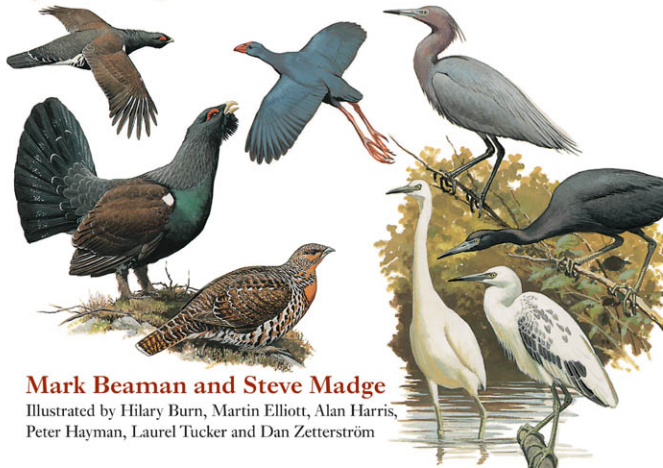




The Handbook of Bird Identification

for Europe and the Western Palearctic



Mark Beaman and Steve Madge

Illustrated by Hilary Burn, Martin Elliott, Alan Harris,
Peter Hayman, Laurel Tucker and Dan Zetterström

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ARTISTS' CREDITS

Hilary Burn: Ostrich, herons & egrets, storks, ibises & spoonbills, flamingos, Fulvous and White-faced Whistling Ducks, Ross's and Spur-winged Geese, Cotton Pygmy-goose, Red-billed Teal, Canvasback, Lesser Scaup, grouse, pheasants & partridges, guineafowl, buttonquails, rails, cranes, bustards, terns, skimmers, sandgrouse, pigeons & doves, parrots, cuckoos, owls, nightjars, swifts, kingfishers, rollers, hoopoes, woodpeckers, American Cliff Swallow, Northern Mockingbird, Black Scrub Robin, Pygmy Sunbird, Brown and Long-tailed Shrikes, Eurasian Golden Oriole, Purple-backed Starling, Common Myna, Streaked Weaver, Philadelphia Vireo, Black-throated Green, Magnolia, Chestnut-sided, Wilson's and Canada Warblers, Lark and Savannah Sparrows, Dickcissel, Lazuli Bunting, Common Grackle, Yellow-headed Blackbird and many additions/corrections on Laurel Tucker's unfinished plates.

Martin Elliott: skuas and gulls.

Alan Harris: introduction, Lesser Whistling Duck, Bar-headed Goose, hybrid *Aythya* ducks and Redhead, Eastern Phoebe, Hume's Short-toed Lark, Oriental Skylark, Banded Martin, Tree and Ethiopian Swallows, coverts and tails of Richard's and Blyth's Pipits, Buff-bellied Pipit, wheatear tails, wing formulae of *Acrocephalus* warblers, Eastern Crowned, Sykes's and Two-barred Greenish Warblers, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, treecreeper wings, penduline tit races, Indian and African Silverbills, Yellow-throated Vireo, redpoll undertails, crossbill heads, Mongolian Finch, Golden-winged, Black-throated Blue and Blackburnian Warblers, and Brown-headed Cowbird.

Peter Hayman: divers, grebes, albatrosses, petrels & shearwaters, storm-petrels, tropicbirds, gannets & boobies, cormorants, darters, pelicans, frigatebirds, waders and auks.

Laurel Tucker: most wildfowl and most passerines.

Dan Zetterström: raptors.

INTRODUCTION

Birding, or birdwatching, has become one of Europe's most popular pastimes and at whatever level one indulges in ornithology, whether it is making an in-depth behavioural study, searching for rare vagrants or simply looking at birds in the garden, a primary need is to identify the species of birds one is seeing.

Great advances in the field of bird identification have been made in recent decades as ornithologists have concentrated on living birds as opposed to museum skins (although, in turn, the latter have now become widely recognized as an invaluable reference source for field ornithologists wishing to check the validity of new field marks, and have often alerted us to the existence of useful characters that were previously unnoticed). Since the publication in 1954 of the first edition of *A Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe* by Peterson, Mountfort and Hollom, a landmark in the history of field identification that marked the beginning of the modern era, our knowledge has been transformed to such an extent that a great many identification problems that were once considered beyond solution can now be tackled successfully by the careful observer.

The aim of this book is to bring together as much of this accumulation of knowledge as is possible within the limits of a single volume and provide observers with a detailed, up-to-date guide to the field identification of every species known to have occurred in Europe and those parts of North Africa and the Middle East that fall within the boundaries of the Western Palearctic, including vagrant species and introduced species that have established apparently viable breeding populations.

This guide is more comprehensive than traditional European field guides, illustrating many more plumages and a much wider range of species, and providing a much more detailed text. In its attention to the finer points of field identification it will, we hope, cater for the needs of today's increasingly sophisticated birder. It is our intention not only to provide for the experienced observer, but also to help develop skills of the beginner through a thorough attention to first principles. For the latter we have provided extended family introductions, since establishing the family (or major subdivision within a family) to which a bird belongs is the fundamental stepping stone to identification at the species level.

Geographical Area

The geographical area covered by this guide is the Western Palearctic, a subdivision of the Palearctic zoogeographical region. Since they are now so well-established, we have followed the boundaries for the Western Palearctic as defined by Cramp & Simmons (1977) in the first volume of the monumental *The Birds of the Western Palearctic*, although it can be argued on faunistic grounds that western Iran and some other peripheral areas should also be included. The Western Palearctic so far as this guide is concerned consists of the whole of Europe, North Africa southwards to the central Sahara (including the Hoggar and the Tibesti), the Middle East eastwards to the border of Iran (but excluding most of the Arabian Peninsula), the Azores, Madeira, the Canary Islands, the islands of the Banc d'Arguin off Mauritania and the Cape Verde Islands (see map, page 10).

Birds recognize no man-made frontiers and inevitably the boundaries of any faunal region or subdivision must be rather arbitrary. From a zoogeographer's viewpoint the Western Palearctic is a more natural faunal unit than Europe alone, since it is the Sahara and Arabian deserts, not the Mediterranean, that are the true southern boundaries of 'Europe'. To the east, the Urals and the Caspian form a geographically convenient boundary (but one largely unrecognized by birds) between the western and eastern subdivisions of the vast Palearctic region that extends to the east across the whole of Asia north of the Himalayas and the mountains of central China.

Almost 900 species have so far been recorded from the Western Palearctic. This total includes some 600 breeding species, while most of the remainder are vagrants and therefore, by definition, only extremely rare visitors. One or more new species are being reported from the region annually and this trend looks set to continue. In this book, all those species reliably recorded up to the end of 1996 are included, apart from presumed escapes from captivity and species deliberately or inadvertently introduced into the wild which have not yet established viable breeding populations.

The assessment of records of rare vagrants is a complex and difficult problem, exacerbated in many parts of our region by lack of any local ornithological organization able to consider records of rarities. We have included a small number of species based on records which have not been assessed by any rarities committee, since none as yet cover the areas in question, but which we feel are likely to be valid. On the other hand, we have excluded a few species where we feel the evidence is insufficient to justify their inclusion.

A number of additional species are treated briefly in an appendix, which covers species that have only recently been recorded from our region, newly established introductions and species that have been omitted because all records are either erroneous or because they may well have been escapes.



The Western Palearctic Region

Key

- | | | |
|------------------|------------------------|---------------|
| 1 Banc d'Arguin | 11 Slovenia | 21 Crete |
| 2 Netherlands | 12 Croatia | 22 Cyprus |
| 3 Belgium | 13 Bosnia-Herzegovina | 23 Lebanon |
| 4 Luxembourg | 14 Serbia & Montenegro | 24 Israel |
| 5 Switzerland | 15 Macedonia | 25 Jordan |
| 6 Austria | 16 Albania | 26 Kuwait |
| 7 Czech Republic | 17 Balearic Islands | 27 Georgia |
| 8 Slovakia | 18 Corsica | 28 Armenia |
| 9 Hungary | 19 Sardinia | 29 Azerbaijan |
| 10 Moldova | 20 Sicily | |

English Names

Many bird species currently have multiple English (i.e. vernacular) names. In recent years great advances have been made in standardizing these names (and in preventing overlap with the names for other bird species), although there will of course still have to be continued evolution to cater for new taxonomic interpretations. In this book we have mainly adopted the names used by Beaman (1994, *Paleartic Birds: a checklist of the Birds of Europe, North Africa and Asia north of the foothills of the Himalayas*), although we also list many alternative names in common usage.

Taxonomy

The most widely accepted taxonomic sequence and scientific nomenclature in Europe at the present time is that of Voous (1977) in *List of Recent Holarctic Bird Species*, which is the sequence and nomenclature adopted (with only a handful of exceptions) by Cramp *et al.* (1977–1994) in *The Birds of the Western Palearctic*. We have also followed Voous throughout, except in a small number of cases where recent research has established a good case in favour of change. Thus we treat:

Zino's Petrel *Pterodroma madeira* and **Fea's Petrel** *P. feae* as distinct from Soft-plumaged Petrel *P. mollis*
Yelkouan Shearwater *Puffinus yelkouan* as distinct from Manx Shearwater *P. puffinus*

Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis* as distinct from Tawny Eagle *A. rapax*

Canary Islands Oystercatcher *Haematopus meadewaldoi* as distinct from African Black Oystercatcher *H. moquini*

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* as distinct from American (or Lesser) Golden Plover *P. dominica*

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus cachinnans* and **Armenian Gull** *L. armenicus* as distinct from Herring Gull *L. argentatus*

Rock Pipit *Anthus petrosus* and **Buff-bellied Pipit** *A. rubescens* as distinct from Water Pipit *A. spinoletta*

Cyprus Wheatear *Oenanthe cyriaca* as distinct from Pied Wheatear *O. pleschanka*

Basra Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus griseldis* as distinct from Great Reed Warbler *A. arundinaceus*

Green Warbler *Phylloscopus nitidus* as conspecific with Greenish Warbler *P. trochiloides*

In these changes we follow the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee (1986, 1991, 1993) and/or Sibley & Monroe (1990, *Distribution and Taxonomy of Birds of the World*).

In addition, we follow Stepanyan (1990, *Conspectus of the ornithological fauna of the USSR*) and others in treating the large gulls of the forms *heuglini* and *taimyrensis* (which have usually been treated in the past as subspecies of Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus* or Herring Gull *L. argentatus*) as a distinct species, *L. heuglini*, with the English name **Heuglin's Gull**.

Recently, the established classification of bird families and also much species-level taxonomy has been extensively challenged following the development of DNA-analysis. The increased use of the Phylogenetic Species Concept (PSC), as opposed to the more traditional Biological Species Concept (BSC), is also leading to new taxonomic interpretations.

Family and Species Accounts

Family Introductions

These introductory sections cover the characteristic features of the family, point out likely areas of confusion with other families and, in the case of the larger and more complex families, compare and contrast the characteristics of the different subgroupings. Finally, wherever practicable, we list the most important features to look for when trying to identify individual members of the family or a particular subgrouping. It is important to realize, however, that these lists of key features are generalizations and may not apply to some members of the family or subgrouping.

Species Headings

The English name is followed by the scientific name and the page number(s) for the relevant plate(s). Alternative English names that are widely used are also given.

Measurements

Measurements are given in centimetres (1 inch = 2.54 cm). The figures for **length** (L) are mostly taken from authoritative sources, predominantly Cramp *et al.* (1977–1994, *The Birds of the Western Palearctic*), and represent the length of museum skins stretched out on their backs and measured from bill tip to tail tip. In many species there are quite considerable variations in length between individuals, sometimes as much as 10% or more on either side of the median, while matters are further complicated by size differences between the sexes and between subspecies. To give a median figure alone can often be very

misleading, especially if it is then used by observers as a means of separating quite similar-sized species. Consequently, we often prefer to give the full range of measurements.

Length measurements are most of use when comparing related species. Because bill length, neck length, tail length, posture and sheer bulk vary so markedly between families or even within them, a straight comparison of total length measurements can be quite misleading and can suggest, for example, that a Common Tern is similar in size to a Barn Owl, while in reality it is a far smaller bird.

For appropriate species we also give **wingspan** (WS). Wingspan measurements, based on the distance from wingtip to wingtip when the wings are fully extended, are necessarily estimates for most species, since museum skins cannot be stretched out to provide accurate figures and measurements of living birds are as yet insufficient in number. Nevertheless, we feel that even very approximate measurements are useful provided they are used with caution. When comparing species, no great significance should be attached to relatively small differences quoted for wingspan.

Wing lengths given in the species accounts (for use in the hand) refer to the distance between the carpal joint (or 'bend of the wing') and the wingtip. Measurements are made with the primaries flattened in order to obtain a maximum length.

Identification

Under this heading, the essential structural and plumage features, bare-part (also known as 'soft-part') colorations and 'jizz' which enable the species to be identified are discussed with reference to similar species (if any) with which it might be confused.

Jizz is a useful term defining the subtle but characteristic 'feel' of a species that derives from a combination of its structure (i.e. shape and size), way of moving, behaviour and overall coloration (see the entry for 'jizz' later in this introductory chapter for a fuller explanation)./

With the exception of a few species where field identification is particularly difficult, we have excluded methods of separating species in the hand as these are outside the scope of this guide.

For the sake of completeness, we have covered identification problems relating to juvenile plumage even for those vagrant species that are exceedingly unlikely to be seen in this plumage in our region.

We wish to stress that all discussion of identification problems is restricted to those species and subspecies (races) that have been recorded in the region. Different problems may exist elsewhere but are outside the scope of this guide.

Throughout the species accounts, the following conventions apply when plumage or bare-part coloration is being described:

'Wing coverts' always refers to the upperwing coverts (as opposed to the underwing coverts)

'Underwing coverts' may include the axillaries

'Secondaries' may include the humerals in some long-winged species

'Mantle' may include the back and the scapulars

'Rump' may include the uppertail coverts

'Vent' may include the undertail coverts

'Legs' may include the feet

Sex/Age

Plumage, bare part or other features which allow sex or age determination in the field are covered here. If there is no mention of differences between the sexes, seasonal variation or differences between juvenile, immature (if any) and adult plumages then the differences are either very marked (and quite obvious from an examination of the plate) or else absent or very slight and thus unlikely to be noticeable in the field.

Size differences between the sexes are usually mentioned only where they are so marked that sex can often be determined in the field.

None of the current systems of **plumage terminology** used for birds is free from controversy. We have generally employed the terminology that is presently in most common usage in the Western Palearctic (i.e. **adult**, **adult winter**, **adult summer**, **sub-adult**, **immature**, **juvenile**, **1st-winter**, **1st-summer**, **2nd-winter**, **2nd-summer** etc.), even though some of these terms can be misleading.

Adult **'summer'** plumage in this terminology equates with **'breeding'** plumage and is typically adopted well before the start of the breeding season (often in winter quarters in migratory species) and often lost well before the end of summer. Likewise adult **'winter'** plumage equates with **'non-breeding'** plumage and is often adopted by late summer or early autumn and lost well before the end of winter.

It is also important to realize that the term **'1st-summer'** is conventionally applied to the summer plumage worn during the **second calendar year** of a bird's life, even though most young birds have already lived through their true 'first summer' (or even their 'first spring' in the case of early-hatched individuals) in their first months of life. Similarly, the term '2nd-summer' refers to the summer plumage adopted during the third calendar year, and so on.

For some larger species with slow-moving plumage development and no rapid changes in appearance the **'calendar-year'** system of plumage terminology is more appropriate.

Both systems are described in more detail in the 'Moult and plumage terminology' section later in this introductory chapter.

Voice

Bird vocalizations present those preparing field guides with their thorniest problem, for there is no effective way of translating complex sounds on to paper in a scientific, unambiguous manner which is easily communicable to others who are not already familiar with the vocalizations in question! Since most birders (including ourselves) find it extremely difficult to interpret sonagrams, which are electronically plotted diagrams of the frequency (pitch) and amplitude (loudness) of bird vocalizations over time, we have used phonetic renditions and other verbal descriptions. While these are highly subjective and open to misinterpretation, they seem to us to represent the lesser of two evils. We recognize that our attempts to indicate the loudness, pitch, duration, spacing and tonal quality are far from perfect. Experienced birders will already be familiar with many calls and will consequently find our descriptions easier to assimilate and compare than will the beginner. As many species have a wide range of vocalizations, we have concentrated on those which are most likely to be used to aid field identification. (For the sake of completeness, we have included songs and other vocalizations of vagrant species even where they are unlikely to be heard in our region.)

In the renditions of vocalizations the following conventions apply:

C is always pronounced soft, as in cease, not hard, as in cat (for which we use **K**).

S is always pronounced soft, as in sail, not hard, as in easy (for which we use **Z**).

Other consonants and vowels are pronounced as in standard English, but single vowels are always pronounced short (thus **A** is pronounced as in apple, not as in father, **E** as in extra, not as in scene, and **I** as in ink, not as in island).

Capitalization is used to indicate the loudest sounds where the loudness of the call or song varies markedly during the delivery.

We strongly recommend anyone with a serious interest in field identification to read the comprehensive and lucid survey of the problems, challenges and potential rewards facing those attempting scientifically to describe and interpret bird vocalizations in the first volume of *The Birds of the Western Palearctic* (Cramp & Simmons 1977). In particular, we should like to draw the attention of users of this book to the controversy over the presence of (or, if present, the identity of) consonants in bird vocalizations. We have used consonants in our renditions because they seem, to most human ears, to be present. We agree that it is often impossible to decide which consonant is present and that consequently, where consonants are given, they should be treated as no more than a suggestion of what kind of sound may be heard.

Taxonomy

The precise relationships between many closely related bird populations are still inadequately known, especially in the more remote and less studied parts of our region. In consequence, frequent changes to taxonomic status take place, with '**lumping**' (the merging of one or more populations into a single species) and '**splitting**' (the dividing off of one or more populations as full species in their own right) being proposed by avian taxonomists at regular intervals following new research. Any recent changes to the taxonomic status of the species in question are mentioned under this heading, as are most recent proposals to change the current status which have not yet received widespread acceptance.

Geographical Variation

Some species show no appreciable geographic variation in plumage or size, while others show marked and complex variation. In some cases, the variation may be clinal (i.e. gradual) from one region to another. In others, certain populations within the range of a species are considered to be distinct **subspecies** (or **races**), and sometimes these subspecies can be clearly differentiated in the field. The extent of this geographical variation and the different subspecies found in our region are discussed under this heading. We also indicate which particular subspecies (or races) are illustrated.

Unusual Variants

Where a species has one or more uncommon or rare plumages (caused by **melanism**, **albinism** or other factors), these plumages and any identification pitfalls associated with them are discussed under this heading.

Hybrids

This poorly-documented topic is mostly beyond the scope of this book, but some reported cases of hybridization between species which could impact on field identification are noted under this heading.

Status/Habitat

Abundance is briefly commented on under this heading. It should be kept in mind that abundance often varies considerably across the range of a species and that species are generally scarcer towards the periphery of their area of distribution. Even so, we feel that some indication of abundance can be of considerable value to users of this guide, since so many species do clearly fall into the categories of 'very common', 'common', 'uncommon', 'scarce' or 'rare' over all or almost all of their range in the region.

'Vagrants' are wandering individuals far from their usual breeding, migratory or wintering ranges and by definition are exceedingly rare. Some vagrants that originate outside the Western Palearctic, in Asia or the Americas, are recorded annually from the region and a few (e.g. Pectoral Sandpiper, Richard's Pipit, Yellow-browed Warbler) are so frequent as to be considered regular visitors, albeit in very small numbers.

Descriptions of abundance are of course quite subjective and so should not be taken too literally. Some species we describe as common are very widespread and numerous in a series of habitats, while others are only common in one or two specialized habitats and thus are much more localized. In addition, we freely admit that we are guilty of changing the abundance criteria from one family to another: thus, we give both Common Kestrel and Song Thrush the 'common' label, although the latter is clearly much more numerous than the former in most areas where they overlap. On a walk of a few hours through mixed woodland and cultivation in NW Europe in spring, one could expect to see (or hear) six or more Song Thrushes but might observe only one or two Common Kestrels. What we are trying to indicate is that Common Kestrels are 'commonly encountered' compared with most other birds of prey, which are much less frequent; we are not trying to give every species a numerical ranking that allows its absolute abundance to be compared.

Basic details of the habitats favoured by each species are also given under this heading. An excellent glossary of habitat types can be found in the first volume of *The Birds of the Western Palearctic* (Cramp & Simmons 1977). For most species, only those habitats utilized within the region are mentioned. Thus, for example, habitats utilized by migrants when south of the Sahara are not included. It should be remembered that preferred habitats do vary in different parts of the range of many species, while a migrating bird can turn up temporarily in quite atypical habitat, as can vagrants.

Although range maps are provided for all species other than vagrants from outside the region, we sometimes add supplementary information in the text where it cannot be adequately communicated by mapping (e.g. areas with occasional breeding or wintering, comments on migration routes where these are not obvious from the maps, or significant changes in breeding or wintering distribution in recent times).

Maps

Range maps are provided for all species that breed in the region, and for a few non-breeding visitors which winter or summer regularly within it, but not for vagrants. Breeding and wintering ranges are shown, but not areas of regular occurrence during migration (which for almost all species is the area lying between the breeding and wintering ranges).

Key to map features:

Deep green: species occurs throughout the year (and breeds)

Deep orange-yellow: species occurs only as a breeding (i.e. summer) visitor

Deep blue: species occurs only as a winter visitor

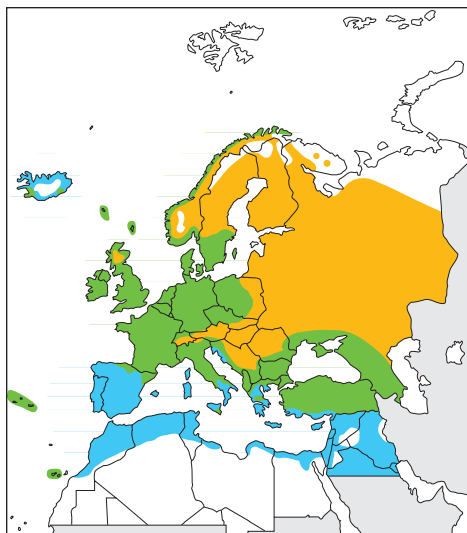
Pale green (at sea): species feeds in this area throughout the year (pelagic species only)

Pale orange-yellow (at sea): species feeds in this area during the breeding season (pelagic species only), or during the summer/early autumn period in the case of non-breeding pelagic visitors from the South Atlantic

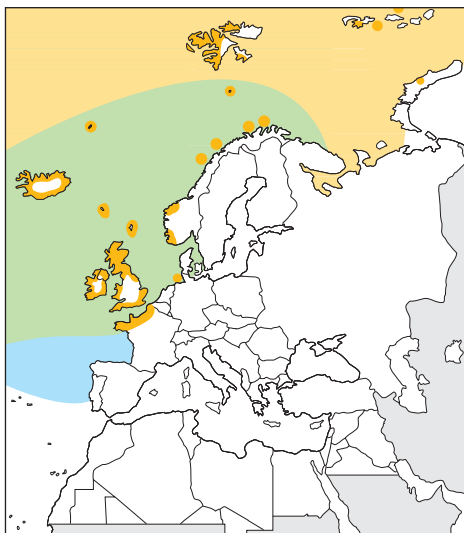
Pale blue (at sea): species occurs in this area only as a winter visitor (pelagic species only)

Small-scale range maps are difficult to draw up accurately and can easily be misinterpreted. Their very small scale and resulting geographical simplification mean that the fine detail of bird distribution cannot be indicated, and the range of localized species, notably wetland birds, is consequently exaggerated. In the case of small islands which are too small to map, distribution cannot be indicated at all. (Note: To keep the maps as compact as possible, the Cape Verde Is have been moved northwards and the Azores eastwards of their true positions.) Changes in distribution take place over the course of time. These are generally slow-moving, but sometimes quite rapid range extensions occur (e.g. Eurasian Collared Dove, which has spread from the Balkans as far as the British Isles and Morocco during the 20th Century). Some species appear sporadically outside their regular range as breeding species, migrants or winter visitors, dependent, for example, on the occurrence of suitable nesting conditions, persistent winds during migration periods or an unusually good winter food supply.

Areas where species occur on migration (as opposed to breeding and wintering areas) are often difficult to map, for some species are rather infrequently recorded on migration due to their tendency to



Example distribution map for a widespread land-based species, showing areas where present all year (green), where present only as a summer visitor (orange-yellow) and where present only as a winter visitor (blue).



Example distribution map for a pelagic seabird species, showing areas where breeding occurs (orange-yellow), where found at sea all year (pale green), where found only during the summer season (pale orange-yellow) and where present only as a winter visitor (pale blue).

overfly the area in question or their secretive habits.

The amount of information available on bird distribution in different parts of our region varies from highly detailed in NW Europe to non-existent in some very remote parts of the Sahara, with every possible intermediate stage in other areas. Even where basic information is excellent, precise mapping of a species' range is impossible at the very small scale used in identification guides, where fine details cannot be shown. Any mapping exercise for the whole Western Palearctic region must therefore require many subjective assessments to be made, resulting inevitably in many cases of underestimation or exaggeration of the true range. The maps should therefore be interpreted with caution. In general, we have only indicated areas where each species is **regularly** found as a breeding species or winter visitor. Areas where the species is only a rare and occasional breeding or wintering visitor, a migrant or merely a vagrant are not mapped. Wherever it seemed particularly relevant, we have given supplementary information on range under the 'Status/Habitat' heading in the species accounts.

Plates

For the great majority of species all major plumages are illustrated on the plates, with equal emphasis given to adult and immature, and male and female plumages. Two or more subspecies are depicted where variation within a species increases the possibility of misidentification, but have generally not shown subspecific variation where there is no possible risk of confusion with other species (e.g. White-throated Dipper).

All figures are of **adults** unless otherwise indicated. Names of subspecies (or races) are included only where two or more are illustrated and then usually only to indicate the figures of the 'other' subspecies (the uncaptioned figures refer to the subspecies we have selected as being 'typical', which is usually the nominate subspecies or some other well-known form: see under 'Geographical Variation' in the species account for details).

In species which show important changes in appearance owing to feather wear, the figures should be assumed to represent fairly worn-plumaged, or even well-worn, individuals unless it is specifically indicated that they are fresh-plumaged. In the majority of species, plumage is fresh in autumn and/or winter.

The sequence of the plates follows the systematic order of the families so far as is possible, although some exceptions have been made through practicality or necessity in the case of very small families. The sequence of the species on the plates depicting each family often diverges markedly from the systematic order, however, as we have tended to group together similar-looking species regardless of their taxonomic position. To speed up cross-referencing between the plates and the text, the page number for the relevant species account appears next to the species caption on the plate.

Wherever possible all members of a family have been illustrated at the same scale. In some large and diverse families it has been necessary to use two or three different scales. Where this has happened, one or two figures of a well-known species from the larger scale plates (which depict the smaller family

members) have generally been included on the first of the smaller scale plates to aid size comparison.

The following abbreviations are used:

♂ = male

♀ = female

imm. = immature

juv. = juvenile

FIELD IDENTIFICATION

Field identification is an acquired skill, but it helps if you have a natural aptitude. Having a good eye and ear, patience, persistence, the capacity to be quiet and the ability to really watch birds are invaluable attributes. There is, however, no substitute for knowledge of the subject based primarily on field experience. As one gains in experience, the range of species with which one is familiar steadily expands, but every so often one comes across unfamiliar birds, particularly when visiting a new area. An intimate knowledge of the variations in the appearance, behaviour, voice, habitat and distribution of familiar species is often vitally important when identifying an unknown bird. Such knowledge allows direct comparison between the bird one is seeking to identify and species with which one is already familiar. An essential ingredient of successful field identification is to make careful field notes of the characters observed. Ideally, this should be done with every unfamiliar bird, and even with familiar species whenever one observes interesting variations in plumage, behaviour etc. Field notes should cover **size and shape, plumage coloration and pattern, behaviour, voice, habitat** and any other seemingly relevant details such as weather conditions, names and addresses of other observers etc.

When confronted with an unfamiliar bird, it is first necessary to establish to which family it belongs (and then, in the case of large and complex families, to decide to which subdivision, or genus, it belongs). Only then can the process of identifying the species seriously begin. The ability to separate one family from another is the foundation of successful field identification. For experienced observers, the process of identifying the family becomes second nature, but for beginners this first step often proves more difficult than separating one family member from another.

Shape and Size

Shape and size are critically important at the first level of field identification, that of determining to which family a bird belongs. Many beginners neglect this first level, making the mistake of jumping straight into species level identification, but there is little point in knowing how to separate one sandpiper or pipit from another if one cannot tell a sandpiper from a plover or a pipit from a lark in the first place. Almost all families have a characteristic shape, or range of shapes, which differentiates them from other families. In general, this characteristic appearance derives largely, or so it seems, from a combination of **head/bill shape, neck length, wing shape, tail shape, leg length** and **foot shape**. All these aspects of a bird's appearance should be carefully examined.

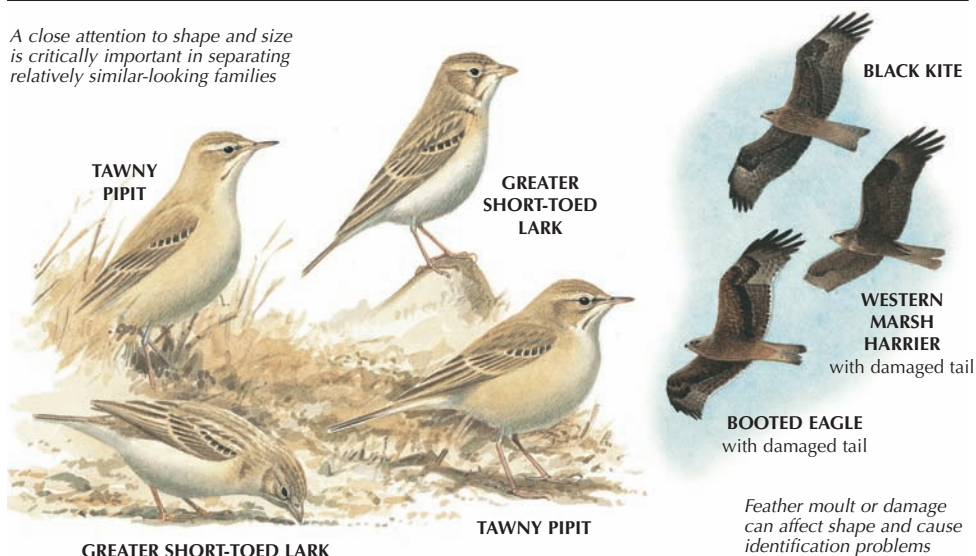
In some cases the structural differences between families are quite subtle, and the field observer will need to use shape and size together with other characters such as plumage pattern, behaviour or voice in order to clinch the family identification.

Differences in shape and size are often very important at the species level also, especially when large and structurally diverse families are involved.

Overall size can be difficult to judge accurately. Birds often seem to vary in size according to what they are doing: a soaring bird of prey seems larger than one that is gliding rapidly downwards with swept-back wings. Mist or haze makes birds seem bigger than they really are. Sometimes, the presence of accompanying birds of known identity will allow accurate size comparisons to be made, but even then there may be potential problems. **Optical size illusion** when looking through a telescope can make the nearer of two identically-sized birds seem smaller than the other (and likewise the front birds in a flock can appear smaller than those of the same size that are standing further back).

Shape can similarly have its pitfalls, since it can vary markedly according to what a bird is doing (e.g. fluffed out in cold weather or when bathing, standing tall and alert, or hunched up when facing into strong winds), but usually at least some of the distinctive characters can still be observed whatever posture is being adopted. Feather moult or damage can also affect overall shape and thus cause identification problems. Not only are distinctive feathers sometimes lost outside the breeding season (e.g. the projecting tail feathers of skuas), but missing flight and tail feathers can create misleading impressions (e.g. Western Marsh Harriers and dark morph Booted Eagles with missing tail feathers that superficially recall Black Kites).

A close attention to shape and size is critically important in separating relatively similar-looking families



Bird Topography

A good knowledge of '**plumage topography**', the relative positions and names of the various tracts of feathers that combine to cover the bird and which add so much to its distinctive shape and appearance, plus a familiarity with the names and positions of the different '**bare parts**', is an **essential** tool of bird identification. We cannot overstate its importance, yet a surprisingly large number of birders shy away from the finer points of this subject and in consequence are severely handicapped when trying to identify birds.

There are two basic types of feather: **contour** and **down**. It is the former which concern the field observer, for the down feathers are not usually visible on fledged birds (other than newly fledged owls), being an underlying, insulating layer. Other less important feather types are **bristles** and **filoplumes**. The former are found in many species, typically in the form of the fine rictal bristles situated around the base of the bill. The latter, which are fine, hair-like plumes, are usually equally inconspicuous (cormorants being an exception).

The contour feathers are generally divided into two groups, the **body feathers** (which include the wing coverts) and the **flight and tail feathers** (the former consisting of the long wing feathers known as the **primaries** and **secondaries**).

Plumage topography varies slightly between families, but the general pattern remains the same. We recommend a thorough study of the topographic illustrations, since this guide can be effectively used only if the terminology and location of the different feather tracts are fully understood.

Some structural or plumage features require further explanation:

Arm: inner part of the wing (before the carpal joint)

Carpal joint: 'wrist' joint on the wing (between 'hand' and 'arm')

Cere: bare skin covering the base of the upper mandible of raptors, pigeons and some gamebirds

Culmen: the dorsal ridge of the upper mandible

Emargination: notch on the outer and inner web of (usually) the outer primaries

Gonys: the ventral ridge on the lower mandible where the two halves of the jaw meet (prominent in divers, gulls etc.)

Gular feathering: wedge of feathering on the underside of the lower mandible

Gular stripe: dark stripe down the centre of the throat (e.g. in some *Accipiter* hawks)

Hand: outer part of the wing (beyond the carpal joint)

Leading edge: the forward edge of the wing. Generally referred to when there is a dark or pale band along the leading edge

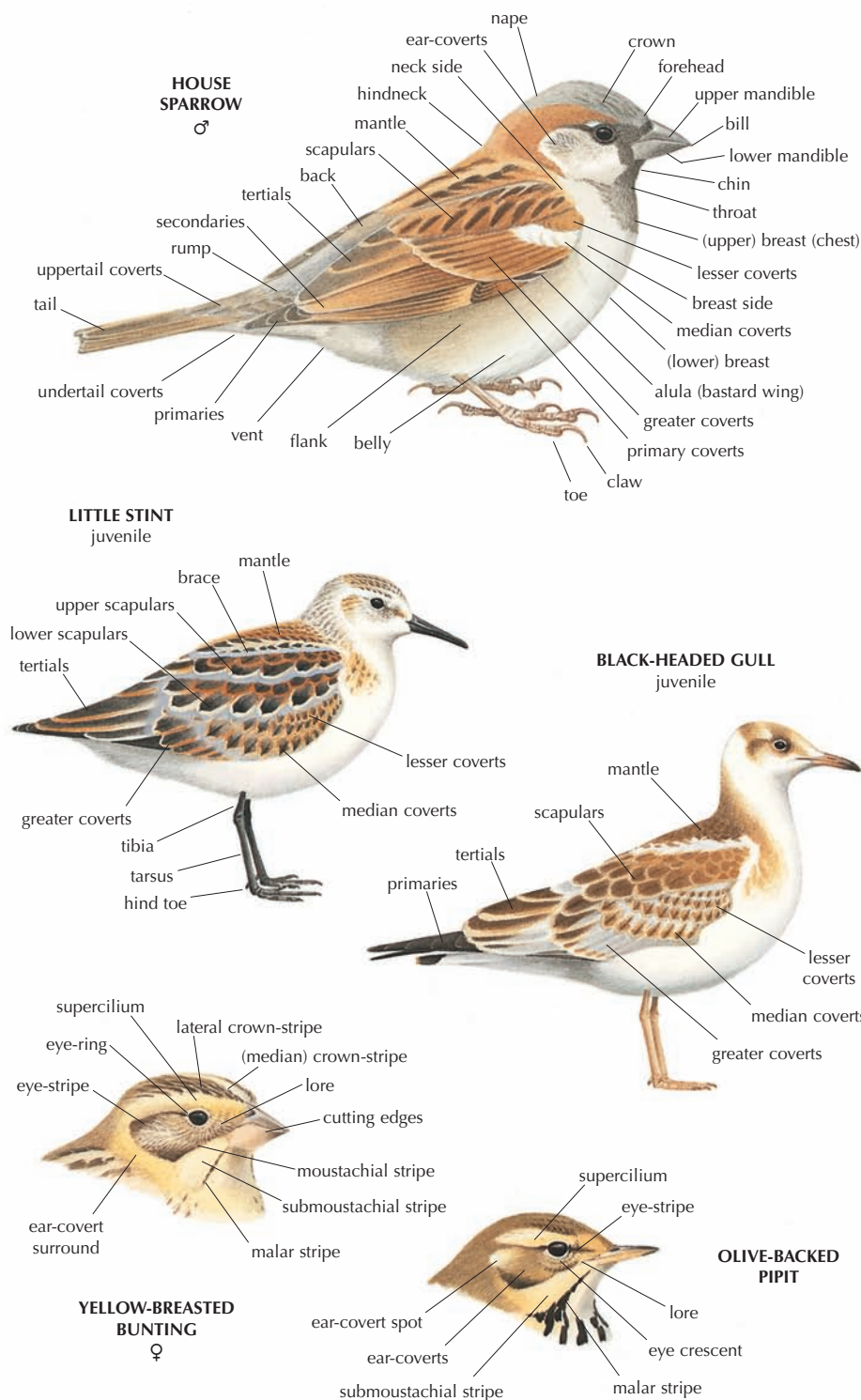
Mirror: subterminal white spot(s) on the tips of the outer primaries of gulls

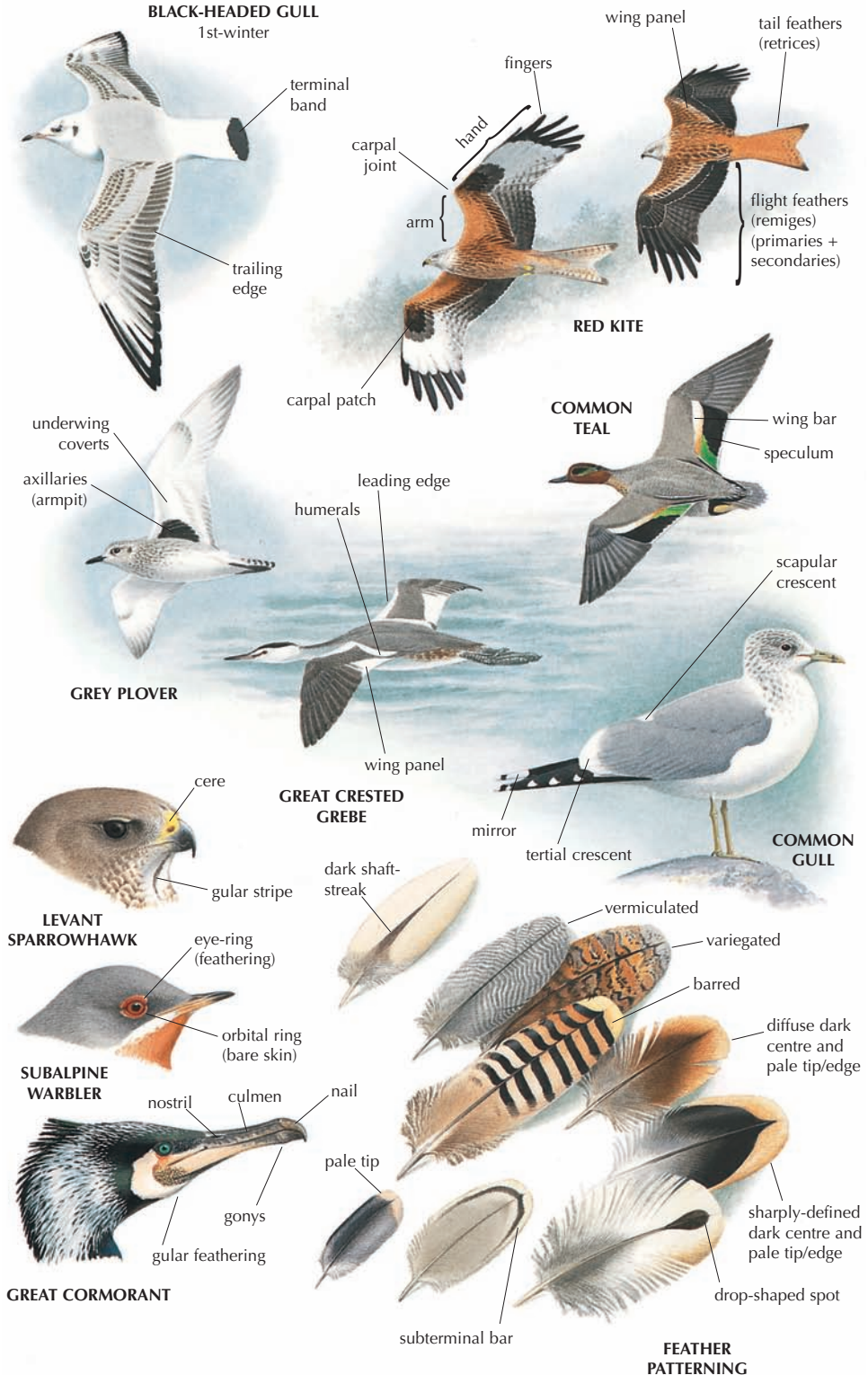
Nail: nail-like projection at tip of upper mandible of wildfowl and some other birds

Occipital plumes: long plumes projecting from the back of the head (e.g. in herons and egrets)

Orbital ring: narrow ring of bare flesh surrounding the eye

Primary projection: distance between the tip of the longest tertial and the tip of the longest primary on the closed wing





Remiges: flight feathers (i.e. primaries and secondaries)

Rectrices: tail feathers

Scapular crescent: crescent formed by white tips to the longest scapulars of gulls

Speculum: panel (usually colourful and iridescent) on the secondaries of dabbling ducks, often bordered by a pale trailing edge and a pale wing bar across the greater coverts

Terminal band: dark or pale band running across the end of the tail

Tertials: a commonly used term for the innermost secondaries, especially where these are of different shape and colour

Tertial crescent: crescent formed by white tips to the tertials of gulls

Trailing edge: the rear edge of the wing. Generally referred to when there is a dark or pale band along the trailing edge

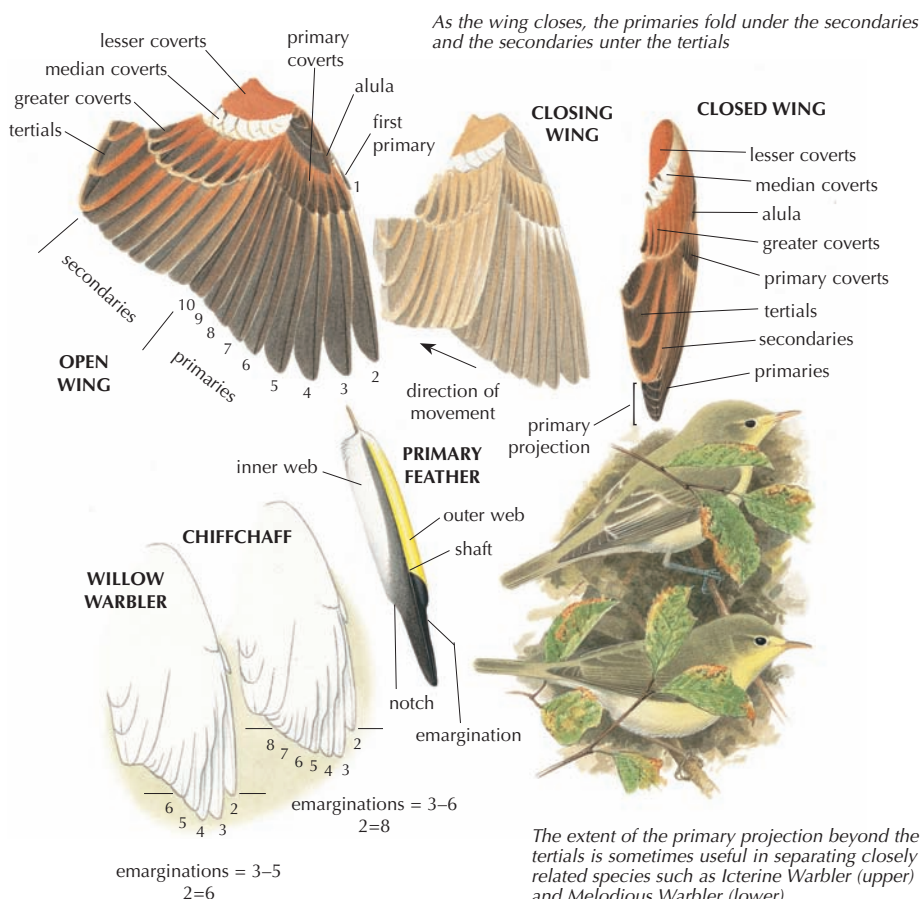
Trousers (or thighs): loose, baggy feathering on the tibia of some species (e.g. raptors, Rook)

Wing bar: contrastingly pale or dark line or band across the upperwing (often formed by pale tips to the greater coverts). Double wing bars are typically formed by pale tips to both median and greater coverts

Wing panel: pale or dark panel on the upperwing. (A broader, more rectangular feature than a wing bar. Examples are the pale diagonal panel across the wing coverts of raptors such as Black Kite and the pale secondaries of Common Redshank and Terek Sandpiper.)

Wing Topography

A good understanding of wing topography, and in particular an understanding of the location of the upperwing feather tracts when the wing is closed, is vital if one is to accurately describe and interpret the appearance of birds in the field. Yet many birders find the closed wing a puzzling morass.



In the hand, wing formulae can separate similar species using presence of emarginations and relative primary lengths

The plumage topography can seem quite straightforward when the wing is fully extended, with all the feather tracts clearly visible, but when the bird is at rest some of the tracts largely or even wholly vanish as they fold away underneath the 'surface layer' of feathers. The best way to see what happens is to study a wing in the hand. Traffic or predator casualties can provide suitable material.

As the wing closes, the secondaries, the inner primaries, the base of the outer primaries, the primary coverts and the alula (or bastard wing) increasingly disappear under the greater coverts and tertials until, depending on the posture of the bird, they are wholly or largely obscured from view. Features that are prominent in flight, such as wing bars, may completely disappear from view or else become inconspicuous.

On a typical bird at rest there is a large oval 'blob' of small or medium-sized feathers towards the front of the wing 'triangle' (these are the lesser, median and greater coverts) and a backward-pointing spike if formed by the outer primaries. The rather large and conspicuous feathers forming its upper edge are the tertials. The undifferentiated strip of closed feathers that lie across the middle of the spike, parallel to the outer primaries and the tertials, are the inner primaries and the secondaries. Often these are barely visible, being obscured by the overhanging tertials. If these feathers have pale outer fringes and dark centres, and are not wholly obscured, they can appear like a mass of parallel lines.

Following the lower edge of the spike forwards, towards the '**bend of the wing**', one can often discern the bunched up primary coverts and at least the largest feather of the alula peeking out from under the greater coverts. In many species the alula is dark-coloured and in this case it often appears as a small but obvious dark wedge along the forward wing edge.

What is visible will depend on the posture and activity being undertaken. Not only will the tertials and greater coverts sometimes obscure more of the feathering underneath, but the body feathers often fluff out around the bend of the wing, obscuring the outermost lesser, median and greater coverts, the alula, the primary coverts and even the base of the primaries.

The closed wing often holds clues that can lead to successful identification, but what can be seen must be interpreted carefully.

The '**wing formula**' is a mathematical representation of the shape of the wingtip and indicates which primary (or primaries) is the longest and how much shorter the other primaries are in relation to it (or them). Emarginations (or notches) in the longer primaries may also be of significance and are noted as part of the formula. Wing formula differences are most frequently used to identify difficult small passerines in the hand, or museum skins.

When wing formula is being described, it is customary to number the primaries 'ascendantly' from the outside inwards (the reverse of the 'descendant' convention applying to moult studies). The outermost primary (often vestigial in passerines) is therefore the 1st primary.

Where differences in wing formula are marked, they can be visible in the field and not only the hand. Species with markedly more pointed wings than similar species with more rounded wings will show a noticeably greater '**primary projection**' where the wings are closed. The primary projection is the length the wingtip (the longest primary) extends out beyond the longest tertial (and the bunched up secondaries that typically lie underneath it). A classic example is the markedly greater primary projection in Icterine Warbler compared with Melodious Warbler, a feature that can often clinch the field identification.

Moult and Plumage Terminology

Worn feathers impair flying ability and thus a bird's survival capacity. Feathers deteriorate with time and must be replaced, in a process known as moulting. Moulting occurs at regular intervals and follows particular, often complicated, sequences.

The number of moults per year, the feathers involved in each of the moult cycles and the sequence of feather replacement vary between families and even between species within a family. Most species change their flight feathers (i.e. their principal wing feathers, the primaries and secondaries), tertials and tail feathers once a year, a few change theirs twice in a year, while others change most of their flight feathers once a year but their tertials and tail feathers twice. Many species, including most passerines, change their body feathers once a year, but many others change theirs twice a year (some adopting a much brighter plumage for the pre-breeding and breeding period). Male ducks moult into a so-called 'eclipse' plumage which resembles that of the female after breeding, retaining this plumage for only a few weeks before another moult begins that restores their 'summer' (i.e. breeding) plumage. Some large birds (such as large raptors, for whom impaired powers of flight could spell disaster) have very protracted moult cycles, lasting up to two or more years, and can often possess three generations of feathers at the same time.

A full replacement of the feathers, including flight feathers, is known as a **complete moult**. Anything less than this is known as a **partial moult**.

The period of moult and its duration vary greatly between species and even to some extent between individuals. Many species start to moult after the breeding season. As moulting requires extra energy, good food supplies are essential and many migrants (faced with dwindling food supplies in late summer) defer their moult until after reaching their winter quarters, or proceed partway with the moult and then suspend it during the migration, or even start moulting again after reaching some favourable stop-over. One should bear in mind this variation in moult cycles and the possibility that two identically aged birds

of the same species can look rather different from each other simply because they are at a different stage of moult. Birds moulting from one distinctive plumage into another equally distinctive plumage can look very strange indeed and, as field-guide illustrations can never be comprehensive enough to cover all the stages of moult, it is important for observers to understand how moult has the capacity to alter the appearance of even familiar birds by creating a combination of characters from two different plumages. Some moulting birds look so strange that they can puzzle even the most experienced observer.

A basic understanding of the moult strategy adopted by a species is extremely valuable if one wishes to age particular individuals in the field, and is sometimes of help in separating one similar-looking species from another.

Many species can be aged in the hand through careful study of the feathering, and the patient, experienced observer fortunate enough to have prolonged, close views in the field may be able to use differences in feather wear, or the presence of retained juvenile or subsequent immature feathers, to age the individual concerned. Those particularly interested in ageing birds by the state of moult and wear should refer to Cramp *et al.* (1977–1994, *The Birds of the Western Palearctic*), Svensson (1992, *Identification Guide to European Passerines*), Baker (1993, *Identification Guide to European Non-Passerines*), Pyle *et al.* (1987, *Identification Guide to North American Passerines*) and other specialized sources.

The following plumage terminology is in most widespread use in the Western Palearctic:

Juvenile: The first ‘normal’ plumage adopted by individuals after the nestling/downy-young stage.

In many species, but by no means all, this plumage differs markedly in appearance from that worn by adults and, in addition, the feathering is often looser and more spikey (frequently making juveniles seem bulkier and untidier than older individuals). After juveniles have fledged in late spring and summer the juvenile plumage is uniformly fresh (all the feathers being new), whereas, depending on the species, the adults at this time are rather heavily worn or have already started their post-breeding moult and thus show a mixture of old (heavily worn) and new (fresh) feathering. Thus, even in species where the juvenile plumage closely resembles that of the adult, the juveniles may be separable in the field on close inspection. In addition, some juveniles show differences in feather shape: juvenile geese have smaller and more rounded wing coverts and scapulars, juvenile ducks have projecting shafts (and slightly forked tips) to the tail feathers, and juvenile waders have smaller scapulars.

1st-winter: Plumage adopted by many species after juvenile plumage. (Most often acquired in late summer or autumn.)

Juvenile plumage is partially or completely replaced during the ‘**post-juvenile moult**’. In most species this moult involves the head and body feathers plus some or all tertials, wing coverts and tail feathers (plus the secondaries in woodpeckers). 1st-winter plumage in most species consists of a mixture of new, adult-like head and body feathers and some new wing coverts (typically the lesser, median and inner greater), tertials and tail feathers, together with retained juvenile flight feathers and some retained wing coverts (typically the outer greater), tertials and tail feathers. In many species, individuals can be aged during their first autumn and winter by the presence of a ‘moult contrast’ between the retained juvenile wing coverts or tertials and the new feathering with its different patterning.

In many species (including most gulls and passerines) the post-juvenile moult commences a month or so after fledging and is completed on the breeding grounds before any migration takes place, whereas in others (e.g. waders, some gulls and some passerines) the moult takes place during the migration period or in the winter quarters. Moult is frequently suspended while migration takes place. In some larger species the post-juvenile moult does not commence until the bird is around a year old, and in some of these, such as large raptors, the moult then proceeds so slowly that it can take several years before the last juvenile feathers (especially flight feathers) are replaced.

In species where only the flight feathers (and perhaps tail) or even just some or all of the primaries remain unmoulted, and the general appearance is already apparently identical with that of an adult, ageing can only be achieved in the field under excellent viewing conditions when the contrast between the old and worn (duller and often faded) juvenile feathers and the new and fresh (brighter) adult-like feathers can be discerned. (In such species, individuals are more easily aged in autumn before the post-juvenile moult is completed, when they still show an obvious moult contrast between the still-unmoulted juvenile wing coverts or tertials and the new feathering.)

A limited number of species (including bustards, sandgrouse, pigeons and doves, larks and starlings) have a complete post-juvenile moult, and (except when the moult of the flight feathers is suspended and a noticeable moult contrast between the retained juvenile flight feathers and the fresh new feathers can be discerned) young individuals of these species cannot usually be separated from adults once their moult is concluded.

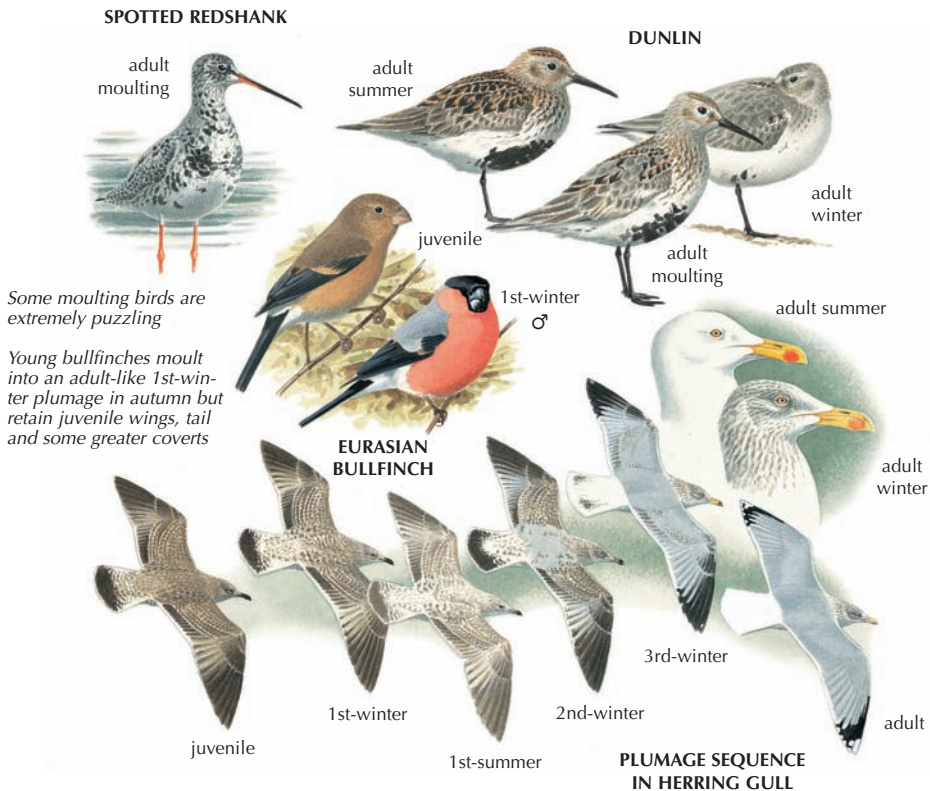
1st-summer: Plumage adopted by many species after 1st-winter plumage. (Most often acquired in late winter or spring.)

This plumage is normally attained by a partial ‘**pre-breeding moult**’ in late winter or early spring of

the second calendar year of life, and may involve anything from a limited number of feathers to the entire head and body plus some wing coverts, tertials and tail feathers. In some waders the outer primaries are moulted, while in many terns the inner primaries are replaced. In some species, such as gulls, this 1st-summer plumage is quite distinctive in the field, as the retained juvenile flight feathers are easy to discern, but most species in 1st-summer plumage are effectively as adults in the field and can be aged only in the hand through detection of retained juvenile flight feathers or other feathering. Some smaller gulls are unusual in having a complete pre-breeding moult before attaining their 1st-summer plumage.

2nd-winter/2nd-summer etc.: Plumages adopted in successive years before eventual adoption of adult plumage. (In some species this can take up to three or more years.)

Large gulls in particular have distinctive immature plumages after 1st-summer: '**2nd-winter**', '**2nd-summer**', '**3rd-winter**' and '**3rd-summer**' plumages may all be discerned, but, as there is much individual variation in moult in these species, individuals cannot be aged with absolute certainty on plumage. In gannets and boobies, raptors, cranes and some other large species, the moult is so protracted that '2nd-winter' and subsequent plumages are not discernible as such and any attempt at ageing must inevitably be very approximate. For these species the '**calendar-year**' system of plumage terminology is more appropriate.



Adult: The ultimate plumage of the species (regardless of sexual maturity). For those species which adopt two different plumages during each annual cycle, the following terms are applied:

Adult summer: The ultimate plumage of the species adopted by individuals during the pre-breeding and breeding period. (This plumage is generally acquired well before the start of the breeding season and in some cases, e.g. ducks, during the previous year. It is sometimes lost before the end of the breeding season.)

Adult winter: The ultimate plumage of the species adopted by individuals during the non-breeding period. (Generally acquired after the end of the breeding season, but sometimes earlier. Typically worn from late summer or early autumn to mid-winter or even later.)

Adults exhibit four different moult strategies. Most species have a complete '**post-breeding moult**'. This moult usually commences shortly after the end of the breeding season (but sometimes earlier) and in most species is completed by autumn or winter. Moult is usually suspended during migration, so migratory species normally finish their moult (or in some cases carry out their entire moult) in winter quarters. (Moult is also suspended during mid-winter in those species that winter at northerly latitudes.) In the larger seabirds and raptors, the moult is almost continuous throughout the year (apart from periods of suspension during migration or mid-winter) and the flight feathers show 'serial moult' (i.e. there are several moult series active at any given time), so that flight ability is never seriously impaired.

A partial '**pre-breeding moult**' (in addition to a complete post-breeding moult) is shown by many species (e.g. most ducks, waders, skuas, gulls, terns, auks and some passerines) that show distinctive breeding and non-breeding plumages. This moult usually occurs in late winter or early spring, although in ducks it occurs in late summer and early autumn (ending the so-called 'eclipse' period)./

Some species (e.g. many warblers and other long-distance migrants) are unusual in having a partial post-breeding moult before the southbound migration followed by a complete pre-breeding moult in winter quarters.

A very few species (Franklin's Gull, Willow Warbler, Bobolink and many Pallas's Grasshopper Warblers) have two complete moults a year.

Other terms in frequent use include:

Immature: All plumages other than adult.

Sub-adult: Immature plumages which are close to those of adults in appearance. (Generally used for species, such as raptors, that show almost continuous moult over long periods and slowly evolve adult plumage, without sharp transitions. Individuals in sub-adult plumage are often sexually mature.)

Eclipse: The equivalent of adult winter plumage in ducks. (Adopted for a relatively short period from the middle or the end of the breeding season onwards.)

Calendar-year terminology is an alternative system based on age and is particularly suitable for describing the immature stages of larger species (such as raptors) with extended moult cycles and correspondingly slow plumage development without abrupt transitions.

1st-calendar-year: an individual in its first calendar year of life, up to 31st December, regardless of number of plumages adopted that year.

2nd-calendar-year: an individual in its second calendar year of life.

3rd-calendar-year, etc.: an individual in its third calendar year of life, and so on.

Seasonal labels (i.e. 'spring', 'summer', 'autumn' or 'winter') are sometimes added to these calendar-year terms to indicate plumage appearance at a particular time of the year.

PLUMAGE SEQUENCE IN STEPPE EAGLE (using calendar-year terminology)



Feather Wear

While all birders are familiar with the fundamental differences in appearance that birds exhibit according to sex, age, or state of feather moult, the differences in appearance owing to feather wear are less widely appreciated. Feathers experience many stresses over the course of time, especially in the case of migratory species. Eventually the feather structure becomes weak and frays. The coloration or patterning around the feather tip or fringes may be lost, while the colours of the remainder of the feather may fade (or even become quite bleached). Such wear can cause very marked changes in overall coloration. Common Redstarts and Bramblings, for example, do not in fact moult their body feathers twice each year as is widely but mistakenly imagined. Instead, their bright breeding plumage results entirely from the progressive wearing away of the dull feather fringes after the post-breeding moult. (Other species that show similar transformations include Black Lark, many chats and wheatears, Rosy Starling and many buntings, although some of the latter do moult some facial feathering prior to breeding.)

Individual colour variation among the members of a species, unrelated to age or sex, can also affect field identification. Often these differences reflect the occurrence of different subspecies or intermediate individuals (also known as intergrades) in the same area (e.g. mixed flocks of Yellow Wagtails on migration), but a large number of species that are not subdivided into subspecies show quite obvious colour differences at the individual level (e.g. many birds of prey, Fieldfare, European Greenfinch).

Where individual members of a species fall into two or more reasonably clearly defined colour categories, which are unconnected to any subspecific variations, then the species is said to possess two or more 'morphs' or 'phases' (e.g. Booted Eagle). In some species, the borderline between morphs is not very clear-cut and intermediates are common (e.g. Arctic Skua).

Some birds exhibit **aberrant plumage** due to imbalances in feather pigmentation. Only rarely does one encounter birds with completely aberrant plumage, and usually some clues to their identity can be found by scrutinizing their plumage pattern, overall structure, behaviour and calls. The commonest forms of aberrant plumage are **albinism** (white coloration through lack of pigments) and **melanism** (blackish coloration through dominance of dark pigments), but even these are usually shown only by a tiny minority of individuals. Even less usual are **leucism** (washed out coloration through partial lack of pigments), **erythrism** (reddish coloration through dominance of red pigments) and **xanthochroism** (yellowish coloration through dominance of yellow pigments). Individuals showing these plumage aberrations are referred to as albinistic, melanistic, leucistic, erythristic and xanthochroic respectively. Although observers should continuously bear the possibility of aberrant plumage in mind, it affects such a small number of individuals that it only rarely interferes with species identification.

A few species apply **cosmetic coloration** to their plumage by way of a pigment (a carotenoid) found in the oil secreted by their preen gland, situated at the base of the uppertail. The pigment soon bleaches but is constantly renewed. Examples include the pink suffusions on the breast and belly of the Great White Pelican and a number of small gulls.

Other changes to plumage coloration which are frequently observed are **feather bleaching** and **feather staining** (by oil or chemical solution). The former is frequently observed in waders, gulls, terns and other seabirds exposed to a combination of intense sunshine and saline atmosphere in the southern part of our region. Faded-looking immature large gulls and strangely pale Grey Plovers are just two examples. In some species, younger birds are more prone to bleaching than adults, which may reflect differences in



Some passerines change their appearance radically through feather wear rather than moult



plumage resistance. Oil-staining can create some strange and confusing brown, black or ochre patterns on affected birds and these can cause identification pitfalls, especially with smaller gulls. Chemical staining from exposure to iron in solution in the water in which they feed, which gives a rusty tinge to the head and neck, is frequently seen in swans, geese and cranes. Strange yellow or orange patches around the bill base on passerines usually turn out to be flower pollen attached to the facial feathering.

Distance, Light and Other Factors

Further differences in the appearance of bird plumage result from the effects of distance, shadow, rain, mist, high-contrast illumination (e.g. in deserts, or at sea) and strong backlighting (including wing-feather translucency when seen against strong sunlight).

It is often surprising just how different particular individuals belonging to the same species can appear depending on distance and light conditions. At moderate distances the upperparts of a European Golden Plover appear brownish, but at close quarters the lovely pattern of yellow spangling can be clearly seen. Light can play almost an infinite number of tricks and in particular can both increase or reduce plumage contrasts. In dull light or mist, or in very bright conditions, it is often difficult to see the fine streaking on a singing Common Grasshopper Warbler, so that it comes to resemble a Savi's Warblers to some extent. In bright sunlight, and on a pale, reflective surface, a Tawny Pipit seems quite 'washed out', with little apparent contrast between the darker upperparts and the paler underparts, yet in overcast conditions the same bird looks much more 'two-tone'. At long range, and in bright light, the grey mantle colour of a 1st-winter Black-billed Kittiwake can seem so dark that it merges with the blackish wing bar and Sabine's Gull is brought to mind. A Lesser Spotted Eagle soaring over a Polish forest on a very dull day seems uniformly black underneath, yet the same bird migrating over the desert in bright sunshine receives so much reflected light that its underwing coverts seem to be almost pale brown and contrast strongly with the darker flight feathers. There are many such situations, all potential traps for the unwary.

The appearance of a Lesser Spotted Eagle can change radically according to the amount of reflected light



The golden spangling on a European Golden Plover is only prominent at close range



In dull or extremely bright conditions the streaking on a Common Grasshopper Warbler may no longer be apparent

Bare Parts

Also known as 'soft parts', the bare parts consist of the **bill**, **eyes**, **orbital ring** (a narrow ring of bare flesh surrounding the eye), **legs** and **feet**, plus, in some species, the **cere** (a fleshy covering at the base of the upper mandible found in raptors, pigeons and some gamebirds) and any other naked areas of skin (as found in vultures, for example). As with plumage, individual colour variation frequently occurs, especially as regards leg colour. Bare-part colours change during the breeding season in some species (e.g. many herons and egrets). Iris colour often changes with age, generally becoming brighter in adults. In some species (e.g. most eagles and large gulls), juveniles have quite dark irides while those of adults are pale.

By their very nature, many bird species tend to get their bills, feet and legs covered in mud. As this dries and diminishes, it can go through a series of colour changes. Observers should always keep mud-staining in mind when dealing with such groups as herons, rails and waders in particular.

On museum skins the colours of the remaining bare parts (the eyes are not preserved) rapidly fade, causing problems of interpretation for users unless accurate labels describing the original colours are present. For some species, especially those inhabiting remote areas, there is still insufficient information available.

Bill shape and length can be an important aid to identification, both at the family level (as the shape reflects the diet and so is often a strong pointer towards family identity) and the species level.

Bill length in long-billed species should be used with caution, however, as some species (e.g. curlews, godwits) show quite marked sex-related differences in bill length and, even more importantly, the bill may take some time to develop fully in young birds (thus juvenile Eurasian Curlews can be confused with Whimbrels, or even Bar-tailed Godwits, by the unwary). A few species show marked geographical variation in bill length. The Dunlin is a classic example: the longest-billed races are particularly prone to misidentification as Curlew Sandpipers.

courtship period



non-breeding period

Cattle Egrets showing variation in bare-part coloration with seasons

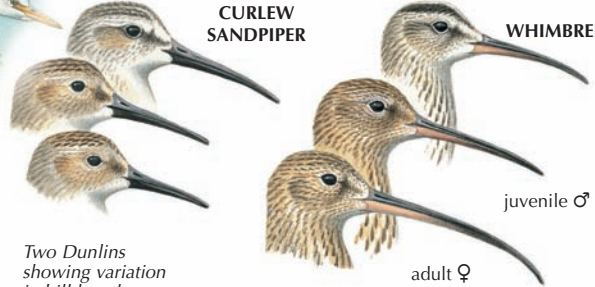
breeding period



A Little Ringed Plover with mud-stained legs might be confused with a Kentish Plover (left)

CURLEW SANDPIPER

WHIMBREL



Two Dunlins showing variation in bill length

Bill length in Eurasian Curlew can vary dramatically with age and sex

Behaviour

The behaviour of a bird often provides good clues as to which family it belongs and, with experience, can frequently be used to separate similar species. Distinctive feeding methods, postures, flight actions, style of display flight or choice of song post, for example, can all help to identify birds. The probing ('sewing-machine') bill actions typical of many feeding sandpipers are quite different from the 'bend forward and pick' method of plovers. Rough-legged Buzzards hover frequently, but Common Buzzards only rarely. A song-flying Eurasian Skylark rises slowly and vertically into the sky with a hovering flight, before slowly descending while continuing to hover, but a Meadow Pipit in similar mode climbs up at an angle and then 'parachutes' rapidly earthwards with wings held up and motionless. River Warblers often sing high up in trees while other *Locustella* warblers generally stick to the shrubbery. These are just a few examples among many.

GREY PLOVERS
'watch, bend and pick'

COMMON REDSHANKS
'walk and drill'



Jizz

By carefully noting how a species (or a group of similar species) moves while carrying out a range of different activities, as well as the changes in its apparent size and shape, it is often possible to gain a subtle but characteristic impression of the species (or species group) that will allow it to be identified again in the future with only a minimum of visual cues (frequently even when the bird is but a distant silhouette, or only a hint of the overall coloration can be discerned). This special 'feel' of a particular species or species group is known as its 'jizz', a term derived from the Second World War fighter pilots' acronym GIS, standing for 'General Impression and Shape'. Jizz is very hard to put across in words and is best learned in the field. It is especially useful when identifying distant seabirds, raptors and waders among others. Thus, a distant European Honey Buzzard can be separated from Common Buzzard and other *Buteo* buzzards by its slim neck and cuckoo-like head, prominent tail, wing shape and way of holding its wings, long before any plumage features are visible.

Voice

A knowledge of bird songs and calls (the difference between which is decidedly blurred) is a vital component of the field skills of any experienced birder. Familiarity with vocalizations allows one to identify many birds that are seen only poorly or not at all. Vocalizations provide the best means of discovering and identifying many of the more secretive species. A few extremely similar-looking species are best separated in the field by their vocalizations, while in many other situations (e.g. Tree Pipit v. Meadow Pipit, Willow Warbler v. Chiffchaff) vocalizations can provide the simplest and most convenient way to confirm an identification.

We recommend the use of tape recordings or compact discs for learning vocalizations. They are not a complete substitute for field experience but do allow a rapid reference and access to unfamiliar calls and songs. Most Western Palearctic species now feature on commercially available tapes or compact discs: a list of good quality recordings follows the bibliography at the end of this guide.

The vocalizations of a species have a special significance to its members. Vocalizations can be grouped according to function, although the boundaries between groups are often indistinct. The principal divisions of relevance to field identification are:

Songs (= advertising calls): Territorial announcements generally delivered from a strategic position within the territory or above it, mainly by the male. The term 'song' is usually associated with the rich and often musical territorial announcements of passerine birds, while 'advertising calls' better describe the simpler announcements of most non-passerines. Outside the breeding season many passerine species produce a subdued version of their song known as a **subsong**. This may be uttered from the erstwhile breeding territory, within a winter territory or even from a temporary territory set up in a stopping place along a migration route. Some young birds, such as young Chiffchaffs, give a kind of subsong during late summer and early autumn.

Passerine songs show considerable geographical variation. Sometimes these variations reflect the subdivision of a species into different subspecies, but in other cases dialects vary even among taxonomically uniform populations. Thus, Great Tits and Common Linnets in W Europe often sound quite different from their counterparts in European Russia.

Contact calls: Fairly simple vocalizations used to keep contact with other members of the species. A species may give different contact calls according to whether the contact is with single individuals or an entire flock. Most 'flight calls' fall into this category.

/Alarm calls: Vocalizations that alert other individuals to real or potential danger. Some species have distinctive alarm calls while in others they are simply variants on a contact call, often delivered with a sharper, more urgent intonation.

Habitat, Distribution and Status

The **habitat** where a bird is seen is of great importance for its identification. While many birds turn up in unusual habitats every so often, especially during migration periods, in general each species has definite habitat preferences and the habitat in which an unknown bird is found can point towards its identification. One is not likely to find a Garden Warbler in a reedbed or a European Reed Warbler deep in a forest.

Geographical distribution is also an important clue, although, as with habitat, one must bear in mind that many birds occur outside their regular range from time to time. Thus, while range may suggest that the *Hippolais* warbler one is looking at will turn out to be a Melodious Warbler, one must not exclude the possibility of a migrant Icterine Warbler a little off course. Season further narrows the likely choices, since many species will normally be completely absent from a particular area at a given time of year.

Many highly migratory species regularly occur as vagrants far from their normal area of occurrence, but vagrancy is much less common in non-migratory species or those which move only short distances. The great majority of vagrants, although stragglers by definition, turn up at certain times of year and in certain areas, dependent largely on their origins. Most vagrancy occurs during the migration periods and is especially common in autumn as young birds are much more prone to go off course than are older, more experienced individuals.

Vagrants from the Americas are almost always recorded from the northwestern fringe of our region, the

westernmost British Isles, Iceland and the Azores. Most appear to be victims of strong cyclonic westerlies while migrating between North America and the Caribbean islands or South America and the great majority occur in autumn. The extent to which vagrant landbirds are ship-assisted is unknown, but in view of the sheer width of the Atlantic and the frequency with which landbirds are observed taking refuge on transatlantic vessels, it may be significant.

Records of vagrants that breed in Siberia and Central Asia are heavily concentrated in NW Europe, but this may reflect the sheer density and skill level of observers rather than any real pattern of movement. Rather than being victims of severe weather, these stragglers are thought to be actively following the wrong migration course, ending up many thousands of kilometres away from their normal range. The great majority of records are in autumn and overwhelmingly involve young birds. Although not apparently weather-driven as such, off-course Asian birds are helped on their way to NW Europe by easterly winds and are most frequent in autumns with prolonged periods of easterlies.

For species nesting within our region, a similar pattern of autumn vagrancy can be observed, and in spring northbound individuals can overshoot, turning up as vagrants well to the north of their regular breeding range.

Vagrants from sub-Saharan Africa and southern Arabia tend to be species that show seasonal movements within their natural areas of distribution. Such species are rarely recorded outside North Africa and the Middle East.

Many pelagic seabirds have a known ability to cover remarkable distances and so vagrant individuals can turn up almost anywhere.

Finally, there is the **known abundance** of a species to consider. While rarities (ranging from rare migrants to true vagrants) do turn up anywhere, providing birders with some of their most exciting moments, the probability of an unknown bird being a rarity is normally very small indeed and the probability reduces still further if two or more individuals are involved. It is always best to assume that an unfamiliar bird will turn out to be something that is to be expected in the area, rather than follow the dangerous path of assuming that it is a rarity unless proven otherwise.

Hybrids

Hybrids are generally rare. Although most frequently noted among wildfowl (especially ducks of the genera *Anas* and *Aythya*) and large gulls, they have been recorded from a surprising variety of families and so observers should always bear the possibility in mind when confronted by a puzzling 'mystery bird'. Hybrids between species are typically less fertile, although there are exceptions.

Escapes

Exotic species are kept in many private and public collections in our region, and unfortunately escapes are not infrequent. The most frequently encountered escapes are flamingos, wildfowl, raptors and parrots, but small seed-eating birds and other species are also encountered occasionally. Identifying some escapes may require a considerable amount of research using field guides to areas outside our region and other works of reference. Hybrid large falcons produced by artificial insemination can cause particular headaches. A few species (e.g. Rose-ringed Parakeet) have escaped from captivity and established self-sustaining breeding populations in our region, while some others (mainly gamebirds) have been deliberately introduced and have become established, or else have their populations maintained through continued releases.

Honesty

Knowing how to identify birds is not enough in itself to make a good field ornithologist. Good judgement and, most important of all, an ability to accept that one can make mistakes are also essential attributes. The conditions under which sightings are made vary so much, from sustained views in ideal circumstances to fleeting glimpses in the mist, yet today more than ever before there are subtle pressures on birders that make many people try to identify everything they see, regardless of circumstances. Do not make the mistake of trying to be infallible. There will always be times when that raptor you were sure was one species reappears a few minutes later and 'metamorphoses' into something else entirely, or some skulking warbler starts giving better views and turns out not to be the species you were quite happy to call it a short time earlier! You will always be respected for a careful and cautious approach to identification, but not for hurried judgements that you later defend against all the evidence. Very occasionally, even under optimum conditions, individual birds will be encountered that defy all efforts at identification, based on our present knowledge. It is sensible to accept that there are limits to our ability to identify birds, even in this most fortunate era.

Ethics

As birding grows in popularity, so does the importance of a concerned approach towards the birds themselves and the environment in general. Important as it may be to clinch an identification, it is essential that all birders act with sensitivity and responsibility. Disturbance to nesting birds should always be avoided. Even outside the breeding period, repeated disturbance to feeding birds can have a damaging

effect. Tired and hungry vagrants are particularly vulnerable to persistent, if unintended, harassment, and those who go in search of rarities should make particular efforts to prevent this from happening.

Enjoy your birding, but avoid spoiling the enjoyment of other birders through inconsiderate behaviour. Be sure, also, to respect other users of the outdoors and the legitimate and reasonable rights of property owners. By setting a good example we all help to ensure that birds prosper and that birding remains a popular and reasonable activity.

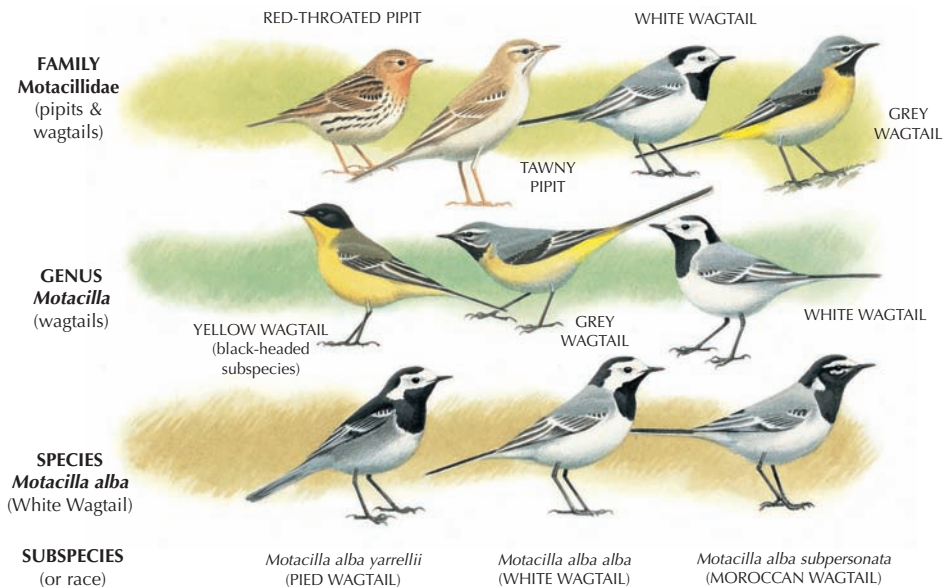
Taxonomy and Scientific Nomenclature

Many birders shy away from even a basic understanding of taxonomy (the science of classification) and the scientific nomenclature. This is a great mistake, but understandable when one considers how inaccessible this aspect of ornithology can at first appear. In fact, a working knowledge of these subjects is not difficult to attain and, as most experienced birders appreciate, is absolutely essential for anyone who wishes to study the art of field identification in any depth and use identification guides to best effect.

Through learning the basic principles of taxonomy and scientific nomenclature, one achieves a far deeper understanding of avian relationships and differences, and gains greater insight into many of the identification problems that involve closely related birds. One also comes to appreciate the shortcomings of vernacular names. The latter can be quite ambiguous or even confusing, for many birds which have quite similar English names are in reality quite unrelated (e.g. 'warblers', which are actually members of two quite separate bird families: Old World warblers and the American wood-warblers).

At the root of taxonomy is the concept of the **species**, the basic building block on which all classifications are constructed. Taxonomy today is a fluid, ever-changing field as the criteria used to decide what is, or what is not, a species steadily evolve. The traditional idea that a species is a population of individuals that freely interbreed among themselves but cannot interbreed with any other population has long since proved to be too simplistic. A discussion of these criteria, including such topics as DNA configuration, and the alternative 'biological' and 'evolutionary' species concepts, is well beyond the scope of this guide, but we urge anyone with a serious interest in identification to investigate this fascinating subject further. An understanding of the subject and the many problems that taxonomists face in trying to impose a rigid framework, in effect a snapshot taken at one moment in time, on a constantly evolving biological universe is fundamental to understanding why so many taxonomic decisions are necessarily difficult, provisional and often controversial.

Many bird species are divided into '**subspecies**' (or 'races') where populations in different geographical locations show recognizable differences (typically in plumage or structure). In some species, there are distinct '**subspecies groups**' which show common features that differentiate one group from another within the species. Further studies sometimes indicate that these groups differ sufficiently from each other to justify full species status.



Sometimes there may be a progressive change in one or more morphological characters from one part of a species' range to another. In such cases, it may be difficult or impossible for taxonomists to establish realistic boundaries between subspecies, or even to establish the existence of recognizable subspecies at all. They will then refer to the existence of a '**cline**' (e.g. a cline of increasingly darker plumage from northeast to southwest).

Bird species which share certain structural or biochemical features are grouped by taxonomists in the same '**family**' (some of which are subdivided into two or more 'subfamilies'). Within a family, more closely related species are arranged in the same '**genus**' (plural: genera). Typically, a genus includes two or more, even many, closely related species, although a genus may include only a single species that is not considered sufficiently closely related to any other species in the family to be included in the same genus.

Knowing where to find each family in an identification guide saves constant references to the index and thus much time and effort. If you are not already familiar with the Voous sequence of families (followed by this book and most other current European guides and handbooks), do make an effort to learn it. It is easiest to start with the major families and then gradually learn the position of the smaller ones. With practice, you will find yourself turning automatically to the right area of the book. In time, you should also try to get to know the sequence of the major genera within the larger families.

Scientific Nomenclature

A basic understanding of the way the scientific nomenclature, the basic tool of the taxonomist, operates is fundamental for anyone interested in bird identification.

Each bird species has a unique, two-part, Latinized scientific name, which is conventionally written in italics. The first part, which begins with a capital letter, is the '**generic name**' and indicates the genus to which the species belongs. The second part is the '**specific name**' and denotes which particular member of the genus is involved. This '**binomial system**' creates names that are unique to each species. Thus, White Wagtail has the scientific name *Motacilla alba*. The first part is the generic name that signifies that the White Wagtail is a member of the genus *Motacilla*, a small group of species within the pipit and wagtail family, known as the Motacillidae. The second part, *alba*, is its specific name, which no other member of the genus *Motacilla* possesses. (Although a species that was a member of another family or even a member of another genus within the same family could share this specific name, it would always have a different generic name, so no confusion can arise.)

If there is no doubt as to which genus is involved, scientific names are often shortened in print. Thus, *Motacilla alba* becomes *M. alba* or even simply *alba*.

Where a species is divided into '**subspecies**' (or 'races'), each subspecies has its own '**subspecific name**', forming a third part of the scientific name, which can be used when it is necessary to indicate the subspecies. Thus, the black-backed subspecies of White Wagtail inhabiting the British Isles (known as 'Pied Wagtail') has the subspecific name *yarrellii*, while the grey-backed subspecies inhabiting most of the rest of Europe has the subspecific name *alba*. Note that the subspecies *alba* carries the same name as that for the species as a whole (i.e. *M. alba*): such subspecies, which are invariably the first to have been described, are referred to as the '**nominate subspecies**' (or 'nominate race').

Subspecies names can be either written out in full, i.e. *Motacilla alba yarrellii* (or *Motacilla alba alba*), or, in appropriate context, shortened to *M. a. yarrellii* (or *M. a. alba*) or even just *yarrellii* (or *alba*).

Although the system of scientific nomenclature does provide much greater stability than the rapidly evolving and much less precise world of vernacular names, even scientific names do change with time, following new thinking by taxonomists (who may merge species or genera, or subdivide them). Taxonomists also regularly propose revisions to the sequence of the species within genera, the sequence of the genera within families, and even the sequence of the families themselves.

While birders mostly use vernacular names when talking about birds, a familiarity with scientific names can often be helpful, especially when discussing the finer points of identification or when communicating with those for whom English is not the first language. Some scientific names have even become part of popular parlance. The major generic names for Western Palearctic warblers are frequently used as convenient labels that narrow down an otherwise very wide field of species. Thus, *Acrocephalus* (typically shortened to 'Acro'), *Locustella*, *Hippolais* ('Hippo'), *Sylvia* and *Phylloscopus* ('Phyllosc') are all in common usage. Likewise, the term *Aquila* is often used to differentiate members of this confusing genus from other eagles.

OSTRICH Struthionidae

1 species (the sole member of the family)

OSTRICH *Struthio camelus*

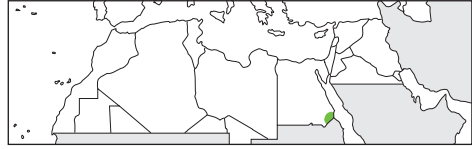
Plate page 108

Height to crown: male 210–275 cm,
female 175–190 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Unmistakable. Enormous flightless bird with long, thin and almost bare neck, relatively tiny and almost bare head, barrel-like body and long, powerful legs. Only two toes. Often gregarious. Wary. Typically walks sedately but can run very rapidly if pressed. Feeds mainly on seeds, roots and leaves; also flowers, insects and lizards. Nests on ground.

SEX/AGE Sexes distinct. Adult male has bright red head/neck in breeding season. Post-breeding moult complete, probably taking place in spring/early summer. Juvenile resembles adult female, but tail and primaries concolorous with body, neck downier. Complete post-juvenile moult takes place at an age of 9–11 months.

VOICE Often silent, but has wide range of calls, including hissing, snorting and booming sounds. Loud territorial booming ('boo-boo-boooh-hoo') of males



carries long distances.

STATUS/HABITAT Nomadic and extremely rare. (Exterminated from most of former range in N Africa and Middle East, which extended from the Atlantic coast of the Sahara to Kuwait. Recently rediscovered extreme SE Egypt. May still survive Western Sahara, southernmost Morocco.) Open, rolling or partly broken semi-desert with sparse vegetation, especially broad wadi beds.

DIVERS (or LOONS) Gaviidae

4 species

Fairly large to large, long-necked, low-bodied, cormorant-like diving birds of fresh and inshore coastal waters with dark upperparts and pale underparts. Normally appear tailless (although short tail can be elevated when bird at rest). Dive by slipping gently below surface, with slight forward roll. Not very gregarious but will form loose flocks away from breeding territories. In flight, have humpbacked appearance, with head and feet drooped below level of body. Flight swift and direct, often quite high, with rapid beats of strongly pointed wings. Normally visits land only when breeding, and then only immediate waterside. Generally silent outside breeding season. Feed mainly on fish.

Sexes similar. Marked seasonal variation. Juveniles resemble winter adults.

Partial post-breeding moult (complete in Red-throated) commences in late summer or early autumn and finishes by early winter. Complete pre-breeding moult (partial in Red-throated) takes place from late winter to spring. Post-juvenile moult virtually continuous during second calendar year, with adult plumage fully attained by second autumn or winter (apart from Yellow-billed, which has more complex and protracted moult and does not acquire full adult plumage until spring of fourth calendar year).

Divers (also known as loons) show an obvious white breast in all plumages, and when not in adult summer plumage also show extensive white on foreneck and face. On water, confusion likely only with the large grebes, cormorants and mergansers. Large grebes are shorter-bodied and longer-necked, with more abrupt, less gently sloping sterns. Cormorants have long, prominent tails, usually visible as bird dives, and tend to hold their heads angled upwards when swimming. Often (especially European Shag) jump well clear of water when diving. Cormorants also tend to look all-dark, but beware immatures with whitish or pale brown underparts. Adult female or immature mergansers show little or no white on foreneck, have solid brown head/hindneck, shaggy appearance to back of head and a white wing patch (sometimes obscured). In flight, large grebes and mergansers show conspicuous white patches on upperwing, while cormorants have slower wingbeats, carry their heads higher (so do not look humpbacked) and have conspicuously long tails.

Identification of adult summer-plumaged birds straightforward given reasonable views, but winter, immature and moulting birds more difficult. Identifying larger species in flight is particularly difficult. Points to concentrate on (for birds on water) are:

Pattern of head and neck • Head shape • Bill colour and shape • Contrast between neck and mantle • Flank pattern

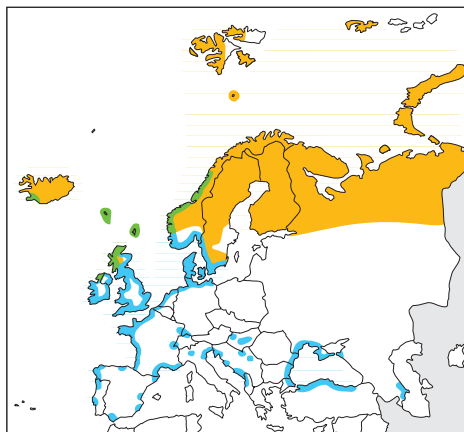
RED-THROATED DIVER *Gavia stellata*

Plate page 49

Red-throated Loon

L 53–69 cm, WS 106–116 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Smallest and most elegant of the divers, showing gently rounded head shape, relatively slim neck and fine, generally upturned, bill. (Note: when neck retracted appears stockier, recalling Black-throated.) Often holds head and bill pointing markedly upwards (typical of much larger Yellow-billed also, but unusual in other divers). Diving action smooth and quick with a slight jump (other divers do not normally show even a slight jump). **Adult summer** distinguished by lack of bold white markings on upperparts, dark reddish-brown patch on foreneck (which can look blackish in poor light), grey head and sides to neck, and fine black and white stripes on hindneck. **Adult winter** distinguished by extensive white on head/neck, with white typically extending above and in front of eye and well towards back of neck (so that eye stands out clearly and white sides to face/neck are visible even in rear view), and paler, greyer-looking upperparts. At close range the latter can be seen to be dark grey-brown covered in numerous oval white spots. Birds moulting into adult summer plumage have this head/neck pattern obscured (with dark foreneck patch and grey feathering coming through). Distinguished from summer Black-throated by lack of large white markings on upperparts. **Juvenile** has less obvious, dingy-buff feather edgings above and a dusky brown throat, face and foreneck. Distinguished from Black-throated by lack of clean-cut white flank patch (but beware white showing on preening birds rolled over on side), pale feather edgings on most of upperparts (if visible), differences in shape of neck, head and bill, and (compared to adult) less distinct head/neck pattern. Amount of white on face and foreneck usually increases during first autumn and winter, with throat becoming all white (and eye often being ringed with white, unlike Black-throated). In flight, wings appear to be set further back along body and rear end seems shorter than in other divers, probably because wings are more backward-angled and because feet project less prominently. Shows less obvious dark flank line dividing pale underwing from pale belly and has distinctive habit of turning head from side to side



(rarely seen in other divers). Wingbeats faster and upstroke higher than in other species. Often looks even more humpbacked owing to well-drooped head and neck.

SEX/AGE Juvenile resembles adult winter, but is duller: shows dusky face and sides of neck (these areas suffused with greyish-brown) and browner upperparts with less obvious, pale buff spots. Adopts partial adult summer plumage in late spring/early summer of second calendar year.

VOICE Flight call a rapid goose-like cackle: 'gwuk-gwuk-gwuk-gwuk', synchronized with wingbeats. On breeding grounds male has repeated loud, rolling, growling 'oorroo-ugh, oorroo-ugh' call. Female makes similar but longer, more moaning 'aarroo, aarroo' call. Also a barking call and a descending wailing call resembling a cat's meow: 'eeaaoooh'.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally fairly common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Estonia.) Breeds by shallow pools and lakes; sometimes by marine inlets. At other times found in coastal waters, especially shallow sandy bays; rarely on inland lakes.

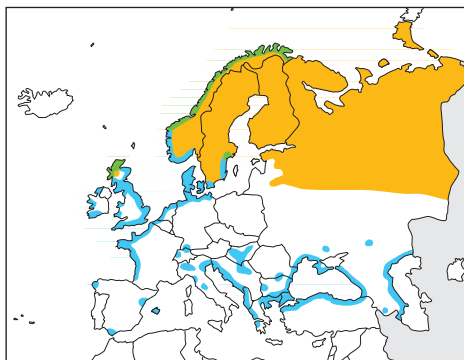
BLACK-THROATED DIVER *Gavia arctica*

Plate page 49

Black-throated Loon, Arctic Loon (N America)

L 58–73 cm, WS 110–130 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Intermediate in size and bulk between Red-throated and the largest divers; at times appearing distinctly elegant (recalling Red-throated) when neck erect, at times rather stocky (recalling Great Northern) when neck retracted. Bill less stout and head more rounded than in largest divers, but bill heavier and straighter, often longer, than in Red-throated. Head and neck often form an elegant S-shaped curve. (Note that appearance of head can alter: resting birds often erect forehead feathers, creating outline recalling Great Northern, and sometimes point head and bill somewhat upwards, recalling Red-throated.) At times a distinctive muscular bulge is visible on sides of neck (most obvious in birds seen head-on or facing away). Dives with smooth and fast action, associated with sharp backward jerk of head and neck. **Adult summer** distinguished by combination of pale grey head and hindneck, black patch on



foreneck bordered on each side by black and white stripes, and conspicuous white markings on upperparts. Latter are more restricted in extent than in largest divers, mainly restricted to a solid 'block' on scapulars (a feature seen in large divers too, but those species also have smaller white spots fairly evenly scattered over rest of upperparts and flanks. **Adult winter/Juvenile** distinguished by contrast between lighter crown and hindneck (grey-brown in adult, brown in juvenile) and darker upperparts (normally vice versa in Great Northern), and by distinctive, clear-cut white patch that generally shows above water line towards rear of flanks (absent or at least never as large and clean-cut in other divers). On buoyantly swimming bird this flank patch shows as extension of white belly. Also has different head/neck pattern: in side-on profile amounts of dark and white are about equal. Lacks pale indentations in collar and pale eye-ring of largest divers and shows more extensive dark area than Red-throated, with dark of crown reaching eye. Head pattern often enhanced by apparent darker line dividing white foreneck and lower face from grey-brown crown and hindneck, but this not always visible. Bill of adult is pale with dark tip and culmen, a pattern otherwise seen only in winter Great Northern. Juveniles show variable amount of dusky grey-brown on throat, lower face and foreneck and bill lacks strong pattern, so they are harder to tell from juvenile Red-throated: best separated by flank patch, paler nape and shape of head, neck and bill. At close

range shows only inconspicuous pale edgings to scapulars instead of numerous pale buff feather edgings over most of upperparts. Birds moulting into adult summer plumage have head/neck pattern obscured by dark foreneck and chin patches, and grey of head and neck coming through, but such birds distinguished from Red-throated by presence of bold white 'blocking' on upperparts. In flight, in comparison with Red-throated, is distinctly heavier-looking, with more prominently projecting feet, less drooped neck, horizontally-held bill, apparently more centrally positioned wings, slower, stiffer wingbeats (with not such a high upstroke) and distinctly more black-and-white appearance with more obvious dark flank line and (in adult winter and older immatures) more extensive dark on head/neck. See also flight details for largest divers. **SEX/AGE** Juvenile similar to adult winter, but has relatively indistinct pale scaling on upperparts (most obvious to middle of first winter).

VOICE On breeding grounds makes loud, mournful 'kluiee-ku-kluiee-ku-kluiee-ku-kluiee'. Other calls include a repeated croaking snore, 'knarr-knorr, knarr-knorr', and a yelping, gull-like 'aah-oww'. Silent in flight.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally not uncommon. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Poland.) Breeds by larger lakes with deeper water than those typically favoured by Red-throated; rarely by marine inlets. At other times found in coastal waters; rarely on inland lakes except on migration.

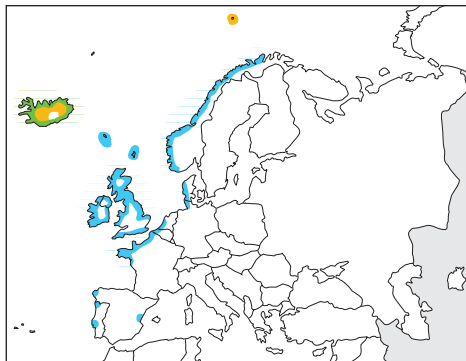
GREAT NORTHERN DIVER *Gavia immer*

Plate page 50

Great Northern Loon; Common Loon (N America)

L 69–91 cm, WS 127–147 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Large, bulky diver, exceeded in size only by some Yellow-billed. Compared with smaller species has stouter bill, heavier head, thicker neck and more steeply angled forehead (but note that largest Black-throated are as large as smallest Great Northern and former occasionally look thick-necked and can show fairly steeply angled forehead). Typically holds head and bill level (unlike Yellow-billed or Red-throated). Diving action smooth and powerful, lunging forwards to slide below surface. **Adult summer** distinguished from all but Yellow-billed by black head and neck (with green gloss), almost complete collar of black and white stripes on mid-neck (not easily seen at long range) and very extensive white markings on both upperparts and flanks. From Yellow-billed by black bill (note: can be whitish towards tip). **Adult winter/Juvenile** distinguished from all but Yellow-billed by head and hindneck darker than back, white eye-ring (on many), pale indentation into dark hindneck at middle of neck (white in adult, brownish-white in juvenile) and broad dark half-collar at base of neck. From Yellow-billed by pale greyish-white bill with black culmen, black cutting edges to mandibles and often a black tip. (Note: bill sometimes looks all whitish-grey, especially in late winter, so superficially recalling winter Yellow-billed.) Always lacks distinctive bill shape of Yellow-billed (q.v.) and rarely holds bill angled upwards. Body outline is often subtly different: in Yellow-billed the highest point is usually above the mid-point while in Great Northern it is typically further forward, making body seem longer. Outline can vary, however. Beware young juvenile Great Northern or bleached adult winter with paler, browner head, hindneck and half-collar and, in case of former, obvious pale scaling on upperparts; such birds recall both Black-throated and Yellow-billed in



some respects. Birds moulting into adult summer plumage have blackish appearing on head/neck and more extensive white markings on upperparts than Black-throated. In flight, wingbeats slower, heavier, more flexible and less stiff than Black-throated. Head, bill and neck noticeably bulkier, the neck quite well drooped but head held up. Feet very prominently projecting, making broader wings seem very centrally positioned. Dark flank line very obvious and (in all but adult summer and some juveniles) white 'indentation' and dark half-collar on neck often visible and more obvious than in Yellow-billed.

SEX/AGE Juvenile resembles adult winter, but has prominent pale fringes to feathers of upperparts and paler, browner crown/hindneck (most obvious until middle of first winter). Lower face browner and some dusky brown on throat and foreneck. Pale areas above and below eye less white and so less obvious. Looks

a little less bulky, with bill a little slimmer.

VOICE On the breeding grounds gives a loud, repeated, haunting yodelling, 'a-a-whoo-kwee-wheoooo-kwee-wheoooo', also a tremulous scream resembling manic laughter, a long howl and a low moan.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally not uncommon. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Britain.) Like Black-throated, generally breeds by larger lakes with deeper water. At other times frequents coastal waters; occasionally inland lakes.

YELLOW-BILLED DIVER *Gavia adamsii*

Plate page 51

Yellow-billed Loon, White-billed Diver

L 76–91 cm, WS 137–152 cm.

IDENTIFICATION The largest diver (averaging larger and bulkier than Great Northern and often looking even thicker-necked). Distinctive pale bill is typically a little longer than bill of Great Northern with a straight (adult) or slightly convex (juvenile) culmen (obviously convex in Great Northerns of all ages) and distinctly up-angled lower mandible (less obviously so in juvenile), giving bill a noticeably upturned appearance. This effect added to by habit of pointing head and bill at a markedly upwards angle. (Recalls Red-throated in this respect, but overall bulk much greater with large head and thick neck.) **Adult summer** distinguished by pale straw-yellow bill (black or mainly black in Great Northern) with distinctive shape that contrasts with dark head. In close view, shows fewer and broader white stripes in neck patches, which taper towards nape (unlike Great Northern) and slightly larger and fewer white markings on back than Great Northern. **Adult winter/Juvenile** likely to be confused only with Great Northern. Distinguished by ivory-white bill (typically pale grey with blackish culmen, cutting edges to mandibles and often tip in Great Northern, but note that Yellow-billed can have dusky greyish bill base) with distinctive shape (less obvious in juvenile), paler overall coloration (especially on crown and hindneck, which are paler than upperparts) and less sharply defined and subtly different head/neck pattern. Latter is much less obviously dark-and-white, with dusky brownish-grey invading sides of neck, foreneck and lower face. Pale indentation and dark area at base of neck both less obvious than in Great Northern, although latter feature is often even more extensive, sometimes forming almost complete collar that contrasts with white breast. Yellow-billed often shows a characteristic but rather ill-defined oval dark patch at rear of ear-coverts. At very close range, shafts of primaries are whitish (brownish in Great Northern). See also difference in typical body outline described under Great Northern. (Beware young juvenile, or bleached adult winter-plumaged Great Northern in spring or summer, which can be confusingly pale above.) Birds moulting into adult summer plumage are very similar to Great Northern and best distinguished by bill colour and shape (but beware Great



Northern at similar stage, which can show quite extensive whitish at tip of bill). In flight looks elongated and bulky like Great Northern, with well projecting feet, but wingbeats rather slower and neck more uniformly thick. Head/neck pattern of adult winter/immature indistinct, without clear white indentation and solid dark half-collar of adult winter/older immature Great Northern, and often with dark eye clearly visible against pale background.

SEX/AGE Juvenile broadly resembles adult winter, but has conspicuous pale scaling on upperparts (most obvious to middle of first winter) and is paler on head and neck with less obvious dark area at base of neck. By first summer shows more contrasting head/neck pattern and has rather variegated upperparts, with a mixture of dark new feathers and pale-edged juvenile feathers. By second winter much as adult winter, but lacks white spotting on upperwing coverts (difficult to see in the field); in summer of third calendar year often inseparable from adult winter, but some show elements of adult summer plumage on upperparts and have very sooty head and neck. Adult summer plumage finally acquired in spring of fourth calendar year.

VOICE Resembles Great Northern but loud, repeated, haunting yodelling lower-pitched and tremulous scream higher-pitched.

STATUS/HABITAT Generally rare, although local concentrations occur (e.g. Varangerfjord). (Map note: may not breed regularly in Murmansk area.) Breeds by lakes of various sizes, not necessarily with deeper water. At other times found in coastal waters.

GREBES Podicipedidae

6 species (1 vagrant)

Fairly small to fairly large diving birds of fresh and inshore coastal waters. Extremely short tail makes them appear tailless, with distinctive 'round-sterned' look; the latter is a useful pointer on distant birds that is often evident as they dive. Grebes generally dive by slipping gently below surface with wings held close to body, although most species will jump clear of water at times. Entirely aquatic, even constructing floating nests of plant matter anchored to emergent vegetation. Chicks are prominently striped, a feature partly

persisting into juvenile plumage (especially on head/neck). Often quite gregarious outside breeding season, occurring in scattered concentrations. With exception of Little, generally silent outside breeding season. Feed mainly on fish and aquatic insects. In flight, relatively long neck is drooped below body level and large feet project beyond rear end of body. Flight is weak and fluttering over short distances, but quite strong when well underway.

Sexes similar, although females have less well-developed head plumes in adult summer plumage. Marked seasonal variation. Juveniles resemble winter adults (apart from retained downy striping on head/neck).

Complete post-breeding moult from late summer to autumn or early winter. Partial pre-breeding moult from winter to spring. Partial post-juvenile moult takes place from autumn to early winter.

Tailless, round-sterned appearance combined with long, slim neck distinguishes grebes from all other waterbirds apart from divers. But note that when neck retracted onto shoulders distant small grebes on sea could be confused with auks or even Long-tailed Duck. Latter, however, have pointed rear end and dive with wings partly open (while diving grebes would have wings closed and neck extended). Larger grebes distinguished at distance from divers by shorter bodies with even more rounded sterns, longer and more slender necks, and, in flight, by white patches on upperwing.

In adult summer plumage identification relatively easy, but in other plumages more difficult. Points to concentrate on are:

Head and bill shape • Head and neck pattern • Bill colour and pattern

PIED-BILLED GREBE *Podilymbus podiceps*

Plate page 52

L 31–38 cm, WS 56–64 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Stocky, medium-sized grebe with relatively large and chunky head, thick, stubby bill, stout neck and very blunt stern. Neck long when erect, but head often carried low on shoulders. Wary: sometimes swims with body either partly or wholly submerged when alarmed, or even with just bill showing. **Adult summer** distinguished by large and chunky head, thick, stubby, whitish bill with black band (that contrasts with greyish-brown face and neck and black throat patch), whitish eye-ring, and conspicuous white undertail coverts contrasting with dark upperparts and flanks.

Adult winter/Juvenile lacks black band on bill. Distinguished by large and chunky head, thick, stubby, yellowish to dusky-grey bill, whitish eye-ring (not present in juvenile), whitish throat contrasting with warm, rufous-brown face, neck, breast and flanks (these areas dull brownish, striped with white on face and neck, in juvenile), and conspicuous white undertail

coverts (somewhat less so in juvenile) contrasting with dark upperparts and flanks. Most similar to adult winter Little Grebe, which is noticeably smaller overall, with smaller, more rounded head, darker and slimmer bill, buffer throat and usually pale greyish-brown undertail coverts (although these are whitish in some individuals). In flight, Pied-billed shows all-dark upperwings (without the obvious white patches shown by all other grebes except Little). At most shows narrow pale trailing edge on secondaries.

SEX/AGE Juvenile separable (see above).

VOICE On breeding grounds, has a loud, resonant, hollow rattling call, at first fast, then slower and ending with a plaintive wail: 'kow-kow-kow-kow-kow-kow-kow-kowk-kowk-kowk-kowk-kowk-wherr'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe, Azores). Fresh-water lakes with emergent vegetation and marshes with some open water. Outside breeding season also on more open lakes and estuaries.

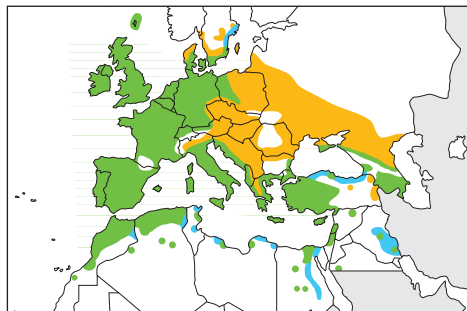
LITTLE GREBE *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Plate page 53

Dabchick

L 25–29 cm, WS 40–45 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Smallest and dumpy grebe, with relatively small, rounded head and small, weak bill often showing very obvious pale gape patch. Swims buoyantly, with blunt whitish stern which is often fluffed up and conspicuous. When alarmed, may partly submerge until only head showing. **Adult summer** distinguished by chestnut cheeks, throat and foreneck contrasting with otherwise dark brown plumage and pale yellow gape patch. **Adult winter/Juvenile** distinguished by rather uniform appearance: buff cheeks, throat, foreneck and flanks do not contrast greatly with brown crown, hindneck and upperparts. Gape patch not obvious. May be confused with Black-necked and to a lesser degree Horned, but is smaller, distinctly buff (not greyish or whitish) on foreneck and flanks, with shorter neck (although neck can look quite long when fully erect) and straighter bill, and, compared with Black-necked, has flatter crown (high



and peaked in Black-necked) and blunter stern (especially compared with Horned). Even more like vagrant Pied-billed Grebe (q.v.). In flight, typically shows drab

brownish upperwing, sometimes with narrow, paler trailing edge to secondaries or at most (in some individuals or races) a dull whitish panel on secondaries. All other grebes, apart from vagrant Pied-billed, have conspicuous white patches on upperwing.

SEX/AGE Juvenile resembles adult winter, but has dark stripes on face and neck. Neck and breast often tinged rufous-brown.

VOICE On breeding grounds, gives a distinctive high, shrill, trilling whinny, often rising and falling and not unlike call of Whimbrel. Also a variety of other twittering calls, a sharp metallic alarm call, 'whit, whit',

and a short, high-pitched contact call, 'beeh-ib'.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 3 races (nominate and *capensis* illustrated). Races *capensis* (Egypt, Caucasus to Armenia) and *iraquensis* (Iraq), especially the former, show more white on secondaries than typical individuals of nominate race.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Finland, Cyprus.) In breeding season, lakes and slow-flowing rivers with emergent vegetation, and marshes with open water. At other times, also on more open lakes, estuaries and, in some areas, sheltered coastal waters.

GREAT CRESTED GREBE *Podiceps cristatus*

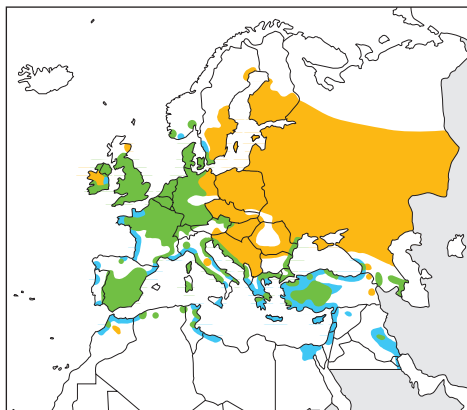
Plate page 52

L 46–51 cm, WS 85–90 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Largest, slimmest and most elegant grebe, with relatively long, slim neck and bill. When rolls on side during preening, whole body looks gleaming white. When resting, floats with head sunk low on back, displaying conspicuous white breast. Has elaborate courtship displays with 'tufts' and 'tip-pets' (facial plumes) elevated, including rising up, breast to breast, while trampling water, or rapidly pattering across surface. **Adult summer** distinguished by large size plus very distinctive black 'tufts' at rear of crown and black-tipped chestnut 'tip-pets' at sides of head. **Adult winter/Juvenile** most likely to be confused with Red-necked (q.v.). Distinguished by relatively clean white face, foreneck and breast contrasting with neat dark cap that does not extend to eye (or area in front of eye) and by long, slender, pale pinkish bill (with dark culmen). Horned is similar in whiteness of plumage but much smaller, with short, weak bill and shorter head with dark cap extending to level of eye. In flight, shows long, drooped, thin neck and conspicuous white patches on both forewing and secondaries, the former broadening towards the body and almost joining the latter.

SEX/AGE Juvenile resembles adult winter, but has dark stripes on neck.

VOICE Less vocal than some grebes. Calls on breeding grounds include a loud, repeated, barking 'vrek-



vrek-vrek' and a loud, growling 'gorrr'.

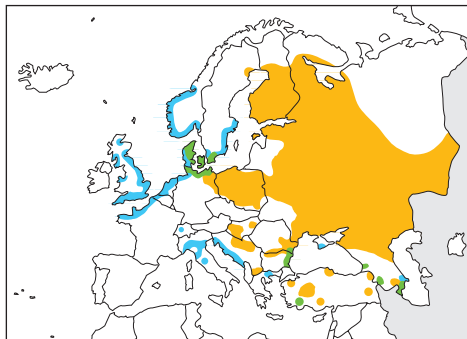
STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Sicily, Cyprus, Israel.) Breeds on freshwater and brackish lakes with emergent vegetation and locally on very slow-flowing rivers. Outside breeding season also on more open lakes, estuaries and fairly sheltered coastal waters.

RED-NECKED GREBE *Podiceps grisegena*

Plate page 52

L 40–50 cm, WS 77–85 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Large, thickset grebe, with typically (but not always) rather deeply wedge-shaped head, stout neck and relatively long, stout bill. At long range gives front-heavy impression. Often encountered singly: less sociable than Great Crested. On breeding waters tends to be more cover-loving than other grebes; often lurks just inside cover of emergent vegetation. **Adult summer** distinguished by pale grey face and throat, outlined in white (looks all whitish at a distance), combined with reddish-brown foreneck and breast, and blackish bill with yellow base. **Adult winter** quite similar to Great Crested, but distinguished by stockier body shape, drabber, duskier overall coloration with dark crown extending to eye level (with dusky area below eye and on cheeks), shorter neck with dusky-grey sides, and shorter, stouter blackish bill with yellow base. Overall plumage pattern not dissimilar to Black-necked, but Red-necked larger and more thickset, with two-toned bill pattern and typically a more wedge-shaped head (although can often look quite rounded). In flight, shows two white patches on upperwing, but forewing patch much less



extensive than in Great Crested, and looks less elegant overall with shorter and darker neck.

SEX/AGE Juvenile very similar to adult winter, but has dark stripes on face, reddish foreneck and less contrasting bill pattern (with yellowish extending further towards

bordered by white crescent to rear, wider dusky stripe joining blackish crown to dusky hindneck, and (usually) by dusky wash on sides and front of neck that contrasts with white breast and throat. Dark cap comes well below eye (especially on cheeks), and pale areas on rear cheeks are well separated in rear view by wide dusky stripe on nape. Owing to individual variation in both species, some individuals require special care: some Black-necked look surprisingly white on foreneck and dark on face is reduced, although always spreading below eye and onto cheeks, creating a different facial expression to Horned. Compared with Little Grebe is generally darker, greyer and longer-necked, lacking buff tone to plumage. Rare individuals in autumn have warm buffy wash on foreneck, inviting confusion with Horned or even Little. Latter could also recall Red-necked (q.v.),

but size and structure markedly different. In flight, upperwing pattern resembles Horned, but lacks small patch of white at base of forewing and white on trailing edge extends onto inner primaries.

SEX/AGE Juvenile closely resembles adult winter, but is a little browner on head/hindneck, a little paler on upperparts and flanks.

VOICE Mainly silent away from breeding grounds. Repertoire includes a plaintive, flute-like 'poo-eeet' and a shrill, chittering trill: 'tssrrroooeep'.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally fairly common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Ireland, Finland, Sicily, Morocco, Algeria.) In breeding season, freshwater lakes (occasionally slow-moving rivers) with emergent vegetation (occasionally without). At other times, mainly open lakes, estuaries and sheltered coastal waters.

ALBATROSSES Diomedidae

4 species (all vagrant)

Huge pelagic seabirds, all of which are vagrants to our region from Southern Oceans. Locally seen close to shore in normal range, but generally well offshore: often follow ships. Albatrosses alight on sea readily and may spend considerable lengths of time on water. Ride waves buoyantly and appear extremely bulky, with wings folded into three at rest. Have very long, narrow wings, long, heavy, plated bills, heavily built heads and necks, and short tails. Flight effortless, gliding and banking as they follow the contours of the waves with hardly a flap in windy weather, with wings stiffly outstretched in shearwater fashion, often rising up to 20 m or more above the surface when banking (at which point they are typically tilted right over on their sides). In calm weather progression much less easy, with more flapping: birds are inclined to settle on sea in such conditions. Patter along surface when taking off. Do not normally visit land away from breeding colonies. Gait awkward and waddling. Feed on fish, squid and offal taken at surface or just below by up-ending or shallow diving (either from surface or from air, with wings half open).

Sexes similar. No seasonal variation. Juveniles more or less distinct.

Smaller species have complete post-breeding moult annually, lasting up to a year; larger species have a complete moult over two years. Juveniles and immatures have similar length cycles. Adult plumage not attained for a number of years in smaller, black-backed species (known collectively as 'mollymawks'), not for many years in Wandering, and precise ageing difficult owing to extended moult cycles.

Owing to huge size, relatively long, narrow wings and gliding flight, albatrosses are unlikely to be confused with other birds apart from giant petrels (see Wandering Albatross). Upperpart coloration of some species superficially resembles that of adult black-backed gulls. Although gulls do glide for long periods, their wings are relatively shorter and broader and sooner or later they move their wings with flexible beats. Gannets and boobies have relatively shorter wings, longer, wedge-shaped tails and markedly conical bills.

Most of the albatrosses recorded from our region are very similar in upperpart and body coloration. In consequence points to concentrate on are:

Precise underwing pattern • Bill colour and pattern

Other species (or confusing subspecies of species already recorded) could occur in the region (either as natural vagrants or released by sailors), so reference should be made to *Seabirds: an identification guide* (Harrison 1985) if an albatross is observed.

BLACK-BROWED ALBATROSS *Diomedea melanophrys*

Plate page 54

L 80–95 cm, WS 213–246 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Vagrant from Southern Oceans. Most frequently recorded albatross in N Atlantic. Often follows ships. **Adult** distinguished from other

albatrosses by very broad black band along leading edge of underwing, all orange-yellow bill and dark 'brow' (much more conspicuous than in other molly-

mawks). Broadest point of black band is about mid-way along arm. **Juvenile** distinguished from all albatrosses by largely dark underwing (which shows only an ill-defined whitish strip along centre), by greyish-brown bill with blackish tip (can look quite obviously black-tipped) and (from Yellow-nosed but not Shy) by dusky collar extending from nape almost to encircle neck.

SEX/AGE In immature, basal two-thirds of blackish-

tipped bill first becomes pale brownish, then yellowish, before all orange-yellow adult coloration adopted.

VOICE Usually silent at sea.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe, Spitsbergen). Only nominate race recorded. Away from breeding colonies pelagic, only locally coming close to shore. Several individuals have taken up long-term residence in Northern Gannet colonies in our region.

YELLOW-NOSED ALBATROSS *Diomedea chlororhynchos*

Plate page 54

L 71–81 cm, WS 178–205 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Vagrant from Southern Oceans. Smallest and most slender of the albatrosses recorded from our region (although differences are slight among mollymawks). Often follows ships. **Adult** distinguished by narrow black border to underwing (lacking 'thumb mark' of Shy), black bill with orange-yellow culmen and pinkish-orange tip (often appears all black at a distance), and (in nominate race) pale grey head and hindneck (becoming whitish in heavily

worn individuals). **Juvenile** distinguished by narrow black border to underwing (lacking 'thumb mark' of Shy) and all-black bill. Head and hindneck white. Some have broader black band on leading edge of wing, but never as much as adult Black-browed.

VOICE Usually silent at sea.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe; nominate race). Away from breeding colonies pelagic, only locally coming close to shore.

SHY ALBATROSS *Diomedea cauta*

Plate page 55

White-capped Albatross

L 96–100 cm, WS 198–256 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Vagrant from Southern Oceans. Slightly larger than other mollymawks, but size difference unlikely to be of use in our region. Often follows ships. **Adult** distinguished by distinctive underwing pattern with very narrow black border to white wing and small but distinct black patch, or 'thumb mark', at base of leading edge which projects into coverts (visible at quite surprising distances if one is looking out for it); also by pale yellowish-grey bill with yellower tip. Head of nominate race is white (with grey cheeks,

not easily visible). **Juvenile** distinguished by underwing pattern (see adult) and by pale bluish-grey bill with black tip. Head grey. **Immature** often shows white head with partial darkish collar and juvenile bill pattern; best distinguished from juvenile/immature Black-browed by underwing pattern.

VOICE Usually silent at sea.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Eilat, Israel; nominate race). Away from breeding colonies pelagic, only locally coming close to shore.

WANDERING ALBATROSS *Diomedea exulans*

Plate page 55

L 110–135 cm, WS 272–345 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Vagrant from Southern Oceans. Very large, especially long-winged albatross, substantially larger than the mollymawks and with a very different plumage pattern at any age. Often follows ships. Species distinguished by huge size, largely white underwing with dark tip and narrow dark trailing edge, large pale pink bill, and feet projecting well beyond tail in flight. Adult also distinguished by white back, largely white upperwing and white tail (often with black sides), quite unlike mollymawks, which have all-dark backs and upperwings and darkish tails. Juvenile also distinguished by wholly dark brown plumage (apart from white face patch and largely white underwing). Immature in any stage also distinguished by presence of at least some white on back and upperwing (see Sex/Age). Confusion with species other than albatrosses unlikely. Gannets and boobies are much smaller, with different shape (see family introduction). Plumage pattern only superficially similar: none shows combination

of largely white underwing, with small dark tip and narrow dark trailing edge, and pale pink bill (and white face patch of juvenile Wandering).

SEX/AGE Adult female retains some dark markings on head, body and tail, with white area on upperwing less extensive than in male. Immatures show increasing extent of white with age. Show broad brown breast band and mostly dark upperparts in early years, then white patches on centre of upperwing and rather whitish back and rump contrasting with otherwise dark upperwing. Eventually head and body largely white with broad white wedge across centre of dark upperwing, before adult plumage finally attained after 20 years or more.

VOICE Usually silent at sea, but sometimes gives a throaty bleating sound when squabbling over food.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). Only smaller nominate race recorded to date. Away from breeding colonies pelagic, only locally coming close to shore.

PETRELS & SHEARWATERS Procellariidae

119 species (8 vagrant)

Fairly small to fairly large pelagic seabirds, coming to land only at breeding colonies and even then the great majority do so only under cover of darkness. Only Northern Fulmar readily seen in inshore waters in all weather, but most come close inshore at times, especially in windy conditions. Petrels and shearwaters, together with albatrosses and storm-petrels, are known as 'tubenoses' because of their tubular nostrils positioned along the ridge of the bill (i.e. culmen). All are similar in basic shape, with long, narrow, pointed wings and shortish tails. They are masters of the marine environment, spending much of their lives on the wing. In average conditions, flight consists of a series of rapid wingbeats on stiffly held wings followed by long glides and shallow banking turns with wings typically held slightly bowed downwards. In windy weather, they ride the air currents above the waves, following the contours of the sea surface, making few, if any, wingbeats and banking and gliding on stiffly held wings (a process known as 'shearwatering'), rearing up 10–20 m or more above the water at times (at which point they are often tilted right over on their sides). Food chiefly small fish, cephalopods and crustaceans; also offal and carrion. Feed by shallow plunge-diving, by diving from surface or while sitting on surface; some (especially *Pterodroma* petrels) also while pattering on surface in flight. Colonial breeders; those nesting in our region choose holes and crevices, or open ledges (Northern Fulmar). Often form large 'rafts' at sea when roosting or feeding. Clumsy on land, able only to shuffle along owing to rear positioning of legs. When rising from water they initially patter along surface. Typically silent away from breeding colonies (with exception of Northern Fulmar).

Sexes similar. No seasonal variation. Juveniles and immatures resemble adults. Several species polymorphic, occurring in both light and dark morphs.

Complete post-breeding moult commences shortly after (or even during) nesting and finishes during autumn or winter. Post-juvenile moult is complete, commencing shortly after fledging and finishing during autumn or winter. Immatures have complete moult over much the same period as adults.

Most likely to be confused with gulls (especially immature gulls) and skuas at longer distances. Both the latter will rear up high (turned over on their sides) and bank and glide for some time and give a 'shearwatering' impression, but their looser, less stiff wingbeats and more flexed-back wings when gliding differentiate them even at long range. The smallest shearwaters with their rapid wingbeats can look quite auk-like at times, but auks fly with almost whirring wingbeats on wings that appear too small for their plump bodies. In most cases small shearwaters in rapidly flapping flight eventually bank and glide, revealing their true nature. Points to concentrate on when identifying petrels and shearwaters are:

Upperpart pattern • Head pattern and bill colour • Underwing pattern • Basic structure • Flight action

Although flight action is a useful aid to identification, it can be difficult to assess objectively unless the observer has considerable experience of several species. It is affected both by wind speed and by the type of activity in which the bird is involved (e.g. feeding, travelling). Moult and abrasion can affect appearance of upperwing in particular, and the wide range of lighting conditions at sea can enhance or subdue certain plumage features. These factors should be constantly borne in mind when identifying shearwaters and petrels. Other species of petrels and shearwaters could well be recorded as vagrants from our region in future, so observers faced with such a possibility should consult *Seabirds: an identification guide* (Harrison 1985).

NORTHERN FULMAR *Fulmarus glacialis*

Plate page 57

Fulmar

L 45–50 cm, WS 102–112 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Large petrel, intermediate between shearwaters and gulls in shape, with coloration (especially of light morph) recalling latter. Head and body rather chunky, with stout, neckless appearance, but wings shorter and narrower than in gulls. Flight action recalls albatrosses more than shearwaters, consisting of several rapid wingbeats alternating with prolonged glides on stiffly held straight wings, using air currents above sea surface or along nesting cliffs and in windier conditions effortlessly banking and gliding, following the contours of the sea, or bounding in high arcs (tilted over almost vertically), with hardly a wingbeat. Flight is thus very different from that of gulls. Polymorphic, with intermediates. Freely visits breeding cliffs in daytime, unlike our other tubenoses. (The chicks on the

breeding ledges, often left for long periods alone, resemble fat balls of blue-grey down.) Often follows ships and scavenges. Sociable; frequently gathers in flocks on water, often not far offshore. May be distinguished from shearwaters by shorter, broader wings, broader tail, thicker and shorter bill, uniformly white (pale morph) or grey (dark morph) head, stocky, bull-necked appearance, and fairly uniform grey upperparts, upperwing and tail (light morph) or whole plumage (dark morph). Pale morph distinguished from larger adult gulls with grey upperparts by stiffer, straight-winged flight action (see above), bull-necked appearance, short, stubby bill, shorter, narrower wings with pale panel on primaries, lack of clean-cut black on wingtip and lack of white trailing edge to upper-

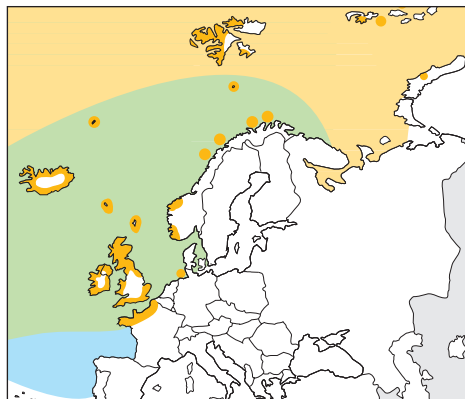
wing. On breeding ledges looks creamier-white on head and breast than gulls, with dark 'eye-shadow' created by dark patch in front of eye. Takes to air from cliff ledges by literally falling off and opening wings, and rises from sea by pattering along surface, unlike gulls. Some intermediate individuals with greyish crown and nape (as well as grey upperparts, upperwing and tail) can suggest Cory's Shearwater, but latter distinctly browner, with structural differences (see above) and looser wingbeats. Other intermediates are uniform pale grey (paler than dark morph). Worn birds often show brownish cast on upperparts, upperwing and tail (pale morph) or entire plumage (dark morph), and pale panel on primaries becomes more conspicuous.

VOICE Quite noisy at breeding sites, where predominant calls are a slow cackling 'aaark-aaaww-aaark-aaaww-aaark' and a faster cackling 'cock-cock-cock-cock-aaaww-cock-cock-cock', delivered at every pitch from quiet crooning to loud and excited. Often silent at sea, but guttural cackling given by feeding groups.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Pale morph overwhelmingly dominant (over 99%) in south of range. Dark morph predominant in extreme north, rapidly becoming a minority further south.

UNUSUAL VARIANTS Albinism occurs occasionally. Symmetrically mottled partial albinos can vaguely suggest Cape Petrel (q.v.).

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (Present throughout



mapped marine range all year except in far north when sea ice unbroken. Has increased in numbers and extended breeding range southwards, with prospecting now recorded in Denmark.) Nests on cliff ledges, occasionally even stone walls, buildings etc, usually, but not always, close to sea. Vacates colonies only in autumn/early winter. Frequents both inshore and offshore waters.

CAPE PETREL *Daption capense*

Pintado Petrel

L 38–40 cm, WS 81–91 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Vagrant from Southern Oceans. Distinctive large petrel with a fulmar-like flight action: a burst of stiff-winged beats is followed by glide. In strong winds bounds high above waves. Often follows ships. Species distinguished by unmistakable piebald plumage pattern. (Beware rarely encountered mottled

Plate page 56

partial-albino Northern Fulmar or partial-albino Sooty Shearwater with symmetrical patterning which could suggest this species.)

VOICE Generally silent away from breeding colonies.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). Pelagic away from breeding colonies.

FEA'S PETREL *Pterodroma feae*

Cape Verde Petrel, Gon-gon

L 36–37 cm, WS 92–95 cm.

IDENTIFICATION One of only two *Pterodroma* (gadfly) petrels breeding in our region. A compact petrel, recalling Manx and Yelkouan Shearwaters in size, with rapid, impetuous, flight action typical of the genus, several rapid wingbeats to gain height being followed by fast downward glide on slightly flexed and bowed wings, frequently making very high bounding arcs into the air in windier conditions (but flight over land to inland breeding sites consists of steady wingbeats). Only occasionally follows ships. Species distinguished from similar-looking shearwaters (especially Cory's, Manx and Yelkouan) by more compact, thicker-set (bullet-shaped) look to head and body, shorter, thicker bill, narrower, more sharply pointed and angled wings, and distinctive flight action (see above). Also differs from all shearwaters and all vagrant *Pterodroma* petrels of region except Soft-plumaged by combination of gleaming white underbody contrasting markedly with dusky-grey underwing (which often looks blackish in strong light). While whitish areas across centre and leading edge of underwing are often not obvious in the field, the dark M-shaped band across the upperwing is sometimes quite apparent, recalling Cory's Shearwater. Lacks complete (or virtually complete) dark breast band



Plate page 56

typical of Soft-plumaged Petrel (q.v.), but individuals often have a grey smudge extending down either side of breast (and these can look quite dark at times). See also very similar Zino's Petrel.

VOICE At breeding sites gives a long, mournful wail, recalling Tawny Owl, ending in a hiccup (latter audible only at close range). Sometimes gives a whimpering cry and a continuous cackling 'gon-gon'. Silent at sea.

TAXONOMY Until recently treated as a race of Soft-plumaged Petrel *P. mollis*.

STATUS/HABITAT Generally rare, but not uncommon around breeding sites. (may also breed Azores.) Breeds on cliffs and crags, often well inland. Pelagic, normally coming inshore only close to breeding sites.

ZINO'S PETREL *Pterodroma madeira*

Plate page 56

Madeira Petrel, Freira

L 32–33 cm, WS 83–86 cm.

IDENTIFICATION One of only two *Pterodroma* (gadfly) petrels breeding in our region and much the rarer. Extremely similar to Fea's Petrel (q.v.), with no consistent plumage differences yet determined. Differs in being about 10% smaller overall with significantly smaller head and more slender bill. Appears shorter- and broader-winged, with stubbier body. Separation in the field may not be possible unless views are quite exceptional and, even then, direct comparison with *feae* would be desirable. In the hand the two can be separated on measurements: Zino's: wing 247–254 mm, tail 104–110 mm, tarsus 30–31 mm, bill 24.5–26.5 mm; Fea's: wing 263–273 mm, tail 108–115 mm, tarsus 32–38 mm, bill 26–30 mm.

VOICE Calls at breeding sites perhaps sharper and not quite so mournful as in Fea's Petrel (q.v.). Sometimes



gives a whimpering cry. Silent at sea.

TAXONOMY Until recently treated as a race of Soft-plumaged Petrel *P. mollis*.

STATUS/HABITAT Extremely rare and endangered. (Also recorded from Azores, where it may even breed.) Breeds on cliffs and crags on the main island of the Madeira group only, often well inland. Pelagic, normally coming inshore only close to breeding sites.

SOFT-PLUMAGED PETREL *Pterodroma mollis*

Plate page 56

L 33–36 cm, WS 86–92 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Vagrant from Southern Oceans. Plumage very similar to Fea's and Zino's Petrels, and field separation of the three still controversial. More variable in size, some being as small as Zino's, others as large as Fea's. Differs in having (usually) a complete dark breast band, but this is of variable width. In many the breast band narrows and is of reduced intensity across the centre of the upper breast: in some there is a complete gap in this area. Extent of variation in breast band of Zino's still uncertain, however, so this feature should be used with caution (although any bird with broad, unbroken band would certainly be Soft-plumaged). Also shows more

uniform upperparts (with mid-grey uppertail coverts and tail); in both Fea's and Zino's the uppertail coverts and tail are pale, pearly grey and contrast with darker grey mantle and back. Bill proportionately a little less deep than typical Fea's (and heavier than Zino's), but this difference unlikely to be of use in the field. A very rare dark morph, sooty-grey overall apart from a reduced white patch on underwing (and possibly an indistinct darker breast band) has been recorded.

VOICE Silent at sea.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Madeira, possibly elsewhere). Pelagic away from breeding colonies.

ATLANTIC PETREL *Pterodroma incerta*

Plate page 56

Schlegel's Petrel

L 43–44 cm, WS 104 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Vagrant from S Atlantic (breeds Tristan da Cunha group). Large *Pterodroma*, slightly larger than Sooty Shearwater, with flight action typical of the genus (see Fea's). Often follows ships. Dark underwing which contrasts with mainly white underbody recalls Soft-plumaged, but unlikely to be confused except at very long range. Dark hood and vent contrasting with white belly distinguish it from Fea's or Zino's and also from smaller Bulwer's and Jouanin's

(but note that worn individuals can show whitish throat, greyish sides to face and whitish collar across nape, making separation from Fea's or Zino's less straightforward). See also vagrant Herald Petrel *P. arminjoniana* in Appendix.

VOICE Silent at sea.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Eilat, Israel). Pelagic away from breeding colonies.

BLACK-CAPPED PETREL *Pterodroma hasitata*

Plate page 56

Capped Petrel

L 35–46 cm, WS 89–102 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant (breeds Hispaniola in Caribbean). Large *Pterodroma*, larger than Manx and Yelkouan Shearwaters, with flight action typical of the genus (see Fea's). Species distinguished from similar-looking shearwaters by differences in structure and flight action in same way as Fea's (q.v.) and, in case of Great Shearwater, by much greater extent of white on collar and rump (although some individuals have these areas largely or wholly obscured by dark feathering), white forehead and

lack of dark smudge on belly (although this not always easy to see on Great Shearwater and sometimes absent). From Fea's and Zino's by extensive white (bordered black, with diagonal black bar of varying prominence) on underwing and, usually, by obvious white rump and collar contrasting with brownish-black cap.

VOICE Silent at sea.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). Pelagic away from breeding colonies.

BULWER'S PETREL *Bulweria bulwerii*

Plate page 62

L 26–28 cm, WS 68–73 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Smallest true petrel of region, but substantially larger, longer-winged and longer-tailed than Swinhoe's Storm-petrel, which it superficially recalls. Flight action buoyant and erratic, with wings held slightly forward and bowed; a series of rapid wingbeats followed by a short twisting glide. Generally keeps close to water. When feeding, circles or zigzags low over surface. Only occasionally fans tail to reveal wedge shape; tail normally looks long and tapering (sometimes held slightly raised). Usually solitary at sea. Does not normally follow ships. Most likely to be confused with vagrant Jouanin's (q.v.). Distinguished from dark shearwaters and Swinhoe's Storm-petrel by even longer-winged appearance, long, pointed tail, flight action (see above), bill shape (much shorter than in shearwaters, thicker than in Swinhoe's Storm-petrel) and size (much smaller than dark shearwaters, substantially larger than Swinhoe's Storm-petrel). Bill usually pointed well downwards in flight. Paler brown diagonal band across upper-



wing coverts is visible only at close range.

VOICE At breeding colonies gives a low barking 'chuff', repeated at varying speed and pitch, recalling steam engine.

STATUS/HABITAT Uncommon. (Map note: in summer marine range extends north of Azores and east to waters off Portugal. Found all year around Cape Verde Is but mostly disperses into tropical Atlantic for winter.) Breeds in holes and crevices on rocky slopes near shore. Pelagic away from breeding colonies.

JOUANIN'S PETREL *Bulweria fallax*

Plate page 62

L 30–32 cm, WS 76–83 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Vagrant from NW Indian Ocean (breeding grounds unknown but perhaps on islands off Arabian Peninsula). Medium-sized petrel that is similar to Bulwer's in character, but with quicker, more powerful, flight action. Has steady flight action with tern-like wingbeats, intermittently banking away sharply to glide along wave troughs before rising and continuing once more with steady wingbeats. In very calm conditions beats wings almost continually, recalling a small skua but in windier conditions makes high sweeping arcs interspersed with short series of rapid wingbeats (recalling *Pterodroma*). Holds wings slightly forward and bowed, like Bulwer's. Species distinguished from Bulwer's by larger size, rather different flight action, proportionately heavier head and thicker bill (which create heavier look overall), and characteristic 'step' in

outline of long tail (with central feathers projecting). Tail appears less slender. Typically lacks pale band across upperwing coverts (but this often impossible to see on Bulwer's, and some worn Jouanin's show a pale band). At close range small pale area around base of bill and shortness of outer tail feathers may be noticeable. Distinctions from Swinhoe's Storm-petrel as for Bulwer's. Long tail, all-dark underwing, rather thick bill (usually held at a distinctly angled downwards) and different flight action separates Jouanin's from larger Sooty Shearwater and from vagrant Flesh-footed or dark morph Wedge-tailed Shearwaters. Head of latter is noticeably slimmer than in Jouanin's.

VOICE Silent at sea.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Italy). Pelagic away from breeding colonies.

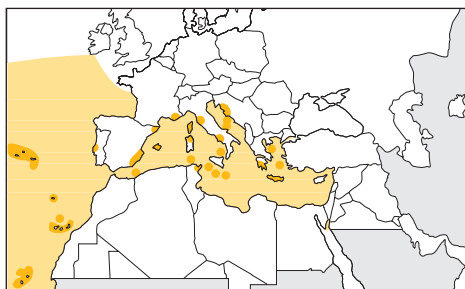
CORY'S SHEARWATER *Calonectris diomedea*

Plate page 59

Cape Verde Shearwater (*C. d. edwardsii*)

L 41–46 cm, WS 95–125 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Large, heavily built shearwater, similar in size to Great. Flight action often seems lazy, yet in fact is often swift. Several deep but rather loose wingbeats (less stiff than other shearwaters) are followed by a long, low glide that is sometimes banking or circling. Typically holds wings slightly pressed forward and gently flexed, with a slight bow. In windier conditions rises in long, high sweeping arcs and will even soar at times. Frequently follows ships and scavenges. Often forms large rafts. Distinguished from Great by lack of capped appearance (mouse-brown head merges slowly into whitish throat and foreneck), pale yellowish bill with quite conspicuous dark sub-terminal area (but not race *edwardsii*, which has all-dark bill), lack of dark patch on belly (but this not always present on Great), lack of dark markings across underwing coverts, distinctly more extensive black tip to underwing, and longer, looser-winged, heavier-headed appearance. Many Cory's lack the narrow white band across uppertail coverts shown by Great,



but some Cory's do show a narrow, indistinct white band and contrastingly dark tail can create illusion of pale band even when none exists. Coloration quite close to Yelkouan of race *mauretanicus* ('Balearic Shearwater'); distinguished by larger, heavier appearance, rather 'scaly' grey-brown upperparts (often with

contrastingly darker diagonal band across wing coverts), looser flight, paler head (with darker mask), thicker, mainly pale bill (except *edwardsii*) and much whiter underwing and underbody (including vent). Confusion also possible at long range with Northern Fulmar, but latter has shorter, stockier head and body, shorter, thicker bill, greyer and generally paler-looking upperparts, shorter wings and stiffer wing action and, in light morph, all-white head (but beware intermediates with grey crown and nape). See also Fea's and Zino's Petrels. Bleached and worn Cory's can look very pale brown above.

