Spring. Juvenile. Male ()
Whinchat. Spring. Adult. Breast pattern: left male (16-IV); right female (16-IV).

Whinchat. Spring. 2nd year. Breast pattern: left male (16-IV); right female (16-IV).

Whinchat. Spring. Juvenile. Head pattern: top male (); bottom female ()..


Whinchat. Spring. 2nd year. Upperpart pattern: left male (16-IV); right female (16-IV).

Whinchat. Spring. 2nd year. Uppertop pattern: left male (16-IV); right female (16-IV).
Whinchat. Spring. Adult. Tail pattern: left male (16-IV); right female (16-IV).

Whinchat. Spring. 2nd year. Colour inside of upper mandible: left male (16-IV); right female (16-IV).


Whinchat. Spring. Adult. Colour inside of upper mandible: left male (16-IV); right female (16-IV).


Whinchat. Spring. 2nd year. Female: pattern of wing coverts (16-IV).


Whinchat. Spring. 2nd year. Female: pattern of primary coverts (16-IV).


Whinchat. Spring. 2nd year. Female: pattern of wing (16-IV).


Whinchat. Autumn. 1st year. Female (09-IX).

Whinchat. Autumn. Adult. Head pattern: top male (10-IX); bottom female (24-IX).

Whinchat. Autumn. 1st year. Head pattern: top male (12-IX); bottom female (09-IX).
Whinchat. Autumn. Adult. Breast pattern: left male (10-IX); right female (24-IX).

Whinchat. Autumn. 1st year. Breast pattern: left male (12-IX); right female (09-IX).

Whinchat. Autumn. Adult. Upperparts pattern: left male (10-IX); right female (24-IX).

Whinchat. Autumn. 1st year. Upperparts pattern: left male (12-IX); right 1st year (09-IX).

Whinchat. Autumn. Colour inside of upper mandible: left adult (24-IX); right 1st year (09-IX).

Whinchat. Autumn. Adult. Tail pattern: left male (10-IX); right female (24-IX).
Whinchat. Autumn. 1st year. Tail pattern: left male (12-IX); right female (09-IX).


Whinchat. Autumn. 1st year. Female: pattern of wing coverts (09-IX).


Whinchat. Autumn. 1st year. Female: pattern of primary coverts (09-IX).
