

107 Bearded Vulture

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BEARDED VULTURE (*Gypaetus barbatus*)

IDENTIFICATION

102-117 cm. **Adult** with creamy head and neck, with a black line from the head to the base of bill becoming a “beard”; dark upperparts with fine pale streaks; buff underparts. **Juvenile** dark brown, with pale streaks on wing and upperparts.

SIMILAR SPECIES

This species is unmistakable.

SEXING

Plumage of both sexes alike.

MOULT

Partial **postbreeding** moult changing each year only small body feathers on head and body; bigger body feathers and wing coverts are moulted spending several years; this species spends 4 years to change primaries: the **1st year** changes 3 to 5 inner feathers; the **2nd year** changes till 8th primary: the outermost are changed in the **3rd year** and the 10th in the **4th year**; moult is active between June and November. Duration of **postjuvenile** moult is 4 to 5 years; most of the body feathers and some inner primaries are moulted in **2nd year**; median primaries and a large number of secondaries are moulted in **3rd year**; outer primaries and the old **juvenile** secondaries can spend two years to be changed; moult period is active between April and November.

AGEING

7 types of age can be recognized (**CAUTION:** there are individual factors (different metabolism, food availability, date of birth, e.g.) causing that the moult in a so big birds no always fit exactly the annual cycle described here):

Juvenile with fresh plumage and without moult limits; black head and neck; dark iris; very small beard; mantle with a distinct white “triangle”; brown upperparts; brown wing coverts with some white feathers; dark brown breast and underparts with pale mottled.

2nd year autumn/3rd year spring with moulted inner primaries; black head and neck; pale iris; mantle with a less prominent white “triangle”; brown upperparts; brown wing coverts with more white feathers; pale brown breast and underparts without pale mottled.

3rd year autumn/4th year spring with strong moult limit on flight feathers between the short and rounded new feathers and the long and pointed **juvenile** feathers; black head and neck with some pale feathers on cheek; yellow iris; mantle without a white “triangle”; brown upperparts; wing coverts paler than the flight feathers, sometime with some white feathers; pale brown breast and underparts.

4th year autumn/5th year spring with juvenil outermost primaries; neck still black and sides and top of the head white; narrow band on breast; brown upperparts; wing coverts paler than the flight feathers, sometime with some white feathers; pale brown breast and underparts.

5th year autumn/6th year spring with white head and neck and still some black feathers on neck; wing coverts still with some pale mottled; pale brown breast and underparts but still with come contrast.

6th year autumn/7th year spring similar to **adult**, but with **subadult** feathers on neck, breast and underwing coverts.

Adult with white to orange head, neck, breast and underparts; fine collar on breast; black fetters on upperparts with silvery centres; black wing coverts; grey flight feathers.

PHENOLOGY

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

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STATUS IN ARAGON

Resident, breeds in Pyrenees with vagrant birds in Sistema Iberico. An endangered species with less than 100 breeding pairs.