VOICE On breeding grounds main call is a harsh, snoring, repeated wail, 'keowwrrah, keowwrrah' (with slight variations in each race). Silent at sea.

TAXONOMY Form *edwardsii* is probably best treated as a separate species, **Cape Verde Shearwater**.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Quite marked. 3 races (*borealis* and *edwardsii* illustrated). Cape Verde Is race *edwardsii* about 10% smaller than northern races and more slightly built: somewhat darker brown neck and mantle, producing greater contrast with whitish under-

parts, and has particularly dark sooty brown hood contrasting with paler hindneck and whitish chin and throat; bill proportionately more slender, and greyish-horn with blackish subterminal area (looks rather uniform dingy grey at sea). Of the northern races, *borealis* (breeds Atlantic) is slightly larger and darker than nominate race (breeds Mediterranean) but probably inseparable in the field.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. (Map note: in summer marine range extends north to SW Ireland and approaches to English Channel, and throughout Mediterranean as far as Sea of Marmara. Even visits Gulf of Aqaba. Some may remain around Cape Verde Is all year, but otherwise vacates region to winter in S Atlantic. Breeding areas seemingly mapped for mainland coasts in fact refer to nearby offshore islands. May breed outside mapped areas among Aegean Is and on Islas Chafarinas off Morocco.) Breeds in holes and crevices on cliffs, rocky slopes and (where undisturbed) even gently sloping ground, sometimes well inland. Pelagic away from breeding colonies, but regularly seen quite close inshore.

STREAKED SHEARWATER *Calonectris leucomelas*

Plate page 58

White-faced Shearwater

L 48 cm, WS 122 cm

IDENTIFICATION Vagrant (breeds N Pacific, wintering southwards, including E Indian Ocean). Resembles Cory's in overall size, structure, flight action and basic coloration but is slightly sleeker and finer-billed, with whitish head contrasting with dark brownish streaking on hindcrown and nape, more 'scaly' upperparts (owing to paler feather fringes), and distinctive streaked dark carpal patch on underwing (and, less obviously, a small dark notch at base of leading edge). Amount of white on head varies,

some only whitish about face, on others white extends over most of head. Beware Cory's with pale (bleached) head and neck, which can look white-headed in bright light (such birds, however, lack dark nape and are very pale on mantle). Like Cory's, some birds may show a whitish crescent on uppertail coverts.

VOICE Silent at sea.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Eilat, Israel). Pelagic away from breeding colonies.

FLESH-FOOTED SHEARWATER *Puffinus carneipes*

Plate page 58

Pale-footed Shearwater

L 41–48 cm, WS 99–109 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Vagrant (breeds Southern Oceans, wintering north to N Pacific and N Indian Ocean). Large, rather broad-winged all-dark shearwater. Flight action rather slow and ponderous, with slow, deep wingbeats and long glides on stiff wings. In windier conditions shows more typical shearwater flight of long arcs. Most likely to be confused with Sooty, which is smaller and narrower-winged. Best distinguished by pale pink bill with blackish tip (and pale pink legs, if visible) contrasting with overall dark

appearance and almost wholly dark underwing (although primary bases a little paler than coverts in good light). From dark morph Wedge-tailed by pale pink bill with blackish tip and almost wholly dark underwing; also by rather straight wings, not bowed and held forward. See also skuas (dark morphs and juveniles) and Jouanin's Petrel.

VOICE Silent at sea.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Eilat, Israel). Pelagic away from breeding colonies.

GREAT SHEARWATER *Puffinus gravis*

Plate page 59

Greater Shearwater (N America)

L 43–51 cm, WS 100–118 cm.

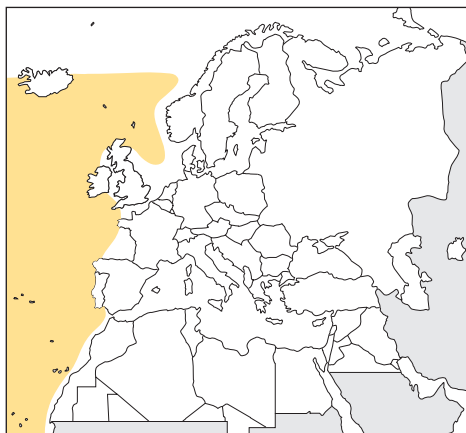
IDENTIFICATION Large, heavily built shearwater approaching Cory's in bulk. Flight strong and powerful, recalling Cory's with its high, bounding arcs in windier conditions but wingbeats stiffer and wings held straighter, less pressed forward, flexed and bowed, recalling Manx and Yelkouan in this respect. Often follows ships and scavenges. Can be distin-

guished from Cory's by dark cap contrasting with white underparts, whitish collar (absent in some), all-dark bill (although this is shared with Cory's of race *edwardsii*), less extensive dark tip to underwing, band of dark mottling across underwing coverts (hard to see at long range) and different flight action. Darkish belly patch is a good feature when present, but even then

can be hard to see unless bird banks right over. Whitish band on uppertail coverts is also present in some Cory's. Moulting birds often show whitish bands on upperwing across base of secondaries. See also Black-capped Petrel.

VOICE Generally silent at sea, but makes harsh squeals when squabbling over food.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally fairly common but generally uncommon, especially from Scotland northwards. A non-breeding visitor from S Atlantic (spending northern summer mainly in NW Atlantic), mostly occurring in our region during southbound migration in late summer/autumn. Pelagic away from breeding colonies, only coming inshore during strong winds.



WEDGE-TAILED SHEARWATER *Puffinus pacificus*

Plate page 58

L 41–46 cm, WS 96–104 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Vagrant (breeds from Indian Ocean eastwards to Pacific). Medium-large polymorphic shearwater (dark morph much commoner), with intermediates. Flight typically rather buoyant with slow flaps and short glides (often circling), although more rapid and bounding in strong winds; distinctly broad-based wings held well forwards and bowed when gliding. Dark morph distinguished from other all-dark shearwaters by relatively long tail typically giving slender, tapering appearance to rear body (wedge shape apparent only from time to time, when manoeuvring), almost uniform dark underwing, upperwing often with obvious pale area on coverts (most obvious in worn birds), and distinctive flight action. Head and all-dark bill rather slender, adding to overall slender body shape. Feet pale pinkish. Sooty has chunkier head, obvious silvery patches on underwing coverts, shorter, inconspicuous tail, dark feet, and narrower wings that are held straighter when gliding. Flesh-

footed heavier and chunkier overall, with stouter, largely pale pink bill, shorter, less conspicuous tail, silvery undersides to primaries, and straighter wings when gliding. Jouanin's Petrel distinctly smaller (although has similar long-tailed appearance), with heavier head and bill (latter usually held at a downwards angle), pale upperwing band often more defined, narrower wings and typically high bounding flight. Pale morph recalls Cory's in coloration (being paler brown above than dark morph) but is smaller overall than typical Cory's, with slim, dark bill, smaller head, longer and more slender tail, broader dark trailing edge to underwing and brown mottling on flanks and undertail coverts (visible only at close range). (Beware possible, if unlikely, confusion with smaller, dark-billed *edwardsii* race of Cory's of Cape Verde Is.)

VOICE Silent at sea.

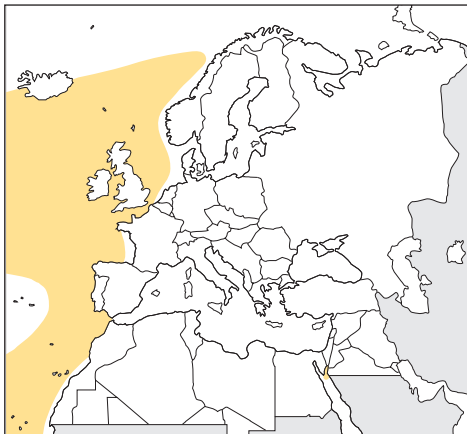
STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Egypt). Pelagic away from breeding colonies.

SOOTY SHEARWATER *Puffinus griseus*

Plate page 59

L 40–51 cm, WS 94–109 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Rather large shearwater and the only regularly occurring all-dark species. Wings long and narrow, appearing set relatively far back along body and usually held in backward-angled position. Flight action strong, with several rapid, stiff-winged flaps followed by a long glide. In stronger winds progression faster, banking and swinging (although less prone to high bounding than other large species). Does not often follow ships, but scavenges at trawlers. Species distinguished (from all but vagrant Flesh-footed and Wedge-tailed, or Jouanin's Petrel, q.v.) by wholly dark plumage, apart from pale silvery underwing coverts, long wings and distinctive flight action. Pale underwing coverts often show conspicuously when bird banks over on its side (and in strong light entire underwing can seem pale silvery-grey), but in dull conditions often looks all-dark. Bill and legs dark. Can be confused with darkest *mauretanicus* Mediterranean, but latter smaller, with at least whitish centre to belly (although can look all-dark at long range), and is browner overall, shorter-winged and not so heavy-bodied. For distinctions from dark skuas see family introduction.



VOICE Silent at sea.

UNUSUAL VARIANTS Partial albinism rare, but some symmetrically patterned individuals can vaguely suggest Cape Petrel (q.v.).

STATUS/HABITAT Locally fairly common but generally uncommon. A non-breeding visitor from Southern

Oceans (spending northern summer mainly in NW Atlantic), mostly occurring in our region during south-bound migration in late summer/autumn. Rare in Mediterranean but surprisingly regular in Gulf of Aqaba. Mainly pelagic away from breeding colonies, but locally comes close inshore.

MANX SHEARWATER *Puffinus puffinus*

L 31–36 cm, WS 76–85 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Medium-sized shearwater. The commonest species in NW Europe. Flight fast, with series of rapid, shallow, stiff-winged beats close to water followed by low glide, often swinging from side to side. Typically holds wings rather straight. In stronger winds progression mostly by gliding with wings flexed back, rising above skyline in shallow (sometimes high) arcs. Does not often follow ships but scavenges at trawlers. Often forms rafts. Manx distinguished from all other species (apart from Yelkouan, Little and Audubon's, q.v.) by blackish upperparts contrasting sharply with almost wholly white underparts and underwing (the latter being dark only on wingtip and trailing edge). Confusion most likely with very similar Yelkouan.

VOICE On breeding grounds typically a loud, raucous, cackling and crooning 'cack-cack-cack-car-roo', but much variation in pitch, making calls often sound squealing or howling. Usually silent at sea.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (Map note: in summer marine range extends from S coast of Iceland east to N coast of Norway and south through Atlantic and North Sea to Azores and Canary Is. Almost all winter off S America. Breeding areas seemingly mapped for mainland coasts generally refer to nearby offshore

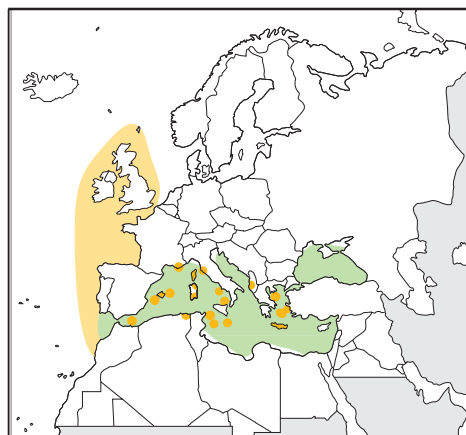


Plate page 61

islands.) Breeds in burrows and crevices on slopes and flat tops of islands. Away from breeding colonies mainly pelagic, but locally comes close inshore.

YELKOUAN SHEARWATER *Puffinus yelkouan*

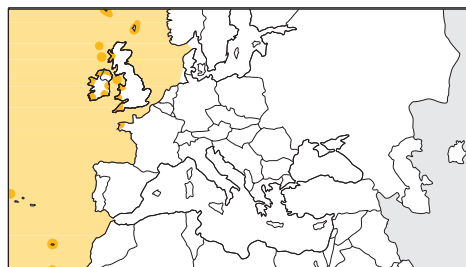
Plate page 61

Mediterranean Shearwater, Levantine Shearwater; Balearic Shearwater (*P. y. mauretanicus*)

L 30–38 cm, WS 76–89 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Medium-sized shearwater with marked geographic variation in appearance. Flight action as Manx (q.v.), but tends to look more ponderous and fluttering (perhaps mainly owing to calm conditions in which it is often seen). Does not often follow ships but scavenges at trawlers. Often forms rafts.

Yelkouan Shearwater (nominate race) distinguished from all other species (apart from Manx, Little and Audubon's, q.v.) by blackish-brown upperparts contrasting sharply with almost wholly white underparts and underwing (latter being dark only on wingtip, trailing edge and band across secondary coverts). Differs from very similar Manx in having browner upperparts, some brown on flanks, axillaries and undertail coverts, a diagonal brown band across underwing coverts, shorter tail and deeper-chested appearance (but Manx, especially worn birds, can look brownish above in strong light). Feet are proportionately larger and extend slightly beyond tail, tending to cancel out shorter-tailed appearance at long range. **Balearic Shearwater** (race *mauretanicus*) similar to nominate Yelkouan in having browner upperparts, shorter tail and deeper-chested appearance than Manx, but is also somewhat larger with a more attenuated body, longer wings and greater feet projection beyond tail. Also has quite variable underpart coloration: some resemble nominate Yelkouan (and thus are rather like Manx below, but with dark flanks, axillaries and undertail coverts and a diagonal dark band across underwing coverts), many differ in having a broad dusky breast



band, still others have extensive brownish below and some are all brown apart from some whitish on throat, centre of belly and centre of underwing. Whitish areas are typically tinged dirty buff and boundary between dark and pale areas is diffuse. Feet extend significantly beyond tail tip, thus tending to cancel out shorter-tailed appearance than in Manx. Distant pale *mauretanicus* could be confused with Cory's (q.v.), while darkest could be confused with Sooty (q.v.).

VOICE On breeding grounds voice apparently rather similar to Manx (q.v.). Usually silent at sea.

TAXONOMY W Mediterranean form *mauretanicus* is probably best treated as a full species, **Balearic Shearwater**. Previously, both forms were lumped in Manx Shearwater *P. puffinus*.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Marked. 2 races (both illustrated). See Identification.



summer



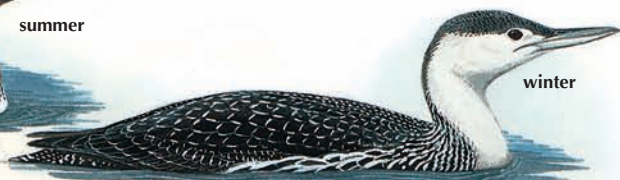
winter



juv



summer

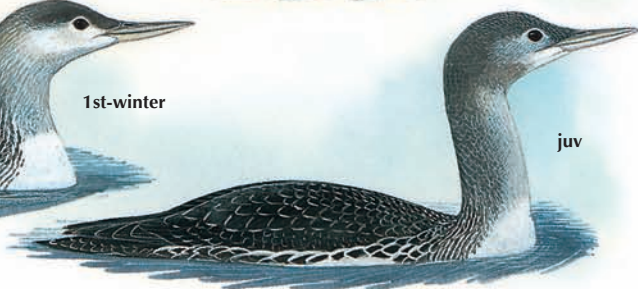


winter

RED-THROATED DIVER
(RED-THROATED LOON)
(p. 34)



1st-winter



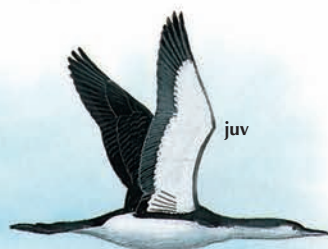
juv



summer



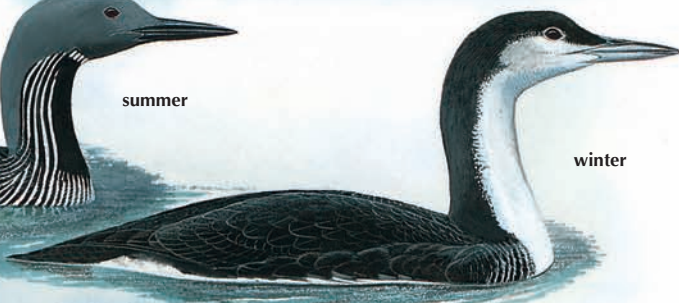
winter



juv



summer



winter

BLACK-THROATED DIVER
(BLACK-THROATED LOON)
(p. 34)



juv

DIVERS (or LOONS)



summer



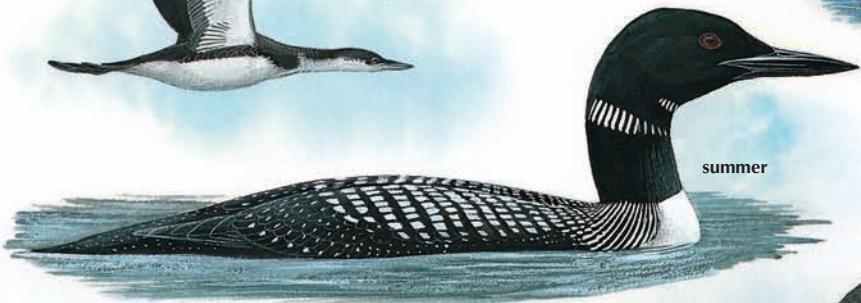
winter



juv



juv



summer

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER
(GREAT NORTHERN LOON)
(p. 35)



winter



2nd-cal-year (spring)



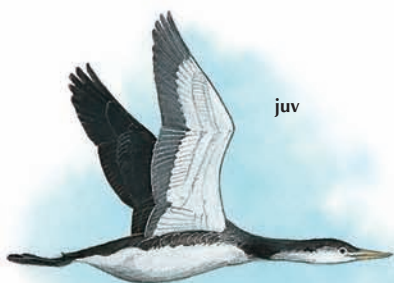
juv



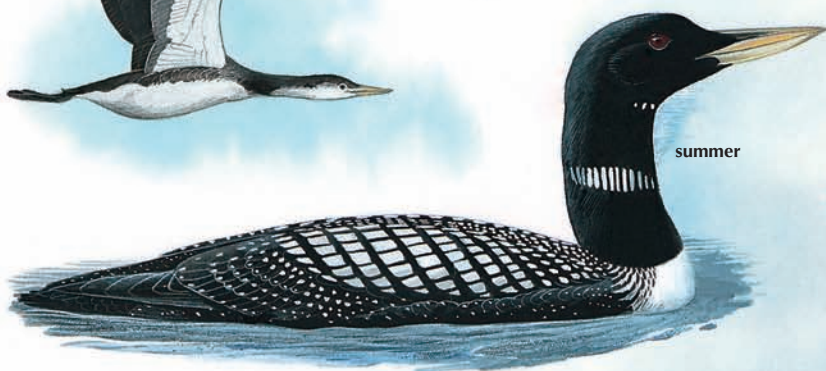
summer



winter



juv



summer

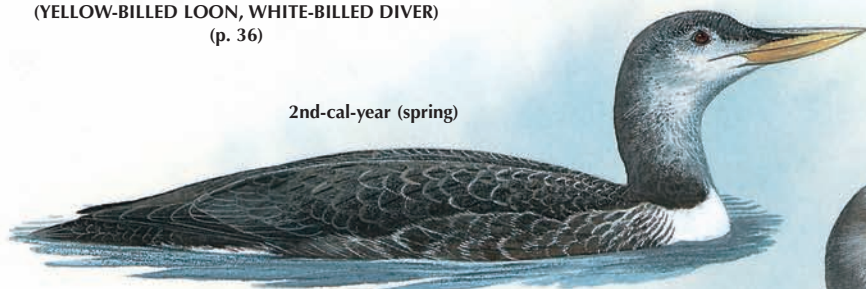


juv



winter

YELLOW-BILLED DIVER
(YELLOW-BILLED LOON, WHITE-BILLED DIVER)
(p. 36)



2nd-cal-year (spring)



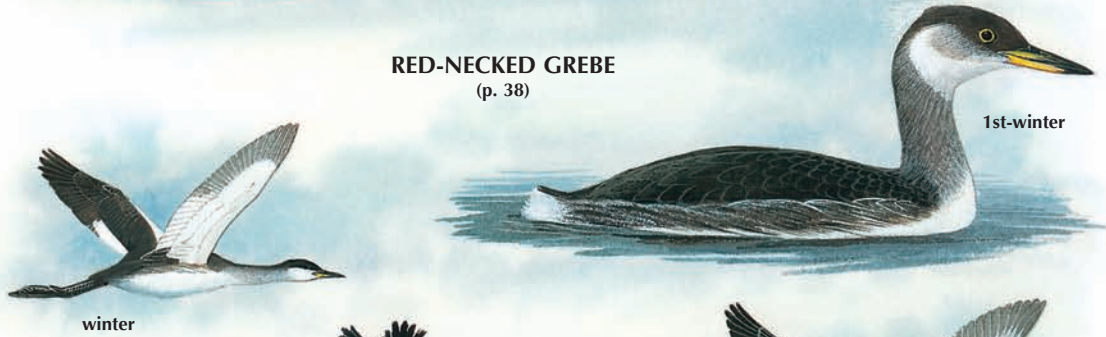
juv

GREBES

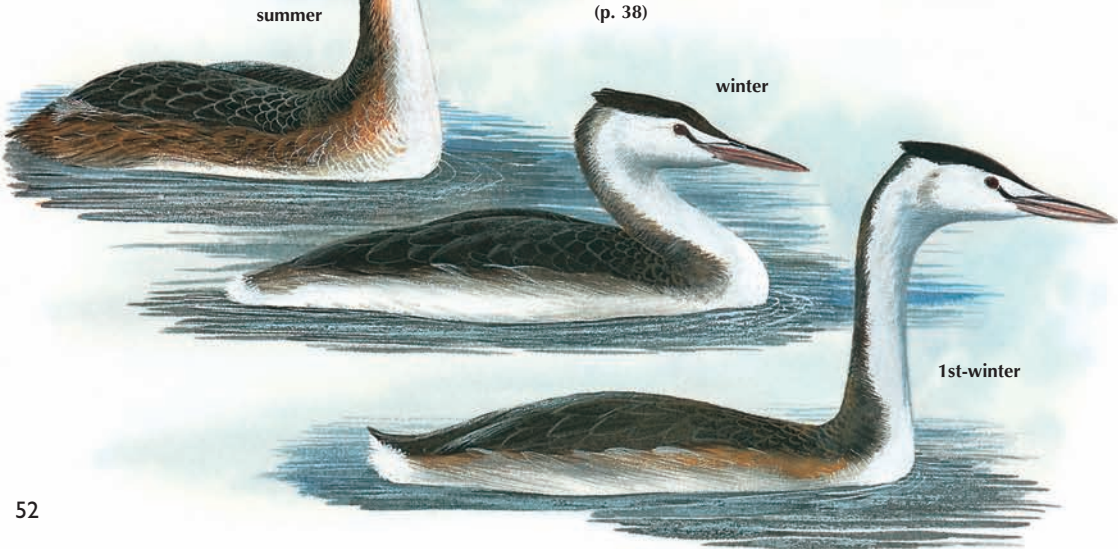
PIED-BILLED GREBE
(p. 37)



RED-NECKED GREBE
(p. 38)



GREAT CRESTED GREBE
(p. 38)





summer



winter



1st-winter

LITTLE GREBE
(p. 37)



summer



winter



summer
capensis



winter

BLACK-NECKED GREBE
(p. 39)



summer



winter



juv
(autumn)



summer



summer



winter

HORNED GREBE
(SLAVONIAN GREBE)
(p. 39)



winter



juv
(autumn)

ALBATROSSES

**YELLOW-NOSED
ALBATROSS**
(p. 41)



**BLACK-BROWED
ALBATROSS**
(p. 40)

SHY ALBATROSS
(p. 41)

juv

juv

juv

imm

WANDERING
ALBATROSS
(p. 41)



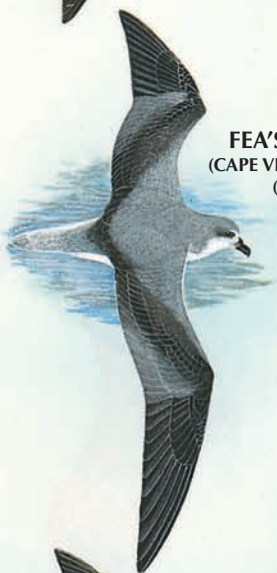
PETRELS



CAPE PETREL
(p. 43)



ZINO'S PETREL
(MADEIRA PETREL)
(p. 44)



FEA'S PETREL
(CAPE VERDE PETREL)
(p. 43)



**SOFT-
PLUMAGED
PETREL**
(p. 44)



**BLACK-CAPPED
PETREL**
(p. 44)



**ATLANTIC
PETREL**
(p. 44)



PETRELS

dark
morph

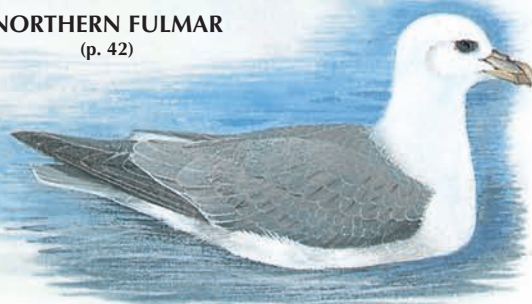


HERRING GULL
(at same scale)



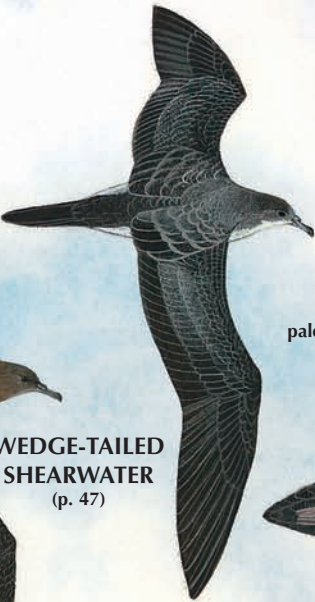
dark morph

NORTHERN FULMAR
(p. 42)

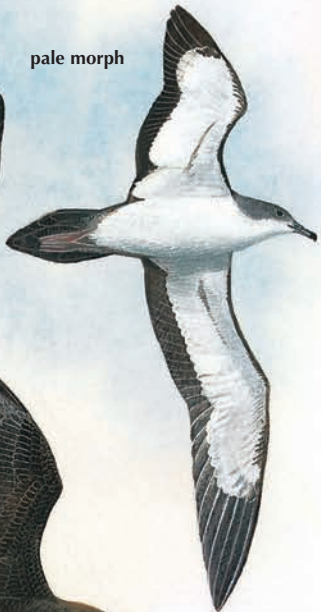


SHEARWATERS

STREAKED SHEARWATER
(p. 46)

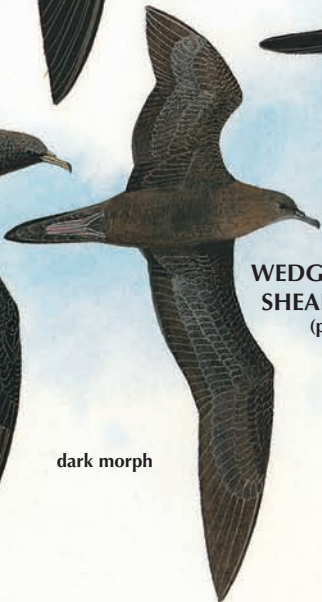


pale morph



WEDGE-TAILED SHEARWATER
(p. 47)

dark morph



FLESH-FOOTED SHEARWATER
(p. 46)

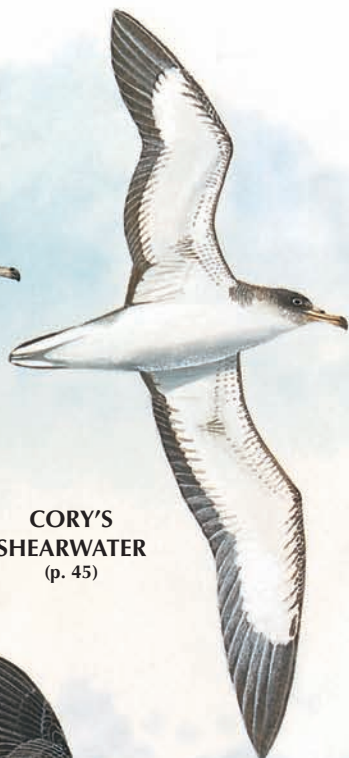


SHEARWATERS

edwardsii
(CAPE VERDE
SHEARWATER)



CORY'S
SHEARWATER
(p. 45)



GREAT SHEARWATER
(p. 46)



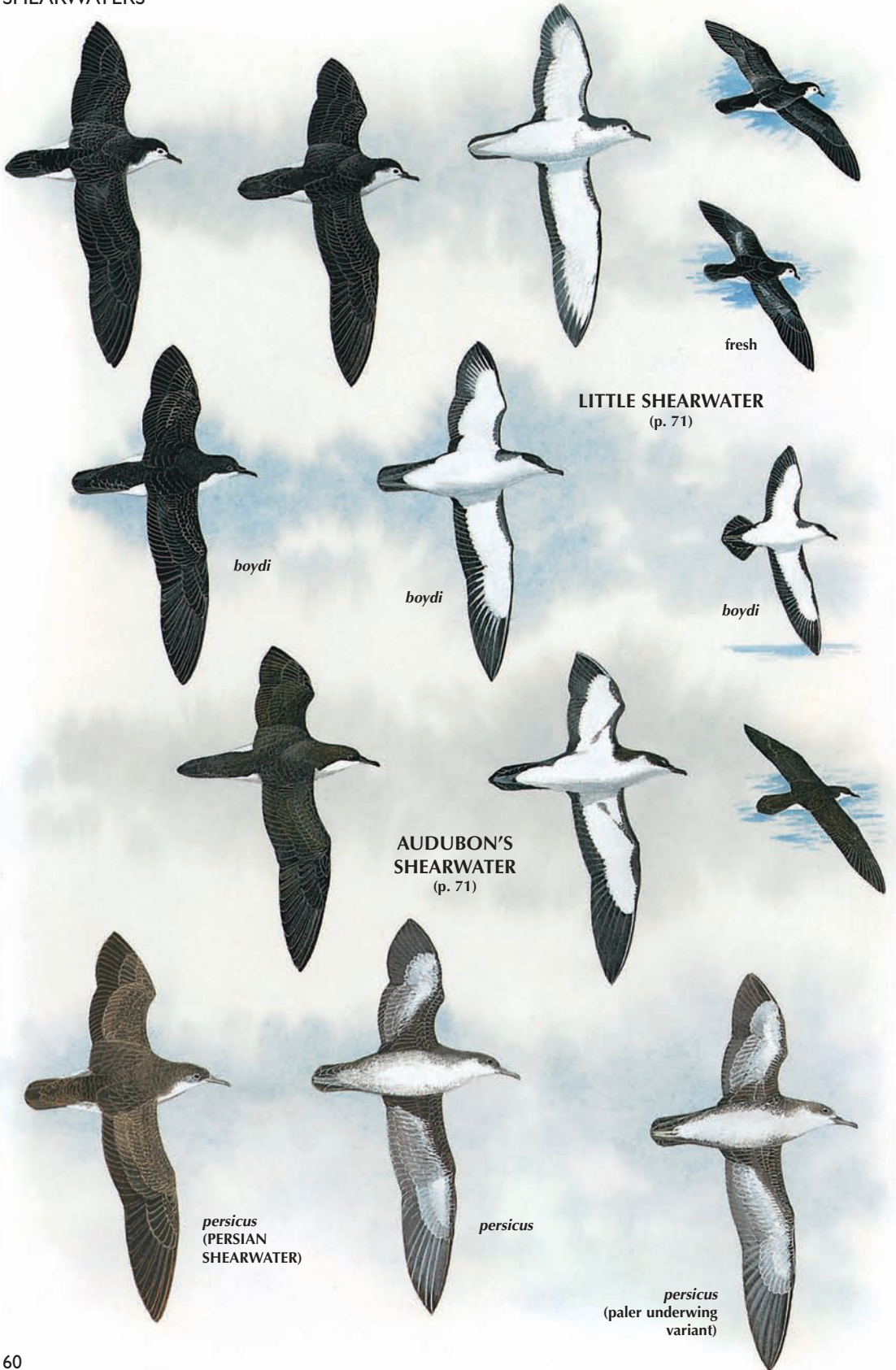
SOOTY SHEARWATER
(p. 47)



darker
underwing
variant



SHEARWATERS



fresh

LITTLE SHEARWATER
(p. 71)

boydi

boydi

boydi

AUDUBON'S SHEARWATER
(p. 71)

persicus
(PERSIAN SHEARWATER)

persicus

persicus
(paler underwing variant)

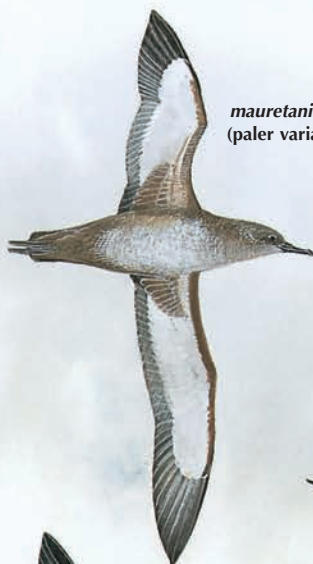
YELKOUAN SHEARWATER
(p. 48)



dark
variant



mauretanicus
(BALEARIC
SHEARWATER)



mauretanicus
(paler variant)



mauretanicus
(darker variant)



MANX SHEARWATER
(p. 48)



STORM-PETRELS, *BULWERIA* PETRELS



**WHITE-BELLIED
STORM-PETREL**
(p. 73)



**WHITE-FACED
STORM-PETREL**
(p. 73)



BULWER'S PETREL
(p. 45)



JOUANIN'S PETREL
(p. 45)



**WILSON'S
STORM-
PETREL**
(p. 72)



**EUROPEAN
STORM-
PETREL**
(p. 73)



**SWINHOE'S
STORM-PETREL**
(p. 75)



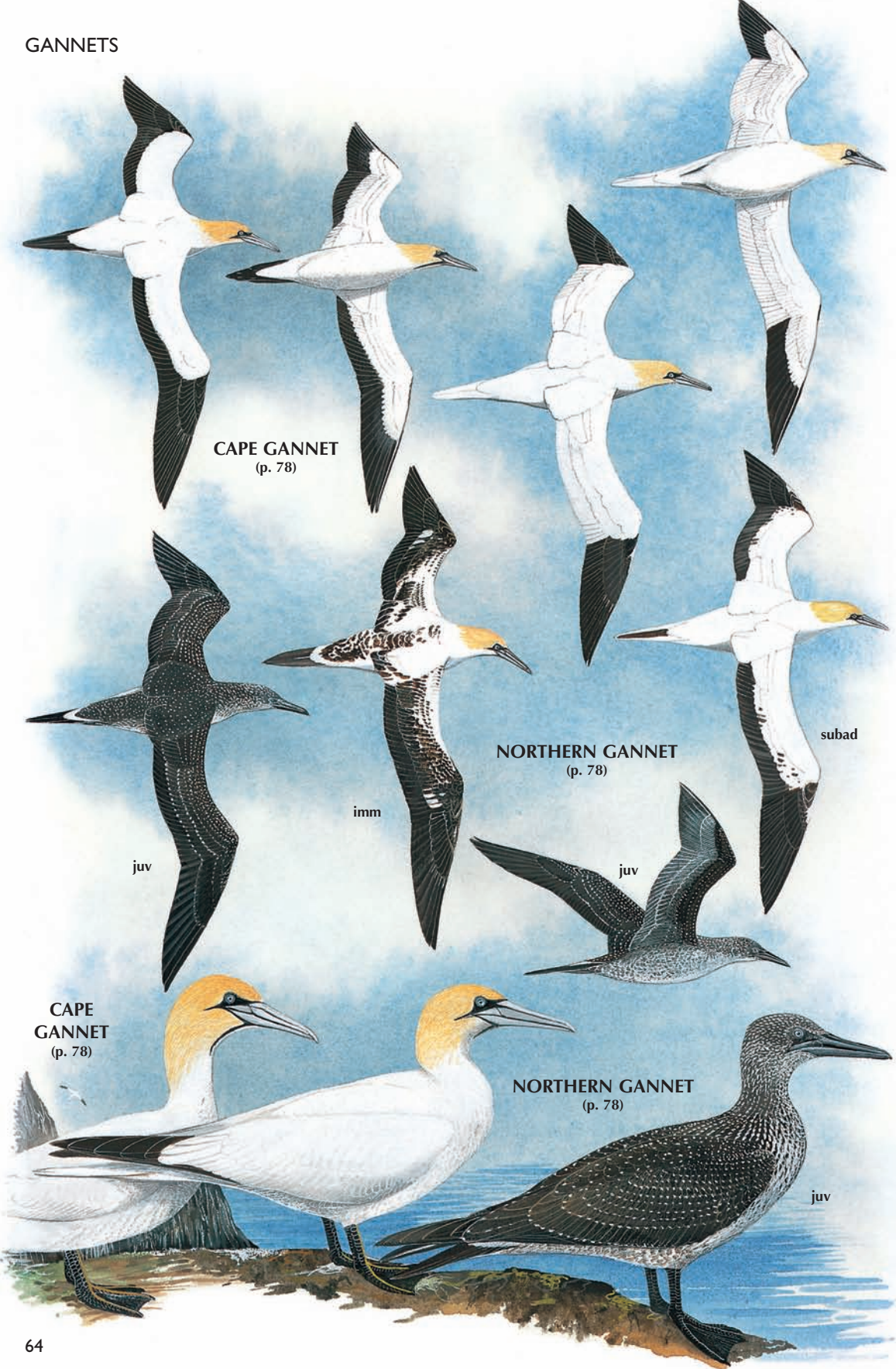
**LEACH'S
STORM-
PETREL**
(p. 74)



**MADEIRAN
STORM-
PETREL**
(p. 75)



GANNETS



CAPE GANNET
(p. 78)

NORTHERN GANNET
(p. 78)

subad

imm

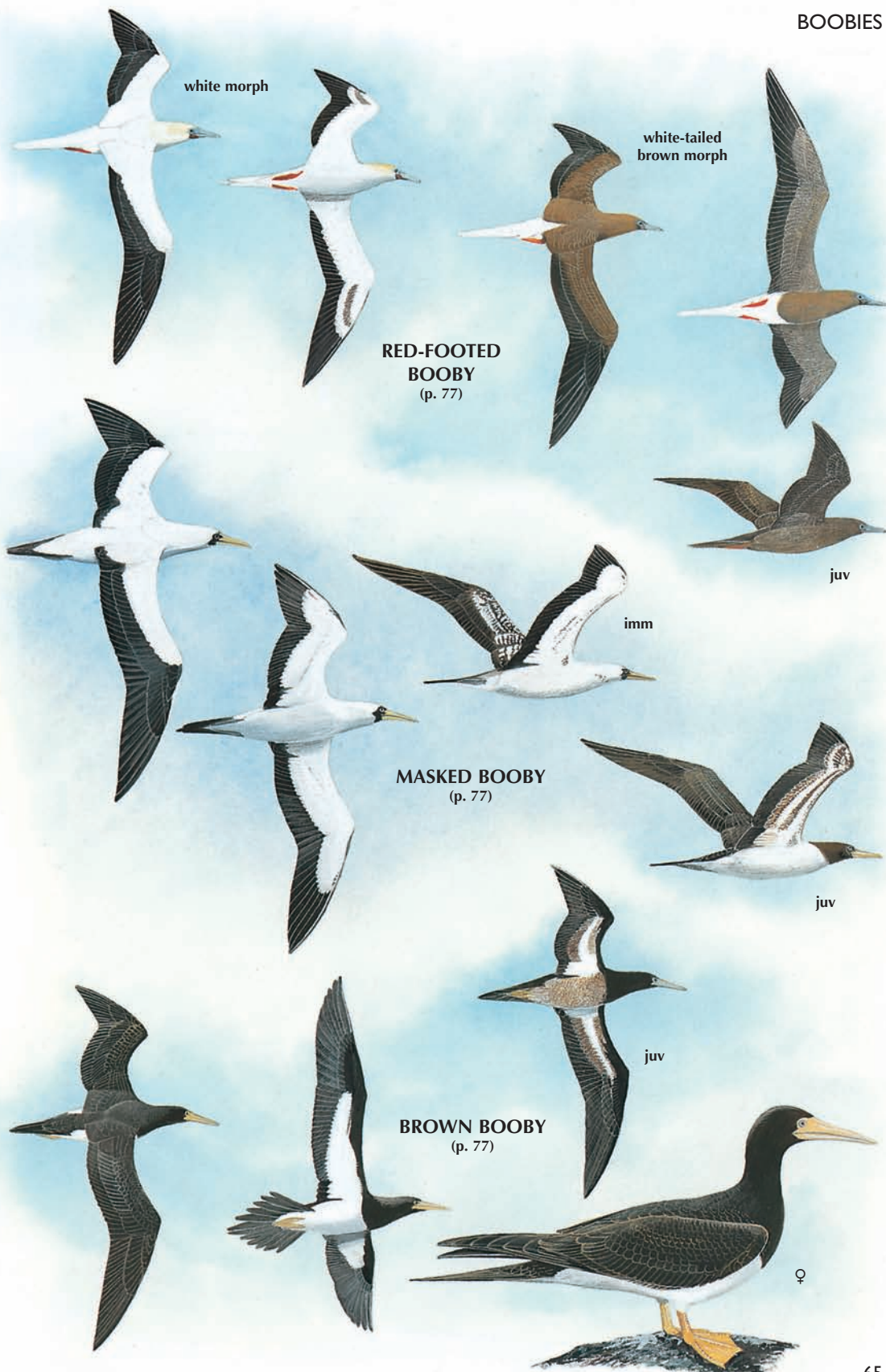
juv

juv

CAPE
GANNET
(p. 78)

NORTHERN GANNET
(p. 78)

juv



CORMORANTS



summer

winter

juv

DOUBLE-CRESTED
CORMORANT
(p. 80)

winter

winter

winter

winter

juv

summer *sinensis*

summer
lucidus

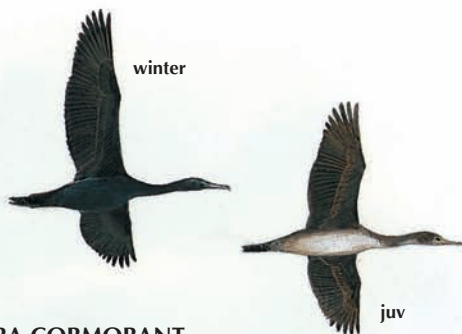
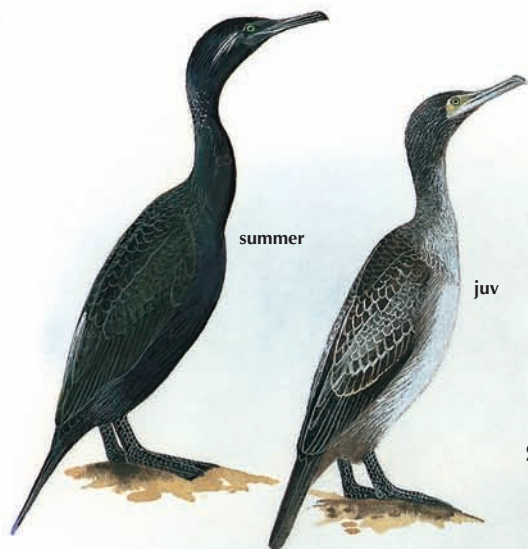
summer

juv

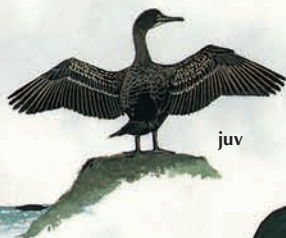
winter

juv
sinensis

GREAT CORMORANT
(p. 79)



SOCOTRA CORMORANT
(p. 81)

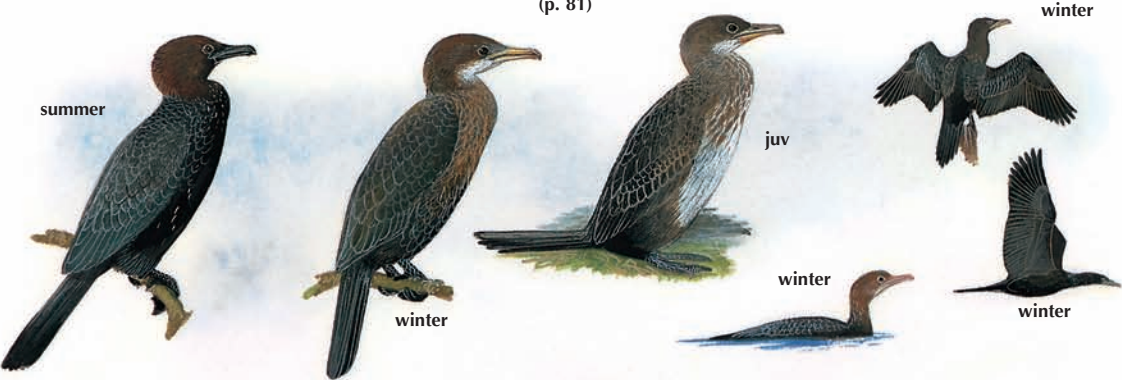


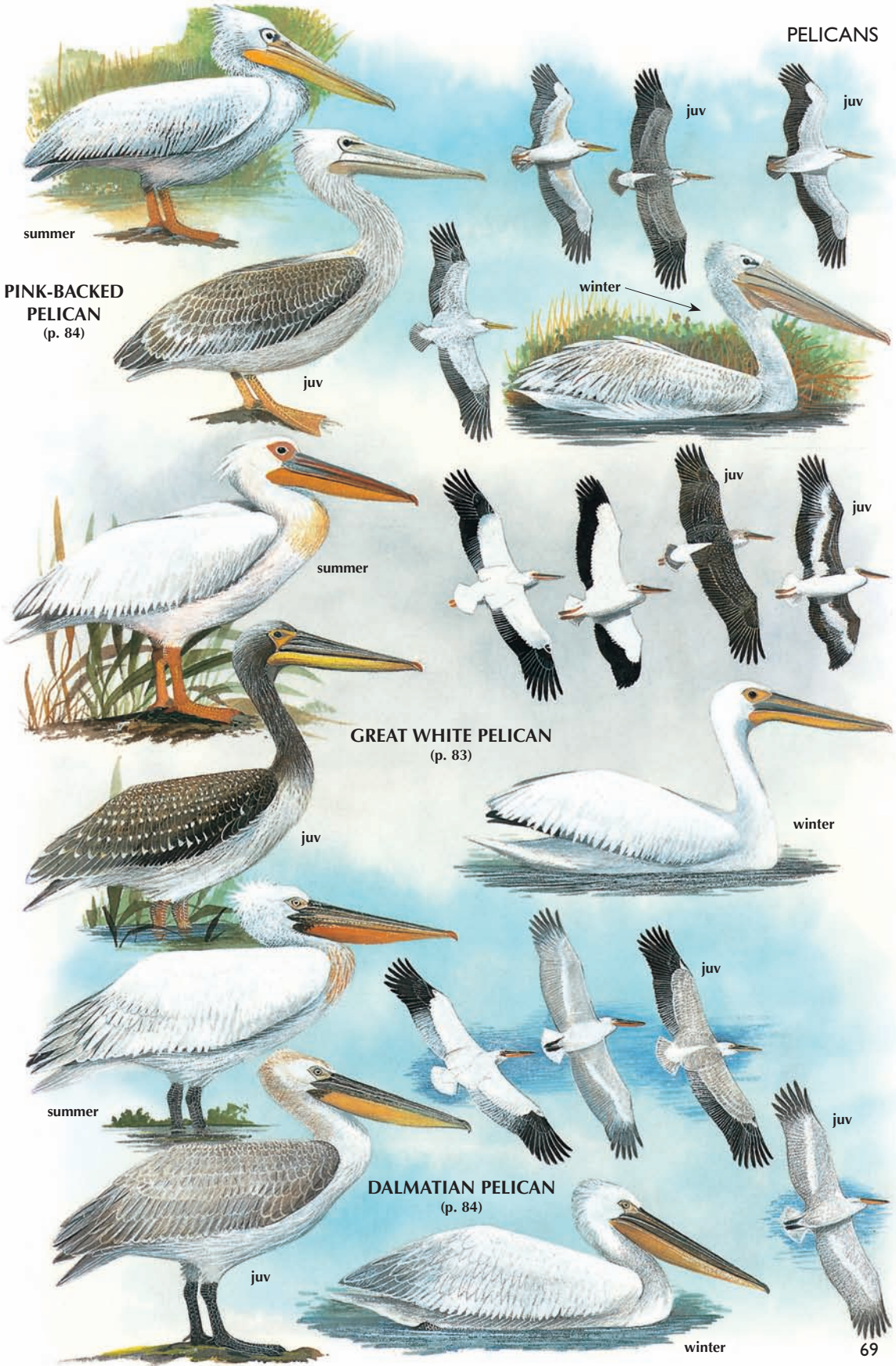
EUROPEAN SHAG
(p. 80)



CORMORANTS, DARTERS

PYGMY CORMORANT
(p. 81)





PINK-BACKED
PELICAN
(p. 84)

GREAT WHITE PELICAN
(p. 83)

DALMATIAN PELICAN
(p. 84)

RED-BILLED
TROPICBIRD
(p. 76)



juv



♀

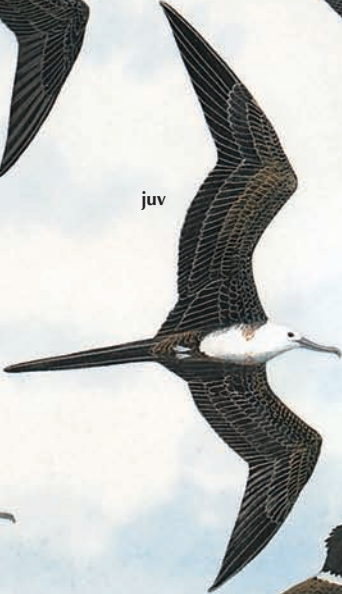


♀



♂

juv



♂



MAGNIFICENT
FRIGATEBIRD
(p. 85)



♂

♀



STATUS/HABITAT Common. (Nominate breeds E/C Mediterranean but extends to eastern Black Sea when feeding; sometimes disperses as far as Atlantic. Race *mauretanicus* breeds W Mediterranean, dispersing into Atlantic after breeding and regularly reaching British Is

in summer/autumn. Breeding areas seemingly mapped for mainland coasts generally refer to nearby offshore islands.) Breeds in burrows and crevices on slopes and flat tops of islands. Away from breeding colonies mainly pelagic, but locally comes close inshore.

LITTLE SHEARWATER *Puffinus assimilis*

L 25–30 cm, WS 58–67 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Small shearwater. Flight action fast, with a series of shallow, stiff, fluttering wingbeats followed by a short, low glide with wings usually parallel to sea surface. Wings are held out rather straight. Fluttering flight closely hugging water, rather short outer wing and compact body create almost auk-like appearance. In stronger winds, will rise and bank in low arcs at times (usually without zigzagging), but generally mixed with distinctive flutter-and-glide flight down troughs between waves. When feeding in windy conditions, patters on surface with wings raised like large storm-petrel. Sometimes follows ships. Likely to be confused only with Manx or nominate race of Yelkouan (or Audubon's, q.v.). Best distinguished by smaller size, shorter wings, very characteristic fluttering flight, less extensive dark tip and narrower dark trailing edge to underwing, and, in race *baroli*, more extensive white on face (extending above eye to give neatly-capped appearance). Is even blacker above (but worn birds can look rather patchy, less uniform), stockier, with shorter, blunter-tipped wings, no obvious dark projection on sides of neck, white of flanks extending a little onto sides of rump and shorter, finer bill. Beware moulting Manx or nominate race Yelkouan with more fluttering flight than usual and sometimes more extensive, but ill-defined, white on face than is typical. On water wingtips do not project beyond tail, unlike Manx and Yelkouan. Feet pale blue with yellowish webs (entirely greyish-pink in Manx and Yelkouan).

VOICE On breeding grounds, a repeated, high-pitched, crowing, laughing 'karki-ki-ki-ki-koo'; pitch



Plate page 60

varies, but higher and weaker than call of Manx or Yelkouan.

TAXONOMY Race *boydi* is sometimes treated as a full species (**Boyd's Shearwater**) or a race of Audubon's Shearwater *P. lherminieri* because of plumage differences, but structure, foot colour and voice are similar to those of race *baroli*.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 2 races (both illustrated). Compared with race *baroli* (Azores, Madeira and Canary Is), *boydi* (Cape Verde Is) has upperparts a little browner (hardly visible at sea), all undertail coverts (not just sides) dark (but this hard to see because of feet), base of primaries on underwing dusky and dark cap more extensive, less well defined.

STATUS/HABITAT Generally uncommon. (Found in mapped marine range all year but may also be regular late summer/autumn visitor north to SW Ireland.) Breeds in crevices (sometimes burrows) on rocky or vegetated slopes of islands, sometimes well inland. Mainly pelagic away from breeding colonies, but locally comes inshore.

AUDUBON'S SHEARWATER *Puffinus lherminieri*

Persian Shearwater (*P. l. persicus*)

L 30 cm, WS 69 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Small shearwater. Flight rapid, typically with several rather fluttering wingbeats followed by short glide low over waves. Uses relatively long tail to change direction rapidly. In strong winds glides more prolonged and banking. Has storm-petrel-like feeding technique (see Little). Does not usually follow ships. Species best distinguished from slightly smaller Little by stockier body, longer tail, considerably duller and browner upperparts, more extensive dark cap, dusky-brown underside to flight feathers, broader wings and less hastily fluttering flight. Also has longer bill, longer outer wing, dark undertail coverts (mainly white in *baroli* race of Little, although dark in *boydi*) and pinkish feet (pale blue with yellowish webs in Little). Race *persicus*, 'Persian Shearwater', also differs in having brownish flanks. From Manx and Yelkouan by faster, more fluttering wingbeats, shorter wings, broader dark trailing edge on underwing, longer tail and (compared with Manx) browner upperparts, dark areas on underwing and, in *persicus*, brownish flanks. On sea, wingtips do not

reach end of tail.

VOICE Usually silent at sea.

TAXONOMY Sometimes treated as conspecific with Little Shearwater *P. assimilis*. Form *persicus* sometimes treated as a race of Little Shearwater or (probably the most appropriate solution) as a full species, **Persian Shearwater**.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (both illustrated). Race *persicus*, known as 'Persian Shearwater' (probably breeds in S Persian Gulf), differs from nominate chiefly in having brownish flanks and in being slightly larger, heavier-bodied and shorter-billed, with longer and broader wings, less dark (so less contrasting) underside to flight feathers and a squarer-ended tail.

STATUS/HABITAT Occasional non-breeding visitor to head of Persian Gulf. Vagrant to N Red Sea. Nominant race (breeds W Atlantic and Caribbean) may possibly have reached British Is as genuine vagrant, but not on official list. Mainly pelagic away from breeding colonies, but locally comes inshore.

Plate page 60

STORM-PETRELS Hydrobatidae

7 species (1 vagrant)

Fairly small pelagic seabirds that come to land only at breeding colonies (and even then only under the cover of darkness). Some species come close inshore away from their breeding colonies during very windy weather, but others remain far out to sea at all times. Like other 'tubenoses', have tubular nostrils positioned along the ridge of the bill (i.e. along the culmen). Most are rather similar in plumage, being largely blackish with a conspicuous white rump patch, vaguely recalling large House Martins in general appearance when seen from above. Feed on small crustaceans, molluscs and fish, and also fatty or oily offal, taken from the surface layer while fluttering, hovering, pattering or swooping, or when alighted on the water (storm-petrels dive only rarely). Some species regularly follow ships and feed on discarded offal etc., others ignore them. Frequently form small groups and sometimes large flocks in areas with especially rich food supplies. Some species may form 'rafts' on surface when roosting or feeding.

Sexes similar. Little or no seasonal variation. Juveniles closely resemble adults.

Complete post-breeding moult starts during or shortly after breeding period and continues until following spring. Post-juvenile moult commences during spring of second calendar year (or even during first winter), and finishes by autumn or early winter.

Their small size, generally distinctive plumage pattern and pelagic habits make them unlikely to be confused with any other type of bird, although there is a small risk of confusion (especially in the case of the all-dark Swinhoe's Storm-petrel) with the somewhat similar but considerably larger petrels of the genus *Bulweria* (i.e. Bulwer's and Jouanin's Petrels).

Identification difficult, except in case of White-faced Storm-petrel, owing to small size, very similar plumage features (in most species) and often adverse viewing conditions. Flight action varies according to activity (i.e. whether bird feeding or travelling) and also according to wind strength, so broad experience of different species under varying conditions is especially useful when identifying lone storm-petrels. The paler band on the upperwing, a useful identification feature in some species, is more apparent on worn birds. Points to concentrate on are:

Flight action and wing shape • Extent and shape of white 'rump patch' (if present) • Presence or absence of pale bands on upperwing or underwing • Tail shape and presence or absence of projecting toes

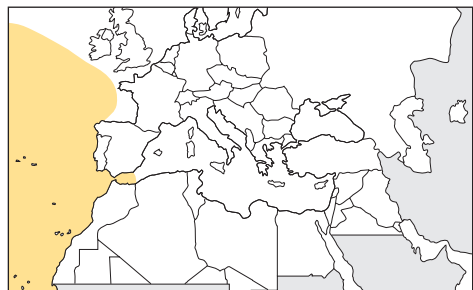
WILSON'S STORM-PETREL *Oceanites oceanicus*

Plate page 63

Wilson's Petrel

L 15–19 cm, WS 38–42 cm.

IDENTIFICATION One of the smaller storm-petrels; closest to European in shape but slightly larger. Rather long-legged, with feet projecting beyond tail in travelling flight (the only dark storm-petrel with this feature) and diagnostic yellow webs between toes (visible only in very close view when feeding). From European best separated by fairly obvious pale band on greater coverts, exceptionally long legs (projecting beyond tail), lack of white band down centre of underwing, white of rump patch extending further onto lateral undertail coverts (appearing to encircle rear body), straighter wings (less angled back at carpal joint) and different flight action. (Note: white band on underwing of European not always easy to see and beware confusion with faint pale area on underwing of Wilson's.) From Leach's by broader, more rounded wings (most apparent when feeding) which are held out straighter, less angled back at carpal joint, square-ended (i.e. unforked) tail that looks rounded when fanned during feeding activity, blacker overall appearance, less striking pale band across greater coverts, broader and more rounded (less V-shaped) rump patch which extends conspicuously onto lateral undertail coverts, and different flight action. Separation from Madeiran (q.v.) more difficult. Travelling flight fairly direct, with series of rapid, rather shallow (almost wader- or hirundine-like) wingbeats interspersed with short glides. Less surface-hugging and more direct than European (lacking fluttering, bat-like impression), much less erratic than Leach's and lacks prolonged



shearing glides of Madeiran (although course often zigzagging when into wind, suggesting Madeiran). Feeding flight is distinctive, with bird literally bouncing or hopping over water surface, mostly with wings arched in shallow V and long legs dangling and pattering on surface, but at times with wings briefly raised high above back in acute V and legs trailing. Latter method not shared by other species. Readily follows ships and attends fishing boats to feed on offal. Often solitary in our waters, but will form large flocks. Sometimes forms rafts on sea.

SEX/AGE Slight seasonal variation: when worn, is browner, less black overall, with more prominent pale band across wing coverts. Note that Wilson's has moult cycles that relate to S Hemisphere seasons: thus, adults are most worn during N Hemisphere

spring and early summer, juveniles during autumn and early winter.

VOICE Feeding birds sometimes make a soft, rapid squeaking or chattering.

STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon. Non-breeding

visitor from Southern Oceans, mainly found in N Atlantic from late spring to early autumn. May be regular visitor also to Red Sea. Normally highly pelagic in our region, but elsewhere will sometimes come inshore when feeding.

WHITE-FACED STORM-PETREL *Pelagodroma marina*

Plate page 62

White-faced Petrel, Fritege Petrel

L 20–21 cm, WS 41–43 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Much the most distinctive storm-petrel: the only species with almost wholly pale underparts. Upperparts appear greyish-brown at a distance, but at closer range blackish tail, flight feathers and face patch and paler grey rump can be differentiated. Legs unusually long and feet rather large with yellow webs (visible only at close range), projecting well beyond tail in flight. More likely to be confused with winter/immature-plumaged phalaropes than with other storm-petrels, but former have utterly different flight (fast and typically wader-like), different wing pattern and more pointed wings (when seen on water, phalaropes have particularly upright posture with obviously longer necks and bills). Travelling flight fast and erratic, with much banking and weaving. Wing action quite stiff, recalling Common Sandpiper. Feeding flight highly distinctive: bird glides low over surface in series of bounces, dangling feet at each bounce so that they just touch surface before retracting them again; body generally swings from side to side in between contacts with surface. In strong head winds often seems to 'walk on water', facing directly into wind with wings held out stiffly in shallow arch and feet pattering on surface. At times hardly seems to be moving forwards. Generally rather solitary, although sometimes in small groups. Only rarely follows ships.

SEX/AGE Slight seasonal variation: when worn, the pale bar across upperwing coverts is more pro-



nounced. Juvenile closely resembles adult, but has paler head, whiter rump and more obvious pale bar across upperwing coverts.

VOICE Silent at sea. At breeding colonies utters a repeated mournful 'ooo-ooo-ooo-ooo-ooo ...' (two or more units per second); also soft twittering notes and a low rasping (likened to the sound made by a pair of rusty springs).

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Rather slight. 2 races (race *hypoleuca* illustrated). Race *eadesi* (Cape Verde Is) has whiter forehead, slightly paler upperparts and ill-defined whitish half-collar across hindneck.

STATUS/HABITAT Can be numerous at colonies, but generally uncommon at sea. (Map note: found in mapped marine range all year.) Breeds in burrows excavated in sandy, flat or gently sloping substrate on islands. Highly pelagic away from colonies and almost never seen inshore.

WHITE-BELLIED STORM-PETREL *Fregetta grallaria*

Plate page 62

L 18 cm, WS 44 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Vagrant (breeds S Atlantic etc.). Highly distinctive storm-petrel differing from other 'white-rumped' species in having gleaming white lower breast, belly and underwing coverts (bordered with black on leading edge). Flight direct, closely following contours of sea surface, with body often swinging from side to side. Frequently splashes onto surface, breast first, before springing up again, revealing long, dangling legs. Often foot-patters. From

White-faced Petrel by all-black hood, much less extensive white on underwing, white rather than grey rump patch and darker, less contrasting, upperwing coverts. Also has quite different flight action (see White-faced).

SEX/AGE No obvious seasonal variation.

VOICE Usually silent at sea.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Cape Verde Is). Pelagic away from breeding colonies.

EUROPEAN STORM-PETREL *Hydrobates pelagicus*

Plate page 63

British Storm-petrel, Storm Petrel

L 14–18 cm, WS 36–39 cm.

IDENTIFICATION The most widespread storm-petrel of our region and the smallest and darkest. Wings rather short and rounded and tail fairly short and square-ended (appearing almost rounded when fanned). Has only faint paler bar across greater coverts but diagnostic white band down centre of underwing (by no means always easy to see). Travelling flight fairly direct and wader-like but rather weak, with almost continuous bat-like fluttering interspersed with short glides and twists and turns; always

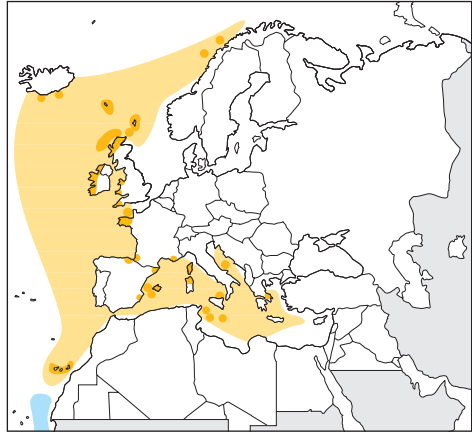
close to surface. Feeding flight fluttering, with wings partially raised over back in shallow V and feet pattering on surface (but short legs make this hard to observe). Often briefly alights when feeding. Often follows ships and attends fishing boats for offal. Sociable. Sometimes forms large rafts. For separation from Wilson's, Leach's and Madeiran see those species.

SEX/AGE Juvenile closely resembles adult, but initially shows somewhat more obvious, although still incon-

spicuous, paler bar across upperwing coverts.

VOICE Silent at sea. At breeding colonies utters quiet, extended, harsh purring 'arr-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r...' in burrow (with 30–40 units per second), ending with abrupt, hiccup-like 'chikka' (owing to intake of breath) before next sequence commences. In courtship flight gives sharp 'terr-CHICK'.

STATUS/HABITAT Can be numerous at colonies and often common at sea. (Map note: in summer marine range extends from Canary Is and C Mediterranean northwards to south coast of Iceland and C Norway, but rare in, or absent from, much of North Sea and English Channel. Largely vacates our region in winter for waters off W and S Africa: mapped marine range shows only regular wintering area in our region. Breeding areas seemingly mapped for mainland coasts in fact refer to nearby offshore islands. May breed Lofoten Is off Norway, Desertas off Madeira and Aegean Is. In addition to mapped range, has bred Canary Is and Tunisia.) Breeds in crevices (sometimes in burrows) in piles of boulders, stone walls or ruins on rocky or partly vegetated slopes of islands. Highly pelagic away from colonies, but locally comes inshore



during strong winds and known to pass along coasts at night.

LEACH'S STORM-PETREL *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*

Plate page 63

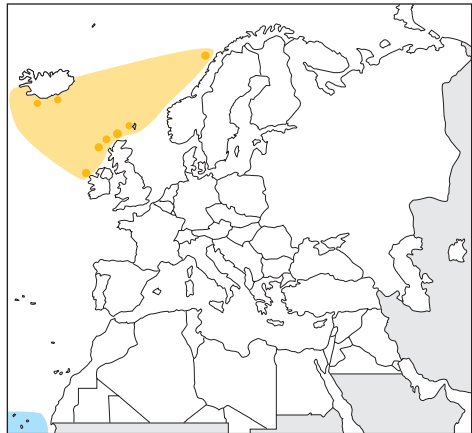
Leach's Petrel

L 19–22 cm, WS 45–48 cm.

IDENTIFICATION The largest storm-petrel. Best separated from European and Wilson's by different flight action, longer, narrower and more pointed wings which are obviously back-angled at carpal joint, rather long and slim-looking body (an effect enhanced by longish tail), larger size, browner overall coloration, more striking pale panel across greater coverts (especially compared with European), rather forked tail (obvious only in close view), and narrower, rather V-shaped white rump patch (barely extending onto lateral undertail coverts). Rump patch is divided down middle by brownish-grey feathering: although this feature visible only at close range and often not even then, it does make rump patch less bright than in other species. For separation from rather similar Madeiran see that species. Travelling flight characteristically swift, erratic and bounding; typified by abrupt changes in speed and direction. Periods of deep, buoyant, tern-like wingbeats are interspersed with shearwater-like gliding, banking and weaving on slightly bowed wings. When feeding, either hangs almost motionless into wind with wings raised only a little above horizontal and slightly bowed, with feet pattering on surface for quite long periods, or actively hovers just above surface. Only rarely alights. Does not usually follow ships, but will attend fishing boats for offal. Generally solitary or in small parties.

SEX/AGE Juvenile closely resembles adult, but initially shows even more striking pale panel across wing coverts.

VOICE Usually silent at sea. At breeding colonies gives a prolonged purring 'r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r...' from burrow, rising in pitch during sequence and ending with a short 'whee' (owing to intake of breath) before starting off again at a lower pitch. Purring is slower than in European (with about 15–22 units per second) and each sequence more prolonged (3–5 seconds). Also gives an abrupt harsh, muffled laughing or



even screaming 'par-kiki-kar-koo whuk-kuk-kuh-kuh-kuh' (with a slight pause between phrases, and second phrase descending in pitch and speeding up) in flight over colony or from burrow (rarely at sea).

STATUS/HABITAT Can be numerous at colonies but generally fairly uncommon at sea. (Map note: in summer marine range extends from south coast of Iceland and Lofoten Is off Norway southwards to at least western edge of British Is. Mostly vacates our region in winter for waters of tropical Atlantic: mapped marine range shows only regular wintering area in our region.) Breeds in crevices or burrows in banks, walls, old buildings or piles of boulders on slopes of islands. Highly pelagic away from colonies, but locally comes inshore during strong winds (and the most likely storm-petrel to occur inland).

TROPICBIRDS Phaethontidae

1 species

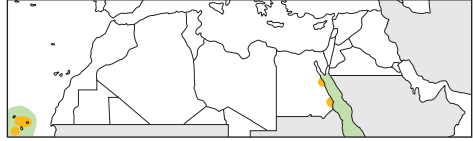
RED-BILLED TROPICBIRD *Phaethon aethereus*

Plate page 70

L 90–105 cm (including tail streamers of 45–50 cm),
WS 100–110 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Tropicbirds are fairly large, predominantly white, superficially tern-like pelagic seabirds with greatly elongated central tail feathers which gently curl and undulate in flight. Bill large and powerful, slightly decurved. Typically fly well above surface, with direct, rather pigeon-like flight action, often interspersed with long glides. Often soar high into sky. Sit buoyantly on water with tail half-cocked. Feed on fish (especially flying-fish) and cephalopods caught by hovering and then plunge-diving, generally only into surface layer. Will inspect ships but do not follow them. Generally solitary or in pairs away from breeding colonies. Extraordinarily elongated central tail feathers render close adult unmistakable. Juvenile and more distant adult (especially with broken or moulting central tail feathers) could be mistaken for large tern, especially (owing to size and red bill colour) adult winter or juvenile Caspian Tern. At a distance (especially in strong light), upperparts, apart from black wingtips, often appear all white or dusky. When elongated central tail feathers invisible or absent, best separated from large terns by completely white underside to primaries, wedge-shaped rather than forked tail, and pigeon-like flight action. Compared with immature terns, lacks any brownish colour on upperparts.

SEX/AGE Tail streamers are longer in adult male than in adult female, but beware effects of damage or moult. Juvenile resembles adult, but has yellowish bill, more black on nape, black subterminal spots on



tail feathers and lacks elongated central tail feathers. Complete post-breeding moult commences shortly after breeding and finishes after about six months. Post-juvenile moult is complete, but timing uncertain: perhaps 12–18 months after fledging.

VOICE Typical calls are loud, piercing, shrill but grating whistles and cackles, often given in rapid series when in display flight at colony. Vaguely recalls shrill trilling of bosun's pipe, hence name 'bosunbird' for members of family.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (*mesonauta* illustrated). Race *indicus* of Red Sea is smaller, with bill orange-red instead of scarlet and with little or no black streak behind eye.

STATUS/HABITAT Uncommon and localized. (Found in mapped marine range all year. Breeding areas apparently mapped for mainland Egyptian Red Sea coast in fact refer to nearby offshore islands.) Breeds in large holes and crevices, or under boulders, on rocky offshore islands in tropical and subtropical seas. Pelagic away from breeding colonies.

GANNETS & BOOBIES Sulidae

5 species (3 vagrant)

Large inshore-dwelling or partially pelagic seabirds characterized by very long, narrow, pointed wings, long, wedge-shaped tail (which generally looks strongly pointed), rather long neck, and long, heavy, dagger-shaped bill. Have bare skin at base of bill and around eye. Flight strong and direct, with series of deep wingbeats interspersed with short glides on level wings. In stronger winds, glide, rise up and bank in shearwater fashion, often tilted over on side. Often fly low over water but also frequently quite high, often appearing well above horizon. Flocks fly in long lines, gliding and banking in unison. Feed on fish by dramatic plunge-diving (almost vertically, from up to 30 m or more in case of gannets and Masked Booby, at shallower angle from lower levels in case of Brown and Red-footed Boobies) with wings held partially closed. Gannets attend trawlers for lost or discarded fish, but otherwise rarely attracted by ships. Boobies will even perch on masts. Swim buoyantly on water. Patter over surface when taking off. Slow and ungainly on land. Sociable: Northern Gannet in particular forms large concentrations at favourable feeding areas. Breed on ground in colonies on sea cliffs and rocky islets (in huge numbers in case of Northern Gannet).

Sexes very similar. Little or no seasonal variation. Juveniles (and immature gannets) distinct or at least separable.

Moult of adult boobies continues for much of year (but is normally suspended during breeding), with two flight-feather cycles active simultaneously. Moult of juveniles commences within about ten months of fledging and thence almost continuous through immature stages. In Northern Gannet, adult and immature moult active from late summer to winter; juveniles commence moult during first winter. (Moult of Cape Gannet coincides with S Hemisphere seasons.) Adult plumage attained after about 3–4 years or more in gannets, about 2–3 years in boobies.

Risk of confusion with other types of bird rather low in all but poor view. Immature Northern Gannet

and other dark-plumaged sulids can be mistaken at long distance in windy weather for large shearwaters, but as well as being very much larger have even longer, more pointed wings and tail, and very large, dagger-shaped bill giving much more powerful appearance to front end. Could also be mistaken for large gull or skua in poor view, but very large, dagger-shaped bill and wedge-shaped tail (which give gannets and boobies very characteristic ‘pointed at both ends’ look) and the very long, narrow and more pointed wings should prevent all but momentary misidentification. (See also vagrant albatrosses.)

Northern Gannet only widespread member of family in region, but separation of other members of family requires some care. Points to concentrate on are:

Upperwing pattern • Underwing pattern • Tail colour (whether all-dark or not) • **Head colour**

Note: the inner secondaries in gannets and boobies, lying close to the body, are often known as ‘humeral’s’.

RED-FOOTED BOOBY *Sula sula*

Plate page 65

L 66–77 cm, WS 124–142 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Vagrant (breeds tropical Atlantic, tropical Indian Ocean etc.). Small and slim-winged booby, being smaller and sleeker overall than Masked, and with relatively longer tail and slimmer wings and bill. Plumage confusingly variable, but elegant appearance and agile flight action helpful at all stages. **Adult white morph** differs from adult Masked in build and in having wholly white tail and tertials (so that black of secondaries tapers away towards wing base, as in Cape Gannet), blackish carpal patch on underwing, less extensive dark face patch and bright red feet. **Adult brown morph** a distinctive coffee-brown, with

whitish rump and tail (wholly brown adults are confined to the Pacific). **Juvenile** wholly brown, with blackish bill and feet (latter soon becoming reddish), so unlikely to be confused. **Immature** white morph with varying amounts of white below can be confused with juvenile Brown, but latter has darker head and neck and border to underwing.

SEX/AGE Adult plumage gradually attained over 2–3 years.

VOICE Silent at sea.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe, Cape Verde Is). Pelagic away from breeding colonies.

MASKED BOOBY *Sula dactylatra*

Plate page 65

L 81–92 cm, WS 152–170 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Vagrant (breeding in tropical seas right across the world). Large booby, not much smaller than Northern Gannet but a little stockier. **Adult** may be confused with adult gannets. From Northern Gannet by black secondaries, tertials (humeral’s) and tail; from very similar Cape Gannet by broad black trailing edge to wing that does not distinctly taper towards body but instead looks uniform in width, and black even extends up sides of body owing to black tertials. From either at close range by yellow or greenish-yellow bill, pure white head (but beware winter gannets with very pale heads), and more extensive exposed area of dark facial skin. Older sub-adult Northern Gannet can look superficially similar, but, by stage when black feathering on mantle, back, rump and wing coverts largely lost, has at least a few and usually many white feathers showing in secondaries and tail. **Juvenile** resembles Brown Booby, but is larger and bulkier, with brown of head extending only to neck (not to breast), an indistinct

whitish collar across hindneck, distinctly paler mantle (contrasting with darker head), and a dusky line extending down middle of otherwise whitish underwing coverts. **Immature** has much whitish on wing coverts and rump, with broader white collar across hindneck, making confusion unlikely. Feeds by near-vertical plunge-diving, often from some height, resembling gannets in this respect.

SEX/AGE Adult female has greenish-yellow rather than yellow bill. Adult plumage gradually attained over 2–3 years.

VOICE Calls mainly at colonies (so unlikely to be heard in our region). Typical calls are harsh grunts and honks (by female and young) and thin whistles (by male).

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). Occurs regularly in southern Red Sea, so may also occur as vagrant in northern Red Sea. In natural range, rocky islands and surrounding waters, offshore waters; less commonly in inshore waters of mainland coasts.

BROWN BOOBY *Sula leucogaster*

Plate page 65

L 64–74 cm, WS 132–150 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Considerably smaller and slimmer than gannets, with longer tail and faster wingbeats. Feeds by plunge-diving from low level and at much shallower angle than in gannets (and will even catch flying-fish on the wing). **Adult** has distinctive sharp demarcation between brown foreparts and white remainder of underparts and centre of underwing, making confusion with juvenile gannets unlikely (but see juvenile Masked Booby). **Juvenile** separated from



juvenile gannets by darker, more uniform brown upperparts that lack extensive white spotting, lack of

white band on uppertail coverts, and often fairly obvious demarcation between dark brown foreparts and paler remainder of underparts and centre of underwing. At very close range, greater expanse of unfeathered skin in facial area gives birds of any age a different facial expression from that of gannets.

SEX/AGE Adult female markedly larger, with yellow instead of blue eye-ring and usually paler facial skin. Juvenile not unlike adult, but not so dark brown, and with underparts from lower breast to vent and centre of underwing whitish mottled with brown instead of all white. Bill largely grey rather than yellow, and

facial skin also initially grey.

VOICE Typical calls, given mainly at colonies, are harsh grunts and honks (by female and young) and high, sibilant whistles (by male).

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Minimal. 2 races (nominate illustrated).

STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon. (Found in mapped marine range all year. Breeding area apparently mapped for mainland Egyptian Red Sea coast in fact refers to nearby offshore islands.) Rocky islands and surrounding waters; also inshore waters of mainland coasts. Less often offshore waters.

CAPE GANNET *Morus capensis*

L 84–94 cm, WS 160–175 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Vagrant (breeds Southern Africa, wintering north to Gulf of Guinea and Kenya). Closely resembles Northern Gannet but averages a little smaller. **Adult** distinguished from Northern by black rather than white secondaries and tail, and at close range by very long dark gular (throat) stripe. (Note: some Cape have white outer tail feathers.) Beware, however, sub-adult Northern with much blackish feathering in secondaries and tail but otherwise rather adult-like appearance: at a distance these can easily be mistaken for Cape, but at closer range the mixture of blackish and white feathers in the greater coverts results in a ragged, blotchy border between the white forewing and the dark trailing edge (clean-cut in Cape), while some white feathering can be discerned in the secondaries and some blackish spotting on the otherwise white remainder of the upperparts. In addition, the yellowish-buff tinge on the head and nape of Cape is at its brightest from late summer to early winter,

when Northern are at their palest. **Sub-adult** is identical to sub-adult Northern apart from uniform blackish secondaries (without any white feathering at all), all-blackish tail (in most but not all) and much longer dark gular stripe. (See also Masked Booby.) **Juvenile/Immature** cannot, as yet, be separated from Northern.

SEX/AGE Sexes differ slightly (as in Northern). Minimal seasonal variation (as in Northern, but seasons reversed so that they have head palest from our late winter to spring). Adult plumage attained gradually over 3–4 years.

VOICE As with Northern Gannet, calls mainly at colony but also while feeding communally. Typical call very similar to that of Northern.

TAXONOMY Sometimes treated as a race of Northern Gannet *M. bassanus*.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Spain, Western Sahara). In natural range, inshore and offshore waters: breeds on rocky islets (and rarely on mainland coasts).

Plate page 64

NORTHERN GANNET *Morus bassanus*

Gannet

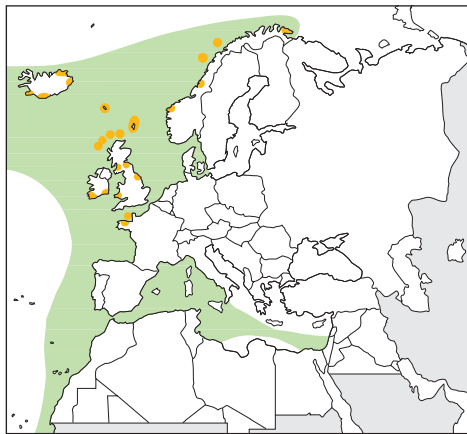
L 87–100 cm, WS 165–180 cm.

IDENTIFICATION The only widespread sulid in the region and the largest breeding seabird of our region: as such, identification straightforward (for separation from boobies and Cape Gannet see those species).

SEX/AGE Rich yellowish-buff tinge on head and nape, present from winter to early summer, usually stronger in adult male. In late summer and autumn head and nape paler, sometimes almost white. Adult plumage not fully attained until fourth year. Juvenile sooty with minute white freckles and whitish band on uppertail coverts. Some are quite whitish on belly from the start. Later, white areas develop on underwing and head as well as underparts and by autumn of second calendar year whole head and underparts white, with white feathers soon appearing on upperside; by third calendar year very mottled but most of secondaries and tail still black; fourth-calendar-year birds are variable and are close to adult but still show a few dark feathers in wing and tail and even in fifth calendar year might retain black tail centre or a black secondary or two. Precise ageing is impossible due to individual variation.

VOICE Calls mainly at colonies, but also while feeding communally. Typical call a repeated loud, harsh, throaty 'urrah'.

STATUS/HABITAT Common, locally abundant around breeding colonies. (Found throughout mapped marine range in winter, but many, especially juveniles, migrate south to winter off sub-tropical or even tropi-



cal W Africa. Rare but regular at this season in E Mediterranean. In summer uncommon south of Bay of Biscay; mostly immatures. Most breeding areas apparently mapped for mainland coasts in fact refer to nearby offshore islands.) Breeds on rocky islets and sea cliffs on small islands (or very rarely mainland coasts). Frequents both inshore and offshore waters.

Plate page 64

CORMORANTS *Phalacrocoracidae*

6 species (1 vagrant)

Medium-large to large diving birds of both salt and fresh water. Cormorants are characterized by long bills (with hooked tip), long necks, long bodies, long wedge-shaped tails and predominantly dark coloration. Their rather scaly upperparts feathering and their long, snaky heads and necks give them an almost reptilian feel, exceeded only by darters. Adults generally have metallic sheen. Cormorants often perch with wings extended and tail spread in characteristic spread-eagle pose (significance uncertain; may not be in order to dry out feathers). Legs are set far back, giving upright stance when perched. Gait rather slow and waddling. Bare facial skin often brightly coloured. Sociable, although tend to feed solitarily or in loose assemblages. Feed primarily on fish taken while diving from surface up to 30 m in depth. Breed colonially on ground on islands, on sea cliffs or in trees. Flight is strong and direct, often low over water but generally much higher over land, with regular, powerful wingbeats. Occasionally soars when over land. Flocks often form long wavering lines or V-shaped formations. Patter over surface when taking off.

Sexes similar. All show marked or at least obvious seasonal variation. Juveniles are brownish and separable but not unlike winter adults.

Complete post-breeding moult between summer and winter. Partial pre-breeding moult in winter/early spring involves mainly head and neck feathers. Juvenile/immature moult cycles complex, overlapping with each other. Post-juvenile body moult commences in first autumn, but flight feathers and tail only from following spring. Adult plumage attained within about 18 months to two years.

Confusion with divers is quite possible, especially where juvenile cormorants concerned, but divers lack the long tails of cormorants (which are noticeable even when the latter dive from surface, flipping up as bird submerges).

Cormorants show great similarity in plumage, and so jizz is particularly helpful when separating them. Points to concentrate on are:

Size • Head and bill shapes • Colour and distribution of bare facial skin

GREAT CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Plate page 66

Cormorant; White-breasted Cormorant (*P. c. lucidus*)

L 80–100 cm, WS 130–160 cm.

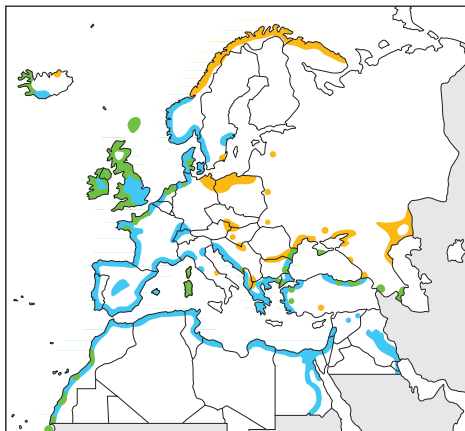
IDENTIFICATION The largest and most widespread cormorant of the region. (For separation from other cormorants see those species.) Flight heavy and rather goose-like, but interspersed with short glides.

SEX/AGE Adult winter lacks white thigh patch and white plumes on crown and upper neck, while plumage duller overall. White on throat and face tinged buff. Juvenile fairly distinct. Compared with adult winter, is much browner overall with variable amount of whitish on underparts. Most have belly and throat whitish, but some all-dark, while a few have foreneck and breast also whitish. Younger immature resembles juvenile, older resembles adult winter but is mottled with white on belly.

VOICE Silent away from colonies, where gives a variety of deep, guttural calls.

TAXONOMY Race *lucidus* is sometimes treated as a full species, **White-breasted Cormorant**.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate (main difference is amount of white in plumage). 4 races (nominate, *sinensis* and *lucidus* illustrated). Race *sinensis* (breeds from the Netherlands, Corsica and Sardinia eastwards to the Caspian) shows much more extensive white on crown and upper neck in adult summer than most birds of nominate race (breeds NW Europe), although some old nominate show as much. Race *maroccanus* (breeds Morocco) as *sinensis*, but also has throat and foreneck white. Race *lucidus* (breeds Banc d'Arguin, Mauritania, and pos-



sibly further north) as *maroccanus*, but has breast (and sometimes belly) white. Both *maroccanus* and *lucidus* retain some white on underparts in winter plumage.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Tunisia.) Both rocky and sandy coasts (especially where water sheltered), estuaries, lakes and large rivers.

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax auritus*

Plate page 66

L 74–86 cm, WS 122–137 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Slightly smaller than rather similar Great Cormorant, with smaller, more rounded (less angular) head and slimmer bill and neck; also has larger, more square-cut, orange-yellow (rather than yellow) patch of bare skin at base of lower mandible. (Lacks wedge of feathering under mandible shown by Great, but this often hard to see.) In close view often shows a clean, pale-orange stripe of bare skin on lore (although loreal skin is yellow or pale orange in adult winter/immature Great, it is partly obscured by tiny dark feathers). Lower mandible often pale yellow (usually whitish in Great). Adult summer (of races occurring in eastern N America) has rather inconspicuous double crest of two dark tufts that curve back from behind each eye and lacks the white plumes on head and neck and the white flank patches shown by Great. Juvenile variable, but usually shows whitish foreneck and breast and brownish belly, the opposite of many juvenile Great, which are darker on foreneck and breast with paler patch on centre of belly. Darker individuals, looking all brown below, can recall European Shag (q.v.), but differ in having heavier build with thicker neck, stouter bill

and more gently sloping forehead, and lack whitish chin patch, pale ventral area (contrasting with dark thighs) and pale wing panel. Iris is dark in juvenile Double-crested (pale in juvenile Great Cormorant and European Shag). Immature Double-crested often whitish from foreneck to upper belly, recalling immatures of southern races of Great, but these have completely white bellies and also usually have whiter ear-coverts, creating a more capped appearance to head. Similarly, immature European Shag with very pale underparts has whitish extending to ventral area (contrast with dark thighs). In flight, holds neck with obvious kink, more marked than in Great.

SEX/AGE Adult winter lacks crest. Juvenile fairly distinct. Compared with adult winter is much browner overall with variable amount of whitish on underparts. Most have foreneck and breast whitish but brown belly and flanks, although some whitish from foreneck to centre of belly and others virtually all-dark.

VOICE Silent away from colonies.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe, Azores). Nominant race most likely to be involved. In natural range, habitats much as Great Cormorant.

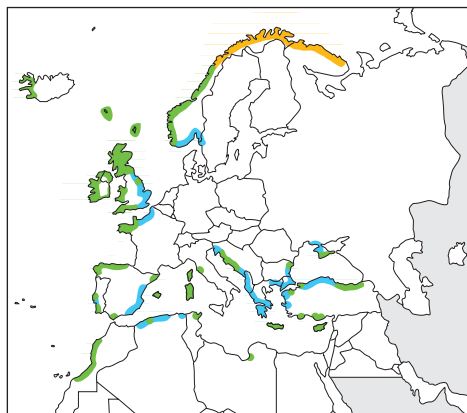
EUROPEAN SHAG *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

Plate page 67

Shag

L 65–80 cm, WS 90–105 cm.

IDENTIFICATION This somewhat smaller, strictly marine relative of Great Cormorant is the only other widespread member of the family in our region. Less inclined to perch on buoys or piers than Great Cormorant, and posture when perched generally less upright. When diving, generally (but not always) springs clear of water during forward roll, a habit only sometimes exhibited by Great Cormorant. **Adult summer** may be separated from adult summer Great Cormorant by recurved crest on forehead (present for restricted period), all-black plumage without white on chin and cheeks (or more extensively on head, neck and underparts) or on thigh, and by bright yellow gape. **Adult winter** closely resembles winter adult of typical races of Great Cormorant, differing in smaller, more rounded head (Great Cormorant's is longer, with shallower forehead, distinctly flatter crown and noticeably angular nape), more slender bill and slimmer, slightly shorter neck. European Shag generally shows more restricted pale area on throat. **Juvenile** similarly resembles juvenile Great Cormorant, but differs structurally (see above, but beware occasional juvenile Great Cormorant with thinner bill). Juveniles of nominate (W European) race also appear more uniformly brownish below (apart from white chin), although some show variable amounts of white on foreneck, breast and belly. Great Cormorant typically has obvious whitish belly patch or even more extensive white on underparts (especially southern races). Thighs are contrastingly darker brown in European Shag and pale fringes to wing coverts contrast with dark remainder of upperparts. **Immature** lacks bold dark spotting below that is shown by many immature Great Cormorants. In flight, wingbeats faster than Great Cormorant's and outline different, with smaller, more knob-shaped head held higher, slimmer neck stretched out (instead of slightly retracted, producing noticeable kink), belly more bulging and shorter tail, the whole giving European Shag a tail-heavy appearance. Wings appear more rounded and less angled-



back than in Great Cormorant and are raised higher. In juvenile and immature, pale edgings to wing coverts create pale panel in flight (Great Cormorant looks all-dark). Typically flies close to water, while Great Cormorant often flies at higher level. (See also Double-crested, Socotra, Long-tailed and Pygmy Cormorants.)

SEX/AGE Adult winter lacks recurved crest and is duller overall, with whitish chin and brown throat. Juvenile fairly distinct: compared with adult winter, is browner overall, with whitish chin and paler brown underparts (sometimes with variable amounts of whitish on foreneck, breast and belly in nominate race: see Geographical Variation regarding other races) and has pinkish-brown bill with dark culmen.

VOICE Silent away from colonies, where both sexes make clicking sounds and male a series of grunts interspersed with clicks: 'ark-ik-ark-ik-ark-ik ...'.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 3 races (nominate and *desmarestii* illustrated). Adult

desmarestii (Mediterranean and Black Sea) and *riggenbachi* (Morocco) differ from nominate in having breeding crest shorter or absent, feet paler and bill yellow apart from black culmen and tip. Juveniles differ in routinely having whitish underparts from chin to belly or even ventral area (but brown flanks), characters shown by only a minority of nominate juveniles. Also show more extensive whitish fringes to wing coverts that form conspicuous pale wing panel.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common in north of range, but generally uncommon and local in south. (In addition to mapped areas, a widespread breeding resident among Aegean Is.) Inshore waters, especially along rocky coasts, tolerating rougher conditions than Great Cormorant. Outside breeding season, also sandy coasts far from suitable nesting areas, but generally avoids estuaries and shallow sandy inlets. Only exceptionally found on fresh water.

SOCOTRA CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax nigrogularis*

Plate page 67

L 77–84 cm, WS 102–110 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A species of the Persian Gulf. Highly sociable, often forming dense flocks, but rather shy. Distinctly smaller than Great Cormorant, the only cormorant with which it normally overlaps. Has slimmer, rather European Shag-like overall jizz, slimmer head and noticeably longer, slimmer neck (making head and neck look particularly snaky), longer and slimmer bill, shorter wings, much shorter tail and faster wingbeats. Compared with somewhat smaller European Shag, has much shorter tail and longer bill. **Adult** differs from adult Great Cormorant in generally appearing entirely black (Great always has yellowish base of bill and adjacent facial skin, white chin and cheeks, with white thigh patch in adult summer: some races show more extensive areas of white). Note, however, that for brief period at start of breeding season white filoplumes show on head, neck and rump, often forming quite obvious white streak behind eye. Compared with adult European Shag, lacks pale patch at gape and recurved breeding crest. In close view, shows purplish rather than green gloss to plumage (most obvious in breeding season). **Juvenile** is distinctly paler and greyer above than juvenile Great Cormorant (appears quite bleached) and is invariably whitish on breast and belly (unlike many Greats), with bill pale brown rather than yellowish, facial skin pink



rather than yellow and legs pinkish instead of black. Juvenile European Shag more similar, but is darker and browner above, pale brown on breast and belly, and has legs black with pale brown insides to tarsi and webs. **Immature** coloration quite closely resembles immature (or dark juvenile) Great Cormorant and immature European Shag, but is greyer overall, with bill greyish (yellowish in Great Cormorant, pinkish-brown in European Shag). (See also Pygmy and Long-tailed Cormorants.)

SEX/AGE Immature intermediate between juvenile and adult, but closer to latter. Dark greyish-brown overall, with paler chin and throat, greyish bill, yellowish facial skin and dark brownish legs.

VOICE Silent away from colonies (from where data is lacking).

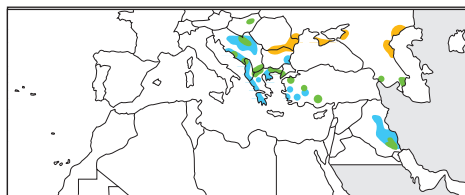
STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon non-breeding visitor (late spring–autumn) to head of Persian Gulf. Formerly bred on islands off Kuwait. Inshore and offshore waters, rocky islands, sand banks, sand spits.

PYGMY CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax pygmeus*

Plate page 68

L 45–55 cm, WS 80–90 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A small cormorant of SE Europe and the Middle East; barely over half length of Great Cormorant. The only small cormorant in its range and thus unlikely to be misidentified (but see Long-tailed Cormorant). Shape is somewhat different from that of larger species: Pygmy has small, rounded head with steep forehead and decidedly short bill (features combine to give cute rather than reptilian expression), shorter neck and longer tail. Rather sociable, often forming quite large feeding parties. Perches particularly upright. Often breeds among herons and egrets in trees or reeds. In flight, spells of rapid wingbeats (creating duck-like impression) are interspersed with short glides. Distant birds (when bill invisible) can bear a remarkable resemblance to Glossy Ibises. Will soar high in air in hot weather. **Adult summer** also differs from other cormorants in having bill and facial skin entirely black, head and neck reddish-brown (with inconspicuous short shaggy crest) and a generous scattering of white filoplumes on head, neck, uppertail coverts and underparts during early stages of breeding season. (Bill is brown with yellowish base outside breeding period.)



SEX/AGE For differences between adult summer and adult winter see above. Juvenile resembles adult winter but has noticeable brown tinge to mantle, scapulars, wing coverts and flight feathers.

VOICE Mainly silent, but low grunts and higher-pitched croaks at colonies.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally fairly common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Hungary, Italy, Algeria, Israel.) Lakes and slow-flowing rivers fringed by extensive marshes or swampy scrub or woodland. Outside breeding season sometimes visits brackish lagoons, but not the sea.

LONG-TAILED CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax africanus*

Plate page 68

Reed Cormorant

L 50–55 cm, WS 80–90 cm.

IDENTIFICATION African counterpart of Pygmy Cormorant, now restricted to Banc d'Arguin, Mauritania, so unlikely to be confused. As with Pygmy (q.v.), barely more than half size of Great Cormorant and has same marked structural differences but with even longer tail. Confusion with Darter possible, especially when swimming low in water with body submerged and only head and neck showing, but Darter much larger and with longer, more pointed bill, slimmer head and much longer, slimmer neck (creating famous 'snake-bird' impression). Fairly sociable, forming loose feeding parties. Like Pygmy, often perches very upright. Flight action as Pygmy. **Adult summer** differs from adult summer Pygmy in all-black head and neck with tuft of feathers on forehead, even paler (silver-grey) scapulars and wing coverts that are spotted with black, and yellow bill and facial skin. **Adult winter** closely resembles adult winter Pygmy, but is whitish on breast and belly (instead of brown or buff), with greyish scapulars and wing coverts that are spotted with black (these areas, however, less contrasting than in summer plumage), and yellow bill and facial skin (bill brownish and facial skin black in



Pygmy). **Juvenile** often hard to separate from juvenile Pygmy. Generally whiter on breast and belly than Pygmy (where latter generally brown or buff). In close view, eye generally red (brown in Pygmy, but some Long-tailed also brown), bill pinkish-yellow with dark tip (instead of brownish-yellow with dark brown ridge) and facial skin yellow (instead of reddish-yellow).

VOICE Mainly silent, but hissing and throaty cackling at colonies.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common in restricted range. Formerly bred Egypt. Shallow coastal waters, sandy and rocky coastal islands, mangroves. Outside our region, however, predominantly in freshwater and brackish habitats.

DARTERS Anhingidae

1 species

AFRICAN DARTER *Anhinga rufa*

Plate page 68

Darter

L 85–97 cm, WS 116–128 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Darters are large, cormorant-like birds of freshwater and brackish-water habitats. Their long, slender head and neck and long, thin bill give them their characteristic 'snake-bird' appearance. Body bulky and cormorant-like, with long, strongly graduated (almost paddle-like) tail. Likely to be confused only with cormorants, but easily separated on good view by longer and much more slender neck, head and bill. Perch on trees or rocks with strongly upright stance owing to legs being positioned well back on body. Gait rather slow and awkward, but rarely seen walking on ground. Often hold wings outstretched and tail spread in cormorant fashion. When swimming, body is generally submerged, with only head and neck visible, creating particularly serpentine impression. Flight powerful and cormorant-like, with a series of rapid wingbeats typically followed by a short glide. Hold long neck outstretched, but slightly kinked, in flight. Sometimes soar high in air with long tail fanned. Patter heavily over surface when taking off, and frequently resort to scrambling on to waterside perch rather than flying to it. Not very sociable, usually occurring singly or in pairs. Nest in waterside trees or bushes, either solitarily or in small groups. Feed on fish, speared with bill.

SEX/AGE Adult female summer has crown and hind-neck brown instead of black, white stripe on neck less



obvious and rest of neck pinkish-buff instead of chestnut. Adult winter has head and neck browner, with less obvious white streak (looks duller than adult female summer). Juvenile separable. Moults little known, but perhaps a complete post-breeding moult followed by a partial pre-breeding moult of body plumage. Period between fledging and attainment of adult plumage unknown, but probably at least 18 months.

VOICE Generally silent, but has a variety of harsh rattling and grunting calls at nest.

TAXONOMY Sometimes treated as a race of *A. melanogaster* **Oriental Darter**, with the enlarged species being known simply as Darter.

STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon in restricted range. Formerly bred Turkey; this population largely wintering in Israel. Lakes, pools, lagoons, slow-moving rivers and also open water in extensive marshes, almost always where fringing trees or bushes provide perches. Mostly found in freshwater habitats, but will tolerate brackish conditions.

PELICANS Pelecanidae

3 species

Huge, heavy-bodied, short-tailed waterbirds with long neck, large head and enormous (long, broad and pointed) bill with distensible gular pouch that gives pelicans their distinctive appearance. Full extent of gular pouch usually evident only while swallowing. Gait slow and waddling on short, thick legs. Highly sociable, nesting in large colonies on islands, in reedbeds or in bushes and trees. Very sensitive to disturbance: may desert colony following human intrusion. Feed on fish, scooped up in gular pouch while head-dipping or up-ending. Often feed co-operatively, with a fleet of swimming birds in semicircular formation rounding up potential prey. Float very high when swimming, with wings held rather loosely against body. Wings both long and broad, adapted to soaring and gliding flight. Flapping flight lumbering but powerful with deep, slow wingbeats, often followed by short glide on slightly bowed wings. Often soar high in sky, spiralling flocks recalling storks or raptors. In flight, neck tucked back onto shoulders but long bill protrudes conspicuously. Flocks fly in lines or more complex formations. Land heavily with feet skating over surface prior to touchdown on water. Take off heavily and clumsily with feet pattering.

Sexes similar. Slight seasonal variation (mainly in soft-part coloration). Juveniles range from similar to adult to quite distinct.

Complete post-breeding moult commences during breeding period, finishing by following breeding season. Partial pre-breeding moult affects occipital crest and some other body feathers only. Post-juvenile moult poorly known: may commence in second autumn and continue for a year or more. Adult plumage attained within about 2–3 years from fledging.

Unlikely to be confused with other kinds of bird, although very distant pelicans on water may be mistaken for swans and distant soaring birds (particularly Great White Pelican, q.v.) can be mistaken for storks (especially White or Yellow-billed Storks) or raptors, especially in hazy conditions.

Specific identification can be difficult, especially at a distance or when juveniles involved. Points to concentrate on are:

Colour of gular pouch and facial skin • Colour of legs • Wing pattern (especially underwing)

GREAT WHITE PELICAN *Pelecanus onocrotalus*

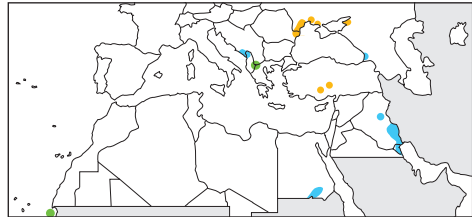
Plate page 69

White Pelican

L 140–175 cm, WS 234–309 cm.

IDENTIFICATION The most numerous and wide-spread pelican. See Dalmatian and Pink-backed for methods of separation. Highly sociable, often occurring in large flocks. Pinkish tinge in breeding season can cause confusion with flamingos when seen at a distance through heat shimmer. Contrasting black flight feathers and white wing coverts and body make confusion with White Stork (or conceivably Yellow-billed Stork) possible in flight, especially when soaring flock seen at distance in hazy conditions, but heavy-bodied, almost neckless appearance from below (created by retraction of head and neck onto shoulders) together with huge, broad bill and rather bulging inner wing identify distant Great White Pelican, as does slower and more controlled movement of soaring flock (distant stork flocks appearing faster-moving and more swirling, less ordered). Pelicans do not have projecting legs, but at distance legs of storks often invisible.

SEX/AGE Gular pouch and facial skin yellow in both sexes outside breeding season. White areas of plumage faintly tinged pink in breeding season and has inconspicuous short, shaggy crest on nape. Bill becomes brighter yellowish-grey, gular pouch becomes orange-yellow and facial skin is pinkish-yellow in male, bright orange in female. Leg becomes brighter pink, almost crimson.



VOICE Mainly silent away from colonies, where has a variety of low-pitched lowing, grunting and growling calls. Flight call is a deep, quiet croak.

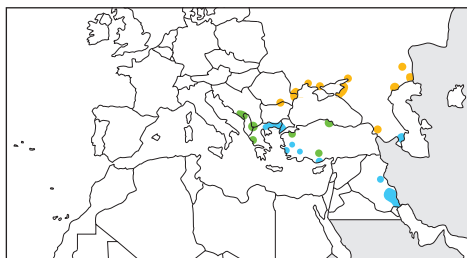
STATUS/HABITAT Very localized as breeding species. Generally uncommon, but large concentrations occur in a few areas. (Map note: may breed regularly in Van Gölü region of E Turkey. In addition, has bred Hungary, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Iraq, Kuwait. Most winter S of the Sahara.) When breeding, large lakes and lagoons, generally surrounded by extensive reedbeds suitable for nesting but locally with bare shorelines where small islands available for nesting; at Banc d'Arguin, Mauritania, small islands in shallow coastal waters. At other times also smaller lakes and lagoons, large fishponds, broad, slow-moving rivers and sometimes sheltered coastal waters.

DALMATIAN PELICAN *Pelecanus crispus*

Plate page 69

L 160–180 cm, WS 310–345 cm.

IDENTIFICATION The largest pelican, but much rarer than Great White and much less sociable (typically only seen in small groups or singly). Not difficult to separate in flight, as Dalmatian always has pale greyish underwing, with indistinct whitish band across centre, that shades to darker grey at wingtips and along trailing edge: quite unlike Great White, which always has all-dark flight feathers. Pattern of adult Great White especially contrasting, with white underwing coverts contrasting with black flight feathers. In juvenile Great White, dark brown flight feathers and leading edge of underwing contrast strongly with broad whitish band across centre. Upperwing differences are less obvious, but Dalmatian always looks greyer overall, with reduced contrast compared with Great White. Lacks strong contrast between white coverts and black flight feathers (edged white on secondaries) shown by adult Great White, or contrast between all-brown upperwing and mantle and whitish rump shown by juvenile Great White. Separation at rest more difficult. Size difference noticeable only when together. Dalmatian is duller than adult Great White with a grey tinge, lacking the latter's clean bright whiteness. Whole plumage looks quite rough-textured, while feathering of head and neck seems distinctly ruffled. Juvenile Great White is largely dark brown above, so confusion highly unlikely. Immature Great White is dusker than adult, so more like Dalmatian (especially juvenile), but latter can be separated by careful attention to detail even if no size comparison available. Dalmatian always has a bushy and rather curly crest on nape that becomes longer and more untidy in the breeding season (quite unlike shaggy, downward-hanging crest of breeding Great White), a less extensive area of bare facial skin around a pale eye (contrastingly dark in Great White), a broad area of feathering across the forehead between the areas of bare facial skin that terminates in a slightly concave line at the base of the bill (narrower and



tapering to a point in Great White), and dark grey legs (pinkish or pinkish-red in Great White). Adult Dalmatian also has the gular pouch orange-red or red (yellow or at most orange-yellow in Great White) and the facial skin purple (pinkish-yellow or orange in Great White) during the breeding period. In adult winter both areas are dull pinkish-yellow (yellow in winter Great White), while in the juvenile they are very similar to those of juvenile Great White: dull grey with a pinkish-yellow tinge (dull yellowish-grey in Great White). See also Pink-backed Pelican.

SEX/AGE Colour of adult's pouch and facial skin alters with season (see above). Juvenile differs from adult in greyer overall coloration (with brownish tinge to mantle, wing coverts and tail), shorter crest and grey bill, and gular pouch and facial skin only tinged with yellow.

VOICE Generally silent away from colonies, where utters various barking, hissing, spitting and grunting calls.

STATUS/HABITAT Rare, localized and endangered. When breeding, large lakes and lagoons fringed by extensive marshes or areas of flooded scrub and trees. At other times, also large lakes and lagoons without fringing vegetation, smaller lakes and lagoons in general, and even sheltered coastal waters.

PINK-BACKED PELICAN *Pelecanus rufescens*

Plate page 69

L 125–132 cm, WS 265–290 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Rather drab non-breeding visitor from sub-Saharan Africa/SW Arabia. The smallest pelican, but size difference obvious only if comparison possible: this is still a very large bird. Could be confused with either of larger species. In flight, underwing pattern of adult summer is much like a washed-out version of juvenile Great White: dusky-grey flight feathers and vinaceous leading edge of wing contrast with broad whitish band across centre. Underwing of adult winter and juvenile is like a washed-out version of adult Great White's: dusky-grey flight feathers contrast with entirely whitish wing coverts. Adult's upperwing pattern, however, recalls juvenile Dalmatian, with pale greyish or pinkish-grey coverts contrasting with dark grey flight feathers. Upperwing pattern of juvenile between juvenile Dalmatian and juvenile Great White, with brownish-grey coverts and dark grey flight feathers contrasting with whitish rump. At all ages, flight feathers are never so darkly contrasting as in Great White, either above or below. When swimming or standing, Pink-backed is the drabest and greyest of the pelicans apart from juvenile Great White (which is, however, largely brown) and juvenile Dalmatian (which is similar in overall coloration to adult winter Pink-backed). Bill and gular pouch of adult in



winter are pale yellowish-pink, while those of juvenile are pale greyish-pink, looking paler, more washed out than in any other pelican. Even adult in breeding season, which has gular pouch somewhat brighter pinkish-yellow, still looks pale-billed. Dark eye (like Great White, but unlike Dalmatian), blackish lore and narrow area of pale, pinkish skin around eye (becoming yellow or orange when breeding) with blackish rear border give Pink-backed a different facial expression from either Dalmatian or Great White. Broad area of feathering across forehead, ending in slightly concave line at base of bill as in Dalmatian. Has inconspicuous short bushy crest on nape lacking curling, ruffled appearance of Dalmatian's. Legs always pale (unlike Dalmatian), ranging from greyish-pink to yellow or orange (becoming pinkish-red in breeding season): this difference useful in separating overhead birds from

Dalmatian. Readily perches in trees.

SEX/AGE At beginning of breeding season, adult male has upper eyelid deep yellow, female dark orange. Slight seasonal variation in colour of gular pouch, facial skin and legs (see above). Adult winter also lacks pinkish or vinaceous tinge to plumage of upperparts and undertail coverts, and has lesser and median underwing coverts and axillaries whitish rather than vinaceous. Juvenile resembles adult winter, but upper-

parts brownish-grey rather than greyish, crest on nape very short, tail dark brown rather than grey, and secondaries darker grey.

VOICE Generally silent away from colonies.

STATUS/HABITAT Rare but regular non-breeding visitor to extreme S Egypt. Vagrant to Morocco, Canary Is, Israel. In sub-Saharan Africa, favours freshwater and saline lakes and lagoons, open water in marshes, mangrove creeks, sheltered coastal waters.

FRIGATEBIRDS *Fregatidae*

1 species

MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD *Fregata magnificens*

Plate page 70

L 95–110 cm, WS 215–245 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Frigatebirds are very large, highly aerial seabirds with dramatic, rather raptor-like silhouette in flight. Characterized by long, slender, strongly hooked bill, short neck, slender body, long, narrow, deeply forked tail (often held closed, forming long spike behind body), and extremely long, narrow, pointed wings. Superbly adapted to dynamic soaring flight with only occasional deep wingbeat, changing position with help of long, rudder-like tail. Typically hang buoyantly high in air with wings arched, soaring and gliding effortlessly. Capable of remarkably rapid and dramatic manoeuvres when feeding. Do not usually alight on sea, nor walk when on land. Strictly diurnal, roosting on land at night. Sun themselves by lying back on tail with wings outstretched and upturned. Feed mainly on fish (especially flying-fish) and cephalopods, either taken directly while on wing by hovering and swooping or even plunging straight down to surface, or by forcefully pursuing boobies and tropicbirds and forcing regurgitation in skua fashion. Will also follow boats and take offal from sea surface, snatch stranded fish and hatching turtles from beaches and take eggs or small young of other seabirds, almost always while on the wing. Colonial breeders (usually in small groups) on undisturbed islets, either on bare rock or in bushes and trees. Male grossly inflates otherwise fairly inconspicuous orange gular pouch into huge and spectacular scarlet balloon when displaying with head thrown back and wings outstretched. Generally solitary away from colonies, but will form loose aggregations where feeding good. Tropical and subtropical inshore and offshore waters. Magnificent is the only frigatebird of the region and as such unmistakable, but out-of-range frigatebirds should be checked in Harrison (1985) in view of possibility of vagrant occurrence of other species (Great *F. minor*, Lesser *F. ariel* and Ascension *F. aquila* are all conceivable).

SEX/AGE Sexes differ. No seasonal variation. Juvenile



upperparts are much as adult female, with pale greyish band across lesser wing coverts, but head and neck are white. In immature stages head and belly progressively darken (as also does breast in male). Immatures of both sexes have blackish band across lower breast, with blackish spotting on remainder of breast and belly (heaviest on breast in male, on belly in female). Sub-adult male has all-blackish underparts apart from some white mottling left on upper belly. Sub-adult female resembles immature, but has even heavier blackish spotting on belly. Narrow white fringes to axillaries present from earliest immature stage to sub-adult stage in male and to adulthood in female; in good view, these show as an indistinct whitish 'spur' extending from body onto base of underwing. Moults complex and poorly known: apparently almost continuous, with up to three moult series active in flight feathers simultaneously. Period from fledging to attainment of adult plumage unknown, but probably at least four years.

VOICE Generally silent except at colonies, where male makes rapid rattling, drumming and reeling sounds by vibrating and clicking bill.

STATUS/HABITAT Very rare, very localized and endangered. Breeding restricted to rocky islets off Boa Vista, Cape Verde Is, but ranges over both inshore and offshore waters in surrounding region all year. Vagrants recorded elsewhere may originate from tropical W Atlantic. Outside our region, found also over mainland coasts, including mangrove swamps and ports.

HERONS & EGRETS Ardeidae

26 species (13 vagrant)

Medium-sized to very large or even huge, long-legged, long-necked, long-billed wading birds. Body is slim, tail short (and inconspicuous, as undertail coverts virtually as long), and wings long and broad with rounded tips. Some have ornamental plumes on head, back or chest when breeding. Flight strong, with steady beats of arched wings (slow-paced in large species). Feed mainly on fish, amphibians and large invertebrates, but also small mammals, birds and reptiles. Feeding technique involves waiting motionless in or by water, stealthy wading, or even deliberately flushing prey by running about or merely foot-stirring or flicking wings. Prey is grabbed, or sometimes speared on sharp bill. Whereas most feed out in open, bitterns generally skulk close to or within dense vegetation (and thus most often seen when in flight low over reeds etc. before dropping back into cover). All but bitterns are colonial, often breeding in mixed colonies. Nest in reedbeds, bushes or trees. Likewise, all but bitterns highly sociable when roosting or migrating (and even the small bitterns sometimes migrate in flocks), but otherwise rather solitary, although some species form loose assemblages and will even hunt co-operatively. Cattle Egret, however, is highly sociable at all times. Found in all kinds of wetlands (and Cattle Egret also found routinely in grassland and even arable cultivation). The majority utter harsh rasping or croaking calls, although some bitterns have distinctive advertising call.

Sexes similar (except in some small bitterns). Seasonal variation ranges from nil to moderate, being slight in most. Juveniles closely resemble adults in most species. Adult plumage attained within 1–2 years.

Confusion with other long-legged, long-necked wading birds such as storks, ibises, spoonbills, flamingos and cranes quite possible, particularly with most heron-like of these such as storks and cranes. Confusion most likely in distant flight, but all heron family retract neck back onto 'shoulders' when in steady flight (although may keep neck partly extended in very brief flights), while all the others (apart from vagrant Marabou Stork) keep neck fully extended.

Identification within the family often quite tricky in principle, but if vagrants are discounted identification of most breeding species of our region is straightforward. Points to concentrate on are:

Size • Overall coloration

and for all egrets:

Bare-part coloration (bill, legs, feet etc.)

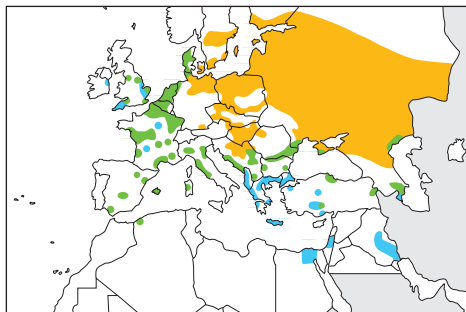
GREAT BITTERN *Botaurus stellaris*

Plate page 101

Bittern, Eurasian Bittern

L 70–80 cm, WS 125–135 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Heavily built heron of extensive reedbeds. Large size and golden-brown coloration with blackish markings highly distinctive (shared only with very similar vagrant American Bittern, q.v.). Confusion possible with juvenile Black-crowned Night Heron in poor view, but latter is substantially smaller with shorter neck, much darker (leaden-brown) upperparts with conspicuous pale spotting on wing coverts, and much larger, staring eye and no moustache (so quite different facial expression). Black-crowned Night Heron has faster wingbeats and readily perches in trees, unlike Great Bittern. Juvenile Purple Heron also vaguely similar in poor view, but is streaked only on underparts and has much more slender body, neck, head and bill and longer legs (that project much further in flight). Secretive and easily overlooked, though presence often betrayed in breeding season by distinctive 'booming' (see Voice). Generally encountered standing at waterside on edge of dense reeds. Typical stance rather hunched, but when feeding very long neck becomes obvious. If alarmed, will adopt characteristic frozen posture of all bitterns, with long neck extended upwards and bill pointing skywards. Clambers up reeds and often perches high up stems, with head and neck protruding above tops. Rises clumsily with neck extended, flying low over reeds for short



distance before dropping back into cover, but neck retracted in typical heron fashion when in steady flight. Distinctive coloration, thick-necked appearance and rather smooth beats of broad, rounded wings create owl-like impression, especially when seen at dawn or dusk flying to or from feeding sites.

SEX/AGE Juvenile closely resembles adult, but has crown and moustachial streak brown instead of black (so less conspicuous), mantle and scapulars less boldly marked and wing coverts paler.

VOICE Advertising call of male, most commonly given at dusk (but heard at night and during day), is a characteristic slow, deep, resonant, far-carrying booming (not unlike sound made when blowing across mouth of empty bottle), preceded by one to three short, muffled coughs: 'up-RUMBH' or 'up-up-RUMBH'. Repeated at intervals of 1–2 seconds, usu-

ally 3–4 times. Also a harsh, nasal 'kau' or 'krau', recalling large gull or, when heard at distance, barking of fox; most often heard in flight in autumn.

STATUS/HABITAT Uncommon and localized. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Ireland, Portugal, Sicily, Greece.) Freshwater or brackish marshes with extensive reedbeds, generally in lowlands.

AMERICAN BITTERN *Botaurus lentiginosus*

Plate page 101

L 60–85 cm, WS 105–125 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. American counterpart of Great Bittern, which it closely resembles. Slightly smaller, with distinctly warm-coloured rufous-brown crown (black or dark brown in Great), distinctly greyish-cinnamon overall appearance (Great looks buff-brown or golden-brown) with broad warm brown streaks on foreneck and breast (narrower and blackish in Great), and has much more striped facial pattern with narrow whitish supercilium, dark brown stripe between eye and bill bordered by pale yellow stripe below (both these stripes being bare facial skin), and a narrower black moustachial stripe than in Great which (unlike in latter) extends and broadens in adult into a characteristic black stripe on sides of upper neck. Lacks fine barring on sides of neck and hind-neck. Also has yellowish-green legs (green in Great) and longer, more slender bill (usually with darker culmen). In flight, wing coverts look plain-coloured and contrast strongly with largely unmarked dark grey

primaries and outer secondaries. Latter are barred with rufous in Great and normally contrast only weakly with well-marked wing coverts (boldly patterned with dark arrowheads), but beware juveniles with paler wing coverts that can suggest American. Behaviour much as Great, but more often in flight in daytime and more inclined to feed in open situations.

SEX/AGE Juvenile closely resembles adult, but has little rufous tinge on crown and no black streak on upper neck.

VOICE Advertising call of male, unlikely to be heard in our region, a peculiar pumping, deep but rather liquid, far-carrying 'oonk-a-lunk'. When flushed, may give a nasal 'haink' or throaty 'kok-kok-kok'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe, Azores, Canary Is). In natural range, found in both freshwater and brackish marshes, bogs and even wet meadows. Tolerates a broader range of habitats than Great Bittern and not so linked to reedbeds.

LEAST BITTERN *Ixobrychus exilis*

Plate page 98

L 28–36 cm, WS 40–45 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Closely resembles Little Bittern. **Adult** has rufous-chestnut greater coverts, bend of wing and tips of primary coverts that contrast with yellowish-buff remainder of inner coverts. In adult male Little entire inner coverts are pale creamy-buff, contrasting strikingly with black remainder of wing. Although adult female Little has dull reddish-brown at bend of wing and on innermost greater coverts, wing coverts are otherwise entirely pale buffish-brown. Rufous-chestnut on Least is especially obvious in flight, when also shows rufous-chestnut tips to inner primaries and outer secondaries. At rest, shows uniformly dark mantle and scapulars apart from clear whitish 'braces' along scapulars (mantle and scapulars entirely black in adult male Little, and narrowly streaked throughout with pale buff in adult female Little). Typical adult male Little (but not vagrant African race *payesii*) also differs from adult Least in lacking rufous-chestnut on sides of head and neck, which are pale vinaceous-buff. **Juvenile** Least differs from juvenile Little in having rufous-chestnut greater coverts, bend of wing and tips to primary coverts, a somewhat better-defined pale patch on inner coverts, and a somewhat more chestnut overall appearance above with pale buff tips (instead of

fringes) to feathers of mantle and scapulars. In flight, shows rufous-chestnut tips to inner primaries and outer secondaries. Behaviour much as Little Bittern. See also rare dark morph below and Schrenck's Bittern.

SEX/AGE Sexes fairly similar, but adult female has crown and mantle dark brown instead of black, more obvious dark streaking on underparts, and duller rufous-chestnut on greater coverts, bend of wing and tips of primary coverts. Juvenile quite like adult female, but more prominently dark-streaked on underparts, and has dark streaking on lesser and median coverts (females only), and more chestnut on crown, mantle and scapulars (which initially have buff tips).

VOICE Advertising call of male, unlikely to be heard in our region, a low, muted, dove-like 'koo-koo-koo'. Alarm call a harsh 'kok'.

UNUSUAL VARIANTS A rare dark morph known as 'Cory's Least Bittern' is rich rufous-chestnut in overall coloration in all plumages. Misidentification unlikely.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe and Azores). In natural range, freshwater marshes, lakes and pools with dense fringing vegetation, and even mangroves and brackish marshes.

LITTLE BITTERN *Ixobrychus minutus*

Plate page 98

L 33–38 cm, WS 52–58 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Much the smallest regularly occurring member of the heron family. Its very small size and pale wing patches, especially striking in adult male, make it unlikely to be misidentified (except as

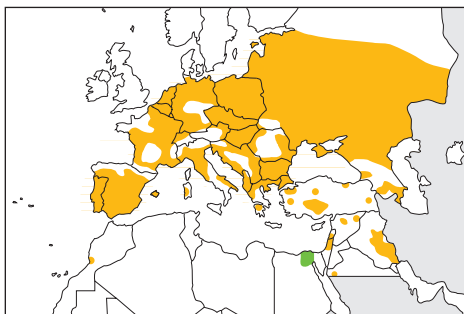
vagrant Least or Schrenck's Bitterns, q.v.). Very skulking by nature, feeding among dense aquatic vegetation and often clambering up reed stems, or among branches of waterside bushes. Most active at dawn

and dusk, when typically seen flying low over reeds or along channels. Rises clumsily with dangling legs, but once underway flight action quite strong with rather quick, shallow, slightly jerky beats of blunt wings and quite long glides. When alarmed, adopts classic bittern 'freeze' posture with neck, head and bill stretched skywards.

SEX/AGE Sexes fairly similar, but adult female has black area dark brown, pale buff edges to feathers of mantle, more prominently dark-streaked underparts, and inner coverts duller and darker, with some reddish-brown on bend of wing and inner greater coverts. Minimal seasonal variation: facial skin and base of bill may become temporarily orange or red when breeding. Juvenile fairly distinct: compared with adult female, is much duller (buffish-brown) overall, with heavy dark brown streaking both above and below; dark streaking on inner wing coverts makes pale patch on wing much less obvious. Bare parts duller.

VOICE Advertising call of breeding male a low, muffled but far-carrying 'hoogh' or 'groom' repeated at 2-second intervals, sometimes for long periods. Flight call (often given when flushed) a low 'quer' or a throaty 'ker-ak'. When excited, a loud, hoarse 'eke eke'.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 2 races



(nominate illustrated). Vagrant *payesii* from sub-Saharan Africa has chestnut sides to head and neck in adult male.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally fairly common; most numerous in E of range. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Britain, Sicily, Algeria, Tunisia, Jordan. Most winter S of the Sahara.) Freshwater marshes and lakes, pools, fishponds, canals and large ditches with dense fringing reeds or other tall vegetation.

SCHRENCK'S BITTERN *Ixobrychus eurhythmus*

Plate page 99

Schrenck's Little Bittern

L 35 cm, WS 55–59 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Asian vagrant. **Adult male** distinctive: distinguished by dark chestnut sides of head that contrast with whitish throat, prominent dark gular stripe from chin to breast, pale olive-grey patches with a faint ochraceous tinge on inner coverts, and chestnut mantle. (Note: sides of head, hindneck and mantle look blackish in poor light.) From Least Bittern also told by lack of rufous-chestnut on greater coverts and on tips of primary coverts, inner primaries and outer secondaries. Flight feathers are not so dark as in either Little or Least, producing less contrast in flight, especially from below. **Adult female and juvenile** quite distinct from Little or Least: both are spotted with white or buff on mantle and coverts (adult female Little and Least have fine pale streaking on mantle, while juveniles are conspicuously dark-streaked). In addition,

females of any age lack obvious pale patch on coverts shown by all Little and Least. Behaviour much as Little Bittern.

SEX/AGE Juvenile male resembles adult female, but has pale patch on inner wing coverts (more ochraceous than in adult male). Juvenile female identical to adult female (but may differ in browner mantle, with pale ochre rather than white spotting, and in more ochraceous margins to covert feathers). Immature male as adult apart from some pale spotting on mantle.

VOICE Advertising call of male, unlikely to be heard in our region, a repeated low 'gup'. On take-off gives a harsh, muffled cry.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, freshwater marshes and damp meadows with tall grass and small pools.

DWARF BITTERN *Ixobrychus sturmii*

Plate page 100

L 30 cm, WS 50 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Vagrant from sub-Saharan Africa. Easily distinguished from other small bitterns by all-dark appearance above (and in flight also by all-dark underwing). Striated Heron is considerably larger and is not uniformly dark slaty above. Shy and secretive. Most active at dusk. Will freeze in typical neck-extended bittern posture if alarmed.

SEX/AGE Sexes very similar, but adult female not so dark overall and has belly more rufous. Eye dark red

in male, yellow in female. Juvenile resembles adult, but is duller and browner overall, with buff tips to feathers of mantle and coverts and more rufous underparts; eye reddish-orange.

VOICE Generally silent, but gives a soft, frog-like croak on take-off.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Canary Is). In natural range, marshes, lakes, pools, rivers and streams with fringing reeds, bushes or trees, flooded grassland, mangroves.

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON *Nycticorax nycticorax*

Plate page 101

Night Heron

L 58–65 cm, WS 105–112 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Medium-sized, stocky, large-headed, thick-necked heron with relatively short neck and legs. **Adult** has unique combination of black

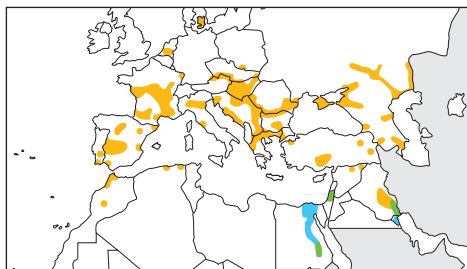
crown and mantle contrasting with grey wings and whitish underparts. **Juvenile** with its numerous large pale spots on upperparts is distinctive but could be

confused with Great Bittern (q.v.) or vagrant American Bittern (q.v.) on poor view. **Immature** birds may be encountered in a variety of intermediate plumages, some of which can resemble smaller Striated Heron (q.v.). Most active at night or at dawn and dusk, when often seen flying to and from daytime roosts. Only occasionally feeds in middle of day. Daytime typically spent perched within canopy of trees and large shrubs by waterside, often in small parties. Flight action steady, with fairly quick, shallow wingbeats. Stocky appearance in flight, with only the toes projecting beyond the tail, is distinctive. The body is slightly canted upwards, with the bill pointing slightly downwards. In semi-darkness, long, dagger-like bill and projecting toes prevent confusion with owls.

SEX/AGE At start of breeding season, legs become pinkish-red and lores blue. 1st-summer has brown crown and grey-brown mantle and scapulars, and less heavily streaked underparts, but retains pale spotting on wing coverts. 2nd-winter often a peculiarly dull, unmarked brownish above with a blackish crown and uniformly pale (or partly streaked) underparts.

VOICE Usually silent away from breeding colonies except for a distinctive low, hollow, frog-like croaking 'quark' (or sometimes a more sudden 'guk'), freely given in flight and sometimes at roosts.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Nominate race occurs



throughout our region. N American race *hoactli* suspected to occur as a vagrant, and a small feral population of this race established at Edinburgh Zoo; adults may be distinguished by having more extensive white patch on forehead and a shorter and thinner white supercilium.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally fairly common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Switzerland, Sicily, Tunisia. Most winter S of the Sahara.) Lakes, marshes and rivers with extensive fringe vegetation. Usually nests and roosts in stands of trees. Occurs in more open situations on migration or when feeding, including rice fields, open lagoons etc.

STRIATED HERON *Butorides striatus*

Green-backed Heron, Little Heron

L 40–48 cm, WS 62–70 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Small, stocky, dingy greyish-green heron of the Red Sea coasts, with relatively short neck and legs. Unlikely to be confused: juvenile Black-crowned Night Heron is substantially larger, with shorter and stouter bill, larger pale spots on wings and pale spots also on mantle and scapulars. Activity governed by tides: roosts at high tide within stands of mangroves, becoming active as tide recedes and feeding in open on exposed reefs. Rather furtive, often crouching in horizontal position. On take-off neck often extended momentarily, but soon retracted onto shoulders. Flight usually low, and silhouette recalls Squacco Heron with only feet extending beyond tail. Lacks contrasting pale patches on wing coverts shown by most small bitterns.

SEX/AGE At onset of breeding season, bill base (or even entire bill), lores and legs may become pinkish-



red. Juvenile is duller and browner, with heavily streaked body and lines of small pale spots on upperwing coverts.

VOICE Usually silent, but when flushed gives a harsh, squawking 'kwok' or 'kyah'.

STATUS/HABITAT Uncommon and very localized. (In addition to mapped range, may be regular in winter in Nile Valley of S Egypt.) Coral reefs and tidal mudflats, especially those close to mangroves; occasionally harbours and exposed rocks.

GREEN HERON *Butorides virescens*

L 40–48 cm, WS 62–70 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Rather similar to Striated Heron (q.v.). **Adult** differs in particular in its deep chestnut sides to head and neck (divided by a whitish stripe down centre of throat and foreneck), noticeably bluish-green (rather than grey-green) tinge to long lanceolate feathers of mantle and scapulars, and yellow legs. **Juvenile** is distinctly darker and browner, less greyish than juvenile Striated, and usually has dull rufous sides of head. Flight characters and behaviour similar to Striated. Typically feeds close to cover and readily perches in waterside trees and shrubs.

SEX/AGE At onset of breeding season, lores and entire bill of adult are black (lores and base of upper mandible

are yellowish at other times) and legs orange (instead of greenish yellow). Juvenile is duller and browner (especially on sides of head and neck), with heavily streaked body and lines of small pale spots on upperwing coverts.

VOICE Usually silent but when flushed gives a harsh, squawking 'kyowk'.

TAXONOMY Sometimes treated as conspecific with Striated Heron *B. striatus*.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, favours freshwater or brackish marshes, lakes, lagoons, tidal mudflats, coral reefs, rivers, ponds and streams (usually not far from trees).

Plate page 99

Plate page 99

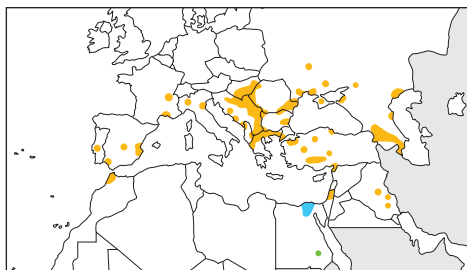
SQUACCO HERON *Ardeola ralloides*

Plate page 100

L 44–47 cm, WS 80–92 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Small, stocky, warm buff and vinaceous (adult summer) or brownish-looking heron at rest, dramatically transformed in flight into a largely white bird with buffish or brownish head, neck and 'saddle' (latter tinged vinaceous in adult summer). Broad white wings are wholly or largely hidden at rest by long scapulars. Unlikely to be confused except with Indian Pond Heron or vagrant Chinese Pond Heron (q.v.). In flight, often appears as white as egrets, but stocky shape, with only toes projecting beyond tail, prevents confusion even if darker head, neck and 'saddle' not visible (Cattle Egret is stockiest of egrets but more than half of tarsi, as well as toes, project beyond tail in flight). Wingbeats shallower than in egrets. Typically seen in flight low over emergent vegetation, soon dropping into cover. Normally more skulking than egrets, and usually solitary away from breeding colonies. Feeds by streams and marshy pools, not normally far from cover. Often adopts rather horizontal, crouching posture while feeding. Climbs through reeds and freely perches in trees.

SEX/AGE At onset of breeding season, bill becomes bright blue with blackish tip, lores blue and legs red; later in nesting cycle, bill greenish-blue with blackish tip, lores green and legs dull pink. Juvenile differs



from winter adult in having more streaking on head and neck (but paler buff ground colour), duller upperbody, and brownish mottling on upperwing coverts and primary tips.

VOICE Rather silent. Gives an abrupt, harsh squawking 'kakh' in flight at dusk or when flushed (vaguely reminiscent of Western Jackdaw).

STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon, but localized. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Czechoslovakia, Sardinia, Jordan. Most winter S of the Sahara.) Marshes and lakesides with dense fringing and emergent vegetation. When feeding or on migration, also small ponds, ditches, rice fields, open lakes etc.

INDIAN POND HERON *Ardeola grayii*

Plate page 100

L 42–45 cm, WS 75–90 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Formerly Kuwait. Indian subcontinent replacement of Squacco Heron. **Adult summer** easily separated by darker, maroon mantle and scapulars and by unstreaked head and hindneck. **Other plumages** very similar to those of Squacco Heron, but streaking on head, neck and upper breast broader and more intense, upperparts duller brown, and typically shows a prominent pale stripe between eye and bill above lore. Less inclined than Squacco to seek cover, feeding readily in open.

SEX/AGE At onset of breeding season, bill may

become blackish and legs red or deep yellow. Juvenile differs from winter adult in having paler buff ground colour to head and neck, and brownish mottling on upperwing coverts and primary tips.

VOICE Rather silent. Call given in flight at dusk or when flushed a harsh croak, similar to Squacco Heron.

STATUS/HABITAT Formerly Kuwait, where may have bred, but no recent records. Favours almost any form of wetland from marshes, lagoons and riversides to ditches and ponds, paddyfields, mangroves etc.

CHINESE POND HERON *Ardeola bacchus*

Plate page 91

L 42–45 cm, WS 75–90 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Asian vagrant. Closely resembles both Squacco and Indian Pond Herons, but averages slightly larger. **Adult summer** easily distinguished by slaty-black mantle and scapulars and dark wine-maroon head, neck and breast. **Adult winter and juvenile** insufficiently studied and possibly inseparable in field from Indian Pond, but bill relatively longer, head and neck more heavily streaked and less buffish, and mantle and scapulars a darker and richer brown than in Squacco. Like Indian Pond, less inclined than

Squacco to seek cover.

SEX/AGE At onset of breeding season, bill may become bluish with a blackish tip. Juvenile differs from winter adult in much the same way as in Indian Pond Heron.

VOICE Rather silent. Call given in flight at dusk or when flushed a harsh croak, similar to Squacco Heron.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, habitat as for Indian Pond Heron.

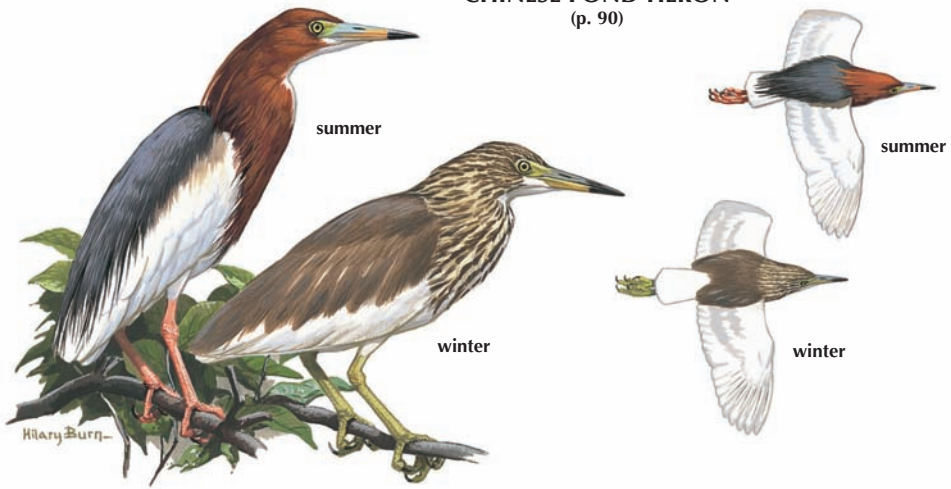
CATTLE EGRET *Bubulcus ibis*

Plate page 102

L 48–53 cm, WS 90–96 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Small, relatively stocky egret with rather short bill and prominent 'jowl' (i.e. feathering under bill). **Adult summer**, with deep warm buff crown, breast and mantle, distinctive. **Adult winter and juvenile** easily separated from Little Egret by yel-

low bill (but beware young juvenile with dusky bill), lack of contrast between pale, yellowish feet and blackish legs, and stockier, much less elegant appearance. Very sociable and often found well away from water, typically in close association with grazing ani-

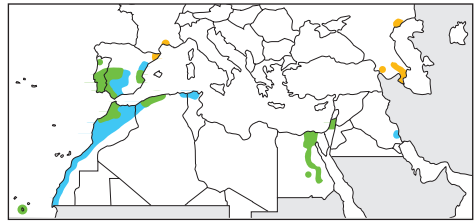
CHINESE POND HERON
(p. 90)

mals, perching readily on their backs or walking at their feet with strutting gait. Runs readily and will even follow tractors in pursuit of insects etc. In flight, has distinctly stocky, snub-nosed look created by relatively short bill, less angular and less sagging breast bulge, and legs and feet projecting less far beyond tail than in other egrets. See also Western Reef Egret, Great Egret and vagrant Intermediate Egret.

