WESTERN ORPHEAN WARBLER (Curruca hortensis)

IDENTIFICATION
14-15 cm. Male with black cap going under the eye; pale grey upperparts, unspotted; white underparts, with pinkish tinge; dark wings; tail with white edges; dark legs. Female similar to male with grey cap and breast with brownish tinge.

SEX
In spring, male with uniformly black-grey head without distinct (or just a little) ear-coverts; black eye-ring. Female with grey head with distinct darker ear-coverts; white eye-ring with some grey feathers. (CAUTION: 2nd year males are very similar to adult females). Juveniles cannot be sexed using plumage characteristics.

In autumn, adult male with head uniformly blackish-grey; without distinct ear-coverts or just slightly darker; eye-ring mostly black; underparts white tinged pinkish grey. Adult female with head greyer than male, with distinct darker ear-coverts; eye-ring white or grey feathers; underparts like male but less extensively tinged pinkish. After postjuvenile moult, only some extreme 1st year birds can be sexed: male tends to have darker head than female and distinct darker ear-coverts; eye-ring usually pure grey. Female with pale grey head and ear-coverts slightly marked; eye-ring grey tinged.

SIMILAR SPECIES
Male Blackcap has black over the eye. Male Sardinian Warbler is smaller, with red eyering and pale legs.
AGEING

4 age groups can be recognized: 

Juvenile with fresh plumage, without moult limits; iris dark brown-olive; dark brown crown little contrasted with sides of head; outermost tail feathers with creamy-brown edges.

1st year autumn similar to juveniles, but with moult limit on wing between darker lesser and median coverts and unmoulted greater coverts; if some greater coverts moulted then with limit within the grey inner and outer brown juvenile retained; grey crown.

2nd year spring easy to see in some birds that do not yet have the pale yellow iris of adults; very worn primary coverts; some birds retain juvenile tail feathers, which will be very worn (CAUTION: there are 2nd year birds with iris and tail similar to adults).

Adult in autumn without moult limits on wing (CAUTION: birds with suspended moult have very worn secondaries); iris whitish; outermost tail feathers with white edges. 

CAUTION: in spring, after prebreeding moult, both 2nd year and adult birds have moult limits.
MOULT
Complete postbreeding moult, usually finished early September (CAUTION: some birds suspend moulting (usually secondaries) to finish it in their wintering quarters). Partial postjuvenile moult, involving body feathers, lesser and median coverts and some inner greater coverts; some birds can moult all the greater coverts and some tertials; usually finished in August. Both age classes have a prebreeding moult including part of body feathers, a variable number of greater coverts, some tertials and secondaries and some tail feathers (2nd year birds usually change all tail feathers).

PHENOLOGY

STATUS IN ARAGON
Summer visitor. Distributed throughout the Mediterranean open woodlands from the Region.

Orphee Warbler. Ageing. Pattern of crown: left 1st year; right juvenile.

Orphee Warbler. Ageing. Moult limit on wing coverts. From top to bottom: adult; 2nd year; 1st year; juvenile.
Western Orphean Warbler

Orphean Warbler. Spring. 2nd year. Male (16-V).

Orphean Warbler. Spring. 2nd year. Female (16-V).


Orphean Warbler. Spring. Adult. Head pattern: top 2nd year male (16-V); middle 2nd year female (16-V); bottom juvenile (21-VI).

Western Orphean Warbler

Orphean Warbler. Spring. Head pattern: top left 2nd year male (16-V); top right 2nd year female (16-V); left juvenile (21-VI).

Orphean Warbler. Spring. Adult. Upperpart pattern: left male (16-V); bottom female (16-V).

Orphean Warbler. Spring. Adult. Breast pattern: left male (16-V); bottom female (16-V).

Orphean Warbler. Spring. Breast pattern: top left 2nd year male (16-V); top right 2nd year female (16-V); left juvenile (21-VI).

Orphean Warbler. Spring. Upperpart pattern: top left 2nd year male (16-V); top right 2nd year female (16-V); left juvenile (21-VI).
Orphean Warbler. Spring. Adult. Tail pattern: left male (16-V); bottom female (16-V).


Orphean Warbler. Spring. Tail pattern: top left 2nd year male with unmoulted tail (16-V); top right 2nd year female with moulted tail (16-V); left juvenile (21-VI).

Orphean Warbler. Spring. 2nd year. Female: pattern of wing (16-V).


Orphean Warbler. Autumn. 1st year. Female (23-VII).
Western Orphean Warbler

Orphean Warbler. Autumn. Adult. Head pattern and iris colour: top male (17-VIII); bottom female (17-VIII).

Orphean Warbler. Autumn. 1st year. Head pattern and iris colour: top male (23-VII); bottom female (23-VII).


Orphean Warbler. Autumn. 1st year. Breast pattern: left male (23-VII); right female (23-VII).

Western Orphean Warbler

Orphean Warbler. Autumn. Adult. Upperpart pattern: left male (17-VIII); right female (17-VIII).

Orphean Warbler. Autumn. Adult. Tail pattern: left male (17-VIII); right female (17-VIII).

Orphean Warbler. Autumn. 1st year. Upperpart pattern: left male (23-VII); derecha hembra (23-VII).

Orphean Warbler. Autumn. 1st year. Tail pattern: left male (23-VII); derecha hembra (23-VII).