SEX/AGE At onset of breeding season, bill, lores and iris turn from yellow to red, and legs turn from dark greenish to dull red and then yellow. Juvenile closely resembles adult winter, but bill initially yellowish-horn.

VOICE Usually silent away from breeding colonies, but sometimes gives a quiet, harsh, croaking 'ruk' or disyllabic 'RIK-rak' in flight.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Nominat race occurs throughout our region, but check vagrants outside normal range for escaped Oriental race *coromandus*,



which has whole head, neck and breast deep orange-buff in breeding plumage.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred W France, Sardinia.) Marshes, lakes and rivers, but also dry grassland and arable fields (not necessarily near water). Frequently associates with cattle or other livestock.

LITTLE BLUE HERON *Egretta caerulea*

L 58–63 cm, WS 95–105 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Recalls Western Reef Egret in being either dark slate-blue (adult) or white (juvenile), with immature birds often peculiarly patchy. **Adult** differs from dark morph Western Reef Egret in having purple (winter) or cinnamon (summer) wash to grey of head and neck, and pale blue (summer) or grey (winter) bill with black tip; also lacks white throat and has all-black legs, pale blue lores and no elongated hindcrown plumes in breeding season. Vagrant Black Heron is much blacker and stockier, with brilliant yellow feet. **Juvenile** most likely to be confused with Western Reef Egret, Little Egret or vagrant Snowy Egret, but proportions closer to Western Reef Egret of race *schistacea*, being larger than nominate race of Western Reef or Little and Snowy Egrets, with longer and heavier bill and proportionately longer legs. Differs from all these in having dusky tips to pri-

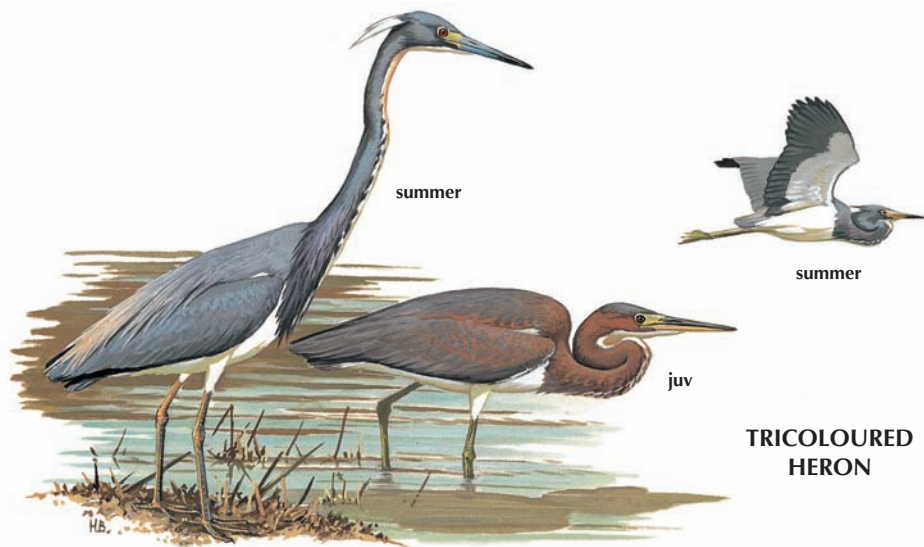
maries (present in most), rather uniformly yellowish-green legs and feet, greyish lores, and greyish or pinkish bill with blackish tip. (Bill can be yellowish at the base and lores yellowish-green, however). **Immature** blotched plumage matched by many Western Reef Egrets, so best features are dusky primary tips (if present), lack of contrastingly paler yellowish feet, two-tone bill pattern (with no yellow), and differences in structure (compared with nominate race).

SEX/AGE At onset of breeding season, legs turn from green to black, lores from pale green to pale blue, and bill from grey with black tip to blue with black tip. Head and neck become more reddish.

VOICE Rather silent. When flushed, gives a harsh, croaking 'gerr'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Azores). In natural range, marshes, lakes, coastal lagoons, estuaries.

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TRICOLOURED
HERON

TRICOLOURED HERON *Egretta tricolor*
Louisiana Heron

L 63–68 cm, WS 95–105 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Medium-sized heron, with long and very slender neck and bill and relatively short legs. Has diagnostic combination of white belly and white stripe down centre of fore-neck contrasting with dark remainder of plumage. In flight, shows white underwing coverts. Unlikely to be confused, but beware intermediate Western Reef Egret and larger and usually more skulking Purple Heron.

SEX/AGE Adult winter lacks white hindcrown plumes

and has shorter scapular plumes. Juvenile differs from winter adult in rufous sides to head, rufous neck (with white stripe down foreneck) and lesser upperwing coverts, and rufous tinge to mantle; also has mainly yellow bill and lacks pale brown scapular plumes.

VOICE Usually silent away from breeding colonies, but gives a harsh, nasal croak when flushed.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Azores). In natural range, tidal mudflats, mangroves and coastal marshes.

Plate above

BLACK HERON *Egretta ardesiaca*
Black Egret

L 52–55 cm, WS 90–95 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Vagrant from sub-Saharan Africa. The very black plumage, bill and legs of this egret are relieved only by its brilliant orange-yellow feet. This contrast is obvious, even in flight. Confusion possible with dark morph Western Reef Egret or vagrant adult Little Blue Heron, but combination of brilliant orange-yellow feet and lack of any white on throat diagnostic. It is also rather smaller, slightly stockier and relatively shorter-legged than these species, with a rather shaggy crest of lanceolate plumes on the hindcrown and nape (instead of the two or three long wiry plumes

worn by Western Reef Egret in breeding period). Has striking habit of arching wings over head to form an 'umbrella' while feeding (although other small herons may briefly adopt a similar posture).

SEX/AGE Feet of adult sometimes become red at onset of breeding season. Juvenile resembles adult, but is a duller, browner black and lacks long but often rather inconspicuous head and breast plumes.

VOICE Usually silent.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Cape Verde Is, Israel). In natural range, lakes, rivers, marshes and coastal mudflats.

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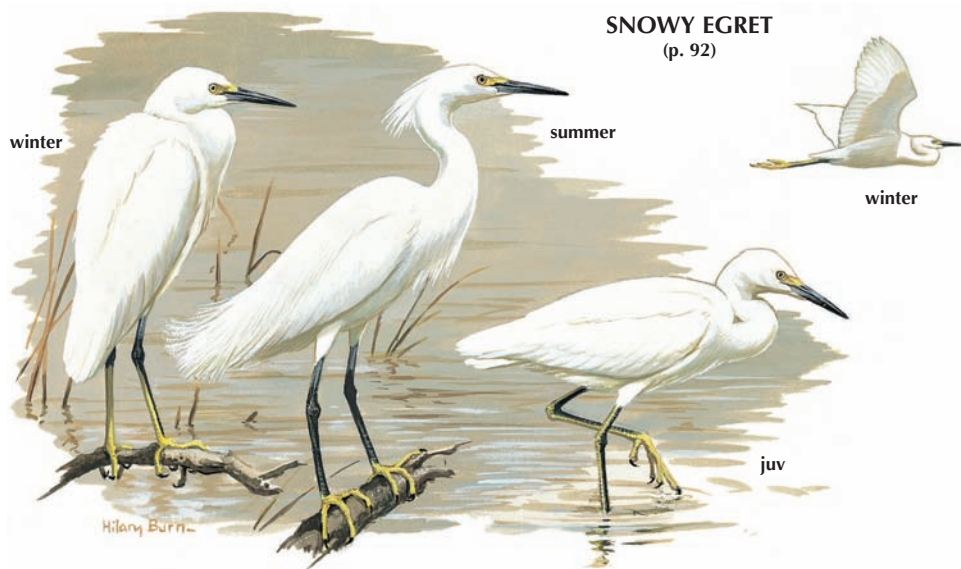
SNOWY EGRET *Egretta thula*

L 55–65 cm, WS 90–105 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Very similar to Little Egret, but (except at onset of breeding season, when lores can be reddish) has bright yellow, not greyish lores. (Note: Snowy, perhaps only young birds, occasionally shows greyish-yellow lores and Little can rarely show dull yellow lores outside breeding period.)

Little can show bright pink, orange or even yellow lores at onset of breeding season, but is then distinguishable by presence of two or three long wiry plumes on hindcrown. (Snowy has instead a loose tuft of shorter plumes on hindcrown). Snowy has yellow of feet typically extending up rear of tarsus to 'knee'

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SNOWY EGRET

(p. 92)

winter

summer

winter

juv

joint or tibia (unlike typical adult Little), but note that juvenile Little often has dull yellow rear of tarsus and occasional Little with largely yellowish legs has been recorded. Adult winter and juvenile additionally have blacker upper mandible than Little and contrastingly lighter lower mandible, an effect not shown by Little except sometimes when in breeding condition. Snowy also has slightly more rounded forehead than Little and adult winter often shows a trace of the tuft of feathers on the hindcrown, giving a rougher, less sleek look to the head. Behaviour as Little. See also Western

Reef Egret.

SEX/AGE At onset of breeding season, yellow lores and feet may become pale red and orange respectively. Adult winter lacks recurved scapular plumes, plumes on upper breast and tuft of hindcrown plumes (or shows a reduced tuft) and has pale grey lower mandible with dark tip. Juvenile closely resembles adult winter and may not be separable.

VOICE Usually silent away from breeding colonies.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Azores, Iceland). In natural range, habitat as for Little Egret.

WESTERN REEF EGRET *Egretta gularis*

Western Reef Heron

L 55–67 cm, WS 90–110 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Dimorphic egret of Red Sea and Persian Gulf coasts, and the Banc d'Arguin (Mauritania). Dark morph predominates in most areas (but white morph commoner in northern Red Sea region). As well as dark and white morphs, intermediates occur showing variable amounts of white or dark in plumage, some being distinctly piebald. **Dark morph and intermediates** unlikely to be confused in normal circumstances (but see Little Egret regarding possible existence of a dark morph and also vagrant Little Blue Heron and Black Heron). **White morph** most likely to be confused with Little Egret. In breeding plumage shows two or three long, wiry hindcrown plumes just like latter. Indian Ocean race *schistacea* somewhat larger than Little, with larger and markedly thicker-based, stouter bill, and longer legs (a result of longer tibia). Bill typically yellowish-brown (yellowest on lower mandible), or yellow or even orange-yellow (not all black, or black with greyish base to lower mandible, like adult Little or else dull greyish, greenish or brownish as in juvenile Little). Legs dull brownish, greenish or yellowish, with yellower feet (not black with contrastingly pale yellow or greenish-yellow feet as in typical Little, but beware some juvenile Little with similar appearance). Rather smaller and



slighter West African nominate race very close to Little in structure (but with longer tibia and slightly shorter tarsi) and has darker brown legs and more contrastingly pale yellow or greenish feet than *schistacea* (adding to Little Egret-like appearance). Nominate race best separated from Little by slightly heavier, dark brown to pale brownish bill (thicker-billed look being enhanced by deeper 'jowl' of feathering underneath bill base) and distinctly longer tibia, but beware darkening effect of water on bill. Outside breeding period, lores are usually pale greenish or yellowish, whereas in Little they are usually greyish or grey-blue. At height of breeding period they may be orange in both species. See also vagrant Snowy Egret and juvenile Little Blue Heron.

SEX/AGE Nominate-race adults with yellow lower mandible and orange lores are at height of breeding

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condition: bill usually appears dark brown and lores greenish or yellowish. Adult winter lacks long hindcrown, breast and scapular plumes, while bill is pale brownish. In both morphs, juvenile closely resembles adult winter but has lower part of tarsus and feet greenish-brown (not yellow or yellowish). Juvenile dark morph is a paler and browner grey than adult winter and has whitish underbody; some juvenile white morphs are mottled with brownish-grey but others are all white.

VOICE Usually silent away from breeding colonies, but sometimes gives a guttural croak during feeding disputes or when flushed.

TAXONOMY Sometimes considered conspecific with

Little Egret *E. garzetta*.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (both illustrated). Race *schistacea* of Red Sea and Persian Gulf averages larger than nominate race and adult has either mainly yellow or yellowish-brown bill. Dark-morph adult and juvenile are both somewhat paler, with adult having bluish tinge and juvenile looking browner than nominate race. Juvenile *schistacea* has dull brownish bill with yellow tinge to lower mandible.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. (May no longer breed Kuwait.) Both rocky and sandy coasts, coral reefs, coastal lagoons, tidal mudflats, estuaries and mangroves. Exceptionally inland.

LITTLE EGRET *Egretta garzetta*

L 55–65 cm, WS 90–105 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Most widespread egret of our region. A small, elegant white egret with a distinctive combination of slender neck, fine blackish bill, and (except in juvenile) blackish legs with greenish-yellow or pale yellow feet. Pale feet not always conspicuous (e.g. when muddy). In breeding plumage, has two long plumes projecting from hindcrown. Juveniles and immatures have bill and legs dull greyish or greenish and may lack contrasting yellow feet of adults. Confusion possible with other white egrets of our region given distant or inadequate views, but most likely case of confusion is with white-morph Western Reef Egret (q.v.). See also very similar vagrant Snowy Egret, juvenile Cattle Egret and vagrant Little Blue Heron. Feeds in open by waterside; sociable, associating freely with other heron species.

SEX/AGE Adult winter lacks long hindcrown plumes and 'aigrettes' (the long plumes of upper breast and recurved scapular plumes), while base of lower mandible is greyish (not black). Lores and feet turn bright yellow-orange or even pinkish for short time at onset of breeding season (at other times, lores usually greyish and feet greenish-yellow to pale yellow). Juvenile closely resembles adult winter, but bill and legs duller (greenish or greyish, not black) and feet grey-green and less contrasting.

VOICE Usually silent away from breeding colonies, but gives a hoarse, grating 'kgarrk' or longer 'aaahk' during feeding disputes or when flushed.

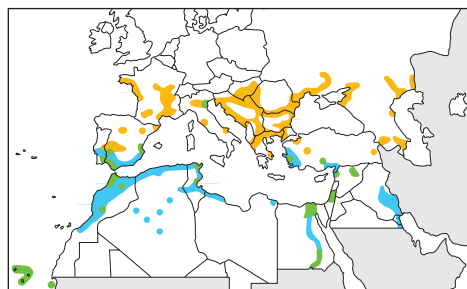


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UNUSUAL VARIANTS Extremely rare dark morph is perhaps a result of hybridizing with Western Reef Egret. Plumage grey to dark grey (sometimes with some white feathering). Look for more slender, blacker bill (with reduced 'jowl' of feathering underneath bill base), shorter tibia and longer tarsi than in nominate-race Western Reef (latter range from 106–141% of bill length in Little compared with 97–116% in nominate-race Western Reef).

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Netherlands, Czechoslovakia, Algeria. Most winter S of the Sahara.) Freshwater and brackish lakes, rivers and marshes, coastal lagoons, estuaries, saltpans, rice fields, mangroves. Occasionally feeds in dry grassland not far from water.

INTERMEDIATE EGRET *Egretta intermedia*

Yellow-billed Egret, Plumed Egret

L 65–72 cm, WS 105–115 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Vagrant from sub-Saharan Africa and perhaps S Asia. Intermediate in size between Little and Great Egrets; size closer to former, but structure and bare-part coloration recall latter. In many respects suggests a more elegant, long-necked version of winter-plumaged Cattle Egret. Compared with Great, is a smaller bird, with heavier head, shorter bill and much less graceful, shorter neck; neck does not usually show the sharp kink so characteristic of Great, being more cleanly S-curved. In breeding plumage has long plumes on breast (absent in Great). Shorter, stouter bill and slight 'jowl' (noticeable feathering under bill) recall Cattle, but Intermediate has much longer neck and relatively longer bill with jowl less prominent. Plumage white at all times and tarsi and feet black (greenish or yellowish in winter or juvenile Cattle). At very close quarters narrow gape

line can be seen to end immediately below the eye, whereas in Great it is broader and ends distinctly behind eye. Compared with white-morph Western Reef Egret (especially heavier-billed Red Sea race *schistacea*), has black feet and legs (not yellowish) and relatively shorter bill. Lacks long, narrow hindcrown plumes of adult summer Western Reef. Bill of adult invariably clean yellow, orange or even pinkish-red, never brownish or brownish-yellow as in many Western Reef. (Asian nominate race, not so far recorded from our region but a potential candidate, has diagnostic but small black tip to bill.) Flight action recalls Great, being slower and more buoyant than that of Little.

SEX/AGE Adult winter lacks long scapular plumes and shorter plumes on upper breast. Bill becomes pinkish-red (instead of yellow or orange-yellow) and lores

Plate page 104

green (instead of yellow) at onset of breeding season; tarsi and feet remain black at all times, but tibia becomes red or yellow during breeding season (yellowish-brown at other times). Juvenile as winter adult, but bill initially yellowish-grey.

VOICE Usually silent away from breeding colonies,

but sometimes gives a harsh, croaking 'kwark' or disyllabic 'kuwark' when flushed.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Cape Verde Is, Jordan) and perhaps regular non-breeding visitor to Banc d'Arguin (Mauritania). Habitat much as Little Egret but less fond of brackish or saline wetlands.

GREAT EGRET *Egretta alba*

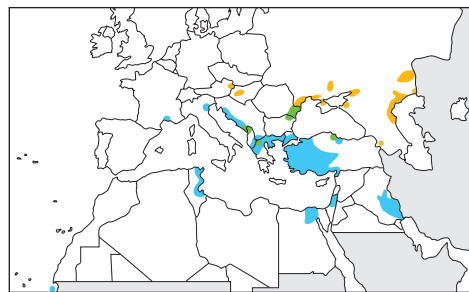
Great White Egret

L 85–102 cm, WS 140–170 cm.

IDENTIFICATION White plumage and large size (as big as Grey Heron) render this egret almost unmistakable. Size may not always be apparent with lone or distant birds, however. Differs from smaller all-white herons and egrets (except winter/juvenile Cattle and vagrant Intermediate) in having combination of dark tarsi and feet and yellow bill (or, at start of breeding period, black bill with yellow or pinkish base). Usually shows distinctive kink in neck, much more obvious than in smaller species which typically have more smoothly S-shaped necks. Wingbeats slower than in smaller egrets, and flight outline shows more prominent breast bulge and legs projecting further beyond tail. Lacks prominent 'jowl' (i.e. feathering underneath bill base) of Cattle and has much longer legs and bill (latter also largely black at start of breeding period). See also vagrant Intermediate Egret and albino Grey Heron.

SEX/AGE Adult winter lacks greatly elongated scapular plumes ('aigrettes'). At onset of breeding season, bill becomes blackish with yellow or pinkish base and lores green (at other times bill yellow and lores greenish-yellow). Tarsus and foot remain blackish at all times (although duller and greener outside breeding period), but tibia becomes yellow or even deep pinkish during breeding season (yellowish at other times). Juvenile much as winter adult, but bill initially yellowish-grey.

VOICE Usually silent away from breeding colonies,



but sometimes gives a distinctive harsh but high-pitched, rolling, rattling 'krr-rr-rr-rra' when flushed.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Nominate race occurs throughout our region. Race *modesta* (S Asia etc.) reported as vagrant, but such individuals could be escapes or aberrations: *modesta* has bill and legs deep red at start of breeding season, but is otherwise inseparable in the field.

STATUS/HABITAT Uncommon and very localized. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Netherlands, Poland, Czechoslovakia.) Freshwater marshes and lakes with extensive fringing vegetation, visiting rivers, rice fields etc. while feeding. Outside breeding season also coastal lagoons, salt pans, tidal mudflats, mangroves.

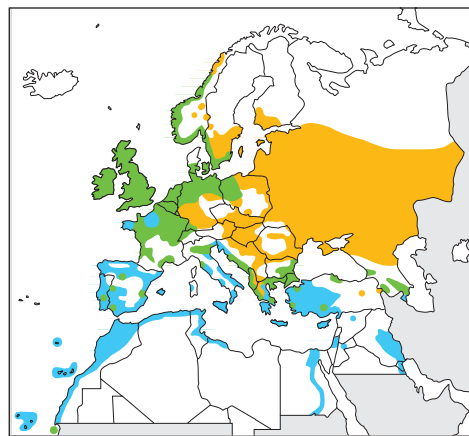
GREY HERON *Ardea cinerea*

Heron

L 90–98 cm, WS 160–175 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Most widespread and familiar heron of our region. Large size and basically greyish plumage distinctive. **Adult** at rest shows whitish fore-neck and breast with dark streaking and black crown band and 'shoulders'. **Juvenile** duller, lacking prominent head and breast markings. Beware unusually brownish or even buffy juveniles that can recall juvenile Purple Heron (q.v.). Often seen standing hunched at waterside, or even in fields or in trees. Sociable, but often solitary. In flight, wings strongly arched and wingbeats relatively slow and heavy. Both wing surfaces look grey, the upperside showing much darker flight feathers. Unlikely to be confused except with distant Purple Heron (q.v.). Common Cranes can be vaguely similar, but fly with neck outstretched, wings much less arched and with primary tips wide apart (they also show prominent 'bustle' at rear of body when seen distantly on ground). See also vagrant Great Blue Heron and Goliath Heron.

SEX/AGE At onset of breeding season, bill and legs may become orange or pinkish-red; at other times, bill dull brownish-yellow and legs brownish-green with yellower tibia. Juvenile resembles adult, but has top of head all dark grey (without long plumes), remainder



of head, neck and underparts washed with buffy-grey, and upperparts duller and greyer (lacking bluish tinge of adult).

Plate page 104

Plate page 104

VOICE Away from breeding colonies, most frequently heard call an abrupt, loud, harsh 'krahnk' (often rendered 'frahnk') or 'kaark', freely uttered in flight.

TAXONOMY The isolated form *monicae*, known as 'Mauritanian Heron', is sometimes treated as a full species.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 2 races (nominate illustrated). Race *monicae* of Banc d'Arguin (Mauritania) is paler, almost whitish-grey, on upper-body and wing coverts and has clean white neck with reduced black gular stripe.

UNUSUAL VARIANTS Rare albino individuals can recall Great Egret, but have shorter, thicker neck, heavier head, and shorter, thicker bill which is never clean yellow or largely black.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Israel.) Almost any form of wetland, from fresh-water lakes, rivers and marshes to ditches, ponds, rice fields, estuaries, salt pans, mangroves and seashores. Usually nests in trees, less often in reedbeds or on small islands.

GREAT BLUE HERON *Ardea herodias*

L 110–125 cm, WS 175–195 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Resembles Grey Heron but considerably larger (noticeable only if the two seen together), with relatively longer neck and more massive bill. **Adult** has rufous 'thighs' and 'shoulders' (whitish and black respectively in Grey Heron), and sides of head and neck are suffused with pinkish-grey. **Juvenile** resembles juvenile Grey Heron but, compared with most, is decidedly browner on upperparts and more buff below. Some juvenile Grey Herons can look very brown above and buff-suffused below, so best distinguished from these by size and shape, and by rufous on 'thighs', 'shoulders' and tips of wing coverts if present (is often faint or lacking). Compared with even larger juvenile Goliath Heron, principal differences at all ages are greyish-green (instead of black) legs, two-tone (instead of all-blackish) bill with dark upper mandible and yellow lower mandible, and lack of rusty-reddish on upperparts (including hindneck). In flight, overall appearance and wing pattern resemble Grey Heron, but legs relatively longer and flight action heavier.

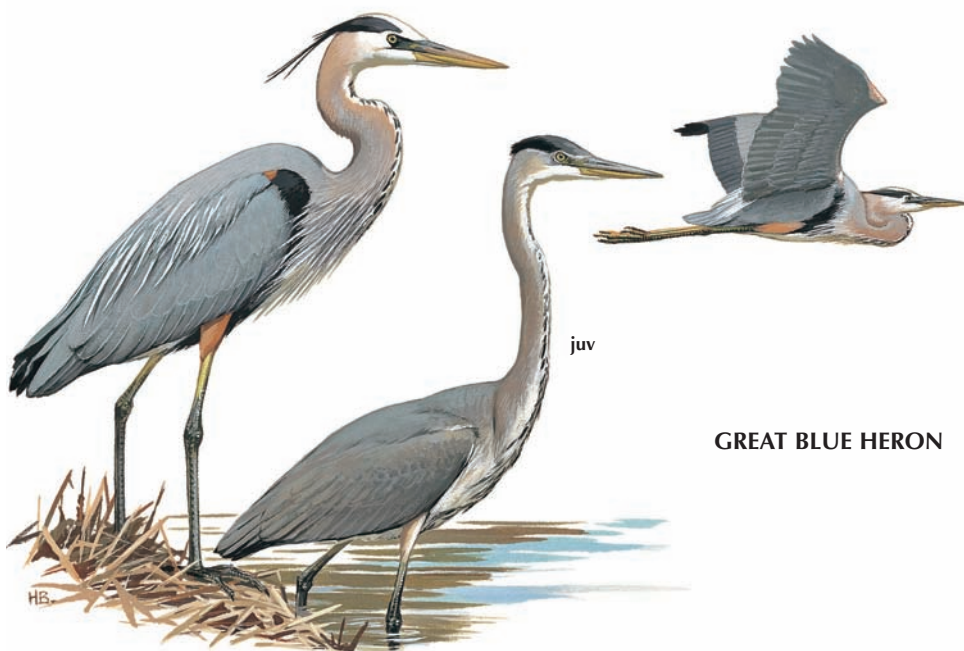
Plate below

SEX/AGE At onset of breeding season, bill becomes pinkish-orange (with dark culmen) and lores green (bill orange-yellow, lores bluish at other times); legs and feet become pinkish-orange in breeding season (greenish-brown with yellowish tibia at other times). Juvenile resembles adult, but has top of head brownish-black (without long plumes) and has remainder of head, neck and underparts washed with buffy-grey; upperparts a browner grey than in adult (lacking bluish tinge), and has rufous markings on wing coverts.

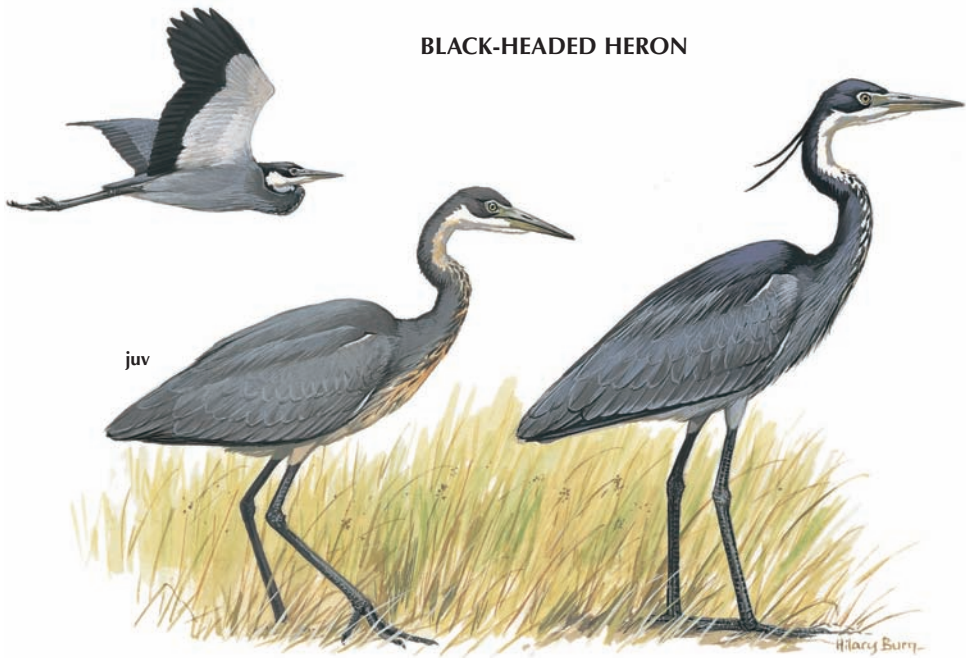
VOICE Usually silent, but gives a low, harsh 'kraak' when flushed.

UNUSUAL VARIANTS The white morph found in S Florida and known as 'Great White Heron' could be confused with Great Egret, but is larger and bulkier with heavier bill and pale legs. Intermediate morph known as 'Wurde mann's Heron' differs mainly in having all-white head. Neither yet recorded from our region.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe, Azores). In natural range, habitat similar to Grey Heron.



GREAT BLUE HERON



BLACK-HEADED HERON

BLACK-HEADED HERON *Ardea melanocephala*

Plate above

L 90–95 cm, WS 150–160 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Vagrant from sub-Saharan Africa. Broadly resembles Grey Heron, but has crown and hindneck black (adult) or dark slate (juvenile), with contrasting white throat and upper foreneck; legs blacker than in Grey Heron, and underwing coverts white, not grey (creating striking two-tone underwing pattern). Often feeds in open grasslands, well away from water.

SEX/AGE Iris becomes red at onset of breeding season

(yellow at other times). Juvenile resembles adult, but has top of head and hindneck grey or brownish-grey (not black) and underparts whitish (with some rusty-buff on foreneck and breast).

VOICE Away from breeding colony, usual call a loud, harsh croaking 'kuark'.

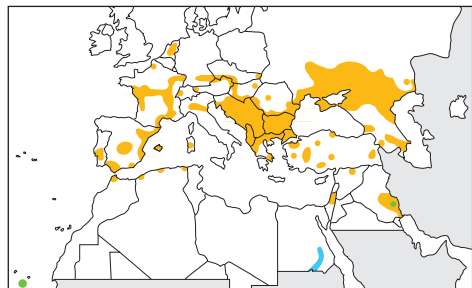
STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (France, N Africa, Israel). In natural range, both freshwater and brackish wetlands but equally in open savanna grassland far from water.

PURPLE HERON *Ardea purpurea*

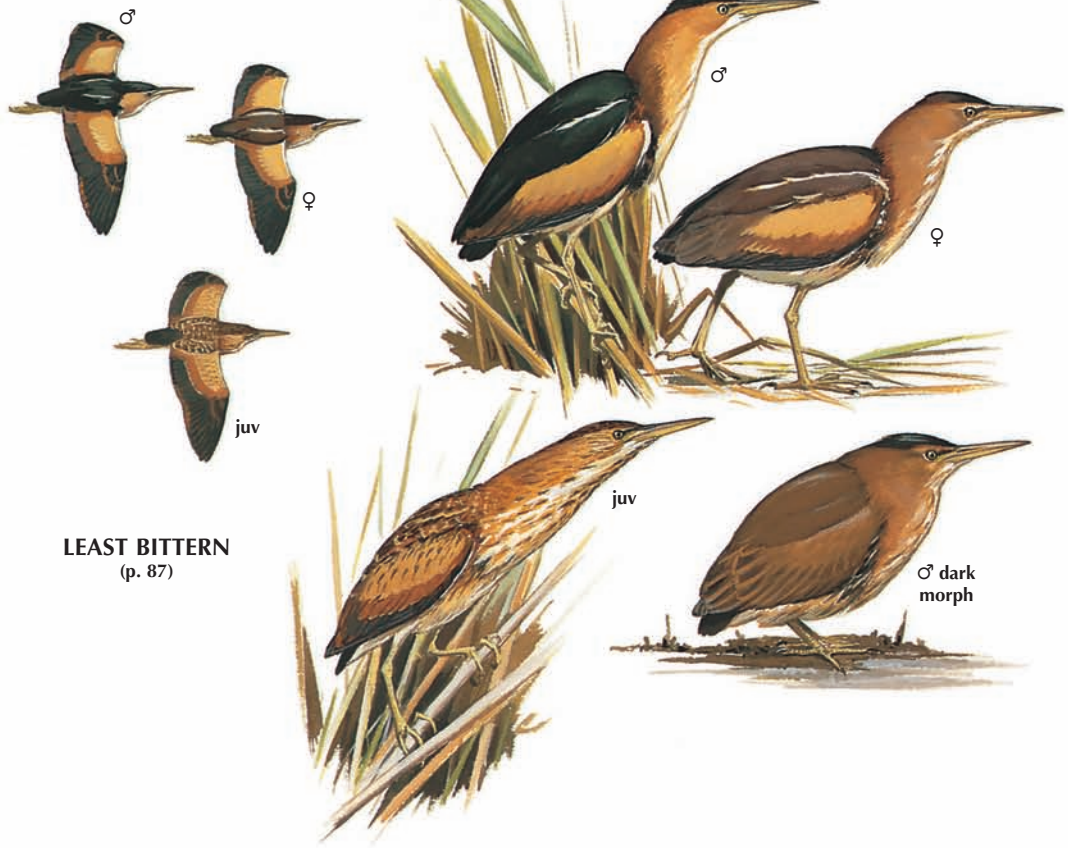
Plate page 105

L 78–90 cm, WS 120–150 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Large, slender-necked heron characteristic of large reedbeds. Far more cover-loving than Grey Heron, typically being flushed from cover or flying over reeds in manner recalling Great Bittern. Rather smaller and slimmer than Grey Heron, with very long, slender neck merging into slim head (creating snake-like impression) and longer, thinner bill. Overall appearance (especially of juvenile and sub-adult) is of a brownish heron: purplish tinge to upperparts of adult noticeable only at close range. **Adult** virtually unmistakable if seen well, owing to bold black-and-rufous patterning of head and neck (contrasting with mainly grey mantle, scapulars and upperwing coverts). **Juvenile** less distinctive, but broad tawny feather edges to mantle, scapulars and upperwing coverts (contrasting with dark feather centres), clean-cut black streaks on pale buff lower foreneck and breast, and structural differences prevent confusion with even the brownest juvenile Grey Heron. In flight, both wing surfaces very dark and rather uni-



form, lacking strong contrast between paler coverts and dark flight feathers shown by Grey Heron on upperwing (although juvenile Purple shows more contrast than adult). Overall shape resembles Grey Heron, but Purple Heron is more rakish, with deeper and more angular neck bulge that is discernible even



LEAST BITTERN
(p. 87)



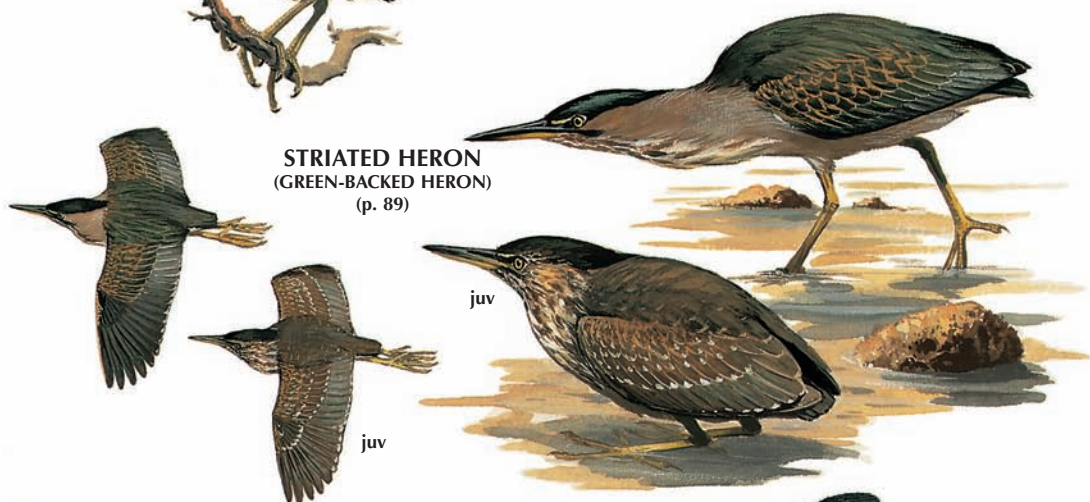
LITTLE BITTERN
(p. 87)

Hilary Burn

SCHRENCK'S BITTERN
(p. 88)



STRIATED HERON
(GREEN-BACKED HERON)
(p. 89)

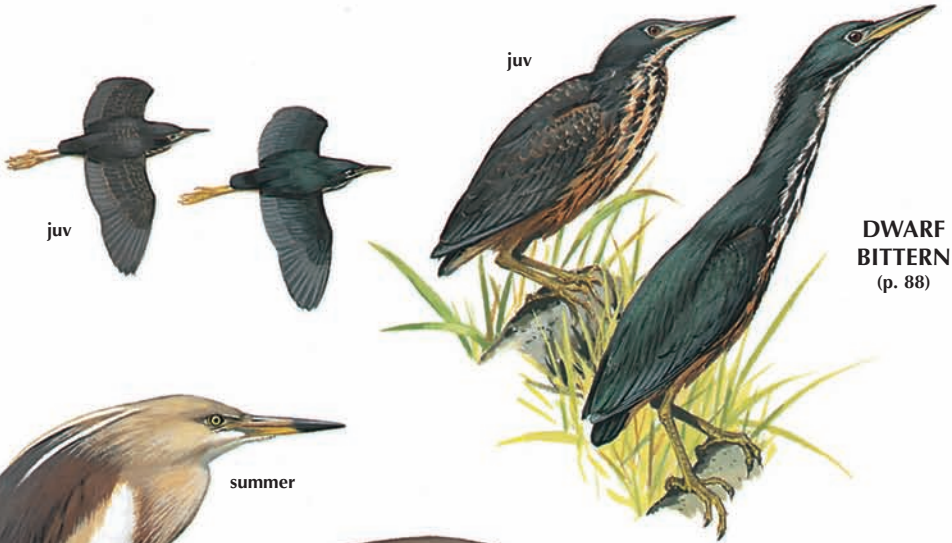


GREEN
HERON
(p. 89)



Hilary Burn

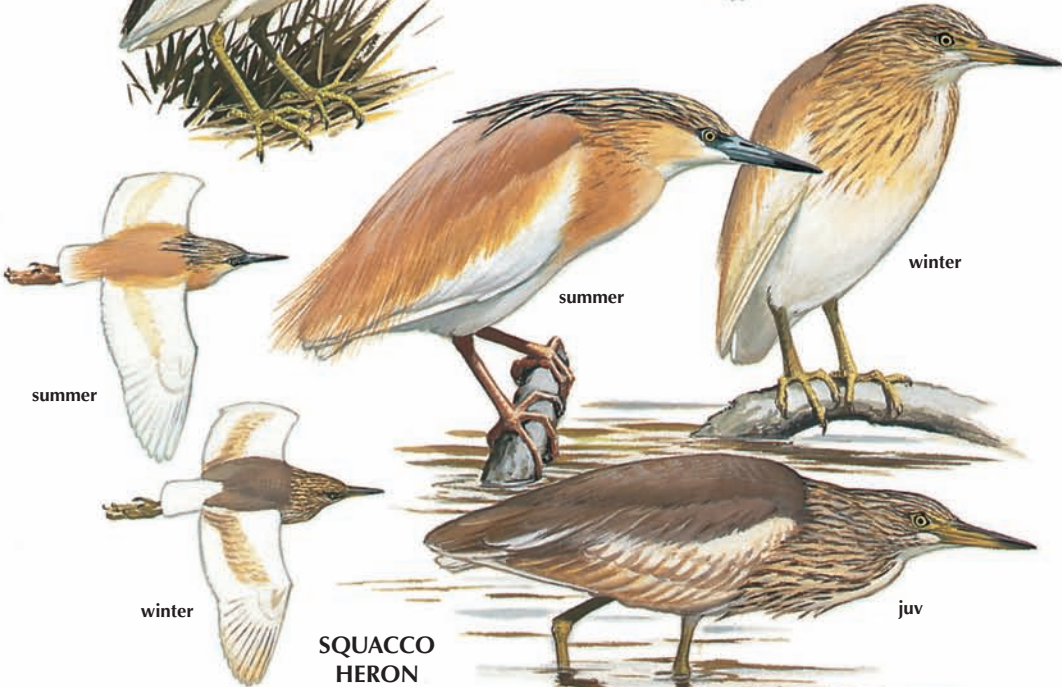
HERONS



**DWARF
BITTERN**
(p. 88)



**INDIAN
POND
HERON**
(p. 90)



**SQUACCO
HERON**
(p. 90)

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON
(p. 88)



summer

summer



juv



juv



2nd-winter



juv



AMERICAN BITTERN
(p. 87)



juv

GREAT BITTERN
(p. 86)



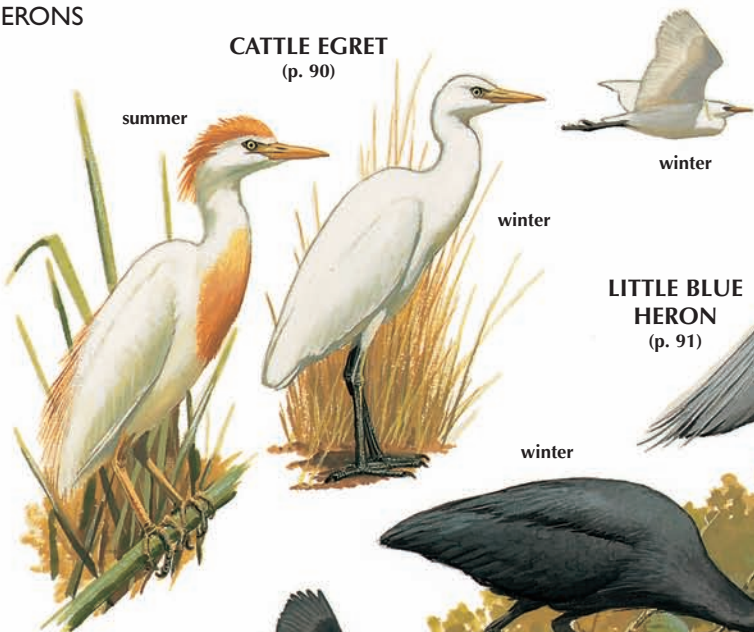
SQUACCO HERON
(at same scale)



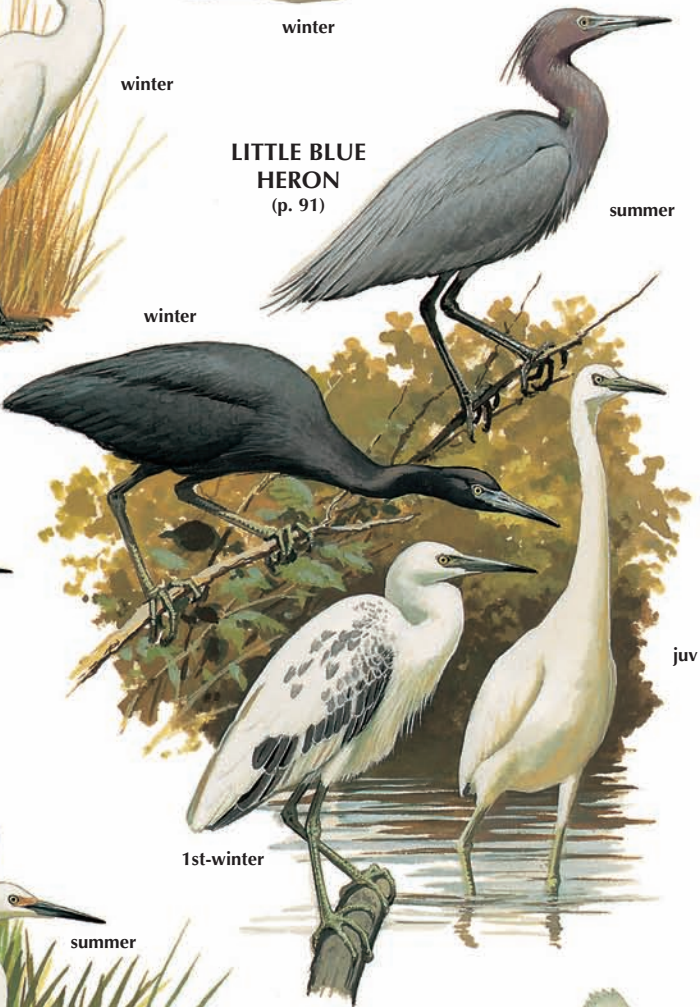
Hilary Burne

HERONS

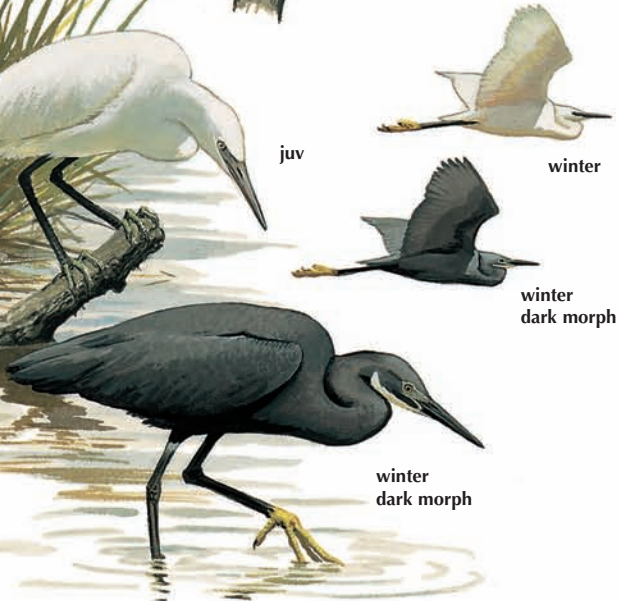
CATTLE EGRET
(p. 90)



LITTLE BLUE
HERON
(p. 91)



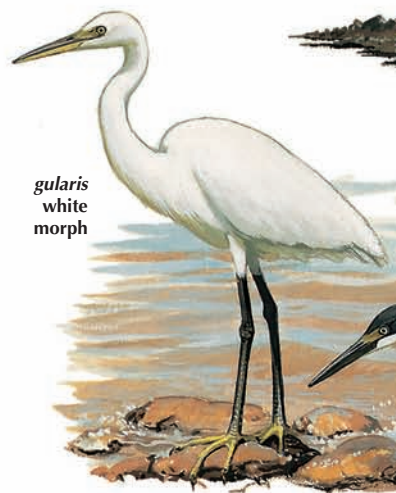
LITTLE EGRET
(p. 94)



BLACK HERON
(p. 92)



juv



gularis
white
morph



gularis
dark morph

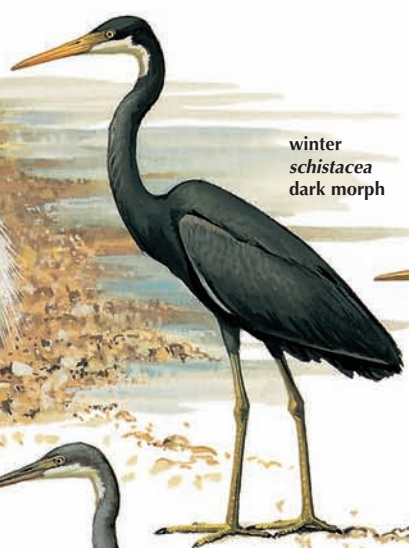
WESTERN REEF
EGRET
(p. 93)



winter *schistacea*
white morph



summer
schistacea
white morph



winter
schistacea
dark morph



winter *schistacea*
dark morph



juv
schistacea
(dark-mottled
variant)



juv
schistacea
dark morph

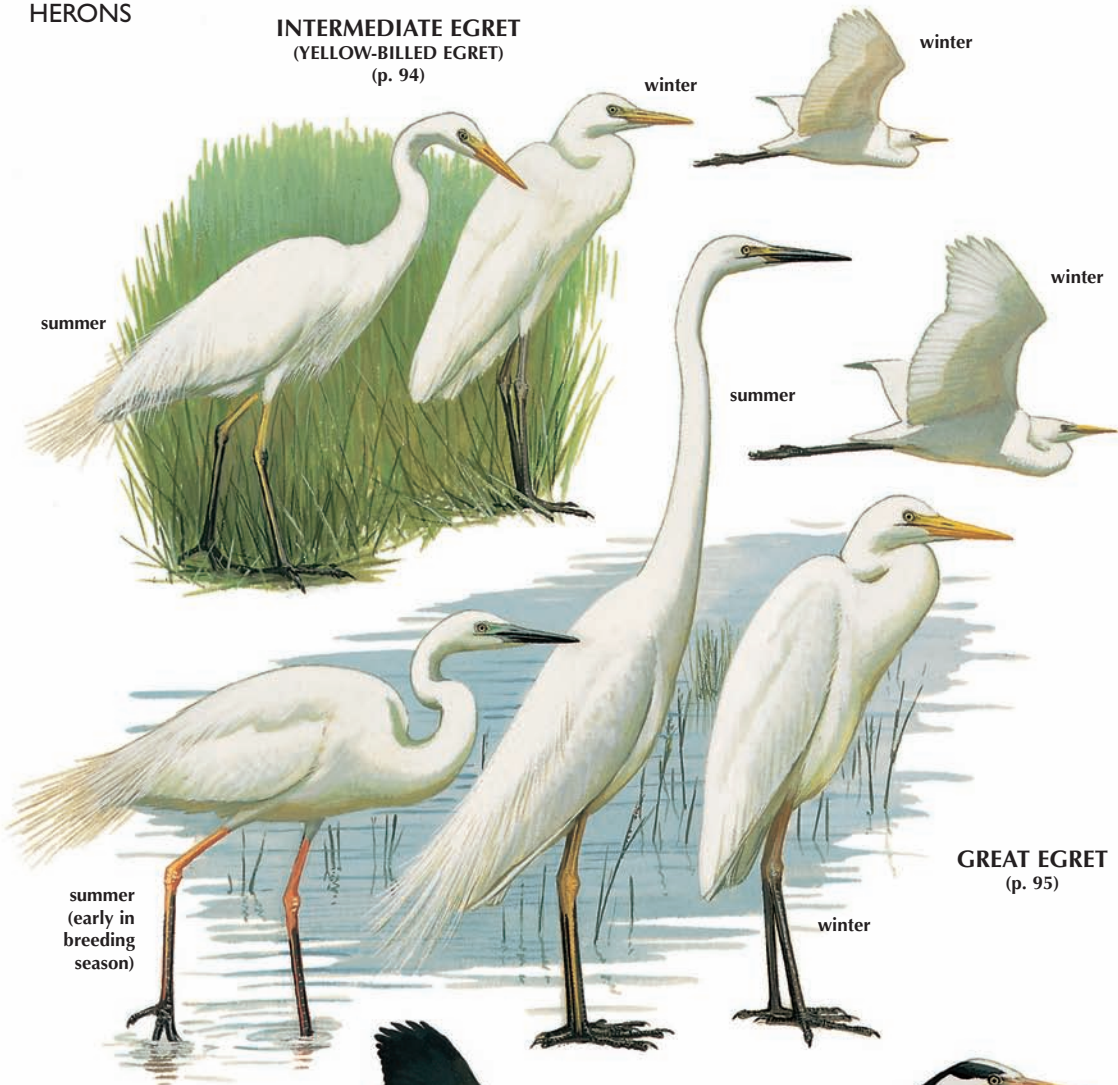


winter
schistacea
(intermediate)

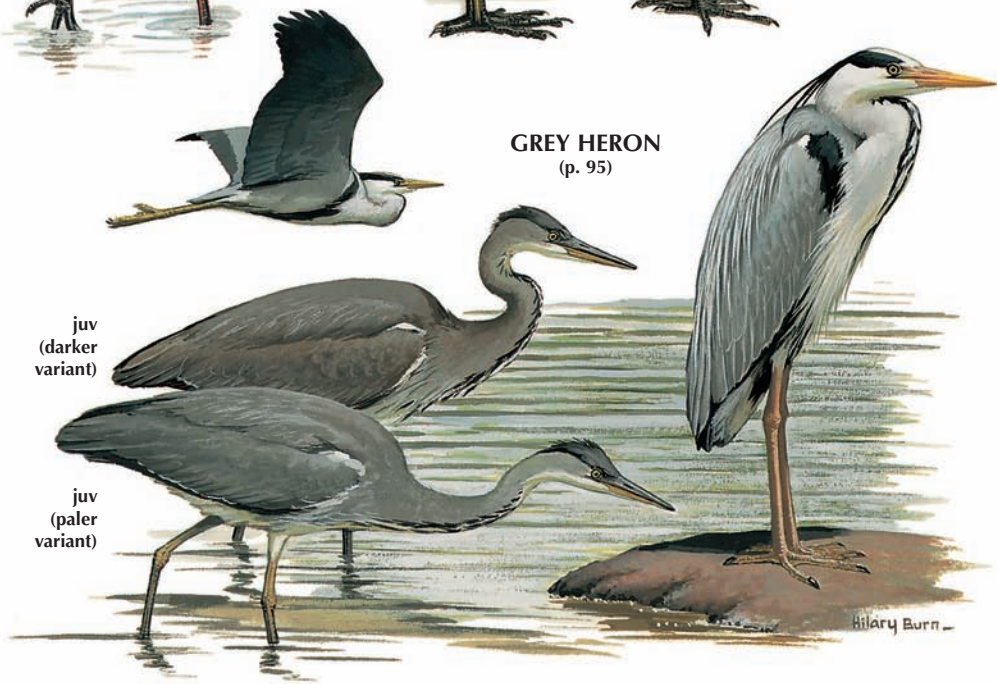
Hilary Burn

HERONS

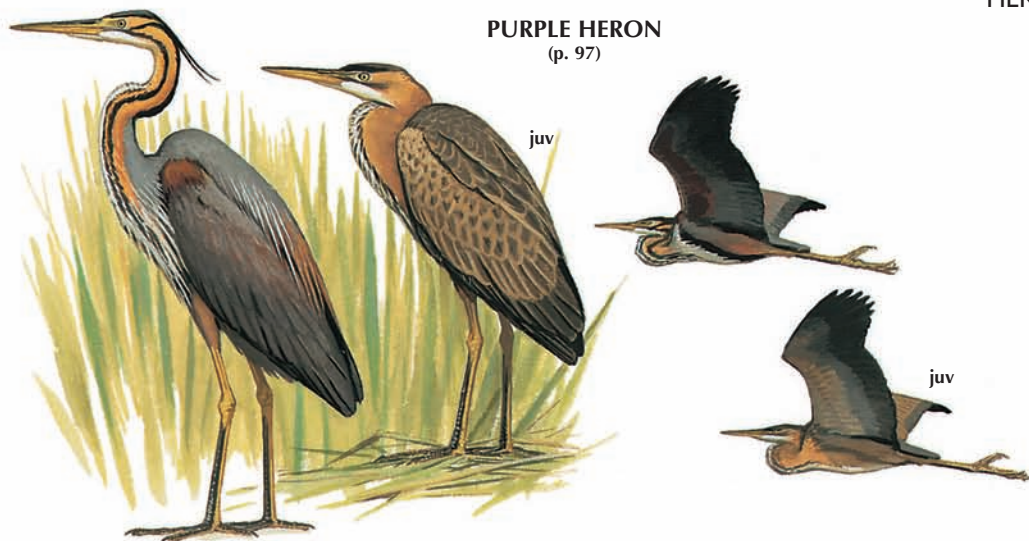
INTERMEDIATE EGRET
(YELLOW-BILLED EGRET)
(p. 94)



GREAT EGRET
(p. 95)



PURPLE HERON
(p. 97)



GOLIATH HERON
(p. 109)



IBISES, SPOONBILLS

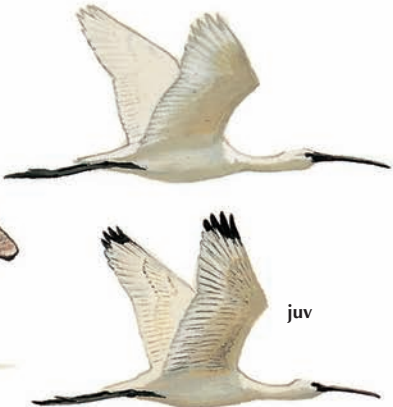
GLOSSY IBIS
(p. 111)



NORTHERN
BALD IBIS
(p. 112)



SACRED IBIS
(p. 112)



Hilary Burn.

**YELLOW-BILLED
STORK**
(p. 110)



**BLACK
STORK**
(p. 110)



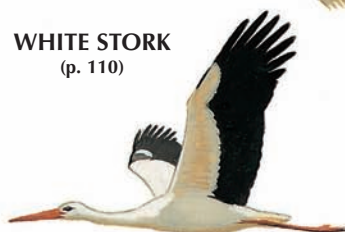
juv



juv



WHITE STORK
(p. 110)



Hilary Burn

MARABOU STORK
(p. 111)

FLAMINGOS, OSTRICH

LESSER FLAMINGO

(p. 113)



GREATER FLAMINGO

(p. 113)



OSTRICH

(at much smaller scale)
(p. 33)



Hilary Burn

at a distance, thinner body, longer, thinner bill, longer, more prominent feet (enhanced by long hindtoes) and narrower wings. See also much larger Goliath Heron. **SEX/AGE** Yellow colour of bill and lores brighter at onset of breeding season. Juvenile resembles adult, but lacks distinctive, clean-cut head-and-neck pattern and appears rather brown overall (lacking grey on upperparts); lacks long black nape plumes, has pale buff and blackish longitudinal streaks on lower fore-neck and breast, and mantle, scapulars and upperwing coverts have broad tawny feather edges. Sub-adult much as adult, but upperwing coverts look brown instead of grey owing to tawny feather edges. **VOICE** Flight call similar to Grey Heron, although

higher-pitched and thinner. Otherwise usually silent away from breeding colonies.

TAXONOMY/GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 2 races (nominate illustrated). Cape Verde Is race *bournei* ('**Bourne's Heron**') is paler than nominate race and is sometimes given specific status.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Belgium, Poland, Sicily, Jordan. Almost all winter S of the Sahara.) When breeding, favours marshes and lakes with extensive reedbeds. At other times in more open wetlands (but usually with some fringing vegetation). In Cape Verde Is feeds even in dry grassland and fields, presumably owing to shortage of typical habitat.

GOLIATH HERON *Ardea goliath*

L 135–150 cm, WS 210–230 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Only in Middle East. Enormous size makes this largest of all herons almost unmistakable. Huge blackish bill, very long legs, grey upperparts and (in adult) chestnut head and hindneck with white throat and foreneck all add up to a very striking bird. Unlikely to be confused with Purple Heron owing to huge size and massive (not slender) bill; also less skulking, typically feeding in open. Duller juvenile perhaps confusable with vagrant juvenile Great Blue Heron (q.v.). In flight, has very slow and heavy wingbeats, with legs projecting further than in Purple or Grey Herons (and chestnut underwing coverts of adult more extensive and more obvious than in the former). **SEX/AGE** Juvenile resembles adult, but has head and neck duller and greyer and rusty-buff edgings to feathers of upperbody and upperwing coverts; underbody



is whitish with dark streaking and underwing coverts greyish instead of uniform vinaceous-chestnut.

VOICE Flight call a loud, harsh, deep 'kowoorrk-kowoorrk-woorrk-work-work'. Otherwise usually silent away from breeding colonies.

STATUS/HABITAT Scarce. No recent confirmation of breeding from Iraq. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Egypt, where may be rare but regular visitor.) Lakes, large rivers, marshes, tidal mudflats, coral reefs, mangroves.

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STORKS Ciconiidae

4 species (1 vagrant)

Very large, long-legged, long-necked and long-billed wading birds of open country and marshes. Wings long, broad and rectangular, with deep slots visible between prominent primary tips ('fingers') when in flight. Flight strong, with slow and powerful wingbeats. Feed out in open, mainly on amphibians, small rodents and large invertebrates, but also on small reptiles. Marabou Stork often feeds on carrion. Nest solitarily (e.g. Black Stork) or in loose colonies (e.g. White Stork), creating huge and untidy stick nests in trees, on cliffs or even (White Stork) on buildings. Sociable outside breeding season, forming flocks on migration. Migrate by soaring on thermals and gliding between them in similar manner to large birds of prey. Avoid long sea crossings on migration, White Storks concentrating in large numbers at Strait of Gibraltar, Bosphorus/Sea of Marmara and Sinai peninsula. Mostly rather silent, but various harsh calls or bill-clattering displays given at nest sites.

Sexes similar. No seasonal variation. Juveniles either resemble adults or are decidedly duller. Adult plumage attained within 12–18 months.

Confusion with other large, long-legged, long-necked, long-billed birds such as large herons, spoonbills, flamingos and cranes possible. Confusion most likely in distant flight, but all herons retract neck back onto 'shoulders' when in steady flight (although may keep neck partly extended in brief flights), while storks (apart from vagrant Marabou) keep neck fully extended. Strong plumage pattern when in flight makes confusion with cranes (other than Siberian) unlikely, while structural differences (including their very different bill shapes and narrower wings without prominent 'fingers') make confusion with spoonbills or flamingos improbable.

Identification within the family straightforward. Points to concentrate on are:

Overall coloration and plumage pattern • Bare-part coloration (bill, legs, bare facial skin)

YELLOW-BILLED STORK *Mycteria ibis*

Plate page 107

L 95–105 cm, WS 150–165 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Non-breeding visitor from sub-Saharan Africa. Overall plumage pattern of adult recalls White Stork but, except at long range, unmistakable owing to bare red face and large, slightly decurved yellow bill. Yellow-billed also has some pinkish on upperparts and black tail. In juvenile, white plumage of adult is replaced by drab greyish-brown (becoming whitish on belly, flanks and vent), bill is dull greyish (with yellow base), facial skin yellowish and legs greyish, so confusion with other storks unlikely (but beware unusually heavily soiled White Stork). In flight, adult rather similar to White Stork, especially at long range, but larger, somewhat decurved yellow bill and black tail are useful differences. Feeds mostly by wading in shallow water. Less inclined to feed away from water than White Stork.



SEX/AGE Immature closely resembles adult, but usually lacks pink on upperparts and has less red on face and duller bare parts overall.

VOICE Usually silent away from nest.

STATUS/HABITAT Regular non-breeding visitor in small numbers to Banc d'Arguin (Mauritania) and Lake Nasser (S Egypt). In sub-Saharan Africa favours freshwater marshes, lakes and rivers in open country, and coastal lagoons.

BLACK STORK *Ciconia nigra*

Plate page 107

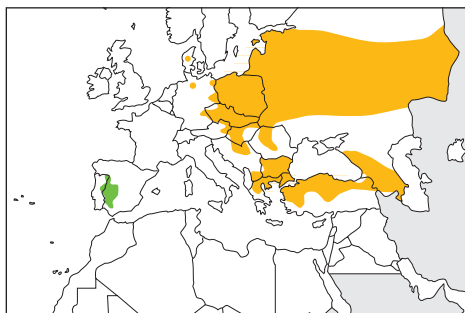
L 95–100 cm, WS 165–180 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A stork of forested areas, primarily in east of our region. Mainly black appearance with contrasting white belly renders it almost unmistakable. Looks darkly 'prehistoric' in flight, when the white triangle formed by the lower underbody and axillaries contrasts starkly with dark remainder of plumage. Like White migrates by soaring and thermalling, but typically in much smaller flocks. Shyer and less sociable than White, nesting solitarily in large trees or sometimes on cliffs. See also vagrant Marabou Stork.

SEX/AGE Bill, legs and orbital skin brighter crimson when breeding. Juvenile resembles adult, but duller and browner overall, especially on head and neck (but white belly clear and contrasting as in adult); bill, legs and lores grey-green (with orange-yellow bill base and yellowish tibia).

VOICE Usually silent away from nest.

STATUS/HABITAT Scarce and localized. (In addition to mapped range, has bred France, Belgium, Sweden. Partly resident in Iberia, but otherwise winters S of the



Sahara.) Breeds in forested or partly forested areas with damp meadows, rivers and marshes. On passage typically seen only in flight, but parties may be found resting by rivers, lakes and estuaries.

WHITE STORK *Ciconia ciconia*

Plate page 107

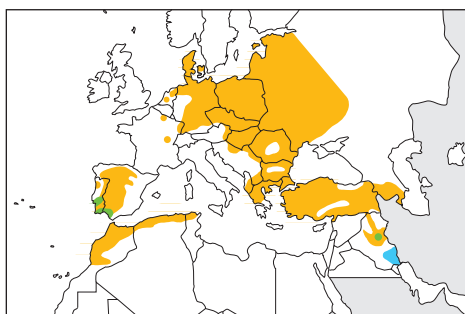
L 100–115 cm, WS 175–195 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Widespread stork of open country. Huge size, largely white plumage with black flight feathers and long bill distinctive. Unlikely to be confused, but plumage often remarkably dingy and soiled. In flight, black flight feathers contrast with white of remainder of plumage: allowing confusion only with vagrant Yellow-billed Stork (q.v.) or, at a distance, with Egyptian Vulture and White Pelican, last two of which have similar wing pattern but lack long and extended neck and projecting legs. Migratory flocks often reach thousands at key concentration points such as the Bosphorus, flying with slow ponderous wingbeats or soaring and wheeling on thermals in dense masses. See also vagrant Siberian Crane.

SEX/AGE Juvenile closely resembles adult, but bill initially black, later brownish, black of plumage duller, and inner median upperwing coverts (and sometimes some scapulars) black instead of white.

VOICE Usually silent away from nest, where communication mainly by rapid bill-clattering.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (In addition to



mapped range, has bred Belgium, Sweden, Switzerland, Italy, Israel. Almost all winter S of the Sahara.) Damp meadows, marshes, rice fields, steppes and even arable fields. Nests on buildings (often in villages or towns) or in trees.

MARABOU STORK *Leptoptilos crumeniferus*

Plate page 107

Marabou

L 115–130 cm, WS 225–255 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Vagrant from sub-Saharan Africa. Enormous, ugly, bald-headed stork with massive bill. These features plus dark slate-grey upperparts and whitish underparts, very long black legs (often stained whitish with excrement) and scruffy collar all add up to a very distinctive bird. Adults may show a bare, hanging throat pouch when neck extended. Typically stands with head sunk onto shoulders, or squats on tarsi. Frequently eats carrion, attending vulture feasts. In flight, enormous size, dark upperparts and whitish underparts and axillaries present a distinctive pattern. Unlike other storks, flies with head tucked back between 'shoulders' in manner of a heron. Underside pattern recalls Black Stork, but lacks dark head, neck and upper breast of that species. Can recall a large

vulture in flight at long range because of wing outline, but massive bill and projecting legs an easy distinction. Compare also pelicans, which have more extensive white or whitish on underwings.

SEX/AGE Adult males average considerably larger than adult females or immatures. In both sexes, head and neck brighter red at onset of breeding season, with light blue patch on hindneck. Juvenile resembles adult, but has browner upperparts (with brown instead of white margins to greater upperwing coverts) and head and neck more extensively covered in sparse down.

VOICE Usually silent away from nest.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Israel and Banc d'Arguin, Mauritania). In natural range, open savanna country with lakes, marshes, pools and rivers.

IBISES & SPOONBILLS Threskiornithidae

4 species

Fairly large to large, long-legged, long-necked and long-billed wading birds with rather long wings. Primarily inhabitants of marshes and wetlands, but Northern Bald Ibis also found in dry country. Flight strong, with fairly quick and powerful wingbeats: flocks usually fly in lines that may undulate up and down. Feed mainly on invertebrates, small fish, amphibians and, in case of Northern Bald Ibis, small reptiles. Nest in colonies in trees or reedbeds, or (Northern Bald Ibis) on cliffs. Sociable, forming flocks on migration. Mostly rather silent, but give various harsh calls at nest sites (and spoonbills give bill-clatters).

Sexes similar. Little or no seasonal variation in most. Juveniles resemble adults but are duller (especially bare parts). Adult plumage attained within 12–18 months.

Unique bill shape quickly permits identification of spoonbills at all but extreme range. Confusion at great distance with other large, long-legged, long-necked, long-billed birds possible, but all herons retract neck back onto 'shoulders' when in steady flight (although may keep neck partly extended in very brief flights) while spoonbills keep neck fully extended. Lack prominent primary 'fingers' shown by storks and cranes. Strongly curved bills of ibises likewise render confusion highly unlikely (curlews never appearing so uniformly dark or, as in Sacred Ibis, so black and white).

Marked difference in structure between ibises (with conspicuously decurved bills and shorter legs) and spoonbills (with flattened, spoon-tipped bills and longer legs) makes confusion between these subgroups very unlikely. Identification of ibises straightforward. Points to concentrate on are:

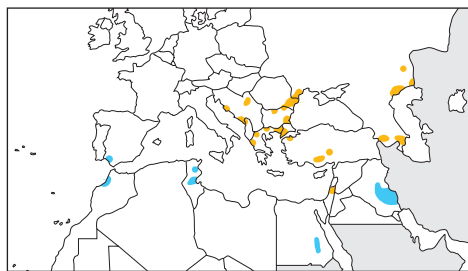
Overall coloration • Bare-part coloration (bill, legs, bare facial skin)

GLOSSY IBIS *Plegadis falcinellus*

Plate page 106

L 55–65 cm, WS 80–95 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Highly distinctive medium-large blackish wading bird of freshwater marshes with strongly downcurved bill. Closer views may reveal that breeding plumage is dark chestnut and glossy black (with greenish and pinkish iridescence). Winter birds are duller and show whitish streaking on head and neck. Confusion likely only with much rarer Northern Bald Ibis (q.v.). Even in silhouette unlikely to be confused with curlews, as distinctly bulkier, with thinner and more S-shaped neck and more strongly curved bill. Feeds by wading and probing in marshy shallows, usually in small parties and associating with herons and Eurasian Spoonbills. Flight action distinctive,



several rapid flaps followed by a glide being typical when well underway. Black appearance and distinctive shape, with curved bill, extended neck and legs (with head held slightly up) and broad wings, make it an easy bird to identify in flight. Flight recalls that of smaller cormorants; indeed, very distant birds with bills invisible can look surprisingly like flying Pygmy Cormorants.

SEX/AGE Adult winter duller, with drab blackish-brown head and neck finely streaked with whitish. Juvenile resembles adult winter, but dull brown on head, neck and body and less clearly streaked on head and neck than adult, often with whitish throat.

VOICE Usually silent away from breeding colonies, but sometimes gives a repeated low, harsh, crow-like 'graa' or more subdued grunting in flight.

STATUS/HABITAT Rather uncommon and localized. No recent confirmation of breeding from Iraq. (In addition to mapped range, may still breed Iraq and has bred Spain, France, Italy, Sardinia, Austria, Hungary, Morocco, Algeria. Almost all winter S of the Sahara.) Breeds in freshwater marshes and by lakes or large rivers with extensive fringing vegetation; when feeding or on passage, also damp meadows, rice fields and coastal lagoons.

NORTHERN BALD IBIS *Geronticus eremita*

Plate page 106

Bald Ibis, Hermit Ibis, Waldrapp

L 70–80 cm, WS 125–135 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Very rare ibis, now confined to a handful of sites in NW Africa and Turkey. Larger, bulkier and even blacker overall than Glossy, with shorter neck and legs. Adult has bare reddish head, red bill and legs, a scruffy ruff of long feathers about neck and a purplish 'shoulder patch' on wing coverts. Longer-tailed: looks rather drooping at rear end. Confusion unlikely given reasonable views, even in flight. Flight shape different from Glossy: legs do not project beyond tail and has more 'fingered' wingtips and shorter neck and bill. Flight action slower. Fairly sociable, feeding in small groups in areas often much drier than those favoured by Glossy.

SEX/AGE Juvenile duller, less glossy, without ruff on neck; head is sparsely feathered (blackish, streaked with white) and bill and legs greyish instead of red. 1st-summer more like adult, but bare parts duller and plumage not highly glossed, still lacking purplish 'shoulder' (lesser and median upwings coverts).

VOICE Usually silent away from breeding colonies or roosts.



STATUS/HABITAT Extremely rare and endangered. (Formerly far more widespread: bred Algeria, Syria and in historical times Germany, Switzerland and Austria. Turkish population formerly wintered Ethiopia and perhaps Yemen, but remaining individuals, all bred in captivity, overwinter locally. Some of Moroccan population disperses southwards as far as Mauritania.) Arid or semi-arid hilly country, with cliffs and gorges for nesting, feeding in adjacent dry fields and along rivers or streams.

SACRED IBIS *Threskiornis aethiopicus*

Plate page 106

L 65–75 cm, WS 112–124 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Unmistakable ibis of Iraq. Black head, bill, 'bustle' (composed of loose lower scapulars and tertials) and legs contrast with otherwise white plumage (although juvenile has head and neck mottled white and lacks 'bustle'). In flight, ibis shape and white plumage, with strongly contrasting black tips to flight feathers and black head and bill, distinctive. Feeds in small parties.

SEX/AGE Bare area at sides of breast, extending as stripe along leading edge of underwing, becomes blood-red at onset of breeding season (at other times dull greyish-pink). Juvenile has head and neck mottled with white and lacks black 'bustle'; black tips to flight



feathers more extensive but less sharply demarcated.

VOICE Usually silent away from breeding colonies.

STATUS/HABITAT Uncommon. (Formerly bred Egypt. Individuals observed in Europe most likely to be escapes.) Freshwater marshes, damp cultivation and rivers.

EURASIAN SPOONBILL *Platalea leucorodia*

Plate page 106

Spoonbill, White Spoonbill

L 80–90 cm, WS 115–130 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Large, white, long-legged waterbird recalling a thickest egret, but long, broad, flattened, spoon-shaped bill diagnostic. Has distinctive feeding action, wading in shallows and swinging head and bill rhythmically from side to side, which is quite unlike feeding action of any other large white waterbird. Even in profile, slight decurve and greater length of bill prevent confusion with egrets. Flight action of

several rapid beats and a glide is distinctive and quite unlike that of egrets, as is fully extended neck. Sociable, often feeding among mixed groups of herons, wading up to belly in water.

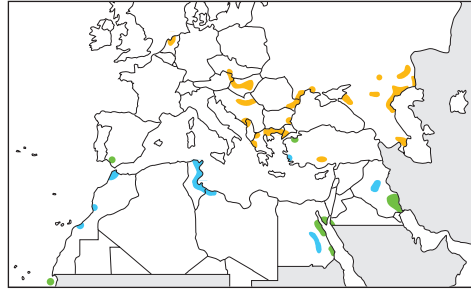
SEX/AGE In breeding plumage, crest of elongated feathers appears on rear crown and breast becomes tawny-yellow. Juvenile closely resembles adult winter, but has pinkish bill and legs and indistinct black tips

to primaries. By first winter bill and legs begin to turn greyish.

VOICE Usually silent.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (nominate illustrated). Race *balsaci* (Banc d'Arguin, Mauritania) has bill all black in adult and almost no yellow-buff on upper breast.

STATUS/HABITAT Uncommon and localized. (In addition to mapped range, may breed E Turkey in Van Gölü region and has bred this century in Portugal, Denmark, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Israel and Kuwait. Most winter S of the Sahara.) Brackish and freshwater lakes, coastal lagoons, tidal mudflats, mangroves and coral reefs. Often nests in bushes or low trees among extensive reedbeds.



FLAMINGOS *Phoenicopteridae*

2 species

Exceedingly tall, very long-legged and long-necked waterbirds with peculiar bent, swollen bills. Adults look largely pink or whitish when on ground (and bolder colours of wing are normally hidden by elongated scapulars). Perhaps even more remarkable in flight, when heavy head and bill held out on very long neck and pink, crimson and black wings strikingly apparent. Brownish juveniles with dusky bill and legs may be confusing, especially when partially grown and even more so if swimming (when distant birds can even recall juvenile swans). Typically in densely packed congregations at favoured shallow saline or alkaline lakes. Feed on blue-green algae, diatoms and tiny invertebrates while sweeping head and bill from side to side, the latter often being inverted. Inner surfaces of mandibles are lined with lamellae that sieve out prey. Breed in large colonies, building mud nests in very shallow water. Highly sensitive to feeding conditions and water levels: most colonies not active every year. Silent when alone, but flocks make loud nasal honkings and continuous goose-like babbings.

Sexes very similar, but males average considerably larger. No seasonal variation as such, but degree of pink tinge in plumage varies with time and place: depends on amount of keto-carotenoid pigments in diet. Juveniles distinct: not only dull and brownish with dusky bill and legs but also considerably smaller than adults. Do not reach full adult size or coloration until 2–3 years old, perhaps longer.

Confusion with other bird families highly unlikely.

GREATER FLAMINGO *Phoenicopterus ruber*

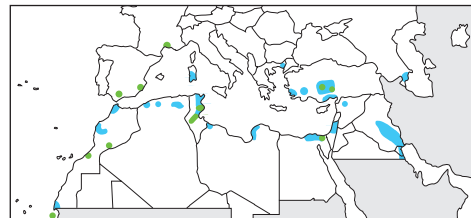
Plate page 108

L 125–155 cm, WS 140–165 cm.

IDENTIFICATION The only widespread flamingo and as such unmistakable, but vagrants should be checked for quite similar **Chilean Flamingo** *P. chilensis*, a frequent escape. Latter easily distinguished by grey legs with pink 'knees' and feet, and by much more extensive black on bill (covering distal half). See also Lesser Flamingo.

VOICE Typical calls a repeated, distinctly Greylag-like honking 'ka-ha' in flight and a softer, continuous babbling 'kuk-kuk, ke-kuk, kuk-kuk...' when feeding. Large flocks can recall wild geese flocks in the sheer volume of noise.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Race *roseus* is only naturally occurring form but beware escapes of American nominate race, which is deep pink all over, not just on wing coverts.



STATUS/HABITAT Very localized, but often abundant. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Algeria, Kuwait.) Saline or brackish lakes and coastal lagoons, locally on tidal mudflats.

LESSER FLAMINGO *Phoenicopterus minor*

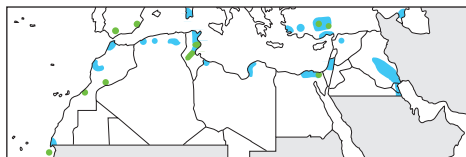
Plate page 108

L 80–105 cm, WS 95–120 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Likely only at Banc d'Arguin (Mauritania). Compared with Greater, is markedly smaller

than corresponding age group of latter (but beware small juvenile Greaters among much larger

adults) and is relatively shorter-necked and shorter-legged, while bill is shorter-based, with a noticeably more abrupt bend. **Adult** is distinctive, having deep red bill with small black tip together with dark red eye and surrounding bare facial skin. Has a rather angry expression. Bill, facial skin and eye look blackish at a distance and always appear much darker overall than in Greater (which shows obvious contrast between more extensive black tip and pale pink bill base). Overall plumage coloration usually a brighter, deeper pink and some males have crimson on breast and upperbody. Many individuals paler-plumaged, however, and some no brighter than typical Greater, so variation in size and overall coloration within flocks of Greater Flamingos makes picking out a vagrant Lesser at a distance a challenge. **Juvenile** (perhaps unlikely to be encountered in our region) very similar in colour to juvenile Greater, but slightly greyer and with distinctly darker bill (purplish-brown with small black tip versus grey with more extensive black tip). Structural differences also helpful. **Immature** very pale, almost whitish: differences in structure and bill coloration are best features. In flight, relatively stockier and shorter-necked than Greater. A



useful distinction in adult (and later-immature) plumage is upperwing coverts: bright pink with paler leading edge in Greater, deep pink with contrasting patch of bright crimson on median and lesser coverts in Lesser.

SEX/AGE As well as averaging larger, some males have crimson feather centres to breast, mantle and scapulars.

VOICE Flight call rather different from Greater: a high-pitched 'kwirrik' (recalling White-fronted Goose). Feeding or walking birds give a low murmuring 'murrh-errh, murrh-errh'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe, Morocco) and perhaps regular non-breeding visitor to Banc d'Arguin from small colony further S in Mauritania. Habitat as Greater Flamingo.

WILDFOWL (or WATERFOWL) Anatidae

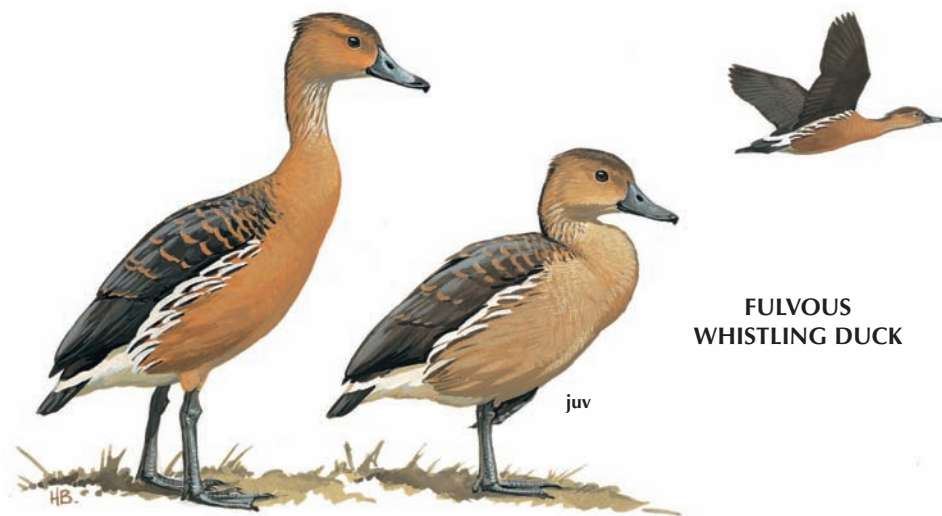
66 species (3 introduced, 23 vagrant)

Large family of medium-sized to very large waterbirds. Wildfowl fall mainly into three distinct and familiar groups: ducks, geese, and swans. All are rather broad-bodied, short-legged, web-footed birds with relatively small (but powerful) wings. Bill shape, so familiar to all of us, is typically broad and flattened, with rounded tip and high base. Horny 'nail' at tip of upper mandible creates slight hook. Neck long in geese and especially in swans. Flight rapid and powerful (distinctly fast in most ducks). Diet highly varied, ranging from entirely vegetarian to wholly fish or invertebrates. Feeding methods range from grazing on land, to up-ending to feed on shallow bottom or pure diving. Most are sociable, often gathering in large flocks when feeding, roosting or migrating. Nesting is, however, mostly solitary (although some species, such as geese and eiders, nest in loose colonies). Vocalizations are mostly honks, grunts and hisses in swans and geese, and quacks, croonings and whistles in ducks.

A number of exotic species are popular in collections and parks as ornamental waterbirds, and escapes are not infrequent. This possibility should always be considered when one is faced with something apparently not included in this guide. Only those species well established as being part of our feral avifauna are included here (e.g. Mandarin Duck, Ruddy Duck). Other works should be consulted where an escape is suspected, especially *Wildfowl: an identification guide to the ducks, geese and swans of the world* (Madge & Burn 1988). Even records of apparent vagrants from outside our region may be partly, or possibly wholly, attributable to escapes (e.g. Ross's Goose, Baikal Teal). Wildfowl occasionally hybridize, even under wild conditions, and this is another factor to consider when faced with an unfamiliar goose or duck.

WHISTLING DUCKS

These vagrant species from sub-Saharan Africa and S Asia are in fact more closely related to geese and swans than to the true ducks. While superficially duck-like in appearance, their long necks, long legs and broad wings hint at their relationship to geese.



FULVOUS
WHISTLING DUCK

FULVOUS WHISTLING DUCK *Dendrocygna bicolor*

Plate above

Fulvous Tree Duck

L 45–53 cm, WS 85–93 cm.

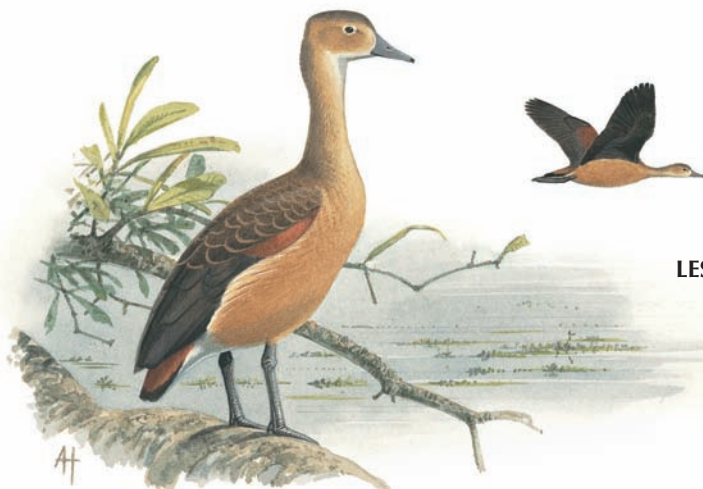
IDENTIFICATION Vagrant (breeds in S Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and the Americas; vagrants in our region likely to originate from sub-Saharan Africa). Relatively long-legged, long-necked and short-bodied freshwater duck, overall tawny-buff in colour with darker brown upperparts (barred with yellowish-brown) and dark grey bill and legs. Plain tawny head, neck and underpart coloration contrasts somewhat with dark hind-neck and whitish-buff undertail coverts and prominent striping along upper flanks. Typically found loafing by shores of lakes and pools, flighting to and from feeding areas at dawn and dusk. Feeds mainly by dabbling, only occasionally diving. Confusion unlikely except with vagrant Lesser Whistling Duck (q.v.) or perhaps juvenile White-faced Whistling Duck, but latter has black crown, extensively barred flanks, chestnut breast and black uppertail coverts. **In flight** appears slightly

humpbacked, with a long-necked appearance, the feet projecting noticeably beyond short tail (unlike true ducks). The broad wings are blackish above and below, and the wingbeats relatively shallow; closer views should reveal whitish band across dark uppertail coverts.

SEX/AGE Juvenile duller and greyer, less fulvous or rufous, with flank pattern much reduced; uppertail coverts greyish, not white. Scapulars are narrower and rounder, with duller, less contrasting pale tips.

VOICE Very vocal, both when feeding and on the wing. Typical flight call a thin, wader-like whistling 'k-weeoo', usually repeated.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Morocco, where may have bred; also Spain, France, unless escapes involved). In natural range, lowland freshwater marshes and lakes in open country. Favours wetlands with extensive fringing and emergent vegetation.



LESSER WHISTLING
DUCK
(p. 116)

LESSER WHISTLING DUCK *Dendrocygna javanica*

Plate page 115

Lesser Tree Duck

L 38–42 cm, WS 70–74 cm.

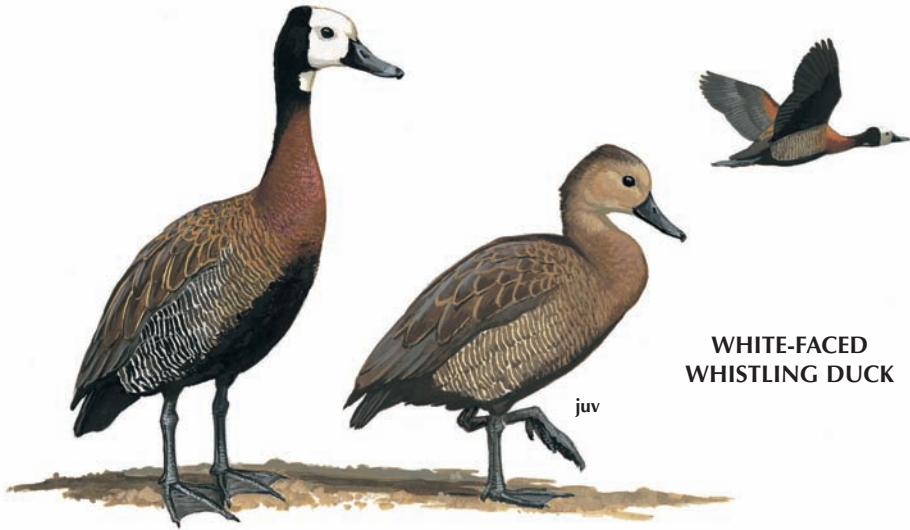
IDENTIFICATION Vagrant from S Asia. Resembles Fulvous Whistling Duck, but smaller and has chestnut, not white, uppertail coverts. Dark grey-brown of crown and upper hindneck diffuses into pale grey-brown lower hindneck and sides of neck; in Fulvous pattern of contrast is reversed, with blackish lower hindneck and pale brown upper hindneck and crown. Body coloration of Lesser is duller and greyer, and lacks finely streaked collar of Fulvous. Leading part of forewing chestnut (most obvious in flight), while

upperwing uniform dark grey-brown in Fulvous. Behaviour similar, but favours more heavily vegetated freshwater habitats.

SEX/AGE Juvenile duller, with crown less blackish for short period.

VOICE Very vocal in flight, when utters a thin, clear, whistled 'whi- whee' accompanied by whistling wing-beats.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Israel). Freshwater lakes and marshes, especially with floating vegetation.

**WHITE-FACED
WHISTLING DUCK**

juv

WHITE-FACED WHISTLING DUCK *Dendrocygna viduata*

Plate above

White-faced Tree Duck

L 45–53 cm, WS 86–94 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Vagrant (breeds sub-Saharan Africa and the Americas; vagrants in our region likely to originate from sub-Saharan Africa). Overall shape resembles that of Fulvous Whistling Duck, but plumage coloration strikingly different. Mainly blackish plumage contrasting with chiefly white head makes identification easy. The white front of the head and throat sharply contrasts with black rear of head and upper neck. Breast, lower neck and back chestnut, with sides of body closely barred buffish-white and blackish-brown. Belly and tail blackish. **Adult** unlikely to be confused. **Juvenile** dingier and distinguished from juvenile Fulvous by black (not greyish or whitish) uppertail coverts, blackish (not brownish) crown,

more prominently barred flanks and dull chestnut breast. **In flight** appears wholly dark with contrasting white head and has distinctive whistling duck shape (see Fulvous Whistling Duck).

SEX/AGE Juvenile drab, with greyish rather than white on head, blackish-grey rather than black rear of head. Chestnut of breast duller and less extensive than in adult. Lower underparts at first pale greyish with paler belly, but soon much as adult.

VOICE Quite vocal, the usual call being a clear three-note whistle: 'tsri-tsri-trseoo'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Spain, Canary Is). In natural range, freshwater lakes, marshes and river banks in open country.

SWANS

Sexes alike (apart from slight differences in bill shape of Mute Swan). No seasonal differences. Juveniles are distinct. Adult plumage mostly attained by end of first winter but not fully attained until late in first summer.

Swans are so distinctive and familiar that confusion with other wildfowl, or any other kind of bird, is exceedingly unlikely.

Identification within the group is not difficult given a good view. The main point to concentrate on is:

Bill colour and pattern

MUTE SWAN *Cygnus olor*

L 125–155 cm, WS 200–235 cm.

IDENTIFICATION The familiar swan of park lakes and lowland waterways in NW Europe, where it is typically tame and confiding. Adult has an orange bill with black basal area and prominent black knob on forehead, and may also be easily distinguished from other swans at a distance by its relatively long, pointed tail and usually more curved neck. Has fairly frequent habit of swimming with wing feathers strongly arched and neck gracefully curved. Head and neck sometimes stained rusty through feeding in waters with strong iron concentration, but less often than Whooper Swan. Dull greyish-brown juvenile is darker and browner than those of Tundra and Whooper Swans, and has black-based, pinkish-grey bill and longer, pointed tail. Juveniles of the other two swans are paler and greyer, with pale-based bills, and have shorter, more rounded tails. Feeds mostly by up-ending to reach submerged vegetation; grazes on short grassland less commonly than our other swans. **In flight** easily distinguished by loud throbbing drone ('waou, waou, waou') produced by wingbeats and clearly audible even at some distance; wingbeats are almost silent in other swans. Unlike Tundra and Whooper, Mute Swan does not utter loud honkings in flight. Pointed tail projects beyond prominent black feet in flight (feet reach tail tip in other swans), but, if bird close enough to see this feature, distinctive bill colour and shape are usually visible.

SEX/AGE Juvenile strongly washed brownish-grey,

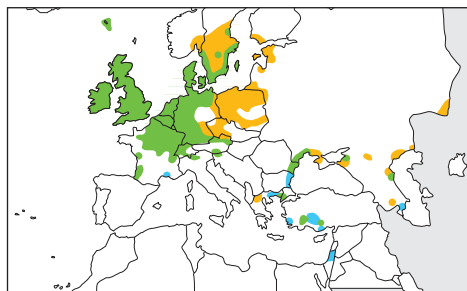


Plate page 157

becoming whiter by first spring or summer, but not completely white until second winter. Pinkish-grey bill lacks frontal knob, but has black areas as adult, becoming pinker during first winter and attaining adult shape and colour by second winter.

VOICE As name implies, least vocal of swans, but by no means mute. Utters short grunts and hisses, but lacks honking calls of other species.

UNUSUAL VARIANTS Uncommon colour variant known as 'Polish Swan' has pinkish instead of black feet and is all white even when juvenile.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. Lowland freshwater lakes (even in town parks), reservoirs, rivers and large ponds. Also on estuaries, coastal brackish lagoons and even in sheltered coastal bays. Rarely in upland districts.

TUNDRA SWAN *Cygnus columbianus*

Bewick's Swan (*C. c. bewickii*); **Whistling Swan** (*C. c. columbianus*)

L 115–140 cm ('Whistling Swan' 120–150 cm), WS 180–215 cm ('Whistling Swan' 190–225 cm).

IDENTIFICATION The smallest of the swans. Most likely to be confused with larger Whooper Swan, which shares striking yellow and black bill coloration, but Tundra is smaller, shorter-necked and shorter-bodied, with more rounded and shorter head as well as shorter bill. Differences between them are fully discussed under Whooper. Despite these structural differences lone birds are particularly difficult to separate, but adults may be fairly readily identified by their bill pattern. Typically, Tundra has yellow only at base of bill, the yellow not extending along sides of bill to form a pointed projection as in Whooper, but ending in a rounded projection midway along the bill. The bill pattern varies individually, however, and some birds can be tricky. Vagrants of nominate race ('Whistling Swan') have at most a very small yellow patch at base of bill (just in front of eye) and present no real problem. Head and neck sometimes stained rusty although less often than in Whooper. Juvenile not easy to separate from young Whooper, except by structure, although is usually relatively more uniform greyish-brown in late winter, by which time adult bill pattern should be partially visible in both species, but is most

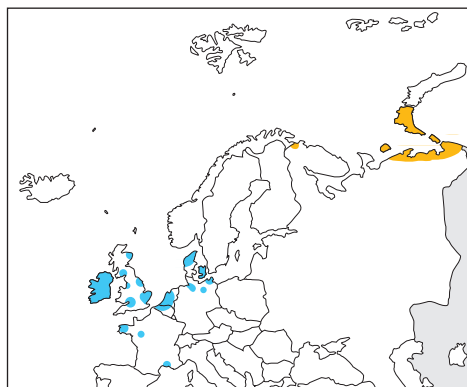


Plate page 157

marked in young Whooper (with areas which will become yellow indicated by a paler pink coloration and areas which will become black already blackish-pink). 2nd-winter Tundra normally shows some grey-

ish-brown feathering on head and neck, whereas 2nd-winter Whooper is very much like adult. In winter, typically grazes in low-lying fields like Whooper Swan, the two species often becoming intermingled. **In flight** is smaller and stockier than Whooper, with shorter neck and body, and has rather quicker wing action. More agile at take-off and landing than Whooper, dropping on to water at steeper angle and often rising with little foot-pattering. Calls also higher in pitch and more yelping. See also Whooper Swan.

SEX/AGE Juvenile overall greyish-brown, a little paler than juvenile Whooper but basically very similar. Bill pink, whiter towards base, with tip and cutting edge black; by late in first winter or early in first spring, dusky areas appear on bill as adult bill pattern develops, becoming as adult by second winter. Retains greyish-brown juvenile plumage well into first spring and, although attains adult coloration by second winter, most birds can still be aged by presence of greyish-brown on head and neck until at least middle of second winter.

VOICE Generally more vocal than Whooper, uttering variety of honking and yelping calls both when on water and when taking to the air. Typically, these are higher-pitched and quicker in delivery than those of Whooper, but many calls are similar. Usual flight call faster and more yelping, less bugling than Whooper: 'klau-klau-klau'. Also gives a softer, more Whooper-

like 'hoo-hoo-hoo'.

TAXONOMY The form *bewickii* was formerly treated as a separate species under the name **Bewick's Swan**, but is now considered to be conspecific with the **Whistling Swan** *C. columbianus* of N America; the enlarged species is referred to as **Tundra Swan**.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight, apart from bill coloration. 2 races (both illustrated) including nominate race from N America known as Whistling Swan (a vagrant to W Europe). Whistling averages a little larger overall and is a little longer-billed than *bewickii* (Bewick's Swan), but is most easily distinguished by apparently all-black bill; close views should reveal a tiny yellow patch at the very base of the bill in front of eye, but this is individually variable in extent and may be absent. Juveniles not safely separable from juvenile Bewick's, but tend to be a little longer-billed and have bill coloration more uniformly rose-pink (with black tip and cutting edges); bill is typically two-toned pink in young Bewick's. Compare also juvenile Whooper Swan.

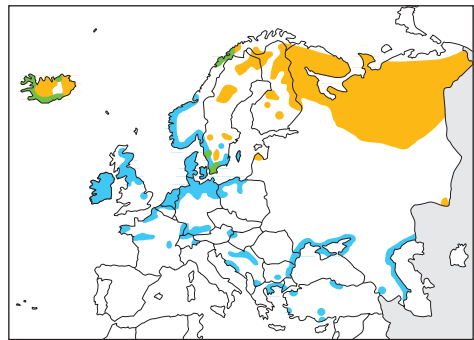
STATUS/HABITAT Generally uncommon but locally quite numerous. (Probably does not breed regularly in Murmansk area.) Breeds in tundra, wintering by low-lying wet pasture, flooded grasslands and adjacent fields with winter cereals. On passage, often stops on upland lakes and reservoirs and sheltered coastal bays and estuaries.

WHOOPER SWAN *Cygnus cygnus*

L 140–165 cm, WS 215–245 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Closely resembles Tundra Swan (of Palearctic race *bewickii*, known as 'Bewick's Swan'), but averages considerably larger, with longer body and neck, and has more angular head shape, exaggerated by longer bill, which gives a patrician 'roman-nose' shape to front of head. Adults have a striking black and yellow bill, a feature shared by Tundra, but the precise pattern is normally quite different. In Whooper, the bill appears yellow with a black tip, whereas in Tundra it appears to be black with a yellow base, or at least shows equal amounts of black and yellow. In Whooper the yellow covers the basal half of the bill and extends in a long projection along the sides towards the tip. Bill pattern of Tundra is individually variable, far more so than in Whooper, and some can approach Whooper in pattern. Plumage, especially head and neck, frequently stained rusty from feeding in waters with strong iron concentration. Juvenile similar to juvenile Tundra and best distinguished by structure, but tends to be a little darker in first autumn, although by latter part of first winter plumage paler and more blotched with white than in young Tundra, with bill pattern recalling adult (although pale area at first coloured pinkish-white rather than yellow). 1st-winter Tundra remains greyish-brown until first spring (when begins to attain extensive black on bill). Juveniles of both species paler, more cinnamon-grey, than young Mute, with rounded (not pointed) tails and brighter pink bills which lack black at very base. Both Tundra and Whooper spend much of their time grazing in winter, more so than Mute, and tend to hold their necks more stiffly erect when swimming.

In flight distinguished from Mute by black-tipped, pale-based bill and rounded tail, with feet reaching tail tip. Lone birds or single-species flocks difficult to separate from Tundra, but, especially if flying together, Whooper looks clearly larger, with longer neck and body, heavier head and bill, and slightly slower wing-beats. Less agile at take-off and landing than Tundra,



coming on to water at shallower angle and skating more over surface, taking-off with more foot-pattering. Wing-beats silent, or with quiet swishing at close range (Mute produces deep throbbing). Flying birds typically vocal (see below).

SEX/AGE Juvenile greyish-brown; a little darker on head and neck, and whiter on underparts, tail and flight feathers. Becomes paler during latter part of first winter and whiter during first summer, attaining full adult coloration before second winter. Bill pink, paler at base, with dark brownish tip and cutting edges which blacken early in first winter. During latter part of first winter and first spring acquires adult bill pattern, but with pale area whitish instead of yellow (adult coloration being attained during summer).

VOICE Has a variety of honking and trumpeting calls, deeper and stronger than those of Tundra. Typical flight call is a deep, resonant, bugling 'hoop-hoop-hoop', or 'kloo-kloo-kloo', with first syllable slightly lower-pitched.

STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon (locally numerous in winter quarters). (In addition to mapped range, has bred Britain, Ireland, Poland.) Breeds by variety of

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shallow, open waters ranging from steppe lakes to lakes and pools in the northern taiga, also locally by northern coastal inlets, estuaries and rivers. Winters in

lowland open farmland, usually in coastal regions and inland in floodplains. Occasionally on passage in sheltered coastal bays and inlets.

GEESE

Most species feed primarily by grazing, but all are good swimmers. They breed mostly in open tundra or boggy uplands of the far north, migrating south to winter in large concentrations in lowland farmland and marshes in open country. During migration, which generally follows set routes (sometimes called 'flyways'), flocks come down to feed at favoured stop-over points, often remaining for several weeks. Some species do not continue to limits of winter range until forced to do so by weather conditions. Flocks fly high, moving in chevrons (V-formations) when well underway. Sociable habits in winter allow mixed flocks to form, so careful checking of goose flocks may reveal individuals of other species.

Sexes alike. No seasonal variation. Juveniles often closely resemble adults, but some are distinct. Adult plumage mostly attained by end of first winter, but not fully attained until late in first summer.

Widespread familiarity with farmyard geese, in spite of their often rather 'distorted' appearance compared with their wild cousins, means that geese are unlikely to be confused with other birds.

Within the group, identification problems are often significant. Voice is a useful identification aid. Although many call notes are basically similar, with experience key call notes among the general honking and cackling help identify the various species. Some geese have distinctive plumage patterns that make separation relatively straightforward, but overall coloration of the members of genus *Anser* (known as 'grey geese') is very similar (especially as regards juveniles). Juveniles typically have duller bill and leg coloration than adults. Although leg colour is important, it can be difficult in certain light conditions to decide whether legs are dull orange or dull pink. When identifying 'grey geese', concentrate on:

Leg and bill colour (and bill pattern) • **Presence or absence of black belly patches** • **Darkness of forewing in flight** (both above and below) • **Voice** (with caution)

BEAN GOOSE *Anser fabalis*

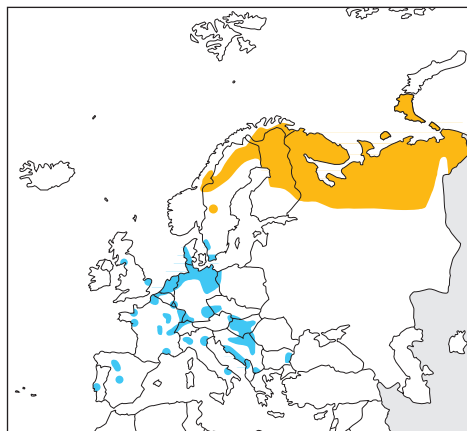
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Taiga Bean Goose (*A. f. fabalis* etc.); **Tundra Bean Goose** (*A. f. rossicus*)

L 66–84 cm, WS 140–175 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Overall size, bill pattern and structure vary both individually and racially (see Geographical Variation). A large, long-necked, long-billed, dark-headed 'grey goose', with orange legs and orange and black bill. Extent of black on the bill varies from small patches to large expanses. Juvenile Greater White-fronted often has dark nail and indistinct dusky shading on bill, but Bean has darker head, offering more contrast with paler breast, and (except *rossicus*) a longer bill with clear blackish patches. Confusion most likely (especially where small *rossicus* Bean is concerned) with Pink-footed, which may have similar bill shape, but Pink-footed smaller, with more rounded head, greyer upperparts and more extensive white in tail (with relatively small dark tail band), and has deep pinkish legs and band on bill. Exceptionally, Bean has dull pinkish legs, and under some lighting conditions it is difficult to decide whether leg colour is dull orange or dull pink, this being especially true of duller juveniles. Some Beans have a very narrow whitish line around base of bill, but never enough to suggest Greater White-fronted. **In flight** a large, very dark 'grey goose' with relatively longer neck than other species (but beware *rossicus*, which is smaller and stockier). The wing pattern is darker than in other 'grey geese', showing little contrast between the coverts and the flight feathers, although not unlike pattern of Greater White-fronted. Both the upperwing and the underwing lack the distinctive pale grey tones of Pink-footed or Greylag.

SEX/AGE Juvenile resembles adult but head and neck dull brown, not so dark; pattern of upperparts and flanks more scaled and pale fringes browner, less



whitish. Always lacks white at base of bill.

TAXONOMY/GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Rather marked but complex, owing to intergradation and individual variation in both size and bill pattern: it can be impossible to assign some birds to a particular subspecies in the field. 3 races (nominate race and *rossicus* illustrated). Nominate race, breeding in the taiga zone, is large, long-billed and long-necked, with bill typically orange and black (with black over distal portion and patches over culmen and towards bill base, most birds having equal amounts of black and orange, or more orange than black). Intergrades in

Ural region with similar but slightly larger and darker-billed *johanseni*. Tundra race *rossicus* breeds west to the Kanin Peninsula: compared with nominate *fabalis* it is smaller, shorter-necked and with a shorter and deeper bill, in shape and structure recalling Pink-footed Goose; bill is almost all blackish, with an orange sub-terminal band. May, together with extralimital *serriros-tris*, merit specific status as **Tundra Bean Goose**.

VOICE Less noisy than other 'grey geese', even when in winter flocks. Bean Geese are vocally quite close to

Pink-footed and included in their vocabulary is a similar nasal 'wink-wink', although in Bean it is considerably deeper-toned, more of a 'hank-hank' or 'ung-unk'.

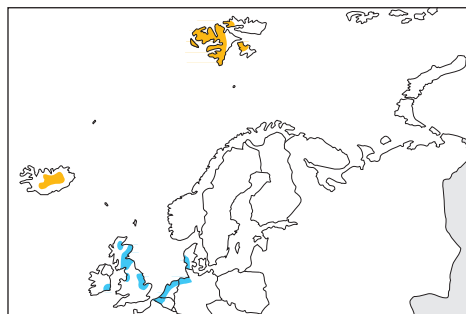
STATUS/HABITAT Locally not uncommon, with large concentrations in some wintering areas. In the breeding season, in open damp tundra, Arctic coastal regions and islands, scrubby birch forest and even boggy clearings in relatively dense coniferous forest. Winters in open country, favouring damp steppe and open agricultural land.

PINK-FOOTED GOOSE *Anser brachyrhynchus*

L 60–75 cm, WS 135–165 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A dark-headed, dark-billed 'grey goose' with deep rose-pink legs and bill band. Smaller, shorter-necked and with rounder head and stubbier bill than most individuals of closely related Bean Goose (but matched by some *rossicus* Bean in structure). Deep pink legs and bands on bill distinctive, although beware occasional Bean with similar bare-part colour (known as 'Sushkin's Goose'). Overall body coloration paler (and greyer above) than Bean, and has much more white in tail (Bean has dark tail with relatively narrow white border) and more contrasting dark head and flanks. Scapulars and tertials look to be washed almost silvery-grey in good lighting conditions, although this most obvious on fresh adults. Some birds show narrow white line around base of bill as in some Bean. Duller juvenile is less distinct, with browner upperparts and duller, sometimes almost pinkish-yellow legs. Can be problematic on ground unless accompanied by adults, but in flight note pale upperwing. Confusion with other 'grey geese' less likely except at long range. **In flight** distinguished from most other 'grey geese' by markedly light grey forewing, although not so strikingly pale as in Greylag Goose; neck relatively shorter than in most other species, and the narrowing behind the rounded head creates a slightly 'waisted' look. Has broader white tip to tail than Bean. Distinguished from Greylag by shorter neck, darker head, darker underwing and flanks, and by voice.

SEX/AGE Juvenile duller and browner than adult, lacking grey tones to upperparts, which have more



scale-like pale feather fringes, lacking strongly barred appearance of adult; often shows weak spotting on breast and belly. Legs and feet dull pale greyish-pink, sometimes yellowish-grey.

VOICE Highly vocal, with incessant cackling when in flight. Calls are higher-pitched and shriller than those of larger species, and include distinctive double (or treble) 'wink-wink' phrase and high-pitched 'ahng-ahng-ahng'.

TAXONOMY Sometimes treated as a race of Bean Goose *A. fabalis*.

STATUS/HABITAT Common (but wintering areas localized). Breeds in open tundra, often in mountainous areas with deep rocky ravines and gorges. Winters in lowland farmland and by wide estuaries, feeding both in fields and on extensive areas of saltmarsh.

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GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE *Anser albifrons*

White-fronted Goose

L 65–78 cm, WS 135–165 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Compared with other 'grey geese' (apart from very similar but much rarer Lesser White-fronted), this relatively stocky and orange-legged species is easily distinguished when adult by its combination of extensive white patch surrounding base of bill and large, irregular, black belly patches. The white 'blaze' is most apparent when bird is facing observer and is individually variable in extent, as are the belly patches. Both Bean and Greylag sometimes show quite a distinct white line around bill base, but this is never so extensive as in Greater White-fronted. Juvenile lacks white face and belly patches and in addition bill often shows dusky nail and dark shading elsewhere, creating potential confusion with Bean, but Greater White-fronted is chunkier in shape, with shorter neck, relatively squarer head shape, and shorter bill which lacks clear-cut black patches of Bean. Greylag is larger and bulkier, with longer neck and more massive bill, pink legs and distinctly pale

grey wing coverts (often hidden when on ground). (Legs of Greater White-fronted can sometimes, however, appear distinctly pinkish under certain conditions.) Bill colour (pink or orange-yellow) and overall plumage contrasts vary according to subspecies involved. **In flight** a rather heavily built 'grey goose', with fairly dark upperwing pattern (although under good viewing conditions upperwing coverts look lighter than flight feathers, with primary coverts palest of all); upperwing obviously darker than either Pink-footed or Greylag, but not so dark as Bean. Large black belly patches of adults obvious when overhead, but lacking in juvenile. Has heavier appearance to head and neck than Pink-footed, lacking 'waisted' look. Appears shorter-necked than Bean.

SEX/AGE Juvenile lacks white frontal blaze and black belly patches; upperparts lack transverse barring of adult, barring being less distinct and more scaly as in other juveniles of genus. Bill duller, with dusky nail

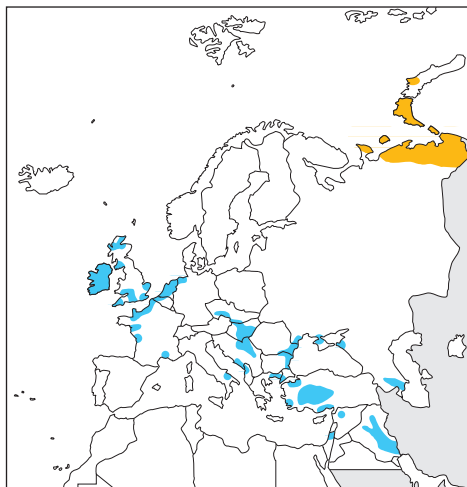
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and occasionally with greyish shading along sides. Legs duller, often greyish-yellow or even pinkish-yellow. White blaze acquired by end of first winter or first spring, but black belly patches only by second autumn.

VOICE Noisy, with typical goose-type cackling. Characteristic flight sounds include repeated, musical 'lyo-lyok' of varying pitch. Calls all higher in pitch than those of Bean or Greylag, but less shrill than Pink-footed.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 2 races (both illustrated). Nominate race ('Russian White-fronted Goose') breeds west to Kanin Peninsula and winters over most of our region; has pink bill becoming slightly orange towards base. Greenland race *flavirostris* ('Greenland White-fronted Goose'), wintering in Ireland and W Britain, is larger overall and darker on head and upperparts than nominate, and has orange-yellow bill, becoming slightly pinker towards tip.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. Breeds on lowland tundra, often by lakes and rivers. In winter quarters, a bird of open steppe and farmland, improved grassland, stubble fields and wide estuarine saltmarshes; locally (race *flavirostris*) upland bogs.

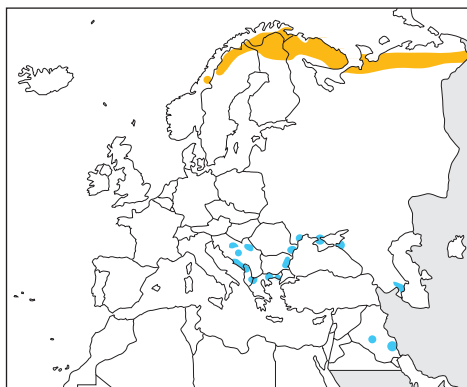


LESSER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE *Anser erythropus*

Plate page 159

L 53–66 cm, WS 120–135 cm.

IDENTIFICATION At all ages difficult to separate from very similar nominate race of Greater White-fronted, especially when in mixed flocks. Typically appears smaller and daintier than nominate race Greater, although there is a certain amount of overlap between smallest juvenile Greater and largest adult Lesser. Compared with nominate race Greater, has a smaller, shorter (more conical) and brighter pink bill, more rounded head (with steeper, higher fore-crown), rather shorter body and neck, slightly shorter legs, and longer wings which project clearly beyond tip of tail (in Greater the wings reach tail tip, only occasionally projecting slightly beyond). At reasonably close ranges, the bright yellow eye-ring may be visible (although Greater occasionally shows an eye-ring, it is never so clear as on Lesser). Adults usually have white face patch extending a little further up onto forecrown than in Greater, ending above eye and with more of a point, but this subtle difference is difficult to see when bird feeding unless it stops momentarily to hold head up. The belly patches are often smaller than in nominate race Greater, but this feature is individually variable in both species. Lesser is an overall darker, brighter-looking bird with relatively darker head and neck, and has a brighter white border line between the flank and wing than Greater. Lesser also has a quicker feeding action and walk than Greater, which can help to locate individuals among flocks of the latter. Like Greater, legs may appear to be distinctly pinkish at times. Many of the features of Lesser are difficult to discern in the field, and locating individual Lessers among a flock of Greater is made even trickier owing to individual variation in overall size, posture, and shape and extent of white frontal patch. Once located and observed, however, Lessers can start to appear markedly different from the surrounding Greater. Juveniles are even more difficult, differing from adults in much the same way as in Greater, and, like some juvenile Greater, often show dusky nail and shading on the bill; best distinguished



by structure and darker overall coloration. **In flight** resembles Greater White-fronted, but can sometimes be picked out if the two flying together by smaller size, shorter neck, smaller body and bill, relatively longer wings, slightly faster wingbeats and higher-pitched call note.

SEX/AGE Juvenile differs from adult in same manner as in Greater White-fronted Goose.

VOICE Some calls are relatively loud, particularly on breeding grounds, where alarm is an almost grating 'queuee-oop'. Flight calls notably squeakier, quicker and higher in pitch than those of Greater White-fronted, typically including a 'kyee-yeek' and a repeated 'kyu-yu-yu'.

STATUS/HABITAT Rare and localized. Breeds among moist tundra with bushy thickets and at the fringes of the taiga. Winter flocks now rather small; prefer areas of salt steppe, arable farmland and meadows, tending to favour more semi-arid country than Greater White-fronted. Vagrants in W Europe chiefly associate with flocks of latter.

GREYLAG GOOSE *Anser anser*

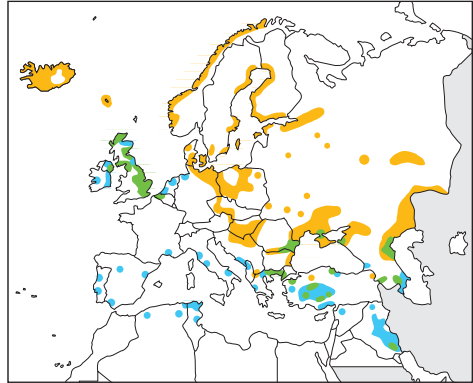
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L 75–90 cm, WS 150–180 cm.

IDENTIFICATION The most likely 'grey goose' to be seen in SW Europe or N Africa, and the only one likely to be found in Europe south of the Arctic region in summer (but beware injured 'grey geese' of other species which may oversummer on winter grounds). In some regions (e.g. Britain) has been reintroduced and occurs alongside feral Canada Geese (with which it sometimes hybridizes). Largest and bulkiest 'grey goose', with heavy head and bill, bulky body, and long and relatively thick neck. Legs and feet pink; bill orange or pink depending on race. Overall plumage coloration rather uniform greyish-brown, with head and neck not markedly darker (unlike other 'grey geese', which are typically darker in this area, at least on head). Sometimes a narrow white line present around base of bill. Pink leg coloration shared only by smaller Pink-footed, which has mostly dark bill, smaller and darker head and shorter neck. Juvenile Greater White-fronted and Lesser White-fronted lack white face and black belly patches of adults (so are more like Greylag), but they still differ in having orange legs and darker head and neck than Greylag. Confusion with other species unlikely. **In flight** the easiest 'grey goose' to identify owing to its strikingly pale grey forewing and light grey underwing coverts, which can appear almost whitish in bright light. This pattern is approached by Pink-footed, but latter is nowhere near so pale, especially on the underwing; additionally, Pink-footed has a shorter neck, markedly smaller bill, smaller, darker head and different call note. Typically, Greylag in flight shows a long thick neck and a chunky head (with massive bill), neither markedly darker than the body plumage, and lacks the obvious black belly marks of adults of the two white-fronted species.

SEX/AGE Juvenile much as adult, but lacks the indistinct spots on belly; upperpart pattern more scaly, as in other 'grey geese'. Does not acquire belly spots until second winter.

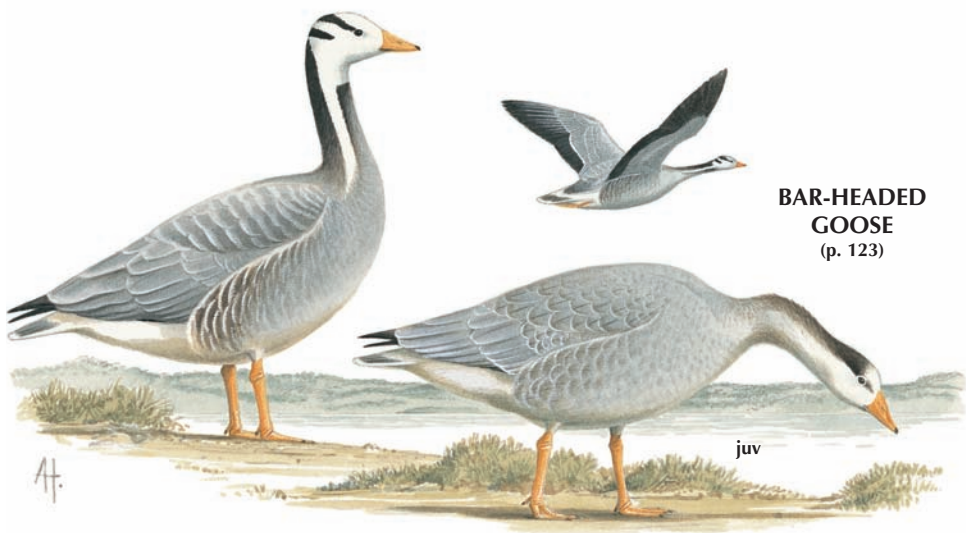
VOICE Familiar to all as the voice of the farmyard goose. Typical flight calls consist of a loud, ringing, honking series of notes, including a repeated deep



'aahng-ahng-ung'. Sounds deeper and more ringing than other 'grey geese'. Has several other more conversational notes.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 2 races (both illustrated), which intergrade in E Europe. Rather darker, more orange-billed nominate race is W European breeding form (although certain introduced populations, e.g. Belgium, are of eastern race). Race *rubrirostris* breeds from E Europe and Turkey eastwards; compared with nominate race, it is a distinctly paler bird with a wholly bright pink bill (although juveniles tend to have a yellowish tone to bill base, which is soon lost) and a pink eye-ring.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred France, Algeria.) Breeds in extensive wetland areas with adjacent moist grassland in open country, from the fringes of the tundra southwards. Winters in lowland farmland, by estuaries, reservoirs and lakes in open country. Reintroductions into parts of W Europe have allowed populations to become established about lakes, reservoirs and gravel pits.



**BAR-HEADED
GOOSE**
(p. 123)

juv

BAR-HEADED GOOSE *Anser indicus*

Plate page 122

L 71–76 cm, WS 140–160 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Introduction (natural breeding range high Central Asia). Adult is unmistakable, being light to medium grey with white head and neck contrasting with dark grey foreneck, black hindneck and two black transverse bands crossing rear of head. Bill and legs orange-yellow. Juvenile duller, recalling juvenile Snow Goose, but is greyer and has yellowish bill and legs.

SEX/AGE Juvenile closely resembles adult but is

duller, with grey crown and hindneck. Has yellowish (not orange-yellow) bill and legs.

VOICE Utters typical goose honking in flight, but rather slow, low-pitched and nasal in tone.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Hungary, European Russia). Popular in captivity, and not infrequently occurs as an escape. Feral breeding reported Germany, Czechoslovakia and probably Norway. Lakes and marshes, grazing in surrounding pasture.

SNOW GOOSE *Anser caerulescens*

Plate page 160

Blue Goose (dark morph)

L 65–84 cm, WS 135–170 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Occurs in two distinct colour morphs, white and dark (latter known as 'Blue Goose'), while intermediates are not uncommon. **White morph** adult is totally white, except for black primaries (partially concealed at rest by elongated tertials). Rusty staining is common on head and neck in N America, and presence of staining on a bird in our region may be indicative of wild origins. Bill and legs pink. Apart from very similar Ross's Goose, unlikely to be confused with any other goose. Occasional albino 'grey geese' occur, but these do not show neat black primaries or the elongated, pointed tertials of Snow. Juvenile white morph has pale greyish-brown upperparts, crown and nape, with paler face, sides and front of neck and underparts (contrasting somewhat with the greyish upperparts and black primaries). Bill and legs dusky. Confusable only with occasional leucistic 'grey geese', which differ in same way as for adults. **In flight** white morph almost unmistakable (but see Ross's), adults having pure white plumage contrasting with black primaries, juveniles showing similar contrast in spite of grey-brown wash on upperparts and wing coverts. **Dark morph** distinctive and unlikely to be confused: adult has white head and neck contrasting with dark grey of much of remainder of plumage; some birds are darker than others, but all are darkest on body, often showing

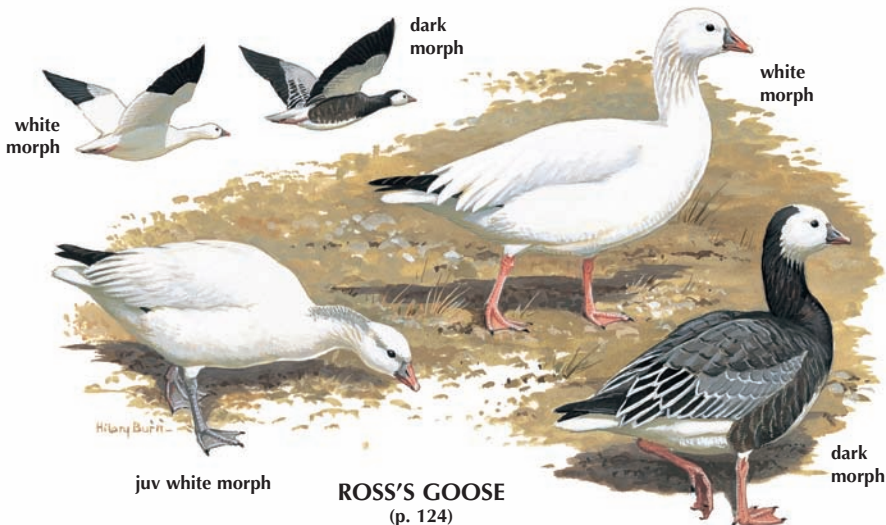
whitish undertail coverts; wing coverts paler grey. Bill and legs pink. Juvenile at first almost completely sooty-brown, with dusky bill and legs. **In flight** dark morph looks mainly dark, with contrasting paler grey wing coverts and pale rump and tail (adults also have white heads). Unlikely to be confused with other geese.

SEX/AGE Juvenile characters are discussed above.

VOICE As with all geese, very vocal. Flying birds call almost constantly, giving a hard, rather nasal and high-pitched cackling 'la-luk' or 'uh-uk', at distance not dissimilar to barking of small dog.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (nominate race illustrated). Differ chiefly in size. Nominate race, known as 'Lesser Snow Goose', is most frequently recorded, but some individuals of larger race *atlanticus*, known as 'Greater Snow Goose', also identified. Latter has a relatively heavier bill and the dark morph is very rare.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Europe, Azores). Owing to its popularity in collections, many of which have free-flying birds, most records are considered to be escapes, but genuine vagrants certainly occur, especially in Iceland and Ireland, often mixed with parties of Greater White-fronted Geese from Greenland. In natural range, breeds in tundra and winters in moist grasslands, open farmland, extensive wetlands.



ROSS'S GOOSE
(p. 124)

ROSS'S GOOSE *Anser rossii*

Plate page 123

L 53–66 cm, WS 120–130 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Closely resembles white morph of Snow Goose but is smaller, with short, deep-based, relatively tiny bill. Lacks Snow's prominent blackish 'grinning patch' along cutting edges of mandibles (having only narrow black cutting edges), but has indistinct bluish warty protuberances over base of bill, most obvious in old males (absent in juvenile and some adult females) and usually visible only at close range. Has smaller, more rounded head and shorter and thicker neck than

Snow, and relatively shorter, dumper body. Juvenile Ross's is much whiter overall than juvenile Snow.

SEX/AGE Juvenile closely resembles adult, but has weak greyish wash on hindneck and scapulars.

VOICE Much higher-pitched than Snow. In flight, a short, grunting 'kug' and a weak, cackling 'kek, ke-gak'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe), or perhaps only an escape from collections; reported occasionally among flocks of 'grey geese'. In natural range, habitats similar to Snow Goose.

CANADA GOOSE *Branta canadensis*

Plate page 159

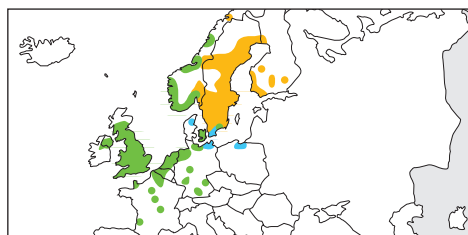
L 55–110 cm, WS 120–190 cm (in our region mainly L 90–100 cm, WS 160–175 cm).

IDENTIFICATION Introduction (natural breeding range northern N America) and genuine transatlantic vagrant. Typical Canada Geese encountered in our region are of the larger, pale-breasted type, although small individuals (which may be only half the size of largest birds) occasionally occur as escapes, deliberate introductions or perhaps as genuine vagrants. Despite the size variation, all are easily identified as Canada Geese by their combination of brown body plumage, black head and neck and extensive white facial patch. The brown body plumage contrasts with whitish breast in introduced European populations, but some of the smaller races are dark-breasted (see Geographical Variation). Barnacle Goose has black neck, but also has black breast, grey body, and white area on head so extensive that it appears almost white-headed at long range. **In flight** combination of brown body with black head and neck and white facial patch distinctive. Looks distinctly long-necked compared to other geese. Dark-breasted races can appear markedly dark, showing little contrast except with white ventral region and uppertail coverts.

SEX/AGE Ageing difficult, but young juveniles more irregularly and less distinctly pale-barred above, facial patch washed light brown, head and neck browner-black.

VOICE Very vocal, especially in flight. Typically utters a deep, almost musical, rolling honking 'ah-hank', repeated at varying pitches as the bird takes to the air. Smaller races have a distinctly different high-pitched yelping or cackling 'yelk, yelk, a-lick, a-lick'.

TAXONOMY/GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Complex. Differences between the various races are not clear-cut (indeed more than one species may be involved) and the feral European populations may derive from more than one form, although they most closely resemble the nominate race, which is large



and pale-breasted. Occasional individuals resembling the following races have been recorded, especially in Ireland and Iceland, suggesting that genuine vagrancy from N America takes place; race *interior*, rather smaller than nominate race and a little darker, with narrower feather fringes to upperparts; race *parvipes* ('Lesser Canada Goose'), small and pale-breasted; race *hutchinsii* ('Richardson's Goose'), smallest of the pale forms, with pale breast, short neck and small bill; race *minima* ('Cackling Goose'), very small and very dark in body colour, with dark breast, short neck (a thin white neck ring may be present) and tiny bill.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally fairly common. Open country, especially farmland and parkland with lakes, gravel pits and rivers. Feral populations well established in British Is, Norway, Sweden and Finland, and has bred Faeroes. Basically resident, but Swedish birds move south in winter, some as far as Germany and Netherlands. Vagrants reported from many European countries probably originate mostly from these feral populations, but some occurring in W Britain, Ireland and Iceland, often found among Greater White-fronted or Pink-footed Goose flocks from Greenland, believed to be genuine transatlantic vagrants.

BARNACLE GOOSE *Branta leucopsis*

Plate page 159

L 58–71 cm, WS 130–145 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Distinctive smaller goose; the black neck and breast, mostly white head, barred grey upperparts and very pale underparts render it unmistakable. Only Canada Goose shares black neck and white on face, but Canada has pale or brown (never black) breast, a narrow white facial patch and brown body plumage, and is typically much larger and longer-necked. Highly gregarious goose in winter, feeding in dense concentrations. **In flight** black neck and breast, mostly white head and pale underparts distinctive, even at quite long range; the pattern of the

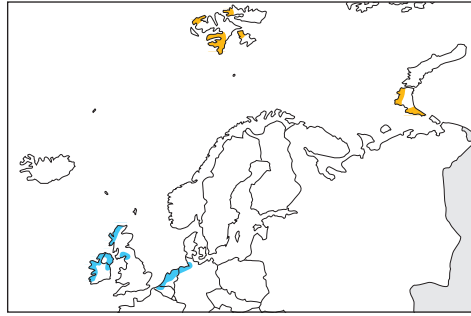
rear upperparts is similar to that of Canada Goose, with black rump and tail and white U on uppertail coverts. Wings longer and flight action slower than in Brent.

SEX/AGE Juvenile duller, with black of head and neck sullied with brown or grey, dark freckling on whitish head, upperparts tinged brownish (with duller pattern than in adult) and flanks washed buffish, lacking distinct whitish feather fringes.

VOICE Flocks are noisy. A high-pitched, chattering 'hogog, hogog' uttered almost constantly by grazing

flocks, interspersed with the occasional louder note. In flight, the noise continues, being rapidly repeated short, high, barking notes; at a distance, the sound of a flock recalls a pack of yelping dogs.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally abundant. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Iceland; probably escapes. Feral populations established in the Stockholm region, on Gotland and on the Estonian islands.) Breeds in coastal tundra of high Arctic, favouring cliffs, steep slopes and small islands. Winters on coastal pasture and grassy islands. Popular in captivity; birds away from normal areas of occurrence most likely to be escapes.



BRENT GOOSE *Branta bernicla*

Brant (N America); **Black Brant** (*B. b. nigricans*)

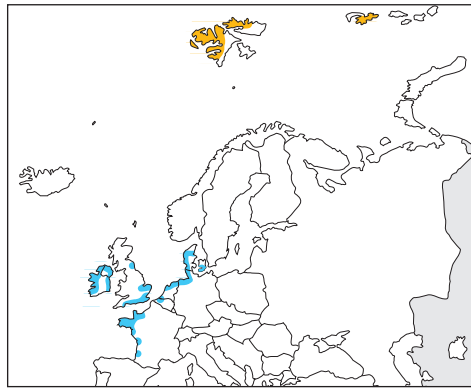
L 55–66 cm, WS 115–125 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A very dark, small, stocky goose that winters on estuaries and coastal pastures. The black head, neck and breast contrast only a little with the dull, dark grey-brown upperparts, and in the nominate race the overall dark plumage is relieved only by the strikingly white ventral region. At close range, a small white patch on the side of the upper neck is visible, although this is lacking in juveniles until midwinter. Found in large closely packed flocks on tidal mudflats and adjacent fields in winter, often associating with Eurasian Wigeon. Lone birds and small parties are often remarkably confiding. **In flight** a small, dark, short-necked goose with conspicuous white rear end, the black tail being almost hidden by the white uppertail coverts; pale flanks of pale-bellied race usually obvious in flight, contrasting with very dark underwing. Wings shorter and flight action faster, more duck-like, than in Barnacle.

SEX/AGE Juvenile has head, neck and breast duller, sullied brown, and lacks white neck patches; flanks more uniform and not so dark as adult (nominate race). Upperparts browner and not quite so dark, with more conspicuous lighter feather fringes forming transverse barring (which is particularly striking on upwinging coverts). Attains neck patches during first winter.

VOICE Typical call a low, rolling 'raunk, raunk', uttered both in flight and by feeding flocks.

TAXONOMY/GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 3 well-defined races (all illustrated). Nominate race (known as 'Dark-bellied Brent Goose'), breeding in W Siberia (wintering NW Europe), has dark dull brownish flanks. Race *hrota* ('Pale-bellied Brent Goose'), breeding from arctic Canada to Franz Josef Land (wintering Ireland, N Britain and Denmark), appears to have whitish flanks as broad whitish feather fringes obscure brown feather bases, although these may be visible on rear flanks. Juvenile has browner belly and flanks and is close to some individuals of



nominate race in appearance, but upperparts are lighter, more greyish-brown. Vagrant '**Black Brant**' (race *nigricans*), breeding from E Siberia to W Canada, is sometimes treated as a full species. Now recorded annually in NW Europe mixed with flocks of other two races, it is typically darker than nominate, with very dark belly and fore flanks; rear and upper flanks appear white because of broad white feather fringes which contrast very strongly with dark belly; in addition, white neck patches are more extensive, usually meeting on foreneck to form white collar. The underpart differences may be less obvious when swimming as dark belly hidden, but striking when on land.

STATUS/HABITAT Rather uncommon breeder in our region, but locally abundant in winter quarters. Breeds on low coastal tundra, with pools and small inlets, or on small islands. Away from breeding grounds, almost always found in coastal habitats: winters on tidal mud- and sandflats, saltmarsh and coastal grassland.

RED-BREASTED GOOSE *Branta ruficollis*

L 53–55 cm, WS 115–125 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Unmistakable little goose, with rounded head and tiny bill, breeding in W Siberian Arctic and wintering in southeast of our region. Gaudy plumage pattern can be surprisingly inconspicuous at long ranges, when can appear very black with contrasting white ventral region and flank stripe. When feeding head-on, the white breast band appears

almost to encircle body. The head and neck pattern is particularly inconspicuous at long range, but closer views reveal the chestnut-red foreneck, breast and sides of head, finely bordered with white. Confusion possible with Brent, especially of race *nigricans*, which also has contrasting white flanks with blackish belly, but Red-breasted is blacker, with narrower

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flank stripe, white rear belly and more extensive black tail (tail almost hidden by white undertail coverts in Brent). Highly gregarious in winter, often associating with Greater White-fronted Geese. Vagrants to W Europe usually encountered among flocks of Greater White-fronted Geese or 'Dark-bellied' Brent Geese. **In flight** small size, relatively short neck and mostly very black-looking plumage (contrasting with white ventral region and flank stripe) are the most obvious features. The colour and pattern of the head and neck are almost impossible to discern in flight.

SEX/AGE Juvenile a little duller, with black of plumage sullied brown, chestnut-red a little duller and white bordering lines on head and neck less clear-cut; chestnut-red patch at side of head smaller, sometimes almost absent (so producing extensive whitish patch on face). Has pale greyish tips to wing coverts, forming several diffuse lines across forewing, rather than two conspicuous white bands (formed by tips to greater and median coverts) of adult; tail with narrow whitish tip. Rear flanks less distinctly barred.



VOICE Typical flight call a repeated, jerky, squeaky, staccato 'kik-yoik, kik-yik'.

STATUS/HABITAT Winter visitor from W Siberian tundra breeding grounds. Highly localized but numerous in coastal Romania and adjacent Bulgaria. May not winter regularly in NE Greece. Until recently also wintered in good numbers in Caspian Sea lowlands, with some moving down into Iraq, but now rare in these regions. Open steppe and open rolling lowland hills, feeding among pasture, stubble and crops.

DUCKS

Sexes usually markedly distinct. Most have distinctive, brightly coloured male summer plumage, while all other plumages are dull. Adult males moult into an 'eclipse' (or winter) plumage, usually closely resembling adult female/juvenile, soon after breeding, remaining dull and dowdy until autumn or winter. Generally, males can be expected to be in 'eclipse' from June/July until October/November. Females also acquire an 'eclipse' (or winter) plumage, in many cases making them appear slightly different in overall coloration from when in summer plumage. Juveniles closely resemble adult females. Adult plumage is attained by beginning or at latest by end of first winter in most species; in a few (e.g. eiders), it is not acquired until the second winter.

The common 'wild duck' seen on so many village ponds or park lakes is the Mallard, and this species, together with its domesticated 'farmyard' forms, is so familiar that confusion of 'dabbling ducks' (see below) with any other bird family is highly unlikely. Diving ducks, in spite of their somewhat different outline, are similar enough to benefit from this immunity from misidentification.

Most duck genera fall clearly into one of two groups, 'Dabbling' or 'Diving'. Egyptian Goose (*Alopochen*), the two shelducks (*Tadorna*) and Spur-winged Goose (*Plectropterus*) are in fact very large, rather goose-like ducks that feed extensively on land or at the waterside and do not fall into either category. Marbled Duck (*Marmaronetta*) and Red-crested Pochard (*Netta*) are somewhat intermediate and behave more like dabbling ducks than other members of the diving duck group of genera, and so cannot be easily allocated to either category.

DABBLING DUCKS (*Anas*, *Nettapus* and *Aix*)

Members of these genera feed principally by dabbling on water surface, by up-ending in shallow water to feed on bottom or by grazing on land, and (with the exception of Northern Shoveler) do not often dive. Flight fast and agile, rising suddenly and easily from water surface with no foot-pattering.

DIVING DUCKS (*Aythya*, *Somateria*, *Polysticta*, *Histrionicus*, *Clangula*, *Melanitta*, *Bucephala*, *Mergus*, *Oxyura*)

Members of these genera feed principally by diving, and rise from the water by pattering along surface before becoming airborne. Generally, the flight is faster and more direct than in dabbling ducks. Some of these genera, especially *Somateria* and *Polysticta* (eiders), *Melanitta* (scoters), *Histrionicus* (Harlequin Duck) and *Clangula* (Long-tailed Duck), are essentially restricted to inshore marine waters outside the breeding season.

Within the duck group of species, identification problems are restricted mainly to females or the similar-looking juveniles or eclipse males. Because of the similarity of many of these 'female-type' plumages, observers should pay as much attention to overall shape and bare-part coloration as to plumage detail when identifying ducks in these plumages. Points to concentrate on are:

Overall coloration • Bare-part coloration • Shape (including tail shape, if unusual) • **Presence or absence of white on the belly • Wing pattern, including speculum** (in flight)

Eclipse males of some species can be distinguished from females if the wing pattern is seen, since they have much the same wing coloration throughout the year. Ageing 'female-type' ducks by plumage fea-

tures alone can be difficult owing to individual variation. The shape of the tips of the tail feathers is useful in the hand, although impossible to discern in the field under normal conditions. Juveniles have the tips of the tail feathers notched, with the bare feather shaft projecting. Adults have the tail tip complete, unless badly abraded (in which case, feather wear is obvious).

Many species of ducks do not form long-term pair-bonds. With such similar females, 'mistakes' can occur and the occasional wild hybrid results, particularly among the freshwater diving ducks of the genus *Aythya*. Male hybrids normally show obvious features of the parent species, but in some cases hybrids resemble quite a different species. Examples are hybrids between Chiloe Wigeon (frequent in collections) and Eurasian Wigeon which closely resemble vagrant American Wigeon, hybrids between Tufted Duck and Common Pochard which resemble vagrant Lesser Scaup, and hybrids between Mallard and Common Teal which can recall vagrant Baikal Teal. Hybridization is frequent in captivity, and such birds may escape. Apparent vagrants found in flocks of related ducks should be studied very carefully before arriving at a firm identification, and special care should be taken with birds that seem to be 'not quite right'. Female-type hybrids are often very difficult to isolate among the individually rather variable adult females, juveniles and eclipse males of the parent species, and are generally impossible to identify with any degree of certainty. Male hybrids in summer plumage are often striking. Those wishing to pursue the hybrid question further, especially within the genus *Aythya*, should consult the specialist literature.

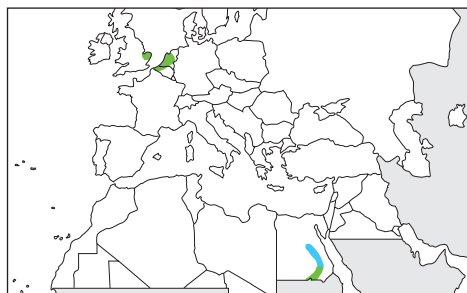
EGYPTIAN GOOSE *Alopochen aegyptiacus*

L 63–73 cm, WS 135–155 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Large, bulky shelduck-like bird of Egypt (and, as an introduction, W Europe), with markedly long, pink legs. Overall coloration buffish, with darker upperparts, paler head and with dark brown facial and belly patches and collar. White forewing often shows when at rest, as well as in flight. Confusion with other species unlikely when adult, but duller juvenile, lacking face and belly patches, but having dark crown and nape, recalls large, long-legged juvenile Common Shelduck, but is buffer below and has brown (rather than dark grey) upperparts. **In flight** goose-like shape and extensive white forewing above and below, contrasting with blackish flight feathers, are distinctive, but wing pattern is close to Ruddy Shelduck; latter less bulky, with uniform rusty-orange body coloration and slimmer, more pointed wings.

SEX/AGE Shows individual variation in upperpart colour from grey-brown to rufous-brown, with no apparent age or sexual significance. Juvenile duller than adult, lacking chocolate-coloured face and breast patches and collar; crown and hindneck dusky-brown, white of upperwing coverts sullied with greyish-brown and secondaries duller.

VOICE Social disputes provoke much calling from both sexes. Males utter a harsh, wheezy hiss. Females have a guttural, strident, almost braying cackle: 'honk-haah-haah-haah'.



STATUS/HABITAT Mainly restricted to sub-Saharan Africa, with natural range just extending to our region in Upper Egypt, where still quite common about Lake Nasser and adjacent Nile valley. Feral populations now well established in Britain and Netherlands. Common in captivity and frequently escapes, most individuals reported in Europe doubtless being of captive origin, although occasional winter records from Mediterranean region possibly refer to genuine vagrants. Freshwater lakes and rivers in open country; feral populations in NW Europe favour pastures adjoining lakes, particularly in parkland settings.

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RUDDY SHELDUCK *Tadorna ferruginea*

L 61–67 cm, WS 120–145 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Distinctive large, rusty-coloured, Common Shelduck-sized duck with paler head and black rear end. Usually met with in small parties in open steppe-like country, especially near water. Confusion normally highly unlikely, but in W Europe beware rather similar escapes of Cape Shelduck *T. cana* and female Paradise Shelduck *T. variegata*. Cape Shelduck has grey head, the females having conspicuous white facial patches, whereas female Paradise Shelduck has snowy-white head and neck and rich chestnut body coloration. Ruddy Shelduck head and neck coloration varies from pale buffish to tawny-buff, often with paler buff facial patches, but is never snowy-white. The body coloration may sometimes be

remarkably pale, almost yellowish-buff in worn plumage. **In flight** combination of rusty-orange or orange-buff body plumage contrasting with blackish flight feathers and tail and with conspicuous white upperwing and underwing coverts is distinctive (although both Cape and Paradise Shelducks have similar pattern). At long range could be confused with Egyptian Goose, which has similar wing pattern, but latter has paler, duller underparts (not the rich rusty-orange of Ruddy Shelduck), longer neck and broader, more rounded wings.

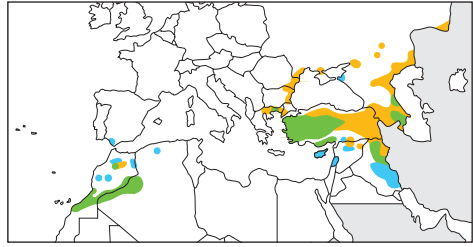
SEX/AGE Depth of body coloration rather variable; ageing and sexing of some individuals problematic. Adult males usually show distinct narrow blackish

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collar around base of neck in summer plumage. Compared with male, adult female lacks neck-collar and has head and neck buffer, with contrasting whitish facial patch. Juvenile duller: whole plumage tinged with greyish-brown, with dark grey-brown on crown, hindneck, mantle and scapulars (latter have diffuse rufous tips).

VOICE Quite vocal, both when at rest and on the wing, winter flocks being especially noisy. Usual calls a honking 'aakh' or 'ah-onk', rather variable in delivery and recalling a weaker, more nasal version of Canada Goose's call, and a rolling, gurgling 'chorr'. Often gives a repeated abrupt, trumpeting 'pok-pok-pok-pok' before taking to the wing.

STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Tunisia.) Breeds in open country, particularly by rivers and lakes in open steppe and dry upland plateaus. Winters by lakes,



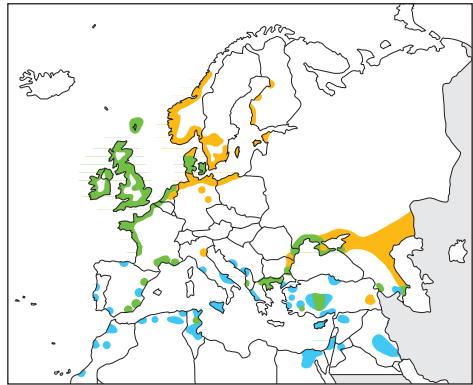
reservoirs and slow-flowing rivers in lowland districts, generally avoiding coastal waters. Vagrants reported from many European countries, but owing to decline of wild populations, and popularity in collections, most, if not all, of these in recent decades refer to escapes from captivity.

COMMON SHELDUCK *Tadorna tadorna* Shelduck

L 58–67 cm, WS 110–135 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Distinctive large black and white duck of tidal flats and saline lakes. Size of a small goose. The most obvious features are the green-black head and upper neck, rusty breast band (which encircles the forepart of the body) and deep red bill. Unlikely to be confused with any other species, although juvenile and eclipse individuals are confusingly different from summer adults, lacking the breast band and showing extensive grey in the upperparts; the bill and legs of young juvenile may also be distinctly greyish and there is a conspicuous white trailing edge to the wing. Both Red-breasted Merganser and Goosander are longer-bodied diving ducks (awkward on land and rarely seen away from water's edge), with very long, slender bills and more or less distinct head tufts; the latter also lacks a breast band. See also juvenile Egyptian Goose. Arrives during late winter and early spring on breeding grounds, where pairs disperse to look for suitable breeding holes, often wandering far from water to locate suitable nest sites. After breeding, almost all adults depart for moulting grounds, leaving still flightless broods in crèches in the care of one or more adults.

SEX/AGE Summer male has enlarged swollen knob at base of bill, whereas female lacks knob and has duller bill colour, whitish facial mottling and narrower rusty breast band. In eclipse plumage duller overall, with less distinct breast band and with upperparts washed greyish. Some eclipse females difficult to separate from juveniles, except by wing pattern. Juvenile still duller, completely lacking breast band, and with whitish forehead, cheeks and foreneck; dark areas of head distinctly grey-brown rather than blackish, flanks and



most of upperparts greyish-brown, upperwing coverts sullied greyish and secondaries and inner primaries conspicuously tipped white.

VOICE Quite vocal by breeding waters in late winter and spring, otherwise relatively silent. Sexes quite different: male utters low, thin whistling cries, whereas female has rapid chattering 'gag-ag-ag-ag-ag'.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. Moulting concentrations often enormous; famous gathering in German Waddenzee reaches some 100,000 birds and includes most of NW European population. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Sardinia, Jordan.) Estuaries and shallow coasts, both muddy and sandy, and shores of saline and brackish lakes in open steppe-like country.

SPUR-WINGED GOOSE *Plectropterus gambensis*

L 75–100 cm, WS 160–180 cm.

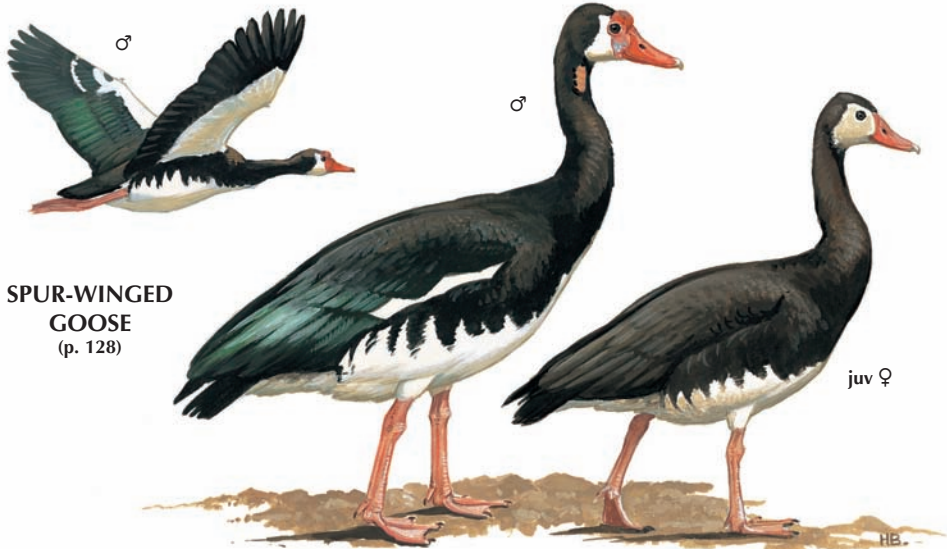
IDENTIFICATION Vagrant from sub-Saharan Africa. Unmistakable large, long-legged, black and white goose-like bird of watersides, with white extending over most of underparts, including foreneck and head, and pinkish-red bill and legs. Duller and browner juveniles are still unmistakable, sharing adult plumage pattern and distinctive size and shape. **In flight** huge size, long, heavy head and neck, broad well-fingered wings and black and white plumage pattern distinct-

tive. The white leading edge to wing coverts is often striking against darkness of rest of upperparts, and the white underwing coverts contrast with black flight feathers. Egyptian Goose also has white upperwing and underwing coverts, but has much more white on upperwing and lacks contrasting pied body, head and neck pattern. Flight action slow and laboured, with relatively shallow wingbeats.

SEX/AGE Sexes similar in plumage, but female much

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**SPUR-WINGED
GOOSE**
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smaller and less iridescent, with less white on upper forewing; lacks prominent knob on forehead. Juvenile duller and greyer, with brown feather fringes; white areas (including face) sullied buffish-brown. (Face is bare in adults, feathered in juvenile.) Cranial knob and fully bare face may take some time to develop, and young males take some time to reach full size, so

accurate sexing not always possible.

VOICE Relatively silent. Typical call, uttered only by male, a soft bubbling 'cherwit' when taking to wing or when alarmed.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Egypt, Morocco). In natural range, favours freshwater marshes, lakes and rivers in open country.

COTTON PYGMY-GOOSE *Nettapus coromandelianus*

Plate below

Cotton Teal

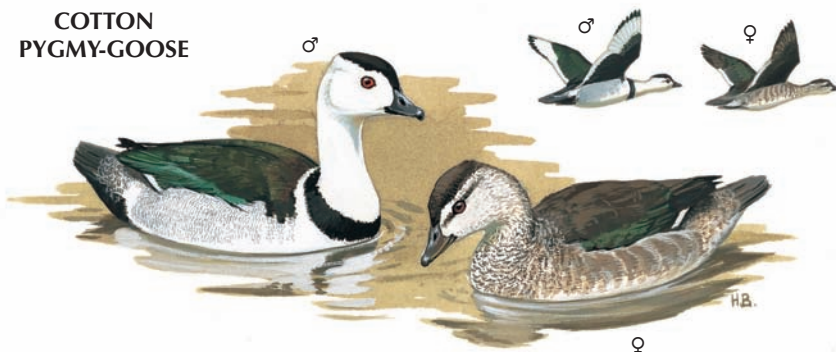
L 30–35 cm, WS 53–60 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Vagrant (breeds from S Asia to Australia). A tiny duck of freshwater marshes. **Adult male summer** is unmistakable, having white head, neck and underparts contrasting with glossy blackish upperparts and dark centre to crown and hindneck. **Adult female, eclipse male and juvenile** duller and browner and have head, neck and underparts washed with greyish-brown (although still look pale on head and neck), and a narrow dark line through the eye. **In flight** the upperwing and underwing patterns are similar, although different in each sex. Gleaming

white head and neck and underparts of the male contrast with its dark upperparts; also has huge white wing band which extends along full length of primaries and secondaries, being broadest on primaries. Female conspicuously different, with largely dull brownish upperparts with narrow white trailing edge to the secondaries.

SEX/AGE Eclipse male resembles adult female, but upperparts darker, face and foreneck whiter and retains male wing pattern. Juvenile differs from adult female in having broader eye-stripe and lacks any

COTTON PYGMY-GOOSE



green gloss to upperparts. Young males show extensive white in wing even from an early age.

VOICE Typical call of male a sharp, staccato cackle, 'car-car-carawak' or 'quack, quack-quackyduck',

uttered chiefly in flight. Females utter a weak quack.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Middle East). In natural range, favours freshwater lakes and pools with emergent and floating vegetation.

WOOD DUCK *Aix sponsa*

Carolina Duck

L 43–51 cm, WS 70–76 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant and also deliberate introduction from N America. **Summer male** unmistakable, with its iridescent dark plumage, intricate white facial and throat markings, white vertical breast stripe, buff flanks, ruddy breast, and distinctive shape created by prominent long and broad tail and sleek, downward-arching crest. The red eye and orange and white bill are also conspicuous. Despite this striking pattern, can be surprisingly well camouflaged when sitting on dappled water, or under shade of overhanging branches. Compare also with vagrant male Baikal Teal. **Female, eclipse male and juvenile** all resemble those of Mandarin Duck (q.v.). **In flight** the overall appearance is of a broad-tailed dark duck with contrasting white belly and narrow white trailing edge to secondaries, both upperwing and underwing otherwise appearing dark. Male head and neck pattern may be apparent in flight at medium range, especially white throat, but in 'female-type' plumages only marginally separable from flying Mandarin Duck by darker upperparts and broader white eye patch. Springs up, teal-like, from water when flushed.

SEX/AGE Eclipse male resembles adult female, but retains coloured bill and vestiges of throat and facial pattern. Juvenile resembles adult female, but duller, with eye patch ill-defined (however, eclipse female



similarly duller); underparts less mottled, more streaked with pale buffish, with centre of underparts less clearly whitish, being mottled and streaked brownish.

VOICE Relatively silent. When flushed, female utters a drawn-out, rising squeal, 'oo-eek'. Male has a thin, high, rising 'jeeeeee'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Iceland, Azores). Genuine vagrants suspected in W Europe proper, but popularity in collections and frequency of escapes makes record assessment difficult. Attempts at establishing feral populations in Europe (e.g. Britain, Germany) not very successful. In natural range, freshwater ponds, lakes and slow-flowing rivers in well-wooded country. In winter, may be found in more open marshes and lake-sides.

MANDARIN DUCK *Aix galericulata*

Mandarin

L 41–49 cm, WS 68–74 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Introduction from NE Asia. Medium-sized duck of lakes and rivers in wooded districts. **Summer male** unmistakable, with large, almost 'maned' head, conspicuous orange 'sails', whitish head band and red bill. **Female, eclipse male and juvenile** superficially resemble those of Wood Duck, but Mandarin is paler and greyer overall, with fine hair-like striations on sides of head and neck; Wood is darker on head and upperparts than Mandarin, with distinctly glossy wing coverts. In Mandarin, the eye patch is narrower, merely an eye-ring rather than a patch, with a narrow white line extending backwards from it towards nape; some Woods, however, can have a very restricted eye patch, with indications of such an eye-stripe, but in Wood head is darker overall, which highlights the prominence of its eye patch. Mandarin has a pale nail at the tip of the bill (blackish in Wood). Mandarin has glossy greenish-blue speculum but dull brown upperwing coverts; in Wood, speculum is more bluish-purple, the gloss extending to cover the greater and median coverts. Additionally, Mandarin has plain upperwing coverts, but these have indistinct black tips in Wood. Finer points of distinction include the relatively shorter legs and longer body, more sloping forehead, and more V-shaped junction of feathering and skin at base of bill of Wood. Confusion with other species is unlikely, although distant males moulting out of eclipse in autumn can show an overall greyish-brown appearance, with prominent white band on sides of



head behind eye that can suggest Garganey. **In flight** a medium-sized duck with clear whitish belly and uniformly dark upperwings and underwings, with contrasting white trailing edge to secondaries. Head pattern of male, with very pale sides of head and dark crown, may be prominent in flight, but the 'sails' are depressed along base of wing, not carried erect. Females very similar to those of Wood and not always safely distinguishable, although underwing uniformly darker and upperparts a little paler in Mandarin. Given a good view, it may be possible to discern the narrow white eye-ring and eye-stripe (instead of the larger eye patch of Wood). Size and prominent white belly may suggest female Eurasian Wigeon, but Mandarin Duck has stockier head and neck and broad, square tail, more uniform upperwings and underwings and white trailing edge to secondaries.

SEX/AGE Eclipse male resembles adult female, but retains red bill. Juvenile resembles adult female but

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duller, with less distinct facial pattern (but this also more indistinct in eclipse female), and underparts more streaked, less spotted; whitish belly has small dark streaks and spots.

VOICE Relatively silent, except when displaying. Male has several short whistling calls in display, and sometimes gives a brief, sharp, whistled 'hwick' in flight. Female has several low, clucking notes, rarely

given unless attending young or in display.

STATUS/HABITAT Feral population in Britain now well established (chiefly S England). Popular in captivity and frequently escapes, so records elsewhere in our region may well not refer to genuine vagrants. Lakes and pools in extensive parks or among farmland with adjacent broadleaved woodlands, water meadows; rarely visits estuaries.

EURASIAN WIGEON *Anas penelope*

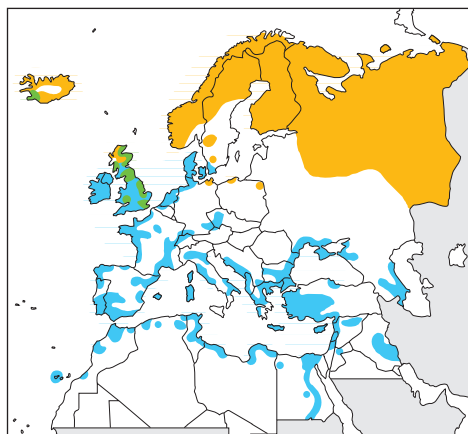
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Wigeon

L 45–51 cm, WS 75–86 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Medium-sized duck with relatively steep forecrown, pointed tail and small grey, black-tipped bill and blackish legs. **Adult male summer** distinctive with its combination of chestnut head, pinkish breast, greyish body and black and white ventral region; the white patch on wing coverts often show when at rest, and at close quarters the yellowish forehead and crown centre may be visible, being most easily seen when bird viewed head-on. **Eclipse male** is rich reddish-chestnut with contrasting white belly and forewing patch. **Adult female and juvenile** rather variable, ranging from greyish-brown to rufous brown with contrasting clear whitish belly; although finely mottled, they appear almost unmarked on the body compared with most other *Anas* ducks. The combination of relatively unmarked brownish body plumage, whitish belly, stocky shape, short bill, steep forehead and pointed tail are shared only by very similar vagrant American Wigeon (q.v.). When standing at waterside, the white belly is very conspicuous compared with most other dabbling ducks. Winter flocks often on estuarine mudflats or grazing waterside grasslands in closely packed congregations. **In flight** appears as a medium-sized duck, with slightly bulbous head, narrow 'waisted' neck and sharply pointed tail and wingtips. Adult males easily distinguished by striking white forewing patch and belly. Females are brownish ducks with contrasting clear whitish bellies and greyish-brown forewings that are slightly paler than flight feathers. Often a narrow whitish line formed by pale tertial edges is apparent at the base of the wing. In all plumages, there is no obvious white trailing edge to secondaries, unlike many *Anas*, and the underwing is pale greyish, with darker flight feathers and leading edge.

SEX/AGE Eclipse male rich chestnut with white forewing patch and belly. Juvenile closely resembles adult female, but white of belly weakly mottled dusky and lesser and median coverts drabber, lacking clear whitish edges. Speculum usually dull brown in juvenile female, but more blackish and glossy in male (so



similar to adult female). By first winter young male as adult male summer, but forewing grey-brown, without large white patch. Some 1st-summer males retain brownish forewing.

VOICE The clear, piercing, whistling 'wheoooo' of the males, freely uttered both in flight and when on the water, is one of the most evocative bird sounds of our region. Also a more subdued 'whut-whittoo'. Female has a low, growling, Common Goldeneye-like 'krrr' or 'karr', often given when flushed.

STATUS/HABITAT Common (locally huge concentrations in winter quarters). (In addition to mapped range, has bred Faeroes, Ireland, Netherlands, Denmark, Czechoslovakia, Italy, Romania.) Breeds by small lakes and marshes in both open and sparsely wooded country, generally avoiding open tundra, densely forested and mountainous country. Winter haunts chiefly estuaries, estuarine grasslands and seasonally flooded water meadows; locally or in smaller numbers by freshwater lakes and in coastal bays.

AMERICAN WIGEON *Anas americana*

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Baldpate

L 46–53 cm, WS 76–89 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant, usually encountered among flocks of Eurasian Wigeon. Averages slightly larger, longer-necked, longer-billed and longer-tailed than Eurasian, but basically very similar in size and structure. **Adult male summer** distinctive, having whitish forehead and crown centre and dark green band extending back from eye over sides of head; rest of head and neck greyish-white, intensely freckled with dark mottling. In the field, head and neck appears greyish, with dark eye band and white

crown. Breast and flanks pinkish-brown, contrasting with white and black ventral region and clear whitish belly. Upperparts brownish with white wing coverts. Male unlikely to be confused with male Eurasian, but, when identifying vagrants, occasional escaped hybrids between Eurasian and ornamental Chiloe Wigeon *A. sibilatrix* should be considered, as such birds have caused confusion in recent years. Although superficially close to American, the hybrids tend to have a whitish front that ends squarely on the upper forehead

and does not taper to a point on rear crown or nape; the dark green of the sides of the head is more extensive, covering most of sides of head and neck. Whether it would be possible to separate female-type hybrids is not known. **Adult female, eclipse male and juvenile** are superficially close to corresponding plumages of Eurasian and vagrant individuals are difficult to pick out from among flocks of latter; plumage tends, however, to show a quite striking contrast between the very greyish head, neck and upperparts and the distinctly bright, clear rusty-rufous flanks, and often breast, in this species. Unfortunately, female Eurasian is very variable and overall coloration of some individuals can approach American, although they lack such strong contrast. Having located a suspected American, close attention to detail of head and wing markings is essential to confirm the identification. The subtle differences in shape between the two species are not always apparent, but may be marked in young males, (note that juvenile males are slightly larger than females in both species). The colour of the axillaries and central underwing coverts is diagnostic: clear white in American, and whitish but closely marked with grey, appearing light grey, in Eurasian. Establishing this is difficult unless bird flaps its wings, preferably repeatedly, or if a good view is obtained as the bird rises from the water or ground (but note that, in bright sunlight the central underwing of Eurasian can look markedly whitish). The forecrown and sides of head tend to be paler and the eye patch darker in American, creating a more striking dark eye patch, but Eurasian often shows a concentration of dark mottles about eye that can, in some light conditions, create the impression of a dark patch. The mottling on the head and neck of American is densest on the rear and sides of head and neck, making front of head and foreneck appear paler; in Eurasian, more evenly patterned. In late winter and spring American has whitish edges to exposed tertials; these are narrower and buffer in Eurasian for most of year, but in autumn and early winter these fringes are also distinctly whitish. Careful observation of the folded wing should reveal the wide, whitish fringes to the median coverts and whitish outer webs to the greater coverts of American (present in adult female, juvenile male and some juvenile females), showing as a distinct pale panel midway along the wing. The wing appears more or

less plain brown in most female Eurasian, apart from a darker speculum, but beware occasional juveniles with broader white fringes to greater coverts. Eclipse male distinctly greyer on head and neck than eclipse male Eurasian. 1st-winter male may show a narrow black line around very base of bill, lacking in Eurasian. Although these differences seem rather subtle and separation both daunting and tedious, many Americans do appear distinctly different when found in a flock of Eurasian. Confusion with other species unlikely, although combination of greyish head and neck and warmer brown body plumage can be suggested by juvenile Gadwall (q.v.), but this has different bill and leg coloration. **In flight** overall shape, structure and striking white belly much as Eurasian but in both sexes white axillaries and central underwing offer stronger contrast with darker leading edge and flight feathers than in Eurasian. In male, white upper forewing is a little less extensive than in male Eurasian, but still very obvious. Adult female upperwing paler than in female Eurasian, with wider whitish edges to greater coverts forming a distinctly whitish panel across central upperwing. Similar pattern seen in juvenile male, but only in some juvenile females (most showing greater covert pattern more like Eurasian).

SEX/AGE Female less variable than female Eurasian. Eclipse male differs from adult female in having breast and flanks richer and darker rufous; retains summer-male wing pattern with large white patches on wing coverts and more contrasting tertials (with black outer webs with white edges). Juvenile similar to adult female, but duller and darker on the breast and speculum dull and brown, especially in female. Juvenile male has wide whitish edges to greater coverts (narrow in most juvenile females). Like Eurasian, retains juvenile wing until at least first summer.

VOICE Similar to that of Eurasian Wigeon, but characteristic whistle of male more throaty and a little weaker and less piercing. Sounds more disyllabic; 'wheooo-wo'.

HYBRIDS Apparent hybrids between this species and Eurasian Wigeon have been reported, showing intermediate characters.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe, Azores, Canary Is, NW Africa; has bred Iceland). In natural range, habitat as Eurasian Wigeon. Usually encountered in our region among flocks of that species.

FALCATED DUCK *Anas falcata*

Falcated Teal

L 48–54 cm, WS 76–82 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Asian vagrant. Rather heavily built, Gadwall-sized dabbling duck with relatively bulky body, rounded crown, slender bill and short tail. **Adult male summer** unmistakable: grey body, large dark head showing green and bronze iridescence, full nape (creating lobed appearance to back of head), buff and black undertail coverts, white throat and elongated, strongly arched, sickle-shaped (i.e. falcated) tertials all contributing to a unique appearance. The white throat can be hard to see when neck retracted and tertials often obscure buffy yellow patch on side of undertail coverts, frequently making distant birds less distinctive, appearing grey with darker head. **Adult female, eclipse male and juvenile** drab brown and easily confused with other female-type *Anas*, but rather long, dark grey bill, full nape feathering (hinting at summer male's crest) and relatively short, heavy, buoyant body combine to produce a fairly distinctive shape. The head and neck lack strong pattern, being uniformly

and intensely mottled with dark freckles on a greyish background, and are slightly darker than and contrasting with the warmer brown coloration of the body. The upperparts are dark, with narrow brown feather fringes, while the underparts show prominent dark V-shaped subterminal marks to the feathers. Apart from a pale buff line along sides of tail, the rear end is almost uniform with the rest of the body. When out of the water, shows dark grey legs and paler buffish belly. Gadwall has clear whitish belly, yellowish legs, orange on sides of bill (usually) and darker crown and eye-stripe (creating more obvious facial patterning). Beware eclipse male Gadwall, which can have all-grey bill. Eurasian and American Wigeons have clear white belly, shorter bill (with prominent black tip), few markings on flanks and paler ventral region. Northern Pintail is much more slender, with longer rear end and neck, and paler head and neck, but has greyish legs and bill like Falcated. Usually has head browner than

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body, the reverse of Falcated. Confusion with other female ducks unlikely. **In flight** a medium-sized, rather short-necked, bulky-bodied dabbling duck. Male is distinctive and appears grey with dark head, rump and tail, but white throat and buff and black on undertail coverts visible when overhead; underwing very pale, with greyer flight feathers, and upperwing grey, with darker primaries and blackish, green-glossed secondaries with prominent white band along base. Female in flight has uniformly dark body coloration, with slightly paler belly centre, and shares striking pale underwing of male; upperwing coverts greyish-brown, only slightly paler than primaries, secondaries very dark with whitish band along base. Female wing pattern suggests Eurasian Wigeon, but underwing much paler and belly duller, not stunningly white as Eurasian Wigeon. Female Gadwall has similar underwing but has whiter belly, while upperwing shows small white patch near body on inner secondaries (remainder of secondaries drab), which is easy to overlook; lacks extensive blackish secondaries of Falcated and whitish central wing band.

SEX/AGE Eclipse male differs from adult female in

having upperparts, crown and hindneck darker; upperwing as summer, but with tertials shorter and much straighter (although longer than in adult female, with broader pale grey fringes). Juvenile resembles adult female, but whole plumage buffier, with shorter, blunter tertials; scapulars merely fringed light buff, generally lacking pale subterminal marks of adult female, and tips to greater coverts duller and greyer. Forehead and crown uniformly dark (heavily streaked in adult female). Breast more spotted, with less obvious crescentic markings than adult female. Young male shows greyer forewing than female and tertials similar to those of eclipse male, although shorter. Becomes much as adult by first winter, but retains shorter, blunter tertials until first summer and has browner, less clean grey, upperwing coverts.

VOICE Relatively silent, but males have a short low whistle followed by a wavering 'uit-trr'. Females utter a hoarse, gruff quack.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Europe, Middle East). Popular in captivity, so many records from within our region may well be escapes from collections. In natural range, favours lowland rivers, lakes and flooded meadows.

GADWALL *Anas strepera*

L 46–56 cm, WS 84–95 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Medium-sized dabbling duck, between Mallard and Eurasian Wigeon in size and structure. Smaller and more slightly built than Mallard, with more slender bill. The orange-yellow legs and white patch at base of secondaries are present in all plumages, although the latter is most obvious in males.

Adult male summer appears dark grey, with blackish bill, browner head and distinctive black 'rear end', lacking any white on rear body but often showing a white speculum patch when at rest. Although not particularly striking, this plumage combination makes Gadwall quite unmistakable. **Adult female, eclipse male and juvenile** are closer to Mallard, but are smaller and more delicate in structure, with more sloping forehead and slightly flatter crown. The dark bill has orange sides (rarely similar in Mallard, which normally has orange subterminal area and bill base). Gadwall has a clean whitish belly (merely a little paler in Mallard). The overall tone of the body coloration is a little duller than in Mallard, and the markings along the flanks are rounder, less pointed; the head is plainer, with a less obvious dark eye-stripe and crown. The white speculum patch, although smaller in females, often shows when on the water. See also vagrant Falcated Duck. **In flight** a fairly large dabbling duck with clear whitish underwing and belly in all plumages. Rather slimmer than Mallard, with relatively narrower-based wings. Upperwing of male shows conspicuous white patch on inner secondaries, but is otherwise distinctively dark and uniform. Adult female has smaller white patch on inner secondaries, and juvenile female has it so obscure that it is easy to overlook. Apart from this feature, female and juvenile distinguished from Eurasian Wigeon by largely drab secondaries (secondaries drab also in juvenile Eurasian Wigeon), more uniform brown upperwing, Mallard-like head with dark eye-stripe, rounded (not pointed) tail and evenly whitish underwing. Typically met with in small parties, freely mixing with other dabbling ducks; often keeps close to edge of extensive emergent vegetation.

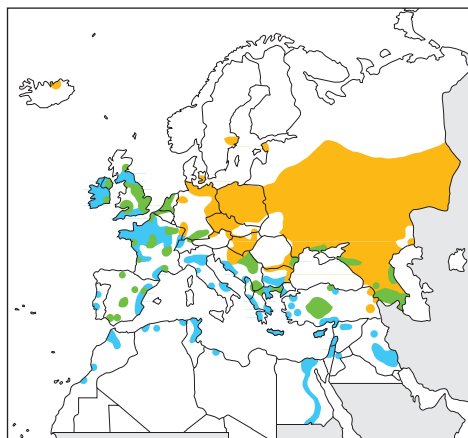
SEX/AGE Eclipse male recalls adult female, but retains summer-male wing; upperparts greyer, less heavily

marked than female, usually with less extensive orange on bill. Juvenile has yellower sides of bill than female and overall plumage brighter, with greyer sides of head and neck and brighter buffish fringes to body feathers giving more contrast between head and neck and body; body markings more streaked and spotted, less scalloped. Upperwing of young males resembles adult female, with more restricted chestnut and white than when adult; upperwing of juvenile female very dull, with no black or chestnut, and white very restricted and suffused with brownish.

VOICE Relatively silent except when displaying in courting parties. Males utter a short 'nheck' and a low whistle. Female utters a repeated 'gag-ag-ag-ag', not dissimilar to that of Mallard but higher in pitch.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Norway, Switzerland, Italy, Algeria.) Favoured haunts are lowland freshwater lakes and marshes with extensive fringing vegetation in open country. Locally also on estuaries, rarely shallow coastal waters, in winter.

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BAIKAL TEAL *Anas formosa*

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L 39–43 cm, WS 65–75 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Asian vagrant. A small dabbling duck but appreciably larger than Common Teal, with longer, broader bill and relatively longer primaries. **Adult male summer** unmistakable with its striking facial pattern, defying brief description, of green, black, buff and white stripes, bands and patches. Pinkish breast contrasts a little with greyish body, being separated by a white vertical breast band and highlighted by elongated, pointed, cream- and black-edged scapulars. **Adult female, eclipse male and juvenile** confusable with other small dabbling ducks, but closest to Common Teal. Female Baikal is larger and has very prominent circular whitish spot on lore (although female Blue-winged Teal and some Common Teals have a similar lore spot, it is never so clear as on Baikal in which spot is framed by darker surround). Like Common, Baikal has a clear pale buff line along sides of tail, not normally shown by other small dabbling ducks. Baikal is a richer, more rufous-brown in colour than Common and has a clear whitish belly (as has female Garganey) and a stronger head pattern, with blackish crown and eye-stripe and sometimes a dusky vertical band across sides of head, although an indication of this can also be shown by some Common. Unlike Garganey, which has prominent dark eye-stripe and pale supercilium, in Baikal the eye-stripe is apparent only behind the eye, and the supercilium is narrow and rather indistinct, being almost broken above the eye by the dusky crown coming down towards eye level. Most female-type Garganeys also have pale stripe below eye-stripe which extends from bill to ear-coverts and which is bordered by a dark stripe below, and thus have much more 'striped' facial appearance than Baikal. Throat is usually whiter and a pale stripe often extends upwards to the area below and behind the eye. Common Teal

usually shows orange or yellowish at bottom of bill base, while bill of Baikal is entirely dark grey, like Garganey, but noticeably finer than that of latter. **In flight** wing pattern resembles that of Common Teal, quickly dispelling confusion with other similar-sized dabbling ducks. Baikal is distinctly larger than Common on the wing, and rusty central band on upperwing is a distinctive difference in adults: upperwing shows a dark green speculum, with a rusty band (whiter in juveniles) along greater coverts and conspicuous white trailing edge; underwing resembles that of Common, being whitish in centre with dusky leading edge and greyish-brown flight feathers, but the dark leading edge to the underwing is blacker and more striking than in Common.

SEX/AGE In fresh plumage, summer male has facial pattern slightly dulled by buffish feather tips. Eclipse male resembles adult female, but is a little darker and more rufous overall, with less pronounced facial pattern (pale lore spot often less distinct) and whitish of belly somewhat mottled dusky. Long, cream-edged scapulars may also be present. Juvenile facial pattern less defined than in adult female, with lore spot buffier and less distinct; centre of underparts mottled, less clearly white, brown of underparts less rufous, more dull brown and upperparts with greyish-brown feather fringes and tips of greater coverts paler, less rusty.

VOICE Call of male, often incessantly uttered from flocks on water and in flight (especially in spring), a deep chuckling 'wot-wot-wot'. Females have a low quack.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Europe), but some records may refer to escapes from captivity. In natural range, found in variety of freshwater and brackish-water habitats from lowland lakes, flooded fields, meadows and slow rivers to estuarine marshes.

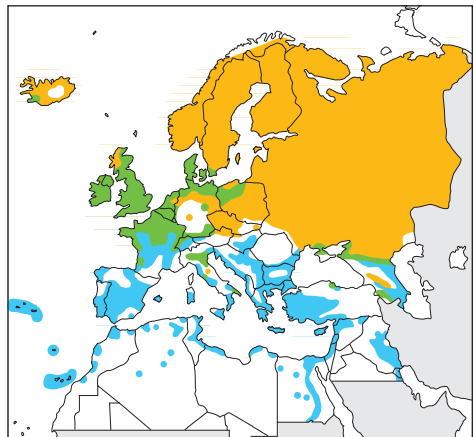
COMMON TEAL *Anas crecca*

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Teal; Green-winged Teal (N America)

L 34–38 cm, WS 58–64 cm.

IDENTIFICATION The most widespread and numerous small dabbling duck of our region. **Adult male summer** is distinctive and unlikely to be confused: appears grey, with dark head and a white stripe along either side of the upperparts; the buffish undertail coverts may also be quite or very conspicuous. The white back stripes vary in prominence according to the position of the feathers. Closer inspection reveals a dark chestnut head, with a broad metallic green band, margined narrowly with buff, running back from the eye (and often looking black in poor light). **Adult female, eclipse male and juvenile** are small ducks with brownish, mottled plumage typical of the genus and rather featureless (especially on face) in comparison with other small dabbling ducks. The ill-defined whitish belly and narrow buffish line along sides of undertail coverts are useful pointers, as is the bright green speculum (normally visible). Head pattern shows dark crown and eye-stripe, some birds having a very indistinct pale lore spot. The grey bill shows indistinct pinkish (or yellowish-orange) area at very base, and the culmen is very slightly concave. These features help to separate Teal from females of Garganey and vagrant Blue-winged Teal and Baikal Teal (q.v.). **In flight** distinguished by tiny size and fast flight; flocks are tightly packed, rapidly twisting and turning. Shows sharply pointed wings and short neck



and tail. Upperwing grey-brown, with darker primaries, green speculum (with white trailing edge) and short but broad, pale buff or whitish bar at base of speculum (narrower in female); from below, shows whitish belly and centre of underwing, the latter hav-

ing a darker band along lesser coverts. Note that the wing pattern is rather similar in larger Baikal Teal, and Garganey has similar underwing. Upperwing darker overall than in female or juvenile Garganey, and pale bar on greater coverts is broader than pale trailing edge to speculum (pattern reversed in Garganey).

SEX/AGE Eclipse male close to adult female, but rather darker above and with less distinct eye-stripe and less distinct spotting below. Juvenile has belly more spotted than adult female and sometimes shows hint of dark bar on cheek, although not so clear as on Garganey. Owing to individual variation, ageing difficult in the field.

VOICE Quite vocal, males having a very distinctive, soft, liquid, high-pitched, cricket-like 'preep-preep' which is surprisingly far-carrying. Females are relatively silent, but utter a sharp, high, nasal 'quack' when suddenly flushed.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 2 races (both illustrated). Race *carolinensis* from N America, known as 'Green-winged Teal', a vagrant to W Europe and Morocco, is basically similar to nominate race, but adult male summer differs in having a conspicuous vertical white stripe on each side of breast and in

lacking white line along each side of upperparts. Closer views would reveal lack of buff borders to most of dark green head band, although this border is weakly indicated on lower edge of band. Additionally, the breast coloration tends to be a little richer (brighter buff) and the tips of the greater coverts are buff. Beware nominate race with white scapular stripe partially, or completely, concealed by feathers (a common occurrence). Female and other male plumages are inseparable, although they tend to have crown and eye-stripe darker than the nominate race; adult males coming out of eclipse or 1st-winter males in only partial summer plumage in early winter may already have breast stripe visible.

STATUS/HABITAT Common (often abundant in winter quarters). (In addition to mapped range, has bred Spitsbergen, Spain, Yugoslavia, Romania.) Favours freshwater pools and lakes with luxuriant fringing vegetation, preferring shallower waters and smaller ponds and pools in breeding season; mostly in open country, but locally in uplands. Outside breeding season, also resorts to very open lakes and reservoirs, estuaries, saltmarshes, river deltas and locally even sheltered coastal bays.

CAPE TEAL *Anas capensis*

Cape Wigeon

L 44–48 cm, WS 78–82 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Vagrant from sub-Saharan Africa. Stockily built small dabbling duck with distinctive combination of rather pale overall coloration, heavily spotted underparts and extensive rose-pink on bill. The slightly shaggy rear of head, high, rounded crown and rather long, slightly upcurved bill add to its rather unusual appearance. Vagrant Red-billed Teal is darker above, with dark crown and nape. Confusion is unlikely except perhaps with escaped White-cheeked Pintail *A. bahamensis*, which is more slender, with very dark crown and pure white sides to head and neck. Marbled Duck is similarly pale, although may easily be separated by more slender shape, dark bill, dusky eye patch and prominent pale blotching on flanks. **In flight** a distinctive plump-bodied, short-necked duck with rather bulbous head. Body uni-

formly pale greyish-brown, but upperwing darker greyish-brown with striking white outer secondaries (inner secondaries green with white borders); the underwing is quite dark greyish with ill-defined paler shading.

SEX/AGE Adult female has breast markings smaller and more spot-like, less scalloped, with outer tertials brown instead of black. Juvenile often lacks black cutting edge and very base of bill, and has less clearly spotted underparts and borders to upperpart feathers narrower and paler.

VOICE Usually silent.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Libya, Israel). In natural range, encountered on freshwater, brackish or saline lakes, seasonally flooded wetlands, reservoirs, marshes and sewage pools.

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MALLARD *Anas platyrhynchos*

L 50–65 cm, WS 81–98 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A large dabbling duck with heavy body and short tail: the familiar 'wild duck' of our region, and a common sight on park lakes everywhere. **Adult male summer** unmistakable with its bottle-green head, narrow white collar, purple-brown breast, grey body, black and white ventral region and short, curled tail feathers. **Female** larger than others of the genus, although confusable with several species, especially Gadwall and vagrant American Black Duck (q.v.), but combination of purple-blue speculum, bordered by white bands to the front and rear, dark bill with orange subterminal area, sides and base (or just orange sides in juvenile), dark eye-stripe, orange legs, mottled brownish belly and pale tail sides is diagnostic. **Eclipse male and juvenile male** resemble female but have plain bills (greenish-yellow in eclipse male, brown in juvenile male). There is considerable individual variation, with influence of birds of feral origin producing abnormally dark, pale or piebald individuals that can be quite confusing. With exceptionally

dark individuals there is a strong possibility of confusion with American Black Duck, and such birds should be treated with extreme caution (although critical examination of tail colour and speculum helps in such cases). **In flight** a large, heavily built duck, with relatively broad-based (but pointed) wings and rounded tail. Summer males appear greyish with contrasting dark head, breast and mantle and black and white tail end. Females are relatively uniform brown on the body, with belly not obviously paler, unlike Gadwall. Wing patterns of both sexes similar and distinctive, with whitish underwing and greyish (adult male summer) or brown upperwing, contrasting with conspicuous dark blue speculum, latter prominently bordered to front and rear by white bands. Feeds chiefly by dabbling and up-ending while swimming; also wades in the shallows and grazes on land, visiting stubbles and crops in autumn and winter. Becomes very tame by park lakes, but normally shy and wary.

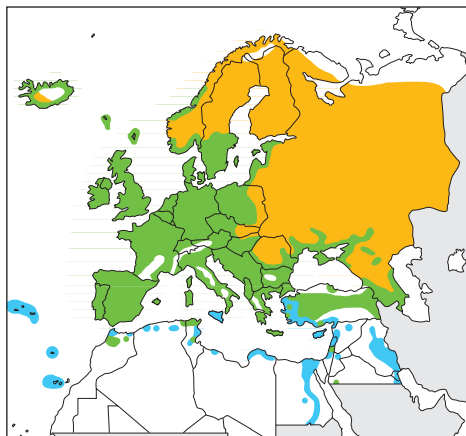
SEX/AGE Eclipse male resembles female, but retains

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plain yellowish bill colour and summer wing colour, and has darker crown and nape, paler sides of head and neck, and warmer, almost rufous-brown, breast which is only weakly marked. Juvenile recalls adult female, but body markings more streaked, with flank marks less V-shaped; bill almost uniform dull reddish. Juvenile male darker above than young female, with greyer wing coverts and warmer breast.

VOICE Quite vocal, especially females. Males utter a soft, rasping 'kreep'. Female's most obvious call is a series of quacks, quite mocking or laughter-like in delivery, descending towards the end: 'QUACK-QUACK-QUACK-quack-quack-quack.....'. Similar descending series of quacks are uttered by several other females of the genus.

STATUS/HABITAT Widespread and often abundant. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Azores, Cyprus, Jordan.) Favours almost any form of wetland, from slow rivers to ponds, marshes, freshwater lakes, reservoirs, estuaries and even sheltered coastal bays.



AMERICAN BLACK DUCK *Anas rubripes*

Black Duck

L 53–61 cm, WS 85–96 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Both sexes recall exceedingly dark female Mallard, but with more contrastingly pale sides of head and neck and almost uniform blackish-brown body plumage (without paler belly). Exceptionally dark female Mallards are frequent in areas where interbreeding with domesticated birds often takes place, but even darkest Mallards show some pale at sides of tail and stronger subterminal markings on feathers of underparts. American Black Ducks have only very narrow brown fringes to blackish-brown body feathers, with uniformly dark uppertail and undertail coverts and tail; the dark body, crown, hindneck and eye-stripe contrast strongly with the pale sides and front of head and neck. Tend to appear larger and bulkier than Mallard when the two seen together. Their bills are almost unmarked yellowish or olive, with some greyer shading in females, unlike female and juvenile Mallard, which typically have orange sides to horn-coloured bill. Legs are orange-red in adult male, but brownish-orange in female and juvenile male, and brown in juvenile female (so duller than many female and juvenile Mallards). Vagrants have hybridized with Mallards: male hybrids show obvious combinations of the two species, with bottle-green on head and neck, mixed with pale brown, reddish breast and less dark body plumage than American Black Duck. Female hybrids more difficult: with reasonably apparent whitish bar at base of speculum, such birds may approach American Black closely, but typically they also show pale areas in outer tail feathers. See also female Common Scoter. **In flight** has Mallard-like shape, but appears distinctly

bulkier in body, a difference exaggerated by blacker appearance; whitish underwing contrasts strikingly with blackish underbody and upperside. There is no pale in tail and purple speculum normally lacks white bands to front and rear (rarely there is a very narrow white trailing edge). Although white band in front of speculum is often narrower than normal in very dark Mallards, they still show a conspicuous white trailing edge. Often shows a dark crescent on median underwing primary coverts, absent in Mallard.

SEX/AGE Ageing and sexing of other than obviously well-marked adult males difficult in the field. Adult female has less contrasting plumage than male, with head and neck greyer and more strongly streaked, tertials narrower, bill greener (rarely yellow), legs duller and browner orange, and speculum a little bluer (less purple). Eclipse male much as female, including bill and leg coloration. Juvenile resembles adult female, but narrow pale edges to underpart feathers broken, giving slightly streaked rather than scalloped appearance, and whole appearance browner, less uniformly blackish. Bill of juvenile female is a dusky greyish-green and legs are brownish.

VOICE Similar to Mallard.

TAXONOMY Sometimes considered conspecific with Mallard *A. platyrhynchos*.

HYBRIDS In natural range, often hybridizes with Mallard, producing progeny showing intermediate characters. Some long-staying vagrants have also hybridized with local Mallards.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe, Azores). In natural range, favours similar habitats to Mallard.

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NORTHERN PINTAIL *Anas acuta*

Pintail

L 51–66 cm (including up to 10 cm tail extension in males), WS 80–95 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Large, slender dabbling duck with slimmer body than Mallard or Eurasian Wigeon. Northern Pintail has relatively long, slim neck, pointed tail, rounded crown and slender bill. **Adult male summer** distinctive, with dark head, white breast, grey

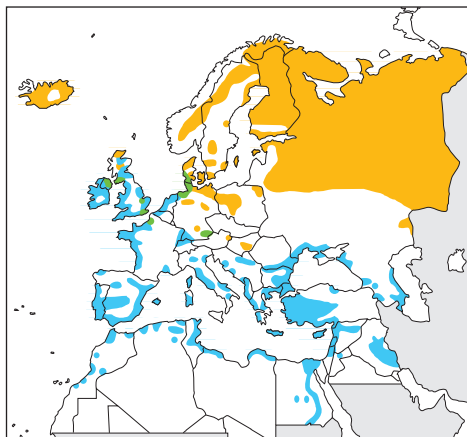
body and black and pale buff ventral region, even when tail elongations not visible (or feathers growing or broken). **Adult female, eclipse male and juvenile** resemble other female-types of the genus in coloration, but slim body and relatively plain head and long

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slim neck, contrasting with dark scalloping on flanks and upperparts, are distinctive. Dark grey bill and legs shared only by stockier Eurasian Wigeon, which has clear-cut white belly; belly is less strikingly white in female Northern Pintail, although paler than rest of underparts. **In flight** relatively long, slim neck with somewhat bulbous head, pointed wings and pointed rear end gives appearance not unlike an elongated Eurasian Wigeon, but wings appear positioned further back on body than in other members of genus owing to long neck. Adult male summer distinctive, with grey body, dark head and white breast and lower neck. Male upperwing grey with green speculum, latter bordered buff in front and prominently white along trailing edge. Underwing of both sexes chiefly greyish with paler shading, looking more variegated than most others of genus. Female overall brownish, with paler belly and conspicuous white trailing edge to brown speculum.

SEX/AGE Eclipse male resembles adult female, but has more patterned bill, greyer and more elongated tertials, green speculum and darker tail centre. Juvenile recalls adult female, but upperparts darker, less clearly marked, with feathers dark brown mottled and barred with pale buff (instead of broadly and neatly pale-edged) and feathers of flanks broadly dark-centred (less scalloped with angled markings); whitish tips to secondaries narrower than in adult, and speculum duller; young males show some green on speculum. Adult wing pattern not fully attained until after summer moult of second calendar year.

VOICE Male utters a mellow 'preep-preep' similar to



that of Common Teal, but lower-pitched. Female has a repeated descending series of quacks, weaker than that of Mallard; gives a low growling croak when flushed. **STATUS/HABITAT** Locally common (can be abundant in winter quarters). (In addition to mapped range, has bred Spitsbergen, Faeroes, Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Black Sea coast of Ukraine, Turkey, Morocco, Tunisia.) Breeds among wet meadows, marshy lakesides or by slow rivers. In winter, also open lakes, estuarine flats, brackish marshes and coastal lagoons.

RED-BILLED TEAL *Anas erythrorhynchos*

Red-billed Duck

L 43–48 cm, WS 76–82 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Vagrant from sub-Saharan Africa. Distinctive although rather drab dabbling duck with a red bill and pale sides of head contrasting with dusky crown and nape. Pale cheeks, dusky crown and otherwise brown appearance shared by superficially similar White-cheeked Pintail *A. bahamensis*, which often escapes from collections, but latter is brighter and buffier overall, with clean white sides of head, longer, pointed, whitish-buff tail, and only basal portion of bill red (Red-billed Teal has reddish-pink bill with dark culmen stripe and nail). Cape Teal also has reddish bill, but head is rather plain whitish and so confusion

Plate below

unlikely. **In flight** shows striking wing pattern: upper-side very dark, but with almost whole secondary region buff, with black stripe along base and parallel buff band across greater coverts; underwing very dark.

SEX/AGE Juvenile has bill duller and pinker, and feather fringes buffier; has streaked, rather than spotted, appearance to breast.

VOICE Relatively silent.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Israel). In natural range, favours shallow freshwater lakes and marshes with floating and emergent vegetation.



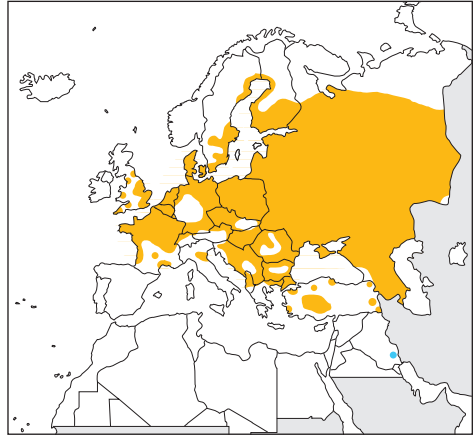
RED-BILLED TEAL

GARGANEY *Anas querquedula*

Plate page 166

L 37–41 cm, WS 60–63 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Small dabbling duck, a little larger than Common Teal and with relatively longer neck and heavier bill. Garganey normally keeps close to cover, preferring to feed among emergent vegetation. On migration, large dense flocks may be seen moving low over sea, especially in Mediterranean and Black Sea regions; flocks often spend day roosting in shallow coastal bays. **Adult male summer** unmistakable, with broad white band along sides of head. Remainder of head, neck and breast dark reddish-brown, contrasting with pale grey tans and elongated black-and-white-striped scapulars. **Adult female, eclipse male and juvenile** more difficult, closely recalling other teal-sized ducks in female-type plumage. Differ from Common Teal in being a little larger and bulkier, and having larger and straighter bill, heavier head with more angular crown shape, and more prominent head pattern. Female-type Garganey has very dark crown and eye-stripe, the latter highlighted by pale buffish supercilium and band below eye-stripe which contrast with mottled sides of head; the pale loreal patch is highlighted by the presence underneath of a dusky stripe which extends across lower face (becoming less distinct to rear). The throat is clearer and whiter than in Common Teal but the body plumage is similar, although female Garganey has very extensive white belly which contrasts with strongly patterned breast and flanks when bird out of the water (in Common Teal, belly is whitish but less striking). In late summer and autumn, however, juvenile Garganey with mottled belly is more like Common Teal in this respect. Additionally, Garganey lacks pale stripe along sides of tail shown by both Common Teal and Baikal Teal, and the all-dark bill lacks indistinct pinkish tones in region of gape usually shown by Common Teal. Blue-winged Teal has plainer head pattern than Garganey; although former has dark crown, a weak eye-stripe and fairly prominent pale loreal spot, it lacks dusky stripe across lower face or an obvious pale band below the shorter eye-stripe, and belly of Blue-winged Teal is always mottled, never clear white. **In flight** other differences are more readily apparent. Garganey appears rather bulkier and longer-necked than Common Teal. Underwing similar to Common Teal, with whitish central underwing contrasting with dusky leading edge (but a little more contrasting). Dark head and breast of male contrast with pale underbody and largely very pale grey upperwing (including the primary coverts), although the green speculum offers some contrast with the white trailing edge and the pale forewing; at very long range, can appear almost white-winged. Females and juvenile males are more Common Teal-like from below, but the belly is whiter and more extensive in adult female (juveniles have mottled bellies). The underwing is similar to that of adult male, but the upperwing is dull greyish, darker than in adult male, and the dull



brownish speculum offers little contrast. Upperwing is paler overall than in Common Teal and lacks that species' short, broad whitish bar along greater coverts, showing a narrower and less conspicuous line; the most obvious feature is the relatively broad whitish trailing edge to the secondaries, which recalls female Northern Pintail. Blue-winged Teal female shows a much bluer forewing than Garganey, with blacker primary coverts and primaries, and lacks white trailing edge to the secondaries or whitish belly.

SEX/AGE Eclipse male resembles adult female, but retains summer-male wing coloration and has throat even whiter and dusky streaking on head and neck coarser. Does not attain full summer plumage until quite late in winter, the true eclipse plumage being replaced by a supplementary plumage (similar to eclipse) in autumn. Juvenile similar to adult female, but centre of underparts well spotted and streaked, not clear white. Wing coloration allows sexing of juveniles. Both sexes differ from adults in having narrower white tips to greater coverts and secondaries; young male has forewing not so pale as adult male, while young female has dull grey speculum.

VOICE Males utter a peculiar dry rattling 'knerek' in display and when flushed recalling a fingernail being run along a comb; females have a high Common Teal-like quack.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Ireland, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sicily, Cyprus. Almost all winter south of the Sahara or in S Asia.) Favours shallow freshwater lakes and marshes with extensive fringe vegetation in open country. On passage, often found roosting on inshore waters (although this also seen frequently in other migratory dabbling ducks).

BLUE-WINGED TEAL *Anas discors*

Plate page 166

L 37–41 cm, WS 60–64 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. **Adult male summer** distinctive, with largely slate-grey head and large white facial crescent at front, warm-brown speckled underparts and black and white ventral region. **Adult female, eclipse male and juvenile** are similar to other teal-sized ducks in female-type plumage, especially Garganey, but are a little duller and

greyer-brown than latter with less marked head pattern: have blackish crown, indistinct pale supercilium, weak dusky eye-stripe and distinct oval whitish patch at base of bill. They lack the extensive dusky striping on sides of head and the dusky area below and behind pale loreal spot shown by Garganey; the supercilium is duller, hardly paler than sides of head,

and eye-stripe is weaker and not bordered by a pale stripe and dark 'cheek bar' below; throat is also less strikingly whitish (although usually whiter than in Common Teal). Often shows quite obvious pale eye-ring (broken into two crescents), which is usually much more prominent than in Garganey or Common Teal. The longer, heavier and more spatulate bill is held pointing downwards in manner of Northern Shoveler and is often not so blackish as in Garganey, showing a slight pinkish or yellowish tone in gape region. When out of the water, the belly appears mottled as in juvenile Garganey, not clear white as in adult Garganey. In adults the legs are yellowish (grey in Garganey), but they are greyish in 1st-year birds. Female Common Teal is smaller overall, with smaller bill, and has more rounded crown shape; its facial pattern is less distinct than in Blue-winged Teal and a pale loreal spot is rarely apparent. Common Teal also shows clear whitish or buffish stripe along sides of tail, whiter and less marked belly and undertail coverts, and narrower and more angled flank markings than Blue-winged Teal. Note that female-type individuals of escaped Cinnamon Teal *A. cyanoptera* are very similar to those of Blue-winged Teal, although overall plumage tone is warmer, almost rufous-brown, rather than dull greyish-buff; additionally, the head pattern is considerably plainer, with the pale loreal spot obscured by dark mottling, a weaker dark eye-stripe and generally darker tone to head and neck making any highlights less apparent. The coloration of eclipse drakes is even more rufous than in females, and they retain the reddish or yellowish iris coloration throughout eclipse (always brown in Blue-winged in any plumage). Juvenile Cinnamon is, however, initially distinctly duller and greyer than adult female and may even show a paler loreal spot, thus even more closely resembling Blue-winged. Juvenile Cinnamon attains a more rufous coloration by autumn, when young males should already be showing a yellowish or orange-red iris; they may be aged by their greyish rather than yellowish legs, but identification of young juveniles sometimes impossible in the field. Cinnamon Teals tend to have breast and flank markings less contrasting, lacking in particular the strong contrast between the spotted breast and pale neck of Blue-winged, and have a larger, longer and broader bill. There are also slight, but often distinct, flanges along the sides of the bill towards the tip, a feature best

appreciated when bill turned slightly away from observer. Bearing in mind the effects of individual variation and feather wear, and fact that eclipse male Blue-winged Teal is warmer buff than female or juvenile, the separation of duller individuals of Cinnamon in female-type plumages is tricky, but most are distinctly more rufous and plainer-headed than Blue-winged. Wing pattern is as Blue-winged Teal. In flight male Blue-winged appears quite dark (with prominent white facial patch in summer male) and with contrasting white underwing; the underwing shows a blackish leading edge, although not so wide as in Common Teal or Garganey, while the dark upperparts are relieved only by the china-blue wing coverts which contrast with the very dark primaries and primary coverts, the broad white band along the greater coverts and a dark green speculum. Females have browner overall body plumage and have underwing as male; the upperwing is also very similar, although instead of a broad white greater-covert bar they show two close-spaced narrow white bars. Lack of white trailing edge to secondaries, and blackish primary coverts and blue forewing make separation in flight from Garganey easy. Wing pattern recalls that of male Northern Shoveler.

SEX/AGE Eclipse male resembles adult female but crown darker, sides of head and neck more coarsely streaked, and upperwing as summer male, with broad white tips to greater coverts and metallic green speculum; general tone of plumage a warmer buff. Eclipse plumage retained well into mid-winter, some birds not assuming summer plumage until late winter. Juvenile much as adult female, but has darker upperparts, yellow-buff underpart feather fringes (at least on breast and flanks), breast markings more streaked, less spotted, and weaker spotting on ventral region; legs and feet greyish, not yellowish. Young males have wing similar to adult male, but speculum duller and darker and greater-covert bar rather narrower (but wider than in female). Juvenile wing retained until first summer.

VOICE Relatively silent. Males have a thin whistled 'tsee-tsee', uttered both in flight and when on water; females give a high-pitched quack.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe, Azores, Canary Is, Morocco; has even bred Denmark). Some suspected to be escapes from collections. In natural range, favours open country, especially grasslands with shallow freshwater lakes and pools.

NORTHERN SHOVELER *Anas clypeata* Shoveler

L 44–52 cm, WS 70–84 cm.

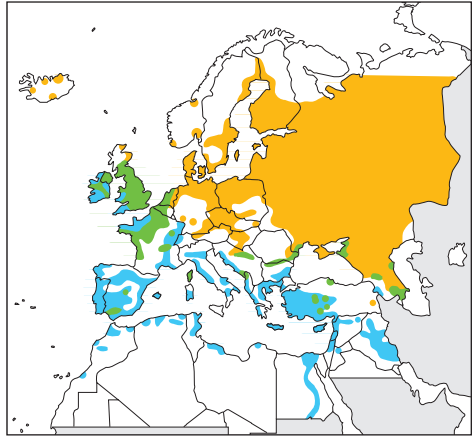
IDENTIFICATION Medium-sized, heavily built dabbling duck with huge bill. Long and very broad, rather shovel-shaped bill, which gives bird decidedly 'front heavy' appearance, easily separates this species from other ducks (except vagrant Cape Shoveler, q.v.). **Adult male summer** distinctive and unmistakable, with gleaming white breast, dark head, chestnut flanks and black and white ventral region. (Male Northern Pintail shares dark head and white breast, but is unlikely to be confused.) **Adult female, eclipse male and juvenile** recall female Mallard apart from outsize bill, but have body pattern less marked, with less strongly defined eye-stripe, and smaller dark flank markings which produce more contrast between darker upperparts and paler underparts. Mallard may appear relatively large-billed compared with other dabbling ducks and shares pale tail sides with Northern Shoveler, but confusion is hardly likely. Massive bill prevents confu-

sion with all other female-type dabbling ducks (but note that Blue-winged Teal has relatively heavy bill which is typically held in a similar downward manner when swimming). In flight appears 'front-heavy', with large bill, relatively long neck and short tail producing impression that wings are attached towards rear of body. A little smaller than Mallard, with narrower and more pointed primaries and faster flight action. Male shows distinctive combination of dark head, white breast, and dark chestnut underparts which contrast with whitish underwing; above, the clear pale blue upperwing coverts, white greater-covert bar and green speculum contrast with black and white upperparts. Female brownish, with same distinctive outline and whitish underwings as male; forewing duller and greyer-blue than male, with narrower greater-covert bar and duller speculum. Juvenile female has very dull grey-brown upperwing, lacking speculum colour or

Plate page 165

obvious wing bar. Flight outline and wing pattern similar to that of vagrant Cape Shoveler, and adult wing pattern similar to that of vagrant Blue-winged Teal (q.v.). Dark primary coverts, bluer forewing and lack of white at rear of speculum prevent confusion with Garganey. **SEX/AGE** Eclipse male recalls adult female, but body plumage more rufous, especially flanks and belly; head darker brown and body markings blacker; retains brighter blue forewing and broad greater-covert bar. Iris usually yellow, but also sometimes yellow in female. A plumage stage attained in early autumn by males is somewhat intermediate between summer and eclipse plumages, but also produces a whitish facial crescent and pale sides to head; full summer plumage may not be attained until late winter. Adult females in late summer and autumn are rather darker than summer, although not so dark as eclipse male. Juvenile has crown and hindneck darker and underparts paler and more spotted than adult female. May be sexed from early age by upperwing coloration; young male has duller secondaries than adult male and narrower greater-covert bar, while secondaries of young female often merely brownish and with narrow whitish tips. Juveniles attain a supplementary plumage in autumn which renders them close to adults of the same sex, although males do not show full male summer plumage until later in winter.

VOICE Relatively silent. During display period, males utter a repeated, liquid, hollow 'sluk-uk' or 'g'dunk'; often uttered in flight as well as from water. Female



has a variety of low quacking calls, including a short descending series of quacks typical of the genus, but limited to four or five notes; 'gak-gak-gak-ga'.

STATUS/HABITAT Widespread and locally abundant. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Switzerland, Greece, Cyprus.) Favours freshwater marshes and lakes with emergent and fringing vegetation and muddy margins. In winter, also open lakes, estuaries and coastal lagoons.

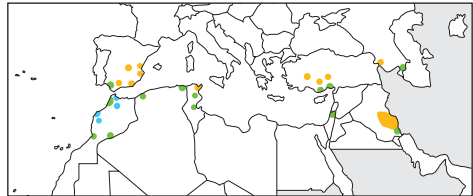
MARBLED DUCK *Marmaronetta angustirostris*

Marbled Teal

L 39–42 cm, WS 63–67 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Very local duck of Mediterranean region and SW Asia. Small, slender and pale sandy-brown overall with dusky eye patch, slim dark bill, rather long neck (often retracted) and, especially in male, distinctly large-headed appearance owing to short shaggy crest. The body plumage is spotted with whitish, although (except against the darker upperparts) the spots are inconspicuous at a distance. The breast and undertail coverts are weakly scalloped with darker markings, and the wings and tail are noticeably pale. In behaviour recalls small dabbling ducks, with which it freely mixes. Unlikely to be confused, but beware occasional leucistic examples of other small ducks, especially escaped White-cheeked Pintail *A. bahamensis*, and similarly pale and mottled but stockier and reddish-billed Cape Teal. Female Northern Pintail not too dissimilar in shape and shares rather plain head and neck, but is larger, longer-necked and browner, lacks eye patch and has well-scalloped flanks. Most active in evening and early morning, spending most of day loafing among emergent vegetation, or perching on partially submerged branches in shady situations. **In flight** the plain sandy wings lack any speculum, which separates Marbled Duck from other similar-sized species, except darker juvenile female Garganey (but this has white trailing edge to secondaries and dusky leading edge to underwing). Flies low and rather slowly, showing less agility than small dabbling ducks, and takes off from water less easily.

SEX/AGE Adult female has shorter crest than male and



usually has indistinct greenish area at base of otherwise blackish bill (male shows a narrow pale subterminal band and a bluish-grey band along cutting edge of upper mandible). Juvenile closely resembles adult female but has pale body spotting duller and more diffuse, with greyer tone to underparts, no barring on breast and little streaking on sides of head.

VOICE Relatively silent. During display, males utter a nasal squeaking 'jeeep' and females a similar 'pleep-pleep'.

STATUS/HABITAT Rare and decidedly local, with patchy and relict distribution. (In addition to mapped range has bred France, Yugoslavia, Crete, Cyprus, Canary Is. Probably no longer breeds Egypt. Some recent records from W Europe may refer to escapes rather than genuine vagrants.) Favours relatively small, shallow freshwater or brackish lowland lakes with emergent and fringing vegetation; also on fishponds, small reservoirs, slow rivers and even saline coastal lagoons in some areas.

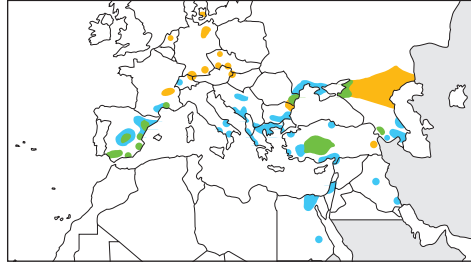
Plate page 162

RED-CRESTED POCHARD *Netta rufina*

Plate page 167

L 53–57 cm, WS 84–88 cm.

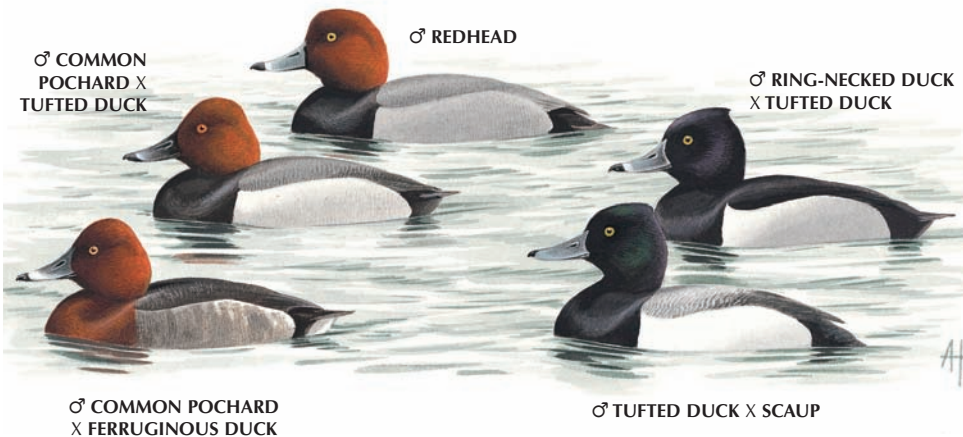
IDENTIFICATION Large and bulky duck that behaves more like a dabbling duck than a Common Pochard. **Adult male summer** unmistakable, with rusty-orange head, red bill, black breast and ventral region, white flanks and plain brown upperparts. **Adult female, eclipse male and juvenile** duller but almost as distinctive: dark crown and nape contrast with very pale sides to head and neck and plain brown body plumage. Pattern recalls female Common Scoter but latter much sootier-brown, especially on breast, has shorter bill and longer tail (often carried erect), lacks white in wings, and is unusual on freshwater lakes in normal range of Red-crested Pochard. Eclipse male easily distinguished by red bill. Feeds by dabbling with head immersed and by up-ending more than Common Pochard, but also readily dives. Sometimes feeds on land in stubbles and crops. **In flight** equally striking: a heavily built, broad-winged duck with extensive white in wings in all plumages. Black underparts of summer male contrast with striking white flanks and underwing and orange head; upperwing has almost all of flight feathers white (with dark trailing edge), contrasting with brown forewing and white leading edge, and at distance birds may appear all dark with white wings. Females have similar extent of white in wings, but lack white leading edge to upperwing; from below, the brownish body contrasts with very white underwing and pale head. Extent of white in wings matched only by smaller Ferruginous Duck, which has faster wingbeats and striking white belly and dark head.



SEX/AGE Eclipse male differs from adult female in retaining red bill. May show traces of rusty-orange on head. Juvenile resembles adult female, but bill lacks extensive pinkish terminal area.

VOICE Relatively silent, except when breeding. During display, male has a rasping wheeze and female a grating chatter.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common, but patchily distributed. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Poland, Italy, Greece, Algeria and Britain, the last probably escapes. Popular in captivity and frequently escapes, so vagrant records suspect.) When breeding, prefers large, relatively deep, freshwater lakes with extensive fringing vegetation in lowland open country. At other times, also slow-flowing rivers, open lakes, coastal lagoons and, more rarely, shallow coastal waters.

SOME MALE HYBRID AYTHYA DUCKS AND REDHEAD

Aythya hybrids, which occur with some regularity, often present identification problems. Male Tufted Duck x Scaup hybrids can closely resemble vagrant Lesser Scaup (see Tufted Duck text), while Male Common Pochard x Tufted Duck hybrids can closely resemble vagrant Redhead (see Appendix). Male Ring-necked Duck x Tufted Duck hybrids closely resemble Ring-necked but do not quite 'fit' the latter, showing an incomplete set of features. They may show a hint of a tuft, only a weak pale bill band, only a poorly-defined white stripe on fore flanks and some white in wing stripe. Male Common Pochard x Ferruginous Duck hybrids may very closely resemble Ferruginous, but tend to show more sloping forehead and a longer and more deeply-based bill (thus creating a more wedge-shaped head and bill outline). They tend to have a bulkier outline overall and sometimes grey vermiculations on mantle and some dark feathering on undertail coverts. Hybrids also have more extensive black bill tip, sometimes with pale subterminal area that curves back along sides of bill. Female *Aythya* hybrids are especially problematic and attention to structure is particularly important.

**CANVASBACK** *Aythya valisineria*

Plate above

L 48–61 cm, WS 80–90 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Closely resembles Common Pochard, and best distinguished by size and head/bill shape. Much larger than Common Pochard when the two seen together (but size of lone birds difficult to assess), with relatively longer neck and with higher-based, longer, all-blackish bill, which bulges towards base and merges almost imperceptibly into high, peaked crown (creating a head shape that recalls Common Eider and which is quite unlike slightly 'turned up nose' look of Common Pochard). Compared with summer male Common Pochard, summer male has paler, almost whitish-grey, mid-body colour, is distinctly blackish about forehead and anterior part of face, and lacks pale band on bill; in profile, the division between the black breast and grey body is distinctly forward-sloping at the water

line (division almost vertical in Common Pochard). Birds in female-type plumages resemble female-type Common Pochards in coloration; larger size and different head and bill structure are the most useful features. Some also show paler mid-body. Pitfalls are juvenile and some adult female Common Pochards which lack pale on bill, especially when alert with neck stretched up and head looking sleek. **In flight** wing pattern very similar to Common Pochard, but with even less distinct pale wing bar.

SEX/AGE Much as Common Pochard, but bill always wholly blackish.

VOICE Generally silent.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Iceland). In natural range, habitats similar to Common Pochard but more at home on brackish or estuarine waters in winter.

COMMON POCHARD *Aythya ferina*

Plate page 167

Pochard

L 42–49 cm, WS 72–82 cm.

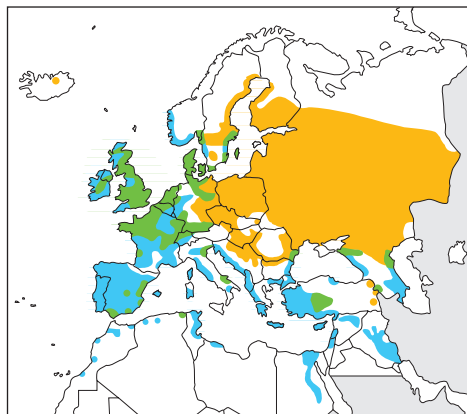
IDENTIFICATION Medium-sized freshwater diving duck with stocky, humped body, relatively short tail, somewhat sloping forehead and relatively long bill. Bill/forehead has a slightly concave profile leading to peaked crown. Freely mixes with other diving ducks, but parties tend to keep discretely away from other species when sleeping; spends most of day sleeping in closely packed rafts on open water. Also loafs on banks in small groups. **Adult male summer** distinctive, with pale grey body, chestnut head, and black breast

and tail end (but see rather similar vagrant Canvasback). Greater Scaup has white flanks contrasting with grey upperparts and black head and breast. **Adult female, eclipse male and juvenile** differ from other female *Aythya* in head and bill shape and (with exception of Canvasback) in having mid-body paler than head, neck and breast, and pale, often whitish, facial shading and line behind eye (but note that duller and browner juveniles may lack facial shading altogether). See also female of vagrant Ring-necked Duck. **In flight**

appears relatively long-necked and short-tailed, with rather bulbous head and 'waisted' neck. In summer male the whitish underwing and greyish upperwing (paler across flight feathers) offer little contrast with the grey mid-body, but black breast and tail end and reddish head make confusion unlikely. Browner female plumage lacks pronounced pattern, but brown breast contrasts with paler and greyer remainder of body, whitish underwing and greyish upperwing (with brownish-grey forewing). Vagrant Ring-necked Duck (particularly female) is only other *Aythya* with similarly dull wing pattern. Patters over surface when taking off, but fast and direct when airborne. See also vagrant Redhead *A. americana* in Appendix.

SEX/AGE Eclipse male recalls adult female, but body plumage greyer, head lacks facial pattern, breast markedly darker, and has redder iris. Adult female markedly browner above and below in summer than in winter, although still shows contrast with head and breast. Juvenile difficult to age in field, owing to individual variation, but typically more uniform above than winter female; lacks pale stripe behind eye and has underparts more mottled, with brown tips and grey bases to flank feathers. Bill all dark (as in some summer females).

VOICE Female sometimes utters a harsh, growled 'krrah' when flushed, but males are generally silent; a repeated soft wheezy whistling 'pee' may be heard



from close males in breeding season.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Italy, Crete, Tunisia.) Favours shallow to deep freshwater lakes with extensive open water, but with fair cover of fringing or emergent vegetation around edges. Outside breeding season, also on more open lakes and reservoirs, slow-flowing rivers and occasionally estuaries and sheltered coastal bays.

RING-NECKED DUCK *Aythya collaris*

L 37–46 cm, WS 61–75 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. A short-bodied diving duck with distinctive high crown (peaking in a distinct bump at rear) and relatively long, deep-based bill with comparatively narrow, pointed-looking tip. The tail is often held noticeably cocked when at rest and the curve of the flank border line is usually distinctly S-shaped in comparison to most other *Aythya*, with rear flank feathering curving up quite high over folded wing and then dipping low towards breast.

Adult male summer with black head, breast and upperparts and grey flanks recalls male Tufted Duck. Distinguished by head/bill structure, lack of loose crest on nape and pale grey flanks that contrast with vertical white stripe between flanks and black breast (this stripe reaching to a higher point than do the pale fore flanks of Tufted). Tufted Ducks assuming summer plumage in autumn often show brownish flanks and otherwise blackish plumage, with whitish on fore flanks suggestive of Ring-necked, but such birds separated by shallower flank curve, shorter tail, longer body and presence at rear of crown of a short downward-hanging tuft rather than a bump. Male Ring-necked also has striking bill pattern, with conspicuous white subterminal band, broad black tip, dark grey central area and narrower white band around base. Early in winter the basal band may be inconspicuous, but the remainder of the bill pattern and the greater length is still strikingly different from Tufted. Narrow chestnut collar around lower neck that gives the species its name can only be discerned under ideal conditions. **Eclipse male and early 1st-winter male** best identified by structure, especially distinctive bump on rear crown, but eclipse male retains white subterminal bill band and an indistinct version of flank pattern.

Adult female and juvenile more likely to be confused with female Common Pochard than with Tufted Duck, having pale areas on face, a distinct whitish eye-ring and often a whitish line behind eye. A few have head rather dark, with pale area only at base of bill (like

many Tufted), but whitish eye-ring and often a whitish line behind eye are diagnostic. Head/bill shape is much as in male, and, compared to Common Pochard, the loreal area is typically whiter, white subterminal bill band is usually clearer (but is very obscure in summer), and the upperparts are markedly darker than the warmer brown flanks and the often greyish sides of head, neck and breast. Most of face often quite pale, contrasting with a conical dark cap. Lacks dark line of feathering adjacent to bill base that creates 'gape extension' in Common Pochard. **In flight** lack of white in wing (on secondaries and inner primaries) immediately separates Ring-necked from Tufted Duck and Greater Scaup. Blackish head, neck, breast, upperparts and forewing of males contrast with whitish underwing, pale underbody and grey secondaries and inner primaries. Female has similar wing pattern, but duller and browner body. Both sexes distinguished from Common Pochard by much darker forewing.

SEX/AGE Eclipse male has black areas of plumage browner, undertail coverts and loreal area whitish, and flanks warm brown with ill-defined paler stripe up each side of breast; distinguished from female by blacker-brown head, breast and upperparts, lack of whitish eye-ring and yellow rather than brown iris. Summer female has facial pattern duller than in winter, although whitish on lore and eye-ring normally retained; whole plumage is rather browner, less grey, and bill band very faint. Juvenile browner on head and neck than winter female, and belly more spotted; young males soon attain blackish on breast, but adult male summer flank colour attained only after blackness of plumage well developed.

VOICE Relatively silent.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe, Azores, Canary Is). In natural range, lowland freshwater lakes, sometimes estuaries. In our region, where annual, often associates with parties of Common Pochards or, to a lesser degree, Tufted Ducks.

Plate page 169

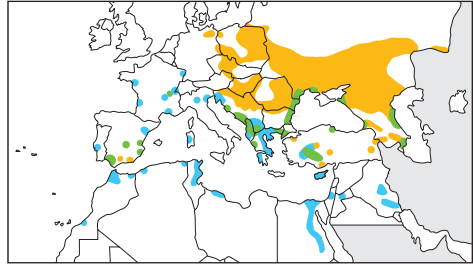
FERRUGINOUS DUCK *Aythya nyroca*

Plate page 168

Ferruginous Pochard, White-eyed Pochard

L 38–42 cm, WS 63–67 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Medium-sized freshwater diving duck. Resembles dark female Tufted Duck, but body relatively shorter, bill longer and crown higher, reaching distinct peak at centre and lacking any form of bump or tuft at rear. Flank feathers often project relatively higher over folded wing than in Tufted Duck when resting. Most active morning and evening, spending daytime loafing on banks or dozing on water with other diving ducks. Generally rather solitary habits and preference for feeding close to or among emergent vegetation make it easy to overlook. **Adult male summer** rich dark chestnut on head, breast and flanks, with darker upperparts and conspicuous, pure white undertail coverts (particularly obvious on resting birds with tail cocked). White belly or wing patch not normally visible when on water, but white eye often conspicuous. **Adult female, eclipse male and juvenile** are duller and browner, being closer to female-type Tufted, but very white undertail coverts and head and bill shape are useful pointers; the eye is dark in female Ferruginous (but white in eclipse male), yellow in most Tufted (but dark in juvenile and a few adult females). Female Tufted often has distinctly whitish undertail coverts, and some birds rather problematic, especially lone juveniles of either species. When identifying birds out of normal range, the possibility of hybrids should be seriously considered. These differ from typical Ferruginous in usually having less extensive white on undertail coverts, shorter bill with more prominent whitish subterminal band and more extensive black at tip, lower crown profile, and often some greyish vermiculations on flanks and upperparts; birds lacking vermiculations may have dull grey flanks (not the rufous-brown of Ferruginous) and the iris is often yellow (not white or dark). Escaped Baer's Pochard *A. baeri* is similar but larger, with heavier bill and darker head, and white of belly shows well above water line below dark fore flanks (Ferruginous usually appears all dark). **In flight** both sexes of Ferruginous recall female Tufted Duck or female Greater Scaup. Body plumage mainly very dark, contrasting with clear white belly, undertail coverts and underwing. Upperwing features very dark forewing contrasting with seemingly all-white primaries and secondaries; has



only a little more white than in Tufted Duck in fact, but in field the white appears very extensive and wing pattern recalls that of much larger male Red-crested Pochard.

SEX/AGE Eclipse male duller and browner, recalling adult female, but redder on head and breast and retains white iris. Adult female duller and browner than summer male, with indistinct whitish mottling on throat and dark iris; in very worn birds, areas of buffish feathering may show on sides of head and throat. Summer female has more extensive whitish mottling on throat, and head and neck lighter brown; flanks scalloped with greyish. Juvenile resembles adult female, but sides of head and foreneck lighter and buffer, more obvious pale feather fringes to flanks and upperparts, and white of belly and undertail coverts slightly mottled.

VOICE Relatively silent. During display, male gives a short 'chuk' or a soft whistling 'wheeo'; female utters a snoring 'err, err, err ...' (higher-pitched than in Tufted Duck) and a harsh 'gaaa'.

STATUS/HABITAT Decidedly local and generally uncommon; most numerous in east of our region. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Netherlands, Italy, Morocco, Algeria, Israel, N Saudi Arabia.) Favours freshwater lakes and marshes with extensive fringing and emergent vegetation in lowland open country. In winter, also on more open lakes and slow rivers, locally on coastal lagoons. Popular in captivity, most records of birds away from normal range in W and N Europe suspected to be escapes.

TUFTED DUCK *Aythya fuligula*

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L 40–47 cm, WS 67–73 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Medium-sized freshwater diving duck. Loafing birds doze in closely packed rafts on water or gather around lakeshores. Generally wary, but becomes remarkably confiding on park lakes. **Adult male summer** unmistakable, having black head, breast and upperparts, white flanks, and long drooping crest at back of head. Distinctive head shape a useful clue in all plumages: has relatively short and broad bill with rather wide black tip (not just restricted to nail), fairly steep rounded forehead, flattish crown, and tuft or ragged bump at rear of crown. **Eclipse male** still shows signs of vestigial tuft, as do birds in female-type plumage. Birds in eclipse or in transitional stages could be mistaken for Ring-necked Duck (q.v.). **Adult female and juvenile** are dark brown diving ducks with lighter brown flanks and often show some whitish on face, recalling Greater Scaup, or white undertail coverts that recall Ferruginous Duck. Head and bill shape

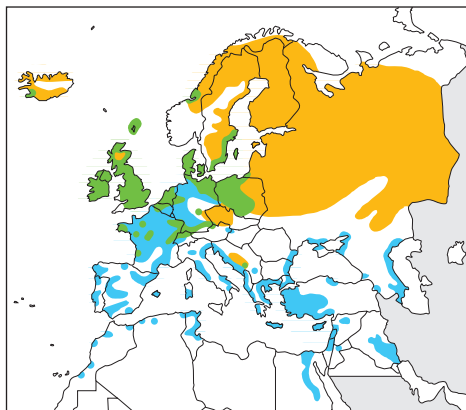
useful in such cases. Greater Scaup looks slightly larger and bulkier if the species are together, and has relatively longer and broader bill, with less black at tip (restricted to nail), and smoothly rounded crown that lacks any hint of a tuft at the rear. Female Greater Scaup often shows distinct oval pale patch on sides of head, lacking in Tufted. These white facial patches are absent in juvenile and eclipse male Greater Scaup, when reliance on size and head structure is important; such males show patches of vermiculated grey feathering appearing on upperparts by early winter. See also vagrant Lesser Scaup. Juvenile Tufted, which may appear to lack a tuft on rear crown and show lighter and buffer brown upperparts and underparts than adult female, can be especially problematic. **In flight** black head, breast and upperparts of male strongly contrast with white flanks, belly, underwing and band along flight feathers of upperwing; Greater Scaup has

similar pattern, but upperparts and forewing are grey, not black. Brown female shows similar wing pattern to female Greater Scaup, but differs from Ferruginous Duck in having less strongly contrasting white on belly and in having white band along flight feathers less extensive. Patters over surface when taking wing, but flight fast when airborne.

SEX/AGE Eclipse male has shorter crest than summer male, and black parts of plumage replaced by blackish-brown; flanks and belly dull brown. Some females develop whitish area on lore, others have distinctly whitish undertail coverts (especially in autumn). Juvenile resembles adult female, but head and upperparts lighter brown (with buff feather fringes), crown darker, buffish area on lore, and flanks distinctly scalloped with dull buff.

VOICE Relatively silent except when displaying. Male utters a low but vibrant whistling 'wheep-wee-whew', female has a low gruff, growling 'err, err, err ...', sometimes given when flushed.

HYBRIDS Uncommon hybrid male Tufted Duck x Common Pochard can look remarkably like adult male of vagrant Lesser Scaup (q.v.), but these usually have a broad black tip to bill, not just a narrow black nail, and rest of bill usually shades from blue-grey at base to whitish subterminally, while in Lesser Scaup it is all blue-grey. Upperparts of hybrids are often more closely vermiculated with dark, so look uniform grey except at close range, and have paler tertials. Flanks may appear finely vermiculated and overall very pale grey at close quarters; black of head may have reddish or bluish-



purple bloom (purplish in Lesser Scaup), and iris may be orange-red (yellow in Lesser Scaup). Feathering of hindcrown often longer, forming short downward hanging tuft rather than 'bump' of Lesser Scaup.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Faeroes, Hungary, Romania, Albania.) Lowland freshwater lakes, with fringing vegetation, from large lakes in open country to park lakes in towns; also on slow rivers. Outside breeding season, also on coastal lagoons, estuaries and shallow coastal bays.

GREATER SCAUP *Aythya marila*

Scaup

L 40–51 cm, WS 69–84 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Medium-sized diving duck, chiefly marine outside breeding season when found in small to large flocks. Although essentially marine in winter, small numbers regular on inland freshwater lakes mixed with other diving ducks. At all ages, relatively large size, bulky appearance, broad bill and smoothly rounded crown shape are subtle, but very useful, identification aids. **Adult male summer** has black head, breast and rear end contrasting with grey upperparts and white belly and flanks. Pattern suggests male Common Pochard, but latter has red head, darker bill and uniform upperparts, flanks and belly, showing no obvious contrast. **Female** is dull brown, with contrasting clear white patches surrounding bill base; these often present in female Tufted Duck, but rarely so extensive as in Greater Scaup, which usually also shows a diffuse pale patch at side of head (often obscured by brownish feather tipping in fresh plumage), lacking in Tufted. **Eclipse male and juvenile male** lack any white on head and more closely resemble Tufted; in the most extreme cases only head and bill structure are useful, but by early winter males show patches of grey and vermiculated feathering on upperparts. Sleeping birds can be picked out from among parties of dozing Tufted by their slightly larger size, lack of tuft, longer body and more sloping rear end. Scaup-like birds in unusual locations are often hybrids between Tufted Duck and Common Pochard or Greater Scaup: males differ from Greater Scaup in having more black at bill tip (only nail black in Greater Scaup), slight tuft at rear crown (but hybrids between Greater Scaup and Tufted Duck may show Greater Scaup crown shape), shorter bill with more concave culmen, and closer, darker grey upperpart vermiculations (recalling Lesser Scaup). See also Tufted Duck. **In flight** upwearing of Greater

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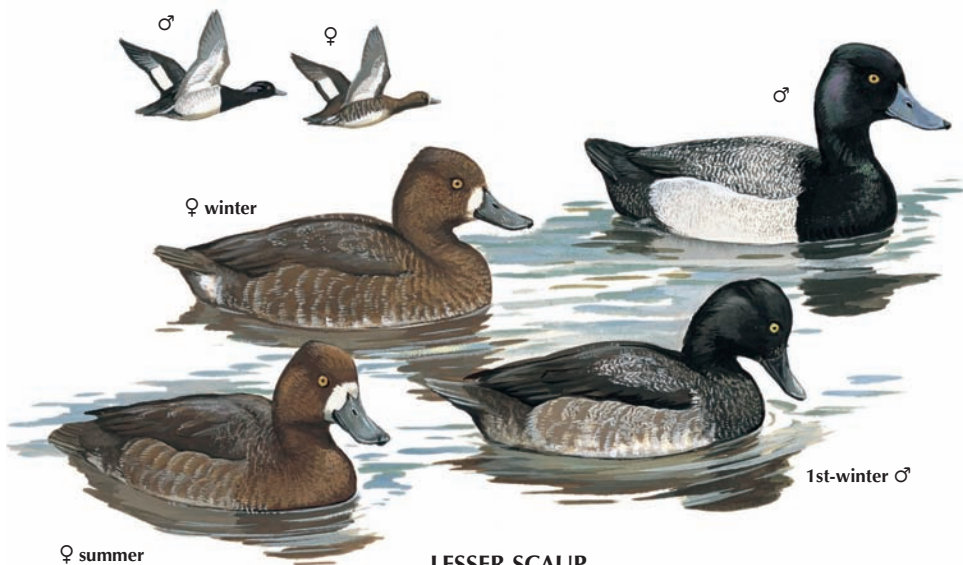
Scaup resembles that of Tufted Duck, but males have grey, not black, upperparts and forewing, contrasting with blackish rump and tail end. Females often difficult to separate from female Tufted in flight. See also very similar vagrant Lesser Scaup.

SEX/AGE Eclipse male has head, neck and breast blackish-brown, sometimes with a little whitish around bill base; upperparts browner but still vermiculated grey, flanks vermiculated grey and pale brownish. Eclipse plumage closer to summer male than in most other *Aythya*. Juvenile resembles female, but has less white around bill base and is paler and buffer-brown below, especially on flanks. Juvenile female lacks any hint of 'frosting' on upperparts and flanks (sometimes visible in adult female), but this is shown by young males. Juvenile male resembles eclipse adult by autumn, and acquires most adult summer features towards end of first winter.

VOICE Relatively silent except in display. Males utter soft cooing and whistling notes in courtship; females give a harsh, gruff 'arr, arr, arr ...' typical of genus, but a little lower-pitched.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (In addition to

mapped range, has bred Spitsbergen, Faeroes, Britain, Denmark.) Breeds by freshwater pools and lakes in tundra and wooded-tundra zones. Winters on shallow coastal waters, estuary mouths and locally on fresh-water lakes and reservoirs inland.



LESSER SCAUP *Aythya affinis*

L 38–46 cm, WS 66–74 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Very similar to slightly larger Greater Scaup. Most easily separated by head and bill shape, and less heavy appearance. Head shows a distinct bump (i.e. a very short crest) towards rear of crown, which contributes to a higher-crowned appearance, unlike smoothly rounded crown of Greater. The bill is relatively shorter than in Greater and is slightly concave along the culmen. In profile, the combination produces the effect of a mild curve from bill tip to rounded forehead, followed by a rising crown that terminates in a small bump, followed by a slight indentation above nape. Greater has a longer and deeper bill, with culmen virtually straight, a smoothly rounded forehead and nape, and fairly flat crown centre (the highest point often seems to be the forecrown, with the flattish crown slightly sloping towards nape). In Lesser, the body appears relatively shorter than that of Greater, but this apparent only if the two species are seen together, when the size difference and relatively longer neck of Greater may also be appreciated. **Adult male summer** also differs appreciably in body plumage: Lesser has blacker and coarser vermiculations on upperparts than Greater, giving a darker, greyer appearance to mantle and scapulars, and the rear flanks often show an area of grey vermiculations, normally absent in Greater (but male Greaters coming out of eclipse during winter have vestigial vermiculations on flanks). Under exceptional viewing conditions, the blackish head shows a purple gloss in Lesser, green in Greater (but this is very hard to interpret correctly in the field, and some Less-

ers also show a hint of green, while some Greaters show a hint of purple). See also Tufted Duck regarding uncommon hybrid Tufted Duck x Common Pochard, the males of which can look remarkably like Lesser Scaup. **Adult female, eclipse male and juvenile** very similar to corresponding plumages of Greater, but white facial patches typically less extensive and pale patch on sides of head usually less obvious (although often still clearly visible). Size and head structure are therefore important. Separation from some Tufted Ducks (especially birds with unusually short crest and large pale area at base of bill) problematic; this smaller scaup typically differs in plumage patterning much as does Greater, but also shows a small bump towards rear of crown which gives a higher peak to crown profile than in Tufted Duck. Bill is relatively broader, with only a narrow black nail (bill of Tufted Duck is broadly tipped with black) and the pale loreal patches, if present, are clean white. Breast, mantle and scapulars are almost uniform with the flanks, contrasting with considerably darker head (head, breast and upperparts are typically distinctly darker than flanks in female-type Tufted). Lesser Scaup sometimes shows a hint of a lighter patch at sides of head, but this is never so marked as in Greater. At close range, flanks and scapulars may, as in Greater, show indistinct grey 'frosting' (lacking in Tufted). **In flight** wing pattern of Lesser Scaup is much as Greater, but Greater shows white band extending from secondaries across inner primaries, whereas Lesser has white restricted to secondaries, the inner primaries being

Plate above

pale grey. This may need to be interpreted with caution, as the difference between pale grey and white is hard to see on rapidly beating wings, but the contrast between whiter secondaries and not so white-looking inner primaries is often visible on Lesser.

SEX/AGE Much as Greater Scaup. Eclipse males tend to be browner on body than those of Greater, but plumage sequences and coloration otherwise similar.

VOICE Relatively silent.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe, Canary Is). Most reports of this species have proved to involve hybrids between Tufted Duck and Common Pochard. In natural range, favours lakes, ponds and marshes in both forested and open country when breeding, wintering not only on estuaries and shallow coastal waters but also extensively on inland lakes.

COMMON EIDER *Somateria mollissima*

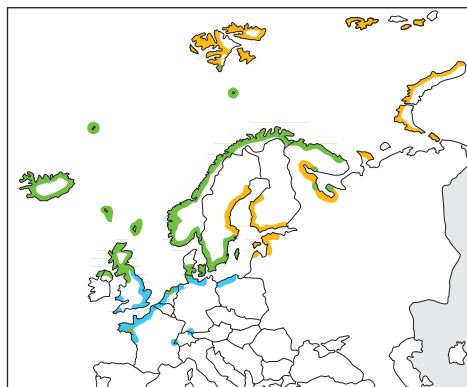
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Eider

L 50–71 cm, WS 80–108 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Large, heavily built sea duck, with distinctive large-headed, 'roman-nosed' profile formed by long, massive bill sloping without an obvious break into forehead. Characteristic appearance added to by high, flattish crown and facial feathering extending out along sides of bill, ending in a blunt point. When alert, relatively long neck and triangular shape to heavy head and bill highly distinctive. In large flocks throughout the year, nesting colonially and favouring inshore islands. Feeds around rocky reefs, islands and promontories, diving expertly; loafing birds gather on adjacent rocks. **Adult male summer** unmistakable: has unique pattern of black crown, belly, rear end and flight feathers that strikingly contrast with largely white remainder of plumage. (Breast is tinged pinkish-cream when fresh and patches on nape and sides of neck a curious mint-green.) **Adult female, eclipse male and juvenile** are basically dark brown and recall those of both King Eider and vagrant Spectacled Eider; most easily distinguished by head and bill features (see those species). Adult plumage is not fully attained until third winter; moulting males, either partially in eclipse or sub-adult, are pied-coloured and striking, often blackish with white breast and scapulars, and unlikely to be confused with anything else apart from other larger eiders (but beware piebald feral-type Mallards, which may confuse the unwary). See also immature Surf and Velvet Scoters, which can appear to have similar head shape. **In flight** a large, heavily built duck with relatively broad wings and heavy head often carried low. Summer male unlikely to be confused, except with male King Eider, but shows far more extensive white than latter on upperwing and upperbody, plus black crown and quite different head shape. Females and eclipse or immature males less distinctive and confusable with other eiders (q.v.), but tend to show less striking white underwing than King. Rises heavily from water with much pattering, flocks often forming lines and keeping low over sea when well underway.

SEX/AGE Eclipse male chiefly sooty-brown, differing from adult female in lacking barring on body and in having white upperwing coverts and scattered whitish feathering on head and upperparts. Adult female quite variable in coloration; when fresh, a warm cinnamon-buff overall, becoming rather pale, greyish-buff, by early summer when worn. Juvenile resembles fresh adult female but darker, with narrow buff barring on underparts, and indistinct pale buffish supercilium; upperwing lacks whitish tips to secondaries and



greater coverts; young male has blacker ground colour to upperparts and wings than young female. Male begins to acquire whitish feathering on breast and upperparts from early first winter onwards, with much individual variation; by end of first winter has extensive white on breast and upperparts, but little white on upperwing coverts until second winter. 2nd-winter resembles adult male, but with extensive dark mottling to white areas and paler green areas on nape and sides of neck. Full plumage not attained until fourth winter, but much as adult by third winter (although black on upperparts more extensive).

VOICE In late winter and spring males particularly vocal, uttering endearing and highly evocative low croon, 'ahOOoo', during display. Females have a low, guttural 'krrr' and chuckling 'kok-ok-ok'.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Complex but sometimes marked. 3 races (nominate race and *borealis* illustrated). Birds from the Faeroe Is (and probably Orkney and Shetland), *faeroensis*, are smaller than nominate race and the females are darker and more heavily barred. Race *borealis* of the Arctic region from Franz Josef Land west through Iceland has bill base richer-coloured in males (yellow, or even orange-yellow, especially in wintering individuals from Greenland), even in eclipse, and females are more rufous-brown.

STATUS/HABITAT Common, locally abundant. Shallow inshore coastal waters, with adjacent small islands, and estuary mouths. Usually only rarely encountered on inland lakes on passage or in winter, but regular inland in a few areas in Europe.

KING EIDER *Somateria spectabilis*

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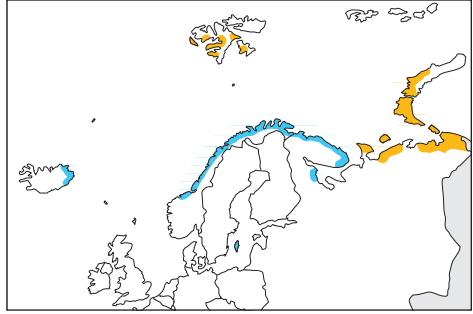
L 47–63 cm, WS 75–95 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Large, rather bulky sea duck of the Arctic region. **Adult male summer** unmistakable but

easily overlooked among large flocks of Commons, with which stragglers often mix. Easily told from male

Common by most distinctive head and bill shape and coloration, and by having most of rear upperparts as well as rear underparts black. Head is large and rectangular, with pale blue crown and rear, and bulging 'forehead' formed by orange-red frontal shield that projects above red bill. Has fairly conspicuous up-pointed scapular plume projecting on either side of back. Other plumages similar to those of Common.

Eclipse male never shows white on scapulars which can be present in eclipse Common, but may show white on mantle, and white wing coverts often visible when on water; most easily distinguished from Common by pinkish-orange bill and frontal shield (but beware arctic race of Common with orange-yellow bill). Head shape distinctly different, with somewhat bulging forehead (although less than when breeding, owing to reduction in size of frontal shield) and flatter crown; also typically a little smaller and shorter-necked than Common. **Female and juvenile** close to those of Common, and vagrants very easily overlooked; head shape and structure the most reliable means of separation. Head of King less triangular in outline, having crown flatter, nape fuller and forehead profile slightly bulging, less straight; whole front portion of head and bill appears somewhat shorter than in Common, and smaller bill tends to be carried more horizontally, less drooped. Feathering on top of the bill reaches much further, almost to nostrils, spike of bare skin at base of bill projects less far towards eye, and feathering on sides of bill has distinctly blunt, not pointed, ending and does not extend as far as nostril. An even more obvious difference is gape line, which noticeably turns upwards in King and bisects an ill-defined whitish area of feathering at bill base, helping to give King a subtly different, 'happy' facial expression; in Common, gape line is straighter and less conspicuous. Bill of King contrasts more with face owing to pale feathering next to bill base. Adult females have crescentic dark flank markings and appear less clearly barred than Common (juvenile King has heavier, more angular markings). Adult female more rufous-buff overall in summer than southern populations of Common, but regional variation within female Common creates overlap. Adult female sometimes shows shorter, much less conspicuous version of scapular 'sails' exhibited by adult males. **1st-winter male** shows more obvious pale area about eye, often extending as a pale line running steeply down and back behind eye and bordering a less obvious dark line (but note that Common often has an inconspicuous pale eyebrow and a weak dark line in a similar position). From end of first winter difference in bill colour becomes diagnostic. **In flight** resembles Common but a little smaller, stockier and



relatively shorter-necked, and with faster wingbeats. Summer male shows black upperparts with smaller white patch on upperwing coverts than in Common, giving overall blacker appearance, but beware sub-adult or moulting eclipse male Commons with more extensive black on upperparts than in full plumage. Females difficult to separate from those of Common, but underwing considerably whiter and contrasting with dusky leading edge.

SEX/AGE Eclipse male overall dull blackish-brown, more uniform and darker than female, usually with some white feathering on breast and mantle; retains white patches on upperwing coverts. Juvenile differs from adult female in being duller and greyer, especially on head and neck; lacks small up-pointed plume on each side of back of adult female and has broader, less crescentic dark markings along flanks; tertials less strongly curved than in adults. 1st-year males show (by autumn) extensive greyish patches on head and whitish on breast, and pale buffish bills (latter becoming yellow-orange at upper base by late winter). 1st-summer male still lacks white patch on wing coverts and is duller overall with paler bill and reduced shield. By second winter resembles adult, but head and bill paler, shows dusky line down centre of nape and white wing covert patches show some dark markings. Fully adult by third winter.

VOICE Similar to that of Common Eider, but croon of male rather deeper in tone. Calls freely in flight, a low croaking note.

HYBRIDS Occasional hybridization with Common Eider reported, offspring showing intermediate characters.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Norway, and has hybridized with Common Eider in Iceland and elsewhere.) Breeds on high-Arctic tundra. Winters in largely ice-free coastal bays and fjords. Stragglers away from normal range generally recorded among flocks of Common.

SPECTACLED EIDER *Somateria fischeri*

L 52–57 cm, WS 85–93 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Vagrant from arctic Siberia/Alaska. A little smaller than Common Eider, but with unique facial appearance: feathers cloak bill almost to nostrils and has distinctive 'goggle' head pattern in all plumages. **Adult male summer** has slate-black breast and underparts, lacking clear white breast of other two large eiders, but sharing white upperparts of Common. Astonishing head pattern prevents confusion: broad white, black-rimmed 'goggles' contrast with dull greenish-olive of most of remainder of head. Bill orange. **Adult female and juvenile** recall female-types of other large eiders, being mottled and barred russet-brown, but quite easily separated by 'goggles' (weaker

than in male, but still quite obvious). Pale brown of 'goggles' contrasts with richer, darker brown of forehead and especially loreal area; dark eye is very obvious against light surround. Feathering extending right over top of bill also diagnostic. Dark barring on upperparts and flanks in adult female is broader than in Common Eider. **Eclipse male and sub-adult male** resemble other large eiders, apart from lack of white on breast at any stage, distinctive head pattern (although 'goggles' greyer and less striking) and more extensive bill feathering. **In flight** recalls other eiders, but smaller and shorter-necked than Common. Summer male recalls Common in pattern, but on under-

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parts black extends up to breast (white only on neck); underwing more dusky than in other male eiders. Adult female and juvenile recall female-type Common, but underwing darker than in most Common. Even at a distance, when pale 'goggles' indistinct, darker brown of forehead and loreal area contrasts with pale buffish-brown of rest of head and neck.

SEX/AGE Eclipse male dark greyish overall with lighter grey 'goggles'; retains white wing coverts. Juvenile resembles adult female, but has narrower barring

on underparts and 'goggles' less distinct, although still apparent. 1st-winter male acquires some whitish on foreneck or upper breast and upperparts towards end of winter. Full adult male summer plumage acquired by third winter after a variety of intermediate stages.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Norway, N Russia). In natural range, habitat much as King Eider. Most likely to be found among flocks of other eiders, although believed to be more of an offshore species than others in winter.

STELLER'S EIDER *Polysticta stelleri*

L 43–47 cm, WS 70–76 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Smaller and less bulky than other eiders (especially Common). Indeed, small size with relatively flat crown and lack of feathered extensions onto bill base can give distinctly un-eider-like impression. Head and bill proportions recall dabbling ducks rather than eiders, while the relatively long tail is often held cocked when resting, recalling scoters. When on sea, tends to stay in shallow waters. **Adult male summer** unlikely to be confused: shows chiefly whitish head with black eye patch, throat and collar, pale green patch in front of eye and tuft on side of hind-crown, rusty to pale rufous-buff (often very pale) underparts contrasting with black ventral region, and black and white upperparts. Has black spot at side of breast, visible just above waterline when swimming.

Adult female, eclipse male and juvenile differ from other female-type eiders principally in smaller size, more 'normal duck-like' head and bill shape, darker, less barred body plumage and often (but not always) more prominent white borders to speculum. Rather flat crown and steeply-angled nape and forehead give head noticeably square-cut look, while relatively small bill lacks any feathering along sides, adding to un-eider-like impression. Sub-adult males always appear more mottled on breast than Common, never attaining a clean white-breasted appearance. Compare also immature Velvet Scoter. **In flight** less bulky than other eiders, rising more easily from water. Summer male distinctive, lacking black underparts of other male eiders. Compared with other eiders, birds in female-type plumages show whiter underwing (although this can be very pale on some Common and King Eiders) and quite prominent white lines in front of and behind glossy purplish speculum (but both speculum and white lines can be dull in juveniles and some female Commons have bright speculum with fairly conspicuous white lines, so this feature needs to be used with caution). If flying with other eiders, smaller size and faster wing action is generally readily apparent.

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SEX/AGE Eclipse male distinguished from adult female by white upperwing coverts and mottled whitish head and breast. Juvenile duller, more greyish-brown, than adult female, lacking warm reddish tone except on lower underparts, and is also more obviously barred below. Feathers of mantle have narrower, less rufous tips. Wing as adult female, but secondaries all dull (female) or with very little blue (male) and white borders to speculum narrower or even virtually absent. Tertiaries are shorter and straighter (slightly curved in male, straight in female). During first winter, pale buffish and whitish feathering begins to appear on head and breast of young male, as does dark throat and dark patch on side of hindcrown: by second winter, nearly in full plumage (but may show some dark markings amidst white wing covert patches).

VOICE Relatively silent compared with other eiders, particularly males, which do not utter crooning courtship sounds. Females more vocal, uttering various low barking, growling or hoarse whistling cries, which may be freely heard from flocks.

STATUS/HABITAT Small numbers throughout the year on arctic coast from N Norway eastwards (and has probably bred N Norway and Novaya Zemlya), but usual breeding region much further east in tundra zone of Siberian coast. Small numbers regular in Baltic in winter. Favours rocky bays and headlands, favouring sites where freshwater streams enter sea.

HARLEQUIN DUCK *Histrionicus histrionicus*

L 38–45 cm, WS 63–69 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Normally found in our region only in Iceland. Small, dark, stocky diving duck with small bill, steeply rounded head, pointed tail and conspicuous white facial patches in all plumages. Usually met with in pairs or small parties, but larger flocks formed outside breeding season. Feeds mostly by diving, swimming buoyantly with tail prominently cocked. On breeding rivers, stands on shores and rocks. Mixes little with other species, although associates loosely with other sea ducks in winter. **Adult male summer** unmistakable if seen well but surprisingly easy to overlook when swimming on dark, dappled water. White facial,

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breast and upperpart patches always striking, but beautiful blue-grey areas of plumage and chestnut flanks appear blackish at long range or against strong light. **Adult female, eclipse male and juvenile** almost

uniform sooty-brown with two white face patches, a large patch on anterior part of face (almost divided into two by dark eye and dusky area on lore) and a circular spot on ear-coverts. Females and immature males have pale belly with dark mottling. Most likely confusion is with darkest female and juvenile Long-tailed Ducks, which can have facial pattern approaching female Harlequin, but pale area behind eye typically a whitish streak (not a circular spot), neck paler (contrasting with dark cheek patch), flanks, ventral area and belly whitish, and bill broader (narrow in Harlequin). Female vagrant Bufflehead has dark loreal area and single rectangular white patch behind eye. Head patterns of considerably larger and bigger-billed female Surf and Velvet Scoters also fairly similar, but head/bill outlines quite different and pale patch on anterior part of face smaller. Eclipse male also differs from all the above in having white stripes on tertials. **In flight** an almost uniformly blackish, dumpy little duck with plump body and pointed tail. Wings appear all dark on both surfaces, and shows no white on belly in any plumage (ill-defined whitish belly centre of female not apparent in flight); white facial and body patches of males may be visible on closer birds. Smaller

and shorter-bodied than scoters, recalling goldeneyes in flight outline and action. Long-tailed Ducks always show conspicuous white underbody in flight. Typically flies low over water, holding head well up.

SEX/AGE Eclipse male duller; intermediate between summer male and adult female, but closer to latter. Retains white on greater coverts but has narrower white stripes on tertials than adult male summer. Belly dark, unlike female and most immature males. May retain trace of white band between breast and flanks. Juvenile closely resembles adult female, but feather edges to upperparts brown rather than grey and lacks blue gloss to secondaries. 1st-winter male starts to attain adult male coloration, including white markings on head and breast (but not on scapulars and wing). 1st-summer male much as adult, but lacks white in wing and has pale, mottled belly.

VOICE Relatively silent outside breeding season. In display, male utters a high-pitched squeaking whistle. Female has several short, harsh calls.

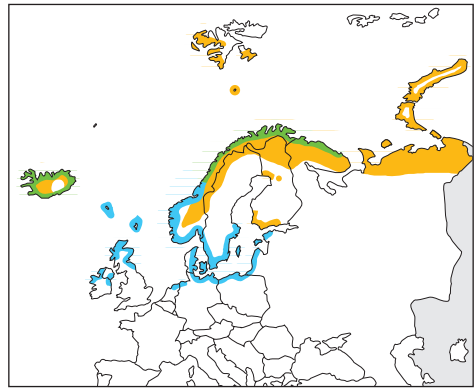
STATUS/HABITAT Locally fairly common. Breeds by fast-flowing rivers and streams in hilly or mountainous country. Winters along coasts, typically in rocky bays or around headlands, but sometimes around harbours.

LONG-TAILED DUCK *Clangula hyemalis* Oldsquaw (N America)

L 36–60 cm (including up to 13 cm tail extension in males), WS 73–79 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Small, dumpy diving duck with short neck, short bill and pointed tail in all plumages. Marine outside breeding season. **Adult male** has greatly elongated central tail feathers, often held erect when sitting buoyantly on water, and pink-tipped black bill. In winter appears whitish overall, with black breast, face-patch and wings; the long white scapulars giving piebald appearance to upperparts. In summer, head, breast and upperparts mostly blackish-brown, with contrasting white flanks and eye patch. **Adult female and juvenile** are small, squat short-tailed ducks, with dark upperparts and white underparts; the head pattern is variable, but typically the sides of the head are whitish, contrasting with dark cheek patch, crown and breast. Darkest birds (especially juveniles) may show only ill-defined whitish patches about eye and recall female Harlequin Duck, but latter has dark flanks (always whitish in Long-tailed), is plumper, and has circular spot on ear-coverts rather than a whitish streak behind eye. Palest birds show only weak face patch and may appear almost uniform mealy whitish at long range (compare with male Smew). Typically swims low when actively feeding, diving abruptly with partially opened wings. Its marine habits in winter, dark and pale plumage pattern and manner of diving contribute to an auk-like appearance (compare winter Black Guillemot). **In flight** a small, dumpy, short-necked duck with all-dark wings (both upper-sides and undersides) contrasting with white underbody in all plumages. Has distinctive flight action, often low over water, swinging from side to side, with shallow beats of stiffly arched wings; the wings are brought well down on the downstroke but rise only a little above body level on the upstroke.

SEX/AGE Moulting sequence complicated: both sexes of adults have four plumages annually, making ageing and sexing of other than adult males difficult (see illustrations). Juvenile resembles winter adult female, but overall dull brownish on head and neck, with



white areas ill-defined, often merely a weak patch on lore, an area above eye and a streak behind eye (beware female Harlequin Duck); scapulars shorter and duller than in adult female, and underparts whitish with greyish-brown breast band and wash along flanks. During first winter becomes whiter on head and neck, more closely resembling adult female. Young males attain features of adult male winter plumage from late autumn onwards, showing pinkish bill tip and whitish on scapulars during first winter.

VOICE Male very vocal, especially during display, uttering loud, yodelling 'ow-OW-owlee.... caloocaloo'; when flock members calling together, the combined noise is strange and far-carrying. Females utter a variety of low weak quacking notes.

STATUS/HABITAT Common (and locally occurs in large concentrations in winter quarters). Breeds by pools and small lakes in the tundra, also by slow rivers and coastal inlets. Outside breeding season resorts to coastal waters (only rarely on fresh water).

Plate page 172

COMMON SCOTER *Melanitta nigra*

Plate page 173

Black Scoter, American Scoter (*M. n. americana*)

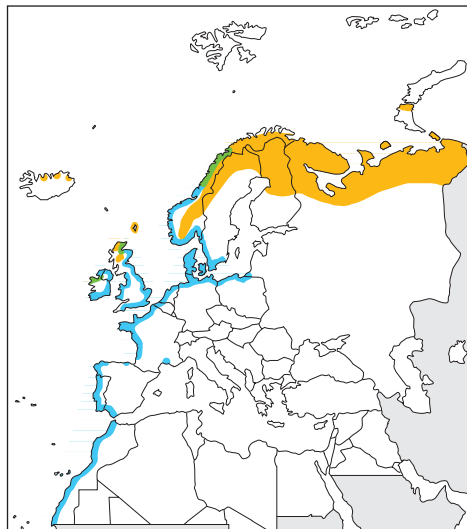
L 44–54 cm, WS 79–90 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Medium-sized, rather heavily built diving duck with relatively long tail, which is often held cocked up when bird resting on water. Smaller than Velvet Scoter, with more rounded body that rides higher in water and more rounded head shape. Typically in closely packed rafts on sea, where found in small to very large flocks, which are often sexually segregated. Swims buoyantly when not feeding, riding heavy swell with ease. **Adult male** totally black, including most of bill and basal knob, but some relief is provided by patch of yellow on the culmen which is surprisingly conspicuous (as a pale patch) even over considerable distances. **Adult female and juvenile** equally distinctive, being dark sooty-brown with contrasting pale sides of head and neck, the pale-cheeked and dark-capped appearance being shared only by non-marine female Red-crested Pochard (q.v.). Moulting 1st-winter males may have pale sides of head obscured by dusky patches, giving spotted effect recalling that of female Surf and Velvet Scoters (q.v.), and caution may need to be exercised with such individuals (although sociable nature normally allows direct size and shape comparison with other individuals in such cases). Tends to dive with a forward jump, with wings tightly closed; the other two scoters tend to dive with wings partially opened. When wing-flapping, has tendency to droop neck; neck is kept rigidly held forwards in other scoters. **In flight** both sexes appear black or blackish, showing slight contrast between lighter undersides to flight feathers and blackish coverts in good light; underwing almost uniform in Surf Scoter, but beware effects of light conditions and distance. At reasonable range, browner, pale-cheeked females easily distinguished from all-black males. Lack of white in wing an easy distinction from Velvet Scoter. Moving flocks fly in long wavering lines over the water, or in small tight bunches when flying high overland. When seen from the side, large flocks look rather like a tadpole with a packed mass of birds at the front and a straggling 'tail' strung out behind. See also Velvet and Surf Scoters.

SEX/AGE Males show no obvious change in late summer, but mixture of old worn feathers and fresh new feathers gives a somewhat mottled and duller appearance. Juvenile resembles adult female, but browner overall, with whitish belly barring (apparent if wing-flapping on water).

VOICE Generally silent, but in display (and on spring migration) male utters a high mellow, piping 'pew, pew, pew ...' and female a harsh, grating, rasping note. Wings of male create a sharp whistling sound on take-off.

TAXONOMY The form *americana* ('**Black Scoter**' or '**American Scoter**') may be worthy of specific status.



GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 2 races (both illustrated), including *americana* ('Black or American Scoter') of N America and NE Asia, a vagrant to W Europe. Adult male *americana* easily distinguished by swollen orange-yellow knob at base of black bill; yellow especially prominent on older males, which have bill base more evenly swollen, not forming such an abrupt protruding knob as in nominate race, with yellow reaching over halfway along bill to reach nostrils. Basal knob on nominate race only about one third of bill length. Yellow on bill of nominate race variable in extent, usually extending forwards in a stripe that reaches to nail, but always has black sides to knob. Females and juvenile males inseparable from those of nominate race, although tend to have base of bill slightly more swollen and nail more prominent. In addition, the nostrils are nearer the bill tip in *americana*. Immature males start to develop adult bill shape and coloration from late in first winter.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common (locally abundant in winter quarters). (In addition to mapped range, has bred Spitsbergen, Faeroes.) Breeds by freshwater lakes, pools and rivers in tundra and in partly forested or open country in sub-arctic regions. Outside breeding season, chiefly inshore coastal waters and estuary mouths. Occasionally on freshwater lakes inland during migration

SURF SCOTER *Melanitta perspicillata*

Plate page 173

L 45–56 cm, WS 78–92 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Similar in size to Common Scoter, but head larger and bill much more massive, producing head/bill profile that recalls Common Eider. As with Common, shows all-dark wings. **Adult male** unmistakable: black, with large white patches on forehead and nape conspicuous even at long range (when can look almost white-headed). At closer range, swollen orange, white and black bill allows easy diagnosis. During summer and

autumn white nape becomes obscure or even disappears, and in some birds may not be apparent again until midwinter. **Adult female and juvenile** dark brown overall, often with pale patches on sides of head recalling those of Velvet Scoter, but Surf stockier, with shorter body, more massive bill (although bill also heavy on Velvet), lighter sides of head overall (below blackish crown) and no white in wings (but latter often hidden in Velvet on water except during

wing-flapping). Female Surf often shows pale patch on nape (lacking in Velvet) and feathering does not extend forward onto sides of bill. Iris often whitish in adult female Surf (always dark in Velvet). Compared to female-type Common, has more massive bill with dark feathering extending in short wedge from forehead onto culmen. Head/bill shape much more angular, with flat crown that slopes away behind noticeably peak at forehead before abruptly ending at sharply-angled nape. Head outline of Common distinctly more rounded and steeper forehead does not merge almost imperceptibly into bill. Sides of head not usually as pale overall as in Common, so less contrasting with dark cap, but Common (except some 1st-winter males) does not show pale patches on sides of head often seen in Surf. (Beware some juvenile Surf with paler overall coloration to sides of head and only indistinct pale face patches: these can look very like Common.) Adult female often has whitish iris (always dark in Common). Often shows darker patch on side of bill (absent in Common), but this feature only visible in ideal conditions. When diving, tends to jump forwards with partially opened wings, and keeps neck rigid while wing-flapping. (Common dives with wings tightly closed and droops neck during wing-flapping; Velvet dives with partially opened wings but no jump, often momentarily showing flash of white in second-

aries.) Confusion possible with female and immature Common Eider, but Surf Scoter smaller, with longer tail, unbarred plumage and distinctive head pattern. **In flight** similar to Common Scoter, but white head patches of male obvious even at quite long range; also rather bulkier, and with heavier head and bill. Shows less contrast between underwing coverts and flight feathers, which are more or less uniform (but this difficult to interpret in dull light or at a distance). Lack of white in wing an easy distinction from Velvet Scoter.

SEX/AGE Slight seasonal variation in adult male (see Identification). Juvenile resembles adult female, but is generally lighter brown, especially on face, throat and underparts, usually with whitish belly; whitish cheek spots sometimes merge, but are usually clearly defined; lacks pale patch on nape shown by most adult females. Iris dark (usually pale in adult female). Gradually attains adult features during first winter, when males begin to show pale on nape and bill. Males attain full plumage by second winter; by late in first winter males are mostly blackish, but white areas on forehead and nape small and indistinct. Females do not attain pale nape or iris until second winter.

VOICE Generally silent.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W and C Europe). In natural range, habitat much as Common Scoter. In our region, usually found associating with flocks of that species.

VELVET SCOTER *Melanitta fusca*

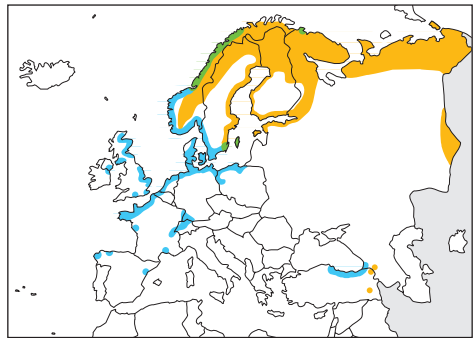
White-winged Scoter (N America)

L 51–58 cm, WS 90–99 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Largest of the three scoters, with relatively longer body; heavy, angular head and bill profile somewhat recall Common Eider, although less so than in Surf Scoter. In all plumages, white secondaries readily distinguish this species from all other dark sea ducks; although they are generally hidden when on water, they may show as momentary flash while diving or be revealed during wing-flapping.

Adult male black, with tiny white eye patch which is difficult to see in field. Has blackish knob at base of mostly yellow bill. **Adult female and juvenile** dusky-brown with one or two circular white patches on sides of head, bearing superficial resemblance to those of smaller and stockier Surf Scoter. Size and bill shape are useful aid in separation from latter, although presence of white in wing needs to be seen to confirm identification. Fresh-plumaged females and immature males lack white face patches and appear totally dusky-brown on head and body; these differ from dark Common Eiders in lacking barred appearance, or any white on breast or mantle, and in having more prominent tail. Dives with wings partially opened, but with no jump, often showing brief flash of white in secondaries. Wing-flaps like Surf with neck held rigidly outstretched, not drooped as in Common. **In flight** easily identified by striking white secondaries strongly contrasting with otherwise all-dark plumage.

SEX/AGE Males in summer look duller owing to brownish feather tips. Juvenile resembles adult female, but is duller and greyer, less blackish, brown, with pale brown feather tips to upperparts and whiter belly



(especially juvenile female); facial spots often clearer than in adult female. Gradually acquires adult features during first winter, but males may not be fully adult until second winter, or even later in some individuals.

VOICE Relatively silent. During display, males give a loud piping call and females have a harsh 'karr'. Both calls also given in flight.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. Breeds by lakes and large pools in wooded tundra and taiga, also locally further south by wooded and rocky coastlines (Baltic) and open upland lakes (E Turkey, Transcaucasia). On passage, occurs on freshwater lakes and estuaries. Winters in coastal waters like other scoters, and occasionally in small numbers on inland lakes.

Plate page 173

BUFFLEHEAD *Bucephala albeola*

L 32–39 cm, WS 54–61 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Small diving duck, reminiscent of Common Goldeneye but smaller.

Adult male summer has remarkable high-domed head shape, dominated by massive white patch which

Plate page 174

covers most of rear of head and contrasts with black front. White underparts and blackish central upperparts recall male Common Goldeneye, but lacks black striping on scapulars and rump grey, not black. Bill pale grey instead of blackish and iris dark, not yellow. Unmistakable, but see vagrant male Hooded Merganser, which has vaguely similar head pattern.

Adult female, eclipse male and juvenile are less conspicuous but still hard to confuse: small grey-brown, rather goldeneye-like ducks with a white flash on sides of head behind eye. Bill pale grey and iris dark (bill dark, often with variable amounts of yellowish, and iris pale yellow in female-type goldeneyes). Confusion possible with female-type Harlequin Duck, but this has smaller whitish patch behind eye and also differs in having pale area on front of face and darker breast and flanks. See also juvenile Long-tailed Duck, which has vaguely similar appearance with whitish flanks and some white before and around eye. Beware occasional Smew x Common Goldeneye hybrid that can recall female-type Bufflehead (see

Smew). **In flight** male recalls miniature Common Goldeneye, but white on head very obvious. Female is a small dull brownish duck, with dusky underwing, showing conspicuous white secondary patches on both upperwing and underwing and whitish central underparts; recalls diminutive female Common Goldeneye as white head flash not visible unless close. Flight action very fast and whirring, but wings silent; takes off from water with less effort than other diving ducks.

SEX/AGE Eclipse male differs from adult female in retaining male upperwing pattern and having larger white head patch. Juvenile much as adult female, but head patch smaller and central underparts mottled grey, less clearly whitish. Young males larger than females, with more extensive white on greater coverts.

VOICE Generally silent.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, freshwater lakes and slow rivers, mainly in wooded areas, in breeding season. At other times, also on open lakes and estuaries.

BARROW'S GOLDENEYE *Bucephala islandica*

Plate page 174

L 42–53 cm, WS 67–84 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Normally only in Iceland in our region. At all ages resembles Common Goldeneye, but rather larger, with slightly stouter bill and steeper, more bulging forecrown, sloping away to rear of head. Common has peak at centre of crown, rather than on forecrown. Nape and hindneck in Barrow's are fuller, making head seem somewhat larger. **Adult male summer** has striking large white facial crescent that is quite different from smaller white circular patch on lore of Common. Has more extensive black on upperparts than Common, extending to upper flanks and a patch at sides of breast, and enclosing a series of white patches along scapulars (Common has scapulars white with black stripes that project down towards gleaming white flanks). In good conditions, head shows purple instead of green gloss. Moulting male Commons with white spot partly obscured often appear to have a crescent rather than a spot, but it is much smaller than crescent of Barrow's and does not reach above level of eye. Transitional male Barrow's with facial crescent and upperpart pattern not fully developed can be problematic, but typically shows larger area of pale feathering on face than Common, although, as with female-type birds, reliance on comparative size and head shape important. **Adult female, eclipse male and juvenile** closely resemble corresponding plumages of Common, but are larger, with different head and bill shape, and have darker chocolate-brown heads. Head and bill shape remain the most useful distinctions when on water and can be surprisingly obvious when the two species are together. Dark extends further down neck, but this usually hard to assess. Tends to show much yellowish on bill, but considerable overlap. **In flight** very like Common, but male shows blacker upperparts with smaller white patch on forewing (restricted to median coverts) that is divided from large white patch on secondaries and



greater coverts by a black band across base of greater coverts; the facial crescent and larger size may also be apparent. Adult female and juvenile harder to separate, but wing pattern of adult female differs slightly, Barrow's lacking obvious white on median coverts shown by Common (but juvenile female Common also lacks white and has wing similar to Barrow's, so this distinction valid only if white present). Juvenile Barrow's has blacker upperwing coverts than juvenile Common.

SEX/AGE Eclipse male resembles adult female, but retains summer-male wing pattern and is generally darker above, with paler breast and black bill. Adult female in summer duller than winter female, with greyer head, and lacks whitish collar and obvious pale bill tip. Juvenile resembles summer adult female, but upperwing coverts with less white and iris often dusky. Juvenile males larger than females from early autumn.

VOICE Relatively silent except during display, when male utters a soft, grunted 'ka-KAA'. Female has several low growling or grunting notes, which may also be uttered when flushed. Wings of males produce whistling sound in flight.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (Vagrants reported from several W European countries, but many likely to be escapes as popular in captivity.) In breeding season, lakes, pools and slow rivers. Outside breeding season disperses to ice-free lakes and rivers, and inshore coastal waters.

COMMON GOLDENEYE *Bucephala clangula*

Plate page 174

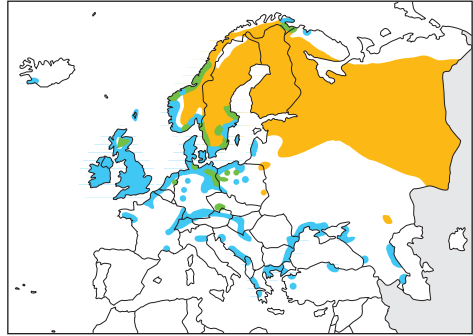
Goldeneye

L 42–50 cm, WS 65–80 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Medium-sized diving duck with stocky build, short neck, prominent tail, short bill and

relatively large, almost triangular-shaped head in all plumages. Often in closely packed rafts on lakes and

coastal waters. Only loosely associates with other species. When resting, swims buoyantly with tail prominently cocked. Nests in tree holes and nestboxes. **Adult male summer** has black head and central upperparts contrasting with very white body. At closer ranges, the circular white loreal spot is very evident. Confusion is likely only with similar Barrow's Goldeneye (q.v.), but latter occurs regularly only in Iceland in our region. **Adult female, eclipse male and juvenile** have greyish-brown body contrasting with darker brown head and white wing patch (often visible when on water); a distinct whitish breast and collar may be evident in adult females, as well as yellowish tip to dark bill. These 'brown-heads' easily distinguished from other diving ducks (apart from Barrow's Goldeneye, q.v.) by distinctive head shape. **In flight** a stocky, broad-winged, short-necked duck, with fast wingbeats (creating noticeable whistling in males). In all plumages, the largely dusky underwing contrasts with white secondaries. Black head of summer male contrasts with white underbody; upperside of male shows mostly white inner wing contrasting with blackish central upperparts and outer wing. Females and juveniles dingy brownish with whiter belly; underwing as male, but upperside with less white, although still obvious. White less extensive in juveniles. See similar Barrow's Goldeneye and smaller vagrant Bufflehead. **SEX/AGE** Eclipse male resembles adult female, but wing as summer male, with extensive white forewing; bill black. Adult female in summer duller than in winter, lacking whitish collar and pale tip to bill and with grey of underparts browner. Juvenile differs from summer adult female in being still duller, with greyer head, often with dark iris; young females lack white



on greater coverts shown by adults, but juvenile males have whitish greater coverts and are larger than females.

VOICE Apart from whistling wingbeats in male, relatively silent except when displaying, when male utters a number of peculiar whistling and grating notes, including a fast rasping 'be-beeezh' when 'head-tossing', followed by a low, Garganey-like rattle. Females have a harsh 'berr' or 'graa', sometimes also given when flushed.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Switzerland, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Romania, W Ukraine.) Breeds in northern forest zone, preferring lakes and slow rivers close to woodland. Outside breeding season on variety of waters, from large freshwater lakes to estuaries and sheltered coastal bays.

HOODED MERGANSER *Mergus cucullatus*

Plate page 175

L 42–50 cm, WS 56–70 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Small diving duck with bushy, erectable crest at rear of head, long, slender bill and prominent tail often carried erect like a Ruddy Duck. **Adult male summer** distinctive, with bushy black head and white blaze behind eye, latter visible as either a rectangular patch or a massive white, fan-shaped area depending on whether crest is closed or elevated. The blackish upperparts contrast with white breast, black and white bands at sides of breast, white-striped tertials and vermiculated rufous-grey flanks. Unmistakable, but compare vagrant male Bufflehead. **Adult female, eclipse male and juvenile** are relatively plain greyish-brown overall, but have bushy dull ginger crest on rear of head and pale yellowish bill base. Virtually unmistakable (can recall Red-breasted Merganser, but much smaller and stockier, with smaller bill and larger, fuller crest; confusion unlikely). **In flight** a small duck with 'waisted' appearance to neck created by large oblong-shaped head. Flies fast and low. Male appears mainly blackish in flight; all-dark impression relieved by white breast, head patch and central underparts. Upperwing very dark, showing white bar along greater coverts, striped

tertials and slightly paler area on median coverts. The underwing resembles that of Common Teal, with dusky leading edge, whitish central area and greyish flight feathers. Adult female and juvenile in flight show similar wing pattern to male, but are dull greyish-brown on head and body, with slightly whiter central underparts.

SEX/AGE Eclipse male resembles adult female, but has yellow (not reddish-brown) iris, blacker bill, grey (not brown) median coverts and more white on greater coverts (so forewing paler overall); often shows vestiges of breeding-male plumage. Juvenile similar to adult female, but crest shorter, lacks white stripes on tertials and either lacks white on greater coverts (female) or shows only a little (male); upperparts paler brown. Iris duller; greyish-brown rather than reddish-brown.

VOICE Relatively silent.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, favours small lakes in wooded regions, but in winter on larger waters, estuaries and coastal lagoons.

SMEW *Mergus albellus*

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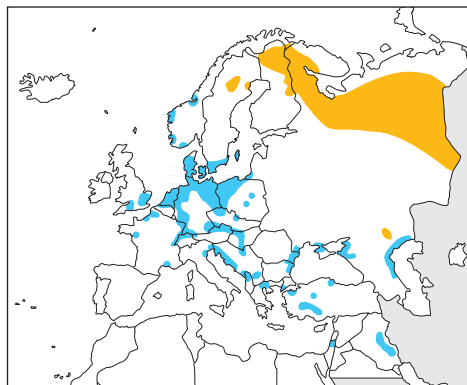
L 38–44 cm, WS 55–69 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Small diving duck (females being little larger than Common Teal). Often in small closely packed rafts in winter, frequently sexually segregated. Adult females and juveniles winter further south than majority of adult males. Mixes little with other species

apart from Common Goldeneyes, with which it occasionally hybridizes. Nests in holes in trees and freely uses nestboxes. **Adult male summer** strikingly white, with blackish mantle and head patches: unlikely to be mistaken for any other duck except perhaps distant

pale immature male Long-tailed Duck (but beware also winter-plumaged Black Guillemot). Surprisingly easy to overlook on dappled or choppy water. **Adult female, eclipse male and juvenile** (known as 'red-heads') show a distinctive combination of greyish body with chestnut-brown head and gleaming white throat and lower cheeks; white wing patches often visible on water, suggesting female Common Goldeneye (with which Smew often associate in winter), but smaller head and rather grebe-like, two-tone head and throat pattern (with dark crown and white throat) make separation easy. Compare also winter-plumaged small grebes. **In flight** small, slim, fast and agile, taking off suddenly from water almost in manner of a dabbling duck. Males look very white, with blackish centre to upperparts and large white patch towards front of blackish upperwing; underwing whitish, with greyer flight feathers and dusky leading edge. 'Red-heads' greyish, with smaller white upperwing patch than male, but similar underwing pattern. Latter recalls Common Teal, but Smew easily distinguished by relatively large white patch on upperwing coverts (obscured in juveniles) and white throat and foreneck. Lacks dusky-white underwing of female Common Goldeneye.

SEX/AGE Ageing and sexing of 'red-heads' difficult in the field. Eclipse male resembles summer adult female (with brown lores), but has larger white patch on upperwing coverts and blacker upperparts. In summer, female has brownish, not blackish, lores. Juvenile as summer adult female, but iris dull (not reddish) brown, central underparts mottled greyish (not clear whitish), and white tips to greater coverts and secondaries broader. Young males larger than females, with tertials longer and paler.



VOICE Generally silent. Males utter occasional low croaks and whistles during display. Female sometimes gives a low growling note.

HYBRIDS Will occasionally interbreed with Common Goldeneye. Progeny in female-type plumage can suggest female-type Bufflehead, but white area on lower face usually more extensive (often extending to throat).

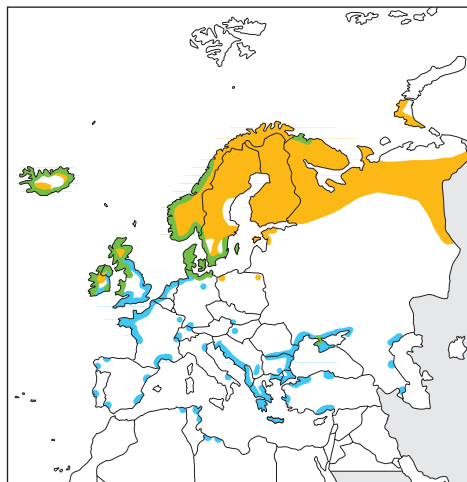
STATUS/HABITAT Generally uncommon, but local concentrations occur in winter quarters. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Romania and south of mapped area in former USSR.) Breeds by forested pools, lakes and slow rivers (as Common Goldeneye), but with preference for lowland riverine forests. Outside breeding season, on open lakes and locally on estuaries and sheltered coastal bays.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER *Mergus serrator*

Plate page 175

L 52–58 cm, WS 70–86 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Long-bodied, long-necked and slender-billed diving duck of estuaries and shallow coastal waters. Sociable, often in flocks throughout the year. When actively feeding, swims low in water with sleeked-down feathering on head and neck; when resting, swims high and buoyantly. Recalls Goosander, with which it very rarely hybridizes, but smaller, more slender and with looser and more spiky crest. **Adult male summer**, with its black (green-glossed) head, black upperparts, white collar and wing patches, greyish flanks, black and white chest patches and streaked brownish breast, is unlikely to be confused. **Adult female, eclipse male and juvenile** are slender, greyish-brown ducks with warmer brown head and ill-defined whitish centre of foreneck, breast and belly, and are sometimes referred to as 'brown-heads'. Crest may be quite inconspicuous, particularly when actively diving (when feathering of head and neck sleeked down, creating an almost serpentine, or at least Cormorant-like, appearance). At other times, rear of the head appears ruffled with a loose crest, which is shorter than in adult male summer. Most likely confusion is with 'brown-head' Goosander, but Red-breasted Merganser is smaller, with slimmer head and neck, finer, less deeply-based bill, duller grey body plumage, duller and paler ginger-brown head, and scruffier and more wispy crest (fuller, droopier and more mane-like in Goosander). Brown of head diffuses into whitish breast and foreneck (division not clear-cut as in Goosander). **In flight** a long-bodied and long-necked duck with wings appearing to be attached well back on body and neck projected stiffly. Adult male shows extensive white on inner wing, contrasting with black-



ish mantle and sides of upperparts, outer wing and head; the white collar and brownish breast are apparent in flight and provide an easy distinction from Goosander. 'Brown-heads' are best identified by shape, the greyish upperparts being relieved only by the white secondaries. They appear similar to Goosander, but are considerably smaller and less bulky overall, and show less striking contrast between head and breast. The white wing patch differs slightly between the two species: Red-breasted Merganser has a black bar across

base of secondaries dividing white wing patch, but this bar is obscured by longer white greater coverts in Goosander. Compare also flying grebes and divers.

SEX/AGE Eclipse male resembles adult female, but retains extensive white on upperwing, has blacker mantle and red (not brown) iris. Summer adult female has head and neck paler, more buffish-orange, than in winter; lacks dusky lores and has more indistinct pale loreal line. Juvenile similar to summer adult female, but central underparts and breast more suffused with greyish-brown, less whitish; upperwing of juvenile female has white a little less extensive.

GOOSANDER *Mergus merganser*

Common Merganser (N America)

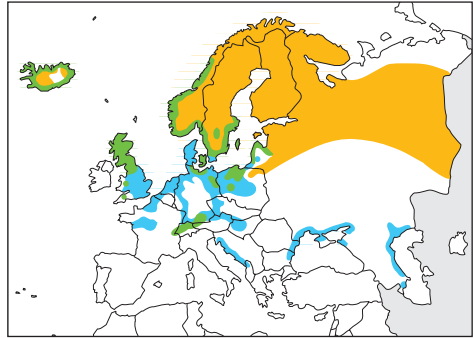
L 58–72 cm, WS 86–102 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Large, chiefly freshwater diving duck. Similar to Red-breasted Merganser (q.v.), but considerably larger and bulkier, with stouter neck and maned (rather than wispy) crest giving a large-headed appearance. Usually encountered in small parties on lakes and rivers. Feeds chiefly along fast-flowing rivers in daytime, flying to and from roosting lakes at dusk and dawn. Nests mainly in tree holes or nestboxes near water. **Adult male summer** distinctive, with black (glossed green) head and black central upperparts contrasting with white breast and underparts, the latter strongly washed creamy salmon-pink (but obvious only in good light, and fading by spring). **Adult female, eclipse male and juvenile** (i.e. birds in 'brown-head' plumage) differ from those of Red-breasted Merganser in size and structure, and in having purer grey body plumage and darker brown head and upper neck: Goosander has dark foreneck, while this is whitish in Red-breasted Merganser; the dark head and neck are clearly demarcated from the creamy-white breast and white chin, although contrast less obvious in duller juvenile, while in Red-breasted Merganser the transition is diffuse. White lower neck, breast and belly of Goosander are tinged with a hint of pink, at least in autumn and winter, unlike female-type Red-breasted Merganser. **In flight** considerably larger and more heavily built than Red-breasted Merganser, but overall shape similar. Male has black head, central upperparts and outer wing and white neck, underparts and inner wing; lacks breast band of Red-breasted Merganser and shows more extensive white on upperwing, lacking black dividing line. 'Brown-heads' most easily separated by heavier appearance and strong contrast between dark brown head and upper neck and white centre of breast; also usually lack black dividing line across white patch on upperwing (although may show an indistinct line).

VOICE Relatively silent except in display, when males utter a variety of soft notes and a low cat-like mewling. Females have several grating and harsh calls, including a gruff 'prrak, prrak', which may be heard during display or in flight.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Netherlands, Lithuania, Armenia.) Breeds by estuaries, rivers and lakes in wooded country north to fringes of tundra. Outside breeding season, almost entirely on inshore tidal waters, chiefly estuary mouths and shallow coastal bays, but regular on freshwater lakes during migration.

Plate page 175



SEX/AGE Eclipse male resembles adult female, but retains extensive white on upperwing; flanks also whiter and mantle blacker. Summer adult female has head paler brown and crest rather shorter than in winter, often with narrow pale loreal line. Juvenile resembles summer adult female, but duller, with brown cast to mantle and scapulars and ill-defined paler throat centre. Young males show whitish median coverts from an early stage.

VOICE Relatively silent. During display, males utter a repeated soft, frog-like 'kuoorrp, kuoorrp ...', a related but almost crane-like 'drruu-drrro' and several other sounds; females have several harsh calls including a loud 'skrrak, skrrak'.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Greece, Austria, Yugoslavia, W Ukraine, Armenia.) Breeds by forested freshwater rivers and lakes, locally along rivers in more open upland areas. Outside breeding season, chiefly on large freshwater lakes, locally on estuaries and brackish waters, but avoids coastal waters of high salinity.

RUDDY DUCK *Oxyura jamaicensis*

L 35–43 cm, WS 53–62 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Introduction from N America. A small, dumpy freshwater diving duck with long and often cocked tail; when actively diving or swimming the long tail is depressed to the surface, giving a sloping profile to back. **Adult male summer** distinctive; is bright chestnut overall with white sides of head and neck, black crown and hindneck, large blue bill and whitish undertail coverts. In eclipse, chestnut replaced by greyish-brown but head pattern retained. **Adult female, eclipse male and juvenile** dull brownish

(adult female washed rufous in summer), with paler sides of head crossed by single rather straight dark brown band over lower cheek. Similar female-type White-headed Duck is larger and has swollen and bulging bill base, and broader dusky-brown facial band that curves downwards towards bill base. **In flight** a plump little duck with relatively long tail and short broad wings, appearing dark overall with pale underwing; white face of male conspicuous. Flies low, with rapid, almost whirring beats, taking off with

Plate page 176

MUTE SWAN
(p. 117)

♀

♂

1st-summer

juv

bewickii

TUNDRA SWAN
(p. 117)

columbianus
(WHISTLING SWAN)

bewickii
(BEWICK'S SWAN)

juv *bewickii*

WHOOPER SWAN
(p. 118)

juv

GEESE

BEAN GOOSE
(p. 119)

fabalis
(TAIGA BEAN
GOOSE)

rossicus
(TUNDRA BEAN
GOOSE)

juv *fabalis*

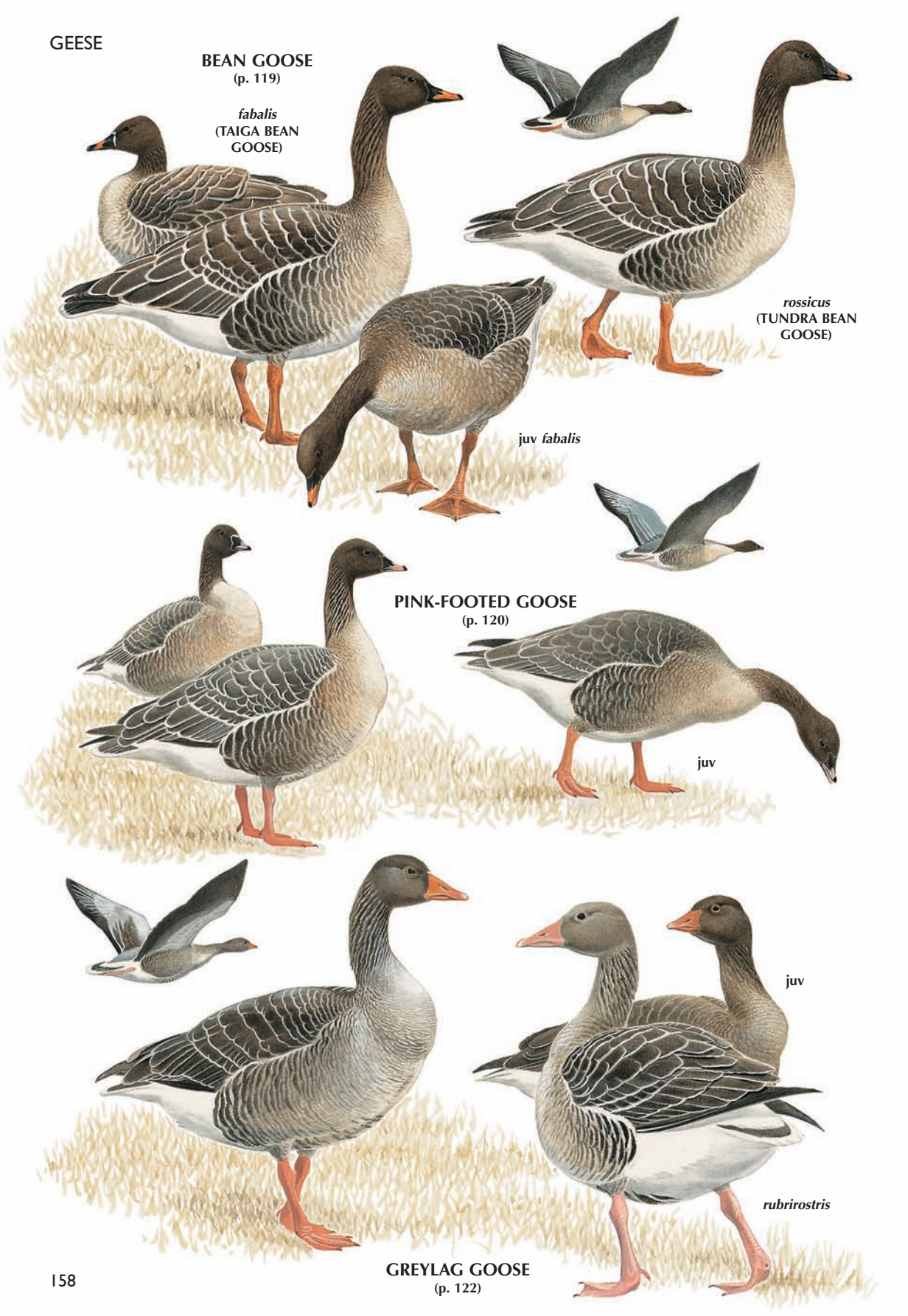
PINK-FOOTED GOOSE
(p. 120)

juv

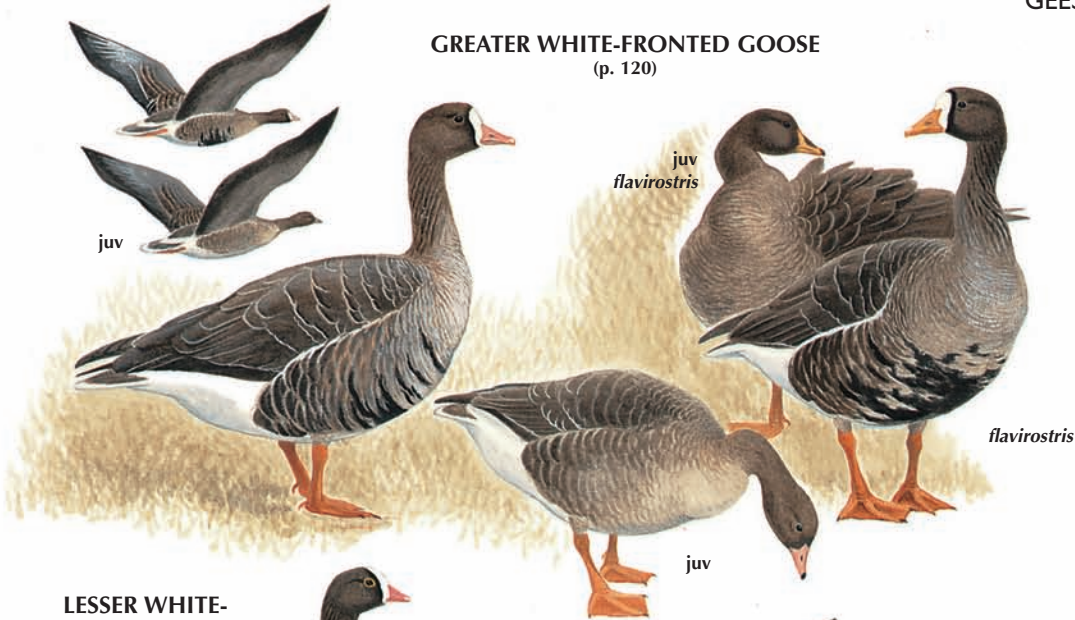
juv

rubrirostris

GREYLAG GOOSE
(p. 122)



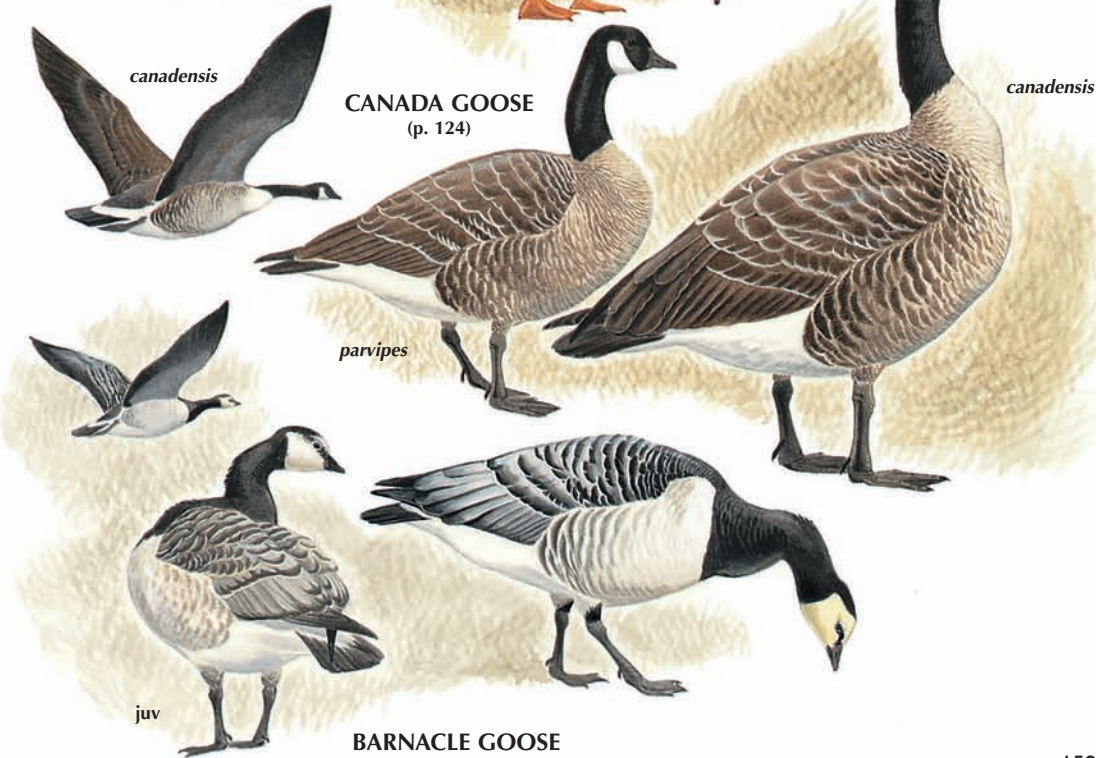
GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE
(p. 120)



LESSER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE
(p. 121)



CANADA GOOSE
(p. 124)



BARNACLE GOOSE
(p. 124)

white
morph



SNOW GOOSE
(p. 123)



white
morph

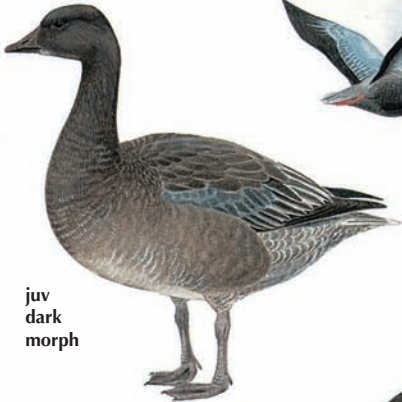
juv
white
morph



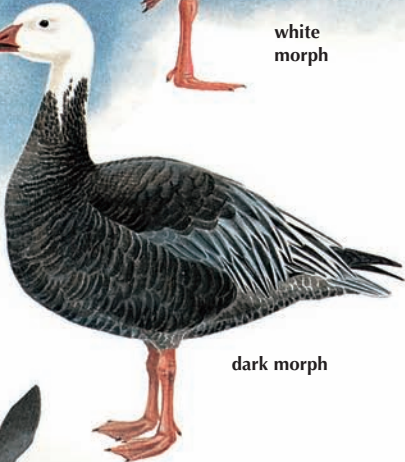
dark
morph



juv
dark
morph



dark morph



nigricans
(BLACK BRANT)



hrota
(PALE-BELLIED
BRENT GOOSE)

BRENT GOOSE
(p. 125)



juv

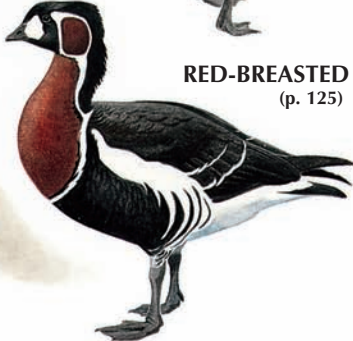


RED-BREASTED GOOSE
(p. 125)

juv
bernicle



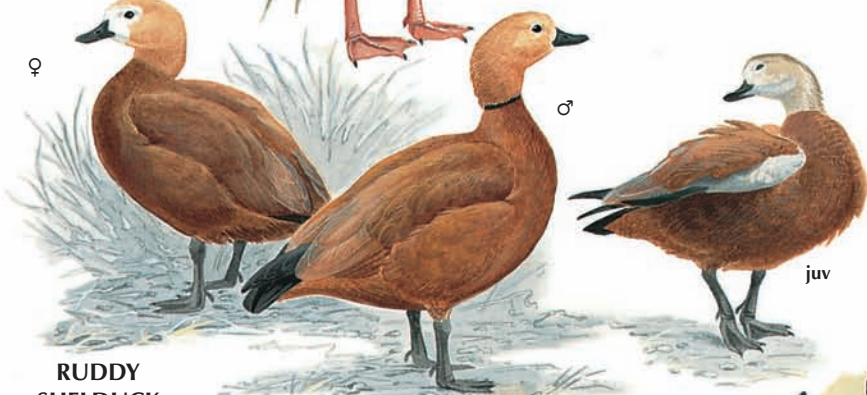
bernicle
(DARK-BELLIED
BRENT GOOSE)



EGYPTIAN GOOSE
(p. 127)



RUDDY
SHELDUCK
(p. 127)



MALLARD
(at same scale)



COMMON
SHELDUCK
(p. 128)

DABBLING DUCKS

♂ eclipse

WOOD DUCK
(p. 130)



♂ eclipse



♂

juv



CAPE TEAL
(p. 135)

EURASIAN WIGEON
(p. 131)



AMERICAN WIGEON
(p. 131)



NORTHERN
PINTAIL
(p. 136)



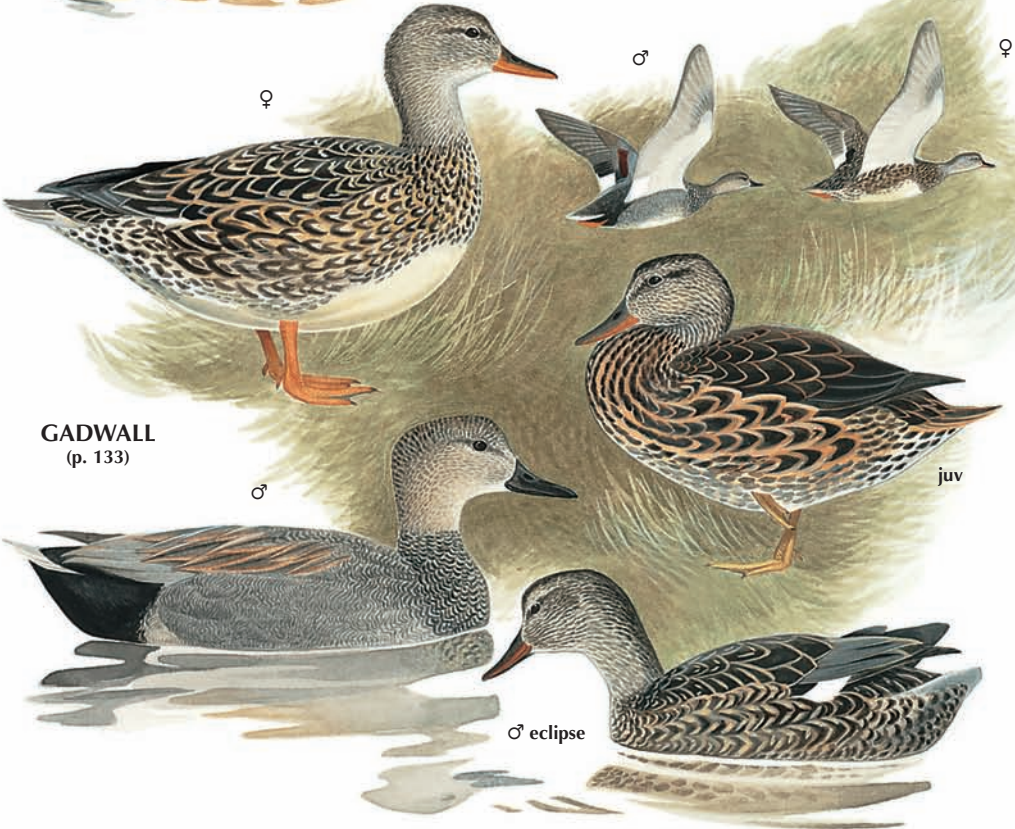
FALCATED DUCK
(p. 132)

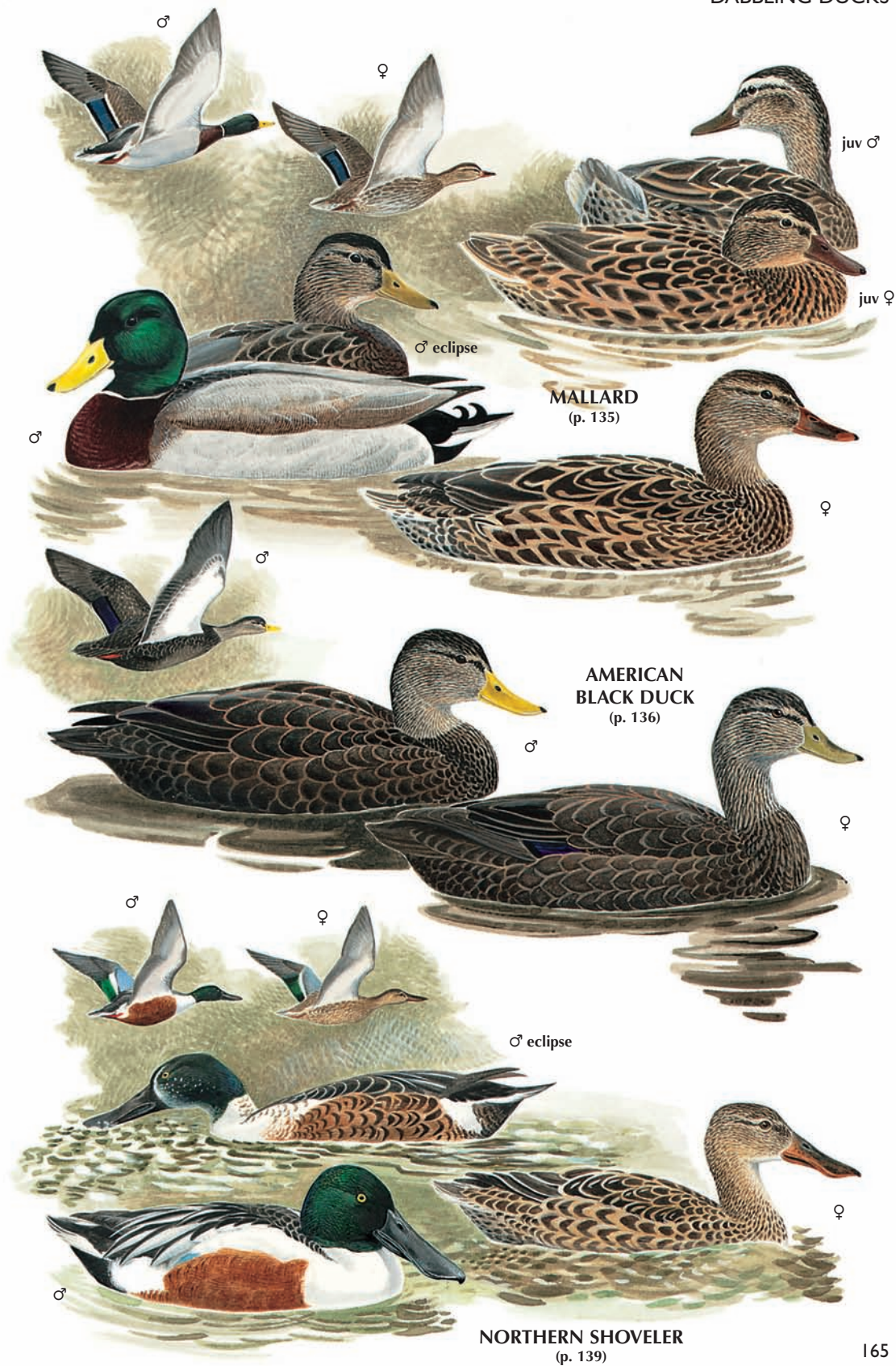


BAIKAL TEAL
(p. 134)



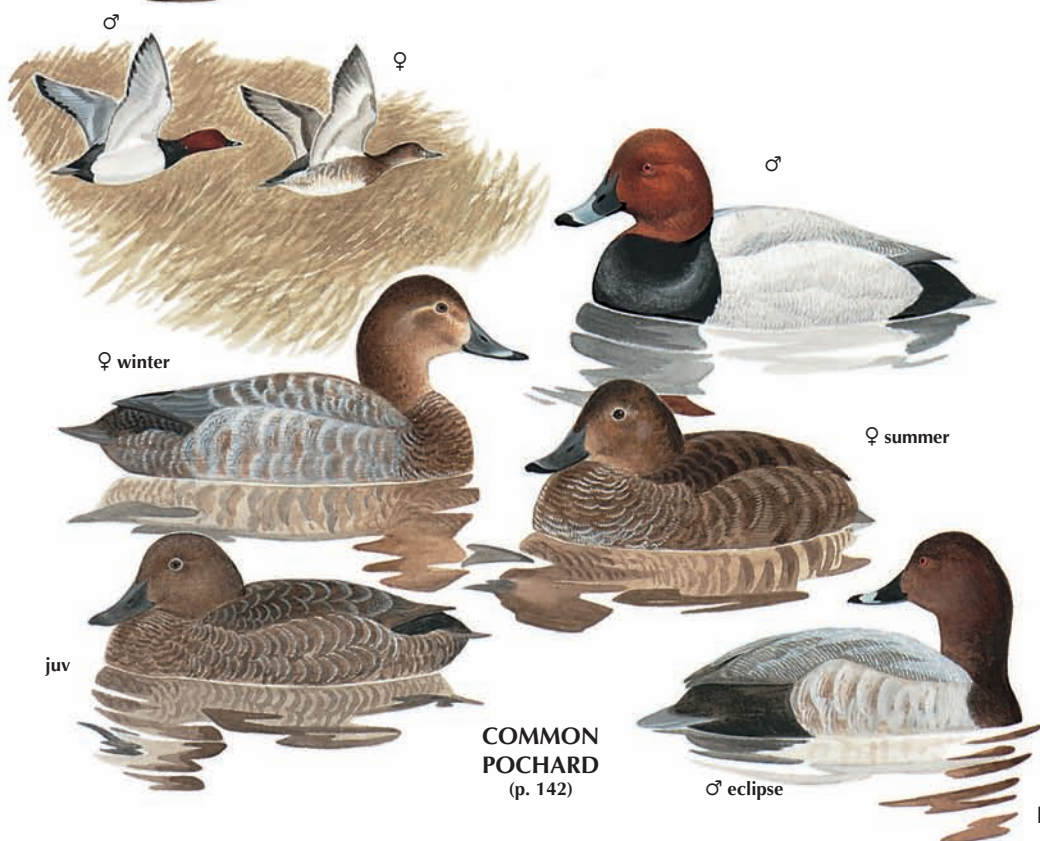
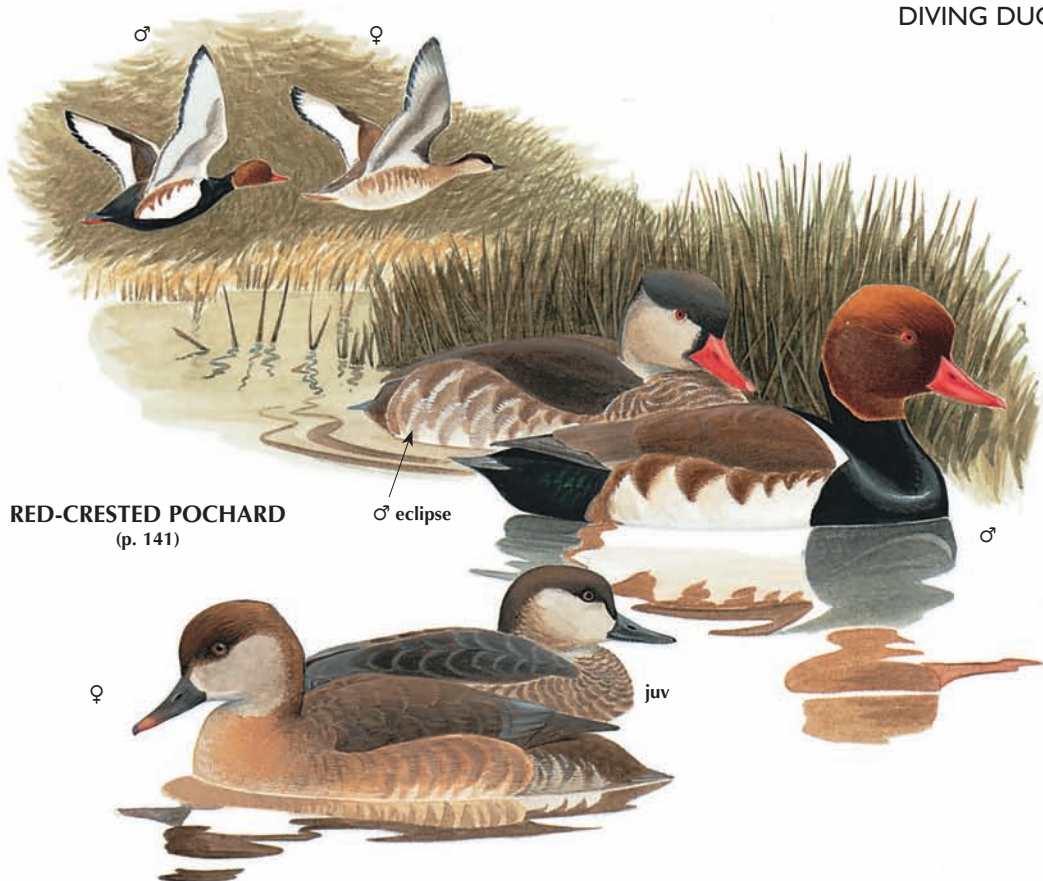
GADWALL
(p. 133)







RED-CRESTED POCHARD
(p. 141)

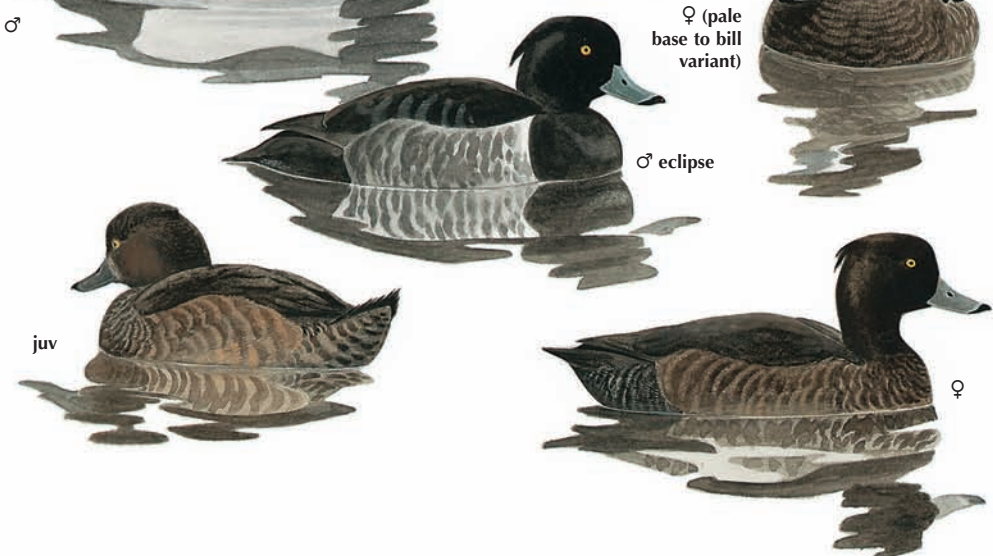


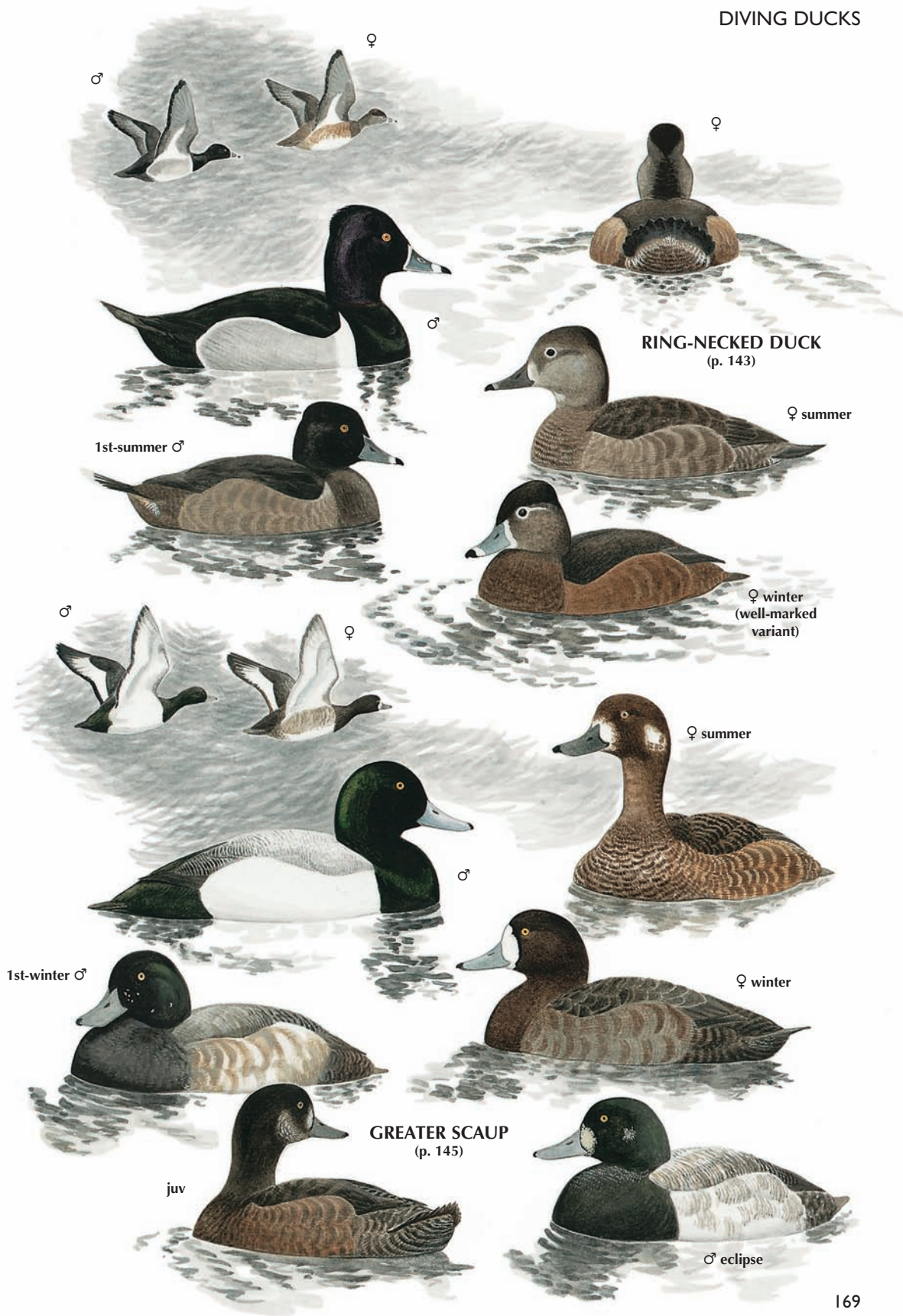
DIVING DUCKS

FERRUGINOUS
DUCK
(p. 144)

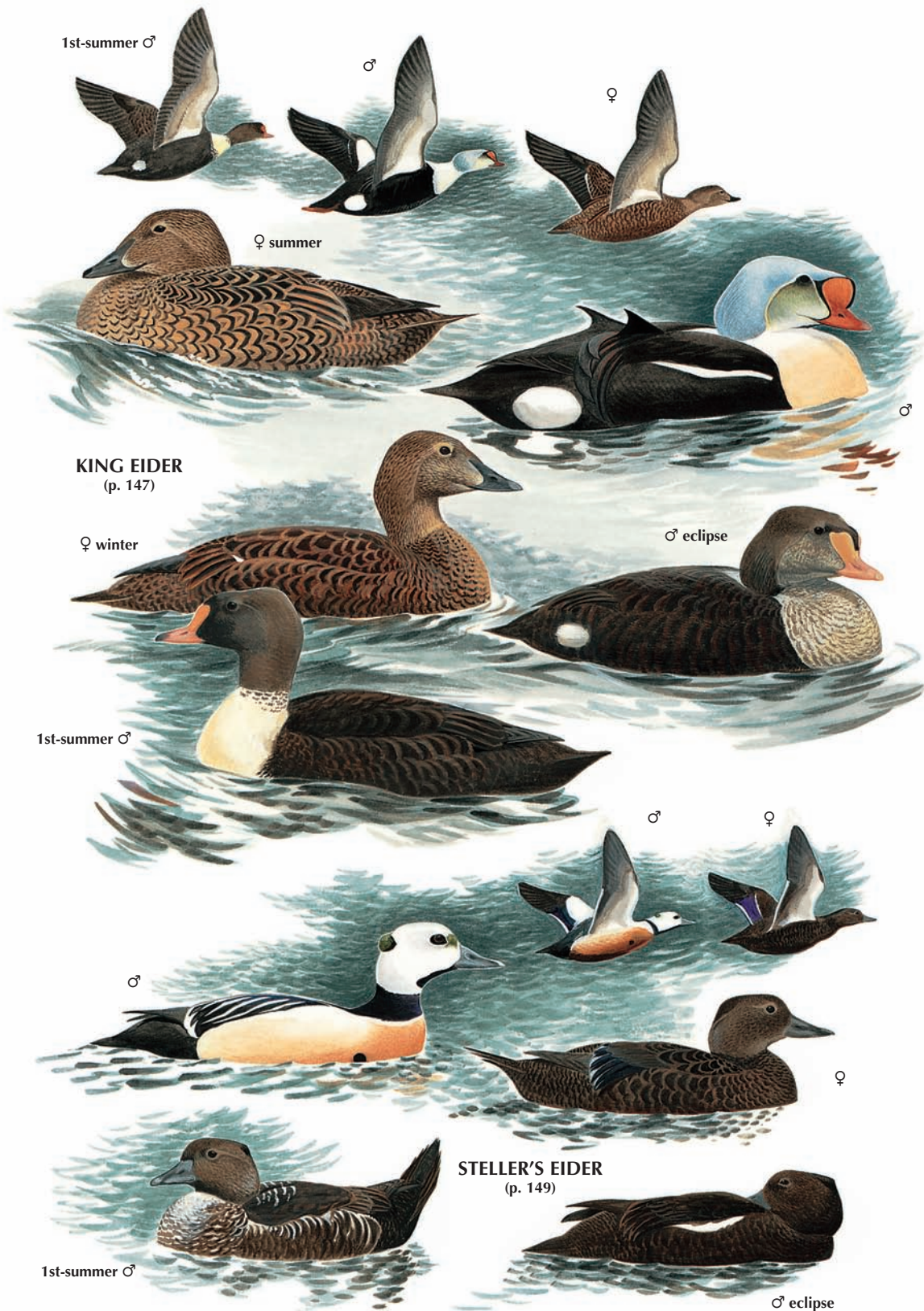


TUFTED DUCK
(p. 144)



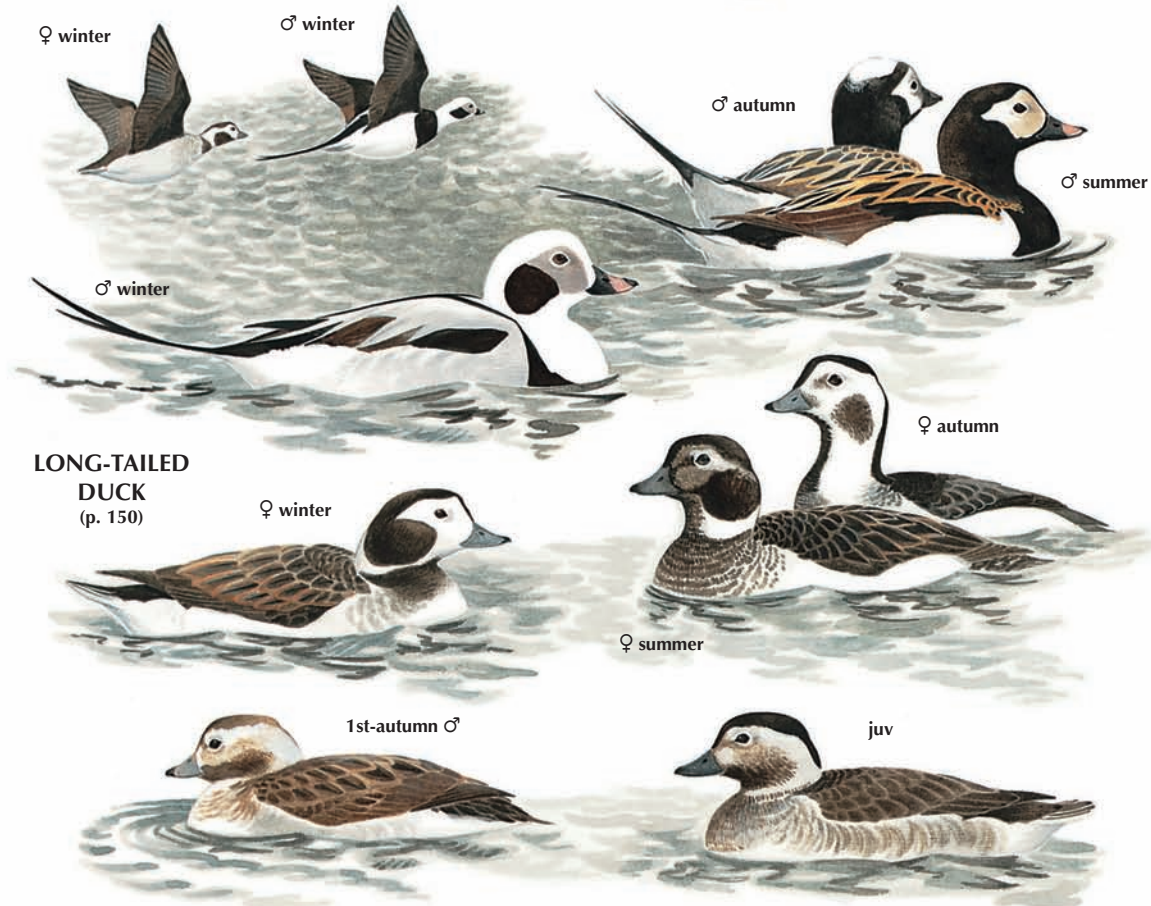








HARLEQUIN
DUCK
(p. 149)

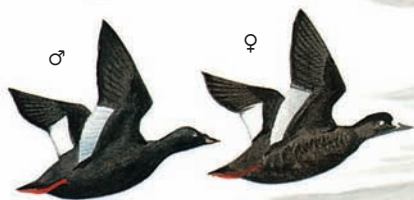


LONG-TAILED
DUCK
(p. 150)

COMMON SCOTER
(p. 151)



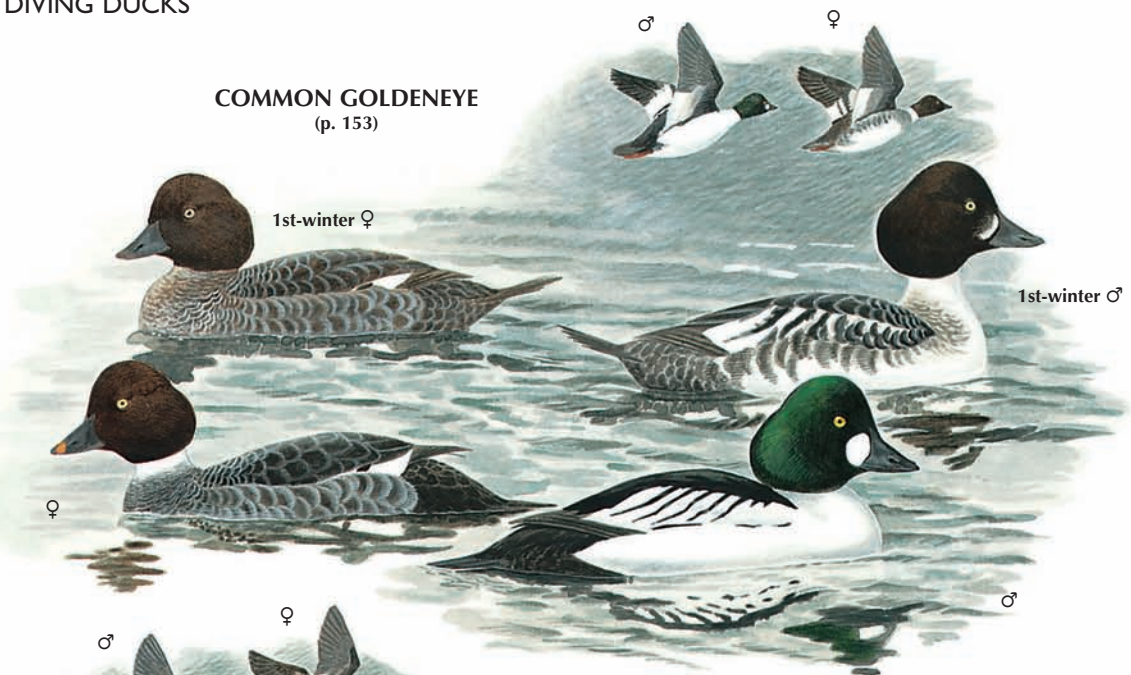
SURF SCOTER
(p. 151)



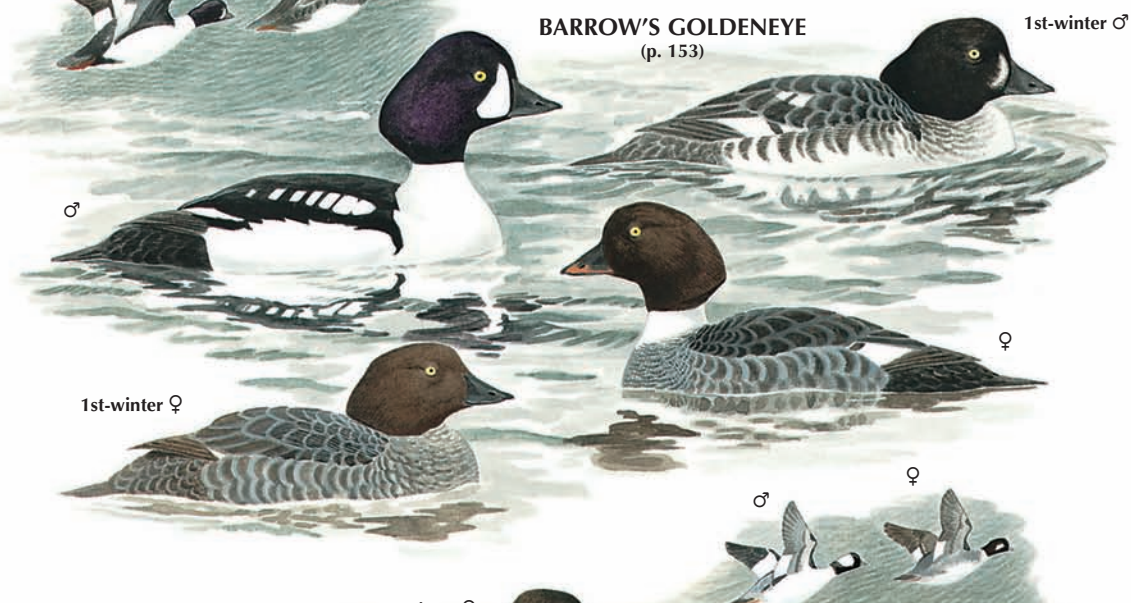
VELVET SCOTER
(p. 152)



COMMON GOLDENEYE
(p. 153)



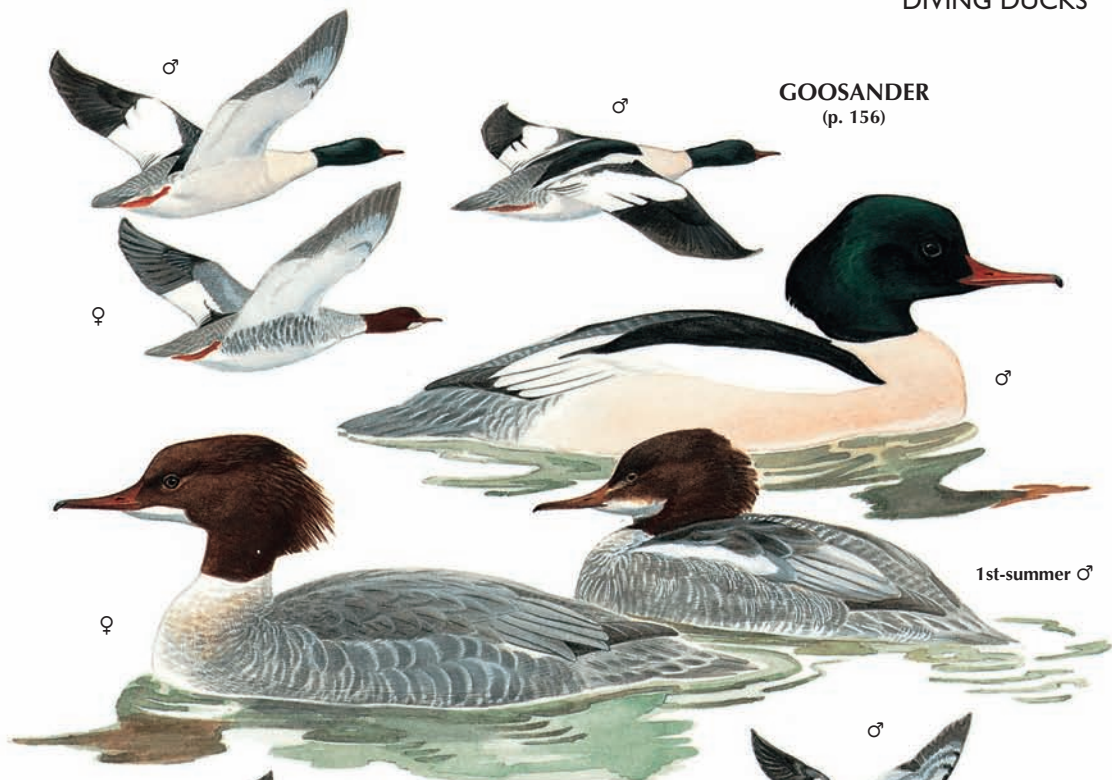
BARROW'S GOLDENEYE
(p. 153)



BUFFLEHEAD
(p. 152)



GOOSANDER
(p. 156)

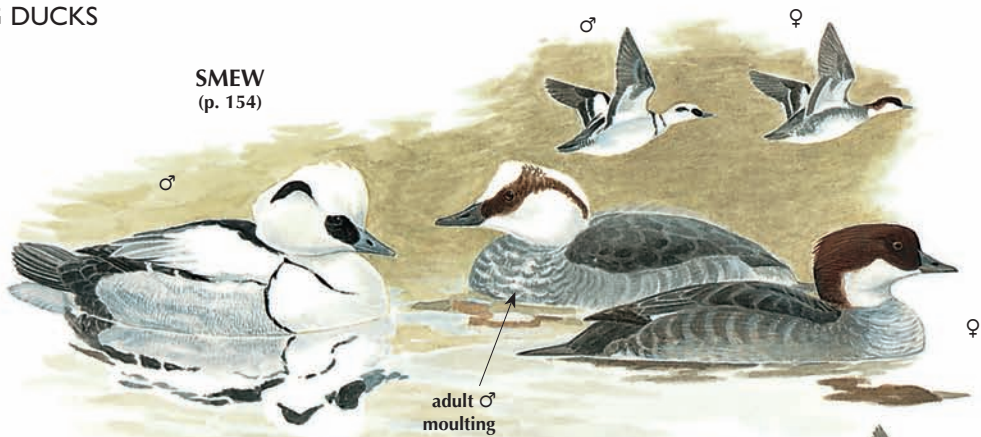


RED-BREASTED MERGANSER
(p. 155)

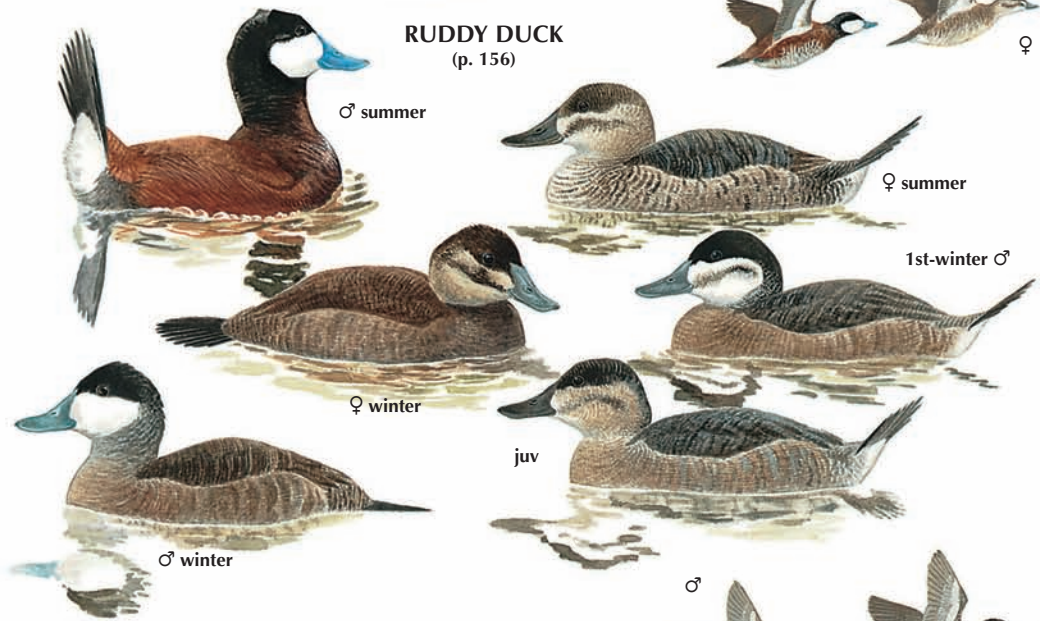


HOODED MERGANSER
(p. 154)

SMEW
(p. 154)

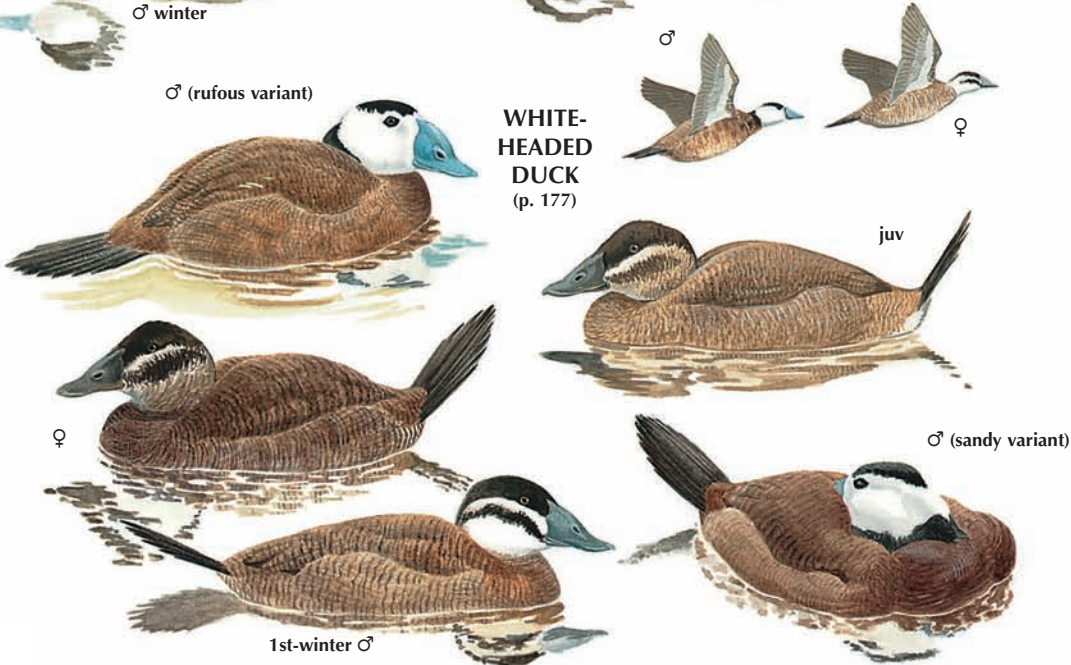


RUDDY DUCK
(p. 156)



♂ (rufous variant)

WHITE-HEADED DUCK
(p. 177)



much pattering over surface and often skating across surface while alighting.

SEX/AGE Eclipse male has chestnut areas replaced by greyish-brown; head as summer, but duller. Female in eclipse duller, more greyish-brown, than summer, lacking rufous tones to body plumage and with cheek bar less clearly defined. Juvenile resembles eclipse adult female, but body plumage more barred and central underparts more mottled; tail feathers narrower, notched at tip, with bare shaft projecting (as in other ducks). This subtle feature is visible (with detailed scrutiny at close range) more easily than in other ducks.

VOICE Relatively silent. During peculiar display, male holds tail vertical and produces ticking, tapping and belching sounds by slapping bill against inflated throat and breast, while also producing bubbles around breast. Other calls rarely given.

HYBRIDS Will hybridize with White-headed Duck, producing offspring with intermediate or mixed characters.



STATUS/HABITAT Locally fairly common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Belgium, Netherlands. May be colonizing S Spain. Increasing feral population in Britain. Vagrants occurring in Continental Europe presumably originate from this population.) Breeds by open freshwater lakes with fringing vegetation. Outside breeding season, also on brackish waters.

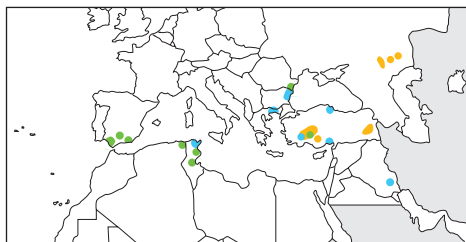
WHITE-HEADED DUCK *Oxyura leucocephala*

Plate page 176

L 43–48 cm, WS 62–70 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Patchily distributed 'stiff-tail', chiefly of southeast of our region. Typically in small parties or pairs in spring, but gathers in flocks outside breeding season. Loafs on water in rafts, or alone, often at edge of reeds. Dives for long periods. Overall shape recalls smaller Ruddy Duck (q.v.). In all plumages, markedly swollen bill base distinctive. **Adult male summer** has rich rufous body coloration, becoming more sandy on the upperparts. Although some birds so rufous as to recall Ruddy Duck, lacks white on undertail coverts and has very little black on head. Head strikingly white, with blackish crown centre and collar on upper neck, and large blue bill with markedly swollen base. **Eclipse male** has more extensive blackish area on head, sometimes reaching eye and nape and thus recalling Ruddy Duck, but swollen base to bill always a distinctive difference. **Adult female and juvenile** resemble those of Ruddy Duck, but White-headed is larger, with heavier head, blacker crown and broader and blacker cheek band, and obviously swollen base to bill. The black of the crown extends well down towards gape, and the blackish cheek bar also curves downwards towards base of bill, creating a strongly curving facial pattern that (together with swollen bill) looks distinctly different from straight facial pattern of Ruddy Duck. Upperparts more vermiculated and adult female often more rufous overall. In most swimming postures more hunched than Ruddy Duck, with higher and more rounded back profile. Males in first spring typically have head mottled dusky; in extreme examples whole head appears blackish in the field. **In flight** shape recalls Ruddy Duck: head appears all white in summer males, and upwiring greyer, less blackish, than in Ruddy Duck; birds in female-type plumage difficult to separate in flight. Only comparatively rarely seen in flight, pattering along surface for some distance before take-off.

SEX/AGE Eclipse male similar to summer, but less rufous-chestnut, being distinctly greyish-buff on neck and underparts; head extensively white but blackish patches more widespread, often reaching eye and extending over nape, with dusky mottling on ear-



coverts. Bill greyer and less swollen. Winter female duller brown, less rufous than in summer, with whiter sides of head making dark cheek bands more conspicuous. Juvenile resembles winter adult female, but cheek pattern more striking, with whiter sides of head; upperparts darker and underparts buff. 1st-winter male has duller head pattern than young female, with more extensive dusky on sides of head. Bill becomes blue by late winter or spring. By first spring young male resembles adult, but head extensively mottled dusky, often appearing black-headed. Not fully white-headed until following spring. Through first winter, juveniles may be aged at close range by narrower and more spike-tipped tail feathers (see Ruddy Duck).

VOICE Relatively silent. During display, erects neck and cocks tail vertically, but most calls uttered during group swimming displays, when low rattling noise uttered. A few low, harsh notes occasionally heard from females.

STATUS/HABITAT Rare and very localized. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Corsica, Italy, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Armenia, Morocco. May breed Algeria. Reintroduction programme recently started in Hungary.) Breeds in open steppe-like country, preferring small lakes adjoining larger open waters, with relatively shallow fresh or brackish water and extensive fringing and emergent vegetation. Winters on larger and more open lakes, but often found in proximity to fringing vegetation.

RAPTORS (BIRDS OF PREY)

Accipitridae, Pandionidae & Falconidae

54 species (9 vagrant)

The raptors, or diurnal birds of prey, are a group of 3 families (in our region) of medium-sized to huge, highly aerial carnivorous birds. The group consists of the Accipitridae (hawks and eagles), the Pandionidae (Osprey) and the Falconidae (falcons). Raptors are characterized by large hooked beaks, large, strongly clawed feet, and large, staring eyes that are positioned well forward to give excellent stereoscopic vision. Most species have long wings and most Accipitridae (and Osprey) have characteristic deep slots between outer primaries in flight, giving wingtip the look of projecting 'fingers' (a feature also seen in other soaring birds such as storks, cranes and pelicans). Note, however, that hawks of genus *Accipiter* and to a lesser extent some other species have rather short wings. Rather severe ('beetle-browed') facial expression of many raptors created by pre-frontal bone of skull projecting strongly above eyes. Base of bill characteristically covered in bare skin, known as the cere. Plumage typically rather dull (sometimes cryptic), an aid to hunting, consisting mainly of browns, black and white. Some species show quite striking wing patterns in flight.

Masters of the air, raptors employ every kind of flight technique, but are most associated with effortless soaring high in the air, utilizing updraughts and rising thermals, that makes them highly conspicuous. Most species migrate using soaring technique and must thus avoid long sea crossings where thermals scarce, making long detours to keep to land and gathering in very large numbers at geographical bottlenecks such as Strait of Gibraltar, Falsterbo (SE Sweden), the Bosphorus, NE Turkey, Suez and Eilat. Others, especially the comparatively narrow-winged harriers, Osprey and falcons, cross the sea on a broad front using active flapping flight.

Raptors are found in every kind of habitat, but most species avoid dense forest where hunting difficult. Prey mostly on birds and mammals, but some specialize on snakes and lizards while a few are fish- or insect-eating and vultures (and to some extent also *Milvus* kites, *Buteo* buzzards and *Aquila* and *Haliaeetus* eagles) feed on carrion. Usually rather silent, but some have far-carrying, often rather plaintive mewing calls (heard especially in breeding season). Most nest in trees or on cliff ledges, a few (mostly harriers) on ground. Sometimes take over abandoned or even occupied nests of other birds (e.g. crows). Many of the Accipitridae and also Osprey have conspicuous aerial displays in breeding season.

Sexes generally alike in plumage, but females often substantially larger. No seasonal variation other than small changes caused by moult and wear. Juveniles range from distinct to closely resembling adults.

Small and medium-sized species have complete post-breeding moult, usually between spring and autumn (or winter in migratory species that suspend moult until reaching winter quarters). Larger species typically have continuous moult, not completing cycle within one year (and with two or more sequences active in flight feathers at any one time). Post-juvenile moult commences between early in first autumn and first spring, depending on species; generally of slightly shorter duration than in adults. Immatures have similar moult pattern to adults. Adult plumage typically attained within 12–18 months of fledging in small species and within 2–3 years in medium-sized species, but not until 4–7 years in large raptors.

Because of their distinctive jizz coupled with the basic similarity of many raptor species, separating one raptor from another is much more of a problem than is misidentifying other types of birds as raptors. Only a few other species look at all similar. *Cuculus* cuckoos (q.v.) superficially resemble Eurasian Sparrowhawk and other small *Accipiter* species, broad wings and long tail of *Streptopelia* doves can also recall a slow-flying *Accipiter*, and even Woodpigeon in flight can give a falcon-like impression at times, while soaring or slowly flapping large corvids (particularly Common Raven with its deeply indented wingtips) can recall medium-sized raptors such as Common Buzzard. Short-eared Owl (q.v.) recalls harriers when quartering low over open ground, and distant soaring White Stork can recall Egyptian Vulture (q.v.).

Important terms used in flight identification of raptors are:

Arm (the part of the wing between the body and the carpal joint, including the secondaries and lesser, median and greater upperwing coverts)

Hand (the part of the wing between the carpal joint and the wingtip, including the primaries and primary coverts)

Fingers (the primaries that project freely at the wingtips, with open slots between each)

Owing to the relatively large number of different raptor species in our region, correct identification is made much simpler if one takes the trouble to learn the character differences that separate the major subgroups.

Large eagles include those in the genera *Aquila* (the archetypal eagles) and *Haliaeetus* (the fishing-eagles). All members are large, heavy, mostly dark-plumaged raptors (but many juveniles are pale) with long, broad

wings, ample hands, deeply cut primary fingers and generally rather parallel wing edges. Have an impressive, majestic look lacking in smaller raptors (but see vultures).

Vultures include the largest raptors of all and in flight silhouette closely resemble large eagles, but (with exception of atypical Lammergeier) have less protruding heads and most have shorter tails and still broader wings with even more deeply cut primary fingers (reflecting their ceaseless but effortless soaring and long-distance gliding in search of carrion).

Buzzard-like raptors is a rather broad category that includes virtually everything not otherwise allocated! It includes the *Buteo* buzzards, European Honey Buzzard, the *Milvus* kites, and Short-toed, Booted and Bonelli's Eagles. All of these are medium to medium-large raptors with broad and long or fairly long wings. Length of primary fingers usually shorter than in large eagles and vultures. All have rather variegated brown, blackish and whitish plumage recalling Common Buzzard (but in some, such as pale-morph Booted, patterning is more simplified). The largest (Short-toed and Bonelli's Eagles) overlap with large eagles in size, but although they have quite deep fingers they lack the heavy, majestic look of those species (but borderline between these two groups subjective and ill-defined).

Harriers are long- but rather narrow-winged, long-tailed raptors that hunt low over open country. Shape and method of flight (a series of wingbeats followed by a glide with wings raised in shallow V) make them relatively easily separable from other medium-sized raptors.

Accipiters include the smaller sparrowhawks and the larger Northern Goshawk of the genus *Accipiter* (plus the vagrant Gabar Goshawk *Micronisus gabar*). All are predominantly woodland species with fairly short, rather rounded wings and long tails. Prey on birds, which they chase at low level with tremendous agility and determination. Can be separated from falcons on wing shape and resulting different flight action (several rapid flaps followed by a short glide, instead of more continuous flapping flight or very long glides).

Falcons range from small to medium-sized and differ distinctly from all other raptors in their obviously pointed wings. Both wings and tail are long. Pointed wings and fast, active flight, with frequent rapid wingbeats, separate smaller species from accipiters and larger species from other raptors in general.

Atypical species that are not easily placed in one of these categories include:

Black-shouldered Kite • Lammergeier • Bateleur • Dark Chanting Goshawk • Osprey

Black-shouldered Kite is small enough to be confused with a falcon, but its highly distinctive appearance makes identification easy.

Lammergeier is placed taxonomically among the vultures, but with its long tail and virtual lack of bare facial skin it does not fit comfortably into that category for identification purposes. In outline resembles a gigantic falcon, but flight action recalls large eagle or vulture.

The vagrant Bateleur is too brightly plumaged and has too unusual a shape to be easily included among the buzzard-like raptors, but in any case is unmistakable.

Dark Chanting Goshawk, although closely related to the accipiters, has some flight characteristics that suggest the harriers, while general appearance somewhat different from the genus *Accipiter*.

Osprey is so unusual in its feeding ecology (plunge-diving for fish) and has such an angled wing posture that it recalls a large gull, so does not fit well in the buzzard-like group.

Identification of raptors is often very difficult when they are in flight and frequently even more so when they are perched. Great care should be taken and, as many raptors are observed at a great distance and others too briefly to note sufficient detail, it is best to reconcile oneself to the fact that some will simply be impossible to identify even after many years of experience of this problematic group. Nevertheless, careful attention to detail, knowing what to look for and extensive previous experience of raptor 'jizz' will enable an observer to identify most individuals. Points to concentrate on for flying raptors are:

Overall size • Wing shape and flight action/posture • Tail length • Upperwing pattern • Underwing pattern

When perched, only some of the field characters used in flight will still be visible, but at close range cere colour, bill size and shape, extent of gape, iris colour and other fine detail may be usable.

HAWKS & EAGLES Accipitridae

39 species (8 vagrant)

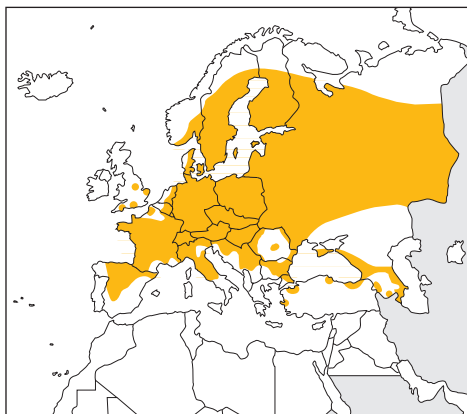
EUROPEAN HONEY BUZZARD *Pernis apivorus*

Plate page 233

Honey Buzzard, Eurasian Honey Buzzard

L 52–60 cm, WS 125–145 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Medium-sized raptor with superficial similarity to Common Buzzard. As with true buzzards of genus *Buteo*, much plumage variation, often making identification on plumage features difficult, especially in juvenile. Range from almost entirely dark below to almost entirely white, but most adults are intermediate. In all plumages, jizz distinctive. Compared with true buzzards, has very characteristic slender neck and small, rather cuckoo-like head and neck that project well forward (at least as far as carpal joints in gliding bird), and longer, bulkier tail (length equal to or more than wing width) which typically has somewhat bulging (i.e. convex) sides and rounded corners (unlike straight-sided, sharp-cornered tail of *Buteo* buzzards). Frequently (especially in juvenile) has slight but noticeable notch in centre of tail. When soaring, typically holds wings straight out from body and level, rather than forward and upwards in shallow V as in *Buteo* buzzards. When gliding, holds wings slightly arched and somewhat drooped (typically level in *Buteo* buzzards, although sometimes drooped). In flapping flight, wingbeats deeper and more elastic than in *Buteo* buzzards. Does not hover. Often twists tail while in flight like *Milvus* kites (but note that *Buteo* buzzards also do this at times). Less aerial (except when migrating) than other large raptors: will often flush from mid-canopy of one tree and then fly to another not far off like a large owl, rather than make a long-distance escape. Secretive when amongst the trees, feeding mainly on wasp larvae, and usually seen only in flight. **Adult** substantially easier than juvenile to separate from *Buteo* buzzards. Has unique wing pattern with obvious broad dark border along trailing edge of wing, very little dark on tips of primaries (especially male) and parallel dark bands across base of flight feathers. Also has a distinctive irregular tail pattern, most obvious when soaring, with broad dark terminal band and two narrow bars near the base. All these features much more obvious from below. Cleanly 'marbled' underparts (including underwing coverts) of typical individuals are also a helpful pointer. A very characteristic feature of the great majority of adults is the rather straight trailing edge to the wing when soaring and especially when gliding: quite unlike *Buteo* buzzards with their S-shaped trailing edge produced by bulging secondaries and narrower, more pointed hand. Carpal joints are held well forward when gliding and combine with straight trailing edge to create a distinctive impression. At very close range, yellow iris enhances cuckoo-like appearance of head. **Juvenile** lacks distinctive plumage pattern of adult, having more even barring on wings and tail plus all-dark primary tips. In addition, juvenile has



an S-shaped trailing edge to wing produced by broader hand and narrower arm compared with adult, and sometimes a shorter tail. Thus more difficult to separate from *Buteo* buzzards: use structural and flight-action features outlined above, plus darker secondaries (showing greater contrast with pale primary bases). Note that many juveniles have body and wing coverts reddish-brown or yellowish-brown, unlike any *Buteo* buzzard in tone. Never shows pale band across breast shown by many *Buteo* buzzards. Pale-headed individuals show obvious dark eye mask, a feature which is not pronounced in pale headed *Buteo* buzzards. In dark individuals, the pale tips to the greater underwing coverts stand out as a pale band, absent in dark individuals of *Buteo* buzzards. See also Western Marsh Harrier, Short-toed, Booted and Bonelli's Eagles, and Osprey (plus vagrant Crested Honey Buzzard *P. ptilorhynchus* in Appendix).

SEX/AGE Adult female browner on head and upperparts, with more extensive, less sharply-defined dark on tips of primaries. Juvenile fairly distinct: for plumage differences see above; in addition, has yellow (not grey) cere and brown (not yellow) iris.

VOICE Typical call a clear, drawn-out, melodious, melancholy 'whee-oo' or more trisyllabic 'whi-whee-oo', more quavering than Common Buzzard and with a curlew-like quality.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Portugal, Greece.) When breeding, forests with clearings or open rides. On migration often perforce over open country. Unlike most larger raptors, will routinely cross wide stretches of sea.

BLACK-SHOULDERED KITE *Elanus caeruleus*

Plate page 244

Black-winged Kite

L 31–35 cm, WS 75–85 cm.

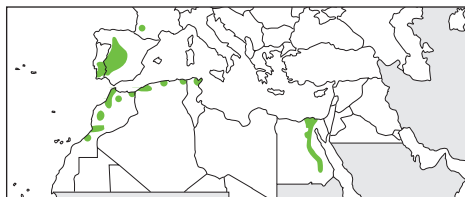
IDENTIFICATION Small raptor, not much bigger than Common Kestrel, recalling a small male harrier (or even a Barn Owl or a small gull) much more than a *Milvus* kite. Broad, protruding head with black smudge around

eye and short tail give rather owl-like look when perched. Flight also owl-like with rapid 'soft' wingbeats, but wings are triangular-shaped with broad base and quite pointed tips. Frequently hovers with shallow, rapid

wingbeats, recalling Common Kestrel. Soars and glides with wings held in marked V-shape. Virtually unmistakable. Even in distant view, wing pattern (with wingtips pale grey above, black below) distinguishes it from any of the small male harriers (or Barn Owl), even if characteristic black 'shoulder patches' not seen.

SEX/AGE Juvenile fairly distinct: differs from adult in brownish tinge to crown and mantle, narrow white tips to mantle and greater upperwing coverts, brownish-yellow wash on breast and flanks with dark streaking, and duller iris (usually brownish or orange instead of bright red).

VOICE Usually silent, but sometimes gives a soft piping 'pii-uu' (especially when displaying) and, when alarmed, a sharp 'gree-ah'.



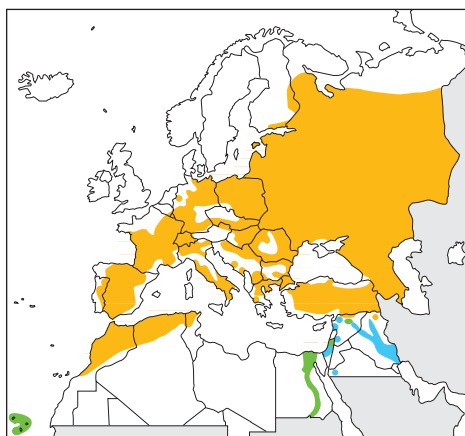
STATUS/HABITAT Generally scarce, but locally fairly common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Tunisia.) Dry, cultivated grassland or semi-desert plains and broad valleys with scattered trees. Also adjacent open woodland or tall scrub.

BLACK KITE *Milvus migrans*

L 55–60 cm, WS 135–170 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Medium-sized raptor with very dark plumage overall (relieved only by pale areas on hand and across upperwing coverts), long, uniformly broad wings and long tail: distinctly larger and longer-winged than Common Buzzard. Often feeds on carrion or refuse. Greatest risk of confusion with Red Kite (q.v.). When comparing with other similar raptors such as dark European Honey Buzzard, dark *Buteo* buzzards, Western Marsh Harrier or dark-morph Booted Eagle, the slightly forked tail is single most diagnostic feature. Note, however, that when tail spread when soaring it looks only slightly concave or even straight-edged. (Beware moulting birds, especially in autumn, with tails that can look convex.) Very dark underwing, with pale area restricted to hand, helps to separate from dark European Honey Buzzard, dark *Buteo* buzzards and Western Marsh Harrier. In most Black Kites pale area on hand is much more extensive than pale wedge on inner primaries of dark-morph Booted Eagle, but beware some adults with quite small, indistinct pale patches. Flight distinctive (except as regards separation from Red Kite): very loose and floppy in flapping flight, with wings bowed forwards on downstroke. In steady, level flight, body rises and falls with wingbeats in tern-like fashion; head often somewhat drooped as bird looks downwards, creating characteristic 'hunched' effect. Soars and glides on flat or slightly arched wings, with hand slightly flexed back and carpal joints projecting forwards, looking very different from obvious raised V-shaped wing position of soaring Western Marsh Harrier, or shallow V-shape of soaring *Buteo* buzzards. Frequently twists tail in flight and moves wings independently of each other, giving loose, active impression.

SEX/AGE Juvenile separable: compared with adult, has paler body, with more contrasting dark markings, a broader, paler band across the upperwing plus a narrow pale band to the rear across the greater and primary coverts, a pale rump, a pale base to the tail, usually larger and paler patches on the hand (especially underside), and a narrow pale band across the underwing on the greater coverts. Some are darker than average, making separation harder.



VOICE Typical call a far-carrying, high-pitched whinnying 'pee-errrr', recalling immature Herring Gull.

TAXONOMY The forms *aegyptius* (Yellow-billed Kite) and *lineatus* (Black-eared Kite) are sometimes treated as full species (the former together with race *parasitus* of sub-Saharan Africa).

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 3 races (all illustrated). Race *aegyptius* of Egypt has bill yellow in adult, and in all plumages is more rufous on tail and underparts than nominate race; juveniles often have quite whitish head and underbody. Race *lineatus*, wintering in Iraq, is the largest race (as large as many Red Kites), and has pale buff lower belly and undertail and very large pale patches on hand in all plumages.

STATUS/HABITAT Generally uncommon, but locally common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Norway. Most winter south of the Sahara.) Open country with or without some woodland, occurring in cultivated areas, grassland and semi-desert. Frequently, but by no means always, near lakes, rivers or marshes. Locally towns and villages where much refuse or offal available.

RED KITE *Milvus milvus*

L 60–66 cm, WS 155–180 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Medium-sized raptor with long wings and long, deeply forked tail; distinctly larger and longer-winged than Common Buzzard, with an

elegant appearance. Distinctive tail shape means confusion likely only with Black Kite, given reasonable view. Red Kite is paler, reddish-brown rather than

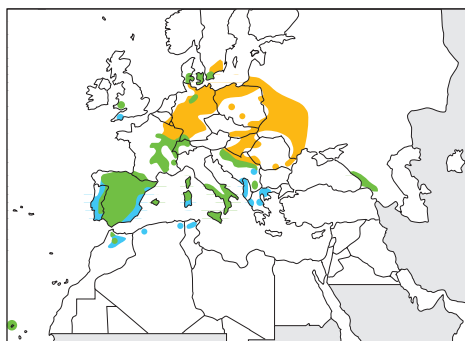
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greyish-brown overall, less uniformly coloured and on average slightly larger, with more elegant, less stocky appearance owing to narrower wings and longer tail (considerably longer than breadth of wing). Red best distinguished by deeply forked, rusty-red (adult) or reddish-brown (juvenile) tail — that of Black being shallow-forked and typically dark greyish-brown. Note, however, that juvenile Black (and also adults of race *aegyptius*) have a dull rusty tinge to tail: in strong light tail of such Blacks can look a dull greyish-orange from below, although never so obviously reddish as in juvenile Red. Even when soaring, tail of Red still obviously forked (unlike Black), but beware occasional moulting or abraded birds without deep fork. Head usually paler than in Black (but beware juvenile Black with pale head, especially race *aegyptius*). Flight action and posture of Red resemble those of Black (q.v.), but Red has even deeper and more elastic wingbeats, creating harrier-like appearance. Long tail makes wings seem set particularly well forward on body. Pale patches on hand are usually larger and always whiter and less barred (thus more contrasting) than in Black, although care is needed as juvenile Black (and also adults of races *aegyptius* and *lineatus*) have larger, paler, less barred patches compared with other Blacks, looking particularly obvious in strong light. Pale band across upperwing coverts is broader and even more noticeable than in Black. Like Black, often feeds on carrion.

SEX/AGE Juvenile separable with difficulty: has paler underside of body, a broader, paler band across upperwing coverts plus a narrow pale band to the rear across the greater and primary coverts, a browner tail and two narrow pale lines across underwing coverts.

VOICE Typical call a shrill, mewing 'peee-ooo', often extended into a rising and falling 'peee-oooo-eee-



ooo-eee-ooo-eee-ooo...'. .

TAXONOMY/GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 2 races (nominate illustrated). Form *fasciicauda* of Cape Verde Is (where extremely rare) is usually treated as race of Red Kite, but very poorly known and may merit specific status as **Cape Verde Kite**. Averages smaller than nominate race Red, with shorter and more rounded wing, less deeply forked tail (usually with more barring on central feathers), less pronounced rufous edgings on upperparts, less rufous underparts, and inner webs of primaries basally pale grey with darker grey marbling (compared with virtually clean white).

STATUS/HABITAT Generally uncommon and local. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Norway, Netherlands, Latvia, Austria, Albania. Reintroduction scheme underway in England, Scotland. Occasional winter visitor Turkey.) Open forest, scattered woodlands or clumps of trees and adjacent grassland, cultivation, heathland or wetlands.

AFRICAN FISH EAGLE *Haliaeetus vocifer*

L 74–84 cm, WS 170–200 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Large vagrant eagle from sub-Saharan Africa. Wings held flat or slightly raised when soaring or gliding. **Adult** made unmistakable at close range by unique chestnut, black and white plumage pattern. At distance, when chestnut merges with black, still easily separated from all other eagles apart from vagrant Bald by combination of white head and tail. From Bald in such conditions by white extending onto mantle and breast. **Juvenile** separated from all large dark raptors other than juvenile/immature *Haliaeetus* eagles by contrasting underpart pattern, with large whitish patches on hand, prominent whitish patch on breast and axillaries (eliminating juvenile Golden Eagle), and whitish tail with dark terminal bar. This pattern is much more pronounced than in other *Haliaeetus*. Conspicuous whitish breast band contrasting with dark head and belly is unique. All other juvenile *Haliaeetus* have almost wholly dark underbody which becomes paler on the belly and then paler overall in immature stages. Large pale patches

on hand are peculiar to this species and Pallas's Fish, which has pale brown instead of whitish patches (but latter has much more extensive pale area on underwing coverts). Whitish tail with contrasting dark terminal band quite unlike other juvenile *Haliaeetus*, but immature Bald and some immature White-tailed show similar but less contrasting patterning and immature Pallas's Fish shows indistinct pale band across centre of tail. **Immature** may be separated from immature White-tailed or Bald by large whitish patches still present on underside of hand.

SEX/AGE Immature resembles juvenile, but has head/neck, mantle and entire underbody mottled with white, more white on underwing coverts, and tail white apart from indistinct dark terminal band. In sub-adult, blackish plumage occupies areas where adult chestnut.

VOICE Typical, frequently given call a loud, far-carrying, yelping 'whee-oh-hyo-hyo-hyo'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Egypt). In natural range, lakes, rivers, coastal lagoons and mangrove swamps.

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PALLAS'S FISH EAGLE *Haliaeetus leucoryphus*

Pallas's Sea Eagle

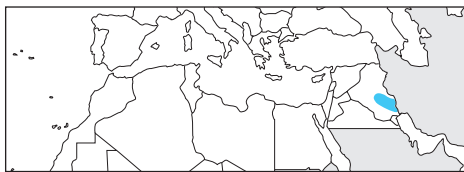
L 76–84 cm, WS 185–205 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Large vagrant eagle from C Asia. Holds wings flat when soaring, flat or slightly arched when gliding. Like White-tailed, spends much time

perched, watching for prey. **Adult** is quite distinctive, with unique combination of pale buffish head and dark tail with conspicuous broad white median band.

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Unlikely to be confused given reasonable view. **Juvenile** more difficult to separate from other large eagles. May be separated from somewhat similar *Aquila* eagles with pale patterning below, including obvious pale area on inner primaries, such as Tawny (all plumages), Steppe, Imperial and Verreaux's (juvenile/immature), by uniform dark upperparts (including wings) and broad dark border along trailing edge of wing behind pale patch on inner primaries. Confusion more likely with juvenile/immature White-tailed. Differs from juvenile White-tailed in having paler, more uniform body and wing coverts; lacks the bold blackish tips to feathers of mantle, scapulars and upperwing coverts (contrasting with pale, warm brown feather bases) and the heavy dark streaking on underbody that are seen in White-tailed. Unlike White-tailed, has distinctive dark face mask contrasting with paler surroundings. Tail all dark (White-tailed shows whitish streaks on underside of tail when soaring, when partly whitish inner webs are visible). Lacks pale panel across upperwing coverts shown by juvenile and some immature White-tailed. Underwing has more extensive and conspicuous pale band across coverts than in White-tailed and, unlike that species, has large pale patch on base of inner primaries. Note, however, that immature White-tailed can show quite extensive, if diffuse, pale areas on underside, sometimes with suggestion of pale patch on inner primaries. Separation



tion from such individuals best done on more precise, more contrasting pale pattern on underwing (including conspicuous pale patch on inner primaries, not just a suggestion of a patch) combined with jizz. Pallas's Fish is obviously slimmer and more elegantly built, with smaller head and bill (although bill still large compared with *Aquila* eagles); wings narrower and tail longer, with more supple, less stiff wingbeats. **Immature** may be identified using same criteria as for juvenile, having even more distinct pale patterning on underwing (and paler body), and by presence of indistinct pale median band on tail. For distinctions from juvenile/immature African Fish and Bald see those species.

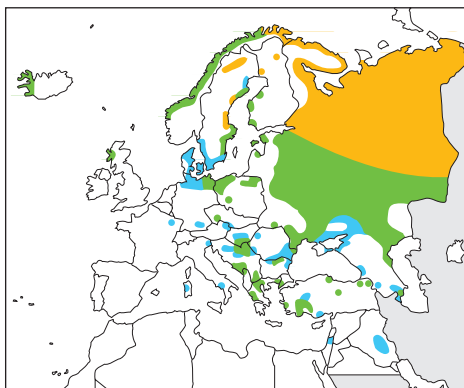
VOICE Typical call a hoarse, barking 'kvok, kvok, kvok'.

STATUS/HABITAT Formerly bred, or at least oversummered, in SE Russia between Volga and Ural rivers. May no longer winter regularly in Iraq. Lakes, rivers and extensive marshes.

WHITE-TAILED EAGLE *Haliaeetus albicilla*

L 70–90 cm, WS 190–250 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Very large, impressive, heavily built eagle: bulkier than any other of our region and with most characteristic shape. Wings very broad with parallel edges and very prominent primary 'fingers', and tail rather short (especially so in adult, when often only half as long as wing is broad), creating distinctly vulture-like impression in flight. Tail rather wedge-shaped, especially in adult. Large head and very large bill conspicuous both when perched and in flight, when head/neck protrudes unusually far forwards of wings (projecting forwards in adult as much as tail projects to rear of wing). Wings held flat or slightly arched when soaring. When gliding, holds wings pressed forwards and either flat or slightly arched, often with hand drooped. Level flight heavy, with series of shallow flaps interspersed with short glides. Rather lethargic, spending much time perched, watching for prey. Feeds mainly on fish, wildfowl and other birds, carrion and eggs, and often steals food from other birds of prey or gulls. **Adult** is easily separated from large vultures or dark *Aquila* eagles by all-white tail and pale head with huge yellow bill. **Juvenile** more easily confused with large vultures or dark *Aquila* eagles, especially Greater Spotted. Even more protruding head/neck, longer, rather wedge-shaped tail and pale axillary patches differentiate from large dark vultures. Best separated from large dark *Aquila* eagles by more protruding head/neck, rather wedge-shaped tail showing whitish centres to feathers when spread, pale axillary patches, lack of any pale area on crown/nape (present in older Golden, Imperial and Steppe), and very heavy appearance in flight. Flat wing position when soaring differentiates it easily from Golden. **Immature** may be distinguished from same problem species by structural differences listed for juvenile, by whitish feathers in tail and by rather variegated overall impression created by mottled



whitish mantle, belly and panel on underwing coverts. Beware pale individuals which superficially resemble juvenile Imperial Eagle or Eurasian Griffon Vulture. Some individuals with indistinct dark terminal area on otherwise whitish tail may be confused with juvenile Golden, but easily separated by lack of large white patches on flight feathers. (See vagrant African Fish, Pallas's Fish and Bald Eagles for distinctions.)

VOICE Typical call a rapid series of far-carrying yelps recalling Black Woodpecker's territorial call: 'klee-klee-klee-klee-klee-klee...'

STATUS/HABITAT Generally localized and uncommon or rare. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Ireland, Denmark, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Corsica, Sardinia, Syria, Iraq, Israel, Egypt.) Lakes, rivers, extensive marshes, coastal lagoons, rocky coasts and islands.

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BALD EAGLE *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*

Plate page 219

L 79–94 cm, WS 200–230 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Large vagrant eagle from N America. Wings held flat or slightly raised when soaring or gliding. **Adult** distinctive. Easily separable from most other large raptors by combination of white head and white tail. From quite similar adult White-tailed by pure white head clearly demarcated from dark brown breast. (See also structural differences listed under juvenile.) From adult African Fish by lack of chestnut in plumage and by white of head not extending onto mantle and breast. **Juvenile** more difficult. May be separated from dark *Aquila* eagles by conspicuous white axillary patches ('white armpits'), presence of pale band across median underwing coverts (as opposed to elsewhere on underwing), and by more protruding head/neck. At very close range, bill is obviously much larger and uniformly dark grey, not pale greyish-horn with a blackish tip as in all *Aquila* eagles. Separation from juvenile White-tailed especially difficult. Plumage very similar, but structure differs: Bald is smaller, less heavily built, with smaller head/bill and somewhat shorter neck (so head/neck protrudes less strikingly in front of wings), narrower wings and longer, rounded (rather than somewhat

wedge-shaped) tail. Note, however, that tail length and shape are often altered by wear. **Immature** has pale areas on underside of inner primaries (like some immature White-tailed), creating underwing pattern recalling immature Pallas's Fish (but latter has pale patches on inner primaries even paler and more sharply contrasting, plus dark base to tail as well as dark terminal bar). From very similar immature White-tailed by structural differences outlined for juvenile. Difference in tail length and shape now even more pronounced.

SEX/AGE Immature resembles juvenile, but is marbled with whitish from belly to undertail (later on entire underbody), on underwing coverts, on back (often creating diffuse inverted pale triangle contrasting with darker crown/nape) and on upperwing coverts. Often shows pale areas on underside of inner primaries.

VOICE Typical calls a loud, harsh cackling 'kweek-kik-ik-ik-ik-ik-ik' and a lower-pitched 'kak-kak-kak-kak'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, lakes, rivers, coastal lagoons, estuaries, rocky coasts and islands.

LAMMERGEIER *Gypaetus barbatus*

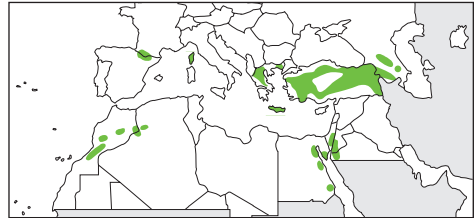
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Bearded Vulture

L 100–115 cm, WS 240–300 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Very large, solitary and impressive vulture with long, narrow, rather pointed wings (wingspan sometimes exceeding that of any other raptor in our region), long, strongly wedge-shaped tail and well protruding head. Tail is obviously longer than maximum breadth of wing. When soaring, holds wings flat; when gliding, arms held flat with carpal joints pressed forwards and hands flexed backwards and somewhat drooped, primaries semi-closed. At some moments, when long tail is held tightly closed and slightly drooped, and wings look long, flexed and obviously pointed, Lammergeiers can give the impression of being huge and majestic falcons. Cruises slowly along mountainsides with downward-peering head in search of carrion and also bones, dropping the latter from a height to break them and release the marrow. **Adult** unmistakable. **Juvenile** may be confused at a distance with juvenile Egyptian Vulture, especially if tail abraded and no way of making size comparison, but separated by longer and more pointed wings, much larger head, dark hood, much longer (even if abraded), less sharply-pointed and darker tail, and different flight posture.

SEX/AGE Transition to adult plumage slow and steady.



By summer of third calendar year underbody coloration as adult, but still has buffy or whitish areas on mantle and upperwing coverts. Adult plumage not fully attained until sixth calendar year.

VOICE Typical call in aerial display a shrill, whistling 'feeeeeee'.

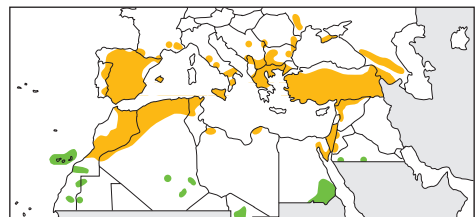
STATUS/HABITAT Uncommon or rare. (Formerly bred French Alps, Switzerland, Austria, Italy, Sardinia, Yugoslavia, Albania, Romania, Bulgaria, Tunisia.) Rugged mountains with precipitous crags when breeding, but at other times also lower ridges or hills, even adjacent plains.

EGYPTIAN VULTURE *Neophron percnopterus*

Plate page 218

L 60–70 cm, WS 155–170 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Medium-sized raptor: much smaller than other vultures (except vagrant Hooded), with long, fairly broad wings, small but protruding head and noticeably short and wedge-shaped tail. Wings held flat when soaring, flat with carpal joints pressed forwards and hands flexed back and drooped (with primaries partly closed) when gliding. Head appears noticeably pointed owing to long, slender bill. **Adult** unlikely to be confused given good views. Pale-morph Booted Eagle (q.v) has similar underwing pattern, but is quite dissimilar in plumage above and



in general outline. At extreme range when shape not apparent, can be confused with White Stork. **Juvenile and immature** easier to confuse with other raptors, but rapidly distinguished from all but young Lammergeier (q.v.) by distinctly short, wedge-shaped tail and small, noticeably pointed head.

VOICE Usually silent.

STATUS/HABITAT Generally uncommon, but locally fairly common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Lebanon, Iraq.) When breeding, rugged, open mountainous or hilly country, locally even quite small rocky crags. At other times also open plains or valleys, often visiting rubbish dumps.

HOODED VULTURE *Necrosyrtes monachus*

Plate page 218

L 62–72 cm, WS 155–165 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Medium-sized vagrant raptor from sub-Saharan Africa. Much smaller than other vultures, apart from Egyptian: not much more than half size of Lappet-faced, for instance. Small, pale head and rather long, slender bill combined with otherwise dark coloration and bulky outline both when perched and in flight render it unlikely to be confused except with juvenile Egyptian. Separated by pink (adult) or pinkish-grey (juvenile) facial skin and throat, short downy feathering on hindneck (making head look smaller and more protruding) and, in flight, by shorter, broader, less pointed wings (shows six 'fingers' in wingtip compared with five in Egyptian), all-dark upperbody and upperwing, and shorter, almost square-cut (instead of wedge-shaped), all-dark tail.

Holds wings like large vultures when soaring, and likewise droops them, obscuring body, when on ground. **Adult** also differs in having a diffuse panel across underwing formed by paler bases to flight feathers.

SEX/AGE Juvenile closely resembles adult, but has dark woolly down from crown to hindneck, dark crop, pinkish-grey (instead of pink) facial skin and throat, and lacks paler panel across underwing.

VOICE Usually silent.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (N Mauritania, southernmost Morocco). In natural range, savannas and clearings in forested areas, coastal mudflats and lagoons. Commonly found in towns and villages, and often visits rubbish dumps or abattoirs.

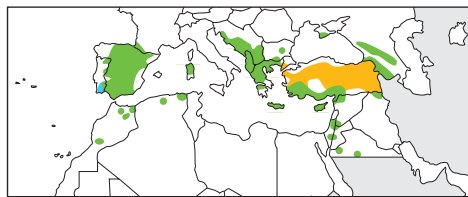
EURASIAN GRIFFON VULTURE *Gyps fulvus*

Plate page 216

Griffon Vulture, Eurasian Griffon

L 95–105 cm, WS 230–270 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Very large, fairly widespread vulture with long, broad wings. Small head that hardly protrudes beyond wings in flight, very broad wings with very deep slots between outer primaries and marked bulge to trailing edges, and particularly short tail combine to make confusion with large pale eagles unlikely. Soars with wings slightly pressed forwards and held in a shallow but noticeable V. When gliding, holds carpal joints slightly forwards and hands swept back and slightly drooped. As with all large vultures, spends much time soaring without a wingbeat, but when active beats extremely slow and deep. Breeds colonially and often gathers at carcasses. Confusion with other large vultures (apart from vagrant Rüppell's Griffon, q.v.) unlikely owing to predominantly two-tone plumage pattern, with gingery-buff body and upperwing and underwing coverts contrasting with dark flight feathers and tail. When soaring against strong light darkest adults can look quite dark, but differ from Eurasian Black and Lappet-faced in holding wings in a shallow V instead of flat; in addition, has less uniformly broad wings with marked bulge to trailing edges, produced by shorter inner primaries and inner secondaries, more square-cut tail and whitish throat (unless stained). When perched, long neck and small head cre-



ate quite different look from that of Eurasian Black and Lappet-faced Vultures, or perched eagles.

SEX/AGE Juvenile resembles adult, but has much paler, sandier underbody and especially underwing coverts which contrast strongly with dark flight feathers and tail. The underwing coverts are also more uniform, lacking obvious paler bands seen in adult.

VOICE Usually silent, but hisses, grunts and bellows at carcasses and at roosts.

STATUS/HABITAT Generally uncommon and patchily distributed, but locally more numerous. (In addition to mapped range, formerly bred Poland, Italy, Sicily, Romania, Tunisia, Egypt. Some oversummer Austria.) Open hillsides or mountainsides and adjacent plains. Usually nests on cliffs.

RÜPPELL'S GRIFFON VULTURE *Gyps rueppellii*

Plate page 216

Rüppell's Vulture, Rüppell's Griffon

L 85–95 cm, WS 220–240 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Very large vagrant vulture from sub-Saharan Africa, a little smaller than Eurasian Griffon but slightly bulkier. Confusion likely only with Eurasian Griffon and larger Lappet-faced. **Adult** separated from both by numerous pale edgings to feathers of underbody and both upperwing and underwing

coverts, creating marked scaly effect at close range, with two conspicuous pale lines visible across rear of upperwing coverts. At long range, upperwing coverts look rather pale sandy or creamy in strong light, thus resembling Eurasian Griffon, but upperbody (especially rump) and underwing coverts invariably much

darker than in Eurasian Griffon. **Juvenile** lacks scaly effect and is more problematical. From Lappet-faced by substantially smaller size, lack of whitish patches on sides of breast and pale 'trousers', presence of inconspicuous pale fringes and shaft streaks on upperwing coverts, and by pale shaft streaks on underwing coverts. From Eurasian Griffon by much darker (brown rather than sandy) upperwing coverts and upperbody. Compared with juvenile Eurasian Griffon, has much darker and browner underbody and underwing coverts also, but is only a little darker than some adults (with narrow white band close to leading edge of underwing more sharply defined and contrasting). If unstained by blood, down on Eurasian Griffon-like small head and long neck is greyish-brown (whitish in Eurasian Griffon, while Lappet-faced has whitish or

pale pink naked head). **Immature** can be separated in similar manner to adult, but care needed as less distinct pale feather edgings make patterning less obvious. When soaring, holds wings flat or slightly raised, not well raised as in typical Eurasian Griffon. Secondary bulge less pronounced. May be told at any age from large eagles when in distant flight or from Eurasian Black or Lappet-faced Vultures and large eagles when perched by same characters as for Eurasian Griffon plus obvious white 'vulture streak' near leading edge of underwing.

VOICE Usually silent, but squeals and squawks at carcasses.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Egypt). In natural range, open hillsides and mountainsides, grasslands and savannas.

LAPPET-FACED VULTURE *Torgos tracheliotus*

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L 95–105 cm, WS 255–290 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Very large, dark vulture of N Africa and the Middle East, almost as large and powerfully built as Eurasian Black. Usually solitary. Best separated from very uniform Eurasian Black by whitish (or pale brown) patches on sides of breast and 'trousers', and narrow whitish (or pale brown) band close to leading edge of underwing with a second, less distinct, pale brown band to its rear. (Beware individuals with rather inconspicuous, pale brown patches and only indistinct pale bands on underwing: these can easily be confused with Eurasian Black at a distance. See also Geographical Variation.) Shows more contrast between slightly paler upperbody and upperwing coverts and darker flight feathers than Eurasian Black, and on underwing shows some contrast between darker underwing coverts and paler flight feathers. Soars on flat wings like Eurasian Black, but has more curved, less parallel, trailing edge (not so bulging as in Eurasian Griffon, however). In gliding flight, keeps wings rather flat without much backward flexing at carpal joint (in Eurasian Black, hands typically flexed well back with primaries bunched together and drooped). All-pale head and neck obvious at close range (adult Eurasian Black has dark mask around eye and black chin and throat; juvenile Eurasian Black has head all dark, contrasting with pale cere). Feet are grey (often yellow in adult Eurasian Black). Like Eurasian Black, tends to be solitary. When distant, best told from large dark eagles by same characters as for Eurasian



Black and also, if visible, by whitish 'vulture streak' close to leading edge of underwing and whitish (or pale brown) patches on sides of breast and 'trousers'. On ground, massive naked head prevents confusion.

SEX/AGE Juvenile closely resembles adult, but has bare skin of head and neck whitish instead of pale pink, sides of breast and 'trousers' pale brown instead of whitish, and less distinct pale band close to leading edge of underwing.

VOICE Usually silent.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION The almost extinct population in the Negev in Israel has almost no folds of skin ('lappets') on the head, which is largely pale greyish with pink being restricted to the nape. Has pale brown rather than white band close to leading edge of underwing. Sometimes treated as a distinct race, *negevensis*.

STATUS/HABITAT Very rare. (In addition to mapped range, formerly bred N Algeria, Tunisia, N Egypt. May breed N Chad. Almost extinct Israel.) Desert hills and plains, especially with scattered acacias.

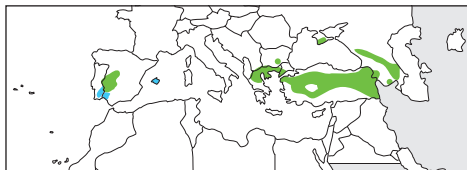
EURASIAN BLACK VULTURE *Aegypius monachus*

Plate page 217

Black Vulture, Monk Vulture, Cinereous Vulture

L 100–110 cm, WS 250–295 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Largest, darkest, most powerful vulture of our region. Usually solitary. Confusion at all likely only with Lappet-faced (q.v.), but see also Eurasian Griffon. At long range could be mistaken for large, all-dark eagle (e.g. Greater Spotted or juvenile White-tailed), but has less projecting head, even longer wings (which are broader than in all but Greater Spotted) with deeper slots between primaries, very short, rather wedge-shaped tail (although worn Greater Spotted have equally short tail), and surprisingly conspicuous pale feet. At close range, pale areas on head also obvious. Soars on flat wings, but hands are slightly drooped when gliding. On ground, rather angular, down-covered head projecting from shaggy ruff of feathers at base of neck is quite unlike that of any eagle.



SEX/AGE Juvenile very closely resembles adult, but is even blacker overall, with almost all-dark head (contrasting with pale cere) and darker (blackish instead of dirty brown) ruff. Wing coverts uniformly blackish, lacking paler, browner area on lesser coverts seen in many adults.

VOICE Usually silent.

STATUS/HABITAT Rare. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Romania, Mol-

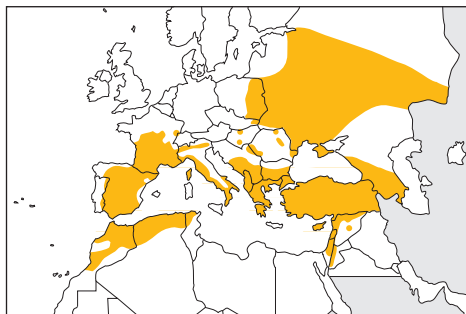
davia, Sardinia, Cyprus.) Open hillsides or mountainsides and adjacent plains. Often nests in trees and therefore frequently found in partly wooded country.

SHORT-TOED EAGLE *Circaetus gallicus*

Short-toed Snake Eagle

L 62–67 cm, WS 170–190 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Large, pale, long-winged raptor. Plumage pattern combined with broad middle of wing and often rather rounded-looking wingtips gives impression of huge pale buzzard rather than classic eagle. Coloration quite variable. Most have dark hood, with more or less dark spotting and barring on underside that form bands across the wings (although at a distance the underside often looks greyish-white). Some have very dark hood and very conspicuous dark brown markings, recalling European Honey Buzzard. A small minority are very pale, without dark hood, and with very little marking on underside at all: even tail barring is less distinct. Contrast on upperside between paler coverts and darker flight feathers also varies individually, and birds which are darkest below generally show least contrast above. Soars with wings slightly pressed forwards, either flat or slightly raised. Glides with carpal joints held well forwards (level with front of head) and trailing edges usually at right angles to body (like European Honey Buzzard), arm slightly raised and hand slightly drooped. In active flight has deep, powerful wingbeats. Frequently hovers or hangs motionless in the wind, often dangling legs. Often twists rather narrow, square-cut tail in kite-like manner when gliding. When perched, large, rounded head and rather compact body can create vaguely owl-like impression. Feeds mainly on snakes and other reptiles. Confusion most likely with Osprey, European Honey Buzzard and pale *Buteo* buzzards. Easily told from all by lack of dark carpal patches on underside and also by rather washed-out, greyish primary tips which do not stand out from rest of underside (unlike black or blackish tips of potential confusion species). Osprey also has narrower, more angled wings, unmarked white belly and leading edge of underside of arm (but beware very pale Short-toed), dark band across middle of underwing, shorter, more closely barred tail (5–6 bands visible on underside when spread, compared with 3–4 in Short-toed) without noticeably broader terminal bar, narrower head, and conspicuous dark streak through eye (con-



trasting with otherwise whitish head). European Honey Buzzard and *Buteo* buzzards are shorter-winged (Short-toed has longer arm) and more rounded in the tail (Short-toed's is noticeably square-ended and sharp-cornered, being longer than those of *Buteo* buzzards). When tail of Short-toed is spread, shows white bases to outer tail feathers on upperside, a feature not seen in Osprey or European Honey Buzzard. Very pale individuals could be confused with pale-morph Booted Eagle in poor view, but latter easily separated by contrast on underwing between blackish underside of flight feathers and creamy-white underwing.

SEX/AGE Juvenile indistinguishable in the field.

VOICE Typical call a musical, plaintive, whistling 'weeo' or longer 'weeo-o', sometimes followed by a gull-like 'woh-woh-woh'.

STATUS/HABITAT Generally uncommon. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Denmark, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Sardinia, Sicily, Libya, Egypt.) In most of range, dry plains, hills and mountains, either uncultivated or partly cultivated and with some scrub, open woodland or at least scattered trees; in north, also heaths, damp grasslands and wetland margins adjacent to forests.

BATELEUR *Terathopius ecaudatus*

L 55–65 cm, WS 160–190 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Large vagrant raptor from sub-Saharan Africa or SW Arabia. Extraordinary outline makes it unmistakable in flight. Virtually tailless, with long wings that are raised in distinct V when gliding or soaring, pinched wingtips and strongly bulging secondaries. Flight very rapid (with audible 'whoosh' at even moderate range). Sustained sailing glides are characterized by regular rocking from side to side and sudden veering. Makes dramatic rolls. Coloration of adult makes it impossible to misidentify when perched, but juvenile much less distinctive. Latter best told by lack of visible tail, extremely pointed wingtips, and large rounded head creating vaguely

owl-like impression.

SEX/AGE Adult female differs from adult male in having all upperwing coverts greyish-brown, and inner primaries and secondaries grey-white with black tips instead of all black.

VOICE Usually silent. In display flight gives loud yelping 'ka-ow'.

UNUSUAL VARIANTS A rare pale morph occurs in which chestnut parts of adult plumage replaced by cream or pale brown.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Israel, Iraq). In natural range, plains or rolling hills covered in grassland, thornbush, savanna or woodland.

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WESTERN MARSH HARRIER *Circus aeruginosus*

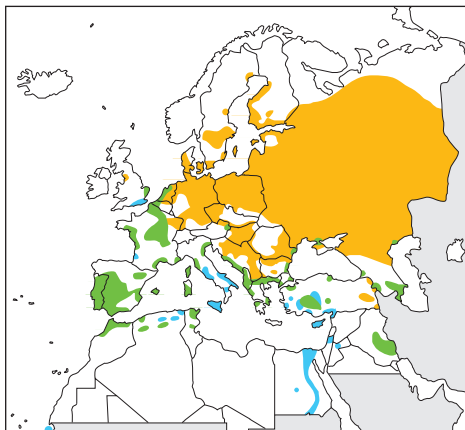
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Marsh Harrier, Eurasian Marsh Harrier

L 48–56 cm, WS 120–135 cm.

IDENTIFICATION The largest harrier, about the size of a Common Buzzard. As with all harriers, is long-winged, holding wings raised in shallow but distinct V when soaring and gliding, with slender head and body together with long, narrow, slightly rounded tail (longer than breadth of wing). Except on migration or in display flight, generally keeps fairly close to ground. Typical flight action a series of flaps followed by a glide on raised wings. When gliding, presses carpal joints forwards (level with front of head). Will stop abruptly to twist and plunge down on to prey, often deep in reedbeds. Unlikely to be mistaken for other harriers (except rare dark-morph Montagu's, q.v.) owing to heavier appearance (with broader wings and more rounded wingtips) and quite different plumage pattern (dark body and wing coverts in adult male, predominantly dark plumage without white 'ringtail' in adult female and juvenile). Bulkier build and shorter tail than in other harriers make confusion with other raptors quite possible. **Adult male** best separated from vaguely similar plumages of *Buteo* buzzards and European Honey Buzzard by clean (i.e. unbarred) pale grey upperside to secondaries and bases of primaries that contrasts with black primary tips, by lack of dark carpal patch on underwing and, if seen at a distance, by narrower wing outline with more parallel edges, longer, narrower tail and habit of gliding (not just soaring) with wings raised. Some adult males are almost wholly pale greyish-white below (apart from black primary tips) and can look rather like adult male Hen Harrier, but still have some chestnut or brownish coloration on belly and vent and retain distinctive upperpart pattern. **Female and juvenile male** (especially those lacking cream or gingerly-yellow on head, breast and forewing, with paler underside to flight feathers and with reddish tinge to tail) may be mistaken for Black Kite, dark-morph Booted Eagle and dark variants of European Honey Buzzard or *Buteo* buzzards. First three do not soar with wings raised, and none glides in this manner. In addition, Black Kite has shallow-forked tail (looks square-ended when spread, but beware moulting birds with seemingly rounded tails) and conspicuous pale panel on upperwing, Booted Eagle has shorter, sharp-cornered, square-cut tail, pale panel on upperwing, semi-transparent wedge on underside of inner primaries and small but surprisingly conspicuous white patches on leading edge of wing, while European Honey Buzzard has narrower and more protruding head and neck, more rounded corners to tail and distinctly pale primaries with dark tips. Best told from dark *Buteo* buzzards by narrower wings with more parallel edges and, at most, somewhat paler primary bases (instead of distinctly pale primaries with black tips), by longer, narrower, all-dark tail and especially by raised wings when gliding.

SEX/AGE Adult females often have yellowish patch on breast, but some lack this and a few lack pale areas on forewing and head. Juvenile resembles typical adult female, but averages darker overall and any pale areas tend to be gingerly-yellow rather than cream; usually



lacks pale forewing and never has yellowish breast patch. Juvenile frequently has all-dark head or just pale patch on nape (and these may be juveniles of dark morph: see below).

VOICE Usually silent. Display call of male a far-carrying, shrill (Lapwing-like) 'whee-ah' or 'kweeoo'. When alarmed, gives a cackling 'chek-ek-ek-ek-ek...'

TAXONOMY If the extralimital E Asian form *spilonotus* (Eastern Marsh Harrier) is treated as conspecific, then the enlarged *C. aeruginosus* is best referred to as **Eurasian Marsh Harrier**.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (nominate race illustrated).

UNUSUAL VARIANTS Scarce dark morph is seen mainly in east of our region. Adult male differs from dark juvenile mainly in silvery-grey upperside to tail (and whitish underside), and whitish bases to underside of primaries and secondaries (plus whitish under primary coverts) that form a conspicuous pale band; on upperwing shows a silvery-grey cast on primary coverts and base of outer secondaries. Adult female dark morph may be indistinguishable from some dark juveniles in the field: is all dark apart from a pale creamy patch on nape and a small pale area on underwing at base of outer primaries. Juvenile plumage uncertain, but some or all dark juveniles lacking any cream markings (or having just a pale cream patch on nape) likely to be dark morph. For separating adult female see under all-dark juveniles above. Adult male much more straightforward owing to conspicuous whitish band across underwing and silvery-grey upperside to tail, but beware poor view of dark European Honey Buzzard (shows pale primaries with dark tips).

STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon, but local. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Norway, Ireland, Switzerland, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan.) Breeds in reed-beds in marshes or fringing lakes and large rivers, less often in peat bogs. At other times, also grasslands, fallow land, low cultivation and saltmarsh.

HEN HARRIER *Circus cyaneus*

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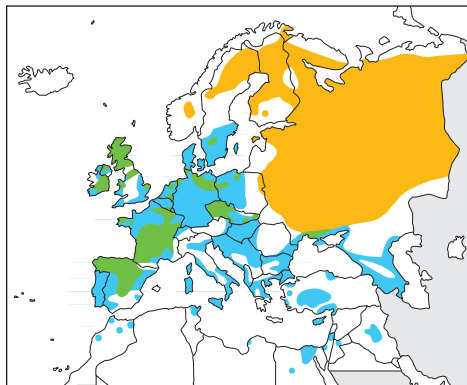
Northern Harrier

L 44–52 cm, WS 105–125 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A little smaller, slimmer and longer-tailed than Western Marsh, but larger, heavier and broader-winged than Pallid and Montagu's and with more rounded wingtips. Confusion likely only with the last two (q.v.), but see Western Marsh regarding possible confusion with especially pale adult males. Unlike Western Marsh and Montagu's, sometimes glides on flattish wings. Wingbeats faster and glides generally shorter than in Western Marsh.

SEX/AGE Juvenile closely resembles adult female, but overall appearance warmer, with rufous tinge to underbody and underwing coverts, broader and more rufous pale edges to upperwing coverts and, on average, darker secondaries and more prominent dark crescent on ear-coverts.

VOICE Usually silent. Display call a rapid quacking chattering 'chukk-ukk-ukk-ukk-ukk-ukk' and alarm call of female a shrill 'kekkekkekkekkek...'.
GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races including 1 vagrant (nominate race illustrated). Adult male of vagrant *hudsonius* from N America differs in having upperparts slightly browner and rufous, with wedge-shaped spots on underparts (especially prominent on flanks and 'trousers'). Adult female has darker brown upperparts, and underparts more warmly tinged with cinnamon. Juvenile is also darker on upperparts with buff instead of white inner webs to primaries, rich rufous underparts with little or no dark streaking and dark brown feather centres to throat and breast (but a few nominate race juveniles show similar rich



rufous underparts with little or no dark streaking). Dark hood, when present, may perhaps separate juvenile *hudsonius* from these rufous nominate race juveniles.

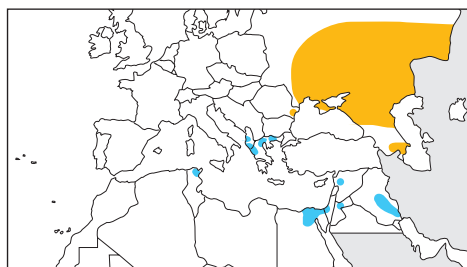
STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Portugal, Belgium, Luxembourg, Denmark, Hungary, Italy.) Open country in both plains and hills. Breeds in grassland, moorland, heathland, low scrub, forest clearings or young conifer plantations. At other times, also fallow land, low crops, marshes, dunes and saltmarsh.

PALLID HARRIER *Circus macrourus*

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L 40–48 cm, WS 100–125 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Slimly built harrier of the south and east of our region. Females average about same size as Montagu's, but males average slightly smaller. **Adult male** separated from other adult male harriers by very slim build and by diagnostic wedge of black on more pointed wingtips that contrasts sharply with virtually white head and remainder of underparts and pale ash-grey remainder of upperparts. (First and second primaries are shorter than in other harriers and black is restricted to 2nd–5th primaries. Black wedge much more distinct from below: on upperwing is rather diffuse.) Lacks dusky band along trailing edge of underwing, grey throat and upper breast (that contrast with white remainder of underbody) and obvious white upperside coverts of Hen. See also Montagu's. **Adult female** more problematic. Recalls female or juvenile male Hen in some aspects, having rather dark-looking secondaries and inner underwing coverts, and often a slight contrast between darker head/breast and paler remainder of underbody. Best told by slimmer build with longer, narrower and more pointed wings (wing point formed by 2nd–4th primaries instead of 2nd–5th), slightly longer and slimmer tail, and more pronounced whitish collar and dark patch on ear-coverts. Flight lighter and more buoyant. Separation from similarly built female Montagu's poses greater difficulties. Adult female Pallid has more uniformly-spaced but narrower and less distinct dark bars on underside of secondaries. In Montagu's, the dark bar across the middle of the secondaries is broader than in Pallid and noticeably darker than the dark band along the trailing edge of the wing. The pale band between the two



is distinctly broader and more obvious than in Pallid and continues clear to the wing base instead of fading away. Unlike Pallid, this dark bar is also quite visible on the upperwing in Montagu's, just behind the greater coverts, and flight feathers appear paler overall, especially in older individuals. In Montagu's the dark trailing edge is of uniform width along the length of the secondaries, while in Pallid it broadens towards the base of the wing (and, unlike in Montagu's, is darker than the other secondary bars). On a good view, Montagu's shows dark barring on axillaries and sometimes also on greater underwing coverts (these areas are mottled with dark in Pallid), while the penultimate bar on undertail extends across width of tail (rather than appearing mainly as a dark blob in the centre of the tail, as in Pallid). Pallid has conspicuous pale collar (usually lacking or faint in Montagu's) and a darker, more distinctly patterned face, especially compared with older Montagu's. Latter often rather

pale headed in comparison to Pallid. Most obvious features are dark oval on ear-coverts and white, claw-shaped area above, below and behind eye, broader than in Pallid. Occasionally shows a pale collar, like Pallid. When perched, adult female Pallid shows rather diffuse rufous spotting on 'trousers' and undertail coverts (sometimes so diffuse that whole area has rufous look), while adult female Montagu's has sharply defined rufous streaks. When soaring or gliding with wings raised in shallow V, tends not to raise wings so high as Montagu's and, unlike latter (but like Hen), will sometimes glide on flattish wings. Hand a little shorter than in Montagu's, but this hard to appreciate in field. **Juvenile** differs from female or immature male Hen in having underbody and underwing coverts unstreaked and much brighter (conspicuously rufous or yellowish-orange). Beware, however, rare juvenile Hen with quite rufous underparts and little or no dark streaking. May be told from such individuals by more pronounced whitish collar and obvious dark patch on ear-coverts, as well as by structural differences described under adult female. Separation from similarly built female Montagu's poses greater difficulties. Wing pattern differences described for adult females are unusable for juveniles as the dark bars do not stand out in either species. Juvenile Pallid has conspicuous pale (usually whitish) collar (typically lacking or faint in Montagu's, and if more obvious then rufous rather than whitish) and also a more well-marked face/neck pattern in general, with dark crescent on ear-coverts extending forwards to base of bill, more conspicuous dark eye-stripe and more extensive, more clear-cut dark band on sides of neck (making pale collar stand out clearly). As in adult female, white areas above, below and behind eye are narrower than in Montagu's. Colour of underparts often paler and more yellowish-rufous. See also flight differences described under adult female. **Immature male** in first spring retains juvenile-like head pattern and uniformly pale underparts, while Montagu's already has grey cheeks, throat and upper breast contrasting

with very pale remainder of underparts (although may at this time also show a whitish collar through feather fading). Beware immature male Montagu's or Hen in summer of second calendar year, or during second autumn, showing male Pallid-like black wedge on wingtip owing to presence of some newly moulted, adult-type primaries surrounded by old, bleached juvenile feathers. Separation from such immature Hens as for juveniles (see above). By first summer or second autumn, dark secondary bars become visible on underwing of Montagu's (although bar on upperwing diffuse or lacking) and lower breast, belly and greater underwing coverts conspicuously streaked with rufous-brown. Beware casually dismissing distant older immature Pallid with distinctly darker, browner-grey upperparts than adult male, only indistinct dark wedge on upperside of wingtips and rufous-tinged breast (contrasting with whitish belly) as Montagu's or Hen. Underwing appearance is by this time almost as adult (with clear-cut black wedge on wingtip), so no difficulties should arise. **Immature female** can be particularly hard to separate as facial patterning is closer to that of adult or immature female Montagu's while underside of secondaries is still quite dark and so nature of barring hard to discern. For such birds, lack of barring on axillaries is a useful feature.

SEX/AGE Juvenile resembles adult female, but has unstreaked yellowish-orange to rufous underbody and underwing coverts, darker grey underside to secondaries, and more prominent facial pattern with crescent on ear-coverts almost black and pale collar, cheek patch and supercilium broader and cleaner creamy-white.

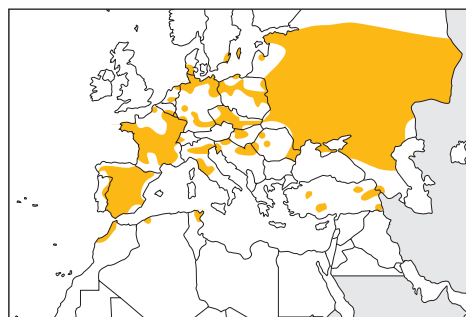
VOICE Usually silent. Display call a high-pitched, chattering 'kik-kik-kik'.

STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Sweden, Germany. Most winter south of the Sahara.) Open country, either flat or rolling, in dry grassland or, especially in winter quarters or on migration, fallow land or low crops.

MONTAGU'S HARRIER *Circus pygargus*

L 43–47 cm, WS 105–125 cm.

IDENTIFICATION The more widespread of the two smaller harriers. Soars and glides with wings held in shallow V. **Adult male** separated from adult male Hen or Pallid by darker grey, less cleanly patterned appearance with two black bands on underside of secondaries and one on upperside, and reddish-brown streaks on flanks and underwing coverts. Has solid black wingtips, unlike Pallid, and often appears longer-winged than latter owing to broader wingtips. Noticeably slimmer than Hen, with longer, narrower, more pointed wings (wing point formed by 2nd–4th primaries instead of 2nd–5th), longer tail (noticeably longer than wing breadth), grey (instead of white) uppertail coverts, and lighter, more buoyant (almost tern-like) flight with rather wavering glides. Body rises and falls rhythmically during softly flapping flight. General coloration varies from medium ash-grey in most to rather pale ash-grey in some older individuals. **Adult female** told from female and juvenile male Hen by same structural and flight differences as for adult male, by more conspicuous dark crescent on ear-coverts and (usually) by lack of any pale collar (narrow collar present in Hen). For differences from very similar adult female Pallid, see that species. **Juvenile** more easily separated by unstreaked and rich rufous underbody and underwing coverts, and by noticeably



darker underside to secondaries. (Beware, however, rare juvenile Hen with quite rufous underparts and little or no dark streaking.) For differences from similar juvenile Pallid, see that species.

SEX/AGE Juvenile resembles adult female, but has largely unstreaked rich rufous or sometimes yellowish-orange underbody and underwing coverts, reduced barring on underside of primaries, more prominent dark crescent on ear-coverts and, usually, darker secondaries. In sub-adult males the grey areas are a dingy

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brownish-grey, darker than in adult.

VOICE Usually silent. Display call a loud, sharp, rapidly repeated 'kniakk-kniekk-kniekk' and alarm call a similar but more shrill 'chekk-ekk-ekk...'. Begging call of female a plaintive, whistling 'psiii'.

UNUSUAL VARIANTS Rare dark morph could be mistaken for dark-morph adult or dark juvenile Western Marsh, but is noticeably smaller and slimmer-bodied, with longer, much narrower and more pointed wings, longer, narrower tail and different flight action. Instead of the conspicuous whitish bases to primaries and secondaries (and similarly coloured

under primary coverts) present in dark-morph Western Marsh, shows silvery-grey bases to primaries (sometimes absent in male and sometimes barred with dark in female). Female and juvenile have strongly banded tail (bands absent or faint in Western Marsh), but adult male may show little or no banding.

STATUS/HABITAT Generally uncommon and local. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Britain, Finland.) Open country, either flat or rolling, in grassland, low crops, heathland, moorland, marshes, dunes and young conifer plantations.

DARK CHANTING GOSHAWK *Melierax metabates*

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Chanting Goshawk

L 38–48 cm, WS 95–110 cm.

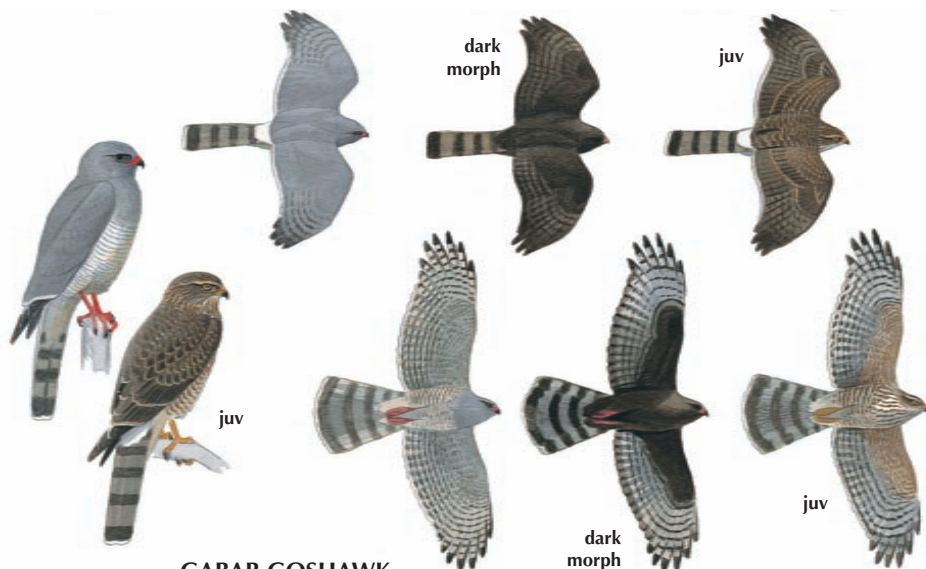
IDENTIFICATION Medium-sized raptor with broad, fairly long, rounded wings and fairly long, tapering tail. In most ways recalls *Accipiter* hawks, but rather bulky build, somewhat longer wings and slightly shorter tail add a hint of buzzard. Often perches conspicuously upright, but sometimes holds itself up on its long legs in characteristic horizontal posture. In steady flight, has slow, steady wingbeats and keeps wings straight out with no bend at carpal joint. Generally hunts low over ground, several wingbeats followed by a short glide on flattish wings in *Accipiter* fashion. When soaring, holds wings raised in shallow V. **Adult** unlikely to be confused. When soaring, vaguely resembles adult male Hen Harrier with its pale grey upperside with black wingtips, but is noticeably broader- and more rounded-winged, has much darker grey head, mantle and lesser upperwing coverts (contrasting with whitish remainder of wing coverts and whitish secondaries), and has broad dark barring on outer tail feathers. When close, fine dark barring from lower breast to undertail coverts, bright orange-red cere and very long orange-red legs are



distinctive. **Juvenile** with its brown coloration, yellowish cere and yellowy-orange legs recalls *Accipiter* hawks, especially when perched. Differs in having unbarred brown upper breast, broader barring on tail and very long legs. Easier in flight, when shows whitish rump and pale (but noticeably barred) buffy panel on the upperside of the primaries (contrasting with dark remainder of upperwing).

VOICE In breeding season, a loud melodious, fluting whistle often repeated for some time: 'wheeu-wheeu-wheeu-wheeu...' (with upward inflexion on 'u').

STATUS/HABITAT Very rare apparent resident (but breeding unproven, perhaps occurring in remote foothills of Atlas). Open argana woodland and, in winter at least, old olive groves with tall trees and clearings.



GABAR GOSHAWK

(p. 192)

GABAR GOSHAWK *Micronisus gabar*

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L 30–36 cm, WS 65–75 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Vagrant *Accipiter*-like raptor from sub-Saharan Africa, similar in size to Eurasian Sparrowhawk, but with longer tail. **Adult** differs from all *Accipiter* in having clean grey throat and breast, contrasting with white remainder of underparts, barred with grey, and red (as opposed to yellow) cere, iris and legs. White uppertail coverts also diagnostic, but beware *Accipiter* with fluffed out white undertail coverts that create illusion of white rump. When seen only from above and behind, clean grey coloration can look quite Shikra-like, but shows white rump patch and heavily barred uppertail. **Juvenile** more like young *Accipiter* in plumage, with orange-yellow cere, iris and legs, and thus more problematical, but white uppertail coverts are diagnostic. Overall coloration

a richer brown than in any juvenile *Accipiter*. White underparts are streaked with brown on throat and breast, but barred with brown on belly and flanks.

VOICE Usually silent. In breeding season gives a high-pitched, rapid, piping 'sweee-pee-pee-pee' or 'kik-kik-kik-kik-kik'.

UNUSUAL VARIANTS A certain percentage (usually under 10%) are melanistic, with almost wholly black plumage (tail is barred with grey above and flight feathers and tail show white barring on undersides). Such individuals unlikely to be confused.

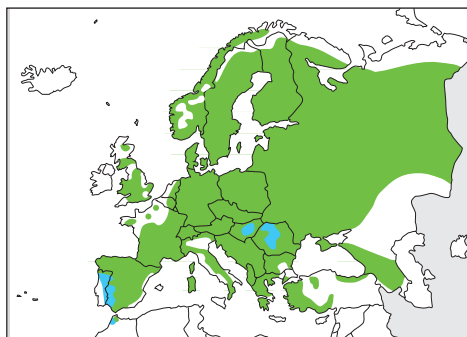
STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Egypt). In natural range, acacia savanna, open woodland and semi-desert scrub.

NORTHERN GOSHAWK *Accipiter gentilis*
Goshawk

Plate page 242

L 48–62 cm, WS 95–125 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Much the largest *Accipiter*, but marked size difference between sexes: females average 15–20% larger and 60% heavier than males. Largest females Common Buzzard-sized, smallest males not much longer than largest female Eurasian Sparrowhawk, although still twice as heavy. Shape, plumage pattern and flight action typical of *Accipiter*. Comparatively short-winged and long-tailed raptor with barred underparts in adult. (Tail considerably longer than wing is broad.) In active flight, gives a series of rapid wingbeats followed by a glide on flat wings with wings held partly closed. Often hunts from concealed perch, launching into swift and impressively agile pursuit low over trees and open ground. When soaring holds wings flat or slightly raised. In display flight, flaps wings slowly. **Adult** (especially male) can be confused with female Eurasian Sparrowhawk, but has longer, broader arm and more pointed hand (slightly shorter and narrower also), with more curved trailing edge (shows pronounced S-curve when gliding), shorter tail with more rounded, less square-cut tip, more protruding head with thicker-necked look, and much more robust body that looks deeper and broader from breast to belly. Northern Goshawk looks more dark-hooded, and often has bulkier, more conspicuous white undertail coverts and frequently less obvious barring on underside of flight feathers. Flight action typically slower, heavier, more powerful and more direct, with shallower wingbeats and longer glides (but beware displaying Eurasian Sparrowhawk with slow wingbeats creating illusion of greater size). Soars more often, and tends to hold tail more open when soaring. If mobbed by Carrion Crows, male Northern Goshawk almost always looks obviously larger (unlike female Eurasian Sparrowhawk). **Juvenile** separated by same features as adult, except that it lacks dark hood and conspicuous white undertail coverts while having bolder barring on underside of flight feathers like Eurasian Sparrowhawk. In addition, drop-like markings on underparts are not found in Eurasian Sparrowhawk (but see Levant Sparrowhawk) and neither is pale mottling on greater coverts. At any age, may be told at a distance from *Buteo* buzzards by smaller, more protruding head and bulkier body, broader arm but more pointed wingtips, longer tail, and quite different flight action. From distant



European Honey Buzzard (with which it shares projecting head, long tail and flat wings when soaring) by bulkier body, more pointed wingtips, uniformly spaced, broad tail bars, and different flight action when travelling. From Gyr Falcon by much shorter, less pointed hand, broader arm, markedly curved trailing edge to wing and broad barring on longer tail.

SEX/AGE Adult female is substantially larger than adult male, browner on upperparts, and has more prominent white undertail coverts. White supercilium contrasts less with browner (less blackish) crown and ear-coverts. Juvenile dark brown above with broad buff feather edgings: lacks solid dark crown and face patch of adult, and supercilium diffuse or lacking; underparts often buff (instead of white), or even washed rufous, with dark drop-like spots replacing barring of adult and dark barring on underside of wings and upperside of tail more obvious (with broad buffish tip to tail). Has pale mottling on greater coverts.

VOICE Usually silent. Alarm call near nest a loud, guttural 'kyee-kyee-kyee ...'. Begging call of female a plaintive, melancholy 'whee-oh'. Both louder, harsher and deeper than in Eurasian Sparrowhawk.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate and clinal, with largest and palest (most blue-grey) populations in north and east, smallest and darkest in south and west. 4 races including vagrant *atricapillus* from N America (nominate race illustrated). Adults of both *buteoides*

(breeding northeasternmost Europe eastwards) and N American race *atricapillus* are paler and more blue-grey above and paler-looking below due to finer barring, while juvenile *buteoides* is less heavily streaked below than nominate race and has more extensive

pale buffy marbling on wing coverts, with pale markings also on uppertail coverts.

STATUS/HABITAT Uncommon. Forests and extensive woodlands (especially coniferous), large clearings and adjacent open country.

EURASIAN SPARROWHAWK *Accipiter nisus*

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Sparrowhawk, Northern Sparrowhawk

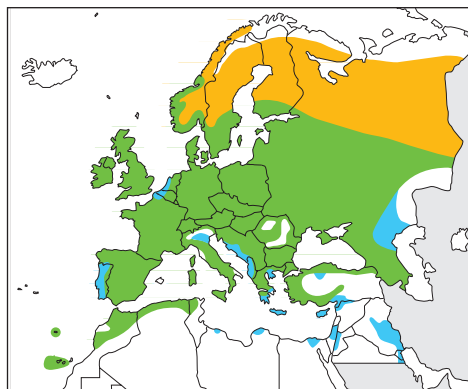
L 28–38 cm, WS 60–80 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Much the commonest and most widespread *Accipiter*. Flight action and behaviour typical of the genus (see Northern Goshawk). For differences from Northern Goshawk, Levant Sparrowhawk and Shikra see those species. This and other small *Accipiter* can be mistaken for small falcons in poor view, but have much shorter and less pointed hand and quite different flight action (see Northern Goshawk).

SEX/AGE Adult female is substantially larger than adult male, with browner (less bluish-grey) upperparts; has dark brown rather than rufous-brown barring on underparts, more obvious head patterning (with more conspicuous white supercilium), and more obvious dark barring on underside of flight feathers. Juvenile closely resembles adult female, but even browner on upperparts and with rufous tips to feathers (most obvious in male); underparts marked with warm brown or dark brown spots, crescents and heart-shaped blotches forming less clean-cut barring, and has dark streaks on foreneck.

VOICE Usually silent. Alarm call near nest a loud, shrill 'kyi-kyi-kyi ...'. Begging call of female a plaintive 'whee-oo'.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 5 races, including vagrant *nisosimilis* which breeds in Siberia.



Nominate race illustrated.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Iraq.) Forests and woodland of all kinds, including copses and town parks, large clearings and adjacent open country. Outside breeding season, also in more open terrain with groves, hedgerows, orchards etc.

SHIKRA *Accipiter badius*

Plate page 244

L 30–36 cm, WS 60–70 cm.

IDENTIFICATION The smallest *Accipiter*, restricted to the SW Caspian region. Likely to be confused only with Levant Sparrowhawk or Eurasian Sparrowhawk.

Adult best told from Levant Sparrowhawk by noticeably more rounded wingtip and, in males, black tips to outer primaries only (not inner as well). From Eurasian Sparrowhawk, which has similar wing shape, by dark wingtip from below, much paler coloration overall (with much less distinct barring on underparts), and rounded instead of square-cut corners to tail (which is slightly tapering). Lacks obvious whitish supercilium usually shown by adult female and juvenile Eurasian Sparrowhawks. **Juvenile** best separated from juvenile Levant Sparrowhawk by noticeably more rounded wingtip and much less prominent dark spotting on underparts. From adult female or juvenile Eurasian Sparrowhawk by spotted rather than barred underbody (but note that juvenile Eurasian Sparrowhawk has dark streaks on foreneck), lack of whitish supercilium, and by rounded instead of square-cut corners to tail (which is slightly tapering). Shikras of any age/sex



have fine dark mesial stripe on throat (unlike Eurasian Sparrowhawk), but this normally discernible only when perched close. Upperside of central tail feathers unbarred (unlike Eurasian Sparrowhawk).

SEX/AGE Adult female differs from closely similar adult male in darker, more slaty upperparts, broader pinkish-buff barring on underparts, and dark tips to 2–3 longest primaries only (instead of 4–5).

VOICE Usually silent, but in breeding season often gives a loud repeated 'keeu-keeu-keeu ...'; also a shrill 'kewik' with stress on last syllable recalling Tawny Owl, often repeated.

STATUS/HABITAT Rare and poorly known; may not breed annually. Deciduous woodland, groves (even inside towns and villages), orchards.

LEVANT SPARROWHAWK *Accipiter brevipes*

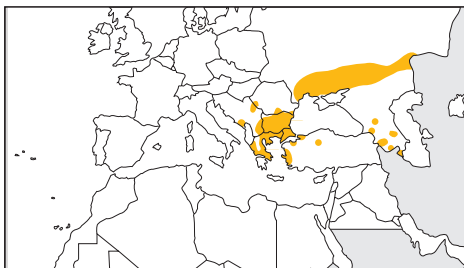
Plate page 243

L 32–38 cm, WS 65–75 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Rather unusual small *Accipiter* with more falcon-like wing shape and habit of migrating in

soaring flocks like large, broad-winged raptors. Female similar in size to Eurasian Sparrowhawk, but sexual

dimorphism reduced in comparison with latter and males mostly larger than Eurasian. **Adult male** easily separated from Eurasian by very pale underparts that contrast with black wingtips and by paler, blue-grey coloration above. Underwing (apart from black tip) looks white at any distance. When perched, has pinkish-grey rather than rufous cheeks and often a rather uniform (rather than cleanly barred) rufous breast. Iris darker: reddish-brown compared with Eurasian's yellow or at most reddish-orange. Central tail feathers unbarred. Could perhaps be mistaken for Lesser Kestrel at a distance, but lacks bold black band at tip of tail, has broader, less pointed wings, lacks contrast between buffy body and largely white underwing, and has very different flight action. **Adult female** best told from Eurasian adult female or juvenile by narrower, more pointed wings with fairly conspicuous dark tips, somewhat more slender body, rounded instead of square-cut corners to tail (which is slightly tapered), lack of whitish supercilium, and by usually paler coloration below. In particularly good view (e.g. when soaring), it is possible to see four 'fingers' in the wingtip (compared with five in Eurasian) and 5–6 narrow dark bars on tail which are restricted to outer feathers (compared with 4–5 broader bars that usually extend right across tail). Iris colour differs as for male and cheeks grey with rufous tinge (rather than whitish or rufous with dark streaking). When perched close, look for relatively short toes. **Juvenile** can be separated from Eurasian in any plumage by the distinctive dark drop-like spots on the underbody (instead of dark barring) and by the same features as for adult female (except that underside of wingtips often not especially dark and underparts are no paler than in Eurasian). (Note: juvenile Eurasian often shows drop-like markings on foreneck and sometimes upper breast, but not on rest of underbody.) Iris yellowish-grey (so duller than in any Eurasian). Juvenile might perhaps be confused with much larger juvenile Northern Goshawk, but is much more slightly built, with much narrower and more pointed hand, and lacks obvious curve



to trailing edge of wing; in addition, ground colour of underparts invariably whitish (in Northern Goshawk often warm buff or even rufous) and same difference in number of tail bands applies as for Eurasian. Levant Sparrowhawks of any age/sex have dark mesial streak down throat (unlike Eurasian), but this is discernible only in close view and is most obvious in juvenile. Upperside of central tail feathers unbarred (unlike Eurasian). For differences from Shikra see that species.

SEX/AGE Adult female differs from adult male in darker and browner upperparts, much more conspicuous (broader and browner, less rufous) barring on underbody and underwing coverts, discernible dark barring on underside of flight feathers, and more obvious dark mesial streak on throat. Juvenile differs from adult female in being even browner on upperparts and has quite different underparts, with dark drop-like markings on underbody and dark barring on underwing coverts; lacks dark wingtips from below, and has a much more prominent dark mesial throat streak.

VOICE Usually silent. In breeding season, gives a shrill, high 'kewik' with stress on last syllable, recalling Tawny Owl.

STATUS/HABITAT Uncommon (except on migration, when can be common). (In addition to mapped range, has bred Hungary, Albania.) Deciduous woodland, groves (even on outskirts of settlements), orchards and adjacent open country. Mostly in lowlands.

SWAINSON'S HAWK *Buteo swainsoni*

Swainson's Buzzard

L 50–55 cm, WS 120–135 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Common Buzzard-sized transatlantic vagrant. Quite variable, with both pale and dark morphs and intermediates. In all plumages looks rather lanky for a *Buteo* with relatively small head and unusually small feet. Wings are relatively long and more pointed than in other *Buteo* species of our region. At rest, wingtips extend to end of tail or beyond. Flight feathers (apart from bases of outer primaries) are characteristically rather dark below, unlike other *Buteo* species. **Pale morph** with its pale body and underwing coverts, dark flight feathers and relatively long, more pointed wings can recall pale morph Booted Eagle. Compared to latter, lacks pale panel on upperwing, pale nape and characteristic small white patch at base of leading edge of wing. Usually shows dark markings below (especially young birds), and often a solid brown 'bib' below clean white throat. Some pale individuals quite like some pale Common Buzzards, but as well as showing structural differences outlined above, these lack pale upperwing coverts that are typical of pale Common Buzzards, while underwing primary coverts are pale with dark tips, not all-dark. **Dark morph** also recalls dark morph Booted Eagle, rather than dark morph *Buteo*, owing to wing shape and largely dark underside to flight feathers.

As in pale morph, lacks pale panel on upperwing, pale nape and small white patch at base of leading edge of wing, and also shows pale buffy undertail coverts (often with dark barring). Compared to typical dark morph Common Buzzard, lacks any pale area on underwing coverts and breast. Intermediates are common, usually showing rufous ground colour to underbody (spotted or streaked darker) and pale rufous tinge to underwing coverts. When soaring, Swainson's Hawk often holds wings slightly pressed forwards and raised higher than in Common Buzzard, forming a distinct V. Sometimes teeters from side to side.

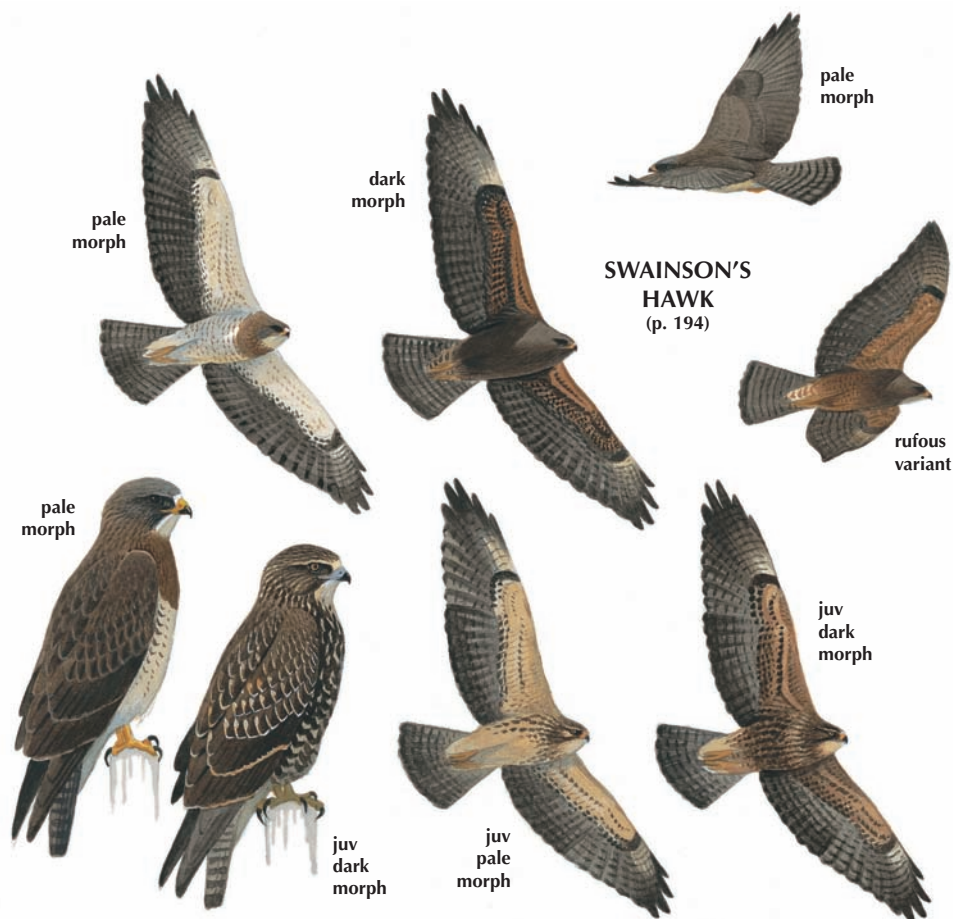
SEX/AGE Juveniles broadly resemble adults. Pale morph juvenile is more 'variegated', however, with broad white feather edgings on upperparts and more dark spotting below. Head paler, often with white eyebrows that meet on forehead, white streaks on crown and whitish cheeks. As in adult, dark markings on sides of neck and breast often coalesce into dark 'bib', isolating white throat patch. Dark morph juvenile very like adult, but underparts are spotted with tawny and may show some white on sides of upperpart coverts.

VOICE Typical call a far-carrying, long, whistling 'kieeer'.

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STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe, Israel). In natural range, open plains and broad, dry valleys with

grassland or cultivation, breeding in isolated trees, groves or riverine woodland.



COMMON BUZZARD *Buteo buteo* Buzzard

L 51–57 cm, WS 115–135 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Much the most widespread and generally the commonest medium-sized raptor of our region. This is the species against which other larger raptors are measured: fairly broad- but longish-winged, with a broad head and neck, fairly short tail and obvious pale patches at the base of the primaries. When soaring, holds wings slightly pressed forwards and raised in a shallow V. In active flight, wingbeats rather stiff and fairly rapid; glides with wings held flat or with hands slightly lowered. Frequently seen riding the updrafts and hanging motionless, but hovers only very occasionally. Often seen perching out in the open on telegraph poles, trees or fence posts. Remarkable range of plumage variation both within races (ranging from pale to dark morphs) and between races makes confusion with Long-legged, Rough-legged and European Honey Buzzards a problem in areas

where they also occur. For separation see those species.

SEX/AGE Juvenile closely resembles adult, but tail lacks distinctly broader dark terminal band and dark border to underside of trailing edge of wing not so dark or clean-cut. Slightly slimmer-winged due to shorter, less bulging secondaries. Iris pale (usually dark in adult).

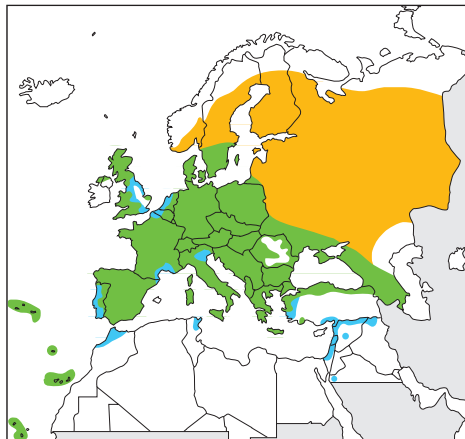
VOICE Typical call a far-carrying, plaintive mewing 'peeeooo'.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Marked. 7 races (nominate race and *vulpinus* illustrated). Only slight variation between nominate race and island races of southwest of our region, but eastern race *vulpinus* (N Scandinavia to Ukraine) is smaller, lacks very pale morphs (and dark morphs are uncommon), is frequently fox-red on body and wing coverts and rufous

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on tail, and has pale area on upperside of primaries (generally lacking in nominate race etc.). Race *menetriesi* (Crimea and Caucasus to NE Turkey) is similar to *vulpinus* but nearer size of nominate race and generally darker and redder; dark morphs more frequent. These two races often referred to as 'Steppe Buzzard' and often present difficulties in separation from Long-legged Buzzard (q.v.).

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. Forests, woodland, clearings, groves and adjacent open country. In winter quarters often in open plains.



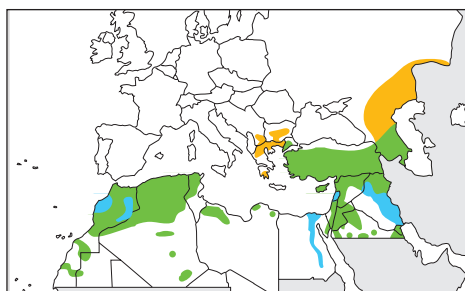
LONG-LEGGED BUZZARD *Buteo rufinus*

L 57–65 cm, WS 135–160 cm (nominate race).

L 50–55 cm, WS 115–125 cm (race *cirtensis*).

IDENTIFICATION The largest, most majestic buzzard, giving almost eagle-like impression at times due to its long wings. Quite variable plumage. Most birds fall into pale to medium category, but also has not uncommon dark morph. Main problem is separation from Common Buzzard. **Pale and medium morphs** can mostly be separated from Common, especially otherwise rather similar 'Steppe Buzzard', by dark belly patch contrasting with pale head and remainder of underparts. Some individuals, however, have dark patch reduced to flanks and 'trousers', and in a few it is virtually absent. Latter, which include rare individuals with virtually white underparts, are best separated by structural, flight and plumage differences outlined below. Nominat race (but not N African *cirtensis*) is noticeably larger and bulkier, with longer wings (especially arm). Soars with wings pressed slightly forwards and raised like Common, but often raises wings higher. Has slower, more fluid wingbeats, and when gliding often holds arms slightly raised but hands flat with an obvious kink at carpal joint (as in Rough-legged but unlike Common, which typically holds arms and hands flat, or hands slightly lowered). In addition, tends to hold arms straighter (less pressed forwards) with wingtips less swept back and pointed and trailing edge of wings straighter. Hovers more frequently than Common (but less often than Rough-legged) and has slightly longer tail. On average, compared with 'Steppe Buzzard', wing coverts contrast more with dark flight feathers, patch on upperside of primaries is larger and paler (extending onto outermost primaries, especially in juvenile), and blackish carpal patch below is larger and more prominent. Long-legged rarely shows a pale band across underwing coverts (frequent in 'Steppe Buzzard'). Tail is paler and is unbarred in adult (finely barred in 'Steppe Buzzard' with, in adult, a more conspicuous dark subterminal bar; but note that a few adult 'Steppe Buzzards' have virtually unbarred tails). Head and usually breast are pale (in 'Steppe Buzzard' head and lower breast are usually darker, with a distinctive pale band across upper breast) and there is little or no barring on the underbody (present in many 'Steppes' from breast to belly). Facial markings are often reduced to just a faint dark line behind the eye and a faint dark moustachial stripe. Some 'Steppes' are

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entirely rufous below (slightly darker on belly and flanks): they lack pale breast band, dark barring on underbody and pale band across underwing coverts, making separation from Long-legged, especially rufous individuals, particularly difficult on plumage. Latter often show rich rufous lesser coverts that contrast with browner remainder of upwinging coverts, while very rufous 'Steppes' typically have rufous tinge to entire upwinging coverts. When perched, looks more elongated and more heavily built, with longer tarsi and larger bill. Long-legged best separated from Rough-legged, which nominate race closely resembles in size, structure and flight action, by unbarred (adult) or weakly and narrowly barred (juvenile) tail, by pale throat and upper breast contrasting with dark belly patch (adult Rough-legged dark from throat to upper breast, with pale U-shaped area between upper breast and dark belly patch), and by rufous plumage coloration (including contrastingly rufous lesser coverts) if present. (Note that juvenile Rough-legged often has quite pale throat and upper breast.) Beware confusing N African race *cirtensis*, which is only 'Steppe Buzzard'-sized, with either 'Steppe' or Rough-legged. May be separated on same characters as nominate race, except for size and bulk and fact that wings are not so long and wingbeats more rapid (so does not give same 'eagle-buzzard' impression). Distinguishing *cirtensis* from 'Steppes' which are entirely rufous below is especially difficult, as differences in structure and flight action are much reduced compared with nominate race. Best features are contrastingly paler (less rufous)

head and breast, larger, more prominent dark carpal patch on underwing, and paler, less uniformly rufous tail (owing to whitish bases to inner webs). Tail is unbarred in adult, but beware some adult 'Steppes' without barring. **Dark morph** (not uncommon, but found in nominate race only) is easily told from all *Buteo* buzzards other than rare dark morphs of 'Steppe' (and even rarer dark morph of Rough-legged) by uniformly dark body and wing coverts. Although tail has broad dark subterminal bar like adult Rough-legged, it is also finely barred throughout. Plumage appears to be identical to dark morphs of 'Steppe' and Rough-legged. Separation from former must be by structural and flight differences outlined above. May be indistinguishable from latter in the field, but they rarely come into contact. See also European Honey Buzzard.

SEX/AGE Juvenile of pale to medium morphs closely

resembles adult, but dark border to underside of trailing edge of wing not so dark or clean-cut and tail barred (barring rare in adult, but if present may show broader subterminal bar as in adult Common). Iris pale. Dark-morph juvenile separable only on trailing edge and iris characters.

VOICE Usually silent. Sometimes give a repeated descending 'aaah' (mellower and lower-pitched than typical call of Common Buzzard).

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 2 races (both illustrated). N African *cirtensis* is much smaller ('Steppe Buzzard'-sized) and lacks dark morph and individuals with almost white underparts (see also Identification).

STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon (locally fairly common). (In addition to mapped range, has bred Lebanon.) Steppe, pasture, semi-desert and desert fringes, inhabiting plains, hills and mountains.

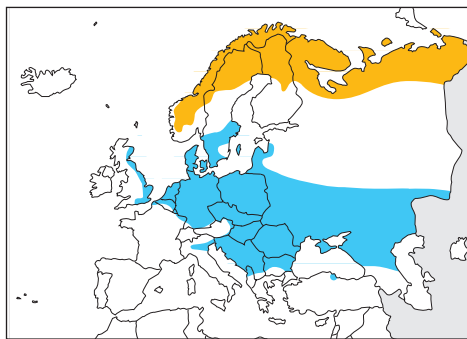
ROUGH-LEGGED BUZZARD *Buteo lagopus*

Rough-legged Hawk (N America)

L 55–61 cm, WS 130–150 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Arctic-breeding buzzard. Larger, longer-winged and slightly longer-tailed than Common Buzzard, the species with which confusion most likely. Can be separated from Common by clean white base to tail that contrasts with otherwise rather dark upper-side and broad dark subterminal band (broader than in any other buzzard). Beware, however, pale Common with white uppertail coverts and pale (whitish or greyish) base to tail: these can look superficially similar, but white on tail often restricted to base of central feathers. In Rough-legged, uppertail coverts are mottled with dark brown (so clean white starts further back, on tail itself). Rough-legged usually has extensive pale patch on upperside of primaries: this lacking (or small) in most western Commons but not in 'Steppe'. Leading edge of arm whitish, often conspicuously so (dark in most Commons). Some Commons have dark belly patch much like Rough-legged, but occasional Commons that show very pale underside to flight feathers, rather conspicuous blackish carpal patches and whitish leading edge to arms never seem to have extensive dark belly patch (but beware occasional Rough-legged with belly patch reduced to sides of belly or virtually absent). Unlike Rough-legged, these pale Commons often have conspicuously whitish upperwing coverts. Some dark adult males can look very like Common Buzzard, but in addition to difference in tail pattern, these always show dark throat (often pale in similar-looking Common). Flight action rather different: has slower, more fluid wingbeats, unlike faster, rather stiff beats of Common. Soars with wings slightly pressed forwards and raised in a shallow V, as Common. When gliding, holds arms raised and hands flat, with distinct kink at carpal joint (while Common holds both arms and hands flat, or hands slightly lowered). Hovers much more frequently and often hangs with wings motionless, frequently twisting tail in *Milvus* kite-like fashion. For differences from Long-legged and European Honey Buzzards see those species. Distant bird soaring with wings raised (especially juvenile with well-marked pale areas on upperside of primaries) could be mistaken for juvenile Golden Eagle if smaller size not apparent, but has less protruding head (and much smaller bill), narrower hands (with four visible 'fingers' instead of six), and completely different underside pattern. When hunting low, can give momentary impression of large harrier.

SEX/AGE Adult male shows three or more dark bands on tail, adult female only one or two (at a distance



often appearing to merge into a single subterminal band). Adult female generally paler on head and breast. Juvenile closely resembles adult, but averages paler on head, body and both upperwing and underwing coverts (sometimes almost clean white below except for dark wingtips, tail band, belly patch and carpal patches): has broader but less distinct subterminal bar on uppertail; dark border to underside of trailing edge of wing is not so dark or clean-cut (this combined with pale underwing coverts makes dark carpal patches and wingtips stand out even more), and dark patch often covers whole belly (uncommon in adult, in which patch often broken down middle). Iris pale.

VOICE Typical call a loud, far-carrying, cat-like 'peeeooo', more mournful and lower-pitched than similar call of Common.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races, including vagrant *menzbieri* which breeds in E Siberia. Nominant race illustrated.

UNUSUAL VARIANTS Extremely rare dark morph closely resembles dark-morph Long-legged, from which it may be indistinguishable in the field, and dark-morph Common (from which it may be separated with care by greater size and by differences in structure and flight action discussed above).

STATUS/HABITAT Numbers rise and fall with vole and lemming cycles in breeding range; ranges from uncommon to fairly common. In breeding season, tundra (including partly forested regions) and, further south, high fells. In winter quarters, open country, both cultivated and uncultivated and with or without woodland or groves.

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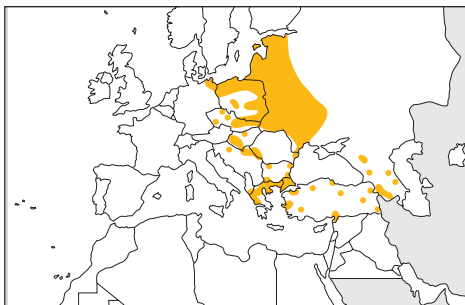
LESSER SPOTTED EAGLE *Aquila pomarina*

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L 62–68 cm, WS 145–165 cm.

IDENTIFICATION The smallest *Aquila* eagle: between Common Buzzard and Golden Eagle in size, but closer to the former. Well proportioned, as in all *Aquila* species, with long, rather uniformly broad wings. Soars with wings level, or with slightly down-curved hands, and generally pressed slightly forwards. Glides with wings noticeably bowed, with hand clearly drooping. In active flight, has rapid, shallow wingbeats. Easily confused with adult and immature Greater Spotted and Steppe, and to a lesser extent Tawny and Imperial. For separation see those species. From Golden by substantially smaller size, much more compact build with less protruding head and shorter, all-dark tail, level wings when soaring, and rather heavy instead of majestic impression in flight.

SEX/AGE Juvenile resembles adult but is darker on body and wing coverts, so little contrast with flight feathers; has whitish spots on greater and median upperwing coverts (looking like single white line across upperwing at a distance), and many have thin whitish line across underwing formed by whitish tips to greater underwing coverts. In very fresh juvenile plumage, has narrow whitish border to trailing edge of wings and tip of tail. Also has obvious whitish upper-tail coverts (usually lacking in adult), a more obvious whitish area on upperwing at base of inner primaries (sometimes appearing as indistinct pale wedge on underwing), more obvious pale ventral area, and often a whitish patch on lower back; pale rusty-yellow patch on nape (often hard to see). Immature is intermediate: narrow white line on underwing may still be



quite noticeable or be absent; underbody and underwing coverts often look rather mottled.

VOICE Usually silent. In breeding season a high-pitched barking 'kyek', often repeated and sounding like yapping of small dog.

UNUSUAL VARIANTS Extremely rare, poorly documented pale morph has pale, rather yellowish-buff underbody and underwing coverts. It is uncertain if any show pale upperbody and upperwing coverts as well (as does pale-morph Greater Spotted Eagle). Such plumages may be restricted to young birds.

STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Austria.) Forests, extensive woodlands and adjacent open country, especially damp meadows and wetlands. Found in both lowlands and wide valleys in mountains.

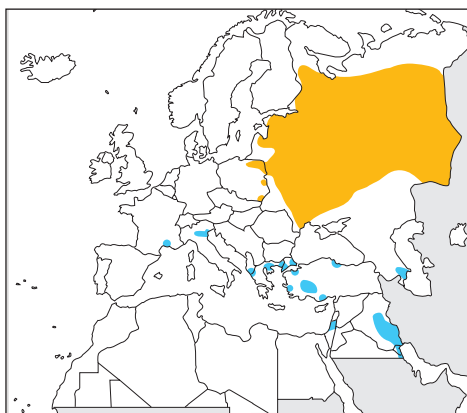
GREATER SPOTTED EAGLE *Aquila clanga*

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Spotted Eagle

L 65–72 cm, WS 155–180 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Smaller *Aquila* associated with wetlands and partly overlapping in size with very similar Lesser Spotted. Separation of some individuals from latter requires great care. Flight characters virtually identical. Soars with wings level, or with slightly downcurved hands, and generally pressed slightly forwards. Glides with wings noticeably bowed, with hand clearly drooping. In active flight has rapid, shallow wingbeats, but when slowly hunting often gives deeper, heavier and more laboured beats than are typical of Lesser Spotted. Wings (when unworn) normally look rather broader and slightly more deeply 'fingered', while tail (which is actually about same length as in Lesser Spotted) tends to seem shorter (about two-thirds breadth of wing compared with about three-quarters in Lesser Spotted) owing to broader wings. As wear, moult and individual variation create many exceptions, an examination of plumage features is also necessary. Greater Spotted usually has very dark, blackish-brown underwing coverts that look slightly darker than flight feathers. This difference most marked in juvenile. In Lesser Spotted, underwing coverts are obviously paler than flight feathers in adult and immature and somewhat paler in most juveniles (but beware a few with no discernible difference). Note, however, that a few Greater Spotted have very dark flight feathers, so underwing looks uniform. In such cases, look at colour of underwing coverts: blackish-brown in Greater Spotted, medium to dark brown (usually with warm tinge) in Lesser Spotted. (Beware occasional Greater Spotted with pale blotches among otherwise blackish-brown coverts.) Under-



body colour differs in like manner in most. From above usually looks darker than Lesser Spotted, lacking contrast between paler upperwing coverts and darker flight feathers (marked in adult Lesser Spotted) or between paler head, neck and mantle and darker back and scapulars (contrast usually present in adult Lesser Spotted). Occasional adult Greater Spotted have bleached panel on upperwing coverts, but these still show a dark blackish-brown leading edge to arm. Some very well-marked juveniles have so much white spotting on upperwing coverts that it obscures blackish-brown ground colour (and makes coverts look

almost wholly pale at a distance), but these still show a dark blackish-brown leading edge. In more typical but still well-marked birds, the white bands of spots across upperwing look much broader than in any juvenile Lesser Spotted, but in many individuals white spotting is not significantly larger or more extensive so bands look similar. Juvenile and immature Greater Spotted tend to have more extensive whitish patch at base of hand made up of white shaft streaks and spots on primary coverts (and patch extends further towards leading edge than in Lesser Spotted), but patch on Lesser Spotted visible at greater distance as, although it generally has fewer white shaft streaks and spots, the pale bases to the primaries make patch more 'solid'. While adult Greater Spotted has at most a few white shaft streaks remaining, a pale brownish-yellow patch is still visible at base of inner primaries in Lesser Spotted. Finally, Greater Spotted never shows rusty-yellow nape patch seen in juvenile Lesser Spotted, and head is darker, contrasting more strongly with yellow cere and gape. Also easily confused with adult Steppe and to a lesser extent Tawny and Imperial. For separation see those species. From Golden by smaller size, much more compact build with less protruding head and shorter, all-dark tail, level wings when soaring, and rather heavy instead of majestic impression in flight. When tail worn can look quite like juvenile White-tailed at a distance, but is substantially smaller with more compact shape (with shorter wings, much less protruding head and much smaller bill) and rounded instead of wedge-shaped tail.

SEX/AGE Immature intermediate between juvenile and adult: still retains white on uppertail coverts, but white on upperwing usually reduced to single line of spots on greater and primary coverts plus white shaft streaks on primaries.

VOICE Usually silent. In breeding season a barking 'kyak', often repeated and as with Lesser Spotted sounding like yapping dog, but lower-pitched than latter's.

UNUSUAL VARIANTS Scarce pale morph (known as '*fulvescens*' from time when thought to be separate species) resembles typical (i.e. dark-morph) juvenile in having white spots on upperwing coverts and white

uppertail coverts, but remainder of body and underwing coverts plus bases of lesser and median upperwing coverts are pale yellowish-buff. Other rare individuals have yellowish-brown or pale reddish-brown underbody and underwing coverts and/or upperbody and upperwing coverts. All these plumages, including '*fulvescens*', may occur only in young birds. Pale individuals may be confused with young Steppe and especially with pale Tawny or young Imperial. Despite reports to the contrary, '*fulvescens*' sometimes shows pale wedge on inner primaries. Easily told from young Steppe by lack of broad white band across underwing. Differs from extremely similar pale Tawny in having conspicuous broad whitish bands across upperwing coverts (narrow and inconspicuous in Tawny). Also has shorter tail (but beware individuals with fresh, longer-looking tails) and more rounded wingtip. Compared with young Imperial, is smaller, distinctly shorter-winged (with more rounded, less long-fingered look to wingtip) and shorter-tailed, but plumage very similar. When perched, shows distinctly spiky feathering on nape (giving shaggy look that is lacking in Steppe and Tawny), bright yellow cere (pale yellow in Tawny) and dark iris (yellow in adult Tawny, but dark in juvenile). Lacks Steppe's long gape that extends backwards to rear of eye. Beware extremely rare pale-morph of Lesser Spotted. All or most of these lack pale upperparts and none seems to be as pale on underbody and underwing coverts as palest Greater Spotted. Darker individuals of pale-morph Greater Spotted are more similar in underpart coloration, but usually show a darker area on head (around bill) and on leading edge of arm (both above and below).

STATUS/HABITAT Scarce. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Sweden, Finland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Romania, Turkey, Israel. Sporadic in winter in Egypt.) More tied to wetlands than Lesser Spotted. In breeding season, forests and woodland with adjacent wetlands for feeding. At other times, also wetlands without nearby tree cover. Autumn migration averages considerably later than that of Lesser Spotted, and does not move nearly so far.

STEPPE EAGLE *Aquila nipalensis*

L 67–87 cm, WS 170–220 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Medium-sized to large, powerful, long-winged *Aquila* of dry, open country of southeast of our region. Wide size range: smallest are significantly smaller than average Imperial, but largest are as large as average Golden. Soars with wings held straight out, either level or with slightly downcurved hands. When gliding slowly, has wings distinctly bowed with noticeably drooping hands; when travelling fast has arm slightly raised, carpal joints pressed forwards and hands slightly lowered. Active flight rather heavy. Wings usually seem rather broad with deeply cut 'fingers'. Trailing edge virtually parallel in many adults, but many juveniles and some older birds show distinct S-curve due to bulging secondaries and narrower 'wrist'. Tail fairly long (typically about three-quarters of wing breadth) and sometimes looks slightly wedge-shaped. Moults and wear cause much variation, however, and some can look narrow-winged and/or short-tailed. **Adult** most likely to be confused with Imperial (q.v.). Larger and longer-winged than Lesser Spotted or Greater Spotted (often considerably larger than former), with more protruding head and neck (enhanced by larger bill), and longer-tailed than



Greater Spotted (but unworn tail barely longer than in Lesser Spotted). Tail when fresh is slightly wedge-shaped (rounded in unworn spotted eagles). Hand is a little longer and more square-ended, with 'fingers' more deeply cut. Trailing edge sometimes shows more distinct S-curve owing to shorter inner primaries, but this difference not nearly so pronounced in adults as in juveniles and often lacking. Wingbeats generally slower, deeper and heavier than in Lesser Spotted (but rather similar to Greater Spotted). Wear and moult

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make many of these differences unreliable, however, and plumage characters should also be used. Some Steppe show uniformly dark underwing coverts contrasting with slightly paler flight feathers (in this respect like Greater Spotted but unlike typical adult Lesser Spotted, which has paler underwing coverts than flight feathers), while many show no discernible contrast (like a few juvenile Lesser Spotted) and a few have slightly paler coverts (like typical juvenile Lesser Spotted). At closer range, Steppe often shows distinctly barred underside to flight feathers and tail, with a broad dark band along trailing edges of wings and another at tip of tail. (Barring usually lacking in both spotted eagles, and even when faint barring visible neither shows broad dark trailing edge to wing or broad dark terminal band on tail.) Barring sometimes visible on upperside also. Steppe also differs in more extensive pale patch on upperside of primaries (covering all but tips of inner primaries and forming pale wedge on upperwing in some, but in others extending across much of hand). In Greater Spotted, pale 'patch' is in fact made up of white shaft streaks, which are often hard to see on distant birds; in Lesser Spotted, pale patch usually smaller, not extending beyond base of inner primaries. Other differences include largely dark ventral area (almost always pale in spotted eagles, but beware occasional Steppe with pale ventral area) and usually less uniform underwing coverts (which often include some white edgings on greater coverts). At very close range, shows longer gape (extending to rear of eye, but only to mid-eye or less in both spotted eagles) and unique dark line below gape which contrasts with pale throat patch. Many Steppe have noticeable rusty-yellow nape patch (absent in Greater Spotted and older Lesser Spotted, but present in juvenile Lesser Spotted), although this is much less extensive and less conspicuous than pale nape 'shawls' of Imperial or Golden. Bill is heavier than that of Lesser Spotted in particular. **Juvenile** also most likely to be confused with Imperial (q.v.). Separated from Lesser Spotted and Greater Spotted of any age by presence of broad whitish band across underwing (and broad rather than narrow white trailing edge and tip of tail), and is usu-

ally much paler on body and wing coverts. (Note: whitish band across underwing of juvenile Lesser Spotted can cause confusion, but is much narrower.) **Immature** most likely to be confused with Imperial (q.v.). Best separated from Lesser Spotted and Greater Spotted when younger by presence of obvious whitish band across underwing (and generally paler coloration). Older immatures that have lost their whitish band more tricky, often looking quite like Lesser Spotted (showing contrastingly paler wing coverts), but can be separated by same features as for adult. They are also usually rather uniformly pale from head to back and scapulars (while in Lesser Spotted back and scapulars are usually darker). Very occasional immature Steppe with body and wing coverts largely pale yellowish-brown and no whitish band across underwing could be mistaken for pale-morph Greater Spotted, and separation would rely on morphological and primary-patch differences outlined above plus lack of very pale lower back/rump (only rarely present in Steppe) and presence of barring on underside of flight feathers and tail (in particular, a broad dark trailing edge to wings and broad dark terminal bar on tail). See also Tawny and Golden Eagles.

SEX/AGE Immature resembles juvenile initially, but averages darker (especially on body) and lacks all or most of whitish band across underwing, while white trailing edge to wings and tail and white bands across upperwing are narrower.

VOICE Usually silent. Especially when breeding, may give a repeated deep, dog-like barking 'ow'.

TAXONOMY Formerly often treated as conspecific with Tawny Eagle *A. rapax*.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Clinal, with size increasing markedly from west to east and plumage becoming darker. 2 races (*orientalis* illustrated). Western race *orientalis* is breeding species of our region, but very large, long-winged, long-gaped nominate race regular on migration through Middle East.

STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Ukraine, Moldavia. Most winter south of the Sahara.) Steppe and semi-desert in plains and low hills.

TAWNY EAGLE *Aquila rapax*

L 65–75 cm, WS 170–190 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Medium-sized, highly variable *Aquila* of NW Africa. Soars with wings held straight out, either level or with slightly downcurved hands. When gliding slowly, has wings distinctly bowed with noticeably drooping hands; when travelling fast, has arm slightly raised, carpal joints pressed forwards and hands slightly lowered. Active flight rather heavy. Only *Aquila* it normally overlaps in range in our region is Golden, and separation straightforward: is substantially smaller and does not hold wings noticeably raised when soaring (or slightly raised when gliding); lacks prominent pale hindneck of adult Golden and conspicuous white wing flashes and tail base of juvenile. As body and wing-covert colour ranges from dark brown (uncommon) through reddish-brown to yellowish-buff or (when bleached) creamy, and as species lacks conspicuous field marks at all ages, can be confused with virtually any other *Aquila*. Paler individuals usually have pale wedge on underside of inner primaries and creamy-white patch from lower back to uppertail coverts. These features, plus lack of white band across underwing, distinguish them from otherwise rather similar juvenile/immature Steppe. Birds with pale wedge and rump patch look much like

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juvenile Imperial, but are generally not so warm-coloured on body and wing coverts, and generally have less obvious pale area on upperside of hand. Imperial also often holds wings slightly raised and pressed forwards when soaring, and when gliding holds wings level, not bowed. Dark adults very difficult to separate from adult Steppe unless view exceptional. Average smaller and shorter-winged (but much overlap) and show little or no barring on underside of flight feathers and tail (often quite obvious in Steppe, which shows broad dark trailing edge to wing and a broad dark terminal band on tail). Tend to be a little paler and greyer-brown overall. Smaller size and less majestic appearance, flight differences and narrow barring on tail (without broad subterminal band) separate dark Tawny from adult/immature Imperial (and adult Imperial also shows white 'braces' and, in Iberian race, white 'shoulders'). Compared with Lesser Spotted and

Greater Spotted, dark Tawny is less compact, with more protruding head and somewhat longer wings and tail. Lacks contrast between darker underwing coverts and noticeably paler flight feathers shown by most Greater Spotted and usually has narrow barring on underside of flight feathers and tail (lacking in both). If seen close, adult has yellow iris (dark brown in Steppe but yellowish-grey or yellowish-brown in Imperial) and gape is not so pronounced as in Steppe (reaching to middle of eye, not to rear edge).

SEX/AGE Juvenile resembles adult, but averages paler (is never dark brown) and always has pale wedge on underside of inner primaries (unlike some adults); also has conspicuous whitish trailing edge to wings, and

conspicuous whitish band across upperwing formed by tips to greater and primary coverts. Iris brown instead of yellow. Many immatures resemble juvenile (but without such obvious white trailing edge), but others (perhaps destined to be darker adults) have reddish-brown or blackish-brown head and/or forebody and often similarly coloured dark bars across underwing coverts contrasting with pale yellow-buff to creamy remainder of underparts.

VOICE Usually silent. Especially when breeding, may give a repeated dog-like barking 'kowk'.

STATUS/HABITAT Rare. (In addition to mapped range, may still breed Middle Atlas of Morocco.) Partly forested mountains and adjacent valleys or plains.

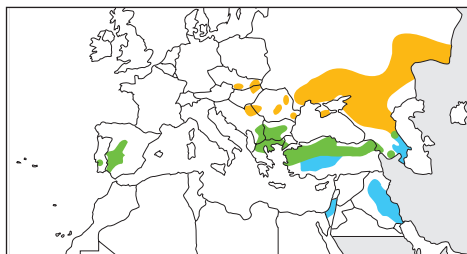
IMPERIAL EAGLE *Aquila heliaca*

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Spanish Eagle, Spanish Imperial Eagle, Adalbert's Eagle (*A. h. adalberti*)

L 72–83 cm, WS 180–215 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Large, heavy, but majestic long-winged *Aquila*, averaging slightly smaller than Golden. Soars with wings held straight out and level or very slightly pressed forwards and raised. When gliding slowly, usually has wings level; when travelling fast, has arm slightly raised, carpal joint pressed forwards and hand slightly lowered. Active flight rather heavy but powerful. Wings have deeply cut 'fingers' and often seem rather broad (mainly in juveniles), but at other times quite narrow (in adults). Trailing edge virtually parallel in most adults but many juveniles and some older birds show distinct S-curve. Tail rather long (typically just less than wing width when unworn). **Adult** of Iberian race *adalberti* is easily separated from all other dark eagles by conspicuous white 'shoulders' (leading edge of upper arm) present in addition to the white 'braces' on the scapulars. Nominate race most likely to be confused with adult Steppe. Usually looks more slender-bodied with even more protruding head and neck, and with slightly longer and (when closed, as is often the case) narrower and more square-cut tail (slightly wedge-shaped in Steppe). Differences are slight, however, and exceptions owing to individual variation, wear and moult mean that plumage characters are more important. Nominate race best told by pale rusty-yellow ventral area (usually present in Imperial, but absent in most adult Steppe), bicoloured tail with paler, silvery-grey base and broad dark terminal band (this two-tone effect is enhanced by pale ventral area), and striking pale rusty-buff or cream crown/hindneck (visible at long distance, but note that some Steppe show a smaller pale patch on crown and nape, not extending to hindneck). At closer range, Imperial shows white 'braces' on scapulars. In addition, Imperial is blacker on body and wing coverts and usually has much less distinctly barred flight feathers which are paler than underwing coverts and which lack distinct dark band on trailing edge shown by Steppe. Steppe also shows whitish patch at base of primaries from above (indistinct or lacking in adult Imperial). Confusion with adult Golden also possible, but soars on flat or only slightly raised (not distinctly raised) wings. Often has more parallel-edged wings, is blacker overall (without discernible barring on flight feathers shown by Golden, especially on upperside), and has more obviously bicoloured tail pattern enhanced by pale ventral area. In addition, has narrower and more square-cut tail (often held tightly closed), slightly more protruding head and neck, and no pale yellowish-brown panel on upperwing coverts. At close range, shows



white 'braces' and paler crown and hindneck (yellowish-brown in Golden). Beware very occasional Golden with white patches on scapulars. Compared with spotted eagles has rather different character in flight, looking noticeably larger, longer-winged and longer-tailed, with obviously more protruding head and neck. Glides with wings level instead of bowed. Shows same contrast between darker underwing coverts and paler flight feathers as Greater Spotted, but shows bicoloured tail (and usually distinct pale ventral area), striking pale patch on crown/hindneck and, at closer range, white braces (while *adalberti* easily separated from both spotted eagles by white shoulders). **Juvenile** shows most of the subtle morphological differences from Steppe exhibited by adult (although usually soars with tail spread, not closed), but best told from juvenile and younger immature Steppes by lack of broad white band across underwing (beware some immature Steppe that have lost this feature), by pale wedge on inner primaries that is very obvious from below as well as above (obvious only above in Steppe), and by dark streaking on breast/upper belly in nominate race. Pale wedge is enhanced by otherwise darker flight feathers of Imperial, while paler flight feathers of Steppe are usually more distinctly barred. In addition, body and wing coverts usually paler and yellower (becoming a distinctive 'milky tea' colour when faded), lower back/ rump usually cream (typically medium brown in Steppe, contrasting with whitish uppertail coverts), and pale patch on upperside of primaries usually smaller. At close range, shows dark streaking on upperwing coverts and mantle (uniform in Steppe). Superficially resembles very rare pale-morph Lesser Spotted, but flight character rather different (see adult). In addition, generally has marked S-curve on trailing edge of wing owing to shorter inner primaries, and has distinct pale wedge on inner primaries, dark streaking on breast and upper belly, and

paler upperbody (with cream lower back/rump) and upperside coverts. Scarce pale-morph Greater Spotted (q.v.) is more problematical. **Immature** best told from Steppe of any age by distinctly mottled (blackish-brown and rusty-yellow) underwing coverts and forebody that contrast with clean rusty-yellow lower belly and ventral area, usually obvious golden-yellow crown and hindneck, and bicoloured tail. Younger immatures show more obvious pale wedge on underside of inner primaries than in any Steppe. Pale patch on upperside of primaries smaller than in Steppe (or absent). Beware immatures with diffuse pale band across median and adjacent lesser underwing coverts: these suggest Steppe, but in that species band is across greater underwing coverts and is white and much more distinct. Can be separated from spotted eagles by same flight characters as for adult and by mottled pale and dark underbody and wing coverts. Younger immatures still show pale wedge on inner primaries. Older birds already show bicoloured tail and conspicuous pale crown/hindneck. Older immatures could be confused with Golden and can be separated in same way as adult. For separation from Tawny at all ages see that species.

SEX/AGE Immature initially resembles juvenile, but later (from about three years old) increasingly like adult. Compared with juvenile, has patchy dark feathering on underbody and wing coverts (starts to appear first on forebody and lesser wing coverts). Mantle and rump rather dark (but uppertail coverts still white, or

at least pale brownish) and golden-yellow crown/hindneck already fairly apparent (but not so contrastingly pale as in adult). Pale inner primaries often still apparent but become tipped and barred dark, so pale wedge less apparent both above and below. Pale band across upper greater coverts narrow and diffuse (visible only at close range). Tail pattern much as adult.

VOICE More vocal than other *Aquila*. Main call a repeated deep, dog-like barking 'owk', recalling Raven but not so deep.

TAXONOMY The isolated Iberian form *adalberti*, known as **Spanish (Imperial) Eagle**, is perhaps best treated as a full species. Plumage differences are especially marked in juvenile.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (nominate race illustrated). Adult of race *adalberti* of Iberia has less tawny-buff on head and more white on carpal area and lesser upperwing coverts. Differences are more marked in juvenile, which is more rusty-rufous overall in fresh plumage and much less heavily streaked. Bill heavier in *adalberti*.

STATUS/HABITAT Scarce. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Austria, Morocco, Algeria. Sporadic in winter Egypt.) Open woodland or parkland, or more open country (especially grassland or wetlands, but sometimes including cultivation) interspersed with patches of forest or woodland. Outside breeding season, also in areas virtually lacking tree cover. Avoids precipitous mountains.

GOLDEN EAGLE *Aquila chrysaetos*

L 76–93 cm, WS 190–240 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Large, majestic, long-winged, long-tailed *Aquila* of mountainous country. Flight often light and elegant, giving impression of much smaller raptor at a distance. Soars with wings pressed slightly forwards and distinctly raised in shallow V. When gliding slowly, usually has wings slightly raised; when travelling fast, has arm slightly raised, carpal joints pressed forwards and hands level. Active flight powerful and surprisingly light for such a large eagle. Wings usually look rather broad (and often quite oval) with deeply cut 'fingers'. Trailing edge shows very distinct S-curve when unworn owing to shorter inner primaries and inner secondaries. Tail longest and fullest of any *Aquila* (virtually equal to wing width when unworn). Of all the eagles, only Golden and Verreaux's distinctly raise wings when soaring, and latter easily separated from Golden on plumage. A bold hunter, often diving from high in the sky onto large prey.

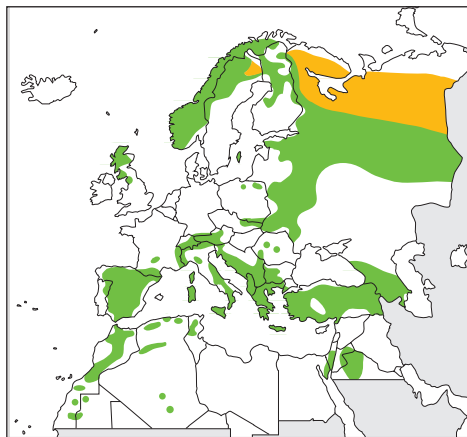
Adult likely to be confused only with Imperial (q.v.).

Juvenile with its combination of large white wing flashes and white base to tail (contrasting strikingly with dark terminal band) is unmistakable. (Pallas's Fish Eagle and to a lesser degree adult Imperial show similar tail pattern, but both lack the wing flashes.)

SEX/AGE Juvenile resembles adult, but has conspicuous white panel on bases of inner primaries and outer secondaries, and white basal two-thirds of tail. Immature closely resembles adult, once all juvenile flight and tail feathers moulted (often not completed until 4th calendar year), but usually has more white at base of tail.

VOICE Usually silent.

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GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Rather slight. 2 races (both illustrated). Race *homeyeri* of Iberia and N Africa is darker overall than nominate race, with more reddish brown (less yellow-brown) nape and less prominent pale panel on greater coverts. Juvenile often has less extensive white in wings and tail.

STATUS/HABITAT Uncommon. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Ireland, Syria.) Mountains and rugged hills (either open or partly forested). Also undisturbed lowlands with extensive forests or wetlands in northeast of our region.

VERREAUX'S EAGLE *Aquila verreauxii*

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Black Eagle

L 80–90 cm, WS 200–220 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Strikingly shaped eagle of Red Sea region. Averages almost as large as Golden, with similarly long tail. Flies effortlessly, sailing along for long periods without flapping. Like Golden, soars with wings noticeably raised in shallow V, with primary 'fingers' even more upturned, but at any age distinguished from this and all other eagles by unique wing shape. Distinctively oval wings are rather narrow at base and broadest at very long outer secondaries, before narrowing to rather pointed wingtips. When gliding, holds wings rather flat with wingtips more swept back and shows pronounced S-curve along trailing edge. **Adult** has distinctive coal-black plumage with strikingly white lower back to uppertail coverts and narrow white 'braces' along edge of mantle (sometimes hard to see). Large whitish panel on both upperside and underside of primaries (extending to leading edge) is unique among eagles. **Juvenile** not unmistakable, but wing shape, equally large pale panel on primaries as in adult (but not so white) and often quite whitish lower back to rump should make identification straightforward. Lacks pale wedge on inner primaries of juvenile Imperial and Tawny, and conspicuous white band across underwing of juvenile/immature Steppe, while none of these shows blackish foreneck to upper breast and leading edge of underarm contrasting with pale remainder of under-



parts. (Beware immature Imperial, which can show latter features and has only indistinct pale wedge on inner primaries.)

SEX/AGE Immature stages not well known, but becomes progressively darker (though with 'trousers' remaining creamy-buff streaked with dark brown even after rest of underbody becomes dark). At four years old is dark grey-brown overall, with pale buff on nape and lower back. Breast and belly feathers may be edged and tipped pale buff also. Immatures probably best told from immature Imperial by wing shape, large whitish panel on primaries and whitish lower back to rump.

VOICE Usually silent.

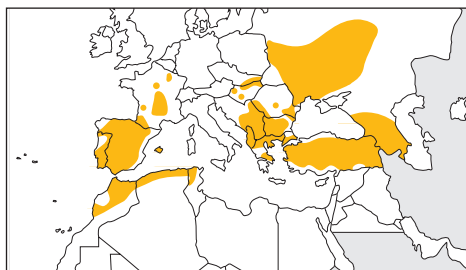
STATUS/HABITAT Extremely rare. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Israel and may breed Jordan.) Wild desert mountains where hyraxes present. Sometimes in better-vegetated mountains to north of usual range.

BOOTED EAGLE *Hieraetus pennatus*

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L 50–57 cm, WS 115–135 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Smallest eagle of our region, only Common Buzzard-sized, with distinctive pale and dark morphs (pale outnumbering dark about 2:1). A dashing hunter despite its size, plunging to earth with feet extended forwards. Eagle-like silhouette enhanced by deeply cut 'fingers', rather parallel-edged wings (with only slightly bulging secondaries) and long, rather square-cut tail (roughly equal to wing width). Soars with wings pressed slightly forwards and flat or slightly bowed, with hands gently curved backwards (and often twisting tail from side to side in kite-like fashion). Glides with carpal joints pressed forwards and hands noticeably lowered (recalling Black Kite). In active flight, wingbeats rapid, elastic but powerful and deep. **Pale morph** difficult to mistake. The only other pale raptors with contrastingly all-dark flight feathers (discounting slightly paler wedge on inner primaries of Booted) are adult Egyptian Vulture and pale morph of vagrant Swainson's Hawk (q.v.). Adult Egyptian Vulture is much larger, with longer and more pointed wings, wedge-shaped tail which is white on both surfaces, white upperbody and upperwing coverts and distinctly pointed head and bill. Compared with pale Common Buzzards and European Honey Buzzards, Booted Eagle has all-dark flight feathers, lacks black carpal patch (conspicuous in European Honey Buzzard and all but a few pale Common Buzzards), lacks tail barring, and has different upperwing pattern (with broad pale band across wing coverts). An excellent feature of Booted is small white patches at base of neck (at junction with wing), visible at surprising distance when bird approaching observer (but not visible when high above), like two navigation lights on an aircraft. In flight, differs from Common Buzzard in longer hand, five (instead of four) visible



'fingers', longer, square-cut tail, slightly bowed wings when soaring (instead of usually slightly raised), and elastic wingbeats. Compared with European Honey Buzzard, is smaller, has broader head and neck, tail is square-cut and wingbeats powerful (rather loose in European Honey). See also Bonelli's Eagle. **Dark morph** easily confused with Black Kite at a distance as upperside pattern and wing position very similar. Booted can be identified by its unbarred, rounded tail when soaring (barred in Black Kite and square-ended when tail spread), largely dark underside to primaries (with only indistinct pale wedge on inner primaries, compared with usually extensive pale patch with dark barring in Black Kite), whitish uppertail coverts, and white 'navigation lights' at base of neck (especially obvious in dark morph). All-dark Western Marsh Harriers also potentially confusing. Booted differs in not having all-dark upperparts and not holding wings raised in shallow V when soaring or gliding. Told from dark Common Buzzards and European Honey Buzzards by differences in shape/flight action outlined under pale morph, and by virtually all-dark flight

feathers and dark tail without barring. See also Bonelli's Eagle.

SEX/AGE Juvenile pale morph closely resembles adult, but tinged more rufous on crown/hindneck and underparts. Juvenile dark morph as adult except for warmer rufous tinge on head/hindneck (not usually discernible in the field).

VOICE Usually silent outside breeding season, but then often gives shrill, clear, chattering 'ki-ki-ki...' or longer 'kee-kee-kee...'.

BONELLI'S EAGLE *Hieraetus fasciatus*

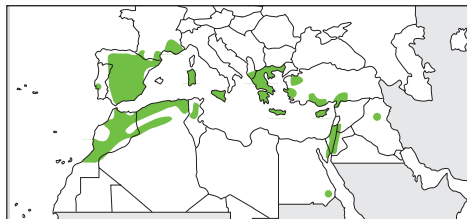
L 65–72 cm, WS 145–175 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Medium-large raptor, averaging smaller than Short-toed Eagle. Wings long but broad and fairly rounded, head small but well protruding, and tail especially long (longer than wing is broad). Soars less frequently than most other large raptors, with wings slightly pressed forwards and flat (and tail often only partly spread). When gliding slowly, presses carpal joints forwards with wings flat or with hand slightly lowered. Trailing edge is kept straight (resembling European Honey Buzzard). In fast glide, hands are swept back. In active flight, wingbeats rapid and powerful but rather shallow. Often hunts in pairs. **Adult** not easily mistaken if seen well, with whitish underbody and whitish leading edge of underwing contrasting with broad blackish band across greater and median coverts and slightly paler flight feathers. (In more heavily marked individuals, entire underwing looks dark at a distance.) Whitish patch on mantle is also diagnostic and often visible at long distance (but can be virtually absent in some, perhaps younger adults). From distant pale-morph Booted by largely dark underwing with white reduced to leading edge, dark terminal band on tail, white patch on mantle, and lack of Black Kite-like pale band on upperwing coverts, whitish uppertail coverts and white 'navigation lights' at base of neck (see Booted). In addition, has longer tail, smaller head and a straight trailing edge when gliding. Compared with European Honey Buzzard, which it resembles in silhouette, has somewhat broader head and neck, more square-cut tail (never notched as in some European Honey Buzzards), more parallel-edged wings when soaring, more deeply cut 'fingers', and more regularly spaced barring on tail and flight feathers. In better view, diagnostic plumage features make identification straightforward. **Juvenile** lacks striking plumage features of adult, but is unusual in having dark outer primary tips which contrast with otherwise rather pale underwing that lacks dark trailing edge. Differs from European Honey Buzzard in this feature plus pale rusty-brown underparts, regular spacing of barring on tail and flight feathers and different outline. At very close range, beak obviously larger and more powerful. Compared with superficially similar *Buteo* buzzards, lacks dark trailing edge to flight feathers (most visible on underwing of buzzards) and is much more uniformly coloured on underbody and under-

UNUSUAL VARIANTS Intermediate individuals not uncommonly seen with underbody and underwing coverts strongly tinged rufous and breast to belly strongly streaked and spotted with blackish-brown. Separation as for dark morph.

STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Poland, Austria.) Forest interspersed with areas of low scrub, heathland, grassland or cultivation, mainly in rather dry hills and mountains but also in plains.

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wing coverts; has longer, narrower tail, longer wings (with straight, not curved, trailing edge when gliding slowly), broader hand with deeper 'fingers', and more protruding and narrower head/neck. Some individuals show a pale panel on inner primaries, which are semi-translucent. **Immature** can show buzzard-like features such as darkish trailing edge to underwing and darkish carpal patches, so best separated on outline differences until old enough to show diagnostic adult-like broad blackish band across underwing. Confusion between dark immatures and dark-morph Booted possible only at long range, and can be separated by paler flight feathers that contrast with dark grey band across underwing coverts (and dark trailing edge to underwing and tail if present) and by absence of pale band on upperwing coverts, whitish uppertail coverts and white 'navigation lights' at base of neck, as well as by shape differences described above.

SEX/AGE Younger immature much like juvenile, but older individuals have adult flight feathers and tail but pale rusty-brown or creamy underparts (with adult-like dark streaks), dark grey instead of black band across underwing coverts (narrower than in adult) and smaller whitish patch on mantle.

VOICE Usually silent. In display flight, gives a repeated shrill, melodious 'iuh' and a longer, whistling 'eeeu(oo)'. Pitch is suddenly lowered at end of latter call.

STATUS/HABITAT Generally scarce. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Syria, N Libya.) Dry and rugged hills and mountains, and especially deep, rocky gorges, either largely open or partly clothed in scrub or forest. Hunts over adjacent plains. Outside breeding season, sometimes visits open lowlands far from hills or mountains.

OSPREY *Pandionidae*

A monotypic (i.e. single-species) family

OSPREY *Pandion haliaetus*

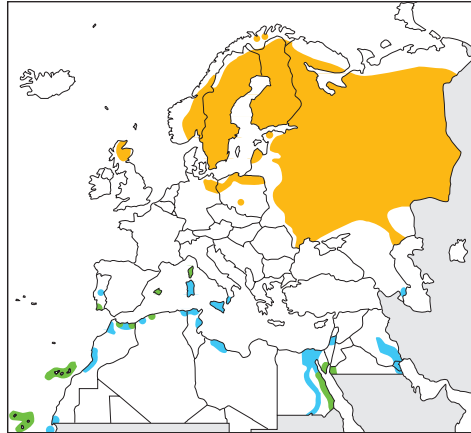
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L 55–63 cm, WS 145–170 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Medium-large raptor with long and relatively narrow wings and relatively short tail that feeds exclusively on fish, which it catches by hovering above the water with deep, powerful wingbeats and dangling legs, and then plunging down with feet projecting forwards, often completely submerging. Holds wings characteristically angled, recalling large gull at a distance. Soars less often than most raptors, with arm flattish and hand slightly lowered, but when gliding has arm well raised and hand distinctly lowered, creating distinctive angled bow. Presses carpal joints forwards when gliding, and trailing edge also angled. In active flight, wingbeats powerful but rather loose and shallow. Characteristic structure and flight action combined with predominantly dark brown upperside, very white underbody and adjacent underwing coverts, and prominent black stripe through eye (extending to side of neck) that contrasts strongly with white throat and whitish crown make confusion unlikely (but see Short-toed and Booted Eagles, pale European Honey Buzzard and *Buteo* buzzards). Beware dismissing this species as juvenile large gull when seen distantly over water.

SEX/AGE Breast band broader in adult female, often on a buffy background. Juvenile closely resembles adult female but paler brown above with creamy feather edgings on upperbody and upperwing coverts; breast band less defined.

VOICE Usually silent, but in breeding season alarm call a series of hoarse, falling whistles: 'piu-piu-piu-piu...'. In undulating display flight, male gives a series of shrill, mournful whistles: 'yeelp-yeelp-yeelp...'.



STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Portugal, Belgium, Denmark, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Switzerland, Italy including Sicily and Sardinia, Yugoslavia, Greece, Romania, Turkey, Tunisia.) In most of range associated with freshwater or brackish lakes, lagoons, estuaries and rivers (usually nesting in adjacent forest or undisturbed clumps of trees), but from Mediterranean southwards breeds only on sea coasts, typically on cliffs or small islets.

FALCONS *Falconidae*

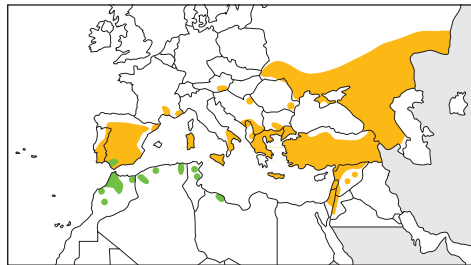
13 species (1 vagrant)

LESSER KESTREL *Falco naumanni*

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L 29–32 cm, WS 60–70 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Likely to be confused only with slightly larger Common Kestrel. Slimmer than latter, with slightly narrower and more pointed wings and slightly shorter and narrower tail. Tail usually more wedge-shaped owing to slightly projecting central tail feathers, which also create a rather triangular-shaped black subterminal band. (A useful field feature which can often be seen when bird overhead, but beware moulting individuals without this character and also moulting Commons which occasionally have a similar appearance.) Flight action much as Common, but in steady flight wingbeats tend to be lighter, faster and shallower. Generally hovers less often and for shorter periods, as largely dependent on insect prey (often caught and eaten on the wing). Usually nests colonially, and frequently found in groups when hunting or on migration (but Commons sometimes form small colonies and will gather together in loose aggregations where hunting conditions favourable, especially on migration). **Adult male** is easily separated from



adult male Common by blue-grey panel on upperwing from about carpal joint to inner secondaries, lack of black spotting on upperparts (but beware occasional old Common with largely unspotted upperparts), lack of moustachial stripe (giving face a much less fierce expression), cleaner and whiter underwing (contrasting more obviously with blackish

wingtips), and cleaner underbody with noticeably rufous-buff ground colour on breast and flanks that contrasts with very pale underwing. Beware strong ground reflection creating impression of very white, rather unmarked underwing in Common (a frequent occurrence in south of our region). See also Levant Sparrowhawk. **Immature male** quite like adult male Common, but lacks moustachial stripe and has unspotted chestnut mantle (while underwing usually already somewhat whiter and less heavily spotted). Retains some barred juvenile flight and tail feathers. **Adult female and juvenile** extremely similar to adult female Common, and on typical view often inseparable. With prolonged view, combination of subtle differences can be used to identify many. Lesser is usually slightly whiter on underwing, with less barred flight feathers and finer and less dense spotting on underwing coverts. Streaking on underbody often finer and moustachial stripe usually less prominent, producing gentler, less fierce expression (a surprisingly obvious feature on many perched individuals). Also averages more grey on uppertail coverts (but this normally impossible to see in field). When perched at

close range, white (rather than black) claws diagnostic. Slightly projecting central tail feathers useful, but see cautionary comment above. Other differences in outline and flight action useful only with considerable experience, and even then great caution necessary.

SEX/AGE Juvenile indistinguishable from adult female in the field. Immature male lacks blue-grey panel on upperwing, still has some dark spotting on upperwing coverts and has less strikingly whitish underwing (with more dark spotting on underwing coverts and weakly barred flight feathers).

VOICE Generally silent except at colonies, where contact call a distinctive high, hoarse, rasping 'chay-chay-chay' which becomes more like 'kikikik' when agitated. Also a Common Kestrel-like trilling 'vriii'.

STATUS/HABITAT Generally uncommon, but locally (especially in Spain) fairly common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Czechoslovakia, Hungary. Most populations winter south of the Sahara). Nests in large old buildings or high walls, sometimes in cliffs, in dry, rather open areas in plains, broad valleys and low hills.

COMMON KESTREL *Falco tinnunculus*

Kestrel, Eurasian Kestrel

L 30–34 cm, WS 60–75 cm.

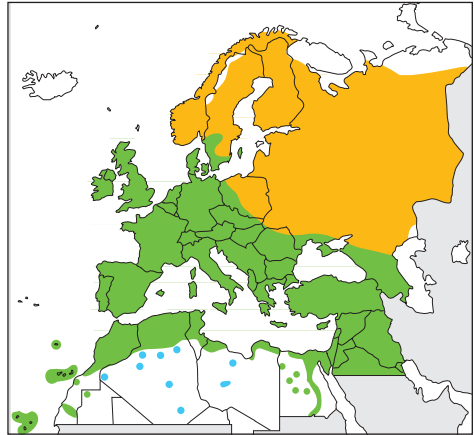
IDENTIFICATION The commonest and most widespread falcon. Its familiar, long-tailed appearance, frequent hovering and fearless nature (hunting busy motorway verges, perching on roadside poles and wires etc.) make it unlikely to be confused except with Lesser Kestrel (q.v.). Hovers with fast, shallow wingbeats and with body level or angled upwards and tail spread and slightly depressed. In steady flight, has rather rapid, shallow, loose wingbeats interspersed with glides, and pauses to hover. See also Red-footed Falcon.

SEX/AGE Juvenile closely resembles adult female, but barring on upperparts broader, underparts paler, and uppertail coverts usually grey-brown or brown (not blue-grey) in males and always so in females. Streaked on flanks rather than marked with heart-shaped spots. Uppertail often greyer in juvenile males.

VOICE Most frequent call a piercing 'kee-kee-kee...' (in shorter series than in some other small falcons). Also a trilling 'vriii'.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 6 races (nominate race illustrated).

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped range, may breed N Chad.) Found in most open or



partly forested habitats, avoiding only precipitous high peaks, true desert, tundra and dense forest; even found nesting on large buildings in towns and cities.

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AMERICAN KESTREL *Falco sparverius*

L 25–29 cm, WS 50–60 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Merlin-sized transatlantic vagrant. Flight action (including frequent hovering) and behaviour much as Common Kestrel, but flight lighter, more graceful and often more rapid (recalling Merlin). Likely to be confused only with larger Common or Lesser Kestrels, but differs from both in striking head pattern with black moustachial stripe paralleled with black stripe down rear of cheeks, buffy nape with black central spot, and grey crown with chestnut patch in centre (greyish crown with reddish-brown patch in female). **Male** further differs from males of other kestrels in bluish-grey upperwing coverts and secondaries (with black spotting) and chestnut (and

white-edged) tail. Upperwing has characteristic row of subterminal whitish spots on primaries. **Female** further differs from females of other kestrels in more rufous upperparts (especially tail) and narrower dark subterminal band on tail. Dark barring above is bolder.

SEX/AGE Juvenile male closely resembles adult male, but crown patch brown, not rufous, and breast streaked, not spotted; tail and mantle more prominently barred. Many juvenile females indistinguishable from adult female in the field, but some have obviously narrower dark subterminal band on tail (in some cases barely broader than the other dark bars).

VOICE Usually silent. Most frequent call a shrill 'klee-

Plate page 246

klee-klee.../.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe, Azores). In

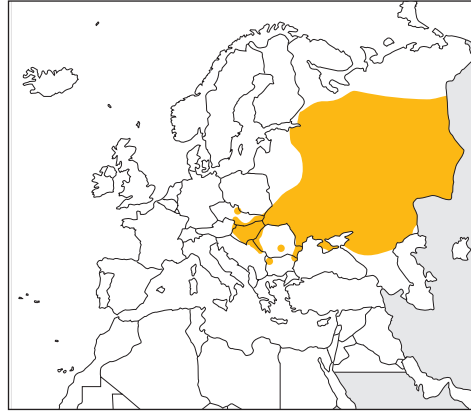
natural range, same wide variety of habitats as for Common Kestrel.

RED-FOOTED FALCON *Falco vespertinus***Plate page 246**

L 29–31 cm, WS 60–75 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Small colonial falcon of east of our region. Flight outline rather like Eurasian Hobby but is slimmer, with wings slightly broader at base and blunter at tip, and tail rather longer (approaching Common Kestrel). Pursues insects with grace and agility, combining typical active flight of fast, stiff wingbeats (like Eurasian Hobby but faster) with fast glides with swept-back, scythe-like wings (recalling Eurasian Hobby) and soaring with wings held straight out and tail more or less spread. Quite often hovers, unlike Eurasian Hobby, but is less persistent than Common Kestrel. Active flight sometimes quite loose. Tends to sally out from perch and then return, often catching and eating insects on the wing in Eurasian Hobby or Lesser Kestrel fashion. Often seen perching on telegraph poles and wires when fairly long tail creates kestrel-like outline. **Adult male** virtually unmistakable. Differs from dark-morph Eleonora's in considerably smaller size, contrast above between silvery-grey flight feathers and darker upperwing coverts (uniformly dark in Eleonora's), and lack of paler area on underwing on primaries and base of secondaries. Has faster wingbeats and somewhat shorter tail. **Immature male** straightforward when older (showing mostly adult male characters), but at a certain stage of moult can look rather like Eurasian Hobby or even Merlin at a distance owing to rather uniform greyish upperside (and unbarred central tail feathers) and lack of juvenile's obvious dark band along trailing edge of underwing. Differs from both in rusty to ash-grey underparts with only diffuse streaking, while compared with Eurasian Hobby has much less pronounced facial pattern, with only fine moustachial stripe, and differences in outline and flight action discussed above. Much less compact than Merlin, with longer wings and tail.

Adult female can be confused with Eurasian Hobby at a distance. Best separated by much less pronounced head pattern and pale rusty to pale yellowish crown, only finely streaked underparts with rusty-buff or buff ground colour, lack of red 'trousers' and undertail coverts, and barring on uppertail. Much paler crown and reduced dark moustachial stripe create quite different facial impression, with black 'bandit mask' standing out against otherwise rather pale head. Unlike Eurasian Hobby, shows some contrast between paler upperparts and uppertail and darker flight feathers. See also outline and flight differences described above. **Juvenile** the closest to Eurasian Hobby, but differs in obvious contrast between paler upperparts and uppertail and darker flight feathers, barred uppertail, conspicuous dark band along trailing edge of wing, more yellowish tinge to underbody and underwing



coverts, lack of red 'trousers' and undertail coverts, smaller, less prominent moustachial stripe (with black on face appearing like a 'bandit mask' as in adult female), paler forehead and whitish collar across hindneck (but note that juvenile Eurasian Hobby lacks red 'trousers' and undertail coverts and sometimes has almost equally pale forehead). See also outline and flight differences described above.

SEX/AGE Immature female closely resembles adult female, but initially separable while some juvenile feathering retained. Older immature male as adult male, apart from some retained juvenile flight and tail feathers and perhaps some rusty-yellow patches on underbody and nape, and paler cheeks. Younger immature male differs from juvenile in lack of obvious dark trailing edge to underwing and whitish collar on hindneck, rather uniform upperside (lacking obvious contrast between underparts and flight feathers) and largely unstreaked, rusty to ash-grey underbody.

VOICE Most frequent call a rapid, scolding 'kew-kew-kew...' from male (not so sharp and clipped as in Eurasian Hobby), and a slower 'kwee-kwee-kwee...' from female (each unit rising in pitch towards end).

STATUS/HABITAT Generally uncommon and local in north and west, not uncommon elsewhere. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Germany, Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Poland. Regular on spring migration as far west as Tunisia and Italy.) Open cultivation, grassland or marshy wetlands interspersed with patches of woodland or groves; sometimes large town parks. Usually breeds in old Rook nests.

MERLIN *Falco columbarius***Plate page 247**

L 25–30 cm, WS 55–65 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Smallest breeding falcon (and indeed raptor) of our region. Smallest males are tiny, but largest females are size of male Common Kestrel. Compact in appearance with rather short wings (with broad bases and pointed tips) that make square-cut tail seem relatively long. Flight rapid and direct with very fast, shallow wingbeats and rather short glides.

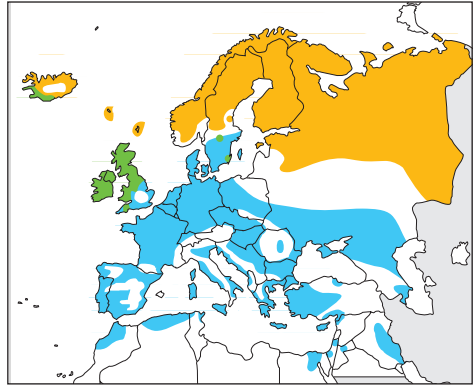
Bold when hunting, often travelling low over ground like sparrowhawk and twisting and turning after small birds. Hunting flight is often gently undulating, with a series of wingbeats followed by a pause (giving rather thrush-like impression). **Male** hard to confuse, as not much bigger than large thrush and with bluish-grey upperparts contrasting with darker primaries. **Female**

and juvenile separated from other small falcons by generally smaller size, more compact outline with shorter, broader-based wings, more rapid and determined wingbeats and, compared with most, less pronounced head pattern. Merlin is shorter-tailed and darker on underwing (owing to much heavier barring) than kestrels, and contrast between darker primaries and paler brown remainder of upperparts much less pronounced than blackish and red-brown combination of latter. When hunting low can resemble Eurasian Sparrowhawk, but wings more pointed, hand much narrower (but beware Eurasian Sparrowhawk gliding with hand swept back and thus more pointed) and tail clearly shorter. High-flying, silhouetted individuals can look quite Peregrine Falcon-like (if size not apparent) owing to rather broad chest and quite broad-based and sharply tapering wings, but tail is distinctly longer.

SEX/AGE Juvenile virtually identical to adult female, but usually has darker brown upperparts without greyish cast, darker brown streaks on underparts, and brown instead of grey uppertail coverts. Juvenile female has darker cheeks than male. Cere tinged bluish or greenish, not clean yellow as in adult.

VOICE Usually silent, but close to nest male gives a shrill, chattering 'kek-kek-kek...' recalling Common Kestrel, while female has hoarser 'zek-zek-zek...'.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Mostly slight. 4 races (race *aesalon* illustrated). Race *pallidus* (winters Middle East) is much paler above, with particularly obvi-



ous contrast between paler wing coverts and dark flight feathers, and only finely dark-streaked below. Ground colour of upperparts in female/juvenile paler and warmer than in other races, gingery-rufous, thus superficially recalling female kestrels.

STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon. Breeds on tundra and open moorland; also in young conifer plantations. In winter, open arable cultivation, grassland, extensive wetlands (some remain on moorland in west of range).

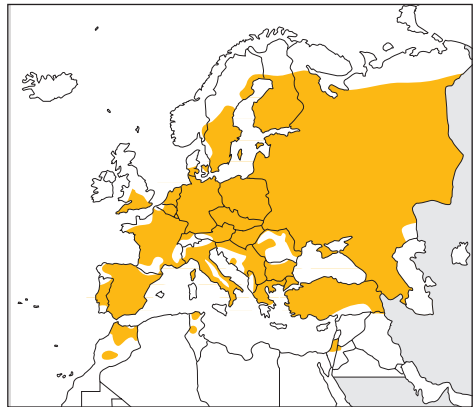
EURASIAN HOBBY *Falco subbuteo*

Hobby, Northern Hobby

L 30–36 cm, WS 65–85 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Medium-small falcon with elegant lines and remarkable skill in the air, catching insects, hirundines and even swifts (and usually eating insects on the wing). Has narrow and very pointed, scythe-like wings and short tail, often looking like giant swift when high in sky. In active flight, has stiff, flat wingbeats interspersed with long, sailing glides. Wingbeats become deeper and faster when hunting birds, broken by short glides on swept-back wings; chase may end with breathtaking stoop with wings partly closed. Often soars with wings held level and straight out, tail more or less spread. Hovers only exceptionally. Most likely to be confused with Red-footed and Eleonora's Falcons (q.v.), or with juvenile Peregrine Falcon, but can be separated from latter by unbarred uppertail, thinner moustachial stripe, red 'trousers' and undertail coverts (adult only), smaller size, much slimmer build (including narrower and more sharply pointed wings) and more graceful flight action. In distant silhouette, differs from kestrels in shorter, more square-cut tail, narrower, more pointed wings and different flight action, and from Merlin by shorter tail, longer, narrower wings, larger size and different flight action.

SEX/AGE Adult female often browner above. Juvenile closely resembles adult, but has buffy 'trousers' and undertail coverts, browner upperparts with narrow buff edgings (at close range a narrow pale line can be seen on upperwing along border of greater coverts), pale tips to flight feathers and more obvious pale tip



to tail.

VOICE Usually silent, but when breeding frequently gives a rapid, sharp scolding 'kew-kew-kew-kew...', often recalling Wryneck.

STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Norway, Sicily, Cyprus, Lebanon.) Open country (cultivated or uncultivated) interspersed with woodland or groves, open woodland and forests with large clearings.

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ELEONORA'S FALCON *Falco eleonora*

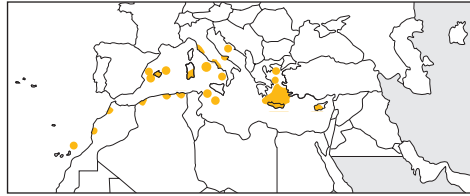
L 36–40 cm, WS 85–100 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Slim, elegant, medium-sized falcon with very long, narrow wings and long tail. Often

very fast and highly agile, hunting birds and insects with rapid, powerful wingbeats, fast glides and dra-

Plate page 248

matic stoops. At other times flight is often surprisingly slow and relaxed, with rather shallow wingbeats. Soars with wings held flat and straight out and tail closed or partly spread. Only rarely hovers. Two distinct morphs, pale outnumbering dark about 3:1. Colonial breeder, mostly on small Mediterranean islands, rearing young on southbound migrant birds in late summer and early autumn. Often hunts out over the sea. **Adult pale morph** separated from Eurasian Hobby or juvenile Peregrine Falcon by longer wings (narrower than in Peregrine) and longer and usually more rounded tail, characteristic relaxed flight action at times, generally darker underside (with characteristic rusty-brown ground colour to breast and belly, and no red on 'trousers' and undertail coverts as in Eurasian Hobby), and more contrast (and lack of patterning) on underwing (paler bases to usually unbarred flight feathers contrasting with very dark, rather uniform underwing coverts and dark trailing edge). Build more powerful than Eurasian Hobby but noticeably slimmer than Peregrine. Darkest individuals (perhaps 1st-summer dark morph rather than adult pale morph) have particularly dark underbody and dusky throat and cheeks, so much darker than any Eurasian Hobby or Peregrine. Some individuals can be rather pale on breast and belly but rusty-brown on 'trousers', thus somewhat recalling Eurasian Hobby. In poor view long wings and tail can suggest Lanner (q.v.), but wings narrower, body more slender and crown dark. See also Sooty Falcon. **Adult dark morph** separated from adult male Red-footed Falcon by paler bases to underside of flight feathers that contrast with very dark coverts and dark trailing edge, rather uniform upperwing (without contrast between paler flight feathers and coverts as in Red-footed), lack of red 'trousers' and undertail coverts, larger size, more powerful build and dashing (or by contrast relaxed) flight action. See also Sooty Falcon. **Juvenile** best separated from Eurasian Hobby or juvenile Peregrine by differences in outline and flight action described above, and by more contrasting underwing pattern with much broader and more pronounced dark trailing edge and somewhat darker underwing coverts that stand out



against fairly pale bases to flight feathers. Moustachial streak less prominent. Streaking on underbody is noticeably narrower than in juvenile Peregrine. Lacks red 'trousers' and undertail coverts of adult Eurasian Hobby. As with adult pale morph, confusion with Lanner is possible on poor view (see above for more obvious differences). See also Sooty Falcon.

SEX/AGE Juvenile resembles pale-morph adult, but is paler and browner overall (with noticeably paler crown and belly), and has pale buff edges to upperwing coverts and back feathers, broader streaking on breast (but finer on belly), dense dark spotting on underwing coverts (which often look plain dark in field), faint dark barring on underside of flight feathers and broad dark trailing edge (but no obvious pale line across underwing), and more obvious barring on tail (especially on upperside). Juveniles with heaviest streaking below are probably dark morph. Immature plumage poorly known, but may differ from light-morph adult in having dense spotting on underwing coverts and barring on underside of flight feathers, with darker underbody and cheeks in immature dark morph.

VOICE Usually silent away from colony, where flight call is a nasal 'kyair-kyair-kyair...'.

STATUS/HABITAT Scarce and local. (Note: mapped areas on mainland coasts in reality refer to adjacent islands. Migrates across Mediterranean and Red Sea areas to winter mainly in Madagascar.) Breeds on islets and small islands (only rarely on mainland coasts), visiting adjacent mainland coasts if available when feeding. Prior to breeding season visits coastal habitats (especially wetlands) far from colonies, and frequently penetrates well inland (e.g. Turkey, Tunisia).

SOOTY FALCON *Falco concolor*

L 33–36 cm, 80–90 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Medium-small, frequently crepuscular falcon of the Middle East. Like Eleonora's, raises young on southbound migrant birds. Long and narrow wings and long tail. Active flight rapid and elastic, with fast glides and sudden stoops, recalling Eurasian Hobby but a little slower. Soars with wings held flat and straight out, gliding also on flat wings. Only rarely hovers. Once thought to have two morphs, but no evidence that this is the case. **Adult** likely to be confused only with very similar dark-morph Eleonora's or with adult male Red-footed. Compared with slightly larger Eleonora's is paler overall (general colour ranging from rather dark-looking in dim light or when backlit to clean medium or even quite pale grey when strongly illuminated). Eleonora's has darker, more uniform upperwing (Sooty shows fairly obvious contrast between darker primaries and paler, sometimes almost silvery-grey, remainder of upperwing) and blackish underwing coverts that contrast with the paler bases of the flight feathers (a contrast lacking in Sooty). Tail of Sooty is shorter and generally looks more wedge-shaped owing to slightly longer central feathers. Flight action when travelling is faster, not so relaxed and with hand more often sharply back-



angled. Compared with smaller Red-footed, does not show paler (silvery) upperside to primaries that contrasts with darker secondaries and wing coverts, or red 'trousers' and vent, while underwing is paler. Cere and conspicuous orbital ring of Sooty are bright yellow; adult male Red-footed lacks conspicuous orbital ring and has cere orange-red. Legs of Sooty are bright yellow to orange-yellow in adult female, bright orange-yellow or even slightly reddish-orange in adult male, compared with orange-red in adult male Red-footed. **Juvenile** may be separated from pale-morph adult or juvenile Eleonora's by rather uniform underwing with coverts only slightly darker than flight feathers (in Eleonora's, coverts are noticeably darker than paler bases to flight feathers and there is a broad dark band along trailing edge of underwing), dense dark

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streaking or blotching on breast that sometimes merges to create impression of dark breast band (in Eleonora's, streaking is finer and more distinct, so breast looks paler), lack of rufous tinge to underparts, and broad dark subterminal bar on underside of tail. At close range, shows downward-pointing extension towards rear of dark ear-coverts, like Eurasian Hobby but unlike Eleonora's. See also differences in tail shape and flight action described for adult. Compared with juvenile Eurasian Hobby, has somewhat darker underwing, same difference in breast markings as for Eleonora's and less prominent moustachial streak.

LANNER *Falco biarmicus*

Lanner Falcon

L 40–50 cm, WS 90–115 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Large falcon, between Saker and Peregrine (or Barbary) in average size (but more like former in general outline: i.e. longer-winged and longer-tailed than Peregrine or Barbary). Often elegant in the air but heavier, slower and less powerful than Peregrine or Barbary. Wingbeats slow and rather shallow in travelling flight, but faster and deeper when in pursuit of prey: often makes dramatic stoops. Takes much of prey in the air, like Peregrine or Barbary, but also hunts ground-dwelling mammals. Holds wings flat when soaring, with tips slightly upturned. Often perches on telegraph poles. **Adult** most likely to be confused with Saker, but usually appears smaller and less heavy-looking, with narrower wings (lacking especially broad wing base of Saker). Differs in upperpart colour (which ranges from quite dark greyish-brown in *feldeggii* to pale greyish-brown in *tanypterus* and *erlangeri*) compared with adult and some juvenile Sakers, which have female Common Kestrel-like pattern above with quite warm brown upperparts and wing coverts that contrast with dark brown flight feathers (in some, wing coverts quite pale yellowish-brown and contrast with flight feathers particularly striking). This warm colour in Saker is produced by broad rusty fringes to brown feathers of upperbody and upperwing coverts (visible at close range); fringes in Lanner are narrower, much less distinct, and grey with a rufous tinge. Crown and nape rusty (*feldeggii*) or warm buff (*erlangeri* and *tanypterus*), not whitish (or white) as in adult Saker. In *feldeggii*, rusty sometimes restricted to nape and supercilium. At close range, often shows distinct dark band dividing pale forehead from pale crown, a feature not seen in Saker. Adults of both species are generally very pale below, often without much dark marking, but Lanner frequently has dark barring on flanks and 'trousers' (not seen in Saker). Underwing patterns very similar, but Lanner tends to be more evenly dark-spotted on coverts while Saker tends to have darker and more obvious band across rear of coverts. Underside of flight feathers tends to show more barring in Lanner, and entire uppertail narrowly but distinctly barred. (Saker has unbarred central feathers, so tail looks unbarred when perched, and barring on outer feathers less distinct.) Moustachial streak longer and more distinct, dark eye-stripe likewise cleaner-cut and more prominent; lacks whitish supercilium of Saker. (Beware rare *saceroides* morph of Saker, which looks greyish-brown above and lacks Common Kestrel-like pattern.) Compared with Peregrine, Lanner is slimmer and less compact, with longer tail, somewhat longer wings (with broader hand and less pointed wingtip), rusty or creamy-buff (not black) crown and nape, narrower moustachial streak, larger white cheek patch, and

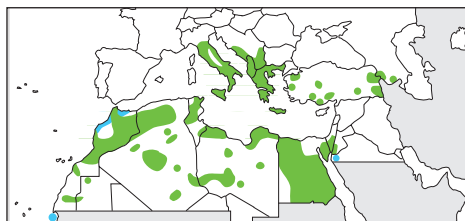
Ground colour of underbody and cheeks browner.

SEX/AGE Adult female darker grey overall and lacks pale throat (not always present in adult male, either). Immature plumage as yet undescribed.

VOICE Usually silent away from nest, where often gives a loud, Eurasian Hobby-like 'keee-keee-keee...'.

STATUS/HABITAT Scarce and local. Distribution poorly known: may breed more widely in Egypt and Libya. Desert hills or unvegetated islets and small islands; exceptionally, nests on isolated rocks in flat desert.

Plate page 251



paler, less densely marked underparts which are streaked and spotted rather than barred. Note: some adult female *feldeggii* are quite heavily marked below. Beware, however, *calidus* Peregrines with paler, less bluish upperparts, very pale underparts with fewer markings and barring restricted to flanks and 'trousers', narrow moustachial streak, large white cheek patch and sometimes whitish forehead, crown and nape. The latter lack clear-cut dark eye-stripe and rusty or creamy-buff colour on nape shown by Lanner, and also lack dark band across underwing coverts seen in some Lanners. See also Barbary Falcon. **Juvenile** often extremely like juvenile Saker and identification hazardous. Juvenile Saker often lacks Common Kestrel-like pattern of adult, having rather uniform dark greyish-brown upperparts (but some do show characteristic rufous-tinged upperparts). Central tail feathers unbarred in juvenile Lanner, as in Saker of all ages. Underside patterns show complete overlap. Saker often paler on crown and with nape slightly whiter, but this often hard to see, as is less clear-cut dark eye-stripe. When perched, Lanner usually shows pale 'trousers' with dark streaks ('trousers' generally look largely dark in Saker). Facial pattern of Lanner often subtly different; typically has much more distinct dark moustachial stripe and eye-stripe, while area in front of eye is dark (fairly pale in Saker), making pale orbital ring stand out more. In juvenile Saker pale supercilium often extends forwards to meet pale forehead, while in Lanner of any age it generally peters out above the eye (the blackish streaking on the forehead merging with the dark eye-stripe and moustachial stripe). Subtle differences in outline and flight action useful only with extensive experience. Owing to overlap, size difference helpful only with smallest Lanners, and then only when size can be well judged. (Beware occasional juvenile *tanypterus* with very whitish head, recalling adult Saker.) May be separated from juvenile Peregrine by much darker underwing coverts that contrast much more strongly with pale flight feathers, even heavier dark streaking on underbody (contrasting sharply with pale throat), narrower moustachial streak and larger white cheek patch. Juvenile *calidus*

Peregrine can be problematical, but as well as structural differences shown by Peregrine (see above) these show even less dark streaking below and show little contrast between underwing coverts and flight feathers. See also Barbary and Eleonora's Falcons.

SEX/AGE Juvenile differs from adult in having bold, longitudinal dark streaks on breast, flanks and belly that contrast with whitish throat and undertail coverts, and largely dark underwing coverts that contrast with rather pale flight feathers and leading edge. Also has darker upperparts overall (with narrower pale feather fringes), including distinctly darker forehead, crown and nape that are virtually concolorous with rest of upperparts. Cere and legs blue-grey, not yellow. Central tail feathers unbarred, so when perched uppertail looks unbarred. Immature much as adult but has dark band on underwing (formed by unmoulted greater

underwing coverts and under primary coverts) and more prominent dark streaking on breast, flanks and belly.

VOICE Usually silent except near nest, where gives a plaintive 'ueeh' and a rapid, grating 'kre-kre-kre...'

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 3 races (*feldeggii* of S Europe to Turkey and *erlangeri* of NW Africa illustrated). For differences, see Identification. Race *tanypterus* of Libya to Jordan very similar to *erlangeri*, but larger and sometimes a little darker.

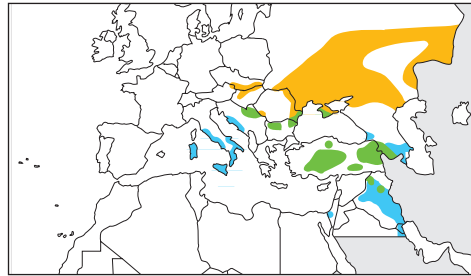
STATUS/HABITAT Rare in north, but not uncommon N Africa. (In addition to mapped range, may breed N Chad, Syria.) Breeds in arid, rocky, largely unvegetated hills and mountains (locally on small rocky outcrops in open terrain), hunting also over adjacent valleys or semi-desert and desert plains, including cultivation.

SAKER *Falco cherrug*

Saker Falcon

L 47–57 cm, WS 105–135 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Second-largest falcon, averaging a little smaller and slimmer than Gyr (with marginally narrower tail base and slightly more pointed wings) but larger than Lanner or Peregrine and with a Common Buzzard-sized wingspan. Wingbeats distinctly slow and shallow but powerful in travelling flight (often only hands seem to move), faster and deeper when in pursuit. Usually hunts at low level, and much prey taken on ground. Holds wings flat when soaring, with tips slightly upturned. Occasionally hovers. Often perches on telegraph poles. **Adult** most likely to be confused with Lanner (q.v.). Could be confused with dark-morph Gyr, or juvenile grey morph, but these lack Common Kestrel-like upperside shown by Saker (with warm brown upperparts and wing coverts contrasting with dark brown flight feathers), and dark-morph Gyr has dark underwing coverts that contrast with pale flight feathers (a feature not seen in adult Saker), while juvenile grey morph has barring on flanks and 'trousers' (not seen in Saker, which is heavily streaked in these areas). Told at a distance from Peregrine (q.v.) by longer tail, longer wings (owing to longer arm), broader hand with more rounded wingtip, and usually larger size; wingbeats even slower in travelling flight. Some juveniles of large *calidus* race of Peregrine have rather similar plumage, showing whitish supercilium, forehead, nape and crown (latter streaked blackish), narrow moustachial streak, large whitish cheek patch, narrow dark eye-stripe, and medium greyish-brown remainder of upperparts and upperwing coverts that contrast with dark brown flight feathers. These are best separated from adult Saker by lack of rufous tinge to upperparts and wing coverts (but see '*saceroides*' morph of Saker below), lack of dark band across underwing coverts (shown by most Sakers), narrower pale barring on uppertail and structural differences described earlier. **Juvenile** most likely to be confused with very similar Lanner (q.v.). Could also be confused with juvenile dark- or grey-morph Gyr (q.v.), especially those young Sakers with cooler, greyish-brown upperparts and wing coverts. Juvenile Saker is even darker on underwing coverts, with even greater contrast with pale flight feathers, and has larger and paler cheek patch that makes narrower moustachial streak more obvious. Saker often (but not always) paler on crown, always lacks the pale barring on upperside shown by many Gyrs, may show rufous tinge on upperparts and upperwing coverts (lacking in Gyr), has unmarked (or finely dark-streaked) undertail



coverts, and usually shows darker 'trousers' when perched. Tail is more distinctly barred in Gyr. As with adult, *calidus* Peregrine can cause problems. Juvenile Saker can be separated from latter (which shows variable forehead and crown colour: some rather pale, others darker) by structural differences (see adult) plus much more heavily dark-streaked underparts, striking contrast between largely dark underwing coverts and pale flight feathers, and broader pale barring on uppertail. Juveniles of nominate and southern races of Peregrine also differ in having almost uniformly dark upperside (including upper head) and broader moustachial streak.

SEX/AGE Juvenile differs from adult in denser dark streaking on crown, denser dark (and usually longitudinal) streaking on breast, belly and flanks that contrasts with whitish throat, and largely dark underwing coverts that contrast with pale flight feathers. Also has darker, less rufous-tinged upperparts and upperwing coverts (with narrower pale feather fringes) that are not noticeably paler than flight feathers. Dark moustachial streak and eye-stripe more prominent. Cere and legs bluish-grey, not yellow. Immature much as adult but has dark band on underwing (formed by unmoulted greater underwing coverts and under primary coverts) and more prominent dark streaking on breast, flanks and belly.

VOICE Usually silent except near nest where gives a harsh 'kek-kek-kek...' (like Peregrine but more gruff).

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 2 races including nominate and vagrant *milvipes* (both illustrated). Vagrant *milvipes*, breeding in C Asia, is barred with rufous above, and markings on underparts often heavy and tear-drop shaped.

UNUSUAL VARIANTS Rare '*saceroides*' morph is

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greyish-brown on upperparts and wing coverts (without strong rufous tinge) and shows less contrast with dark flight feathers. Upperside often extensively but indistinctly barred with pale yellowish-buff. Even central tail feathers are barred (as in adult Lanner). Crown sometimes quite dark. Tends to look very dull greyish above from a distance and is hard to tell from Lanner, but is

usually more rufous tinged on upperparts and upperwing coverts than Lanner. Also resembles adult grey-morph Gyr, but latter lacks any rufous tinge above.

STATUS/HABITAT Scarce. Dry, open grassy or partly cultivated plains and hills, with or without some tree cover, and extensive, partly wooded wetlands. In winter, also semi-desert and treeless wetlands.

GYR FALCON *Falco rusticolus*

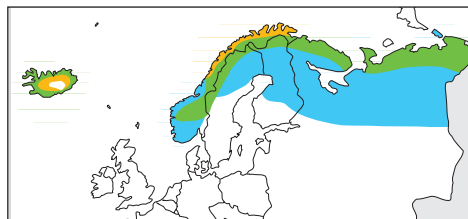
Gyrfalcon

L 50–60 cm, WS 110–140 cm.

IDENTIFICATION The largest and most powerful falcon with a wingspan matching that of Common Buzzard. Substantially larger than most Peregrines (the only other large falcon with which it normally comes into contact), although smallest males are no bigger than largest female Peregrines of northern race *calidus*. Wingbeats very slow and shallow but powerful in travelling flight (often only hands seem to move), faster and deeper when in pursuit. Usually hunts at low level, and much prey taken on ground; stoops much less often than Peregrine. Holds wings flat when soaring, with tips slightly upturned. Three morphs recognized (but many intermediates occur); distinctive white morph rare in our region. Grey morph has underparts resembling dark morph (but often less heavily marked), upperparts paler and greyer (with more prominent whitish feather edges giving scaly appearance) and head mainly white. **White morph** unmistakable. Amount of dark marking quite variable: some adults with few markings, others with many.

Adult dark morph and adult grey morph differ from Peregrine in flight outline, having longer tail with broader base, heavier body (looking broad in the belly), longer wings (owing to longer arm) with even broader bases and broader hand with more rounded tip. Usually much larger, and wingbeats even slower when not in pursuit. Upperpart colour slate-grey in dark morph, pale grey in grey morph; lacking bluish tinge of most adult Peregrines. Dark markings below coarser and less dense, with barring (as opposed to spotting) restricted to flanks and 'trousers'. In most adult Peregrines markings are denser and finer, with barring extending from lower breast to undertail and underwing coverts, but beware race *calidus*, which often has barring restricted to flanks and 'trousers'. Moustachial streak narrower in Gyr (very fine in grey morph) and made less conspicuous in dark morph by fine dark streaks that partly obscure pale cheek patch. Grey morph is paler above than any Peregrine, even *calidus*, and whitish feather edgings give scaly appearance to upperparts and upperwing coverts. Often has large pale panel on upperside of primaries (absent in Peregrine). Note that gliding Northern Goshawk with wings partly closed (and looking more pointed) can momentarily recall this species, but shorter, even broader and more rounded wings (with bulging secondaries) soon reveal its true identity. See also Saker.

Juvenile dark morph and juvenile grey morph are largely dark brown above, recalling juvenile Peregrine of nominate and southern races. Can be separated by same structural differences as for adults and by narrower moustachial streak (made even less prominent by dark streaks that largely obscure pale cheek patch). Separation from juvenile *calidus* Peregrine on plum-



age presents greater difficulty: latter can be quite pale on forehead, crown and nape, is paler brown on upperparts and wing coverts (which have more obvious pale fringes than nominate and southern races), and has narrow moustachial streak. Juvenile dark morph usually shows a marked contrast between heavily dark-spotted underwing coverts and pale flight feathers (absent in Peregrine), moustachial streak is less distinct (as pale cheek patch of *calidus* more obvious, making moustachial streak stand out) and forehead and crown never pale (although shows pale nape patch). Juvenile grey morph can be very similar to some *calidus*: best separated on shape (or size, if assessment possible). See also Saker.

SEX/AGE Juvenile dark morph differs from adult dark morph in being even darker and browner (less greyish) above (with more obvious pale nape patch); underparts more heavily marked with dark, longitudinal streaks and largely dark underwing coverts that contrast with paler flight feathers; moustachial streak bolder, but can seem less prominent owing to finely streaked cheeks. Juvenile grey morph rather like adult grey morph, but darker and browner above. Juvenile white morph is darker above than adult white morph, with denser markings on mantle, wings and tail; underside also more heavily marked, with obvious dark markings on flight feathers, tail and breast. All morphs have cere and legs greyish, not yellow.

VOICE Usually silent except near nest, where gives a harsh 'kak-kak-kak...' (like Peregrine but deeper, more gruff) or more nasal 'GEHe-GEHe-GEHe...'.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Marked, but no races recognized owing to extensive colour variation in most of range. Breeding birds of our region mostly dark morph or grey morph (former predominates in Scandinavia and N Russia, latter in Iceland). White morph occurs rarely in N Russia and as vagrant from N Greenland.

STATUS/HABITAT Scarce. Open tundra (including partly forested areas) cut by river valleys with crags and arctic or sub-arctic mountains and sea cliffs. In winter, also extensive forest clearings, cultivated areas and coastal marshes.

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PEREGRINE *Falco peregrinus*

Plate page 252

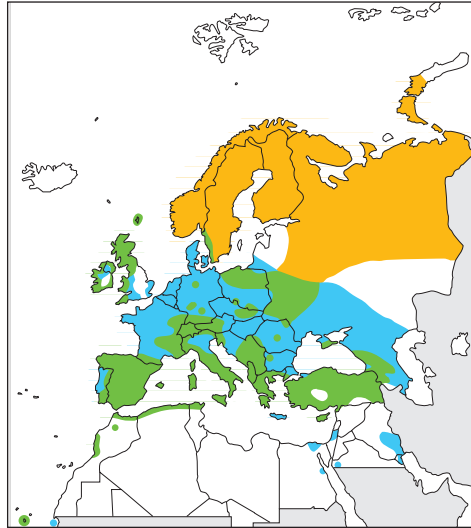
Peregrine Falcon

L 36–48 cm, WS 85–120 cm.

IDENTIFICATION The most widespread large falcon of our region. Significant size differences between races: largest females of northern race *calidus* are as large as smallest male Gyrs, southern race *brookei* is hardly bigger than Barbary. Most widespread (nominate) race averages a little smaller than Lanner. Powerful but very agile in flight, often making long and dramatic, near-vertical stoops (with wings virtually closed) in pursuit of medium-sized birds. Wingbeats slow, stiff and rather shallow in travelling flight, but faster and deeper when in pursuit. Holds wings flat when soaring, with hands slightly upturned. Has characteristic compact flight silhouette (shared with closely related Barbary). Wings are broad-based but hand is narrow and tapers sharply, creating an almost triangular shape when wings fully extended in soaring. Wingtips are sharper than in other large falcons and tail distinctly shorter. **Adult** may be separated from other large falcons (apart from Barbary) by this distinctive structure and also (except in *calidus*) by all-black crown and nape, dark bluish-grey remainder of upperparts (with paler area from lower back to uppertail coverts), very broad dark moustache (contrasting with clean white cheeks), and extensive barring on underparts from lower breast to undertail coverts (but note that adult dark- and grey-morph Gyrs are barred on flanks and 'trousers'). Underparts mostly look grey at a distance, contrasting with whitish upper breast and throat. More problematical is large and pale race *calidus* (breeding Lapland eastwards, wintering south to N Africa and Middle East), which has paler upperparts and which can suggest Lanner (q.v.). Confusion between Peregrine and similarly short-tailed Eurasian Hobby possible at a distance when size and plumage detail not apparent, but Peregrine is much broader in the chest, has broader base to wings and is paler below (with pale breast). See also Barbary Falcon and Merlin. **Juvenile** still has characteristic jizz of adult, but plumage differences less marked (and juvenile *calidus* often shows Lanner-, Saker- or Gyr-like characters). For differences from Eurasian Hobby or Eleonora's, Lanner, Saker, Gyr and Barbary Falcons see those species. (Note: all identification pitfalls associated with *calidus* apply equally to very similar vagrant race *tundrius*, see below.)

SEX/AGE Juvenile differs from adult in being entirely blackish-brown above (not bluish-grey, with paler area from lower back to uppertail coverts). Underbody tinged yellowish, with bold dark, longitudinal streaks (not bars) from breast to undertail coverts. Also has small buffish nape patch, finely streaked cheeks, narrower dark moustachial streak, pale supercilium and paler forehead. Cere and legs bluish, not yellow (but feet occasionally yellow).

VOICE Usually silent except near nest, where most frequent call a loud, harsh, scolding 'ka-yak, ka-yak, ka-yak...', becoming a shrill 'kek-kek-kek...' when alarmed.



GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 5 races including (probably this race) vagrant *tundrius* from N America (nominate race and *brookei* illustrated). Northern *calidus* is slightly larger than nominate race and paler overall, with less heavy barring below and narrower moustachial streak. Juvenile is paler overall than nominate race juvenile: usually less heavily streaked below and paler brown above (often contrasting with darker flight feathers); may show paler (and more contrasting) feather fringes to upperparts, more prominent whitish nape patch, paler forehead, whitish supercilium and narrower moustachial streak, thus recalling Gyr, Saker or Lanner (q.v.). Southern *brookei* is smaller than nominate race, darker above with dull rufous patch on nape (sometimes extending to crown), and more pinkish-tinged below with denser barring. Juvenile is darker and more heavily streaked below than nominate race juvenile and with more rufous nape patch. Race *madens* of Cape Verde Is is browner than nominate race above, with strongly rufous tinge to crown and nape and pinkish suffusion to underparts (resembling smaller but paler Barbary, q.v., of which it may in fact be a race rather than a race of Peregrine). Vagrant *tundrius* very similar to *calidus* and same identification pitfalls apply.

STATUS/HABITAT Generally scarce. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Belgium, Netherlands, Denmark, Israel.) Breeds on cliffs and crags in hills, mountains, moorland, sea coasts and, in far north, on ground or in trees in extensive bogs; rarely, on tall buildings. In winter, also open lowlands and especially estuaries and other wetlands.

BARBARY FALCON *Falco peregrinoides*

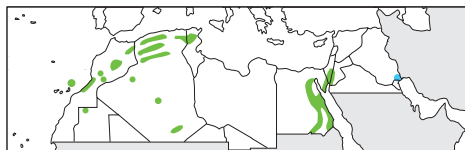
Plate page 252

L 35–42 cm, WS 80–100 cm.

IDENTIFICATION The smallest of the large falcons and rather similar to Peregrine (especially southern race *brookei*), but a little narrower-winged and thus looks slightly longer-tailed and less compact. Powerful

but very agile in flight, often making long and dramatic, near-vertical stoops (with wings virtually closed) in pursuit of prey. Wingbeats slow, stiff and rather shallow in travelling flight, but faster and deeper when in

pursuit. Holds wings flat when soaring, with hands slightly upturned. **Adult** differs from Peregrine (apart from *calidus*) in paler upperparts, narrower and paler moustachial streak, larger white cheek patch (almost reaching eye) and paler underside (with less extensive, less obvious barring on underparts). Underbody and underwing coverts often tinged pinkish-buff (but note that Peregrines of races *brookei* and *madens* have pinkish-buff tinge below, although on former not so strong as in Barbary). Has prominent rusty-red nape patch and supercilium, and also rufous-tinged crown and forehead; *brookei* and *madens* Peregrines are also tinged rufous on forehead and crown, but nape patch smaller and duller (rufous rather than rusty-red, as in most Barbary). Lacks strongly dark-hooded appearance shown by most Peregrines (but not some *calidus*). Compared with adult Lanners of N African and Middle Eastern races *erlangeri* and *tanypterus*, which can look almost as pale bluish-grey above, averages smaller and is less heavily built, with narrower and more pointed wings; has rusty-red (or rusty-yellow) nape patch and supercilium, and often a darker crown, and lacks uniform barring along length of tail (having broader dark subterminal bar). Never shows dark band on underwing coverts seen in juvenile and some adult Lanners. Moustachial streak broader (especially at base) and underparts more pinkish-tinged with finer, more vermiculated markings. Shows same differences in outline and flight action as Peregrine (q.v.). **Juvenile** differs from juvenile Peregrine in having paler and warmer brown (instead of blackish-brown) upperparts, much finer streaking on underbody, rusty-yellow nape patch (absent or smaller and



buffy in most Peregrines, but similar in *brookei* and *madens*), narrower and paler moustachial streak, and yellow (not bluish) cere and legs. Not unlike juvenile Lanners of N African and Middle Eastern races, but shows same structural and flight-action differences as adult, much finer streaking on underbody and much paler underwing coverts (lacking the strong contrast with pale flight feathers shown by Lanner).

SEX/AGE Adult female can have rusty-yellow (rather than rusty-red) nape patch and supercilium. Juvenile differs from adult in darker upperparts and underparts with fine dark, longitudinal streaks from breast to undertail coverts; nape patch rusty-yellow, not rusty-red. Moustachial streak narrower, and cere and legs yellow instead of orange-yellow.

VOICE Usually silent except near nest, where most frequent call a loud, harsh, scolding 'kek-kek-kek...'

TAXONOMY Sometimes lumped in Peregrine Falcon *F. peregrinus*.

STATUS/HABITAT Uncommon. (In addition to mapped range, may breed southernmost Morocco, Libya.) Rocky hills, gorges and mountains in semi-deserts; locally also similar terrain in true desert and along sea cliffs bordering semi-desert or desert. Visits nearby plains and valleys while hunting.

subad

EGYPTIAN
VULTURE
(at same scale)

juv

juv

juv

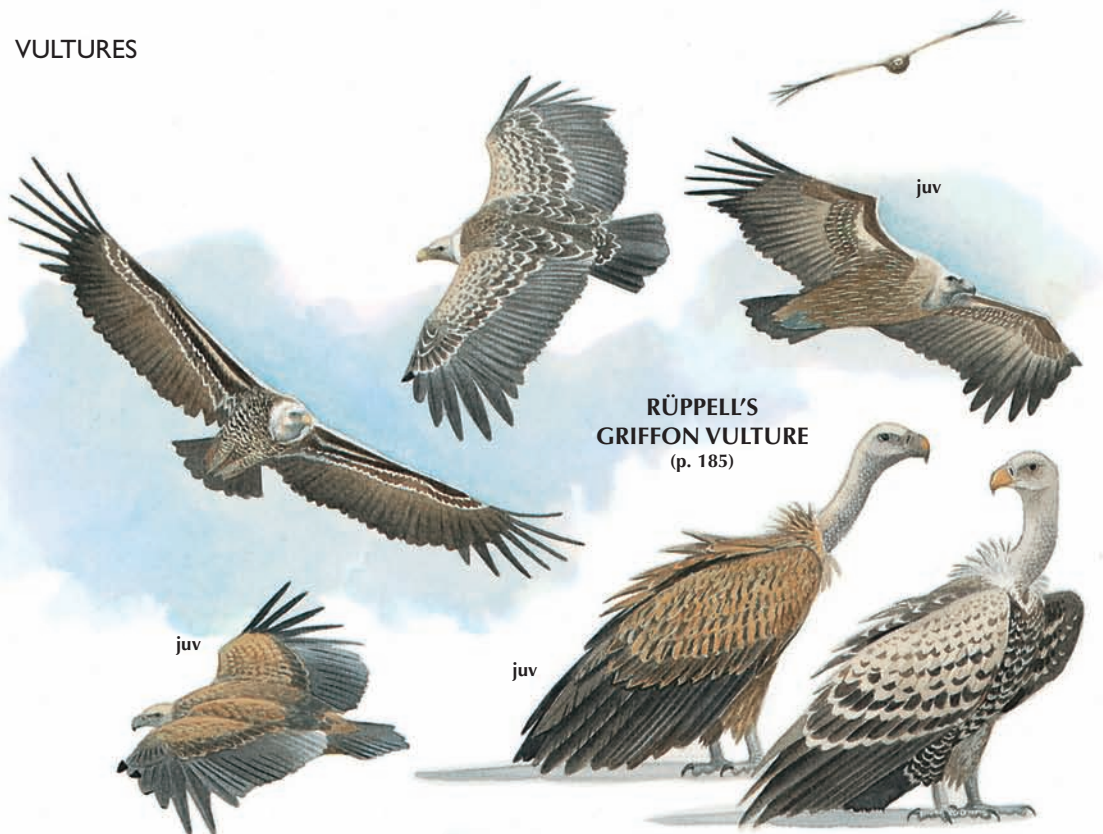
LAMMERGEIER
(p. 184)

EGYPTIAN
VULTURE
(at same scale)

juv

juv







juv
negevensis



juv

LAPPET-FACED VULTURE
(p. 186)



juv



juv

EURASIAN BLACK VULTURE
(MONK VULTURE)
(p. 186)



VULTURES

HOODED VULTURE (p. 185)



juv

3rd/4th-cal-year

3rd/4th-cal-year

juv

EGYPTIAN VULTURE (p. 184)



juv

juv

**AFRICAN
FISH EAGLE**
(p. 182)



juv



juv



juv

BALD EAGLE
(p. 184)



juv



juv



juv



3rd/4th-cal-year

2nd-cal-year
(spring, bleached)



juv



juv

3rd/4th-cal-year



WHITE-TAILED EAGLE
(p. 183)



juv (paler vagrant)



juv







juv
'fulvescens'

juv
'fulvescens'

juv

2nd/3rd-cal-year

juv

juv

juv

**GREATER SPOTTED
EAGLE**
(p. 198)

juv

juv
'fulvescens'

juv

juv



subad



2nd/3rd-cal-year



2nd/3rd-cal-year



juv



juv



juv

LESSER SPOTTED
EAGLE
(p. 198)



juv



juv

AQUILA EAGLES

darker
variant

darker
coverts
variant

paler
coverts
variant

subad

STEPPE EAGLE (p. 199)

juv

juv
(variant lacking
prominent wing bar)





GOLDEN EAGLE
(p. 202)

adalberti
(SPANISH EAGLE)

subad

3rd/4th-cal-year

subad

SPANISH
IMPERIAL EAGLE
(p. 201)

4th/5th-cal-year

juv
(dark)

juv

juv

juv

juv
adalberti
(SPANISH EAGLE)



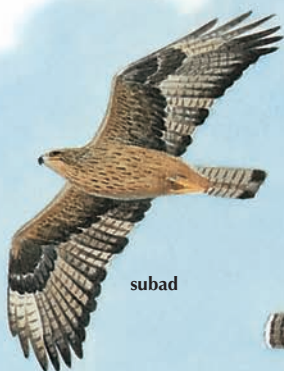


BATELEUR
(p. 187)



VERREAUX'S EAGLE
(p. 203)





BONELLI'S EAGLE
(p. 204)



SHORT-TOED EAGLE





pale
morph

intermediate
variant



pale
morph



dark
morph

BOOTED EAGLE
(p. 203)

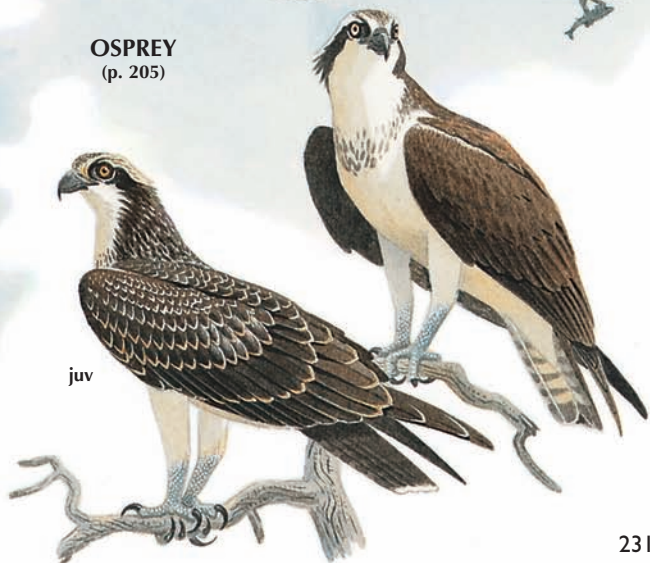


dark
morph

pale
morph



OSPREY
(p. 205)



juv

juv

KITES

RED KITE
(p. 181)

juv

juv

juv

juv

BLACK KITE
(p. 181)

juv

juv

juv

juv

lineatus

lineatus

aegyptius

232

RED KITE
(p. 181)

BLACK KITE
(p. 181)

lineatus

lineatus

aegyptius



BUZZARDS



COMMON BUZZARD
(nominate race)
(p. 195)



dark
morph

dark
morph

juv

juv
dark
morph

juv

juv

juv

juv

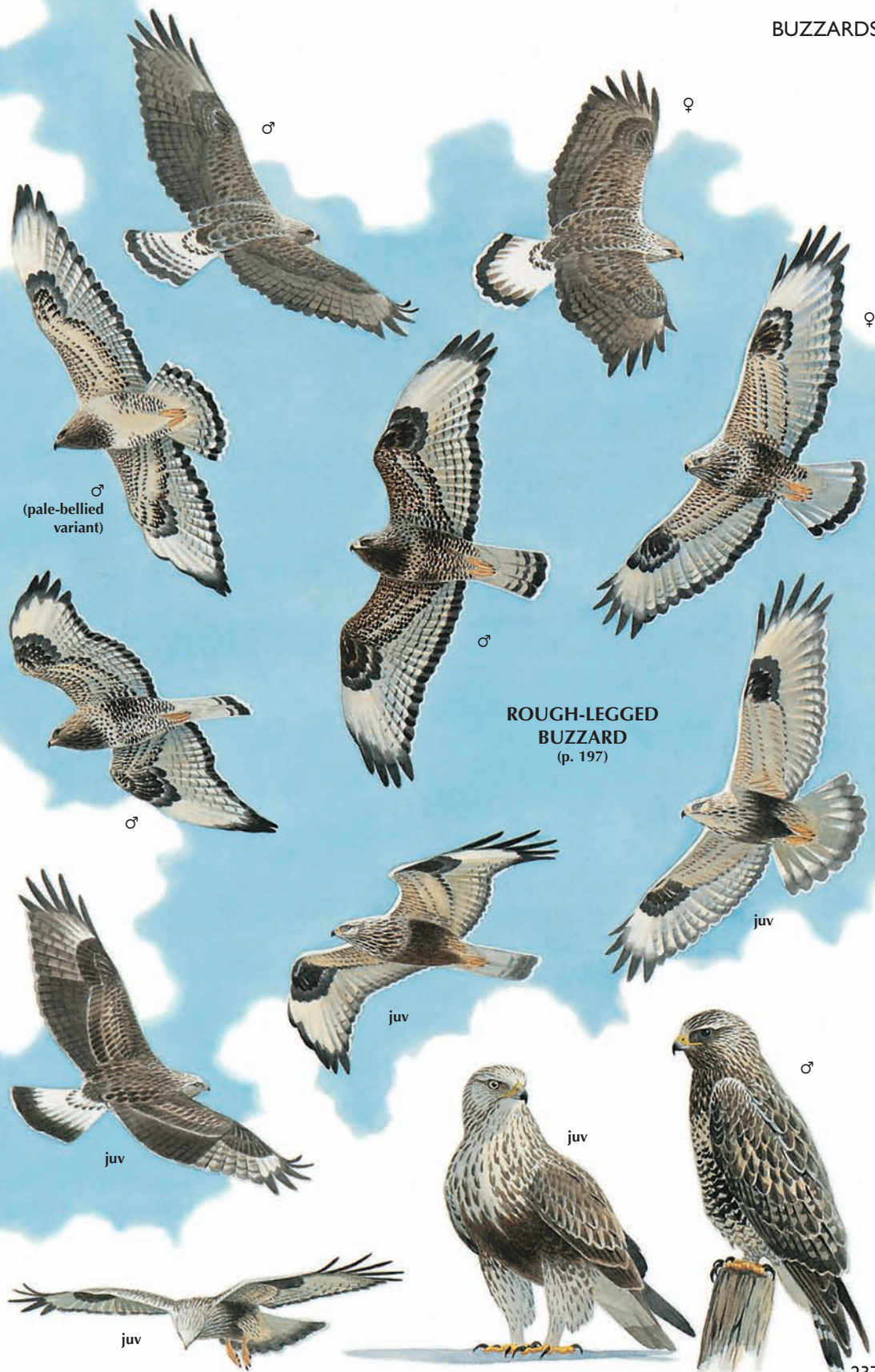
COMMON BUZZARD
(*vulpinus*, STEPPE BUZZARD)
(p. 195)

dark
morph

juv



LONG-LEGGED
BUZZARD
(p. 196)

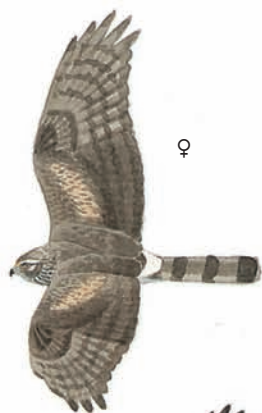


HARRIERS



WESTERN MARSH HARRIER
(p. 188)

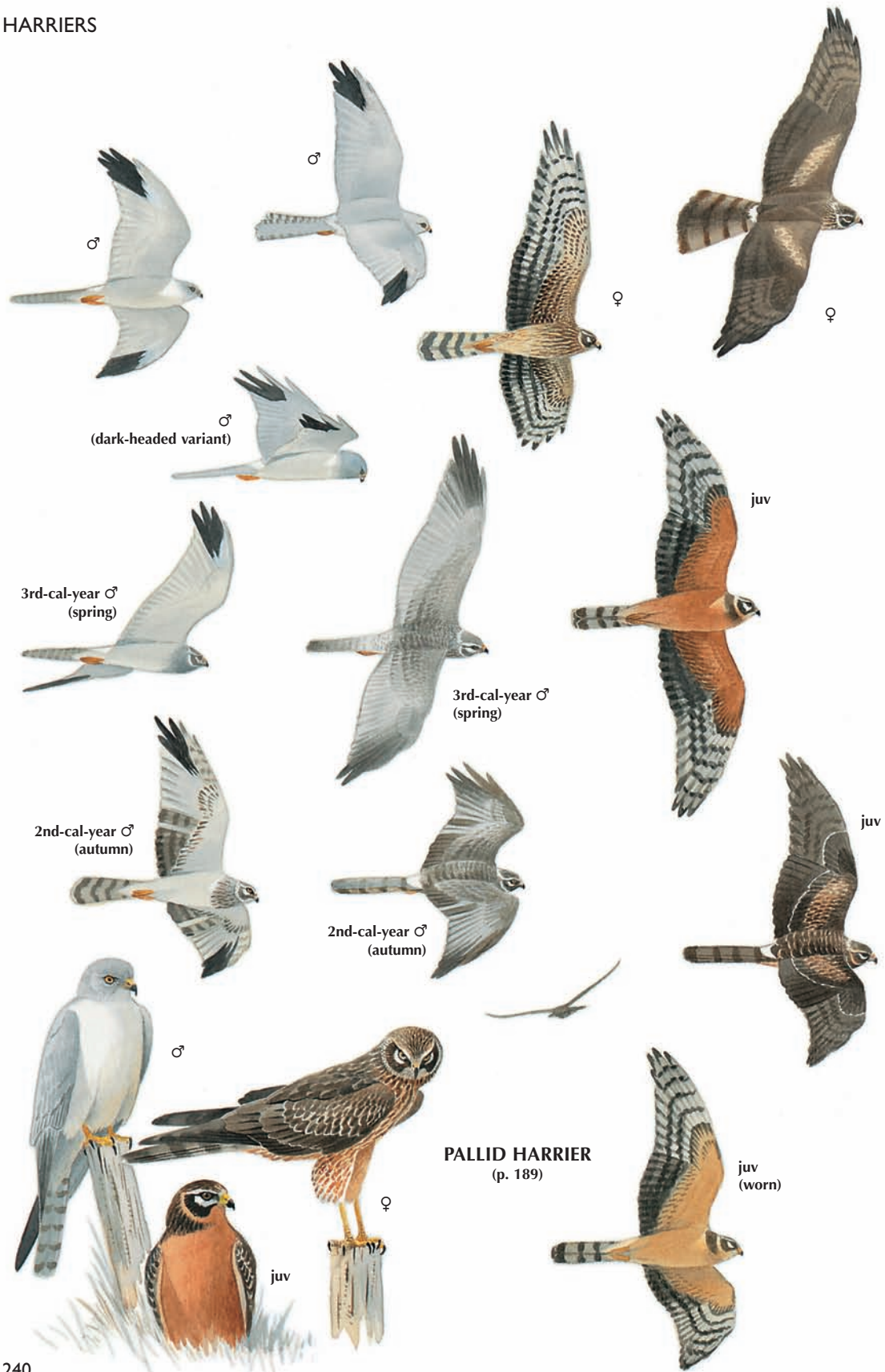




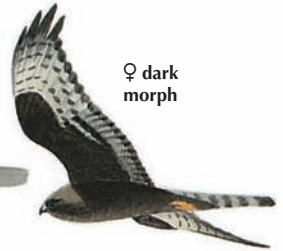
HEN HARRIER
(p. 189)



HARRIERS



PALLID HARRIER
(p. 189)



MONTAGU'S HARRIER
(p. 190)



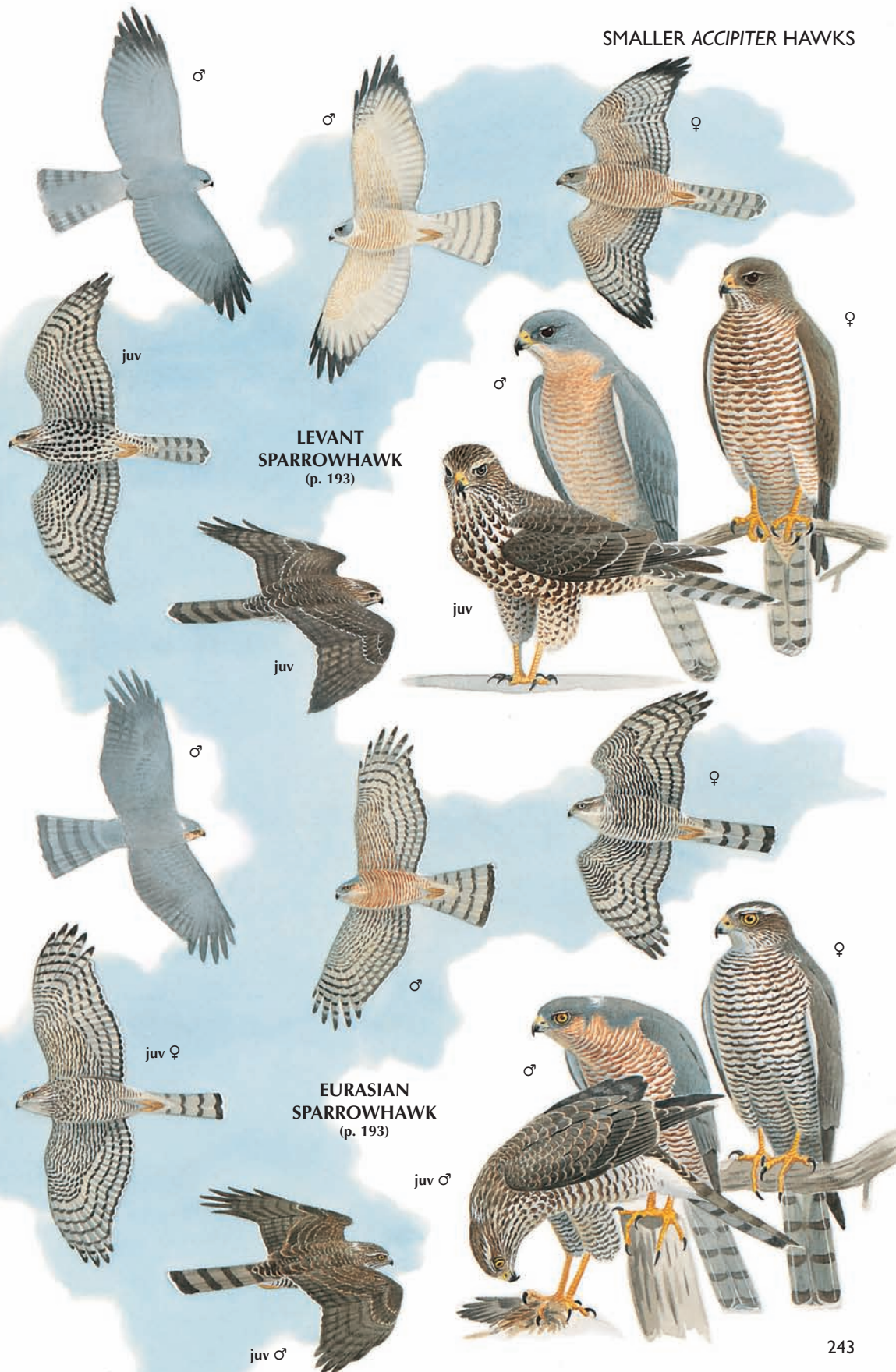
GOSHAWKS



DARK CHANTING GOSHAWK
(p. 191)

EURASIAN SPARROWHAWK
(at same scale)

NORTHERN GOSHAWK
(p. 192)



SMALLER ACCIPITER HAWKS, BLACK-SHOULDERED KITE





COMMON KESTREL
(p. 206)



SMALL FALCONS

AMERICAN KESTREL
(p. 206)



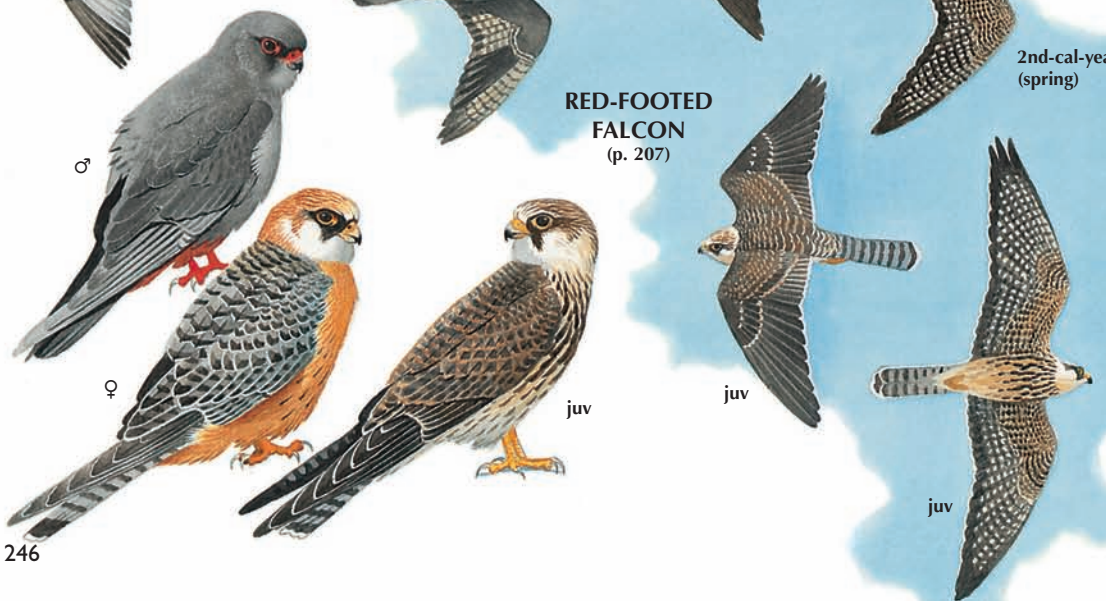
2nd-cal-year ♂
(autumn)

2nd-cal-year ♂
(autumn)

2nd-cal-year ♂
(spring)

2nd-cal-year ♂
(spring)

RED-FOOTED
FALCON
(p. 207)



SMALL FALCONS



MERLIN
(p. 207)



EURASIAN HOBBY
(p. 208)

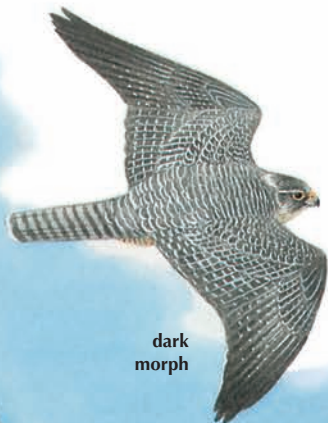


SOOTY & ELEONORA'S FALCONS





white
morph



dark
morph



dark
morph

GYR FALCON
(p. 212)



white
morph



juv
dark
morph



dark
morph



dark
morph



juv
dark
morph



white
morph



juv
dark
morph

LARGE FALCONS

'sacerooides'
morph



SAKER
(p. 211)

milvipes



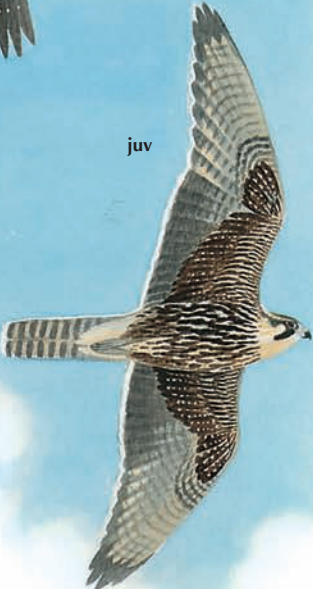
juv



juv



'sacerooides'
morph





erlangeri



feldeggii



feldeggii



erlangeri



erlangeri



juv
feldeggii



juv
erlangeri



juv
feldeggii



erlangeri

erlangeri



juv
feldeggii



feldeggii

LANNER
(p. 210)

LARGE FALCONS



**BARBARY
FALCON**
(p. 213)

PEREGRINE
(p. 213)

GROUSE Tetraonidae

6 species

Small family of medium-sized to very large terrestrial or semi-arboreal gamebirds of moorland, tundra, high mountaintops and boreal forests. Closely related to the pheasant family, differences not being outwardly obvious. Mainly vegetarian: diet predominantly buds (e.g. heather, willow, birch, alder, hazel, pine), catkins and, in case of Western Capercaillie, pine needles. As with the pheasants, the chicks are capable of flight from a very early age. Like many gamebirds, most are shy and wary and, especially for-est species, more easily located in spring when displaying. Displays of Black Grouse and Western Capercaillie are spectacular events, with a number of males gathering to display at favoured arenas ('leks') while females visit and observe. Nest on ground in low cover.

Sexes differ (but difference ranges from slight to marked). Little or no seasonal variation in most, but marked in Rock Ptarmigan and Willow Ptarmigan. Juvenile plumage as such is retained only for a few weeks; juveniles resemble small versions of adult females. Plumage entirely or very largely as adults by first autumn in most, but young males of Western Capercaillie and both black grouse do not achieve full adult plumage until early in first spring.

Less distinctive species or sexes may be confused in poor view with partridges or conceivably with other short-tailed members of the pheasant family which are structurally quite similar.

Identification within the family generally straightforward (although care needed), but no key points to concentrate on that apply throughout.

HAZEL GROUSE *Bonasa bonasia*

Plate page 279

Hazelhen

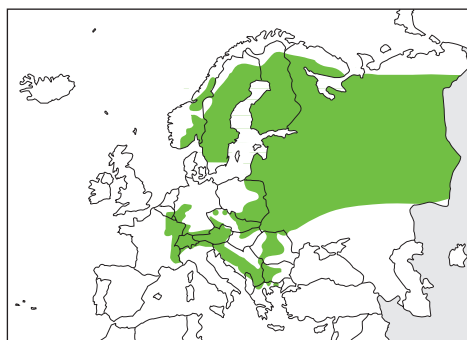
L 35–37 cm, WS 48–54 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Small, shy grouse of dense forests. More often heard than seen. Typical view is of a partridge-like bird rising with whirring wings from forest undergrowth, twisting with agility through the trees and usually landing again before too long. The most striking feature in flight is the white-tipped tail, highlighted by a blackish subterminal band. On the ground, small size, scaled underparts, tufted crown and, in males, black and white throat pattern are distinctive. As flight views are often brief, beware confusion with poorly seen female Black Grouse and even Eurasian Woodcock, which share similar habitats. Usually solitary or in family parties. Readily perches in trees, or walks along fallen tree trunks, but spends most of time on ground.

SEX/AGE Adult female is browner, less greyish above. Lacks black throat patch. Juvenile resembles adult female, but lacks dark subterminal tail band and whitish spotting on scapulars.

VOICE Usual call an extremely high-pitched, very thin, penetrating whistle: 'seeeeeeeee-see-see ...'. Sounds quite unlike any other gamebird and more like some small mammal or perhaps Goldcrest.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 3 races (nominate race illustrated). Southern race *rupestris* (occurs



east to S Poland and Carpathians) is distinctly browner, less grey, on upperparts, breast and flanks.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common, but easily overlooked. (Formerly bred N Spain and French Pyrenees.) Dense, mature mixed forests (sometimes pure coniferous or deciduous stands), especially in hilly regions; prefers damp gulleys, streambanks and boggy depressions with plenty of undergrowth.

WILLOW PTARMIGAN *Lagopus lagopus*

Plate page 277

Willow Grouse; Red Grouse (*L. l. scoticus*)

L 37–42 cm, WS 55–66 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Widespread northern grouse of open country. (The following applies to Continental Willow Ptarmigan: for identification of distinctive 'Red Grouse' of British Is, see Geographical Variation.) Combination of mainly dark body plumage and mainly white wings exhibited for much of year is shared only by similar Rock Ptarmigan, with which it overlaps. Overall body coloration varies with season: body plumage is changed three times in a year to improve camouflage against changing backdrop of

snow, rocks and vegetation. Like Rock Ptarmigan, becomes white in winter, but lacks black lores of male Rock. Calls are quite different and remain the easiest field distinction: see Rock Ptarmigan. Willow Ptarmigan is rather larger, with stubbier bill than Rock; males are rich red-brown in body colour, but females are closer to female Rock in colour. Young juveniles have extensive greyish-brown in upperwing, thus seemingly intermediate between Willow Ptarmigan and 'Red Grouse' in this respect. Noisy, especially in

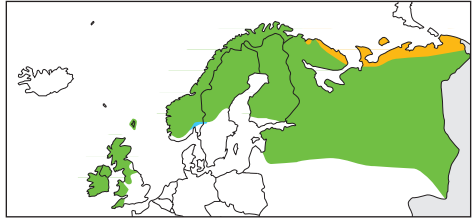
breeding season. Flushes suddenly, and makes off on direct flight path with rapid wingbeats interspersed with periods of gliding. Usually flies a considerable distance before dropping back into cover. Often in flocks outside breeding season, and generally shy and wary.

SEX/AGE Distinctions reasonably obvious in spring, but attains a post-breeding plumage in late summer when sexes similar, followed by mostly white winter dress. Adult male in spring a rich reddish-brown and white with swollen red 'comb' over eye, but later becomes more like adult female summer. Adult female summer has insignificant 'comb' and is more buff overall, with body plumage scalloped with black. After breeding, both sexes become rather dull, dark brown with narrow white edgings on upperparts and rufous tinge on front and flanks. By winter, both sexes become all white with black tail; male 'comb' is less obvious, and sexing more difficult except when patches of summer plumage appearing in late winter/early spring. Ageing rather difficult; juvenile has extensive greyish-brown in upperwing, including flight feathers, the wings becoming whiter during first autumn. (For 'Red Grouse' see Geographical Variation.)

VOICE Most obvious calls of males (more rarely females) a strident nasal, cackling 'go-BACK, go-BACK, back-kak-kak ...' (uttered from ground and in flight) and a loud, evenly accelerating 'ko-ko-ko-ko-kokokokokokrrrr' (given when perched). In display flight male gives a loud 'aa' on rising, followed by a rapid but slowing ka-ka-ka-ka-ka-ka-ka ...' on descending and a gruff 'kohWA-kohWA-kohWA' on landing. Both sexes also give a softer 'kok'.

TAXONOMY Form *scoticus* (Red Grouse) of British Is was formerly treated as a full species.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Marked. 4 races (nominate race and *scoticus* illustrated). Nominate race over much of our region. Population of islands off western Norway, *variegatus*, has dusky mottling in wings, including primaries, and attains white winter plumage for only a short time; it approaches 'Red Grouse' of British Is in some plumage respects. Southern Siberian race *rossicus* more rufous on upperwing



coverts than nominate race, and has black barring rather than spotting on mantle. Race *scoticus* of British Is, known as 'Red Grouse', is easily distinguished from Continental Willow Ptarmigan (and from Rock Ptarmigan) by having all-dark upperwings throughout the year. Lacks extensive white on belly between spring and autumn, and does not have a white winter plumage. In flight, whitish underwing contrasts with darkness of rest of plumage. Confusion possible with female Black Grouse, but latter has longer tail (although notch may be hard to see), is larger, has some whitish on centre of belly and undertail coverts (but some white may be present on 'Red Grouse' in winter), and often shows a narrow pale wing bar. Compare also with rare all-dark variety of Grey Partridge, although habitats unlikely to overlap. Behaviour and voice as Willow Ptarmigan, but feeds mostly on heather throughout the year. 'Red Grouse' has only two plumages, unlike three of Willow Ptarmigan: adult male summer a rich reddish-brown overall with swollen red 'comb' over eye; adult female summer has insignificant 'comb' and is paler overall, with body plumage scalloped with black and buff. In winter female 'Red' more rufous, less mottled with buff, but more mottled black than in male; generally lacks 'comb'. Some birds have some whitish on belly in winter in N Britain. Juvenile resembles adult female summer, but lacks black in tail.

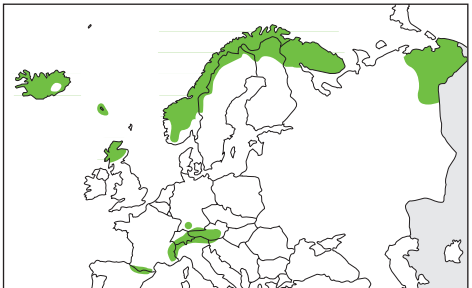
STATUS/HABITAT Locally common on open tundra with low scrub, very open forest, moorland and heaths; locally in coastal dunes with heath-like vegetation. Avoids open rocky or barren ground favoured by Rock Ptarmigan.

ROCK PTARMIGAN *Lagopus mutus*

Ptarmigan

L 34–36 cm, WS 54–60 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Mountain and high-arctic counterpart of Willow Ptarmigan, which it resembles in all plumages. Slightly smaller, less bulky, than Willow, with relatively narrower wings and weaker bill. As in Willow, overall body coloration varies with season: body plumage is changed three times in a year to improve camouflage against changing backdrop of snow, rocks and vegetation. Summer male and post-breeding birds of both sexes always lack rich chestnut tones of male Willow, being instead very grey. Summer female close to female Willow, but overall body coloration paler buff, with larger black spots on upperparts and less clear-cut white belly, the white being invaded by irregular black and buff markings along lower flanks. In white winter dress very difficult to separate from Willow, but male has black lores; females have head pattern as Willow and are best identified by habitat, voice or accompanying males. Juvenile has pale grey-brown upperwing, but luckily this plumage lasts only for a very short time. In poor view, in Scotland, may then be mistaken for 'Red Grouse'. Unlike Willow, is generally exceedingly tame, allowing close



approach before scuttling to rocky outcrop, from which it glides downhill uttering distinctive cackling and grating call. Forms small flocks outside breeding season.

SEX/AGE Adult male very grey, except in winter, with prominent red 'comb' in spring. Females buff, mottled and spotted with black. In winter, both sexes all white with black tail, but male has black lores. Juvenile resembles adult female, but upperwing cloudy grey-

Plate page 277

ish-brown and tail brown, not black.

VOICE Flight call of male (rarely female) very distinctive and quite unlike Willow Ptarmigan: a dry, low-pitched, belching cackle, 'ARR-arr-kakarr', uttered in display or when flushed. Often gives a prolonged, grating ending: 'ARR-arr-kakarrrrrrrr k k k k k k k k k'. Both sexes also give a low 'kuk'.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 8 races (*millaisi* illustrated).

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. Barren rocky country, with scree and crags, in tundra zone and further south in mountains. Marginally overlaps with Willow Ptarmigan in breeding season when inhabiting areas with stunted scrub of willow or birch. Reaches sea level in north of range, but further south a bird of mountaintops well above tree-line. Descends in winter, and then regularly overlaps with Willow Ptarmigan or 'Red Grouse'.

BLACK GROUSE *Tetrao tetrix*

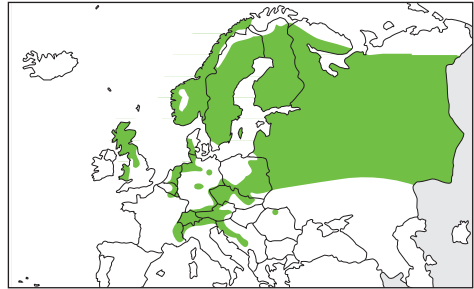
Plate page 278

Blackcock (male), **Greyhen** (female)

L 40–55 cm, WS 65–80 cm (male about 30% longer than female, with WS 15–20% greater).

IDENTIFICATION Black plumage, with striking white undertail coverts, underwing and wing bar, and lyre-shaped tail make adult male unmistakable. Smaller grey-brown, dark-barred female distinguished from Willow Ptarmigan or Rock Ptarmigan by wholly brown (instead of mainly white) upperwing. More easily confused with female 'Red Grouse', especially if poor flight views obtained, but Black is a little larger, with relatively longer neck and tail, whitish undertail coverts and belly centre, and often a narrow whitish bar across upperwing. Female 'Red Grouse' has darker, plain upperwing and all-dark underparts (although some pale may appear on belly in winter). If seen well, Black shows barred and notched tail when perched (but tail looks rather square-cut in flight), while in 'Red Grouse' it is black and more rounded. Note that eclipse male Black has blackish tail. Female Western Capercaillie larger and longer-necked, with unbarred, rufous breast and longer, more rounded tail. Usually solitary or in small parties. Males gather at dawn to display at favoured 'lek' in spring, uttering low bubbling cries, with wings drooped and tail elevated to expose fan of white undertail coverts. Also forms small, usually single-sex, flocks outside breeding season. Readily perches in trees. Generally shy and wary. Flushes with rather silent wingbeats, often flying higher than Willow Ptarmigan when well underway. See also Hazel Grouse and Caucasian Grouse.

SEX/AGE Males moult into an 'eclipse' plumage for a short period in late summer, differing from female in having blackish patches in plumage, prominent wing bar and larger, blackish tail. Juvenile resembles adult female, but smaller, with whitish shaft streaks visible



on upperparts. Young birds much as adult by first autumn, but immature male shows variable amounts of rufous feathering on head, neck and upperparts until first summer.

VOICE Spectacular lekking display incorporates long, low but far-carrying bubbling croons from displaying males, interspersed with harsh, sneezed hiss, 'choo-EESH'. Otherwise generally silent.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 3 races (*britannicus* illustrated).

HYBRIDS Wild hybrids, mostly males, recorded from time to time, especially at edge of range, resulting from hybridization with Western Capercaillie, Willow Ptarmigan or even Common Pheasant.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (Formerly bred Hungary.) Mixed birch and conifer forest, damp heathland and moorland with some tree cover. Often visits adjacent clearings, woodland edges, bog margins and pastures. Usually in upland regions, but also in lowlands further north.

CAUCASIAN GROUSE *Tetrao mlokosiewiczii*

Plate page 278

Caucasian Black Grouse, Caucasian Blackcock

L 38–52 cm, WS 58–62 cm (male about 20% longer-tailed than female, WS about 15% greater).

IDENTIFICATION Endemic to Caucasus and adjoining region to south. Rather smaller and distinctly longer-tailed than similar Black Grouse (with which it does not overlap). Unmistakable male generally appears all black, but white underwing coverts visible in flight. Lacks white undertail coverts of Black and has less pronounced lyre-shape to tail. Female resembles female Black Grouse, but greyer overall, with finer barring on underparts and darker belly centre and undertail coverts. Common Pheasant does not occur in same habitat. Behaviour recalls Black Grouse, with males gathering to perform lekking displays; jump upwards into air from low mounds. In flight, and when 'flutter-jumping' during display, wings of males



produce whistling sound. Unlike Black, only occasionally perches in trees. Outside breeding season forms small, usually single-sex, flocks.

SEX/AGE Much as for Black Grouse (but not known if male has 'eclipse' stage). Immature male does not attain extensive adult male feathering until end of first winter.

VOICE Relatively silent. Lekking males use far-carrying

whistling sound produced by wings in jumping display rather than vocalization.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally not uncommon. Favours

alpine meadows and slopes with low scrub (especially azalea) above tree-line at 2500–3500 m, descending to upper zone of forest in winter.

WESTERN CAPERCAILLIE *Tetrao urogallus*

Plate page 279

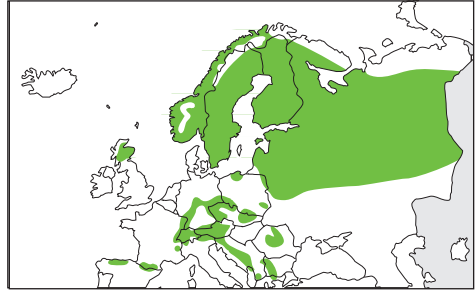
Capercaillie

L 60–87 cm, WS 87–125 cm (male up to 40% larger than female).

IDENTIFICATION Huge grouse of coniferous forests. Male unmistakable with its dark plumage, heavy head and neck, shaggy throat and broad tail. A white patch often visible on shoulder when on ground. In display, cocks and spreads tail in turkey-like fan, holds head and neck erect, and utters peculiar ‘popping’ sound; solitary displaying males can be aggressive, occasionally chasing intruding humans! Female recalls large female Black Grouse, but barring below more prominent and has longer, rounded and more rufous tail and unbarred rufous breast patch. If flushed, rises with noisy wingbeats but silent when underway, twisting with surprising agility between trees in dense forest. Readily perches in trees, even walking among small branches. Generally shy and wary; most easily discovered in spring when males display communally at favourite ‘leks’. Presence in forest often given away by small piles of large, cylindrical, fibrous droppings (over a centimetre thick, which is roughly double that of other grouse). Feeds mostly on pine needles in winter, switching to leaves and berries in summer.

SEX/AGE Juvenile resembles female, but smaller. Much as adults by first winter, but immature male smaller, less glossy than adult male, with shorter and narrower tail feathers.

VOICE Relatively silent except in display, when males utter a series of knocking sounds (like sticks being tapped together) which quicken into a short roll followed by a loud ‘plop’ (recalling sound of a cham-



pagne cork leaving the bottle), in turn followed by several harsh rasping wheezes (like a saw blade being whetted). Also gives a loud guttural bubbling. Female may utter several calls when attending display, including one recalling the ‘crow’ of a Common Pheasant.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 4 races (nominate illustrated).

HYBRIDS Occasionally hybridizes with Black Grouse or even Common Pheasant at edge of range where population low.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common, but often scarce owing to hunting and forest clearance. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Hungary.) Mature coniferous (especially pine) and mixed forests with clearings and undergrowth; in south of range, only in montane forests.

PHEASANTS & PARTRIDGES Phasianidae

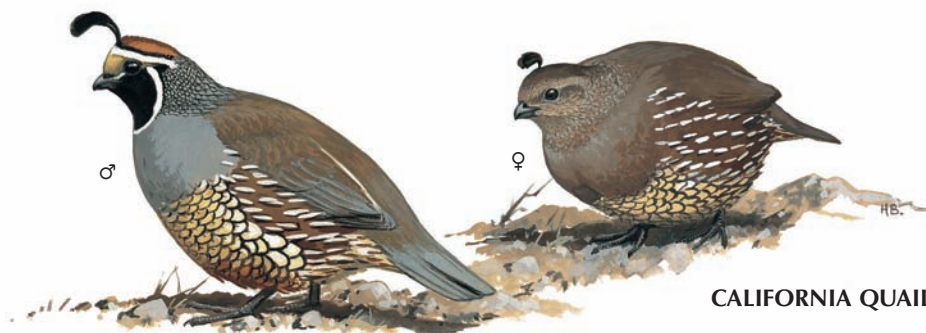
18 species (5 introduced)

All species are ground-dwellers, although some, i.e. pheasants, roost in trees. Because of wary nature most are more often heard than seen, the spring advertising call of male being a useful method for locating many species. Like the grouse, nest on ground. Most species are sociable, gathering into small parties (termed ‘coveys’ in the case of partridges) outside breeding season. They are generally reluctant fliers, preferring to run away from danger, ‘exploding’ into the air with extremely rapid, noisy wingbeats as a last resort. Only Common Quail is migratory; the others are remarkably sedentary, although montane species move lower into mountain valleys in severe weather. Members of this family have long been hunted for food or ‘sport’, and consequently most are shy and wary or have become quite localized. In addition to our native species, a variety of others have been introduced into our region for both sporting and ornamental purposes. Many such introduction attempts have failed, but species known to be currently established in certain areas are treated below.

Sexes sometimes similar, but often distinct. Little or no seasonal variation. The chicks are capable of flight even when very small. This should be borne in mind when ‘odd-looking’ small gamebirds are flushed; these may easily be mistaken for Common Quail. Juveniles either resemble adult females or are remarkably plain, but attain adult plumage quite rapidly in late summer and early autumn.

Snowcocks, partridges and francolins likely to be confused only with structurally rather similar grouse family (and then only if poorly seen). Pheasants and quails pretty much unmistakable (but see button-quails and comment above regarding chicks of other gamebirds).

Identification within the family mostly straightforward but care needed in a few cases. No identification criteria are widely applicable.



CALIFORNIA QUAIL

CALIFORNIA QUAIL *Callipepla californica*

Plate above

L 24–28 cm, WS 38–43 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Successfully introduced from N America to Corsica. A small, partridge-like gamebird with striking and peculiar elongated, forward-pointing head plume. Adult males also have a black throat with white border. Other plumages duller, with mottled, brownish head and neck, but head plume always distinctive. Even in flight, easily distinguished from other partridge-like birds (except Northern Bobwhite) by grey, not chestnut, tail. Only other small gamebird on Corsica is Red-legged Partridge, but confusion highly unlikely. Often in small parties.

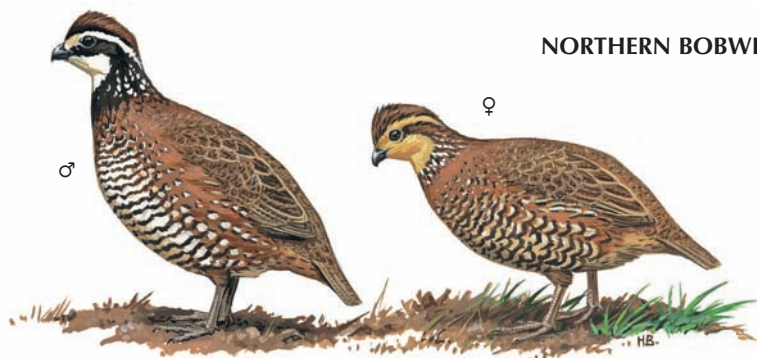
SEX/AGE Juvenile resembles adult female, but underparts lack prominent pattern, flank feathers have buff scallops, and upperpart feathers have narrow pale



fringes (feathers plain in adult female).

VOICE Has variety of cackles and chuckles and a loud, emphatic 'chi-ca-go'.

STATUS/HABITAT Uncommon. Scrubby areas in lowlands and hills, and farmland edges. (Attempts to introduce it to Europe have failed with the exception of Corsica, where it is established in one area in the east of the island.)



NORTHERN BOBWHITE

NORTHERN BOBWHITE *Colinus virginianus*

Plate above

Bobwhite Quail

L 21–26 cm, WS 35–40 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Successfully introduced from N America to France. Small partridge-like bird, males with striking white throat and supercilium contrasting with dark chest and band through eye. Underparts dark rufous, heavily marked with white spots and streaks. Females duller, with buff replacing white of male on head and throat. Rather smaller than partridges, with short greyish (not chestnut) tail especially visible in flight. Shy bird of scrubby grassland, usually encountered in small coveys. Presence usually indi-



cated by distinctive voice.

SEX/AGE Sexes differ in head pattern (see Identification).

Juvenile duller than adult female, with underparts only weakly marked.

VOICE Spring song of male a distinctive rising whistle, 'bob-bob-white', with the female's answer likened to a thin 'a-loie-a-hee'. Various other calls may be heard from feeding parties.

STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon. (Numerous,

mostly unsuccessful attempts have been made to introduce the species in Europe. Became established in S England for a number of years but now seems to have died out. Has become established in several areas in France, Italy and Croatia.) Open country, including farmland, with scattered bushes; also woodland edges.

CAUCASIAN SNOWCOCK *Tetraogallus caucasicus*

Plate page 280

L 54–56 cm, WS 80–95 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Endemic to main Caucasus. Snowcocks are very large partridges of high mountainsides. The ranges of the two species in our region do not overlap. Typically seen perched on rocky outcrops or feeding on grassy slopes below crags. General appearance is of a large greyish partridge with striking white undertail coverts (these may be fully exposed as snowcocks often cock their tails high as they walk). Presence usually indicated by curlew-like, whistling cries long before bird is seen. Often flies across mountainsides or out over deep gullies, usually gliding downwards with few wingbeats, exposing white band across bases of flight feathers (visible from both above and below). Invariably flies downhill, with swept-back wing shape recalling modern jet bomber. Usually in pairs or small parties; shy and wary. Prefers to walk or run uphill away from intruder, rather than fly. Chukar poses only possible confusion risk within range, but is much smaller and browner, with bright chestnut tail, pale cinnamon undertail coverts, more extensive clear whitish throat patch and strong vertical flank barring. Compared with Caucasian Snowcock, Caspian is lighter grey overall, washed with buffish below, with less contrasting facial pattern, no rufous nape patch, less distinct chestnut flank markings, and breast weakly spotted with dark (not closely and prominently scalloped like Caucasian, which has scalloping extending onto upper mantle). Wing patterns similar,



but Caspian has darker tips to primaries, creating more striking contrast with white bases when seen in flight.

SEX/AGE Adult female slightly smaller and duller than adult male, with narrower flank streaks and lighter upperparts. Juvenile still duller, with indistinct flank pattern.

VOICE Distinctive clear, far-carrying whistle, not dissimilar to call of Eurasian Curlew but more mellow and prolonged: 'ooolee-oooweeeyuh'. In spring, uttered by males with neck stretched up and head pointed skywards (first part of call mellow, rising in pitch and speed, second more shrill, ending abruptly). A low-pitched clucking 'pok-pok-pok-pok-pok ...' followed by a shrill bubbling may also be heard from feeding parties, or be given in flight when flushed.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally fairly common in alpine zone, generally keeping between 1800 and 4500 m. Prefers inaccessible grassy slopes with rocky outcrops, ravines and cliffs; avoids extensive snowfields. May descend lower in severe winters, rarely even into mountain foothills.

CASPIAN SNOWCOCK *Tetraogallus caspius*

Plate page 280

L 58–62 cm, WS 95–105 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Mountains of Turkey and Transcaucasus, range not overlapping with that of Caucasian Snowcock. Very similar to Caucasian (q.v.) in overall appearance and behaviour. Chukar poses only possible confusion risk within range, but is much smaller and browner, with bright chestnut tail, pale cinnamon undertail coverts, more extensive clear whitish throat patch and strong vertical flank barring.

SEX/AGE As for Caucasian Snowcock.

VOICE Very similar to that of Caucasian Snowcock.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (*tauricus* illustrated).

STATUS/HABITAT Locally fairly common. (Probably



more widespread in E Turkey than map suggests.) Prefers inaccessible grassy slopes with rocky outcrops, ravines and cliffs between 2000 and 4000 m (above 2500 m in summer); avoids extensive snowfields and sheer cliffs without grassy areas. In winter may descend a little lower. Scarce or even absent where mountain pastures overgrazed by sheep.

CHUKAR *Alectoris chukar*

Plate page 281

Chukar Partridge

L 32–34 cm, WS 47–52 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Very similar in size and appearance to Rock Partridge (q.v.), with which it marginally overlaps in SE Europe, but vocally quite different. Does not overlap with similar Red-legged Partridge in natural range, but Chukar introduced for shooting purposes in France and Britain and hybridizes with

Red-legged (see Hybrids). Chukar most easily separated from Red-legged by lack of extensive necklace of black streaking and spotting across breast and sides of neck, plain greyish crown with indistinct supercilium (brownish with clear whitish supercilium in Red-legged) and greyer overall appearance. Generally shy

and wary, often proclaiming presence by distinctive calls. Feeds in open country and rocky hillsides in small parties, and prefers to run rather than fly away from intruders. In flight, shows rufous tail like other partridges, contrasting with greyish rump and unmarked upperparts (Grey Partridge has streaked upperparts).

SEX/AGE Juvenile very plain, lacking throat pattern or flank bars.

VOICE Calls resemble those of clucking chicken, a repeated 'chuck ... chuck ... chuck ... chuck' often developing into a full 'chuck ... chuck ... chuck ... chuckARR chuckARR chuckARR'. When flushed, often utters a loud squeal followed by a repeated 'wittoo-wittoo-wittoo'. Various other short, harsh calls may also be heard, including a repeated 'chak-chak-chak ...'. Voice of Red-legged Partridge is rather similar, but Rock Partridge quite different.

TAXONOMY Formerly considered conspecific with Rock Partridge *A. graeca*.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 5 races (*kleini* and *sinaica* illustrated). Clinal, with darkest populations in northwest and palest in south and east: dark-



est race is *kleini* (NE Greece, Bulgaria and W Turkey), palest is *sinaica* (C Syria to Sinai).

HYBRIDS Not uncommon where introduced into range of Red-legged Partridge; show intermediate amounts of breast and neck streaking.

STATUS/HABITAT Widespread, but uncommon over much of range through persecution. Common where persecution limited. (In addition to mapped range, also breeds on islands of S and E Aegean. Introduced in France and Britain where hybridizes with local Red-legged Partridges.) Dry grassy and rocky hillsides and mountainsides (up to 4500 m in Caucasus), scrubland and semi-desert; locally among cultivation and open woodland.

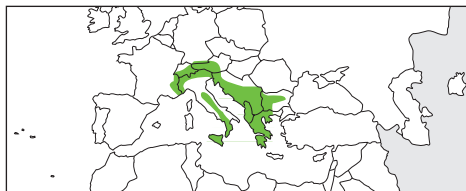
ROCK PARTRIDGE *Alectoris graeca*

L 32–35 cm, WS 46–53 cm.

IDENTIFICATION European counterpart of Chukar, with which it marginally overlaps. Most easily separated by voice and by range, as plumage differences small and difficult to interpret under normal field conditions. At very close range, subtle differences in facial pattern may be visible: Rock has black extending down from forehead across bill base, linking up with small black patch at gape; Chukar merely has black forehead with all-whitish lore, leaving small isolated black patch at gape. A patch of rufous feathering behind eye almost completely interrupts black facial band in Chukar, but there is hardly any break in this band in Rock, which has only a sliver of rufous feathering. White supercilium usually broader in Chukar. Black gorget forms a V on lower throat of Chukar, but border more rounded in Rock. Throat washed creamy-buff in Chukar (although whiter in some Asiatic populations), but is clean white in Rock. Chukar has fewer, broader and more widely spaced flank bars, the rear bars often seemingly broken; in Rock, the flank barring is very neat and regular. In region of overlap in SE Europe, local Chukars are browner above and on upper breast than Rock, which is purer grey. Range also overlaps with Red-legged Partridge, from which most easily separated by lack of extensive necklace of black streaking and spotting across breast and sides of neck, plain greyish crown with indistinct supercilium (brownish with clear whitish supercilium in Red-legged), and greyer overall appearance.

SEX/AGE Juvenile very plain, lacking throat pattern or flank bars.

VOICE Calls more grating and higher-pitched than Chukar; typical advertising call a rapidly repeated, grating 'chitti-ti-tok ... chitti-ti-tok ... chitti-ti-tok ...' or



'chuk ... chuck ... chuck ... pairchuk pairchuk ... chukara chukara'. When alarmed or flushed, utters a shrill whistling 'pitchee' followed by a Chukar-like 'whitoo ... whitoo'.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 3 races (nominate race illustrated). Isolated *whitakeri* of Sicily has more uniform dark grey-brown upperparts, and border of lower throat narrower and more pointed, thus approaching Chukar. (These features may, however, result from interbreeding with introduced Chukar.)

HYBRIDS Limited marginal hybridization occurs with Chukar, such birds being difficult to assign to either species. Like Chukar, also hybridizes with Red-legged Partridge; offspring show intermediate amounts of breast and neck streaking.

STATUS/HABITAT Quite numerous in some areas but over most of range has declined and survives in rather inaccessible habitats because of hunting pressures. Range only marginally overlaps with that of Chukar in extreme NE Greece and SE Bulgaria. Rocky and grassy hillsides and mountainsides, chiefly between tree-line and snow-line in summer, preferring steep, sunny, south-facing slopes with scattered bushes. Locally in open woodland or scrubland. Descends to lower levels in winter, entering vineyards etc.

RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE *Alectoris rufa*

L 32–34 cm, WS 47–50 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Widespread in lowlands of W Europe, with only marginal overlap with Rock Partridge. Differs from superficially similar Rock Par-

tridge and Chukar in having extensive 'necklace' of black streaking and spotting across upper breast and sides of neck, browner overall appearance, more

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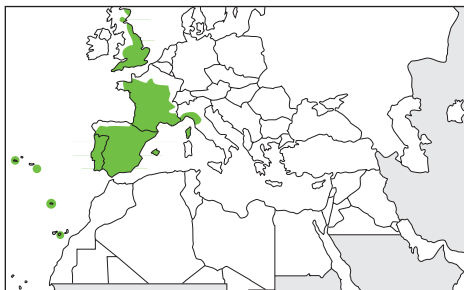
prominent supercilium and deeper rufous belly. Range widely overlaps with that of Grey Partridge, but adults unlikely to be confused unless views poor owing to very different plumage pattern. Juvenile much plainer and more like juvenile Grey, but generally seen in company of adults and usually shows hint of dark necklace and flank bars (while lacking pale shaft streaks that are a feature of young Grey). In flight, unstreaked upperparts and white throat of adult make distinction from Grey easy. These features shared by Rock, but latter has much greyer upperparts.

SEX/AGE Juvenile very plain, largely lacking dark necklace and flank bars.

VOICE Advertising call of male a repeated harsh, grating 'goCHAK-CHAK-CHAK goCHAK goCHAK-CHAK ...'. Both sexes often give a repeated, rather Chukar-like, 'goCHOK CHOK CHOKORRR' or 'pi-tuk tuk tuk cheer'. When flushed usually utters a repeated, low, almost tern-like 'tchree-agh' or similar.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 3 races (nominate race illustrated).

HYBRIDS Occasional hybridization reported in wild with Rock Partridge in SE France, and hybrids with



Chukar frequently reported in Britain where both species regularly released for shooting purposes; these hybrids may resemble either parent species, but with intermediate amounts of breast and neck streaking.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (Formerly bred Germany. Introduced to British Is, Azores, Madeira, and probably Gran Canaria in Canary Is.) Prefers rather dry, open country, including cultivation and grassy hillsides. Locally in foothills and mountains up to 2000 m (where it meets Rock Partridge in France).

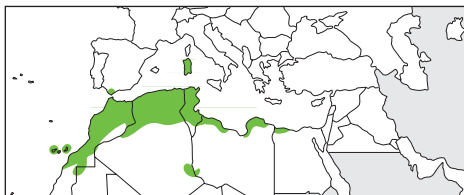
BARBARY PARTRIDGE *Alectoris barbara*

L 32–34 cm, WS 46–49 cm.

IDENTIFICATION N African representative of 'rock partridge' complex. Lacks black border to pale throat of other *Alectoris* partridges. The very dark brown crown strongly contrasts with broad pale supercilium and pale greyish face and throat, creating a distinctive look even in flight. Dark chestnut neck patch with white spotting is unique to this species, but the body plumage otherwise recalls other *Alectoris*. In gliding flight, wings held flatter, less bowed, than in other partridges. Only similar species within range is very localized Double-spurred Francolin, which is unlikely to be confused, even in flight, as it has indistinct longitudinal flank striping (not vertical bars), streaked upperparts, and tail uniform with upperparts (not contrastingly rufous). Even less inclined to fly than other partridges, preferring to run away from danger. Quite regularly perches in bushes or low trees.

SEX/AGE Juvenile very plain, lacking head pattern or flank bars.

VOICE Typical call, a repeated 'kutchuk kutchuk' interspersed with an occasional 'chukor' which breaks the rhythm, is reminiscent of Chukar. Advertising call of male a harsh, grating, drawn-out 'krrraiik' (recalling hoarse note of Eurasian Curlew). Gives a squealed,



repeated 'kree-ah' or a loud 'chuckachew ... chew ... chew' when flushed.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Mainly slight. 4 races (nominate race illustrated). Isolated race *barbata* of NE Libya and NW Egypt is much more richly coloured and has reddish-brown upperparts, bluish-grey throat and face, and cinnamon-brown crown centre and neck patch.

STATUS/HABITAT Often common, but in some areas scarce owing to hunting pressure. (Introduced Gibraltar, and possibly also Sardinia and Canary Is.) Favours scrub, well-vegetated desert wadis, rocky and grassy hillsides and mountainsides with scattered bushes, cultivation, fruit groves, open woodland and coastal dunes.

SEE-SEE PARTRIDGE *Ammoperdix griseogularis*

See-See

L 22–25 cm, WS 40–42 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Small sandy partridge of the Middle East. Range overlaps with that of larger Chukar but not with similar Sand Partridge. Males differ from Sand Partridge in having conspicuous black forehead and supercilium; in addition to white eye patch, shares overall sandy appearance and undulating flank barring with Sand Partridge. Female virtually unmarked greyish-buff, very similar to female Sand Partridge and often not safely separable except on range, although See-see has minute white freckling on head and neck (Sand has fine pinkish barring). Typically in coveys in



wadis and on barren stony hillsides, scuttling away at approach of intruder.

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SEX/AGE Juveniles lack flank pattern of adult male, but have male head pattern. Some, however, are plain-headed like adult female, so more research needed to clarify the situation.

VOICE Usual call a far-carrying, repeated 'wheet-div'; the first syllable has a whiplash quality. If flushed,

utters a rapid, repeated 'bwuit-bwuit-bwuit'.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (In addition to mapped range, probably also occurs N Syria.) Barren, rocky hillsides and open stony country in semi-desert regions; often about wadis and springs, but avoids cultivation.

SAND PARTRIDGE *Ammoperdix heyi*

L 22–25 cm, WS 39–41 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Small sandy partridge of the Middle East. Range overlaps with that of larger Chukar but not with similar See-see Partridge. Males are pinkish sandy-buff with prominent, undulating flank stripes and greyer head, the latter with a striking white patch behind eye. Slightly plumper than See-see and lacking black on head. Egyptian race *chholmleyi* much darker (see Geographical Variation). Females probably inseparable in field from female See-see except on range (but see See-see). Behaviour much as See-see.

SEX/AGE Juvenile closely resembles adult female (not adult male as in most juvenile See-sees).

VOICE Typical call a far-carrying, repeated, loud, fluty 'quip' or 'qu-ip'. Also an explosive 'wuit-wui-wuit' when flushed or alarmed.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 3 races

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(nominate race illustrated). Races *nicolli* and *chholmleyi* of Egypt west of Red Sea lack white on forehead and lores, while latter is darker overall than other two races, vinous cinnamon rather than pinkish sandy-buff.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (Range possibly extends into S Syria.) Barren rocky hillsides, ravines and wadis; often near springs. Often in partly vegetated ravines but avoids cultivation.

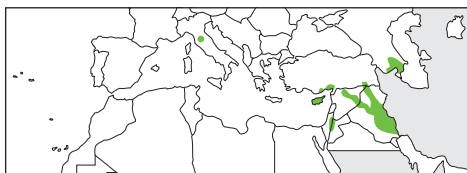
BLACK FRANCOLIN *Francolinus francolinus*

L 33–36 cm, WS 50–55 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A plump partridge-like bird of well-vegetated areas in the Middle East. Voice is very distinctive and the easiest method of locating the species. Male is unmistakable: appears predominantly black with white 'ear patch' and spotting on sides of body. Female is brown, heavily mottled with black feather centres to both body surfaces, and has inconspicuous chestnut nape patch; although less strikingly patterned than male, no other similarly mottled gamebird occurs within its range. Shy and wary, rarely seen in open (except when calling). Typical views are of birds running across tracks in bushy country. Males often utter harsh grating advertising call from low perch, such as small dead tree or fence post, with head up, wings drooped and broad tail spread. Usually in pairs or family parties. Flushes reluctantly, with heavy wing action that recalls pheasants rather than partridges, soon dropping back into cover. Shows striking black outer tail in flight, much darker than in any partridge, and warm cinnamon wings with dark barring.

SEX/AGE Juvenile recalls dull version of female, but underparts paler, with only weak streaking and barring.

VOICE Song of male very distinctive and far-carrying,



a strident, penetrating, grating series of notes (not at all bird-like, more like a machine sound) preceded by a sharper, more metallic clucking note audible only at closer range. Can be rendered as 'klik ... KEEK-ke-keek, ke-KEEK'. Otherwise relatively silent.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (nominate race illustrated).

STATUS/HABITAT Considerable decline through hunting, but locally quite numerous where persecution limited. (Formerly range extended across S Europe, but long since exterminated mainland Spain, Balearic Is, Italy, Sicily and Greece, although recent reintroduction attempt in Tuscany seems to have been successful.) Lowland areas with extensive bushy cover, tall grassland with bushes, tall crops and wetland edges with scrub and reeds.

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DOUBLE-SPURRED FRANCOLIN *Francolinus bicalcaratus*

L 30–33 cm, WS 45–50 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Morocco (where very localized). The only brownish, streaked, partridge-like bird within its range. Most prominent features are pale face and throat and white supercilium contrasting with black forehead and sides of crown and rufous crown centre and nape. Mottled blackish and rufous underparts are marked with narrow, wavy whitish stripes on flanks. In brief views confusable with Barbary Partridge, but lat-



ter has conspicuous dark crown, vertical flank barring

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and rufous tail (mostly visible in flight). Most readily located by distinctive advertising call, uttered from low perch such as stunted tree or mound in the early mornings and evenings. Keeps very much to dense cover and flushes with extreme reluctance, preferring to escape by running through bushes.

SEX/AGE Some adult females are more buff, less whitish, on face and throat. Juvenile duller with underparts less clearly marked and flanks more barred.

VOICE Advertising call distinctive: a far-carrying,

deep, grating, repeated 'krrrrak ... krrrrak ...' etc. Seems to differ from voice of tropical W African population.

STATUS/HABITAT Very local and uncommon. (Now found mainly in Forest of Mamora near Rabat, but also Essaouira area and perhaps Sous valley. Formerly more widespread in Morocco, but population reduced by hunting.) Scrubby woodland with clearings, bushy streambanks and cultivation mixed with scrub.

GREY PARTRIDGE *Perdix perdix*

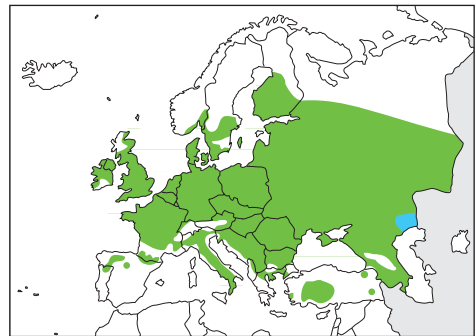
Partridge

L 29–31 cm, WS 45–48 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Most widespread partridge of our region, favouring flat or rolling open country, which it shares with Red-legged Partridge in W Europe. Distinguished from other partridges in its range by streaked, not unmarked, upperparts, orange face and throat, less strikingly barred flanks, and dark belly patch (although latter often difficult to see). In flight, shows rufous tail like the *Alectoris* partridges, but dark belly patch and lack of black-bordered whitish throat allow for separation on all but poorest views. Drab brownish juvenile has dark mottled upperparts and conspicuous pale shaft streaks over most of body, unlike other partridges. Small juveniles confusable with Common Quail when flushed, but latter shows relatively long and pointed, not bluntly rounded, wingtip and flies with much greater power (often for considerable distances). Beware also small juvenile Common Pheasant (but this has wedge-shaped, pointed tail). Typically in coveys for most of year, often feeding in same fields as Red-legged Partridge where ranges overlap. Flushes with explosion of wingbeats at close range, whirring away and dropping out of sight. See also introduced Northern Bobwhite.

SEX/AGE Adult male a little brighter overall, with more conspicuous small red patch of bare skin behind eye in spring. Adult female is duller above and grey of breast is tinged with buff; also has smaller, more diffuse dark chestnut horseshoe patch on belly (sometimes none). Juvenile described above.

VOICE Advertising call of male, given at all times of day and night, is distinctive and has been likened to



grating squeak of rusty gate being opened: 'kiERRR R-R-R-ik'. When flushed, gives a rapid, squeaky, grating 'kip ... kip... kip-ip-ip-ip ...' etc. as bird explodes from cover.

UNUSUAL VARIANTS Rare dark morph ('montana') has extensive dark chestnut on underparts and rufous on upperparts, and can be quite confusing.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 8 races (nominate race illustrated).

STATUS/HABITAT Widespread and locally common, but sometimes scarce through hunting pressures. Open cultivation, pasture and steppes. Usually in flat or rolling terrain, but locally even in mountain foothills.

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COMMON QUAIL *Coturnix coturnix*

Quail

L 16–18 cm, WS 32–35 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Smallest gamebird likely to be encountered in our region. Typically seen only when flushed, when it 'explodes' from grassy cover almost underfoot. Confusion likely only with flying chicks of other gamebirds, especially partridges, but pointed wingtip (produced by relatively long narrow primaries, and quite unlike blunt-tipped wings of other gamebirds) is diagnostic. Flies powerfully with rapid, shallow wingbeats (unlike the weak, fluttering flight of partridge or pheasant chicks), often zooming away for long distances low over the ground before dropping abruptly into cover. If seen on the ground, tiny size is apparent, but the only obvious plumage features of this dull brownish little bird are whitish flank striping and the black facial pattern of male. Voice diagnostic and the usual method of locating the species. The only migratory gamebird of our region, crossing the Medi-

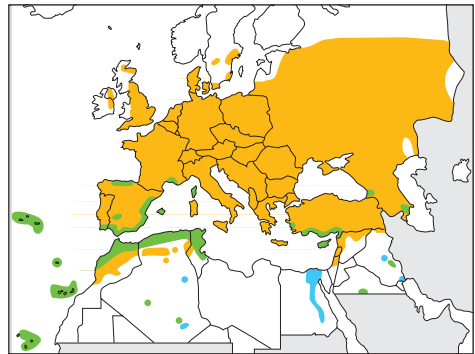


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terranean in large numbers on passage and then often found commonly in coastal cover. See also very similar but much more localized Small Buttonquail (or Andalusian Hemipode).

SEX/AGE Adult male has black centre of throat and strong facial bridle (looking like an anchor-shaped mark when seen from in front), whereas adult female has all-white throat and weak facial pattern. Some males have rufous face and sides of throat (rarely, whole throat chestnut and black anchor mark lacking). Juvenile resembles adult female, but entirely lacks dark facial bridle and has flanks spotted and barred, not streaked; much as adult by first autumn, but full facial pattern of male not developed until following spring.

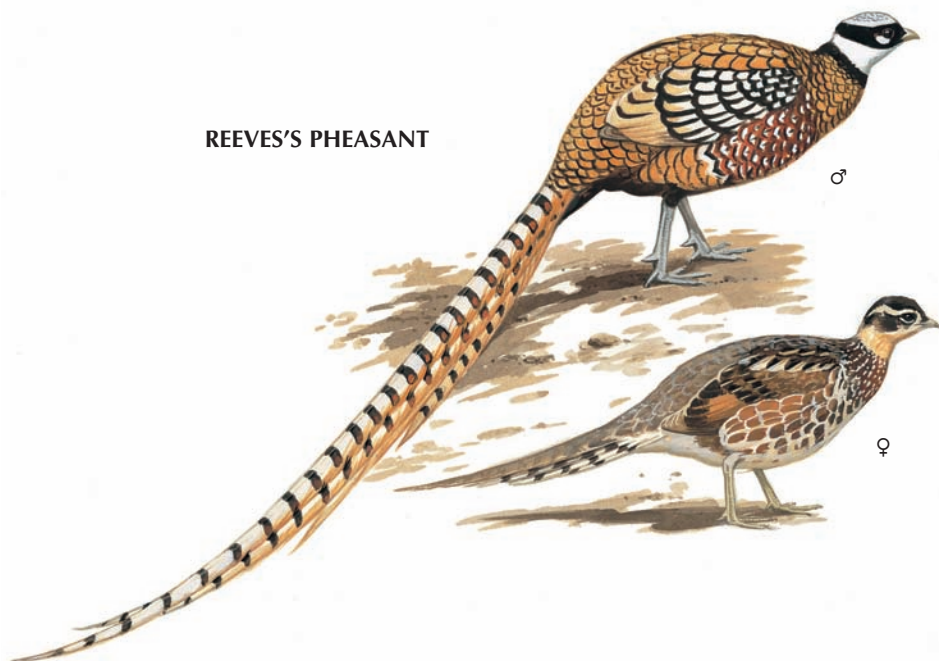
VOICE Advertising call of male very distinctive and, owing to its secretive habits, often the only indication of presence of the species in the area. A rapid series of three liquid, staccato notes: 'quip quip-ip' (likened to 'wet-my-lips' spoken quickly), uttered, with a pause of

up to several seconds between deliveries, up to ten times in succession. This advertising call is far-carrying and ventriloquial, so locating the singing bird is often very difficult. Sometimes preceded by a short, repeated, low growl. Given at all times of day and night, but especially at dusk. Female often responds with a low 'bree-bree'. Otherwise relatively silent, although a low, trilling 'whreeee' may be uttered when flushed.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 3 races (nominate race illustrated).

STATUS/HABITAT Widespread and often locally common. Numbers reaching northern limits of breeding range vary from year to year, but generally scarce (especially in northwest). (In addition to mapped range, has bred Faeroes, Norway, Finland, Egypt.) Open grassland, steppes, cultivation (both cereal crops and pasture) and weedy waste ground in flat or rolling terrain; also desert edges and oases on migration.

REEVES'S PHEASANT



REEVES'S PHEASANT *Syrnaticus reevesii*

L male 150–210 cm (including tail 100–160 cm), female 70–80 cm, WS 80–100 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Introduced from China to France. Male remarkable, with black and white head pattern, scaled golden-chestnut body plumage, and exceedingly long barred, whitish tail. Female resembles female Common Pheasant, but tail relatively longer, head and throat clear buff with blackish-brown crown and eye-stripe, blacker spotting on upperparts and breast, and blacker and more prominent tail barring.

SEX/AGE Juvenile resembles adult female, but tail shorter.

VOICE Advertising call of male a churring chuckle; also utters low piping notes. If surprised, may give a shrill, piercing alarm call.

STATUS/HABITAT Uncommon. (Many attempts at

Plate above



introducing this species in Europe have met with little success; has become temporarily established in British Is, Austria and Germany, but currently seems to be established only in parts of France and perhaps Czech Republic.) Extensive woodland, especially in hilly country, typically in large private estates.

COMMON PHEASANT *Phasianus colchicus*

Plate page 284

Pheasant, Ring-necked Pheasant

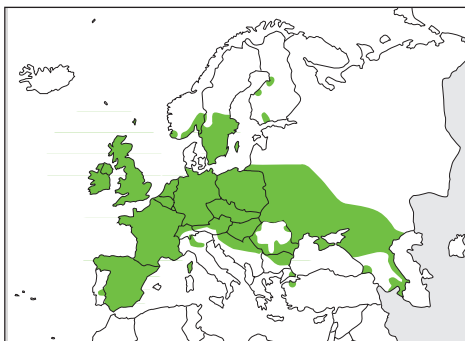
L male 66–89 cm (including tail 35–54 cm),
female 53–63 cm, WS 70–90 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Widespread and familiar introduced bird in most of Europe. Male unmistakable, even in flight, although basic coloration very variable as continually released in a variety of forms for shooting purposes (rarely, even entirely white birds may be encountered). Female confusable with other introduced pheasants, but combination of mottled crown, brownish tail barring and spotted or scaled underparts not shared by other species. Juvenile smaller and with shorter tail, but tail still longer than in any partridge and barred, not rufous. Not unlike female Black Grouse, but latter barred, rather than spotted, and has broader, notched tail.

SEX/AGE Juvenile resembles adult female, but smaller and with shorter tail.

VOICE Male has distinctive crowing advertising call, a harsh, scraping 'ko-KOK' delivered with head pointed upwards, accompanied (usually in spring) by a brief drumming of wings. When suddenly flushed, both sexes give a rapid, harsh, staccato 'kut-UK, kut-UK, kut-UK'.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Marked. 3 native races, but feral populations are a mixture of races including several introduced from E Asia (native nominate race and feral hybrids illustrated). The small native populations of our region lack white collar and are reddish-rumped, with deep buff wing coverts. Males of feral populations may have a broad white collar, pale buff or bluish wing coverts and a grey or greenish rump. Some individuals even appear largely



blackish-green, with paler bluish rump and wing coverts (resembling Japanese race *versicolor*). The majority, however, recall nominate race (but often have narrow white collar).

STATUS/HABITAT Common, but many introduced populations augmented by repeated releases for shooting purposes. Generally uncommon in its native range in our region (Transcaucasia and Caspian lowlands). Native populations, as opposed to introductions, seem to have disappeared from N Turkey and SE Bulgaria. Farmland, open country with scrubby cover, reedbeds, woodland edges and open woodland, extending from lowlands into mountain foothills.

GOLDEN PHEASANT *Chrysolophus pictus*

Plate page 284

L male 80–115 cm (including tail 45–75 cm),
female 60–70 cm, WS 65–75 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Introduced from China to Britain. A rather small, slender pheasant with little size difference between sexes. Male unmistakable with its scarlet underparts, yellow rump and golden 'shawl'. Female smaller than female Common Pheasant, but very similar to Lady Amherst's (q.v.). Compared with Common, has relatively longer and more boldly barred tail, entire body plumage closely barred instead of scalloped or spotted, and relatively pale, almost unmarked head. Shy and retiring woodland bird, often in small parties; rarely flies, even when suddenly flushed, preferring to scuttle away through undergrowth.

SEX/AGE Juvenile resembles adult female, but tail shorter; much as adult female by first winter, but young males have some scarlet in ventral region and on rump and do not attain full plumage until second autumn.

VOICE Crowing call of male a loud, piercing, strident,



harsh 'chak' or 'cha-chak'. Has a variety of other calls, including low clucks and hisses.

HYBRIDS Occasionally hybridizes with Lady Amherst's Pheasant.

STATUS/HABITAT Local and uncommon. Mainly in coniferous plantations with undergrowth, but also in mixed woodland.

LADY AMHERST'S PHEASANT *Chrysolophus amherstiae*

Plate page 284

L male 105–120 cm (including tail 73–95 cm),
female 60–70 cm, WS 70–80 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Introduced from SW China/Burma to Britain. Male unmistakable: a beautiful long-tailed pheasant with white underparts and glossy black breast and upperparts, contrasting with white 'shawl' (covered in scaly black markings) and yellow rump. Female very similar to female Golden Pheasant, but

overall coloration more rufous-brown, with darker and more rufous crown, and paler tail with even more prominent black barring. At close range, bill and legs greyish (dull pale yellowish in Golden). Skulking behaviour as in Golden.

SEX/AGE Juvenile resembles adult female, but tail

shorter and is duller overall; by first autumn much as respective adult, but young males do not attain full plumage until second autumn.

VOICE Crowing call of male a drawn-out hissing 'su-ik-ik'. Other calls poorly documented.

HYBRIDS Sometimes hybridizes with Golden Pheasant.

STATUS/HABITAT Scarce and highly localized. Coniferous plantations with undergrowth, also in mixed and deciduous woodland. Often in or close to private estates.



GUINEAFOWL Numididae

1 species

HELMETED GUINEAFOWL *Numida meleagris*

Plate page 280

L 60–65 cm, WS 95–100 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Unmistakable. Found in the wild only in Chad, Cape Verde Is and perhaps Morocco. A large, very fat, dark grey gamebird, profusely speckled with tiny white spots. Scrawny neck and small naked whitish head, with bony 'helmet', seem out of proportion to large body. Shy and wary; occurs in small parties, feeding in scrubby grassland with scattered trees and bushes. Runs rapidly on relatively long legs, but flies little. If pressed to flight, wings appear broader and wingbeats slower than in partridges. Familiar bird about many farmsteads in our region; beware wandering domesticated birds in Morocco, where now rare or perhaps extinct in the wild.

SEX/AGE Juvenile buff-brown overall, although spotted and speckled with pale buffish. Immature darker brown, heavily mottled whitish, becoming much as adult by second winter.

VOICE A raucous bubbling cackle, 'kek, kek, kek, kek, ka, kaaaaa, ka, ka, ka, kaaaa, ka, ka ...', is most



frequent call.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 3 races (*sabyi* illustrated).

STATUS/HABITAT Now rare owing to excessive hunting. (Formerly N and C Morocco, but very few recent records and all could relate to domesticated birds; may still survive in Atlas foothills or adjacent areas. Probably still occurs in S Tibesti in N Chad, and in Cape Verde Is feral population still present on a number of the islands.) Prefers scrubby grassland but also found on partly wooded hillsides with gullies in Cape Verde Is.

BUTTONQUAILS Turnicidae

1 species

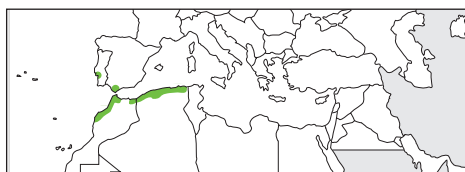
SMALL BUTTONQUAIL *Turnix sylvatica*

Plate page 283

Little Buttonquail, Andalusian Hemipode

L 15–16 cm, WS 25–30 cm.

IDENTIFICATION S Iberia and NW Africa only. Extremely secretive, rare and seldom seen in our region. Resembles Common Quail, but even smaller and shorter-bodied; easily separated in flight by very short, blunt wings with orange-buff wing coverts that contrast with dark flight feathers (Common Quail has longer, uniformly coloured wings which are pointed at tips). Beware flying chicks of partridges (but these have uniform upperwings). Flushes reluctantly, usually only once. Flies with noisy whirr of wings and soon drops back into cover (Common Quail often flies off low for considerable distances). Secretive behaviour and cryptic coloration make location on the



ground very difficult, but if seen well orange-buff breast and heavy black, arrowhead-shaped spotting on sides of body diagnostic. Longer-billed than Common Quail, without obvious facial striping and with

pale (not dark) iris. Perhaps most readily located by peculiar voice. Sexual roles reversed: female brighter and holds territory; male duller and rears young.

SEX/AGE Adult female brighter than adult male, with darker and more rufous plumage. Juvenile paler on head and underparts and lacks both rufous on breast (which is instead dark-streaked on whitish background) and prominent spotting on sides; becomes much as adult by first autumn, although plumage duller overall.

VOICE Female has distinctive advertising call, a low, far-carrying, droning 'hoooooo' repeated every 1–3 seconds, likened to distant foghorn or distant lowing

of cattle. Given mainly at dawn and dusk. Call is strongly ventriloquial, adding to difficulty of locating calling bird.

STATUS/HABITAT Very rare, with few recent records. Highly secretive nature suggests that it could well be overlooked. (Formerly more numerous and widespread, occurring more widely in S Spain and also in Sicily and coastal regions of Tunisia and NW Libya.) Dry country with grassland and very low scrub, especially palmetto (dwarf palm), but also cultivation (including sugar-beet and carrot fields) and stubbles with grassy and scrubby margins.

RAILS Rallidae

15 species (6 vagrant)

Waterside birds of freshwater marshes and lakes. Most species feed by walking on exposed mud or clambering among emergent vegetation, but some (i.e. coots and Common Moorhen) spend much time swimming in open water. All have relatively long legs and toes (latter lacking webs or, in case of coots, having partial webbing). Slender toes an adaptation for grasping clumps of vegetation when clambering about. Tails short and inconspicuous, typically 'flirted' while walking or swimming, exposing undertail coverts. Rather broad, rounded wings and laboured, fluttering flight action (with legs dangling) when flushed suggest a poor flying ability, but in fact they fly strongly and steadily when well underway, with toes projecting beyond short tail; indeed, most are highly migratory. Generally solitary and aggressive (although coots flock regularly and Purple Swamp-hens form loose aggregations outside breeding season). In general omnivorous, eating wide variety of invertebrate food, vegetable matter and carrion. Some larger species exclusively vegetarian. Water Rail regularly takes amphibians, small rodents and even small birds. Nest on ground, on floating mounds of vegetation anchored to aquatic plants or, in some species, even in old nests of other birds, sometimes well above ground or water. Vocalizations of rails and crakes are often squeals, whistles, trills, rattles or grunts, while coots, moorhens and gallinules give loud, but often hollow or metallic-sounding, croaking, trumpeting or booming cries.

Sexes usually similar, but differ in some *Porzana* crakes. Little or no seasonal variation. Juveniles often rather distinct. Often take until first spring to attain adult plumage, sometimes longer.

With their vaguely hen-like general appearance, very long toes and (with exception of Corn Crake and to a lesser degree Common Moorhen) aquatic habits, rails and crakes are unlikely to be confused with other families. The main identification difficulties lie within the family, between the *Porzana* crakes and to a much lesser extent among the coots.

Porzana (and *Aenigmatolimnas*) crakes can be extremely difficult to identify owing to their skulking nature. A frequent view is of a bird flushed from underfoot that heads rapidly away with a low, weak, fluttering flight and dangling legs before dropping back abruptly into dense waterside vegetation, never to be seen again. Sometimes, more obliging individuals can be found that can be watched feeding out in the open. Crakes are most active in the early mornings and evenings, and are best observed by sitting quietly and scanning open patches of mud in marshes that lie close to reeds, rushes and other thick vegetation. Being small and dull-coloured, they are easily overlooked as they walk or run stealthily out of cover. They are generally very vocal in the breeding season, although the range of calls of most species is inadequately known. The only birds likely to be confused with crakes are poorly seen Water Rail and juvenile Common Moorhen. The five species recorded in our region consist of two very similar pairs, a larger pair (Spotted Crake and vagrant Sora) and a smaller pair (Little and Baillon's Crakes), plus the little-known vagrant Striped Crake which is placed in the genus *Aenigmatolimnas*. Because of identification difficulties, as much detail as possible should be noted before deciding on the species. Features to concentrate on are:

Extent of white markings on upperparts • Presence or absence of red at base of bill • Extent of primary projection on folded wing • Colour of head and underparts • Prominence of flank barring

WATER RAIL *Rallus aquaticus*

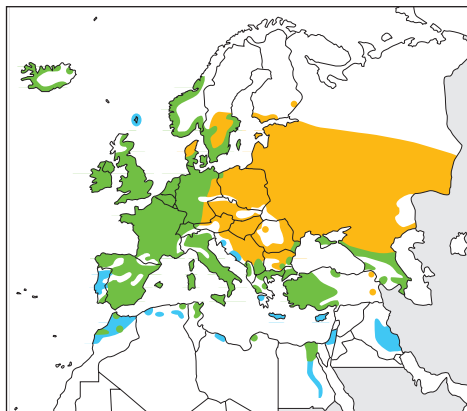
L 23–28 cm, WS 38–45 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Easily separated from other rails and crakes by long, slender reddish bill. Adults have slate-grey face and underparts, with prominently barred flanks and pinkish legs. Juvenile duller and browner, less grey, on underparts, but overall shape as adult. Shy and wary; typically seen walking along ditch or edge of waterside vegetation, or running for cover while ‘flirting’ tail and squeezing nimbly through dense vegetation. Presence mostly indicated by squealing and grunting calls; far more often heard than seen (although frequently emerges onto paths etc. when marshes frozen). Confusion possible with Spotted Crake if poorly seen, but latter has short bill and green, not pinkish, legs. Flushes in typical crake manner, flying low with fluttering wings and dangling legs, and soon dropping back into cover.

SEX/AGE Juvenile has buffish-brown underparts with whitish throat; by first winter most are as adult, although some retain some buff-brown on ear-coverts and breast until first summer.

VOICE Vocabulary quite varied. Typical call is a sudden, explosive series of piercing, screaming, vaguely pig-like, grunting squeals, rising to a crescendo and then fading away; ‘groo, groo, gruuueit grruit, groo, gru’ etc. Frequently uttered at dawn or dusk, but also at other times (especially if surprised by sudden noise). Courtship call of male a rhythmic, sharp, metallic ‘kipp ... kipp ... kipp ...’. Courtship call of female rather similar; ‘piip ... piip ... pii-errrrrr’

Plate page 286



(recalling advertising call of female Little Crake, but higher-pitched and less musical).

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 3 races (nominate race illustrated).

STATUS/HABITAT Widespread and locally common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Faeroes, Cyprus, Lebanon, Libya.) Dense waterside vegetation in lowlands, including reedbeds, marshy lakesides, overgrown ditches etc. In winter, also in saltmarshes.

SPOTTED CRAKE *Porzana porzana*

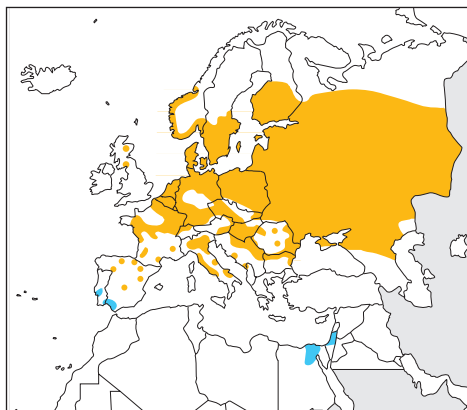
L 22–24 cm, WS 37–42 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Largest and plumpest of the genus. Slightly smaller than Water Rail, although size may not be apparent on a lone bird. Adult is olive-brown, with greyish head and breast; profusely mottled with white on both upperparts and underparts, although at longer ranges appears all greyish-brown. Buff under-tail coverts may be conspicuous during tail-cocking or on retreating bird. Behaviour typical of genus: often seen feeding on patches of mud close to cover, into which it quickly retreats if disturbed. Runs quickly and walks stealthily, tail-cocking when alarmed. Will swim across short stretches of water. See other *Porzana* crakes for distinctions; most readily confused with vagrant Sora. Poorly seen juvenile Water Rail also confusable, but latter has long bill and pinkish, not green, legs.

SEX/AGE Adult females tend to be more heavily speckled, less pure grey, on face and throat. Winter males resemble females, but supercilium and cheeks greyer. Adults have yellowish bill with variable amounts of orange-red at very base, brightest in spring. Juveniles duller and browner, with whitish chin and brownish bill.

VOICE Advertising call a loud, short, high-pitched ‘whuitt’, likened to sound of whiplash or of water dropping into filled barrel, repeated at intervals of a second or so for long periods (usually at night). Other calls include a repeated ‘tik-tak’, likened to a ticking clock, a sharp, croaking ‘qwe-qwe-qwe’ and a sharp ‘krek’ of alarm; all can recall Water Rail.

Plate page 285



STATUS/HABITAT Locally not uncommon, but scarce in most regions owing to drainage of habitat. (Range rather uncertain, especially at southern edge of distribution. Summers and sometimes breeds sporadically outside mapped areas, including Ireland and S Britain. Most winter south of the Sahara.) Dense aquatic vegetation and adjacent muddy areas by shallow water in marshes, bogs, and wet meadows, or beside lakes and slow-moving rivers. Tends to avoid upland wetlands and extensive reedbeds.

SORA *Porzana carolina*

Plate page 285

Sora Crane, Sora Rail

L 20–23 cm, WS 35–40 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Resembles Spotted Crane in plumage, size and structure. Marginally longer-tailed and longer-necked, and has a distinctly deeper-based and slightly longer bill. In all plumages, tiny white mark behind eye, unspotted wing coverts, unstreaked chestnut sides to crown and black central crown-stripe (rather than uniformly dark-streaked crown as in Spotted), deeper-based bill and lack of white spotting on head and breast are diagnostic. Sora lacks the fine white V-shaped markings on the tertials and inner greater coverts shown by Spotted. Adult also shows extensive, unspotted, grey on head, neck and breast with contrasting black face and throat centre (extending onto foreneck), and has tawny-brown upperparts than Spotted Crane. Bill lacks red at base. Juvenile and immature further distinguished from Spotted Crane by greenish or yellowish bill that lacks red base (but beware early juvenile Spotted with little or no red at bill base), rather uniform dusky face (without white spotting), paler buff breast/neck and warmer brown upperparts. Somewhat recalls much smaller juvenile Little Crane, but separated by size, crown pattern (like Spotted, Little has uniformly dark-streaked crown), uniform buff undertail coverts (whitish with dark barring in Little),

more uniformly dark mantle and scapulars, and more extensive whitish markings on upperparts. Primary projection much shorter. Behaviour of Sora is much as Spotted Crane.

SEX/AGE Adult female shows more intense white speckling above and has less extensive black on face and throat. Winter adult has narrow grey tips to black throat feathers and white edges to chest feathers which soon wear away. Juvenile lacks grey on head and neck and black on face and throat, and has buffish-brown underparts and green (rather than yellow) bill. Adult plumage attained gradually through first autumn and winter, often quite early in autumn, although dark throat may not be apparent until late winter. Undertail coverts of juvenile buffier than in adult; although both 1st-autumn birds and adults can show extensive buff, they usually show a variable amount of whitish at tip and along sides.

VOICE Advertising call a plaintive, ascending 'ker-wee', uttered by day and night. Also gives a series of whinnying notes which descend in pitch and speed towards the end, recalling Little Grebe, and a descending 'wee-ker'.

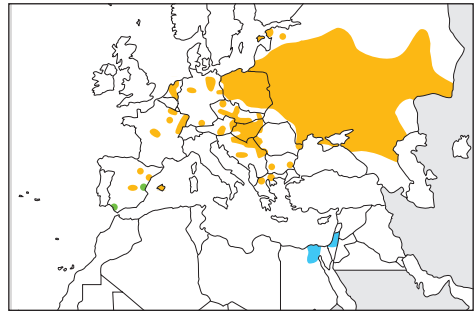
STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (NW Europe). In natural range, occurs in similar habitats to Spotted Crane.

LITTLE CRAKE *Porzana parva*

Plate page 285

L 18–20 cm, WS 34–39 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Very similar to Baillon's Crane, with which it widely overlaps. Most useful structural difference between them is the relatively long, narrow primary extension beyond tertials on folded wing of Little (Baillon's has shorter and more bunched primaries, and shorter wings make it look a little dumper). Adult male Little has face and underparts slate-grey as in Baillon's, but Little has paler grey tone, weak flank barring and brighter, greener legs (flank barring strong and legs duller green in Baillon's). Bill shows small red patch at very base, absent in Baillon's, but this is sometimes weak and indistinct. In Little, upperparts are olive-brown with white streaking restricted chiefly to mantle and scapulars; the wing coverts usually lack white markings (note, however, that wing coverts often obscured by fluffed-out flank feathers, and white scapular edges can then be mistaken for wing-covert markings). Baillon's has more extensive white spotting on richer, rufous-brown upperparts, the spotting extending to wing coverts and tertials; the white marks have black borders that make them more conspicuous than in Little and, together with strong flank barring (which extends further forward than on Little), make the rear half of the body look well marked. Sexes are almost identical in Baillon's, but adult female Little has head and underparts pale buffish. Thus, a tiny buffish crane in spring is a female Little, but the situation is confused in late summer and autumn as juveniles of both species are brownish-buff below and juvenile Little may have brownish legs and more white spotting on wing coverts than adult. Compared with juvenile Baillon's, juvenile Little has weaker flank barring and is paler buff below (Baillon's is washed rufous on sides of neck and breast) and is often clear buffish at very tip of undertail coverts (Baillon's is strongly barred to very tip). White markings on upperparts are solid,



rather than hollow, and arranged in rows that show up as pale bands. Longer primary projection is helpful difference. Swims more readily than other crakes, favouring reedbeds in relatively deep water, but, especially on passage, can occur alongside both Spotted and Baillon's Crakes. Compare also with vagrant Striped Crane.

SEX/AGE Juvenile differs from adult female in being weakly barred along full length of flanks, not just on rear flanks, and in having whiter supercilium. Iris brownish (bright red in adult) and legs browner and duller. Attains adult plumage features during first winter, but second-calendar-year birds may have very little red at bill base.

VOICE Advertising call of male a far-carrying, low, nasal croaking, accelerating into a rapid chatter, then falling away and speeding up again: 'qwek ... qwek ... qwek ... qwek, qwek, qwek, kwa, kwa-kwa-kwa-kwa ...' etc. Could be mistaken for an amphibian. Female utters a similar but shriller and more trilled series of notes: 'kwek, kwek, kwerrrr' (often sounding similar

to courtship call of female Water Rail, but lower-pitched and more musical). Several other calls may be given on breeding grounds.

STATUS/HABITAT Local summer visitor, most numerous in southeast parts of range. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Sweden, Switzerland, Italy, Egypt,

Algeria. Almost all winter south of the Sahara.) Lowland freshwater marshes and lake with extensive reedbeds and other aquatic vegetation; often favours areas with deeper water and bulrushes or reed mace. Migrants can be encountered in a wider variety of damp habitats.

BAILLON'S CRAKE *Porzana pusilla*

Plate page 285

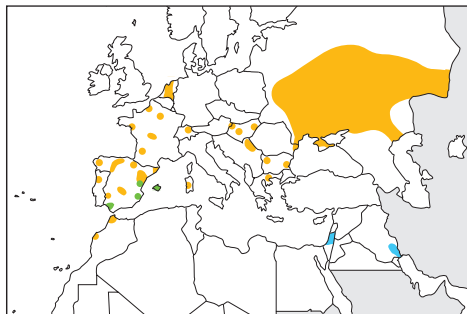
L 17–19 cm, WS 33–37 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Very similar to Little Crane and hard to separate (for discussion see Little). White markings on upperparts can suggest larger Spotted Crane, but underparts lack spotting and undertail coverts are barred, not clean buff. In general, even more skulking than Little Crane. See also vagrant Striped Crane.

SEX/AGE Adult female slightly duller and has whitish throat and some have brown streak on ear-coverts. Juvenile easily aged by brownish-buff underparts; attains adult plumage during first winter.

VOICE Advertising call of male a hard, creaking, rasping 'trrrrr-trrrrr' (or tapering off 'trrrrr-r-r') repeated every 1–2 seconds in long series (and recalling both Garganey and certain frogs, including Edible Frog *Rana esculenta*). Varies slightly in pitch during delivery and has a ventriloquial effect. Other calls may be uttered on breeding grounds, but still some confusion over which precise set of calls is made by each of the small crakes. (Beware: some published sound recordings supposedly of this species are in fact of frogs! Baillon's Crane's advertising call is harder, more clicking in tone.)

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 2 races (both illustrated). Race breeding in most of Europe and NW Africa, wintering mainly in sub-Saharan Africa, is *intermedia*. Nominate *pusilla* breeds from Ukraine and Belorussia eastwards, wintering in S Asia.



Differs from *intermedia* in having a rufous-brown eyestripe and in being slightly paler grey below, with smaller white markings above; juvenile paler below than juvenile *intermedia*, sometimes almost whitish with brownish breast band and thus closer to Little Crane in some respects.

STATUS/HABITAT Local and uncommon. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Britain, Belgium, Germany, Poland, Italy, Greece, Turkey, Jordan, Israel, Egypt, Algeria. Almost all winter south of the Sahara.) Favours lowland marshes and wet grasslands and meadows, with sedges and shallow water. On passage, in a wider variety of wetland habitats.

STRIPED CRAKE *Aenigmatolimnas marginalis*

Plate page 285

L 18–21 cm, WS 36–39 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Little-known vagrant from sub-Saharan Africa. Similar in size to Little Crane, but bill much stouter. Adults are brownish above, with whitish feather fringes that form narrow lines and streaks; the underparts are light greyish, fading to whitish on belly, and contrasting with bright rufous-buff ventral region. Unlikely to be confused with other crakes, given reasonable view, but Spotted shows conspicuous buff undertail when running for cover. Juvenile quite different, being browner above and lacking whitish streaking; has head and breast washed rufous-buff, becoming whiter on belly, and a whitish, not rufous, ventral region. Lack of barring on underparts and unmarked upperparts and stout bill prevent confusion with other

crakes. Very shy and elusive; even harder to flush than other crakes, but, if seen in flight, the very long toes may be apparent.

SEX/AGE Adult female has crown and nape dark grey, not dark brown as in male, and sides of head grey instead of buff. Juvenile described above; presumed to acquire adult plumage during first six or nine months of life.

VOICE Poorly known. Advertising call seems to be a prolonged series of ticking or clucking notes lasting for about a minute.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Italy, N Africa). In natural range, favours wet grassland in rainy season, retreating to permanent marshes and swamps as grasslands dry out.

CORN CRAKE *Crex crex*

Plate page 286

Corncrake

L 27–30 cm, WS 46–53 cm.

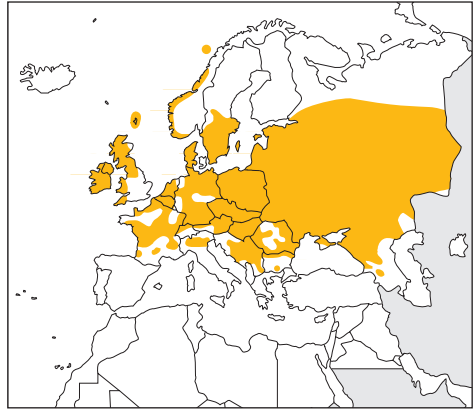
IDENTIFICATION Unusual for a crane in favouring damp grassland rather than wetlands. Far more often heard than seen. Recalls a slender partridge if seen on ground, but plainer, with longer legs and thicker bill. Typical view is of a medium-sized brownish bird flushed from almost underfoot; rufous wings and dan-

gling legs easily distinguish it from all gamebirds. Wings also relatively longer than in gamebirds and wingbeats slower. Calling birds may sometimes walk into open, or head and neck may be visible above vegetation if calling from shorter grass. Confusion with other species unlikely.

SEX/AGE Sexes very similar, but adult female less grey on sides of head and neck. Juvenile buffer above and below than adult, with weaker rufous barring on flanks.

VOICE Advertising call unmistakable and invariably the only clue to the bird's presence. A far-carrying, repeated, dry, rasping 'crex-crex ... crex-crex ... crex-crex ...', often likened to drawing fingernail rapidly along the teeth of a comb.

STATUS/HABITAT Uncommon; has decreased tremendously throughout our region in recent decades with advent of modern farming methods. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Faeroes, Finland and, in past, more widely in west of range in general. Winters south of the Sahara; only exceptionally in west and south of our region.) Open grasslands, meadows and even crops; avoids standing water, but often found in damp meadows. Usually in lowlands, but also locally in lush mountain pastures.



BLACK CRAKE *Amauornis flavirostra*

Plate page 286

African Black Crane

L 20–22 cm, WS 34–38 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Vagrant from sub-Saharan Africa. Unmistakable crane; recalls small, jet-black Common Moorhen with bright greenish-yellow bill and red legs. Beware chick of Purple Swamp-hen, which is similar in size, dusky in colour and has red legs (but lacks yellowish bill and is fluffy). Drab brownish juvenile (with dark bill) unlikely to be confused; is darker and more uniform than juvenile Common Moorhen and gallinules and lacks white undertail coverts. Less

skulking than true crakes, feeding in open at edges of waterside vegetation, or even on floating mats, and running for cover if disturbed.

SEX/AGE Juvenile is described above.

VOICE Advertising call, unlikely to be heard in our region, a duet consisting of a harsh chattering, crowing 'krrrok-krraaa-krrrok-krraaa' answered by a crooning 'krrroo ... krrroo'. Alarm call a sharp 'tyuk'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Madeira). In natural range, freshwater marshes, swamps and lakesides.

COMMON MOORHEN *Gallinula chloropus*

Plate page 286

Moorhen; Common Gallinule (N America)

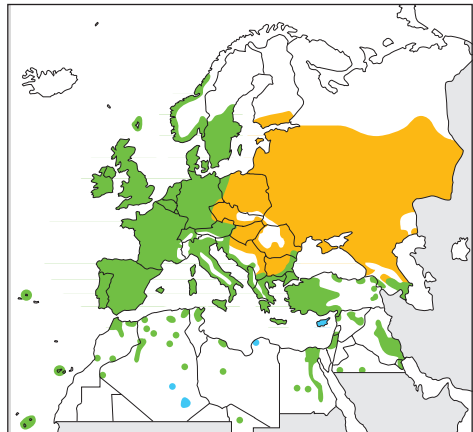
L 32–35 cm, WS 50–55 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Adults are unmistakable slate-black birds with browner upperparts, white on flanks and undertail coverts, green legs, and red bill with yellow tip. Dull brownish juveniles are less striking, with flank stripe less defined or absent, but share adult undertail pattern (compare vagrant juvenile gallinules). A familiar waterside bird, equally at home swimming duck-like with jerky action or walking along banks and shores, the 'flirting' tail action exposing the white sides of the undertail coverts. Runs for cover in typical rail or crane fashion. Often roosts in trees. Although normally rather wary, becomes tame about park lakes.

SEX/AGE Juvenile dull brownish with paler throat and no flank stripe, but has dark-centred white undertail as in adult; bill and legs dusky. Begins to acquire adult features during first autumn, but not fully attained until second autumn.

VOICE Quite vocal, with variety of sharp, explosive calls. Most frequently heard include a low, rolling, clucked 'krrruck' or 'kurruk', a sudden, short 'chuck' and a sharp 'kik' or 'kittick'. In spring (mainly at night, and often in flight) gives a repeated fast, clucking 'krek-krek-krek-krek ...'.

STATUS/HABITAT Common and widespread. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Cyprus, Jordan.)



Almost any form of freshwater wetland with bushy bankside cover or fringing vegetation, from tiny ponds and ditches to slow-flowing rivers, marshes and lakes, including in city parks. In winter, also resorts to estuarine creeks.

ALLEN'S GALLINULE *Porphyryla alleni*

Plate page 287

L 22–24 cm, WS 48–52 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Vagrant from sub-Saharan Africa. In plumage resembles (American) Purple Gallinule, but is considerably smaller. Compared with latter, adult lacks yellow tip to red bill and has red (not yellow) legs, a black centre to white undertail coverts and blacker head. Adult Purple Swamp-hen enormous by comparison and confusion unlikely, but beware growing juveniles of latter: these can be distinguished by massive reddish bill, red frontal shield and clumsy, dowdy greyish appearance (although beware Egyptian birds, which have greenish tinge to upperparts). Brownish juvenile resembles small, slim version of buffish juvenile Common Moorhen, but lacks prominent dark central undertail coverts and has dark-centred feathers to upperparts, giving mottled or scaled appearance, and bluish-green tinge to wing feathers. Mottled or scaly upperparts plus buffer underparts, whitish belly and larger size help to separate it from vagrant juvenile Black Crake. Juvenile (American) Purple Gallinule

is considerably larger, with plain upperparts and conspicuous white undertail coverts (latter pale buff in young Allen's). Secretive inhabitant of freshwater marshes; clambers up reeds and bushes, walks on emergent vegetation and swims readily, but rarely ventures far into open water. Runs for cover with head down and tail up, exposing undertail-covert pattern. In flight, shows remarkably long, dangling legs and toes.

SEX/AGE Juvenile described above. Begins to attain adult features during first autumn, being much as adult by late in first winter, but until first summer may still show buffish feather tips on underparts.

VOICE Calls include a harsh, dry nasal 'kek', a longer, often rapidly repeated 'kerk', a high 'kli-kli-kli' in flight, and a sharp 'click' of alarm.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (N Africa, Europe, Cyprus, Canary Is, Azores). In natural range, freshwater marshes and lakes with extensive emergent and fringing vegetation.

PURPLE GALLINULE *Porphyryla martinica*

Plate page 287

American Purple Gallinule

L 30–36 cm, WS 50–55 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Less bulky than Common Moorhen and with longer neck and legs. Adult a beautiful violet-blue, with greener upperparts, bright yellow legs, striking white undertail coverts and yellow-tipped red bill. Most likely to be confused with vagrant Allen's Gallinule (q.v.). Drab juvenile recalls juvenile Common Moorhen but is more elegant, with whole undertail coverts (not just the sides) and belly white, underparts buffer and wing feathers tinged with bluish-green. Worn juveniles appear almost whitish-fawn below. Rather less skulking than Allen's, often behaving as Common Moorhen,

although more restricted to edges of cover and less inclined to feed in open. Flies readily, with markedly long legs and toes conspicuous.

SEX/AGE Juvenile described above. Begins to attain adult features after arrival in winter quarters and much as adult by following spring, but some show buffish wash to underparts and duller bare parts until first summer.

VOICE Usual call a sharp, high 'kyik'; also a cackling 'kak-kak-kak' when flushed.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe, Azores). In natural range, freshwater marshes, lakesides and pools with extensive emergent or fringing vegetation.

PURPLE SWAMP-HEN *Porphyrio porphyrio*

Plate page 287

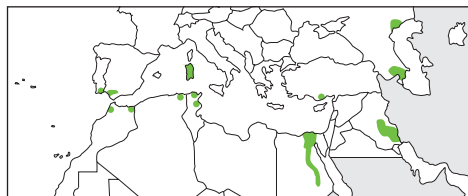
Purple Gallinule

L 45–50 cm, WS 90–100 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Huge but often skulking rail of dense reedbeds in south and east of our region. Purple Swamp-hen is twice size of Common Moorhen and is unmistakable in all plumages; a massive bluish or bluish-grey bird (in structure recalling a giant coot) with striking white undertail coverts (flirted in Common Moorhen-style when anxious), huge, stout red bill and long red legs and toes. Despite distinctive appearance, is remarkably skulking and easily overlooked. Feeds inside cover of dense reedbeds, clamoring about with aid of long toes, sometimes climbing up to peer above tops of reeds. Typical view is of birds feeding in marshy areas at edge of reeds, to which they quickly run if disturbed, or briefly flying over reeds with broad wings and legs dangling. Sometimes feeds well out in open. Usually solitary or in family parties, but forms small flocks in areas where locally numerous (in our region only in Caspian lowlands and Iraq).

SEX/AGE Juvenile smaller than adults and drabber, more greyish-blue overall and with whitish feathering on belly and dusky-red bill; attains adult size by first autumn, but plumage still slightly duller (and usually mottled below) during first summer.

VOICE Quite noisy, with varied vocabulary; most



vocal at night. Advertising call a prolonged series of powerful, nasal, rattles, terminating in a crescendo. Other calls include a low 'chuk' or 'chuk-chuk' and an explosive, nasal blast of alarm, latter sometimes likened to the 'toot' of a tin trumpet.

TAXONOMY The form *madagascariensis* ('Green-backed Swamp-hen') has sometimes been treated as a full species, and the forms *caspicus* and *seistanicus* (along with other extralimital Asian forms) have also sometimes been split off as *P. poliocephalus* ('Grey-headed Swamp-hen').

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 4 isolated races (nominate race, *madagascariensis* and *caspicus* illustrated). Nominate race of S Europe and NW Africa has deep blue head, body and upperparts. Race

madagascariensis of Egypt (and sub-Saharan Africa) differs in having upperparts green and head and neck deeper blue. Populations of the Caspian Sea and S Turkey, *caspius*, have head and neck tinged greyish and body and upperparts blue. Very similar but slightly smaller *seistanicus* occurs in Iraq.

STATUS/HABITAT Very local and generally uncommon. Has declined considerably through hunting and habitat destruction. (Formerly bred Sicily, Italy, further

north in Spain and more widely on Caspian coast. Most of N Caspian population moves to S Caspian in winter. Occasional reports outside normal range in Europe attributed to escapes, as some Asian grey-headed races not infrequent in captivity.) Dense and extensive reedbeds in lowlands, especially river deltas; also locally in and around relatively narrow strips of emergent vegetation along river banks (as in the Nile valley) or around lagoons.

EURASIAN COOT *Fulica atra*

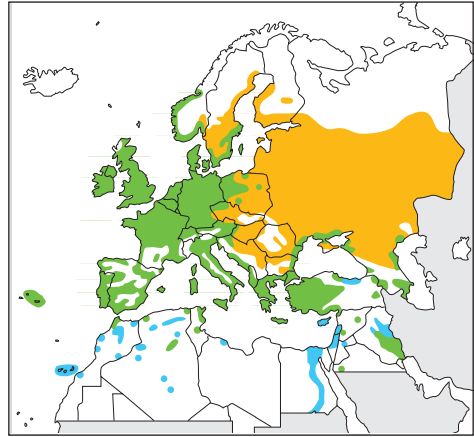
Common Coot, Coot

L 36–38 cm, WS 70–80 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Widespread and rather familiar black, duck-like waterbird. Sooty-black adult with conspicuous white bill and frontal shield unlikely to be confused except with very similar Red-knobbed Coot and vagrant American Coot (q.v.). Juvenile less distinctive: dark grey, with extensive pale grey or whitish on throat, foreneck and belly, and greyish bill. Pattern of palest juveniles recalls that of winter Black-necked Grebe, but bulky shape makes confusion unlikely. Equally at home on land or water. Grazes on waterside grassland, when very plump body, short tail and large feet (with lobe-shaped lateral extensions to toes) readily apparent. When alarmed, runs awkwardly towards water with flapping wings. Spends most of time swimming, diving readily and with ease. Perches on stumps protruding from water. Becomes tame at park lakes, but otherwise wary. Sociable, but somewhat pugnacious. Forms very large duck-like 'rafts' outside breeding season on favoured waters. Flies strongly when well underway, with large feet projecting, but take-off very laboured, with much pattering over surface. In flight, shows narrow whitish trailing edge to secondaries.

SEX/AGE Juvenile, described above, becomes similar to adult by first winter, but bare frontal shield not fully developed, and plumage duller with brownish tone until first spring.

VOICE Has variety of short, explosive calls. Most frequently heard is a sharp 'kowk' or 'kewk' recalling a short blast on a tiny horn. Also gives a very high, explosive 'pssi' or 'pitts' in aggression or when alarmed. When flying around on spring nights gives a



rather hollow, trumpeting 'paay-ow'.

HYBRIDS Rare hybrids between Eurasian Coot and Common Moorhen can recall American Coot (q.v.).

STATUS/HABITAT Widespread and common, often abundant in winter quarters. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Iceland, Cyprus, Syria, Jordan, Israel, Egypt, Canary Is.) Freshwater lakes (including those in town parks), rivers and large ponds with some fringing vegetation, and marshes. Outside breeding season, also locally on estuaries and occasionally in sheltered coastal bays.

AMERICAN COOT *Fulica americana*

L 31–37 cm, WS 60–70 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Closely resembles Eurasian Coot, but slightly smaller, with white sides to undertail coverts and inconspicuous frontal shield (less swollen than in Eurasian, becoming reddish-brown at top), but note that immature Eurasian shows smaller frontal shield than adult. Head shape more angular than that of Eurasian, and bill appears to be dark-tipped, having dusky or reddish-brown subterminal band. Body plumage is greyer, producing slightly stronger contrast with blacker head, neck and forebody; Eurasian shows some contrast, but this is less marked than in American. In Eurasian the black facial feathering projects forwards in a sharp point at the base of the bill, below the frontal shield, (creating a white indentation around the gape), while in American the feathering is rounded off and does not project forwards in a point (so there is only a weak indentation around the gape). In flight, whitish trailing edge to secondaries a little more conspicuous than in Eur-

sian. Juvenile, probably unlikely to turn up in our region, resembles juvenile Eurasian, but shows white sides to undertail coverts. Usually shows a hint of dark subterminal band on bill, but juvenile Eurasian can also show such a feature. Shows same bill feathering difference as adult. Main identification pitfall is very occasional hybrid between Eurasian Coot and Common Moorhen, but hybrids unlikely to show all features of American Coot; one such bird lacked both bill band and white on secondaries. Behaviour as Eurasian. Differences from Red-knobbed Coot mostly as for Eurasian, but shape of feathering on bill base is similar while Red-knobbed shows no white at all on trailing edge of wing and has conspicuous red knobs at top of bill shield for short period early in breeding season.

SEX/AGE Reddish on frontal shield most conspicuous in breeding season. Juvenile described above; much as adult by first autumn, but slight olive cast to dark grey upperparts seen in 1st-winter birds.

Plate page 288

Plate page 288

VOICE Typical call a harsh, croaked 'krok', rather different from typical call of Eurasian Coot.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range found in similar habitats to Eurasian Coot.

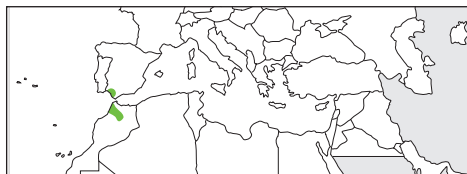
RED-KNOBBED COOT *Fulica cristata*

Plate page 288

Crested Coot

L 38–42 cm, WS 75–85 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Morocco and SW Spain only. Resembles Eurasian Coot in all plumages, and very difficult to separate outside breeding season. Both species may occur on same waters. Adult slightly larger and longer-necked than Eurasian, with slightly blacker and more uniform plumage, lacking any white at tips of secondaries. Easiest method of separation, at any time of year, involves critical observation of the bill. Red-knobbed has bluish tinge to bill, but tinge is pinkish in Eurasian; further, in Eurasian the black facial feathering projects forwards in a sharp point at the base of the bill, below the frontal shield (creating a white indentation around the gape), while in Red-knobbed the feathering is rounded off and does not project forwards in a point (so there is only a weak indentation around the gape). Legs greyish in Red-knobbed, greenish in Eurasian. In breeding season has two swollen red knobs at top of white frontal shield, but for most of the year these knobs are very inconspicuous and remain as tiny brown spots. Nonetheless, they can make top of bill shield look less rounded than in Eurasian. Juvenile much darker than juvenile Eurasian, with whitish only on throat (not foreneck and belly). Behaviour as Eurasian, but keeps a little more inside cover of vegetation



and rarely comes ashore to graze. Easily overlooked when not in breeding condition.

SEX/AGE Juvenile, described above, becomes much as adult by first autumn although plumage still has slight brownish cast and some faint pale edges to underpart feathers.

VOICE Most frequent calls include a disyllabic 'klukuk', deeper than that of Eurasian Coot, and a metallic ringing 'krrook'. Several other calls may be heard, most being deeper than those of Eurasian, including a diagnostic groaning 'euh'.

STATUS/HABITAT Very local and uncommon in Morocco and very rare in S Spain. (Formerly bred Algeria, Tunisia and probably Portugal.) Marshes and freshwater lakes with fringing vegetation.

CRANES Gruidae

4 species (1 vagrant)

Large, long-necked, long-legged birds of open country and marshes. Elongated tertials form bushy rear end, obscuring tail and wingtips. Isolated pairs breed in remote, open habitats. On breeding grounds, cranes have elaborate dancing courtship displays, jumping into the air with raised wings, bowing, erecting the elongated tertials and giving wild, trumpeting cries. Very sociable outside breeding season, gathering in large concentrations. Migrate in lines or V formations, often soaring on thermals. In flight, legs and neck fully extended. Omnivorous, feeding on plant matter (especially rhizomes, roots and tubers), invertebrates and small vertebrates. Nest solitarily on ground in inaccessible places in marshes (or river islands). The rolling trumpeting calls of cranes are wonderfully evocative of the wild.

Sexes similar. No seasonal variation. Juveniles mainly resemble adults, but are duller. Much as adults by second autumn, but may not attain full adult plumage until third winter or later.

Likely to be confused with other large, long-legged birds (or even, at extreme range, with large soaring raptors). Storks also feed in open country and migrate in flocks, flying with legs and neck extended. In strong light Common Crane can appear markedly pale, even almost white at long range, and this can cause confusion with White Stork (but latter shows extensive black in wing when on ground and lacks bushy rear end of Common Crane). Grey Heron could also be confused with Common Crane, but flies with head tucked onto shoulders and with more arched wings and is less sociable, although small gatherings occur at roosts and when breeding. Very high-flying cranes, particularly when soaring, could be confused with large birds of prey if long, extended neck not readily visible.

Adults of all species reasonably distinct from each other given good views, but distant flying birds can be difficult. Juveniles and immatures lack adult head and neck pattern and are more problematic. At any age, points to concentrate on are:

Colour and pattern of head and neck • Wing pattern in flight • Length and thickness of bill • Comparative size

COMMON CRANE *Grus grus*

Plate page 289

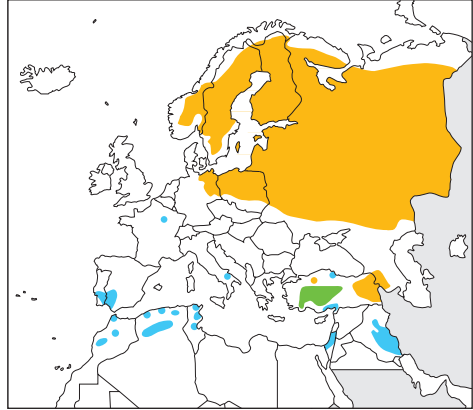
Crane

L 110–120 cm, WS 220–245 cm.

IDENTIFICATION The only widespread crane of our region. Adults have blackish head and neck with white band extending back from eye down side of upper neck; black does not extend as far as breast. At close range, a small red patch on crown may be visible, but it is lacking in many. Juvenile lacks head pattern of adult, having head and neck reddish-brown, and overall tone of body plumage dull brownish-grey. Many birds may be found in intermediate plumage stages. In flight, underwing pattern shows blackish-grey primaries and secondaries contrasting with pale underwing coverts, but on upperwing secondaries appear paler than primaries. Flight action slow and powerful, primaries separating out like 'fingers' on each downbeat; often gives several flaps before a short glide. Walks sedately. Outside breeding season, often in large flocks in open country. In bright light, grey of plumage can appear very pale, even almost whitish at long range, causing potential confusion with White Stork, but Common Crane shows no black on wing when on ground and has bushy 'bustle' at rear end. Confusion most likely with Demoiselle and Sandhill Cranes, especially with juveniles (see those species). With individual vagrant cranes, possibility of escaped Sarus Crane *G. antigone* should be considered. Sarus has naked red head and reddish legs, is considerably larger, and in flight shows dark only on primaries, the secondaries being very pale grey; juvenile Sarus has feathered, brownish-coloured head.

SEX/AGE Juvenile described above.

VOICE Most frequently heard call a far-carrying loud, nasal, trumpeting 'krooh' or harsher 'kraah', often repeated. Adults often duet on breeding grounds, giving a more musical 'krooh-krii ... 'krooh-krii ...'. Juveniles give a thin, high, whistling 'cheerp' that recalls a



small bird.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (nominate race illustrated). Eastern race *lilfordi* of Turkey, Transcaucasia and Urals marginally paler grey overall and tends to lack red on crown, but many of nominate race also lack red.

STATUS/HABITAT Local and generally uncommon. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Britain, Spain, Italy, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Greece.) Breeds in extensive bogs, damp heathland, swampy forest clearings, damp steppe with lakes and treeless, wet uplands. Migrates along narrow flyways, with regular stop-over points, to winter in open country around lakes and marshes, or often far from water on cultivated plains.

SANDHILL CRANE *Grus canadensis*

Plate page 289

L 88–95 cm, WS 175–195 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Smaller than Common, but size difficult to assess on lone birds. Also a little slimmer, with relatively longer and slimmer bill. Adults completely grey apart from bare red crown patch; lack black and whitish pattern on head of Common, and red on crown more extensive and obvious. In flight, shows less contrasting wing pattern than either Common or Demoiselle, with flight feathers only slightly darker grey than rest of wing; has slightly paler central area both above and below, with tips of primaries darkest part of wing. Juvenile lacks red on head and is overall sandy-brown, being more uniform in tone than juvenile Common with browner upperparts (but note that sub-adult Sandhill also

shows mixture of grey and brownish in plumage). Sub-adult Demoiselle is greyer, with shorter bill and more extensive dark in wing (including all flight feathers); older birds show dark on neck and breast.

SEX/AGE Juvenile described above.

VOICE Flight call a rolling 'karr-rooo', more musical than Common; likened to the honking, rolling call of Canada Goose. Juvenile gives a thin, high, rolling whistle.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, habitats much as those of Common, but in breeding season also favours open expanses of wet tundra north of tree-line and, in south of range, rather dry grassland with ponds.

SIBERIAN CRANE *Grus leucogeranus*

Plate page 289

Siberian White Crane

L 120–140 cm, WS 230–260 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Distinctive crane likely to be encountered in our region only in N Caspian during migration periods. Adult an immaculate white crane with red legs, bill and facial skin; the white 'bustle' completely hides black primaries when at rest. In flight, white plumage and striking black primaries are

a unique combination; smaller White Stork has black secondaries as well as primaries. Beware distant Common in bright light appearing very pale, especially distant flying birds. Juvenile has most of plumage rusty, with some white feathering showing on body and wings; bill and legs duller and browner than

adult. More attached to water than other cranes of our region, preferring to feed in shallow lakes and marshes with low vegetation rather than on dry ground. May be met with in family parties.

SEX/AGE Juvenile, described above, gradually attains full adult plumage by third winter or later.

VOICE Less vocal than Common, but flight call a hollow but musical honking 'koonk-koonk'. Juvenile gives a thin, high whistle.

STATUS/HABITAT Very rare and endangered. A few

stop over on migration in Volga delta, mostly in spring, less often in autumn; these birds are *en route* between wintering grounds in S Caspian (and perhaps formerly N India) and breeding grounds in W Siberia by River Ob, a little east of boundary of our region. Unlikely to be encountered elsewhere owing to very small size of Ob population. Breeds in extensive shallow tundra marshes; at other times favours remote shallow freshwater lakes in open country.

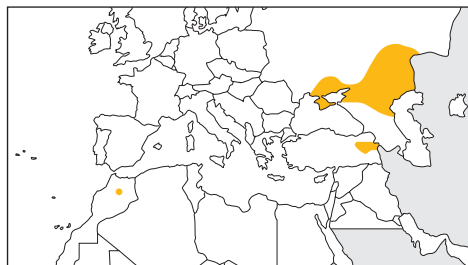
DEMOISELLE CRANE *Anthropoides virgo*

Plate page 289

L 90–100 cm, WS 165–185 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Smaller, shorter-necked and more delicate than Common Crane, with shorter, slimmer bill and less bushy, more elongated, rear end formed by long tertials. Adults show more extensive black on foreparts than Common, with black plumes extending down from foreneck to obscure front of breast; these elongated feathers give a shaggy appearance to breast. From behind the eye a tuft of white feathers curves down towards back of head (white does not extend down sides of neck as in Common). Upperparts a cleaner grey than in Common. Juvenile duller, lacking black and white on head and neck (this starts to develop during first autumn); head and neck lack well-developed brownish tones of juvenile Common (although body may be browner-grey than in adult Demoiselle), and rear end lacks the bushy appearance often indicated in juvenile Common. Shorter and finer bill also helpful; lacks deep base to bill of Common. Despite being smaller than Common, generally appears very large in field, both in flight and on ground. In flight, wing pattern very similar to that of Common, although secondaries and inner primaries tinged greyer (less black). Best distinctions are black extending to cover breast in Demoiselle (only on foreneck in Common) and shorter neck with less extensive white on sides. Has steeper forehead and shorter bill, but these differences only noticeable in very close view. See also Sandhill Crane.

SEX/AGE Juvenile described above. 1st-winter birds start to attain blackish neck and breast so that by first spring they resemble dull version of adult. Young birds



are as adult by second winter.

VOICE Flight call similar to that of Common, but higher-pitched and 'drier' (a difference apparent only to those particularly familiar with Common). Juvenile gives a thin, high, rolling whistle.

STATUS/HABITAT Very local and declining; now almost extinct in Morocco and uncommon in east of our region. (Formerly bred Algeria, Romania and further north in Ukraine and S Russia. Breeding birds of our region winter south of the Sahara from Sudan westwards, but migration routes largely unknown. Migrants regularly noted in early autumn in Cyprus, but very rarely recorded elsewhere. Records from W Europe most likely refer to escapes.) Breeds among grassy steppes, often near water, and frequently found feeding in nearby cultivation. In winter quarters, favours open country around lakes and marshes, including cultivation and stubbles.

BUSTARDS Otididae

6 species (1 vagrant)

Medium-large to very large ground birds of open country. Longer-legged than true gamebirds. All bustards are very localized in our region, having suffered from persecution and habitat destruction. They are wary birds, and are usually located either in flight or by scanning suitable habitats; a typical view is of a head and neck peering above crops or grass. Most species form small flocks outside breeding season. Bustards have quite elaborate displays, often involving remarkable contortions of their plumage and making use of inflatable neck sacs. They nest on the ground. In flight, the long neck is outstretched and the rather long, broad wings and strong, rapid steady flight create a distinctly goose-like impression (at least for the larger species). Have distinctive wing patterns, often including extensive areas of white in upperwing.

Sexes mostly similar in plumage, but males are usually markedly larger. (Little Bustard is unusual in showing marked plumage differences but little size difference between the sexes.) Little or no seasonal variation (except in male Little). Juveniles closely resemble adult females. Males attain full adult size and plumage within two 2–6 years.

Bustards are unlikely to be confused with other birds, and identification within the family is generally straightforward.

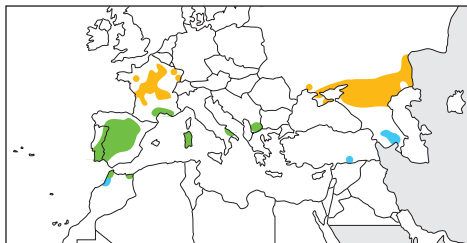
LITTLE BUSTARD *Tetrax tetrax*

Plate page 290

L 40–45 cm (male only slightly larger than female),
WS 105–115 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Much the smallest bustard of our region. Adult male summer has distinctive black neck with white stripes, often the only visible part of the bird as it peers above the vegetation. Other plumages appear vermiculated buff-brown overall when on ground, the mottled buffish-brown head and neck, lacking grey or dark pattern, being a useful distinguishing feature from other bustards. Winter flocks look vaguely grouse- or francolin-like. In flight, rises with outstretched neck, flying in gamebird fashion with rapid, shallow beats of slightly curved wings. Wings of male producing high-pitched whistling sound. The upperwing shows more white than other bustards (except much larger and more ponderous Great), with black restricted to very tips of flight feathers and crescent at base of primaries. Houbara has extensive blackish in secondaries and slower flight action. Overlaps in range and habitat with Great Bustard. Compare also Stone-curlew. In display, male inflates neck feathers (making dramatic black and white patterning even more conspicuous) and throws back head to call; often jumps up above vegetation, exposing extensive white in wing. Typically solitary in breeding season, but forms quite large parties at other times.

SEX/AGE Adult male winter resembles adult female, but is larger, with whiter secondaries, finer vermiculations on upperparts and clean white flanks. Juvenile resembles adult female, but crown blacker, flanks more finely barred and white on upperwing washed



with buff. 1st-summer male resembles adult female, but has whiter flanks. Becomes much as adult male summer by second spring.

VOICE When flushed, sometimes gives a low grunt. Wings of male produce high whistling sound in flight ('sisisisisi ...') recalling uncoiled bicycle wheel. Most vocal in display, when male utters a far-carrying, dry, snorting 'prrit'. See also Identification for wing-whistling sound of male.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common in Iberia, but rare elsewhere; declining over much of range. (Formerly bred Sicily, Germany, Poland, Austria, Hungary, Romania, Moldavia, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, Tunisia, Algeria, and further north in Ukraine and S Russia.) Flat or undulating open country, including grasslands, cereal fields and grassy, stony plains; also occurs in other low crops.

DENHAM'S BUSTARD *Neotis denhami*

Plate page 291

Stanley's Bustard

L 65–90 cm (male much larger than female),
WS 170–250 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Vagrant from sub-Saharan Africa. A large bustard, larger than either Houbara or Nubian (although female Denham's overlap in size with males of these species). The slender bill and relatively long neck are typically carried well forwards of body when walking. Combination of almost unmarked earth-brown upperparts, rufous hindneck and grey foreneck diagnostic. Although basic coloration recalls Nubian, latter lacks rufous on hindneck (neck is all grey) and has black, not whitish, throat and a shorter bill. Larger Arabian Bustard has sandy-rufous upperparts, vermiculated greyish neck and shaggy rear crown. In flight, upperwing blackish with large white patch at

base of inner primaries; latter is lacking in Arabian and, unlike in either Houbara or Nubian, white area does not extend across outer primaries. Outer tail feathers are distinctly banded black and white, unlike other bustards. See also Nubian Bustard.

SEX/AGE Adult male brighter and much larger than adult female. Juvenile resembles adult female, but still duller, with dull orange tips to upperpart feathers.

VOICE Generally silent.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Tibesti region of N Chad). In natural range, grasslands and other similar vegetation in open country; attracted to recently burnt ground.

NUBIAN BUSTARD *Neotis nuba*

Plate page 291

L 50–70 cm (male considerably larger than female),
WS 140–180 cm.

IDENTIFICATION N Chad only. Smaller than Denham's Bustard and with distinctly shorter bill and neck (although large males marginally overlap in size with female Denham's). Neck wholly grey, contrasting with tawny-buff sides of chest and black throat; lacks rufous hindneck of Denham's (which has whitish throat). Upperparts rufous, vermiculated with blackish (almost uniform earthy-brown in Denham's). Overall coloration recalls a small Great Bustard, but ranges do not overlap and both head markings and wing pattern differ. In flight, shows extensive white across full width of primary bases



(white only on inner primaries in Denham's) and tail shows white bases to outermost feathers (lacks strong banding of Denham's). Wing pattern not unlike Houbara, which also favours semi-arid habitats, but





BLACK GROUSE
(p. 255)



CAUCASIAN GROUSE
(p. 255)

HAZEL GROUSE
(p. 253)



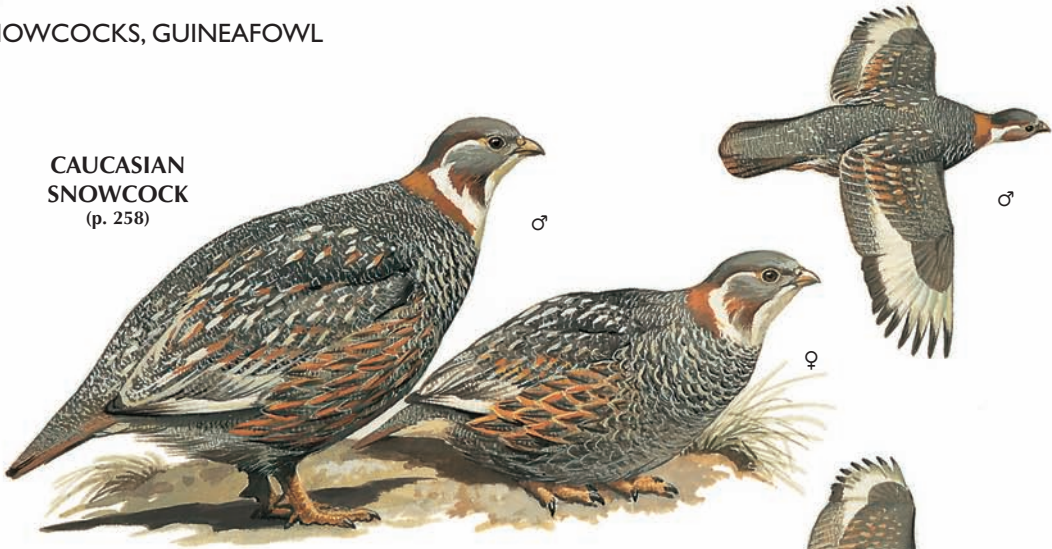
WESTERN CAPERCAILLIE
(p. 256)



Hilary Burn-

SNOWCOCKS, GUINEAFOWL

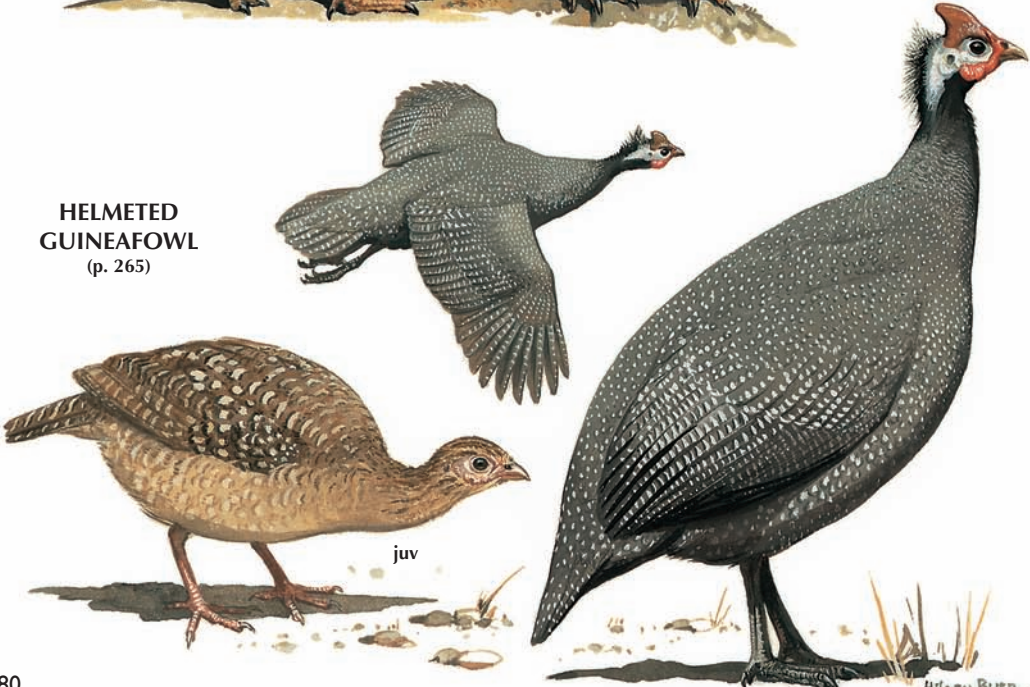
CAUCASIAN
SNOWCOCK
(p. 258)



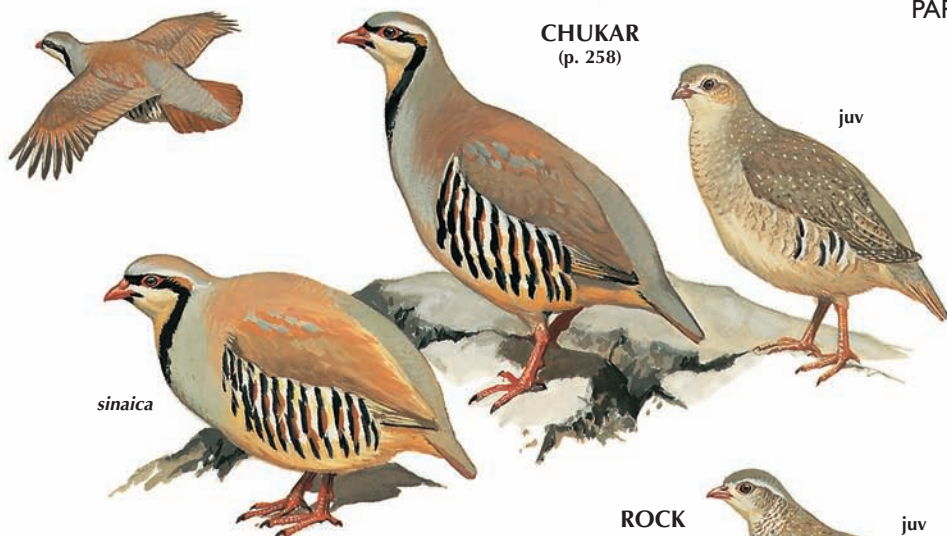
CASPIAN
SNOWCOCK
(p. 258)



HELMETED
GUINEAFOWL
(p. 265)



CHUKAR
(p. 258)



**ROCK
PARTRIDGE**
(p. 259)



RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE
(p. 259)

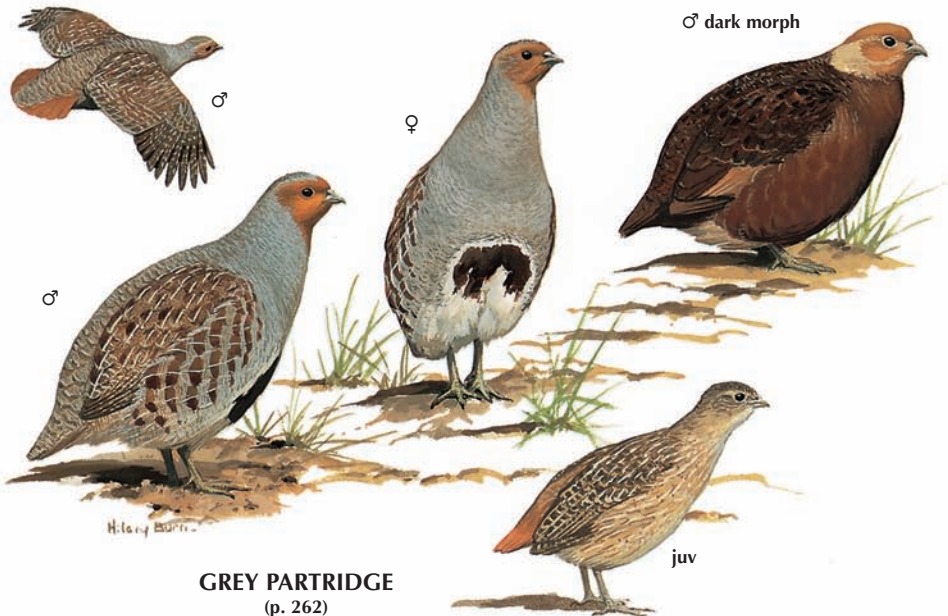
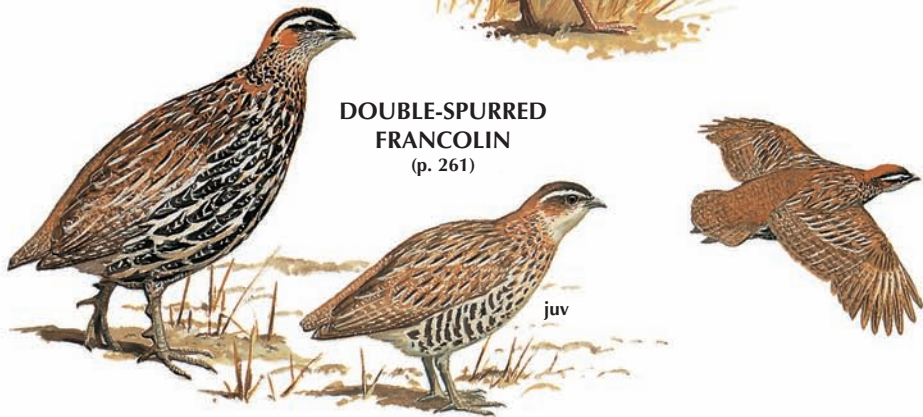


BARBARY PARTRIDGE
(p. 260)

BLACK FRANCOLIN
(p. 261)



DOUBLE-SPURRED
FRANCOLIN
(p. 261)



GREY PARTRIDGE
(p. 262)



♂

SEE-SEE PARTRIDGE
(p. 260)



♂

juv



♀



♂

SAND PARTRIDGE
(p. 261)



♂

juv



♀



♂



♂

**SMALL
BUTTONQUAIL**
(ANDALUSIAN
HEMIPODE)(p. 265)



♀



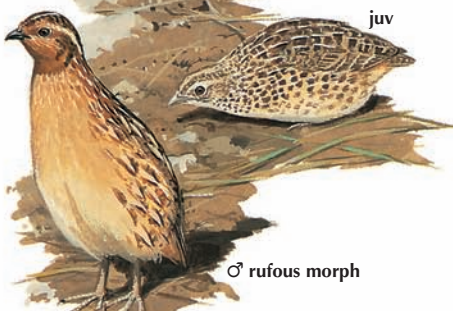
♂



juv



♀



♂ rufous morph

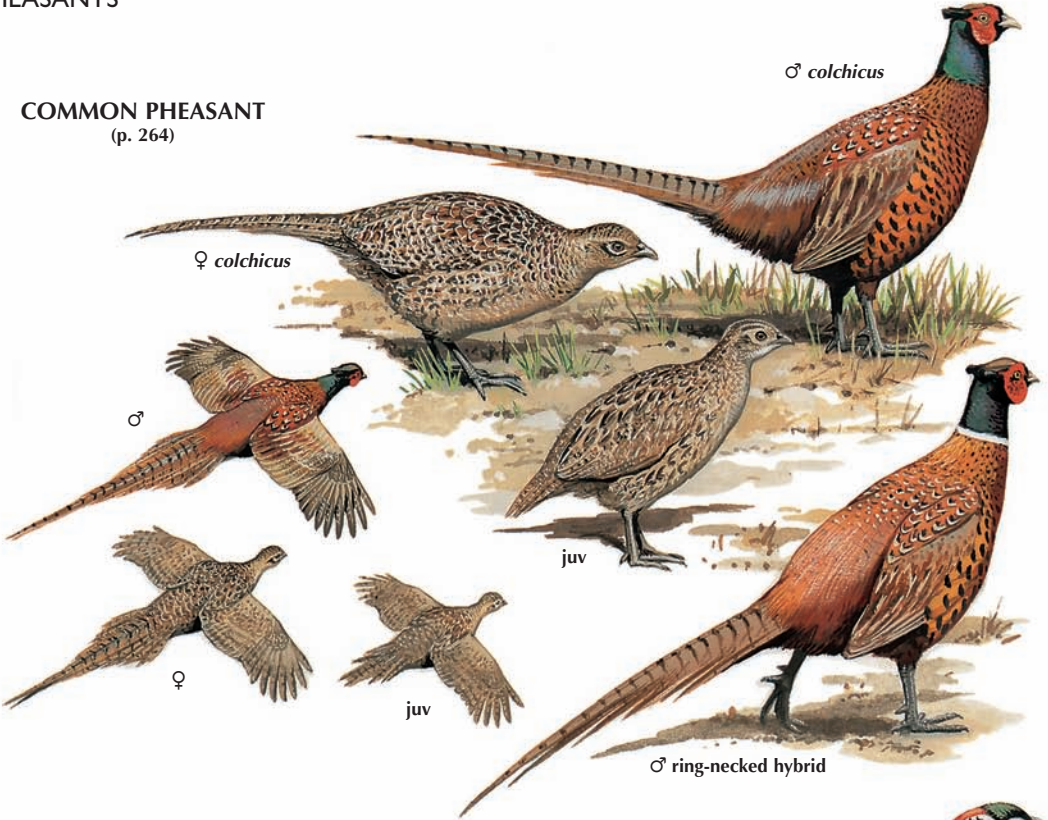
COMMON QUAIL
(p. 262)



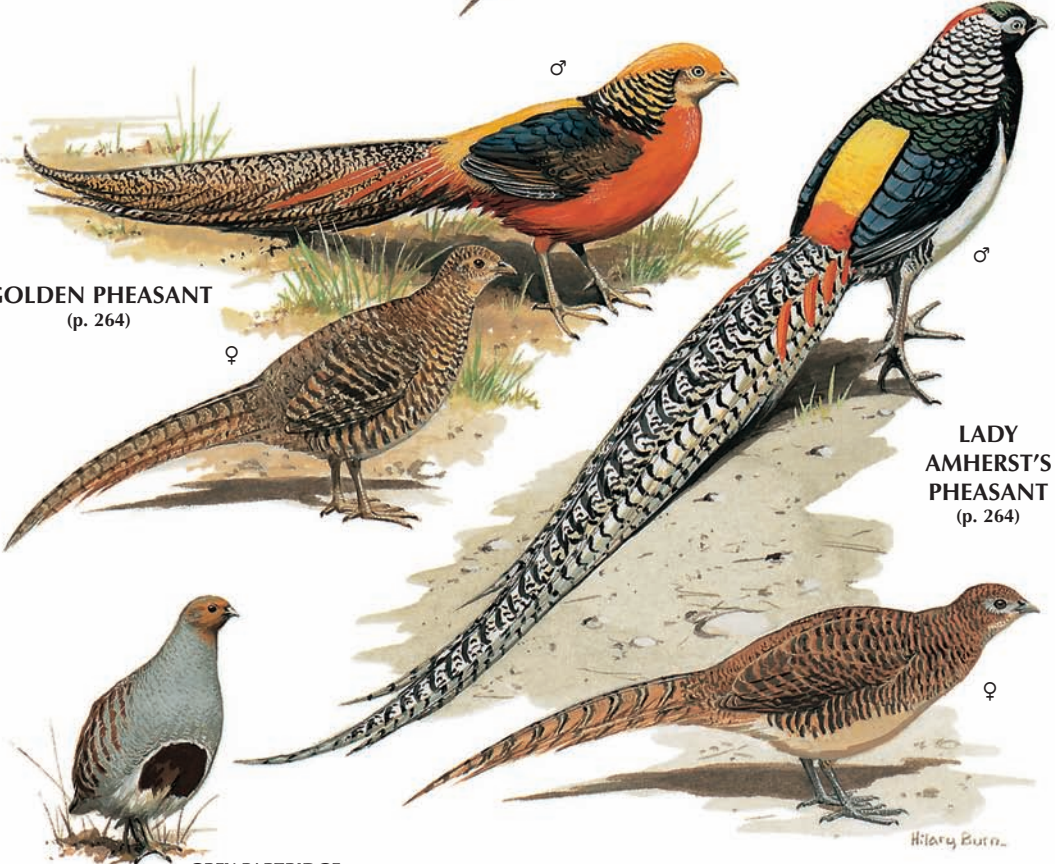
GREY PARTRIDGE
(at same scale)

PHEASANTS

COMMON PHEASANT
(p. 264)



GOLDEN PHEASANT
(p. 264)



LADY
AMHERST'S
PHEASANT
(p. 264)

GREY PARTRIDGE
(at same scale)





**SPOTTED
CRAKE**
(p. 267)



SORA
(p. 268)



**LITTLE
CRAKE**
(p. 268)

STRIPED CRAKE
(p. 269)

**BAILLON'S
CRAKE**
(p. 269)

RAILS

WATER RAIL
(p. 267)



BLACK
CRAKE
(p. 270)



juv



juv



CORN CRAKE
(p. 269)



juv



1st-winter



juv

COMMON MOORHEN
(p. 270)

Hilary Burton

ALLEN'S GALLINULE
(p. 271)

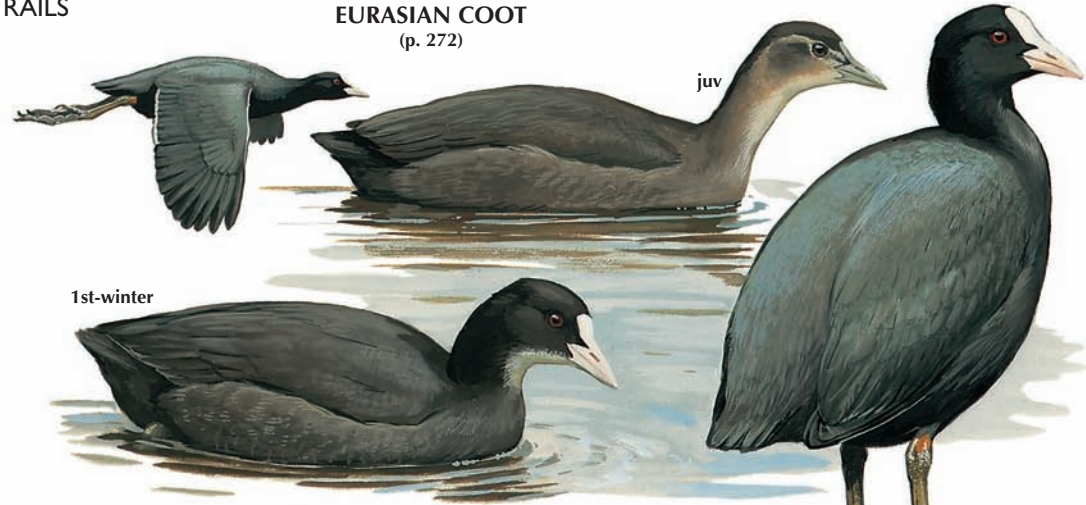
PURPLE GALLINULE
(AMERICAN PURPLE GALLINULE)
(p. 271)

RAILS



RAILS

EURASIAN COOT
(p. 272)

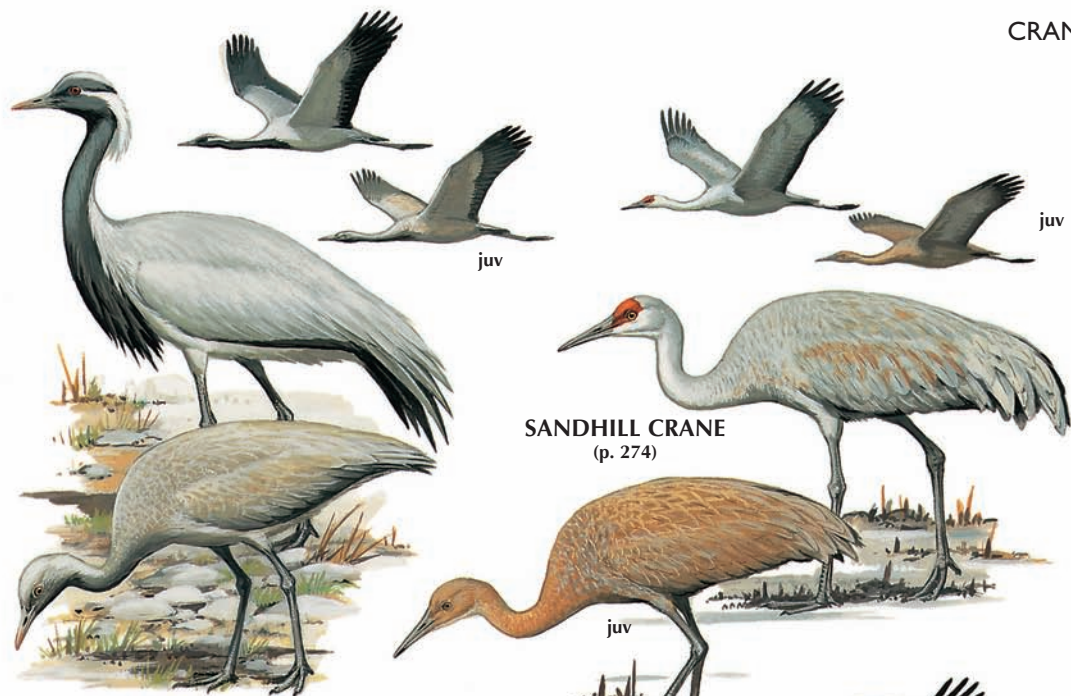


AMERICAN COOT
(p. 272)



RED-KNOBBED COOT
(CRESTED COOT)
(p. 273)

Hilary Burri



SANDHILL CRANE
(p. 274)

DEMOISELLE CRANE
(p. 275)

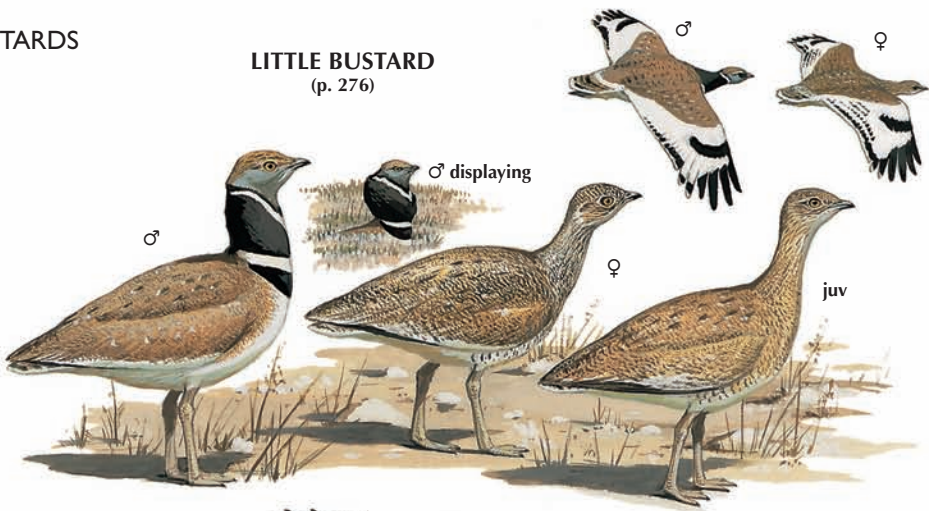


COMMON CRANE
(p. 274)

SIBERIAN CRANE
(p. 274)

BUSTARDS

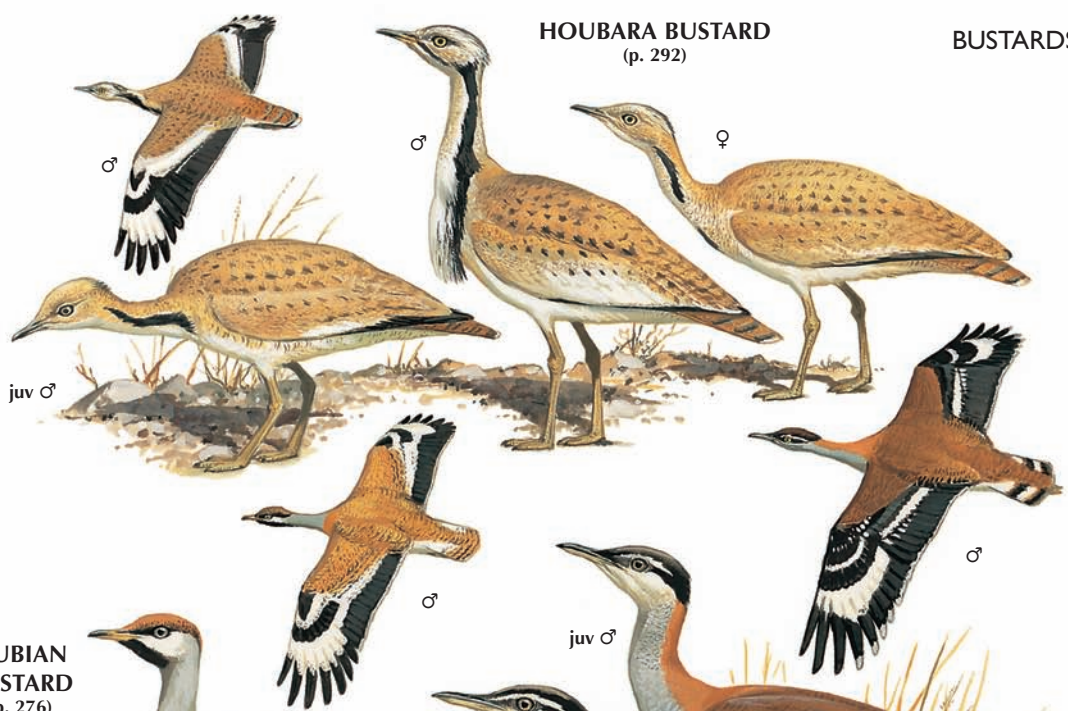
LITTLE BUSTARD
(p. 276)



GREAT BUSTARD
(p. 293)

Hilary Burn.

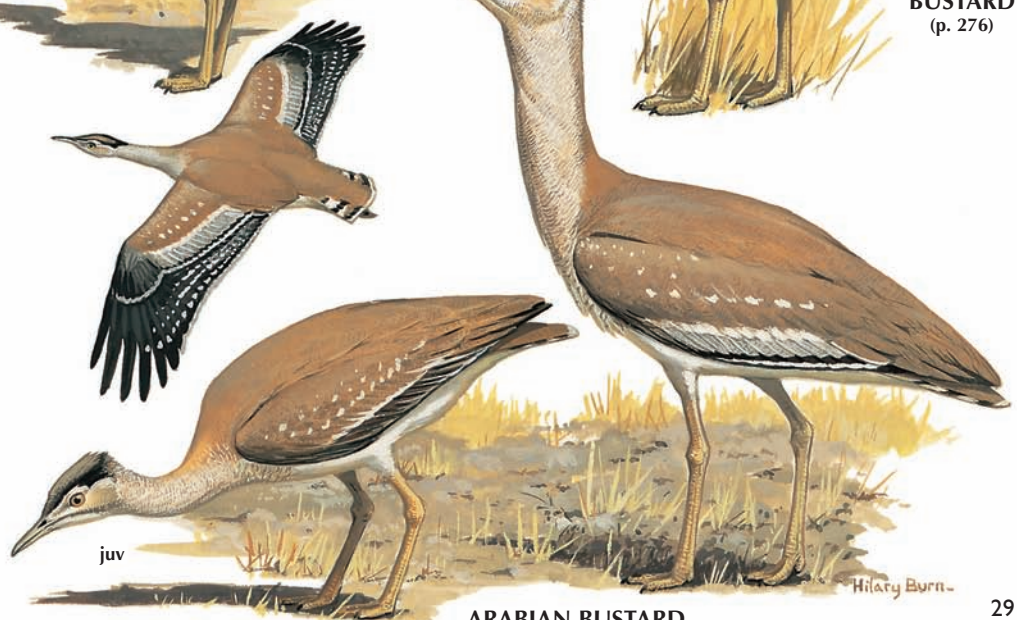
HOUBARA BUSTARD
(p. 292)



NUBIAN
BUSTARD
(p. 276)



DENHAM'S
BUSTARD
(p. 276)



ARABIAN BUSTARD
(p. 292)

Hilary Burn-

ranges not known to overlap and body plumages quite different.

SEX/AGE Adult males larger and with more extensive throat patch than adult females. Juvenile duller than adult female, with black on throat reduced to central stripe.

VOICE Poorly documented. Calls said to include a

low 'wurk' when approached.

STATUS/HABITAT Perhaps resident in Tibesti region of N Chad, but breeding not proven. (Also recorded just outside our region, from mainland opposite Banc d'Arguin of Mauritania). Favours dry savanna and almost arid open country at edges of desert, with scattered acacias and thorny bushes.

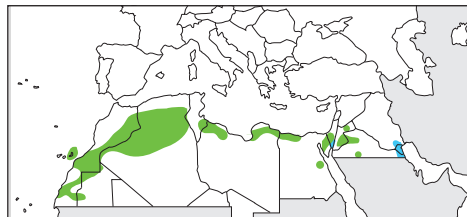
HOUBARA BUSTARD *Chlamydotis undulata*

Houbara; Macqueen's Bustard (*C. u. macqueenii*)

L 55–65 cm (male a little larger than female),
WS 135–170 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Medium-sized bustard of better-vegetated semi-desert and desert country. A relatively pale, slim, long-bodied bustard with distinctive blackish frill down sides of whitish neck and loosely tufted breast feathers. Upperparts sandy, with dark markings, and tail relatively long with prominent broad greyish bands (typically hidden by elongated tertials when standing). In flight, shows long, broad wings with mostly dark upperside to flight feathers, contrasting with large white patch on base of outer primaries and narrower white band across base of secondaries and adjacent wing coverts; underwing mostly white. Flight action slow and steady, but quicker than the largest bustards. Confusion with other bustards unlikely, although wing pattern of Nubian similar. During spectacular display, head retracted onto shoulders and long, loose feathers of breast and neck erected, giving impression of large white animated 'powder puff' as bird trots in circles or zigzags across its display ground. In breeding season relatively solitary, but gathers into flocks at other times; large groups now exceptional, as many populations depleted through human persecution. Shy and wary, having habit of trotting between, and hiding behind, desert bushes when approached.

SEX/AGE Adult males substantially larger than adult females, with longer and more obviously loose crown, neck and breast feathers, showing more extensive blackish frill at sides of neck and breast. Juvenile has even shorter feathers on head and neck than adult female, an even narrower blackish neck stripe and weaker, browner tail bands. 1st-winter and 1st-summer males resemble adult females, although with indication of loose crest at rear crown; become much



as adult male by second winter.

VOICE Relatively silent. Calls all seem to be weak and insignificant.

TAXONOMY Eastern form *macqueenii* (**Macqueen's Bustard**) may merit specific status.

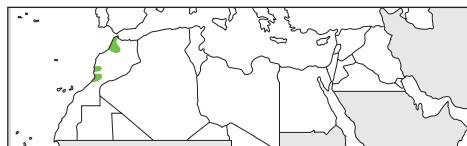
GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Rather slight. 3 races (*macqueenii* illustrated). Race *fuertaventurae* of Canary Is is a little smaller, richer in colour and more strongly dark-marked on upperparts than nominate race. Birds from Sinai eastwards, *macqueenii*, are paler, more sandy, above than nominate race with dark spots, rather than bars, on upperparts, a black tip to the white crest, less extensive black neck frill and three, rather than four, broad tail bands.

STATUS/HABITAT Now decidedly local and rare almost everywhere as result of persecution. (Formerly bred Kuwait, Armenia; may still breed Syria, Iraq. Wintering birds in far southeast of our region originate from migratory C Asian population.) Favours dry steppe, open semi-desert and silty desert fringes, with scattered shrubs. Outside breeding season, sometimes in dry cultivation or on fallow fields.

ARABIAN BUSTARD *Ardeotis arabs*

L 70–90 cm (male considerably larger than female),
WS 205–250 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Morocco only, where possibly extinct. Very large, sturdy bustard with slender bill, thick neck and flat, slightly tufted, crown. Finely vermiculated greyish head and neck contrast with blackish crown; upperparts tawny-tinger, indistinctly vermiculated, with whitish spotting visible on wing coverts. Great Bustard lacks blackish crown, has shorter bill, rufous sides of chest, stronger barring on upperparts and quite different wing pattern. Compare also Denham's Bustard. In flight, huge size apparent; has slow, ponderous wingbeats. Flight feathers blackish with white barring on bases of inner primaries and secondaries, and white tips to greater coverts; white forms less clear patch than in Houbara, which also has large and striking white patch on basal two-thirds of outer primaries. Underwing coverts grey (white in other bustards). In display, males puff out neck feathers, keep head erect, droop wings and cock spread tail. Shy and



wary; uses bushes for concealment when approached, but takes to wing readily. Typically solitary or in pairs.

SEX/AGE Adult males larger and rather brighter above than females. Juvenile has less contrasting pattern on wing coverts than adult, and lacks grey bloom to flight feathers.

VOICE In display, male utters a liquid, hollow 'puk-puk' every 30 seconds or so.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Endemic Moroccan race *lynesei* slightly smaller and darker than tropical

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Plate page 291

African races. Race *stieberi* possibly occurs in our region in extreme N Mali.

STATUS/HABITAT Perhaps now extinct in our region: range occupied in fairly recent past in Morocco is mapped. (Formerly reasonably widespread in Morocco, from the Rharb and Forest of Mamora south

to Sous valley and Tiznit, but no recent records from these areas. Recent unconfirmed records from SE Morocco. May possibly be found in future in extreme N Mali, just within boundary of our region.) Dry grassland with shrubs and small trees; also found in cultivation (cereal fields etc.).

GREAT BUSTARD *Otis tarda*

L 75–105 cm (male much larger than female),
WS 190–260 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Largest bustard of our region (and its heaviest flying bird, weighing up to 18 kg). Plain grey head and neck contrast with sandy-rufous, finely barred upperparts. Summer males have tuft of 'whiskers' at base of bill and are much larger than females (up to twice as big). In display, male brings head back onto mantle, cocks tail over back, inflates neck and chest and erects white wing feathers, producing a grotesque, largely white appearance as it periodically shivers and shakes; displays of several males may occur at 'lekking sites'. Shy and wary. Usually encountered singly or in small groups in open country. Walks sedately, with slow, steady strides and neck upright, often with tail partially cocked. Groups sometimes blend in with grazing sheep. Flocks or individuals often use tall grass or crops for concealment: look for heads peering above top of vegetation. In flight, shows extensive white in wing; its huge size, slow, deliberate wing action and outstretched neck render it unlikely to be confused within its range (although gives vaguely goose-like impression). Compare Arabian Bustard.

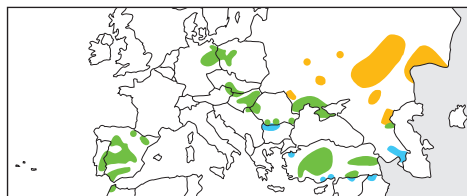
SEX/AGE Adult male considerably larger, deeper-chested and stouter-necked than adult female; summer male also has chest rufous and supports tuft of whiskers, but outside breeding season plumage closer to adult female. Adult female smaller, with slimmer neck and bill than male; has less white in wing (often hidden when at rest), and upperparts more buff, less rufous, in tone. Juvenile resembles adult female, but grey of head, neck and breast washed buff (especially

head and breast); dark upperpart barring closer and browner than in adults. Males can take up to six years to attain full size and plumage, making precise ageing and sexing difficult in field, but usually attain short moustachial tuft by first summer.

VOICE Not strongly vocal. A low gruff bark may be uttered during disputes between males, and a hollow drone often produced from gular pouch during display.

STATUS/HABITAT Very local and declining. Uncommon or rare over most of range as result of persecution and agricultural development. (Formerly bred Britain, France, Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland, Greece, Syria, Iraq, and further north in Russia.) Favours open, rolling grasslands and grassy steppes, avoiding very stony or very arid country; often found among extensive cultivation if disturbance minimal and trees few or absent. Occasionally enters very open olive groves or cork oak woodland with grassy understorey in Iberia.

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WADERS

90 species (33 vagrant)

Waders are a diverse group of 8 families (in our region) of fairly small to fairly large, primarily waterside birds characterized in most cases by fairly long to very long legs, fairly long to very long bills, rather short tails, rather long and pointed wings, rather upright stance and neat, often elegant appearance. (Note, however, that pratincoles have rather short legs, decidedly short bills and quite long tails, while Greater Painted-snipe, Northern Lapwing and some related plovers, and Eurasian Woodcock all have distinctly rounded wings.) Plumage often rather dull and cryptic (although often more colourful in breeding season), but, in flight, often reveal quite striking wing patterns. Flight typically fast and dashing (although more buoyant in rounded-winged species such as Northern Lapwing, Eurasian Woodcock etc.). While most species are characteristic of marshes, mudflats, beaches etc., others are found in dry, open terrain and, outside the breeding season, both our breeding phalaropes live a pelagic existence far from land, resting only on sea and habitually swimming. Some Scolopacidae (sandpipers and allies), Black-winged Stilts and especially Pied Avocets will swim on occasion. Typically conspicuous but fairly wary, although some species (especially when nesting at high latitudes) allow close approach. Alarm and contact calls typically loud and distinctive. Many species highly gregarious outside breeding season, sometimes occurring in flocks of many thousands. Most nest on the ground (a few in trees, sometimes in old nests of other birds), and most have vocal aerial displays during breeding season.

Sexes generally alike. Seasonal variation ranges from minimal to marked. Juveniles range from distinct to closely resembling adults. Adult body plumage (with the exception of some inner wing coverts) attained within a few months of fledging, but may take up to a year to acquire all adult flight feathers.

Small herons and bitterns share the long-legged, long-billed appearance of many waders, but are much stouter-billed, with virtually no tail and with rounded wings, lacking the graceful build and agility of most waders. Rails and crakes are more similar in build but look much dumpier, with (except in Water Rail) shorter, stouter bills and longer toes. Compared with most waders, they exhibit much more furtive behaviour, tend to cock tails while walking and fly only reluctantly (flight whirring on rounded wings, quite unlike swift, agile flight of typical waders).

Because of their distinctive jizz coupled with the basic similarity of many wader species, separating one wader from another is much more of a problem than misidentifying other types of birds as waders. Because of the relatively large number of different wader species, correct identification is made much simpler if one takes the trouble to learn the character differences that separate the two major families and, in the case of the Scolopacidae (sandpipers and allies), the major subsections within the family.

The waders of our region belong to no fewer than eight separate families, but the great majority are members of the Charadriidae (plovers) or the Scolopacidae (sandpipers and allies). Plovers are typically more compactly built than Scolopacids, with broader heads, shorter, thicker necks, shorter (or much shorter) and somewhat stouter bills, larger eyes, even more upright stance and a distinctive forward-dipping feeding action: plovers run forwards briskly with horizontal posture, pause, run forwards again, then tilt body so that head dips to ground and tail sticks up in air when picking up food.

Atypical sandpipers

Eurasian Woodcock, Upland Sandpiper, phalaropes

Most members of the minor families fall obviously into the 'plover-type' or 'sandpiper-type' categories as follows:

Plover-type minor families

Dromadidae (Crab-plover), Burhinidae (Stone-curlew and Senegal Thick-knee), Glareolidae (Egyptian Plover, Cream-coloured Courser, pratincoles)

Sandpiper-type minor families

Rostratulidae (Greater Painted-snipe), Haematopodidae (oystercatchers), Recurvirostridae (Black-winged Stilt, Pied Avocet)

Although pratincoles have been placed here in the plover-type category, their short legs and bills and aerial feeding habits are unique among the waders and they are probably best thought of as falling into a third category.

Details of how to separate any obvious subsections within a family are given in the relevant family introductions.

Identification of waders is often difficult. Points on which to concentrate are:

Overall size and shape • Bill length and shape • Upperwing pattern (in flight) • Leg colour • Calls

Juveniles of many species can easily be separated from adults by obvious pale fringes or spotting on wing coverts and mantle (fine, pale-buff fringes with narrow dark subterminal band in *Charadrius*, whitish-buff

or chestnut fringes in *Calidris* and buff or whitish spots in *Tringa*). In addition, many Scolopacidae can be separated from adults by presence of small, neat scapulars above clearly visible coverts (in adults, larger, looser scapulars tend to droop down and obscure most of inner, median and greater coverts).

PAINTED-SNIPES Rostratulidae

1 species

Medium-sized waders of marshlands that superficially resembles true snipes, but with brighter coloration, larger eyes, shorter bills with distinctly drooping tip and rounded, woodcock-like wings. Female leaves incubation and care of young to male. Nest on ground in thick vegetation. Secretive; most active at dawn and dusk.

Sexes differ (females are larger and brighter). No seasonal variation. Juveniles resemble adult male or differ somewhat. Adult plumage attained after several months.

Likely to be confused only with true snipes (see species account).

GREATER PAINTED-SNIPE *Rostratula benghalensis*

Plate page 351

Painted Snipe

L 23–26 cm, WS 50–55 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Medium-sized wader that superficially resembles true snipes, but Greater Painted-snipe is squatter, with much shorter tail and shorter bill with distinctly drooping tip, all-white belly and vent and longer legs. Most striking features are conspicuous, broad whitish spectacle tapering into streak behind large eye and whitish stripes across back. Runs with curious crouching gait, head held low. In flight, wings much broader and more rounded than in snipes and wingbeats much slower, recalling Eurasian Woodcock, with large buff spots showing on flight feathers. Generally flies low over ground or water, often with legs dangling, recalling large rail. Generally rather solitary, found alone or in pairs, but occasionally in small flocks.

SEX/AGE Adult male much duller than adult female. Juvenile separable with difficulty: compared with adult male, has wing coverts greyer, with smaller, paler buff spots, and lacks clearly demarcated dark



breast band.

VOICE On breeding grounds, female gives long series of 'kook' calls rather like the sound created by blowing into a bottle (and single 'kook' calls in Eurasian Woodcock-like 'roding' display flight low over ground). Other calls include a short, sharp 'kek' when flushed, and hisses and growls.

STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon in very restricted range. Marshes, especially edges and other areas where vegetation not too tall, and abandoned, flooded fields with emergent aquatic vegetation; can also be found on adjacent open mud or low grassland at dawn and dusk.

OYSTERCATCHERS Haematopodidae

2 species (1 probably extinct)

Large, bulky waders with pied or all-dark plumage, long, blunt-tipped, stout orange-red bills and relatively short pinkish legs. Stance often upright, frequently with neck drawn in and bill pointed downwards. Gait a steady walk or fairly fast run. Flight swift, powerful and direct, with rather shallow beats of long, pointed wings. Voice loud and piping. Predominantly coastal, although some (such as Eurasian Oystercatcher) also occur inland. Feed predominantly on bivalve molluscs chiselled from rocks or probed out with long bill and, in some cases, also on other invertebrates. Sociable outside breeding season. Nest on quite open, bare ground.

Sexes alike. Slight or no seasonal variation. Juveniles fairly similar to adults. Adult plumage attained within about 15 months.

Distinctive shape (and plumage pattern in case of Eurasian Oystercatcher) renders confusion with other waders unlikely.

EURASIAN OYSTERCATCHER *Haematopus ostralegus*

Plate page 347

Oystercatcher

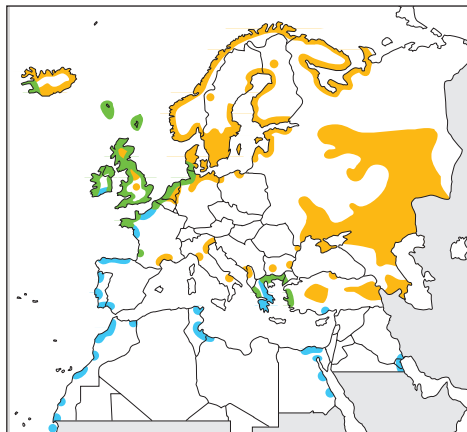
L 40–46 cm, WS 80–86 cm.

IDENTIFICATION One of largest and most distinctive waders. Identified by combination of bold black and white plumage pattern (with white restricted to belly and vent at rest, but conspicuous white wing bar and rump in flight), heavy build, long, straight reddish-orange bill and relatively short reddish-pink legs. Gregarious when not breeding. Flight powerful and direct.

SEX/AGE Sexes similar, but female has longer, thinner bill. Adult winter has variably prominent white half-collar on throat and sides of neck. Juvenile separable: compared with adult summer, has upperparts brownish-black with faint pale fringes, bill dull yellowish-pink with dark brown tip, eye brown, eye-ring indistinct and legs dull greyish; may have whitish half-collar on throat and sides of neck.

VOICE Typical call a high, shrill, piping 'kleep' or disyllabic 'ke-beep', often repeated. Piping trill of breeding birds accelerates into almost Eurasian Curlew-like trill before trailing away: 'ke-beep, ke-beep, ke-beep, kwirrrrrr, ee-beep, ee-beep, ee-beep'. Also a sharp 'pik, pik' and a soft 'weep'.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Rather slight. 2 races (nominate illustrated). Adult of race *longipes* (breeds interior Russia, Ukraine and E Turkey eastwards) is browner on back, scapulars and wing coverts, contrasting with black head and breast. Juvenile has larger white patch across throat.



STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Portugal, Spain.) Found in a wide variety of rocky, sandy or muddy coastal habitats where suitable intertidal feeding available. When breeding, also locally inland along rivers and around lakes with shingle or sand banks, or even in grassland or cultivation some distance from water.

CANARY ISLANDS OYSTERCATCHER *Haematopus meadewaldoi*

Plate page 347

Canarian Black Oystercatcher, Canary Oystercatcher

L 43 cm, WS 83 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Easily separated from otherwise similar Eurasian Oystercatcher by all-black plumage.

SEX/AGE No details about this species are known, but in very similar African Black Oystercatcher (see Taxonomy) adult female has longer bill and juvenile is fairly similar to adult but has plumage browner, with faint pale fringes to upperparts and wing coverts, bill dull orange with dark brown tip, eye brown, eye-ring indistinct and legs dull greyish.

VOICE Very similar to that of Eurasian Oystercatcher, but a little less high-pitched. Typical call a loud, strident 'kleep' or 'kleep-a'. Breeding birds make shrill, piping 'kleepee-kleepee-kleepee-kleepee' calls interspersed with loud trilling. Also a penetrating 'pik', often repeated.

TAXONOMY Sometimes treated as a race of very



similar **African Black Oystercatcher** *H. moquini* of southern Africa, but geographical isolation supports arguments for full species status. Compared with latter, is slightly shorter-winged and at least some show a more distinct white patch on base of inner primaries (especially from below).

STATUS/HABITAT Probably extinct. Formerly Lanzarote, Fuerteventura and satellite islets in E Canary Is, but no definite record since 1913; unconfirmed sightings in recent decades, however. Rocky and sandy shorelines.

STILTS & AVOCETS *Recurvirostridae*

2 species

Fairly large, graceful-looking waders with striking combination of pied plumage and long, slender necks, bills and legs (bills straight and thin in stilts, strongly upcurved in avocets). Bodies fairly slim and heads rather small. Gait a walk, often with long strides. Wings long and pointed in stilts, but broader and more rounded in avocets. Flight rapid and direct, with fairly fast wingbeats. In flight legs extend obviously beyond tail (especially in exceedingly long-legged stilts), but neck only slightly extended. Voices typically

fairly loud and yelping. Found generally in brackish or saline wetlands. Feed by wading in water; stilts feed by picking items from water surface or below, while avocets have distinctive side-to-side stirring action of bill through water or very soft mud. Avocets often swim, up-ending in water to feed. Nest on bare, open ground or in very low vegetation, usually colonially or virtually so. Gregarious outside breeding season.

Sexes similar, or virtually so. No seasonal variation. Juveniles fairly similar to adults. Adult plumage attained within about 15 months.

Highly distinctive appearance makes confusion with other waders very unlikely (but see Crab-plover).

BLACK-WINGED STILT *Himantopus himantopus*

Plate page 348

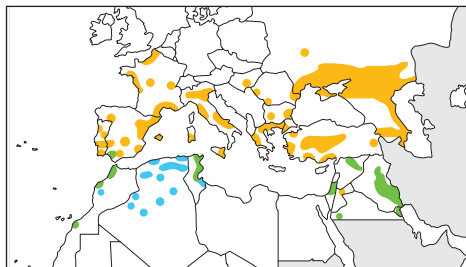
L 35–40 cm (incl. bill 5.6–7 cm), WS 67–83 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Unmistakable: one of the most distinctive waders. Combination of long, fine black bill, improbably long, slender reddish-pink legs (which trail far beyond tail in flight) and all-black wings allows separation from vaguely similar Eurasian Oystercatcher, Pied Avocet or Crab-plover.

SEX/AGE Adult female has brownish cast to mantle, scapulars and tertials (male is blacker with greenish gloss). Amount of blackish on crown and hindneck varies individually and is not a useful character for sexing. Juvenile separable: compared with adult, has black areas, always including crown and hindneck, tinged brownish and narrowly fringed with pale buff (except primaries and secondaries, which are tipped narrowly with white on all but outer primaries) and legs greyish-pink.

VOICE Typical calls a sharp, nasal 'kek' and a yelping 'ke-yak'. When alarmed, a monotonous, high-pitched 'kik-kik-kik-kik ...'.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. Nomadic. (In



addition to mapped range, has bred Britain, Belgium, Netherlands, Switzerland, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Yugoslavia, Cyprus, Egypt, Cape Verde Is. Most winter south of the Sahara.) Shallow lakes, coastal lagoons, salt pans, fishponds, flooded fields and open marshes, fresh or brackish.

PIED AVOCET *Recurvirostra avosetta*

Plate page 348

Avocet

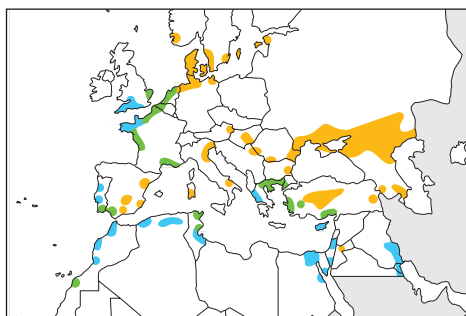
L 42–45 cm (incl. bill 7.5–8.5 cm), WS 77–80 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Another distinctive, beautiful and graceful wader. Its long, fine and strongly upcurved bill, striking pied plumage and long bluish-grey legs (which project well beyond tail in flight) render it unmistakable. Feeds with head held down and with steady side-to-side movement of beak through water or wet mud. Frequently swims, up-ending like dabbling duck when feeding. Gregarious, often occurring in dense flocks. Very distant flying birds can suggest Common Shelduck. See also Crab-plover.

SEX/AGE Sexes similar, but adult female tends to have pale area of feathering at bill base and a suggestion of a whitish eye-ring. Juvenile separable: compared with adult, has black areas tinged brownish and most white areas on upperparts initially heavily mottled with brown and buff.

VOICE Typical calls are a melodious, liquid 'kluit', often repeated, and, when alarmed, a similar but harsher, more emphatic 'kloo-eet' or a shrill 'krree-yu'.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (In addition to



mapped range, has bred Ireland, Czechoslovakia, Albania, Iraq, Israel, Egypt, Algeria.) Highly saline or brackish coastal lagoons, lakes, estuaries, salt pans and flooded areas with little or no emergent vegetation.

CRAB-PLOVER *Dromadidae*

1 species

CRAB-PLOVER *Dromas ardeola*

Plate page 348

Crab Plover

L 38–41 cm (incl. bill 5–6 cm), WS 75–78 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A strikingly patterned large wader. When head sunk on shoulders, large head and massive bill of Crab-plover give vague impression of long-legged gull when seen at a distance. Gull-like impression even stronger when resting on flat tarsi (a characteristic behaviour). Feeds with plover-like run-stop-run-dip action. Nests in burrows in sand. Wingbeats rather slow. Superficially resembles Pied Avocet, but easily distinguished by massive straight black bill, disproportionately large head (either all white or with at most dark streaking on rear crown and nape) and, in flight, by very different wing pattern (with all-dark flight feathers). Beware strongly bleached Grey Plover in winter plumage, which can look vaguely similar to juvenile in particular but lacks massive bill, has much shorter legs (not projecting well beyond tail in flight) and has completely dissimilar wing pattern.

SEX/AGE Juvenile separable: compared with adult



winter, has silver-grey mantle, pale grey wing coverts, tertials, scapulars and tail, and grey-tinged crown and hindneck with more obvious dark streaking. Adult plumage attained within about 15 months.

VOICE Includes a barking, repeated 'ka-how, ka-how ...' and, on breeding grounds, a sharp, whistling 'kew-ki-ki' or 'ki-tewk'.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common in very restricted range. (May no longer breed Iraq, but present all year.) Sand banks, coastal lagoons, estuaries, coral reefs, sandy beaches and also, when breeding, sand dunes.

THICK-KNEES *Burhinidae*

2 species

Fairly large, heavily built waders with highly cryptic plumage. Bodies thickset and heads and eyes large. Fairly short-necked and short-billed. Enlarged tarsal joints give rise to vernacular name 'thick-knee' for members of the family. Gait a plover-like walk or trot, often with short bursts followed by a sudden stop. At rest, often hunched up and at times squat on tarsi like Crab-plover. Wings long and fairly pointed. Wingbeats relatively slow and deliberate, but flight nonetheless rapid and direct (often keeping rather low over ground). Calls loud and plaintive, in some species distinctly curlew-like. Found generally in dry, open country or at edges of wetlands (some species favour beaches). Nest on bare, open ground. Mostly crepuscular or nocturnal, feeding on terrestrial invertebrates (especially beetles, grasshoppers, crickets and worms) but also lizards, amphibians and small rodents. Gregarious outside breeding season.

Sexes similar. No seasonal variation. Juveniles very similar to adults; adult plumage fully attained by first spring.

Distinctive appearance makes confusion with other waders unlikely.

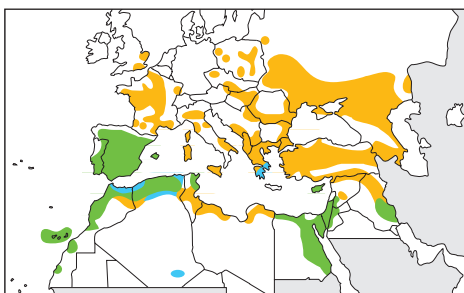
STONE-CURLEW *Burhinus oedicnemus*

Plate page 347

Stone Curlew, Eurasian Thick-knee

L 40–44 cm (incl. bill 4 cm), WS 77–85 cm.

IDENTIFICATION This large, thickset wader is unmistakable except in limited area of overlap with Senegal Thick-knee (q.v.). Has little resemblance to true curlews. Stone-curlew has a large, boldly patterned head, large, staring (almost reptilian) yellow eye, stubby yellow bill with black tip, streaked underparts and breast, long, strong yellowish legs, and bold black, white and pale brown wing pattern in flight. Prominent tarsal joint gives rise to generic term 'thick-knee'. Rather stealthy walk or trot is plover-like, but when running has distinctive posture with head and neck held forwards. Flight action (in steady flight) rather slow for a wader, but powerful; when flushed, often flies away low over ground with more rapid, shallow wingbeats.



EGYPTIAN PLOVER *Pluvianus aegyptius*

Plate page 350

Egyptian Courser, Crocodile Bird

L 19–21 cm, WS 47–51 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A most distinctive rather chunky, short-legged, short-billed wader with broad-based, rather triangular wings that does not closely resemble either coursers or pratincoles (showing some plover-like characters). Easily identified from its unique combination of blue-grey, black and white upperparts and peachy-buff underparts with black pectoral band. Runs rapidly but rather jerkily. The black and white wing pattern visible during the fast, low rather Common Sandpiper-like flight is particularly striking, creating a flickering effect. Keeps wings spread out in cape-like manner when landing.

SEX/AGE Juvenile separable with difficulty: compared

with adult, has rusty-brown tinge to lesser and median wing coverts and black areas of head, while dark breast band is duller and less distinct.

VOICE Typical call is a rapid series of harsh, high-pitched notes: 'cherk-cherk-cherk ...', sometimes run together in a grinding chatter. Also a softer 'wheeup'.

STATUS/HABITAT Probably extinct as a breeding species in our region. Formerly resident along the Nile northwards to Helwan near Cairo, but no records for many years (following the construction of the Aswan dams). Vagrant Israel. River banks (even when partly wooded), riverside settlements, sand banks and river islands.

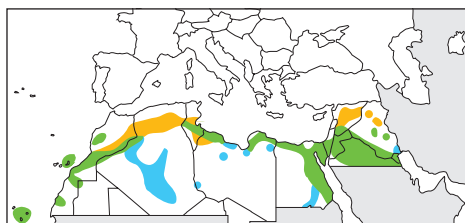
CREAM-COLOURED COURSER *Cursorius cursor*

Plate page 350

L 21–24 cm, WS 51–57 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A distinctive wader with much longer legs than related pratincoles. Superficially resembles plovers, especially larger *Charadrius*, but slimmer, longer-necked and with more upright stance. Distinguished from other waders by combination of overall shape, rather short, slender and obviously downcurved bill, long, pale (whitish) legs, overall warm sandy plumage and, in adult, grey hindcrown bordered by white supercilium and black eye-stripe (meeting on nape in an obvious 'V'). Gait a rapid trot, stopping to dip forwards like a plover when feeding. Tends to run swiftly away from danger rather than take flight. Flight action slow and jerky, rather Northern Lapwing-like, sometimes interspersed with short glides, but nevertheless progress rapid. In flight, black underwing and largely two-toned black and sandy upwerving (with narrow white bar on trailing edge of secondaries) quickly differentiate it from all plovers, while lack of white on rump, rounded tail and projecting feet differentiate it from pratincoles.

SEX/AGE Juvenile separable: compared with adult, has more uniform appearance to head, with creamy supercilium, only a faint dark eye-stripe and no grey on hindcrown; head and breast obscurely spotted brownish, upperparts and central tail feathers with



rather obscure, fine dark barring and primaries fringed with buff.

VOICE Typical call a sharp, piping whistle, often repeated: 'quit, quit ...' (when displaying, series of notes end with a nasal 'whowr'). Also a harsh, frog-like 'praak, praak'.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION 3 races (nominate illustrated). Variation slight and clinal, with darkest, most cinnamon birds in west and palest, most greyish birds in east, but trend obscured by effects of bleaching and wear.

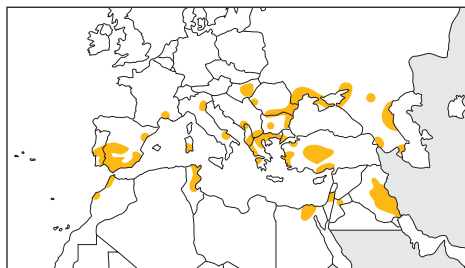
STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. Flat or rolling, stony or sandy desert and semi-desert, or open fields in such areas.

COLLARED PRATINCOLE *Glareola pratincola*

Plate page 349

L 23–26 cm (incl. tail 9–10 cm), WS 60–65 cm.

IDENTIFICATION This and other pratincoles are distinctive waders with the look of an elongated, short-legged plover on the ground but a tern-like appearance in flight. Combination of long wings, deeply forked tail and short legs is unique among waders. Likely to be confused only with very similar Black-winged Pratincole or vagrant Oriental Pratincole (q.v.). At rest, is palest of three above and on breast and (in adult) tail tips project as far as, or a little beyond, wingtips. At very close range, adult shows more red on bill, extending as far as nostrils. Gait and feeding action plover-like. In flight, narrow white trailing edge to secondaries is diagnostic, but beware worn birds where this feature largely lacking and juvenile Black-winged or Oriental. Reddish-chestnut underwing coverts distinguish it in good view from Black-winged, but in harsh light or shadow can look almost black. Flight fast and often direct, but sometimes dashing



and erratic, swooping and soaring high in air in search of insects.

SEX/AGE Adult winter has narrow pale feather fringes to much of plumage, rather indistinct blackish border to pale throat patch and less red on bill and dark on

lores. Juvenile separable: compared with adult winter, has upperparts barred with blackish and pale buff, much less extensive and duller reddish area at bill base, throat band barely visible, breast whiter with clear brown blotches and tail fork shallower.

VOICE Calls mainly at colonies. Typical calls are a harsh, tern-like 'kik' or 'kirrik' and a rolling, trilling 'kikki-kirrik, kikki-kirrik ...'. Calls are higher-pitched

and less emphatic than those of Black-winged.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally fairly common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Sicily, Cyprus, Algeria.) Dry, open margins of fresh or brackish wetlands, including dried-out areas and heavily grazed saline steppe; sometimes ploughed fields. When not breeding, also saltpans, rice fields, dry arable cultivation.

ORIENTAL PRATINCOLE *Glaresola maldivarum*

Plate page 350

L 23–24 cm (incl. tail 7–8.5 cm), WS 59–64 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Vagrant from E Asia. For characteristic features of pratincoles, see Collared. Although shares reddish-chestnut underwing coverts with Collared, is darker on upperparts (so upperwing looks all dark) and adult lacks white trailing edge to secondaries in flight (in these two respects resembling Black-winged). Although juvenile has narrow whitish trailing edge, it is even narrower than that of juvenile Collared. Tail of adult is much shorter and fork much shallower than in other pratincoles; wingtips project well beyond tail tips at rest (but this difference not useful for separating juveniles). In all plumages usually has more extensive orangey-buff suffusion on

lower breast than Collared or Black-winged, and in adult red on base of bill less extensive than on Collared but more than on Black-winged. In harsh light underwing can look all black, making separation from Black-winged difficult.

SEX/AGE Seasonal variation as for Collared. Juvenile separable (differences from adult winter as for Collared).

VOICE Rather similar to that of Collared. Typical calls, mainly at colonies, are a harsh, sharp 'kyik' or 'chik-chik' and a tern-like 'ter-ack'. Also a rising 'trooeet'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, habitat much as that of Collared.

BLACK-WINGED PRATINCOLE *Glaresola nordmanni*

Plate page 349

L 23–26 cm (incl. tail 8–9 cm), WS 60–68 cm.

IDENTIFICATION For characteristic features of pratincoles, see Collared. Slightly heavier in build, and slightly longer-legged and broader-winged than Collared or Oriental. Best distinguishing features from Collared are all-black underwing, lack of white trailing edge to secondaries (except juvenile, which has very narrow whitish trailing edge), darker upperparts (making upperwing appear all dark, with little contrast between coverts and flight feathers) and, in adult, shorter tail (with wingtips projecting somewhat beyond tail tips at rest). Beware Collared looking black on the underwing in dull light, or worn Collared with only a narrow, fairly inconspicuous white trailing edge to secondaries. Adult at close range shows less red at base of bill (does not reach nostrils), lores are blacker and blackish area may extend over bill base and above eye, and white eye-ring noticeable only behind and below eye. See also Oriental Pratincole.

SEX/AGE Seasonal variation as for Collared. Juvenile separable (differs from adult winter as in Collared, but in addition black underwing coverts sometimes narrowly tipped chestnut-buff).

VOICE Similar to that of Collared, but lower-pitched. Calls mostly at colonies. Typical calls include a low, short 'chrr-chrr' and a rapid 'pwik-kik-kik ... pwik ... pwik-kik-kik', lower-pitched and with more distinct



notes than rolling trill of Collared. Also a short, harsh, high 'kett' or 'kettek'.

HYBRIDS Very occasionally (including in France) recorded interbreeding with Collared, offspring showing intermediate characters.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally fairly common on breeding grounds, but most appear to overfly southeast of our region on migration. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Germany, Hungary, Bulgaria, Syria.) Open margins of fresh or brackish wetlands, adjacent steppe, low cultivation; tolerates taller vegetation than Collared at colonies. When not breeding, also damp meadows.

PLOVERS Charadriidae

21 species (5 vagrant)

Small to fairly large waders of open habitats, with upright stance (and neck often extended, with head held high), rather broad heads, rather thick necks, fairly short and somewhat stout bills and quite large eyes. Have a distinctive forward-dipping feeding action: plovers run forwards briskly with horizontal posture, pause to look for prey, run forwards again, then tilt body so that head dips to ground and tail sticks up in air when picking up food. Wings long and pointed in most, but rounded in Northern Lapwing and related large species (subfamily Vanellinae). Flight action rapid and flight itself fast and direct in most, but in Northern Lapwing and related large species flight action slower, with rather deep, jerky beats of rounded wings, and flight slower and decidedly buoyant. Many highly gregarious outside breeding season, while remainder form small flocks. Nest on bare, open ground or in low vegetation.

Sexes mostly similar. Some seasonal variation (often marked). Juveniles separable (sometimes only with some difficulty). Adult plumage attained within about a year (or up to 21 months in a few).

LITTLE RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius dubius*

Plate page 357

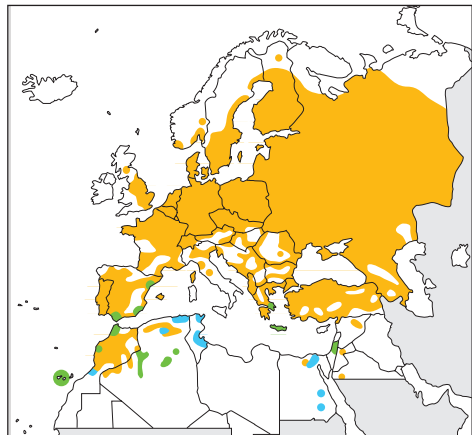
Little Plover

L 14–17 cm, WS 42–48 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A small plover most likely to be confused with very similar Common Ringed. Smaller and slimmer overall than Common Ringed, with slightly longer tail, more attenuated rear end and smaller, more rounded head. Movements often quicker and more jerky than Common Ringed (bobs nervously when alarmed) and flight action faster. Much less gregarious. **Adult** best distinguished from adult Common Ringed by bold yellow eye-ring, all-blackish bill (apart from dull yellowish area at base of lower mandible), duller, generally pinker legs and lack of obvious wing bar in flight. (This is the only small plover without an obvious wing bar.) At close range, narrow white line is visible above black band across forehead in adult summer (lacking in Common Ringed). **Juvenile** less cleanly marked; best separated from juvenile Common Ringed by shape, lack of white patch above and behind eye (but sometimes has pale buffish wedge extending back from forehead), noticeable but dull yellow eye-ring, generally duller yellowish legs and lack of obvious wing bar in flight. When pale wedge above eye lacking, looks more hooded than Common Ringed. Often has extensive yellowish-buff tinge to throat and forehead. Beware adult winter or juvenile with breast band very attenuated or broken in centre, thus vaguely suggesting Kentish Plover.

SEX/AGE Juvenile separable with difficulty: compared with adult winter, has sandier upperparts with rather indistinct buff feather fringes, obscure supercilium, brown breast band or patches, duller eye-ring and yellow legs.

VOICE Typical call a distinctive, far-carrying, whistling 'pee-oo', descending in pitch and with emphasis



on first syllable (unlike equivalent call of Common Ringed). Alarm call a short, rapidly repeated, 'pip-pip-pip ...'. Display-flight call a repeated harsh 'kree-ah ...'.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Cyprus, Iraq, Tunisia, Madeira. Most winter south of the Sahara.) When breeding, the gravelly margins and islands of rivers, freshwater lakes and gravel pits, sewage works and even mine sites and rubbish tips. At other times, also muddy margins of marshes, lakes and estuaries.

COMMON RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius hiaticula*

Plate page 356

Ringed Plover, Great Ringed Plover

L 18–20 cm, WS 48–57 cm.

IDENTIFICATION The 'standard' small plover of our region. Slightly larger, more robustly built, less round-headed and shorter-tailed than Little Ringed. Flight action slower. **Adult** best distinguished from Little Ringed by obviously two-tone bill (black tip and bright orange-yellow on basal two-thirds in summer, blackish with duller, less extensive orange-yellow at base in winter), brighter, orange-yellow legs, and striking white wing bar in flight. Note, however, that some

show almost all-blackish bill in winter. **Juvenile** less cleanly marked; best separated from juvenile Little Ringed by shape, less hooded appearance owing to presence of more obvious whitish supercilium, lack of obvious eye-ring, brighter, more orangey legs, and striking white wing bar in flight. Beware adult winter or juvenile with breast band very attenuated or broken in centre, thus vaguely suggesting Kentish Plover.

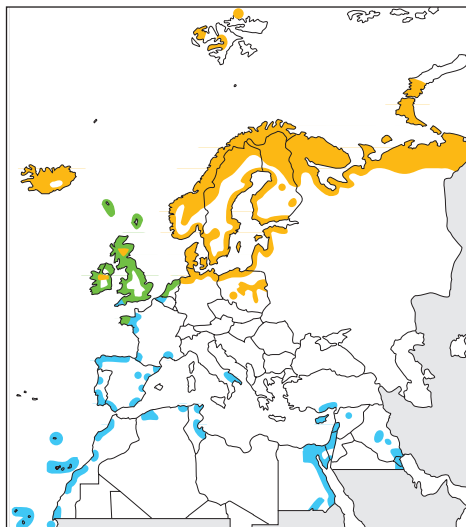
SEX/AGE Adult female summer has ear-coverts and

breast band brownish-black instead of black. Adult winter has black areas of head, neck and breast brown, legs dull orange-yellow (rather than bright orange-yellow) and largely black bill with orange-yellow base (to lower mandible at least). Juvenile very like adult winter but has buff fringes to upperparts, wholly blackish bill and even duller, yellowish-brown legs; most are difficult to age by autumn when fringes wearing away and bill and legs becoming as adult winter.

VOICE Typical call is a distinctive mellow whistling 'too-lee', rising in pitch and with emphasis on second syllable (unlike equivalent call of Little Ringed). Alarm call a softer, lower, longer 'too-weep'. Display-flight call a repeated 'tee-leea, tee-leea ...' or 'leea-leea ...'.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (both illustrated). Race *tundrarum* (breeding Lapland and N Russia) slightly smaller and obviously darker brown above than southernmost breeders of nominate race, but variation clinal.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Bear Is, Spain, Belgium, Czechoslovakia.) When breeding, shingle or sandy coastal beaches, also inland in similar habitat by rivers and lakes and on open tundra with low vegetation, occasionally adjacent meadows, cultivation, industrial sites. At other times, also rocky coastlines, estuarine mudflats, salt pans, marshes.



SEMIPALMATED PLOVER *Charadrius semipalmatus*

Plate page 356

L 17–19 cm, WS 43–52 cm.

IDENTIFICATION This small transatlantic vagrant plover very closely resembles Common Ringed, especially smaller, darker race *tundrarum* of latter, but is slightly smaller and more compact, with somewhat shorter, stouter bill and shorter tail. Wing bar slightly shorter and less prominent, especially at base (Semipalmated lacks white on inner webs of innermost secondaries and on outer webs of outermost primaries, but this difference may not always apply in juveniles). Only other differentiating feature usable in all plumages, given exceptional view, is obvious slight webbing between inner and middle toes (both species have obvious slight webbing between outer and middle toes, however, although that of Semipalmated is more developed). **Adult** usually has white (summer) or whitish (winter) mark above and behind eye smaller and narrower than in Common Ringed or even absent, and more obvious yellow eye-ring. Dark breast band often narrower and rear ear-coverts browner, but much overlap and females of both species usually have narrower breast bands and browner ear-coverts than respective males. White forehead patch in adult male summer does not normally reach eye while it frequently does so in Common Ringed. **Juvenile** tends to look more hooded than juvenile Common Ringed,

as often only small, narrow whitish patch above and behind eye rather than complete supercilium joined to white forehead. Loral pattern often differs: Semipalmated has narrower dark loral stripe and lower edge meets bill about halfway up upper mandible (in Ringed lower edge usually, but not always, meets bill at gape).

SEX/AGE Sexes similar, but adult female summer has cheeks and breast band brownish-black instead of black. Juvenile separable with difficulty, compared with adult winter, has buff fringes to upperparts, largely blackish bill and duller, yellower legs.

VOICE Distinctly different from that of Common Ringed. Typical call a clear, sharp, but rather thin, plaintive 'tu-wee' or 'che-wee' with an increase in pitch and the emphasis on the second syllable, less mellow and fluty than equivalent call of Common Ringed (which has stress on the first syllable). Anxiety call a sharp 'chip' or 'tewit', often rapidly repeated and recalling Spotted Redshank. Display-flight call a repeated 'kerrwee-kerrwee ...'.

HYBRIDS Mixed pairs of Semipalmated and Common Ringed have been reported, so hybrids may occur.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe, Spitsbergen, Azores). In natural range, habitats as Common Ringed.

KILLDEER *Charadrius vociferus*

Plate page 358

Killdeer Plover

L 23–26 cm, WS 59–63 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Medium-sized transatlantic vagrant plover. Obviously larger than Common Ringed, with longer, all-dark bill and very attenuated rear end owing to strikingly longer tail (at rest, tail projects well beyond wingtips). Flight action rather relaxed compared with other small plovers, often low and erratic. In all plumages, easily separated from any other ringed plover of our region by double black or brown-

ish-black breast bands and also, in flight, by bright orange-brown rump and long, wedge-shaped tail with black-and-white border.

SEX/AGE Adult winter has extensive rufous-brown fringes on upperparts, eye-ring is duller and black areas on head and breast are brownish-black. Juvenile separable with difficulty; compared with adult winter, has paler, buff-coloured fringes to upper-

parts.

VOICE Typical call a loud, shrill 'kill-dee' or 'kill-diu', the second syllable often repeated: 'kill-dee-dee-dee-diu'. Alarm call a slurred 'dee, dee, dee, dee-ee, kill-dee-ee, dee-ee'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe, Azores). In natural range, found in grasslands, ploughed fields, bare ground, low crops, airports, gravel pits etc. When not breeding, also marshes, rivers, lakes, coastal beaches and estuarine mudflats.

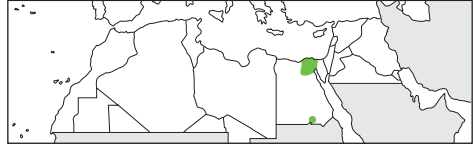
KITTLITZ'S PLOVER *Charadrius pecuarius*

Plate page 358

Kittlitz's Sand Plover

L 12–14 cm, WS 40–44 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A very small, compact plover of Egypt with rather long legs (toes projecting well beyond tail in flight). Gait and flight action rapid. In all plumages, lack of dark breast band or very obvious dark patches at sides of breast separate it from ringed plovers. Confusion most likely with slightly larger Kentish, with which it shares rather short white wing bar and conspicuous white sides to tail in flight (latter suggesting small *Calidris* sandpiper). In all plumages, may be separated by lanky appearance owing to long legs (and longer, finer bill), dark mottling rather than solid, clean-cut, dark patches at sides of breast, dark patch on closed wing formed by blackish lesser coverts (reminiscent of Sanderling but much less striking and often only visible in flight), and more variegated upperparts owing to contrast between dark feather centres and pale fringes. **Adult summer** easily separated from Kentish by white line extending from eye to nape, bordered below by black, and by orangey-buff wash on breast and upper belly (although intensity varies). **Adult winter and Juvenile** have indistinct buffish-white collar (that of Kentish is distinct and



clean white), and long white supercilia that meet pale collar (unlike Kentish).

SEX/AGE Sexes similar, although males tend to have dark areas on face blacker and more intense coloration on breast. Juvenile separable with difficulty, compared with adult winter, has broader buff fringes on upperparts and, in some, dull brown spots across breast.

VOICE Typical calls (especially when alarmed) a plaintive 'pipeep' and a harder 'prit'. In flight, often gives a subdued, ticking trill: 'trit-tritritrit'.

STATUS/HABITAT Localized, but not uncommon. Dry muddy or sandy margins of fresh or brackish pools, lakes, coastal lagoons and salt pans, also adjacent areas with short grass.



THREE-BANDED PLOVER

THREE-BANDED PLOVER *Charadrius tricollaris*

Plate above

L 17–18 cm, WS 45–50 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Distinctive vagrant plover from sub-Saharan Africa. Intermediate between Common Ringed and Kentish in size, with attenuated rear end owing to long tail and rather short wings. Easily identifiable in all plumages through combination of double dark breast band (with white intervening band; hence 'three-banded') and red eye-ring and pinkish-red bill base. Legs are pinkish. Adult also has diagnostic grey face and throat that contrast with prominent white supercilium and dark cap. In flight, shows narrow white wing bar and rather long tail

with white margins.

SEX/AGE Juvenile similar to adult, but has two incomplete dark brown breast bands, browner, less strongly patterned head (without clean grey face and throat), duller reddish eye-ring and buff fringes to upperparts.

VOICE Flight call a high-pitched, whistling 'weee-weet'; when alarmed gives a loud 'wik-wik'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Egypt). In natural range, sandy or stony margins of rivers and lakes, sometimes muddy fringes of wetlands or coastal lagoons, but only rarely on seashore.

KENTISH PLOVER *Charadrius alexandrinus*

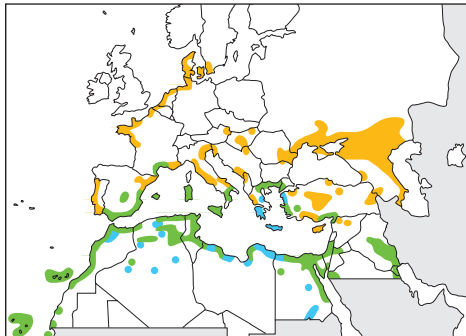
Plate page 357

Snowy Plover (N America)

L 15–17 cm, WS 42–45 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A small, compact, elegant plover with rather long legs and with rapid trotting gait. Flight action rapid. Confusion most likely with ringed plovers. In all plumages, may be separated by lack of dark breast band, having instead small black (adult male summer) or brown patches at sides of breast, and by generally dark grey legs. (Note that some winter or juvenile ringed plovers have broken breast band, but resulting patches at sides of breast are much larger, and more diffuse, than in Kentish. Beware ringed plovers with dark-stained legs and Kentish with apparently pale legs produced by dried out saline residue, or even rare Kentish with brownish or yellowish legs.) Generally looks whiter below than ringed plovers, with longer legs, shorter tail and more graceful gait. When heavily bleached and worn can also look very pale above, almost greyish-white. In flight, Kentish shows obvious white wing bar (unlike Little Ringed), rather short tail (unlike Common Ringed) and much more obvious white sides to tail (latter suggesting small *Calidris* sandpiper). Adult male summer also differs from ringed plovers in rufous hindcrown and white supercilium contiguous with white forehead. See also Kittlitz's and Lesser Sand Plovers.

SEX/AGE Sexes similar (except in summer plumage, when male has more or less cinnamon hind crown and nape and black, rather than dark brown, forecrown, eye-stripe and patch at side of breast). Juvenile separable with difficulty: compared with adult winter,



has rather indistinct buff fringes to upperparts, buffish tinge to forehead and supercilium, and breast patches more diffuse.

VOICE Typical call a soft, clear, often repeated 'pit'. Alarm calls a hard 'prrr' and plaintive 'too-eet' or 'pwweep'. These calls often alternated in flight. Song-flight call a repeated, sharp, rattling 'tjekke-tjekke-tjekke ...'.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Britain, Norway, Azores, Madeira.) Sandy seashores, dunes (occasionally pebble beaches), sandy and silty margins of brackish or saline lagoons and lakes, saltpans.

LESSER SAND PLOVER *Charadrius mongolus*

Plate page 359

Mongolian Plover

L 19–21 cm, WS 45–58 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A small plover wintering in Persian Gulf (breeding in C Asia and E Siberia). Rather similar to ringed plovers in winter or juvenile plumage, but easily separable from these (and from equally similar Kentish or Kittlitz's) by lack of pale collar (but beware collar in these other species becoming invisible when neck retracted, or some Lesser Sand Plovers, especially juveniles, with a suggestion of a paler collar). Appearance is closest to that of Kentish, but Lesser Sand is longer-legged and has a blunter bill and, in flight, less white at sides of tail. In summer plumage, rufous breast band makes separation easy. Confusion most likely with extremely similar Greater Sand (and to a lesser degree with Caspian); for distinctions, see those species.

SEX/AGE Sexes similar (except in summer plumage, when females have black on head replaced by dark brown and cinnamon-buff, a buff tinge to white patches at sides of forehead if present, and rufous areas on head, neck, upper mantle and breast less intense and less extensive). Juvenile separable with difficulty; compared to adult winter has more obvious, buff-coloured (rather than whitish) fringes to upperparts, and, when fresh, warm buffish tinge to breast patches and pale areas on face. Buff tinge to fringes soon bleaches whiter, however. May retain some juve-



nile (i.e. obviously pale-fringed) upperpart feathers during first winter. Most remain in winter plumage during first summer, but some acquire partial summer plumage.

VOICE Can be distinguished from that of Greater with experience. Typical call a short, hard, particularly Ruddy Turnstone-like 'drrit', shorter, harder and clearer, less rolling than equivalent call of Greater. Also (at least in western populations) gives a sharp 'chitik'.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Only race known to occur with certainty in our region is *pamirensis* (breeds Ladakh to Tien Shan), which usually has black forehead in summer plumage (but which can show a small white spot in front of each eye). Race *atrifrons* (breeds S Tibet) never shows white on forehead; may possibly occur in Gulf in winter.

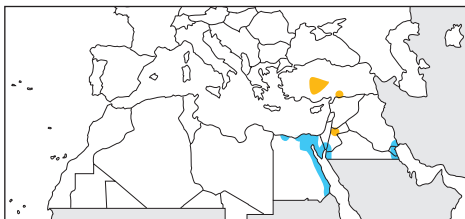
STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. (In addition to mapped range, may be regular winter visitor to Red Sea coast of Egypt.) Wintering habitats as for Greater.

GREATER SAND PLOVER *Charadrius leschenaultii*

Plate page 359

L 22–25 cm, WS 53–60 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A fairly small but heavily built plover of SE of our region, with rather long legs and a large bill. Rather similar to ringed plovers in winter or juvenile plumage, but easily separable from these (and also from equally similar Kentish or Kittlitz's) by lack of pale collar (but beware collar in these other species becoming invisible when neck retracted, or some Greater Sand Plovers, especially juveniles, with a suggestion of a paler collar). In summer plumage, rufous breast band makes separation easy. Confusion most likely with extremely similar Lesser Sand, especially when not in summer plumage, although Greater much more widespread in our region. Plumage differences often minimal, so identification depends on comparison of size, structure and related jizz. Both look like longer-legged, longer-billed, but shorter-tailed version of Common Ringed Plover. Larger overall size of Greater, which is considerably larger-bodied than Common Ringed (while Lesser is only slightly bigger) is often (but not always) apparent. Greater looks even longer-legged than Lesser, positively lanky at times (but beware tendency to crouch), with front-heavy appearance owing to larger bill and more angular head. Bill of nominate race of Greater is much longer and somewhat deeper and more swollen than that of only race of Lesser known to occur in our area (*pamirensis*), and effect is enhanced by rather flat, sloping forehead shown by Greater; bill length of nominate Greater is clearly greater than distance from bill base to rear of eye, while in Lesser it is equal to or less than this distance. Lesser often looks distinctly compact and, due to more rounded forehead and smaller bill, rather 'sweet' in comparison with Greater. In more widespread race *columbinus* difference in bill length is less marked, but even smallest has longer, heavier bill than any Lesser of race *pamirensis* (although there is slight overlap with race *schaferi* of east-central Asia, not yet known to occur in our region); bill length of *columbinus* is equal to, or slightly more than, distance from base of bill to rear of eye. Shape of bill tip also differs subtly; in Greater mandibles slope more gently to a point, in Lesser more abruptly, producing a blunter-billed impression. Further, the slightly swollen outer part of the bill (beyond the nostrils) is proportionately longer in Greater, especially nominate race, but this can be hard to discern in the field. (Note: differences in bill length and shape are greatest between nominate race of Greater and eastern *mongolus* group of races of Lesser, not yet recorded from our region, but are still discernible between *columbinus* Greater and western *atrifrons* group of races of Lesser.) Legs of Greater are generally paler, being pale greenish-grey or sometimes dull yellowish compared with dark greenish-grey or blackish in Lesser, but beware occasional Greater with almost blackish legs. Upperparts of Greater tend to be slightly paler. In flight, toes of Greater project beyond end of tail (level with tail tip in Lesser) and the



wing bar is broader on primaries (uniform width in Lesser); the white at sides of tail is somewhat more extensive, although this is difficult to see in field. Adult male summer sometimes has a narrow black border to upper edge of rufous breast band, but this present only in full plumage and can only be seen in a good view: this feature is not shown by the *atrifrons* group of races of Lesser but is present in the eastern *mongolus* group. Unlike Lesser, adult summer often has some rufous on mantle and scapulars, and rufous breast band in nominate race (but not most *columbinus*) generally narrower. See also Caspian Plover.

SEX/AGE Sexes similar (except in summer plumage, when female has black areas on head dark brown or cinnamon-brown, and rufous areas on head, neck, mantle, scapulars and breast less intense and less extensive). Juvenile separable: compared with adult winter, has more distinct, warm buff (rather than whitish) fringes to upperparts, and, when fresh, warm buffish tinge to breast patches and pale areas on face. May retain some juvenile (i.e. pale-fringed) upperpart feathers during first winter. Most remain in winter plumage during first summer, but some acquire partial summer plumage.

VOICE Can be distinguished from that of Lesser Sand Plover with experience. Typical call a fairly short, soft, somewhat trilling and often repeated 'trrrr' or 'trrr': compared with call of Lesser, is longer, softer, deeper and more slurred, without individual notes being discernible, and, as with Lesser, has somewhat Ruddy Turnstone-like quality, but less so. Song-flight call a repeated, melodious, whistling 'pipuirr, pipuirr ...'.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 2 races (both illustrated). Race *columbinus* (breeding form of our region) differs from race *crassirostris* (found mainly Persian Gulf) in markedly smaller bill and in extensive rufous coloration on upperparts and flanks in summer plumage. Summer females of *columbinus*, compared to males, usually have black areas on head replaced with cinnamon-brown.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally fairly common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Armenia, Azerbaijan.) When breeding, sandy, silty or muddy margins of brackish or saline lakes, and adjacent sparsely vegetated steppe (occasionally far from water). At other times, estuarine mudflats, coastal lagoons, salt pans, sandy beaches, coral reefs.

CASPIAN PLOVER *Charadrius asiaticus*

L 20–22 cm, WS 55–61 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A fairly small, long-legged, long-winged plover of drier habitats, recalling Lesser Sand or Greater Sand but slimmer-bodied, with more attenuated rear end, more upright stance (recalling *Pluvialis* plover) and slimmer bill. Wingtips project well beyond tail tip (equal length in Greater Sand and

Lesser Sand). As with Greater Sand and Lesser Sand, can be distinguished from all other *Charadrius* plovers by lack of pale collar (and by rufous breast band in adult male summer). Smaller than Greater Sand but larger than Common Ringed (although shorter-tailed).

Adult male summer may be separated from Greater

Sand or Lesser Sand by narrow black border to lower edge of rufous breast band (but this present only in full summer plumage) and by lack of black across forehead. **Adult female summer** similarly lacks black on forehead but has less intense rufous on breast band (often breast band is rufous-buff, rarely grey-brown, without any rufous) and no black lower border (or just a trace). **Adult winter and Juvenile** more difficult, but may be separated by structural differences listed above, by broad dusky zone across breast instead of dark patches at sides (sometimes narrowly joined) and by clearer supercilium, especially behind eye. Legs generally paler than those of Lesser Sand, usually yellowish-brown or greenish-grey. Bill is about as long as in Greater Sand, but thinner, and anterior lore is always pale (while in sand plovers the entire lore is often dark). Pale areas on head are tinged with buff (white in adult sand plovers) and dark band across ear-coverts is usually narrower. Unlike adult sand plovers, winter adults show pale (rufous when fresh) feather fringes to upperparts including wing coverts. In flight, compared with sand plovers, shows less distinct white wing bar, most obvious on inner primaries, a shorter, rather broad tail with inconspicuous white sides and much less conspicuous white sides to uppertail coverts. Underwing dusky whitish-grey, not the typical gleaming white of most *Charadrius*. Confusion with somewhat larger Eurasian Dotterel in winter/juvenile plumage also possible, especially in view of similar liking for dry habitats, but latter has pale whitish line across darker area on breast/upper belly, long pale buffish supercilium extending to nape (not ending behind eye) and dark crown streaked with pale buff. Eurasian Dotterel is also shorter-legged and



shorter-winged (wings do not extend obviously beyond tail tip at rest) and has more variegated upperparts.

SEX/AGE Sexes similar, but summer female shows less rufous on breast and never has distinct black border below breast band (although occasionally shows indistinct black border). Juvenile separable with difficulty: compared with adult winter, has buff breast band and darker feather centres to upperparts, producing more scaly appearance. Pale fringes to feathers of upperparts initially rufous-buff, but soon become whitish.

VOICE Typical call a loud, sharp, often repeated 'tup', 'khwit' or 'chep', when repeated rapidly somewhat like the rattling call of Ruddy Turnstone. Also gives a soft, piping, repeated 'tik, tik, tik ...'. Song-flight call a melodious, whistling, repeated 'tyurlee-tyurlee-tyurlee ...'.

STATUS/HABITAT Rare. Most apparently overfly SE of our region on passage. Primarily an inland species. Dry steppe and semi-desert with sparse vegetation (sometimes far from water), silty margins of brackish or saline lakes, salt pans.

EURASIAN DOTTEREL *Charadrius morinellus*

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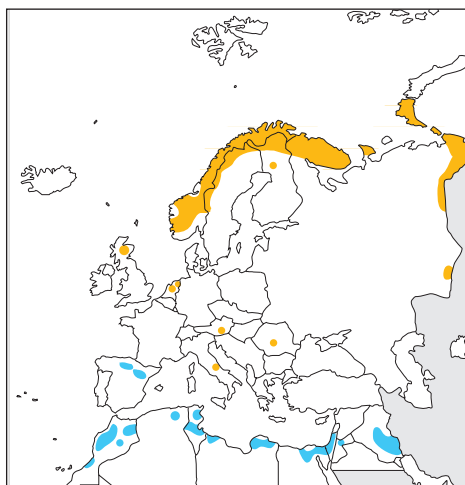
Dotterel, Mountain Dotterel

L 20–22 cm, WS 57–64 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A medium-sized plover, smaller than European Golden, with rather short wings, stocky body and rather broad, rounded tail. Often very tame, especially on breeding grounds. Females are usually brighter-coloured than males in breeding season and leave males to incubate eggs and care for young. **Adult summer** is unmistakable with its striking white supercilium, conspicuous grey and chestnut areas on underparts and narrow white breast band. **Adult winter and Juvenile** also fairly distinctive, with heavily-patterned, vaguely Ruff-like upperparts. Could be confused with Caspian Plover (q.v.) or possibly with American Golden, Pacific Golden and European Golden. May be distinguished from golden plovers by presence of narrow whitish breast band, longer supercilia that meet on nape, lack of gold or white spangling on upperparts, shorter bill, paler (yellowish) legs and, in flight, rather short wings (looking too small for bulky body) and more laboured wingbeats. Lacks pale wing bar (although white shaft of outer primary sometimes obvious on leading edge of outerwing); underwing dull, pale buffish-grey, suggesting American Golden or Pacific Golden in poor view.

SEX/AGE Adult female averages brighter than male in summer plumage. Juvenile separable with difficulty: compared with adult winter, is yellower-buff below, with darker feather centres on upperparts creating more obviously scaly appearance.

VOICE Not very vocal. Typical calls a soft, trilling, Dunlin-like 'pyurrr' or 'keerrr' on take-off, and a soft, repeated 'pwit-pwit-pwit' (given in display flight, and



at other times). Also gives a tinkling 'wit-wit-wit, wita-wita-wita-wee' of alarm and, in flying flocks, a Ruddy Turnstone-like rattle.

STATUS/HABITAT Generally scarce, but locally not uncommon. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Spitsbergen, Ireland, France, Switzerland, Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Caucasus.) When breeding, flat or gently sloping stony tundra and open mountain-tops with very short vegetation; exceptionally,

ploughed fields in lowlands. At other times, open semi-desert, dry, stony steppe, fallow or ploughed

farmland; on passage also open hilltops or mountaintops with very short vegetation, heathland.

AMERICAN GOLDEN PLOVER *Pluvialis dominica*

Plate page 354

Lesser Golden Plover

L 24–28 cm, WS 66–72 cm.

IDENTIFICATION This medium-sized transatlantic vagrant plover is intermediate in size between European Golden and Pacific Golden. Confusion most likely with other golden plovers or with Grey Plover. Most closely resembles Pacific Golden Plover (q.v.). In all plumages, looks slimmer, longer-legged and longer- and narrower-winged than European Golden (wingtips obviously project beyond tail tip at rest, while in European Golden they are slightly longer than or equal to tail tip). Stance more upright than that of European Golden, neck more slender, belly slimmer, rear end more gradually tapering (owing to long wings) and gait more elegant. Legs always dark grey or blackish (often paler, greenish-grey in European Golden). Bill slightly slimmer and longer. In flight, shows dusky-grey underwing coverts and grey axillaries (axillaries white and underwing coverts mainly white in European Golden, but beware juvenile European Golden with weak brownish suffusion on underwing); narrow wing bar on upperwing is also grey (white in European Golden). **Adult summer** also differs from European Golden in having more extensive black on underparts. Black stripe down foreneck and upper breast is broader than in European Golden, as are white supercilium and band on forehead. White stripe down sides of neck and breast is likewise broader, but does not generally show white band on flanks between black belly and wing at rest as does European Golden, and ventral area often entirely black. Generally looks darker, with fewer and coarser golden spangles on upperparts. Easily separated from Grey by golden not white spangling on upperparts, black on underparts extending to cover ventral area, and less extensive white on forehead. See also below. **Adult winter and juvenile** much greyer-looking overall than European Golden: have much less extensive golden spangling

on darker-looking upperparts (can be missing altogether in adults and is less obvious, pale yellow instead of golden, in juvenile); supercilium much clearer and whiter, contrasting strongly with darker crown; breast, neck and ear-coverts greyish instead of yellowish-buff (but beware occasional grey-looking European Golden), with more obvious barring on flanks. See also structural and underwing differences outlined above. Told from Grey by smaller size, slimmer bill, wings projecting obviously beyond tail tip at rest (only slightly in Grey) and, in flight, by lack of white rump, less conspicuous wing bar and dusky-grey underwing and axillaries (underwing white and axillaries black in Grey, forming striking 'black armpit' effect). Adult winter and juvenile have crown darker than in Grey, with contrast enhanced by more obvious whitish supercilium.

SEX/AGE Sexes similar, but female summer has more white admixed in black of underparts and less black on face. Juvenile, compared with winter adult, has darker, brownish-black upperparts with more contrasting whitish or yellowish spangling, whiter supercilium and rather barred underparts without an obvious white belly patch.

VOICE Generally sharper and less mellow than that of European Golden. Typical calls include a sharp 'klee-i' (with stress on first syllable) or monosyllabic 'kleep' and a plaintive, Northern Lapwing-like 'klu-eet' (with stress on second syllable). Calls are slightly higher-pitched than those of Pacific Golden and does not match its emphatic, Spotted Redshank-like 'chu-it'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Europe, Middle East, Canary Is, Cape Verde Is). In natural range, tundra when breeding; at other times, short grassland, ploughed or fallow fields and, to a lesser extent, muddy shores of lakes or coasts.

PACIFIC GOLDEN PLOVER *Pluvialis fulva*

Plate page 354

Asiatic Golden Plover, Asian Golden Plover

L 23–26 cm, WS 60–68 cm.

IDENTIFICATION The smallest of the golden plovers; winters in extreme SE of our region (breeds N Siberia, W Alaska). Confusion most likely with American Golden or European Golden (compared to which it shows intermediate plumage characters in some areas), to lesser extent with Grey. Separation from American Golden presents the most difficulty. In all plumages, looks slimmer, longer-legged and somewhat narrower- and longer-winged than European Golden (wingtips usually project beyond tail tip at rest, while in European Golden they project only slightly beyond tail tip, or are equal to it). Stance more upright than that of European Golden, neck more slender, belly slimmer, rear end more gradually tapering (owing to longer wings) and gait more elegant. Legs always dark grey or blackish (often paler, greenish-grey in European Golden). Bill proportionately a little longer than in European Golden and legs even longer than in American Golden. In flight, shows dusky-grey underwing coverts and grey axillaries (axillaries white and underwing coverts mainly white



in European Golden, but beware juvenile European Golden with weak brownish suffusion on underwing); narrow wing bar on upperwing is also grey (white in European Golden); tips of the toes project clearly beyond tail tip, unlike in European Golden. Compared with American Golden, is slightly larger-billed and has slightly longer legs (toes frequently do not project beyond tail tip in flight in American Golden). In addition, the primary projection is reduced, with three rather than four primary tips visible beyond the tertials; this difference being partly owing to the longer tertials in Pacific Golden which typically reach tail tip while in American Golden they typically fall well short, a key difference. **Adult summer** is generally more heavily dark-barred on flanks compared

with European Golden (occasionally these appear all-black) and there is much black marking on the under-tail coverts (little or none in European Golden). White forehead band, supercilium and patch down side of neck and upper breast are generally broader than in European Golden, and few have much pale mottling on lower face. Differs from American Golden in generally showing narrow white band (with black barring) on upper flanks below wing, and has black on underparts somewhat less extensive and ventral area spotted with black rather than all black, less extensive white patches at sides of neck and breast, narrower black band above bill and often more gold spangling on upperparts. Tends to have whiter spangling on wing coverts that contrasts with gold spangling on mantle and scapulars. There is much variation, however, in both species (e.g. some male Pacific Golden have all-black flanks and ventral area) and a few individuals may not be separable on plumage. **Adult winter and Juvenile** very similar in plumage to winter European Golden; breast and upperparts are usually less obviously spotted and wing coverts often look more cleanly pale-fringed (fringes typically look pale-spotted in European Golden). Shows more distinct supercilium. Juvenile generally also has pale, rather unmarked patch of feathering adjacent to base of upper mandible (rarely seen in European Golden) and the lower face is likewise rather pale with few dark markings, contrasting with small dark patch on rear ear-coverts (face of European Golden is generally rather uniform, with numerous small dark streaks on lower face); wing coverts typically paler than mantle and scapulars (unlike most European Golden). Adult winter and juvenile are easier to separate from American Golden, since much less greyish in appearance, with extensive golden spangling on upperparts (rather restricted or even absent in adult American Golden, more extensive but pale yellow rather than golden in juvenile), less contrasting yellowish-buff (instead of whitish) supercilium, and generally yellowish-buff (instead of dull greyish) ear-coverts, neck and breast, with less obvious dark mottling on breast. Juvenile often looks more evenly coloured above; except when fresh, American Golden generally shows contrastingly darker mantle, upper scapulars and crown, the latter

contrasting strongly with the whitish supercilium. Looks closer to European Golden than juvenile American Golden, which more closely resemble Grey Plover. (Beware, however, occasional worn, grey-looking Pacific Golden and very fresh, yellowish-looking American Golden without obvious contrast on upperparts.) In all plumages told from Grey by obvious golden spangling on upperparts, smaller size, slimmer bill, wings projecting obviously beyond tail tip at rest (only slightly in Grey) and, in flight, by lack of white rump, less conspicuous wing bar and dusky-grey underwing and axillaries (underwing white and axillaries black in Grey, forming striking 'black armpit' effect). In addition, adult summer generally shows a white band between black belly and wing (unlike Grey), while ventral area is generally spotted with black (all white in Grey) and white on forehead less extensive. In adult winter and juvenile, face and breast are generally yellowish-buff, not greyish, and supercilium clearer and yellowish-buff, not whitish (but beware occasional rather grey-looking adults which superficially resemble juvenile Grey with its pale yellowish spangling above).

SEX/AGE Sexes similar, but female summer has more white admixed in black of underparts and less black on face. Juvenile separable with difficulty. Compared with adult winter has gold spangling more prominent and evenly distributed on upperparts, supercilium clearer and breast brighter, more yellowish-buff instead of dull yellowish-grey.

VOICE Generally sharper and less mellow than that of European Golden, but more similar to that of American Golden (q.v.). Typical calls a rapid, whistling 'chu-it', reminiscent of Spotted Redshank, a more drawn out 'klu-ee' and even more extended 'chu-EE' (with stress on second syllable).

TAXONOMY Often considered a race of American Golden Plover *P. dominica*, with the enlarged species being known as **Lesser Golden Plover**.

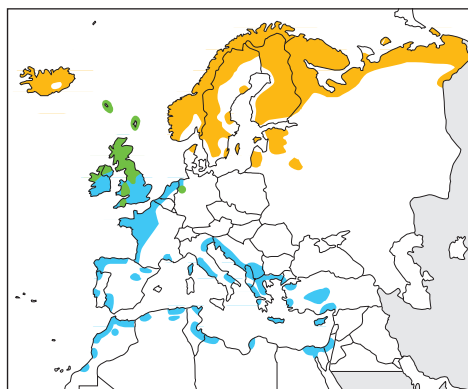
STATUS/HABITAT Scarce. (In addition to mapped range, may winter regularly Iraq.) Breeds on dry, moss- and lichen-covered tundra. At other times, coastal mudflats, sandy beaches, coral reefs; also lakes, marshes and short grasslands, especially on migration.

EUROPEAN GOLDEN PLOVER *Pluvialis apricaria*

Golden Plover, Eurasian Golden Plover

L 26–29 cm, WS 67–76 cm.

IDENTIFICATION This medium-sized, rather compact plover is the only golden plover normally encountered in the great majority of our region. Gathers in large flocks outside breeding season, joining Northern Lapwings in pastures and arable fields. As in all *Pluvialis*, flight action rapid and powerful, with regular wingbeats. Confusion most likely with Grey (or with similar Pacific Golden and vagrant American Golden, which see for full discussion). In all plumages, may be separated from Grey by heavy golden spangling on upperparts, less bulky appearance, shorter legs, slimmer bill and, in flight, lack of 'black armpits' (i.e. black axillaries, which are especially obvious in Grey in winter or juvenile plumage), lack of white rump and less obvious wing bar. **Adult summer** also differs in having less extensive white on forehead and much less black on underparts (especially on face and throat of southern breeders, particularly females), with broad white band between black belly and wing. **Adult winter and Juvenile** also differ in having yellowish-buff on face and breast. (Beware occasional rather



grey-looking European Golden, which can superficially resemble juvenile Grey with its pale yellowish

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spangling on upperparts.)

SEX/AGE Sexes similar, but female summer tends to have more white admixed in black of underparts. Juvenile separable with difficulty: compared with adult winter, has fine, dark barring on flanks and belly.

VOICE Typical calls a mellow, whistling 'too-ee' or 'tloo', generally sounding rather monosyllabic. Display-flight song a repeated melancholy, piping, 'per-pee-oo ...'. Also a repeated trilling 'keroolya ...' in flight.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION No races, but shows wide variation in summer plumage between classic

'northern' form, with extensive black on face and underparts, and classic 'southern' form with much less black, especially on face and throat. 'Northern' form is commoner in north of range, but both types occur throughout range. Northern population formerly treated as distinct race *altifrons*.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Spitsbergen, Belgium, Netherlands, Poland.) When breeding, drier areas of tundra, moorland, heathland. At other times, short grassland, arable fields, saltmarsh, sometimes coastal mudflats.

GREY PLOVER *Pluvialis squatarola*

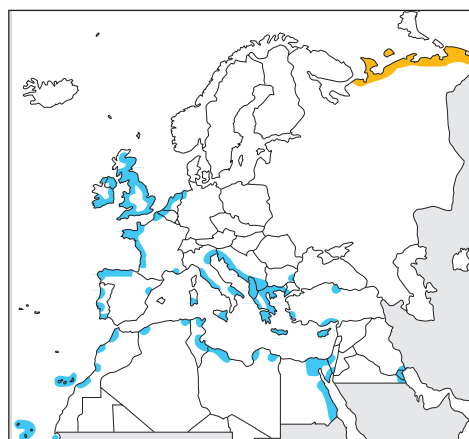
Black-bellied Plover (N America)

L 27–30 cm, WS 71–83 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A medium-sized plover and the largest, bulkiest, heaviest-billed *Pluvialis*. Often looks rather hunched. At a distance, in summer plumage, often looks silvery-grey above. Greatest risk of confusion is with European Golden, Pacific Golden or vagrant American Golden, but differs from all in having conspicuous black 'armpits' (axillaries) that contrast with largely white underwing and prominent white rump patch: for fuller discussion, see those species. Distant winter-plumaged birds can suggest winter Red Knot, but easily separated by major structural differences. Grey Plover has much shorter, stubbier bill, larger eye, much longer legs (especially tibia), upright stance, and short run followed by dip to feed typical of plovers.

SEX/AGE Sexes similar, but female summer generally browner on upperparts and has more white admixed in black of underparts and less black on face. Juvenile separable with difficulty: compared with adult winter, has upperparts darker, with pale yellowish instead of whitish spangling, and breast and flanks have more distinct dark streaking.

VOICE Typical call a far-carrying, melancholy, whistling 'tlee-oo-ee', not unlike typical call of European Golden but higher-pitched, less mellow and distinctly trisyllabic, with the second syllable lower in pitch. Sometimes gives a shorter 'tloo-ee'. Song-flight



call a repeated loud, melancholy 'koodiloo, koodiloo ...'.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. When breeding, tundra, often damp. At other times, coastal mudflats, sandy beaches and lagoons (on migration, also sometimes by inland lakes, or on short grassland or fields).

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SPUR-WINGED LAPWING *Vanellus spinosus*

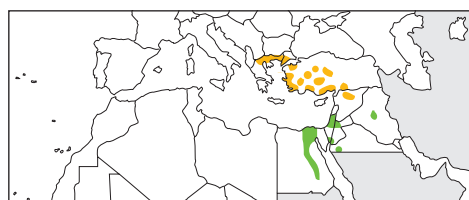
Spur-winged Plover

L 25–28 cm, WS 69–81 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A large, strikingly plumaged plover. Wingbeats rather slow. Unique pied and brown head and body pattern (with extensive black below, gleaming white sides of neck and narrow tapering black nape spike extending from crown) renders it virtually unmistakable (but see Red-wattled and vagrant Black-headed). In flight, dramatic pied and pale brown pattern is also unique, although totality of plumage pattern is important as wing and tail pattern quite similar to those of Red-wattled, Black-headed and Sociable Lapwings (q.v.). Small curving 'spur' at carpal joint is usually only visible when bird overhead.

SEX/AGE Juvenile separable: compared with adult, has black areas of head and underparts tinged brownish and, especially on crown and chin, flecked with whitish; feathers of upperparts have buff fringes.

VOICE Typical alarm calls are a rapidly repeated loud, sharp, metallic 'kitt-kitt-kitt ...' and an even more rapid



'tik-tik-tik ...'. Territorial call a loud, harsh, shrill 'di-did-dooit' (sometimes rendered 'did-ye-do-it') interspersed with harsh, strangled, tern-like sounds including a grating 'kiierrik'.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally fairly common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Cyprus.) Fresh or brackish lakes and marshes, coastal lagoons, riversides, irrigated fields and adjacent bare ground.

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BLACK-HEADED LAPWING *Vanellus tectus*

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Black-headed Plover, Blackhead Plover

L 25 cm, WS 66–74 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A large, strikingly plumaged vagrant plover from sub-Saharan Africa. Wingbeats rather slow. Slight risk of confusion with Red-wattled or Spur-winged, but easily separated from either by very different pied head and underbody pattern (with white nape bordered above and below by black) and also by wispy crest, red legs, yellow eye and, in flight, more extensive white on upperwing (extending to primary bases and coverts). A further difference from Spur-winged is red wattle and basal two-thirds of bill.

SEX/AGE Juvenile separable: compared with adult, has black of head and body tinged brown and fringed with buff, crest shorter, brown of upperparts obviously fringed or barred with buff, and legs and bill base brownish-pink.

VOICE Typical calls are a loud, harsh 'kwairr' and a shriller 'kiarr'. Alarm call a piercing, whistling, often repeated 'kir'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Middle East). In natural range, habitat dry open plains with short grassland or bare areas, sometimes with scattered scrub.

RED-WATTLED LAPWING *Vanellus indicus*

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Red-wattled Plover

L 32–35 cm, WS 80–81 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A large, strikingly plumaged, distinctly long-legged plover of the eastern Middle East. Wingbeats rather slow. Unique pied head and underbody pattern (with black hindneck) renders it virtually unmistakable. Confusion with somewhat smaller Spur-winged is possible, especially at distance. Easily separated by very different head and body pattern (with white, not black, belly) and also by yellow legs and red eye, loral wattle and basal two-thirds of bill; brown of upperparts is darker, less sandy. In flight, tail tipped white (greyish-brown in centre) and white on wings less extensive (not extending to carpal area).

SEX/AGE Juvenile separable: compared with adult, has black of head and breast tinged greyish-brown, with chin and throat whitish, upperparts narrowly fringed buff and bare parts duller.

VOICE Typical call a loud, shrill 'treent-trint, teen-ty-



too-int, trinti-too-int' (latter portions often rendered 'did-he-do-it'). Alarm calls a loud, sharp, often repeated 'trint' and, when mobbing, 'treent-teent-tint-teent-tint-teent-teent-too-int-too-int'. Display flight song a prolonged 'trint-trint-tee-int, tee-int, trinti-too-int, too-int, too-int'.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. Open country near rivers, lakes, marshes, pools or ditches, favouring cultivation, bare ground, even large gardens.

SOCIABLE LAPWING *Vanellus gregarius*

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Sociable Plover

L 27–30 cm, WS 70–76 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A large plover with distinctive summer plumage of SE of our region. Wingbeats rather slow. **Adult summer** is virtually unmistakable. Although dark chestnut and black belly patch and striking white supercilium are reminiscent of Eurasian Dotterel, easily separated by warm buff cheeks, rather uniform pale brownish-grey neck and breast, much less variegated, greyish upperparts and, in flight, by striking white secondaries and rump, plus black subterminal patch on tail. The prominent white supercilia meet on the nape. **Adult winter and juvenile** less distinctive. Confusion perhaps most likely with White-tailed Lapwing, but easily separated by presence of obvious pale supercilium and dark crown, much shorter, black legs and, in flight, obvious black subterminal patch on tail and only slight projection of toes beyond tail tip. White-tailed Lapwing also has more extensive white in wing, extending to leading edge, and narrow black line bordering brown inner coverts. Confusion also possible with smaller golden, Grey and Caspian Plovers and with Eurasian Dotterel, but all of these, in equivalent plumage, have much more variegated upperparts; in addition, Eurasian Dotterel has narrow but noticeable pale band across breast and yellowish legs, while Caspian Plover has brown-



ish legs. In flight, instantly separable from any of these species by white secondaries and by conspicuous black subterminal patch on tail, as well as by more rounded wings and slower flight action. The first of these features also prevents confusion, at a distance, with Spur-winged Lapwing (which instead has a white band across the wing coverts).

SEX/AGE Sexes similar, but adult male summer usually has crown and fore belly blacker, and more extensive chestnut on rear belly. Juvenile separable: compared with adult winter, has dark brown subterminal bars on upperparts, enhancing scaly appearance, and breast conspicuously marked with dark streaks.

VOICE Typical call a harsh, rasping, repeated 'kretsch, kretsch, kretsch ...'. Also a rapid, angry, chattering 'rekrekrekrekrek ...'.

STATUS/HABITAT Uncommon. When breeding, open

steppe, mainly in transitional zone between grassland and wormwood (*Artemisia*) scrub. At other times, dry grassland, ploughed or stubble fields, fallow land.

WHITE-TAILED LAPWING *Vanellus leucurus*

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White-tailed Plover

L 26–29 cm, WS 67–70 cm; legs 7 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A fairly large, rather long-billed and very long-legged plover with an elegant gait. Middle East only. Often wades deep in water, unlike other larger plovers, sometimes alongside Black-winged Stilts. Wingbeats rather slow. Rather uniform greyish-brown plumage without obvious patterning at rest combined with very long yellow legs and, in flight, striking white tail and secondaries/carpal area (with long legs and feet projecting well beyond tail tip) render it unmistakable. None of the other pied-and-brown lapwings has as much white in wing (extending to leading edge) or an all-white tail. Looks rather pale-faced, but supercilium is indistinct. See also Sociable Lapwing.

SEX/AGE Juvenile separable: compared with adult, has upperparts conspicuously variegated owing to dark subterminal bars or feather centres and broad buff fringes; breast mottled whitish-grey.

VOICE Typical calls are a repeated high-pitched,



Northern Lapwing-like, squeaking 'pet-ee-wit, pet-ee-wit ...' and a plaintive 'pee-wick', also Northern Lapwing-like but less strident. May give a harsh 'kwett' when flushed.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred S Turkey, Syria, Azerbaijan. Perhaps a regular winter visitor Egypt.) Shallow margins of lakes, pools and marshes, adjacent damp grassy areas, rice fields.

NORTHERN LAPWING *Vanellus vanellus*

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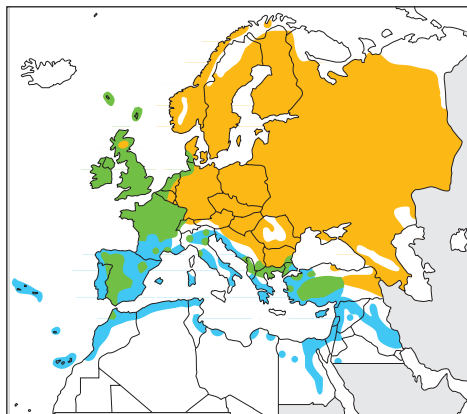
Lapwing

L 28–31 cm, WS 82–87 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A large, distinctive, rather short-legged plover of damp grassland and farmland, forming large flocks in winter. Combination of bronze-green upperparts (which often appear black), pied head and underparts, long, wispy crest and broad, round-ended wings renders it unmistakable. Wingbeats deep and rather slow, creating characteristic twinkling effect in distant flocks as white on underparts and underwing coverts intermittently exposed. Flight often highly acrobatic.

SEX/AGE Sexes similar, but adult female has head pattern less clearly defined, much less blue gloss on lesser and median coverts and usually a shorter crest; summer female has white flecking on throat. Adult winter has buff suffusion to white areas of face, chin and throat white (not black) and buff tips to mantle feathers and scapulars. Juvenile separable with difficulty: compared with adult female winter, has less distinct face pattern, even shorter crest, narrower, browner breast band and more obvious buff fringes to upperparts.

VOICE Typical calls are a loud, shrill 'cheew' and a more plaintive 'cheew-ip' (often rendered 'pee-wit'). Display-flight 'song' consists of short 'wee-ip' calls in level flight followed by plaintive, drawn-out 'cheew-o-wee' as bird dives suddenly towards ground, then a throbbing 'wub, wub, wub ...' wing noise as bird zig-zags close to ground, followed by a shrill 'chay-o-



wee' as it climbs suddenly into the air again. Also a shrill, repeated 'weew-we, weew-ee ...' when intensely alarmed, the emphasis on the first syllable.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Iceland.) Grassland, marshes, wetland margins, saltmarshes and arable fields with low vegetation. When not breeding, sometimes coastal mud-flats.

SANDPIPERS Scolopacidae

56 species (27 vagrant)

Small to large (but mostly small to medium) waders of a diversity of wetland habitats. Typically (but not invariably) have rather upright stance (but more horizontal than in plovers), rather small, narrow heads and small eyes (related to probing, tactile feeding methods as opposed to visual techniques of broad-headed, large-eyed plovers), and rather long, slim necks. Bills rather slender (unlike those of plovers) and often, but by no means always, fairly or very long. When feeding, typically pick or rapidly probe in soft mud with up-and-down and side-to-side movements of bill (looks as if bill is vibrating in smaller species, which typically move bill rapidly). Gait usually a steady walk, interspersed with pauses to feed, but the small, rather short-legged *Calidris* sandpipers and their relatives frequently break into a scurrying run. A feeding flock of these plump little bustling birds on the move is unmistakable. Wings mostly long, rather narrow and pointed. Flight action mostly rapid and flight itself usually fast and direct. Smaller species keep remarkably tight formation when flying in flocks, turning in unison with remarkable speed and precision. Many highly gregarious outside breeding season, while remainder form small flocks. Typically nest in low vegetation, but some nest in old nests of other birds in trees.

Sexes mostly similar. Some seasonal variation (often marked). Juveniles separable (sometimes only with some difficulty). Adult plumage attained within 6–12 months (as few as 3 months in some and up to 21 months in a few).

GREAT KNOT *Calidris tenuirostris*

L 26–28 cm, WS 62–66 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Medium-sized vagrant sandpiper from E Asia (breeding NE Siberia). The largest *Calidris*, dwarfing all of its relatives apart from somewhat smaller Red Knot, the only likely confusion species. Rather larger and, more importantly, longer-legged than latter, with markedly longer, more tapering bill (with deeper base, finer tip and a slight decurve). Body shape is longer, less rotund, with flatter back, more tapering rear end, more bulging breast, longer neck and smaller head. These features combine to produce a distinctly 'different' impression in Great Knot. **Adult summer** is unlike any other *Calidris*. Easily separated from adult summer Red Knot by lack of reddish on face and underparts (even when moulting into or out of summer plumage, Red shows some reddish or rich orange on underparts). Instead looks very dark and distinctive, almost wholly dusky on upperparts when worn, with contrasting deep rufous band along scapulars (or, at least, a number of rufous and black feathers); the breast is very intensely spotted with black (often appearing almost solid blackish), with prominent black spotting and chevrons extending along length of flanks. **Adult winter** not unlike adult winter or juvenile Red, but shows structural differences outlined above, and also has less obvious pale supercilium, broader, more diffuse dark loreal stripe, and heavier, more defined dark streaking on crown, nape and mantle. Does not usually have contrastingly darker ear-coverts (a feature commonly exhibited by Red). May have some distinct round dark spots (usually lacking in Red, or at least smaller) on sides of breast and flanks, but in any event most markings in these areas are solid, dark, spearhead-like or triangular markings that are quite different from finer, open arrowhead-like markings shown by Red. Legs generally darker (dark grey or greenish-grey instead of medium olive-green). **Juvenile** is darker and clearly more mottled overall than Red, having darker feather centres to upperparts, with almost dusky mantle, and

marked scaly effect on scapulars and wing coverts owing to whitish fringes; in Red the feather centres of the upperparts are paler grey and there are dark sub-terminal arcs inside the pale buff fringes. The crown and breast are well streaked, the streaks widening to form a dusky spotted band across lower breast (recalling adult summer) and extending as scattered spots well down flanks. Differences in facial pattern are as for adult winter. Note that leg colour is sometimes as pale as in Red. Feeds more by probing than by picking. Associates freely with other waders. In flight, a large, long-winged wader, clearly larger and less compact than Red, but with slightly narrower and less distinct wing bar; tail is darker in Great, giving stronger contrast to whiter patch on uppertail coverts (which lacks extensive black barring of Red, but is narrower). Flight action recalls that of Ruff, with rather slower, looser, more languid beats than Red. Flocks fly in less dense, more linear formations.

SEX/AGE Adult female summer tends to have less chestnut on scapulars. Juvenile separable with difficulty: compared with adult winter, is darker and browner, with scaly pattern on upperparts owing to whitish-buff feather fringes; crown darker (forming fairly obvious cap) and breast darker, suffused with brownish-buff, and more heavily streaked and spotted with dark brown; legs paler and greener. 1st-winter may be aged by retained juvenile wing coverts throughout winter (winter adult has fine whitish fringe to wing coverts, but lacks fine dark sub-terminal line of juvenile). 1st-summer birds acquire only partial summer plumage.

VOICE Generally silent, but a low, muffled disyllabic 'knot-knot' or 'nyut-nyut' may be given by flying birds (first syllable longer and rising, second shorter and lower).

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Europe, N Africa, Middle East). In natural range, stony mountain tundra with grassy banks when breeding; at other times, coastal mudflats and sand banks.

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RED KNOT *Calidris canutus*

Plate page 369

Knot

L 23–25 cm, WS 57–61 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Larger and stockier than other *Calidris* (apart from vagrant Great Knot, q.v.), with short, straight bill and short greenish legs. **Adult summer** with brick-red face and underparts and stocky appearance is unlikely to be mistaken, but compare with Curlew Sandpiper, godwits and dowitchers. **Adult winter** appears almost uniformly grey over moderate distances; size and structure then best clue to identity on ground. Distant winter Dunlin looks smaller and less pure grey above, with longer, more curved bill and blacker, longer legs. **Juvenile** has distinctive pattern of fine whitish fringes and dark subterminal bands to feathers of upperparts giving a delicately scaled appearance; in early autumn fresh juveniles have a warm peachy-buff wash on underparts, but this soon fades to whitish with wear (compare with juvenile Curlew Sandpiper). Like Dunlin is highly sociable, forming very large close-knit flocks which perform aerial convolutions when flushed or moving to roost. Feeding flocks swarm over mudflats, keeping much more tightly bunched than Dunlin, the flock moving slowly and steadily forward *en masse*, head-down, constantly picking at mud surface. At much longer ranges may be taken for Grey Plover, but steady, creeping feeding motion of Red Knot quite unlike Grey Plover's action of walk, pause and bend forward at knee. In flight, the plump impression is transformed by rather long wings; the wing bar is fairly clear but narrow and typical of the genus *Calidris*, but rear end is distinctively different with uniform pale greyish uppertail coverts (actually almost white, but marked with fine scaling) that contrast little with grey tail. In summer plumage, the red underparts contrast with the white underwing as in Bar-tailed Godwit.

SEX/AGE See Identification. 1st-winter may be aged by retained juvenile wing coverts throughout winter (adult winter is purer grey with fine whitish fringe to feathers of wing coverts, lacking fine dark subterminal line of juvenile). 1st-summer birds acquire only partial red colour.

VOICE A low, soft, nasal 'knut' or 'wutt' is freely given as contact note, similar to call of Bar-tailed Godwit



but softer. Also gives a sudden 'kikkik' when flushed, but otherwise relatively silent.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (nominate illustrated). Nominate race (breeds Siberia, passing through N and W Europe to winter Atlantic coast of Africa) is longer-billed and has deeper chestnut underparts in summer plumage than *islandica* (breeds Greenland and Canada, winters NW Europe).

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common (locally abundant on passage and in winter quarters). Mainly a passage migrant and winter visitor to our region, but has occasionally bred Spitsbergen; Siberian breeders mostly migrate via Baltic, Greenland breeders via Iceland. Breeds on open, rather stony tundra, usually near water. At other times, tidal flats and estuaries, favouring rather firm mud or sand; only occasionally visits salt pans, and rare at inland lakes (on passage).

SANDERLING *Calidris alba*

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L 20–21 cm, WS 40–45 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Plump little wader of sandy beaches, recalling winter Dunlin but much whiter on face and underparts (except in summer plumage), and a little larger, with shorter, straighter bill and slightly longer extension of exposed primary tips beyond tertials. Overall shape, especially of bill, suggests a stint, but stints are all smaller than Dunlin. Lacks hind toe. **Adult summer** quite different from winter, being rusty-brown on head, throat, breast and upperparts, with heavy dark mottling on mantle, scapulars and breast and fine dark streaking on head and throat; the underparts below the breast are clean white (Dunlin has black belly patch). Summer Red-necked and bright Little Stints can be confusingly similar if size difference not apparent; lone passage Sanderling, especially in atypical inland habitats, can be problematic (see Red-necked Stint for discussion). Rarely, summer-plumaged individuals are very dull, largely lacking rusty-brown in plumage. **Adult winter** very pale grey-

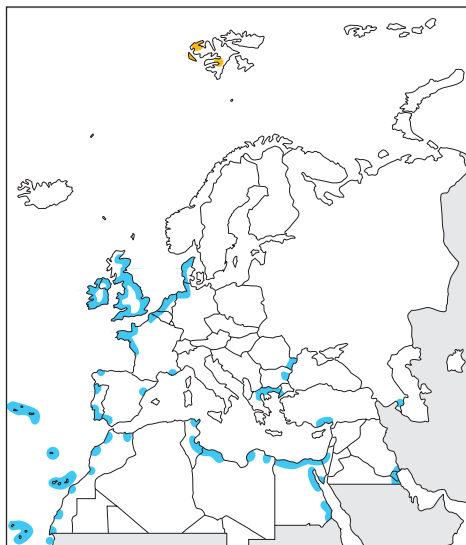
ish, paling to very white on face, ear-coverts and underparts; by comparison, Dunlin is a browner grey, with wide breast band (only a very narrow, broken band on Sanderling), and has greyish sides of head and longer, more decurved bill; winter Broad-billed Sandpiper almost as pale as Sanderling, but with much longer, drooped bill. Winter stints (including small American *Calidris* sandpipers) recall miniature Sanderlings in colour and bill shape, but in general tend to have darker lores, duller greyish and weakly mottled ear-coverts and breast area, and relatively longer tibia. **Juvenile** is distinctive, with strongly spangled blackish and very pale grey upperparts, dark crown centre and dark eye-stripe, contrasting with bright white underparts, sides of head, forehead and supercilium; in fresh plumage, there is a narrow tawny-buff breast band (usually broken in centre) and a little streaking at breast sides, but otherwise the underparts are unmarked. Feeds in small parties at

water's edge, running, walking and picking as wave recedes, running back up beach as wave advances. Mixes freely with other waders at roosts, but at water's edge typically mostly with Ruddy Turnstones, Common Redshanks or Kentish Plovers (latter is similarly very pale at distance). In flight, shows wider and whiter wing bar than Dunlin (or other *Calidris*), extending broadly across primaries, showing strong contrast with blackish primary coverts and trailing edge to secondaries; this coupled with coastal habitat suggests a phalarope, but Red lacks white sides to tail coverts of Sanderling, and both Red-necked and Red have less white on primaries and blacker crown and eye patch; flight action of phalaropes more rapid and direct, almost hugging water (look out for them dropping to settle on water surface).

SEX/AGE See Identification. 1st-winter may be aged by retained juvenile wing coverts and blacker tertials throughout winter. 1st-summer birds acquire only patches of summer plumage.

VOICE Typical flight call a sharp 'klit' or 'twik', often repeated, sometimes into a quick trill. On breeding grounds, displays with variety of trilling, purring and low churring sounds, sometimes in short display flight.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. Mainly a passage migrant and winter visitor in our region; breeds Spitsbergen, but uncommon. Breeds on open, rather stony tundra. At other times, prefers sandy bays and spits (even in very exposed places) and sandy estuaries;



also coral reefs and sometimes (but much less often) tidal mudflats. Occasional at inland waters on passage.

SEMPALMATED SANDPIPER *Calidris pusilla*

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L 13–15 cm, WS 34–37 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Easily confused with Little Stint, or with vagrant Red-necked Stint and Western Sandpiper (q.v.). Often appears plumper than Little (with relatively smaller head in comparison with body), with shorter projection of primary tips beyond tertials and slightly longer legs, but all of these features subject to variation. Bill straight, typically short, relatively deeper at base and marginally blunter at tip than that of Little (but compare with Red-necked); longer-billed individuals occur, however, some of which may even suggest Western (q.v.). Exceptional views required to see partial webbing between toes, which is most obvious between outer and middle toes (view bird from rear as it walks on a dry surface); this feature shared only by Western, but other stints can give impression of having partial webbing when walking on soft mud (when mud clings between toes). **Adult summer** unusually drab-coloured for a stint. Not unlike juvenile (see below), but has band of dusky streaks right across breast, extending lightly onto upper flanks: lack of any rufous in plumage and lack of mantle 'V' are useful pointers, but worn Least Sandpiper with dark legs can be similar; latter best separated by vestiges of rufous in upperparts and by finer bill, lacking thick base and slightly swollen tip of Semipalmated. A few individuals are warmer-looking (especially when heavily worn), but such birds are still much duller than typical Little and lack rufous fringes to wing coverts and tertials (which are paler-centred). **Adult winter** is drab greyish as are other 'winter' stints; best separated from winter Little by more uniformly coloured crown, by slightly paler overall coloration, by structure, especially bill shape and partial toe webbing, and by voice. Little usually has all or some scapulars with more extensive dark centres. Feeds by picking from mud surface in manner of other stints, with which vagrants may associate. **Juvenile** plumage is the one

most often encountered in our region. These birds have fresh plumage, with neat feather edges. They look much duller and more uniform above than typical juvenile Little: lack clear white lines forming 'V' on mantle and rufous or chestnut in scapulars and tertial edges of Little (tertial centres, and also wing covert centres, are also paler and greyer-brown than in Little; see also very similar juvenile Red-necked); upperparts drab greyish-buff or brownish, markedly scaly, typically with broad dark, anchor-shaped, sub-terminal marks on grey background along two lower rows of scapulars (feathers more broadly blackish-centred in Little). In a few Semipalmated the scapular centres are more uniformly dark, but never as solidly blackish as in Little. Although fresh juveniles have sandy-rufous tones to crown and mantle, these disappear early in the autumn and at most the edges to the scapulars are pale rufous, not the bright rufous or chestnut of juvenile Western Sandpiper and most Little. Sides of the breast are usually less heavily marked than in Little and show little or no rufous tinge: head pattern more contrasting, with uniformly darker crown (lacking dark central ridge of Western and diffuse whitish secondary supercilium often shown by Little); upper ear-coverts and loreal line also slightly darker than in Little, making whitish supercilium more obvious. Some Little Stints lack obvious rufous tones in plumage and are particularly confusing; indeed, in late autumn feather wear can obliterate both rufous tones and whitish mantle 'V', but vestiges are normally apparent. Such birds need careful scrutiny, with concentration on crown pattern, shape of dark centres of lower scapulars, and overall shape (especially of bill and projection of primary tips).

SEX/AGE Female averages slightly larger and longer-billed than male. Autumn adults show mixture of old and fresh plumage, but juveniles do not moult until after arrival in winter quarters and are fresh-

plumaged with more delicately patterned upperparts and finer markings on breast. See also Identification. 1st-winter birds are difficult to age after early winter, and resemble worn adult winter through their first summer.

VOICE Typical flight call a short, low-pitched 'chruup' or 'krrit', different from that of Little Stint, but also gives a short, high-pitched 'kit' which is more like latter species.

WESTERN SANDPIPER *Calidris mauri*

L 14–17 cm, WS 35–37 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Relatively longer-billed than other stints, often strikingly so, indeed longest-billed birds (usually females) have a slight decurve to the bill, suggesting small Dunlin rather than a stint. Shorter-billed birds, however, tend to have straighter bills and there is a slight overlap with longest-billed Semipalmated (typically eastern females), but bill of Western finer-tipped, thinner throughout and less deep at the base. Like Semipalmated, shows partial webbing between toe bases (see comment under Semipalmated), but averages slightly longer-legged. **Adult summer** dull greyish, heavily mottled and streaked with dark (Semipalmated similar); breast streaking breaks up into chevron-shaped marks which extend along flanks (markings reach only fore flanks in Semipalmated). Bright rusty crown sides, ear-covert patch and scapulars also provide an easy distinction from Semipalmated. Lacks pale 'V' on mantle and rufous on breast, wing coverts and sides of neck of summer Little Stint. **Adult winter** virtually identical in plumage to winter Semipalmated, best distinction (for the great majority of individuals) being bill shape, but in late autumn/early winter check for odd retained rufous scapular feathers of 1st-winter birds or dark 'arrowhead' marks on flanks retained by adults. Marginally cleaner grey above, usually showing a band of fine streaks across breast (lacking in Semipalmated, which has some indistinct streaking at sides of breast). Differs from small winter Dunlin in being purer grey (less brownish), in having more contrasting (but fine) black shaft streaks to blunter-tipped scapulars and in having partial toe webbing. **Juvenile** lacks white mantle 'V' of Little Stint and is generally drab in colour like Semipalmated, but differs in having rufous edges to upper row of scapulars forming a

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION No races recognized, but easternmost populations tend to have longer bills than western birds. Several vagrants to our region have been long-billed individuals.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe, Azores, Canary Is). In natural range, breeds in damp, grassy tundra, often near pools or lakes. At other times, tidal mudflats, sandflats and sandy beaches; also the muddy margins of freshwater pools and lakes.

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rufous band along the sides of the back. When plumage fresh, centre of mantle (but not crown) also rufous; in Semipalmated, those birds with rufous on mantle in early autumn also have crown tinged equally rufous. Western also has a distinctly darker, more heavily streaked central ridge to otherwise paler crown and paler, less contrasting ear-coverts in comparison with juvenile Semipalmated, which has uniformly dark crown with even streaking; sides of breast are typically cleaner. See also juvenile Red-necked Stint. Wing pattern as in Little Stint or Semipalmated. Spends more time wading in shallows than other stints, but equally at ease picking from mud surface with others of genus. Often feeds on mud with slightly crouched posture, but at other times perky stance gives a longer-legged appearance than in other stints.

SEX/AGE Female averages slightly larger and longer-billed than male. Begins moult early in autumn, thus autumn birds show mixed plumage stages (unlike Semipalmated). Juvenile told from adult in same manner as for Semipalmated. 1st-year birds may be aged by buffish edges to retained tertials in early winter, adults by retained spots on breast and flanks. 1st-summer birds acquire little, or no, adult summer plumage.

VOICE Flight call rather drawn-out, higher-pitched and thinner than that of Semipalmated Sandpiper: a shrill 'cheet' (thinner and less rasping than flight call of Dunlin, recalling White-rumped Sandpiper but shorter). Also gives a shorter 'kirrp' which is closer to call of Semipalmated.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe, Azores). In natural range, breeds on drier tundra among damp, grassy areas with pools and lakes. At other times, tidal mudflats, sandy beaches and muddy margins of freshwater pools.

RED-NECKED STINT *Calidris ruficollis*

Rufous-necked Stint

L 13–16 cm, WS 35–38 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Vagrant from E Asia (breeding NE Siberia). Averages shorter-legged and more attenuated at rear end than Little Stint, with slightly shorter and blunter bill, longer tail (which often projects slightly beyond closed wingtips) and longer projection of primaries beyond tertials, but much individual variation. **Adult summer** similar to summer Little Stint, but throat almost unmarked pinkish-red to brick-red (not whitish) and ground colour to breast sides whitish (usually rufous in Little); like Little, shows variability in intensity of rufous on head and rest of upperparts and in prominence of mantle 'V', but latter typically absent in Red-necked. Many Little are very rufous on upper breast, head and neck, but throat is always whitish; rufous of foreneck/upper breast is dark-spotted, unlike Red-necked. Wing coverts and tertials

have rather pale, grey-brown feather centres and narrow whitish fringes (Little shows dark feather centres and broad rufous fringes); only scapulars stand out as a rufous area on Red-necked, while Little looks rufous right across mantle, scapulars and wings. Summer Sanderling confusingly similar in coloration, but has rusty-brown of throat and breast invaded by dark markings (Red-necked has band of dark arrowhead-shaped spots on whitish background immediately below unmarked reddish throat and upper foreneck), lacks hind-toe, has longer and wider wing bar (extending well across primaries), and is larger (but beware lone migrants, especially at inland waters on passage, where size difficult to assess). In close view, scapulars of Sanderling show broad rusty-brown bands across dark centres and dark centres of tertials likewise

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invaded by rusty-brown areas. **Adult winter** extremely similar to winter Little, marginally differing in structure (see above), but has tendency to have narrower dark centres to scapulars, whiter breast centre and slightly paler, cleaner grey appearance above. Voice a useful distinction (see below). **Juvenile** usually duller and less rufous than juvenile Little (but both vary). Typical individuals differ in having slightly shorter bill, usually much less prominent white 'V' on mantle, smaller and more diffuse markings at sides of breast, anchor-shaped or droplet-shaped blackish subterminal marks to largely pale-centred lower scapulars and grey-brown (less blackish) centres to wing coverts and tertials, the latter being edged dull buffish (not rufous); also differs from Little in having paler and duller crown (lacking rufous tones or well-defined narrow pale fork to supercilium above eye), and more uniform ear-coverts (lacking slightly paler area behind eye shown by most Little); head pattern is duller overall (dark loreal stripe and darkish central crown ridge being the most prominent features). Breast is usually tinged grey, often forming a diffuse pectoral band. Beware some individuals with more Little-like appearance above with largely dark-centred lower scapulars and rufous fringes to wing coverts and tertials; these tend to be less blackish on lower scapular centres than Little, with paler centres to coverts and tertials and more diffuse, less contrasting pale fringes (rufous often restricted to tips, while Little usually shows rufous edges and whitish tips). Many of the features of juvenile Red-necked make confusion more likely with juvenile Semipalmated; dullest (most worn) birds lack the more obvious rufous on scapulars that differentiate many individuals and are separable only with care, the most useful feature being the ridge of darker streaking at crown centre contrasting with paler crown sides, the latter diffusing into upper edge of duller supercilium. Semipalmated has uniformly dark streaking over the whole crown (which is often con-

trastingly rufous, a feature never shown by Red-necked) and a clearer supercilium. Additionally, Red-necked often has a pale greyish breast band (breast centre whiter in Semipalmated) and has slightly longer primary projection and slightly shorter legs, and of course lacks the partial toe webbing. Many Semipalmated are longer-billed. Juvenile Western also fairly similar, but usually has longer (often much longer) bill, frequently with slight decurve, and typically has even more strongly contrasting rufous on upper scapulars, a paler face (with narrower dark loreal stripe and a more prominent supercilium) and a whiter centre to breast, with more defined dark streaking; as with Semipalmated, has partial toe webbing. **1st-summer** rather variable, with some resembling adult winter and others adult summer. A few look similar to adult summer Semipalmated, but show little or no dark streaking on lower face, neck and upper breast, and often have some rufous on head and scapulars. See also structural differences described above.

SEX/AGE Female averages slightly larger than male. Autumn adults show mixture of old and fresh plumage, but juveniles are fresh-plumaged with more delicately patterned upperparts and finer markings on breast; latter start to moult *en route* to winter quarters. 1st-winter birds may be aged by worn retained wing coverts and tertials in early winter, but are less easy to age than Little Stint at this time owing to duller coloration of these feathers. 1st-summer: see Identification.

VOICE Typical flight call, 'creep' or 'creek', is similar to that of Semipalmated Sandpiper, but slightly thinner, shriller and higher in pitch (slightly shorter and lower in pitch than that of Western Sandpiper). Compare with call of Little Stint (which is shorter and lacks slight 'r' sound).

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Europe). In natural range, breeds on drier tundra near damp grassy areas with pools or lakes. At other times, tidal mudflats and muddy margins of freshwater pools.

LITTLE STINT *Calidris minuta*

L 12–14 cm, WS 34–37 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Our smallest common wader, much smaller and with shorter and straighter bill than Dunlin. The blackish legs prevent confusion with most Temminck's Stints and vagrant Least Sandpiper and Long-toed Stint (but see those species for discussion).

Adult summer is warm rusty-brown above, with rusty wash on neck and breast contrasting with whitish throat; the upperparts have extensive blackish feather centres and the pale yellowish mantle 'V' is usually apparent, but less obvious than in juveniles (compare with vagrant Red-necked). Some worn adults in late summer can suggest small version of summer Sanderling, but they lack rusty-brown bars across dark centres of scapulars and rusty-brown areas invading dark tertial centres shown by latter and are finer-billed and more delicate overall. **Adult winter** is whiter below and purer grey above than winter Dunlin, recalling winter Sanderling in plumage and bill shape, but is much smaller and shorter-billed, and has a darker loreal stripe than Sanderling; vagrant Red-necked Stint and Semipalmated and Western Sandpipers (q.v.) are extremely similar. **Juvenile** has upperparts strongly patterned with rufous or greyish-buff edges to black-centred feathers, contrasting with bright white of lower underparts and throat and pale grey hindneck; the mantle has a distinct whitish stripe at each side, forming a pale 'V' when viewed from behind. Brightest birds in this plumage, with rufous edges to tertials



and wing coverts, are unlikely to be mistaken, but duller birds are easily confused with vagrant Semipalmated Sandpiper and Red-necked Stint (q.v.). Feeds by

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picking at surface of mud and wading in shallows, actions being quicker and more 'nervous' than those of Dunlin. Often very confiding, especially lone birds, but normally very sociable, forming large gatherings on passage and in winter in east of our region (smaller parties occur in western parts); also mixes freely with other small waders. In flight, shows a narrow white central wing bar and dark centre to rump and upper-tail coverts reminiscent of Dunlin. Flight action is rapid, with sharper twists and turns than Dunlin. On breeding grounds, displays with aerial song flight. Compare also with vagrant Baird's Sandpiper.

SEX/AGE Female averages slightly larger than male. See Identification for main plumages. 1st-winter may

be aged by worn retained wing coverts and tertials up to mid-winter. 1st-summer birds variable: some acquire summer plumage, whereas others remain in winter dress.

VOICE Flight call a sharp, staccato 'kip' or 'tit', higher in pitch and weaker than call of Sanderling. On breeding grounds, utters repeated 'sweet-sweet-sweet' during aerial display or from ground.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common (but uncommon as breeding species except in extreme northeast of our region). Breeds fairly close to pools and lakes, often in drier tundra or grassy areas. At other times, saline lakes, estuaries, salt pans and coastal lagoons; also found at freshwater lakes (especially on passage).

TEMMINCK'S STINT *Calidris temminckii*

L 13–15 cm, WS 34–37 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Plain brownish stint with long, 'low-slung' and often comparatively stocky appearance. Almost unmarked mouse-brown head, breast and upperparts in most plumages, coupled with short yellowish (greenish-yellow to brownish-yellow) legs and rather long tail projecting beyond wingtips, provide easy distinctions from Little Stint. Adult summer, particularly when fresh, can look a little more variegated, having dark centres to feathers of mantle and scapulars, and some cinnamon fringes to upperparts, but never has warm rusty-brown tone of Little Stint. In many respects recalls a miniature Common Sandpiper. Only other stints with yellowish legs are vagrant Least Sandpiper and Long-toed; both, however, are boldly streaked on upperparts, have short rear end and may recall miniature Pectoral Sandpiper. Baird's Sandpiper is similarly short-legged and long-reared, but has black legs and prominently dark-scalloped upperparts (not the fine scaling of juvenile Temminck's). Usually found singly or in very small groups, generally feeding on mud of freshwater pools and marshes; avoids tidal mudflats. In flight a typical stint, but wing bar narrower than in Little, not extending onto primaries; when flushed, towers high (others tend to dash off low), uttering stuttering trilled call. Diagnostic white outer tail feathers may be visible as tail fanned when alighting. On breeding grounds, displays with low circular flight on trembling wings, held in a 'V', and fanned tail.

SEX/AGE Adult summer has dark-centred mantle and scapular feathers, lacking in other plumages. Juvenile differs from adult winter in having feathers of upperparts narrowly scaled with pale buff fringes and fine dark subterminal lines, but inseparable from adult by early winter.

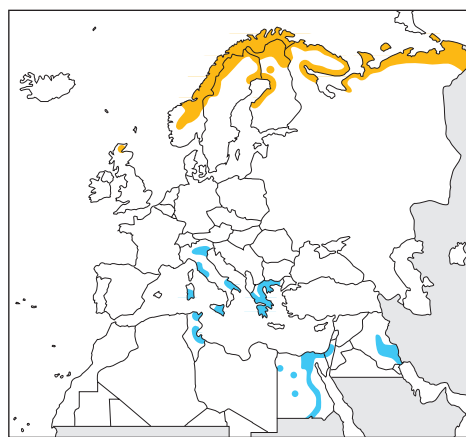


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VOICE Usual flight call a distinctive high-pitched, stuttering, trilled 'tirr' or more prolonged 'tirr-r-r', which may be repeated several times. In display, utters a rhythmic rising and falling continuous trilling (vaguely recalling Grasshopper Warbler, but far more musical, less mechanical).

STATUS/HABITAT Generally rather uncommon. (Only a sporadic or very scarce breeder in Scotland. Most winter south of the Sahara.) Breeds in rather open sandy, stony or grassy areas near inlets, rivers or streams. At other times, prefers freshwater marshes and lakeshores, ponds, irrigation pools and also upper reaches of tidal estuaries; tends to avoid saline habitats (only occasionally visits tidal mudflats).

LONG-TOED STINT *Calidris subminuta*

L 12–13 cm, WS 33–35 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Vagrant from E Asia (breeding E Siberia). A strongly patterned, rather dark-looking stint with pale legs (olive-yellow to brownish-yellow) and short, fine bill (which often looks slightly decurved owing to concave outline to lower mandible). Extremely similar to Least Sandpiper, and safely separable only after careful interpretation of subtle structural and plumage features. Long-toed tends to look less compact, with distinctly longer legs and slightly smaller head, slightly shorter bill and longer neck, but much depends on stance; both adopt crouching stance when feeding and 'leggy', long-necked appear-

ance when alert, although Long-toed often carries latter to an extreme, standing very upright with craning neck when alarmed. Both species have longer toes than other stints, with Long-toed having longest toes of all (in exceptionally good view, middle toe can be seen to be clearly longer than bill, whereas it is about same length in Least). Base of lower mandible is usually paler (orange-brown) in Long-toed, while bill is almost always all blackish in Least. **Adult summer** is very similar to equivalent plumage of Least, although Long-toed tends to be rustier on scapulars, tertials and crown (but some Least can match them, although

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most have narrower, paler rufous fringes to scapulars and tertials). Head pattern differs subtly: supercilium is often more prominent and is almost always split, with an upper narrow segment forming a lateral crown-stripe (a feature only rarely seen in Least); supercilia do not meet on forehead (they are usually narrowly interconnected on Least); dark loreal stripe is narrower (often broken) and malar area below is less heavily streaked. The breast sides are clearly more lightly spotted and streaked in Long-toed and markings extend well onto flanks (in Least markings are heavier and more triangular, but barely reach flanks).

Adult winter may be separated by same head pattern differences as for adult summer; when fresh, winter Long-toed has bolder scapular pattern, with blackish feather centres and clear wide pale edges (looks scalloped), whereas Least has dark central streak and narrower pale edges to brownish-grey feathers (looks streaked), but differences less marked in abraded birds. **Juvenile** plumages differ more widely. Head pattern difference is more marked and consistent than in adults; Least has an evenly broad dusky loreal stripe from eye to bill, separated from forehead by whitish supercilium; the supercilia narrowly meet above base of bill. On Long-toed, however, loreal stripe is less defined: it forms a brown crescent immediately in front of eye, is then constricted or even broken, and then becomes a smudge which connects with the dark forehead, preventing supercilium from reaching base of bill (the supercilium terminates in a distinct whitish blob behind dark forehead feathering). Split supercilium of adults is only occasionally noticeable in juvenile Long-toed. The upper ear-coverts are slightly darker and more uniform in Least (Long-toed is pale behind the eye, becoming darker on rear upper ear-coverts). In fresh plumage, Long-toed has a bright rusty-capped appearance (recalling Sharp-tailed Sandpiper) created by pale neck and nape (this can, however, be approached by Least). The mantle is evenly striped blackish and rufous (and white), while in Least mantle is more scalloped and becomes blacker with

wear. The white mantle 'V' is bold and clear in Long-toed (suggesting Little Stint), but becomes thinner and more broken with wear (as in Least); in fresh plumage, there is distinct contrast between the whiter-edged wing coverts and rusty-edged scapulars, whereas in Least the wing covert and scapular edging is rather uniform pale rufous. (In exceptional view, look for dark shaft streaks breaking pale fringes at feather tips in Long-toed.) Breast markings extend further at sides, reaching fore flanks on Long-toed, and consist of finer streaking; on Least the breast markings hardly reach flanks and are slightly coarser at sides, formed by lines of spots. Both may be almost unstreaked on centre of breast, but this feature is more indicative of Long-toed. Both can recall miniature Pectoral Sandpiper. In all plumages differs from Temminck's Stint in having longer legs, more strongly patterned upperparts and short rear end, with wingtips falling level with tail tip (longer-bodied Temminck's has tail tip projecting beyond wingtips); in adult summer and juvenile plumage, much more richly coloured above. Beware birds with mud-covered legs that appear dark-legged and invite confusion with other stints. Behaviour as that of Least, but less inclined to feed on open mud, tending to feed in close proximity to vegetation. In flight, very similar to Least but wing bar even weaker, especially on inner primaries, and the tips of the toes project slightly beyond tail (usually very difficult to see).

SEX/AGE Juvenile easily separable from drab winter adult; told from birds in worn adult summer plumage by fresher feathering, more rounded dark centres to scapulars and slightly finer streaking on breast. 1st-winter may be aged in same way as for Least.

VOICE Usual call lower in pitch and more disyllabic than that of Least, a soft, liquid 'kurrip' recalling Curlew Sandpiper.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Europe). In natural range, breeds in freshwater marshes, by pools in wet meadows among forest and in damp, marshy tundra. At other times, freshwater or brackish pools, lakes and marshes; sometimes found on sheltered tidal mudflats.

LEAST SANDPIPER *Calidris minutilla*

L 11–12 cm, WS 32–34 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. A very small dark stint with pale legs (pinkish, through olive-yellow to dull brownish) and fine bill. Extremely similar to Long-toed Stint, of which it is the N American counterpart. Differs from somewhat larger Temminck's Stint in having longer legs, more strongly patterned upperparts and short rear end, with wingtips falling level with tail tip (longer-bodied Temminck's has tail tip projecting beyond wingtips). In summer plumage, has clear demarcation between streaked breast and white lower underparts as in Pectoral Sandpiper, of which it is a veritable miniature, but primary projection beyond tertials minimal in Least (marked in Pectoral). Juvenile brighter, with rusty edges to blackish feather centres recalling juvenile Little Stint, but whitish 'V' on mantle narrower, primary projection shorter, bill finer and legs yellowish (not blackish). In all plumages, main confusion is with Long-toed Stint, differences between the two being discernible only after prolonged close views (see Long-toed for discussion). Beware individuals with mud-covered legs that appear dark-legged, inviting confusion with other stints. Likely to be found mixed with other small waders at muddy freshwater pools. When feeding on mud, often adopts crouched stance with knees flexed, but freely wades in shallows with

body more upright, when may appear more 'leggy' than Little. In flight a typical stint, but wings blunter and wing bar narrower than in Little, especially in worn plumage, and blackish centre to rump and uppertail coverts wider than in Little; wing bar shows weakly on inner primaries (compare with Long-toed).

SEX/AGE Female averages slightly longer-billed than male. See Identification for summary of juvenile and adult summer. Adult winter dull brownish grey, paler and greyer than summer, with narrower dark feather centres to upperparts and faintly streaked and mottled breast band. 1st-winter retains blacker juvenile tertials and wing coverts (all of which are more narrowly pale-edged than adult, or are more abraded) until early winter.

VOICE Usual call when flushed is a short series of thin, high 'kreeep' or 'breeep' notes, rising in inflection; also gives a lower, more vibrant 'prrr'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Europe, Azores, Cape Verde Is). In natural range, breeds in open tundra with pools, moist areas near muddy inlets and in marshy areas surrounded by forest. At other times, favours muddy freshwater and brackish pools and marshes; also occurs on mudflats in upper reaches of tidal estuaries. Only infrequently on sandy beaches.

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WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER *Calidris fuscicollis***Plate page 365**

L 15–18 cm, WS 40–45 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Resembles small Dunlin, but long dark primaries reach further beyond tertials, extending beyond tail tip (wingtips often cross); tail and wingtip more or less equal in Dunlin, which has shorter primaries. Also smaller-headed than Dunlin, with shorter legs and bill (both are blackish as in Dunlin, the bill with a slight but distinct decurve, mainly owing to concave outline of lower mandible which has indistinct pale area at base). Shape suggests Baird's Sandpiper, but White-rumped tends to have slightly more decurved and blunter-tipped bill with pale area at base of lower mandible (lacking in Baird's). In all plumages is greyer, less buff, than Baird's and has clean white band across uppertail coverts (a feature shared only with Curlew Sandpiper among the *Calidris*). **Adult summer** is heavily scaled on upperparts with dark-scalloped feather centres, but unlike Baird's has rufous tinge to crown and ear-coverts, and rusty edges to upper scapulars and feathers of mantle. Ground colour of head, neck and breast whitish (buffish in Baird's); supercilium usually more prominent; lines of dark markings form rather uniform breast band and extend as short streaks along flanks (sides of breast more heavily marked in Baird's, which usually lacks streaking on flanks). Very fresh birds can lack rufous tones above, but these show brownish-grey tips to scapulars (tips are buffish in Baird's). **Adult winter** much greyer and plainer than summer adult or juvenile, resembling winter Dunlin in colour (in autumn, has scattered retained old blackish feathers on scapulars). Compared with Baird's is greyer, less buffish above and on breast, with finer streaking on latter and sparse fine streaks along flanks (absent in Baird's); often has a long, narrow, rather obvious whitish supercilium (and supercilia often meet on forehead). **Juvenile** is not unlike adult summer and looks more variegated than juvenile Baird's. Usually has rufous tinge to crown and ear-coverts (contrasting with greyish neck) and rufous fringes to upper scapulars and mantle feathers; Baird's lacks these tones and has rather uniform, neatly-scalloped upperparts with buffy-white feather fringes. Ground colour of head/

neck (except chin/throat) and breast pale greyish (buffish in Baird's) with similar difference in breast pattern as for summer adults, although dark markings are finer and less distinct in both species. Flank streaks are few and inconspicuous in juvenile White-rumped (usually absent in Baird's), and both species consequently have rather obvious cut-off between streaked breast and white lower underparts. White-rumped often shows distinctly paler bases to lower scapulars (contrast only slight in Baird's) and usually has less prominent pale spot above anterior lore. Mixes freely with other small waders, feeding with quick delicate probing and picking actions; gait more brisk than Baird's, on slightly longer legs. In flight, looks distinctly longer-winged than most other small *Calidris* (except Baird's), with diagnostic white horseshoe across uppertail coverts (narrower than in Curlew Sandpiper); wing bar narrower than that of Dunlin. Compare also with Curlew Sandpiper and vagrant juvenile Western and Sharp-tailed Sandpipers.

SEX/AGE Adult summer has bolder, blacker streaking on neck and breast than juvenile, streaks clearly extending along flanks; ear-coverts rufous. Adult winter plainer, greyer and less scaled, upperpart feathers with slightly darker centres and dark shaft streaks; does not acquire this plumage until arrival in winter quarters, autumn adults being drab greyish, with dark patches where worn blackish scapulars retained, more pointed (worn) tertials and shorter (worn), but still noticeable, primary extension. Juvenile uniformly fresh and brighter and more contrasting than autumn adults; has faintly marked neck and breast, washed buffy-grey, the pale nape producing capped effect.

VOICE Usual flight call a shrill, thin, squeaky, almost insect-like 'theet' or 'tzreet', often repeated and quite unlike calls of other small waders.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Europe, Spitsbergen, Azores, Madeira, Canary Is). In natural range, breeds on grassy tundra near freshwater pools, often feeding on nearby beaches. At other times, favours brackish pools and lagoons and upper reaches of estuaries, but also occurs at freshwater pools and open lakeshores.

BAIRD'S SANDPIPER *Calidris bairdii***Plate page 365**

L 14–17 cm, WS 40–46 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Between stints and Dunlin in size, with rather squat, attenuated appearance created by short legs and long wings; the long dark primaries reach far beyond tertials, projecting well beyond tail tip (wingtips often crossing), while tail and wingtips are more or less equal in Dunlin, which has shorter primaries. Elongated shape also shared by vagrant White-rumped Sandpiper (q.v.), with which it can easily be confused unless 'rump' pattern discerned. Relatively smaller-headed and shorter-billed than Dunlin; both legs and bill are black, the latter finer and shorter than in Dunlin, although often with slight decurve. Overall appearance buffish, heavily scaled on upperparts with dark-scalloped feather centres and contrasting whitish fringes; head and breast buffish, with lines of fine dark markings (bolder and blacker on breast in adults) forming clear breast band that contrasts with clean white lower underparts. Combination of overall buffish (not rufous) and heavily scaled upperparts, finely streaked breast band and unmarked lower underparts, coupled with long, squat shape, makes this wader quite distinctive. Beware

Temminck's Stint, which also appears to have long rear end, but this impression created by long brownish tail (not by primaries); Temminck's is soon separated by paler (often yellowish) legs and (except in fresh summer plumage) almost plain upperparts. Mixes freely with other small waders, although favours drier margins of shallow freshwater pools, walking with horizontal carriage on flexed legs; when alert, holds head up but keeps body near horizontal. In flight, looks distinctly longer-winged than most other small *Calidris* (except White-rumped), with broad dark central stripe on rump and uppertail coverts (looks darker-rumped than Dunlin) and a whitish wing bar (usually less obvious than in Dunlin). Underwing whitish, but with wide dusky shade along leading edge (whiter in Dunlin). Compare also with juvenile Semipalmated Sandpiper.

SEX/AGE All plumages similar. Adult summer has blacker, coarser breast markings (largest at breast sides) and more pointed black feather centres to scapulars than juvenile. Adult winter duller and browner, less scaled, upperpart feathers with slightly darker centres and dark shaft streaks; does not acquire

this plumage until arrival in winter quarters, autumn adults being patched with dark owing to retained blackish scapulars and having more pointed (worn) tertials and shorter (worn), but still noticeable, primary extension. Juvenile is pale buff with particularly fine breast streaking, often broken at centre of breast.

VOICE Usual flight call a soft, rolling 'kyrrp' or

'krreep', softer than call of Curlew Sandpiper.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Europe, Azores). In natural range, breeds on dry and sometimes rocky tundra, often in uplands. At other times, favours margins of freshwater pools, lakes and reservoirs (frequently at high altitude), especially where fringed by short grass-land; less often coastal beaches or estuaries.

PECTORAL SANDPIPER *Calidris melanotos*

L 19–23 cm, WS 42–49 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Vagrant from across the Atlantic or N Siberia. Larger, longer-bodied and with relatively longer neck, smaller head and shorter bill in comparison with Dunlin. In some respects not unlike small Ruff, especially in flight, but stance and build typical of *Calidris*. Differs from other similar-sized waders in having sharp division between evenly streaked breast and clean white lower underparts, and in having greenish-yellow to brownish-yellow legs. Fairly long bill has yellowish-brown or greenish-brown basal third. Most vagrants are bright-plumaged juveniles with conspicuous rufous fringes to scapulars, tertials and crown and have narrow whitish lines along sides of mantle (like Little Stint), but these wear narrower and rufous-buff tones of plumage become duller later in autumn. In all plumages, is evenly streaked on sides of head and from foreneck to lower breast, although some juveniles are only weakly streaked at breast centre and can suggest much rarer Sharp-tailed Sandpiper (q.v.). See also Long-toed Stint and Least Sandpiper (both being veritable miniatures of Pectoral Sandpiper). Favours freshwater pools with grassy edges, often preferring to feed close to cover rather than out in open. Mixes little with other waders, although occasionally turns up in small parties which keep close together. Unlike most *Calidris*, males are markedly larger than females, although this apparent only when the two viewed together. Long-winged appearance obvious in flight, and this combined with much weaker wing bar than in most *Calidris* strongly

suggests a small Ruff, but feet do not project beyond tail and flight lacks languid beats of Ruff. Flushed birds tend to tower high and fly off for a considerable distance, although usually soon return to favoured feeding spots. Compare with summer Purple Sandpiper.

SEX/AGE Male larger than female, and has fine black and white spotting at breast centre in summer plumage (generally looking darker-breasted than female, especially when worn). Adult summer, compared with juvenile, has greyer ground colour to head, neck and breast (with very fine streaking), upperparts less rufous, dark-capped appearance and whiter chin; legs duller, brownish-yellow. Adult winter duller, with least rufous in plumage. Juvenile strongly patterned above, with much rufous in feather fringes, whitish lines at side of mantle, indistinct supercilium and slightly darker, rufous-streaked cap, but becomes appreciably duller with wear later in autumn, losing whitish mantle 'V' and rufous tones; thus, ageing difficult by late autumn.

VOICE Invariably calls when flushed, a rolling 'kirrp' or 'chyrk', not unlike call of Curlew Sandpiper but rather harsher.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Europe, Spitsbergen, Bear Is, Azores, Madeira, N Africa, Middle East). In natural range, breeds in both dry and damp grassy tundra, usually near pools. At other times, favours freshwater lakes and pools with grassy margins and short grass-land; less often at brackish saltmarsh pools and saline lagoons. Mostly avoids open tidal mudflats.

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SHARP-TAILED SANDPIPER *Calidris acuminata*

L 17–21 cm, WS 42–48 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Vagrant from E Asia (breeding NE Siberia). Similar in size and shape to Pectoral Sandpiper, but averages slightly smaller and legs (typically greenish-yellow) slightly longer, crown flatter and bill slightly shorter (and less tapered). Unlike Pectoral, has marked seasonal and age differences in plumage, but all plumages lack intense streaking on neck and breast that gives way abruptly to whitish lower underparts in Pectoral. Sharp-tailed has brighter, rufous-chestnut crown (but difference less marked in winter plumage) which contrasts with whiter and more distinct supercilium, and most show dark marks on undertail coverts as well as flanks. Some juvenile Pectoral are almost unstreaked at centre of breast, suggesting Sharp-tailed, but show uniformly fine streaking on buffish background on foreneck, sides of head, throat and supercilium (juvenile Sharp-tailed has whitish supercilium, throat and lower ear-coverts); Pectoral has weak streaks along flanks (often hidden) which do not extend onto undertail coverts, but adult winter Sharp-tailed often similarly unmarked. Pale eye-ring is more prominent and so usually is dark patch on ear-coverts; bill is usually mostly dark, with pinkish base to lower mandible (sometimes both mandibles). **Adult summer** unlike any

other small wader, with streaking and spotting on neck and breast breaking into bold chevrons over most of remainder of underparts; this, coupled with dark-centred upperpart feathers, gives the bird the appearance of being spotted and scaled all over, the only relief being the chestnut crown and base colour to upperparts and breast. Unlike summer Pectoral, has prominent whitish eye-ring. **Adult winter** is drabber than Pectoral and has sparingly fine-streaked foreneck and breast (not forming clear-cut band above whitish lower underparts); in some, the markings extend more boldly along flanks to undertail coverts (but many have flanks and undertail unmarked). Drabness of plumage relieved only by whitish supercilium and rufous-chestnut crown (winter Pectoral has whitish supercilium also, but crown is much duller). **Juvenile** looks quite different from Pectoral if foreparts seen well: has distinctive rich rufous-chestnut crown, bordered below by white supercilium (widest behind eye); the underparts are very white, washed orange-buff across breast, and the only markings are the rather fine dark streaks at the breast sides, often extending as a narrow necklace across lower neck. Rear flanks and undertail coverts often show some fine dark streaks, unlike

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juvenile Pectoral. Behaviour much as that of Pectoral. In flight, shares shape and upperside pattern of Pectoral, but underparts lack breast-band effect and toes project slightly beyond tail tip (hard to see). Compare also with Ruff and adult summer Purple Sandpiper.

SEX/AGE Male somewhat larger than female. See Identification for plumages.

VOICE Call slightly less reedy than that of Pectoral, a

soft 'wheep'. Also gives a twittering 'prrt-wheep-wheep', recalling Barn Swallow.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe, Canary Is). In natural range, breeds in wet tundra with drier hummocks covered in dwarf willows. At other times, favours freshwater lakes and pools and damp grassland, but also occurs freely on estuarine mudflats and brackish lagoons.

CURLEW SANDPIPER *Calidris ferruginea*

L 18–23 cm, WS 42–46 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Small, sociable wader, with noticeably decurved bill. Adult winter and juvenile plumages are easily confused with Dunlin; by comparison, Curlew Sandpiper stands taller on longer legs and typically has slightly longer and more curved bill (but beware marked racial variation in Dunlin, some populations of which are close to Curlew Sandpiper in shape and size). **Adult summer** unmistakable, as chestnut-red of head and underparts shared only by larger, bulkier (less rounded), shorter-legged and shorter-, thicker- and straighter-billed adult summer Red Knot (compare also with adult summer Red Phalarope). **Adult winter** plumage very like Dunlin but a little paler, less brownish-grey, and with longer, whiter supercilium; breast paler than in most winter Dunlin, but both rather variable and identity often confirmed only by sight of white rump. **Juvenile** is much paler and cleaner than autumn Dunlin, with clearer supercilium and eye-stripe and brighter white, almost unmarked underparts (sides of neck and breast only finely and weakly streaked) enhanced by peachy-buff wash over breast when plumage fresh; by comparison, Dunlin shows browner, streaked breast band and at least some spotting on lower breast and belly. The upperparts are marked with rounded dark centres to scapulars, which have narrow whitish fringes (Dunlin has blacker and more pointed scapular markings, edged rufous-buff, and shows whiter lines at side of darker mantle when plumage fresh). Feeds in small parties on open mud by surface-picking and shallow probing, or by wading in shallow water; when wading, tends to crane neck forwards. Mixes freely with other small waders, especially Dunlin. In flight, easily separated from Dunlin by clear white lower rump; this combined with whitish wing bar separates it from other white-rumped waders except Red Knot (bulkier, with rump merely pale grey) and vagrant White-rumped Sandpiper (thinner-winged, narrower U-shaped white band). Compare with vagrant Stilt Sandpiper and White-rumped Sandpiper.

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SEX/AGE See Identification for plumage summary. Fresh summer adult has whitish feather fringes, partly obscuring or giving scaled effect to red plumage, which disappear with wear during spring migration; adults are patchy-looking during late summer and autumn, not gaining full winter plumage until October. Juveniles do not begin to moult until late September and partially retain worn juvenile features into mid-winter. 1st-summer birds remain in winter plumage or merely acquire patches of summer plumage.

VOICE Flight call less rasping than that of Dunlin, a soft, rippled 'kirrip'.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. (Mainly recorded on passage. Breeds N Siberian tundra to east of our region, wintering mainly south of the Sahara or in S Asia/Australasia.) Breeds in moist grassy tundra near pools, or nearby drier areas. At other times, favours tidal mudflats, saltpans and brackish coastal lagoons, also freshwater pools and lakeshores.

PURPLE SANDPIPER *Calidris maritima*

L 20–22 cm, WS 42–46 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Closely associated with rocky coasts for most of year. Slightly larger and stockier than a Dunlin. Readily told in winter dress from other small waders by combination of dark grey plumage, short orange-yellow legs and bill base, and plump shape. In summer plumage, similarly dark but legs and bill base often duskiest and has diffuse whitish supercilium and more mottled and streaked plumage; feathers of mantle and scapulars acquire blackish centres and are edged with rusty and white marks. Unlikely to be confused in normal habitats, but stray individuals turning up at inland sites can be perplexing (and in summer or juvenile plumage might possibly be mistaken for vagrant Sharp-tailed Sandpiper,

q.v.). In winter, often very difficult to see as it feeds in small scattered groups among seaweed-covered rocks, picking and probing into crevices; often first noticed as it flutters up to avoid wave splash or jumps across a gap between rocks. Readily mixes with Ruddy Turnstones and is generally rather tame and unwary. Very hardy, some wintering far to the north of all other waders. In flight, darker than Dunlin, with clear narrow white bar along secondaries, extending weakly onto inner primaries; dark head and breast contrast strongly with white belly. Flight typically low over water, steady and direct, lacking twists and turns of other small waders. On breeding grounds, has circular rising and falling display, rising with fluttering beats,

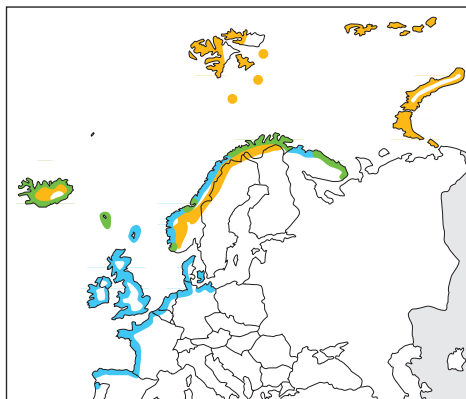
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gliding and falling with wings raised in a 'V'.

SEX/AGE See Identification for adult plumages. Juvenile resembles adult summer, but has less rufous above, with neater and clearer pale edging to wing feathers, neater pattern on scapulars (more rounded black feather centres), sharper but smaller streaks at sides of breast and whiter lower underparts. In autumn, adults have worn, unpatterned wings, quite distinct from scaled pattern of young birds. 1st-winter birds may be aged by retained juvenile wing coverts to mid-winter. 1st-summer birds retain old, worn juvenile wing feathers.

VOICE Flight call a short, liquid 'kut'. Utters a variety of buzzing and wheezing trills and low moans during display on breeding grounds.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally fairly common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Britain.) Breeds in stony tundra, often in uplands and well inland, but sometimes in wet tundra; feeds mainly along shorelines. Winters along exposed rocky coasts, locally on breakwaters and piers; exceptionally at estuaries and inland waters on passage.

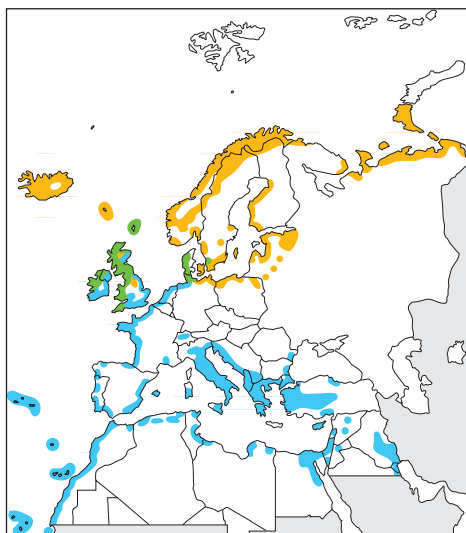


DUNLIN *Calidris alpina*

L 16–22 cm, WS 38–45 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Most abundant small wader of our region; very sociable. Overall impression is of a small dumpy wader with relatively long, gently decurved black bill, black legs and insignificant projection of dark primary tips beyond tertials (these are key features to check when faced with an apparently unfamiliar *Calidris*). Dunlin, however, exhibits a confusing variation in size, bill length and leg length; largest birds tend to have the longest legs and bills (suggesting Curlew Sandpiper) and the smallest birds the shortest (compare with vagrant Western Sandpiper). **Adult summer** is easily identified by large black belly patch. **Adult winter** is almost unmarked grey-brown with white lower underparts. A number of other small waders are very similar, but the combination of longish, obviously decurved bill, dark stripe down centre of rump patch and clear white wing bar is shown only by Dunlin. **Juvenile** has black belly patch of summer adults indicated by blackish spotting on fore flanks and sides of lower breast and belly in juveniles, this not being seen in any other small wader. As autumn advances, juveniles gradually lose this spotting (indeed, it is weaker in juveniles of the smaller races). In full 1st-winter plumage, which is almost identical to adult winter, spotting is absent. Very fresh juveniles have clear whitish 'V' on mantle, and their brightly patterned upperparts, with rufous-brown and rusty-yellow feather fringes, can suggest Pectoral Sandpiper or even Little Stint, but concentration on belly pattern, bill shape and leg colour will resolve the issue. Where large gatherings occur Dunlins seem to 'swarm' over defined areas of mudflats, although not so closely bunched as flocks of Red Knot. They walk quite quickly as they feed, picking or shallowly probing rapidly at the surface; chiefly on open mud, but freely wade in shallows. On the breeding grounds, has low display flight with quivering wingbeats interspersed with glides. In flight, shows clear white bar along centre of wing and dark centre to uppertail coverts, the wing bar being bolder than in most other members of the genus, but less so than in Sanderling. Flight rapid and low when flushed. Larger flocks perform spectacular aerial convolutions *en masse*, twisting and turning in unison to flash their white undersides. Compare with all other members of genus and with Broad-billed Sandpiper.

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SEX/AGE Female averages larger than male. Adult male summer shows contrast between paler nape and rufous mantle in most races (more uniform in females). See Identification for summary of main plumages. In autumn, juveniles begin to acquire greyish feathering on scapulars by late August, but juvenile wing coverts retained into early winter, when otherwise as adult. 1st-summer birds vary: some look as adult breeding, others retain almost all winter plumage, still others acquire incomplete belly patch and have browner, streaked upperparts.

VOICE Flight call distinctive, a shrill, rasping 'kreeep', but feeding birds give a low 'beep'. On breeding grounds, utters longer, reedy, descending trilled whistles during display and a low 'wurt-wurt-wurt' when alarmed.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Complex. At least 3 races, differing in size, bill length, and intensity of red in upperparts and brown or buff tones to breast in

summer plumage (nominate, *schinzii*, *arctica* and *sakhalina* illustrated). Nominative race occurs over most of our region, replaced by smaller, shorter-billed *schinzii* in Baltic, SW Norway, British Is, Faeroes and Iceland (winters NW Africa), which has yellowish tinge to red of upperparts (rusty-red in nominate race) and less white ground colour to foreneck and breast. Summer females of *schinzii* often have reduced black on belly and juveniles can show little or no black spotting on sides. Even smaller and shorter-billed and yellowish-rufous above is race *arctica* (on passage from NE Greenland breeding area through west of our region, wintering W Africa). Longer-billed, long-legged birds (suggesting Curlew Sandpiper) occur in the Middle East and are presumed to be from more eastern popu-

lations of nominate race which approach E Siberian race *sakhalina* (perhaps recorded as vagrant to NW Europe); this form has very white ground colour to neck and breast and bright orange-red upperparts. N American race *hudsonia*, similarly large and likely as a vagrant, differs from others in having breast streaking extending finely along flanks to undertail coverts.

STATUS/HABITAT Common (locally abundant on passage and in wintering areas). (In addition to mapped range, has bred Spitsbergen, Bear Is, N France, Netherlands.) Breeds on boggy tundra or moorland, often close to pools, also locally in moist coastal grasslands and saltmarshes. At other times, chiefly on tidal mudflats, but also brackish lagoons, salt pans and sandy beaches, and locally freshwater lakes.

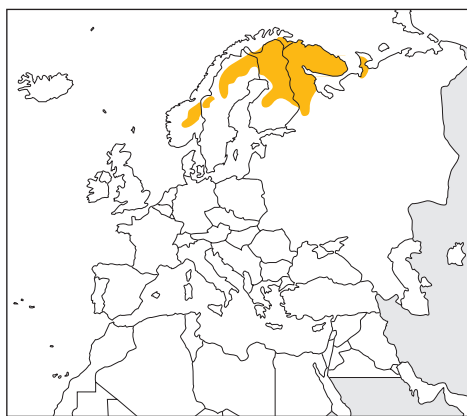
BROAD-BILLED SANDPIPER *Limicola falcinellus*

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L 16–18 cm, WS 37–39 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Uncommon small sandpiper. Smaller, shorter-legged and longer-bodied than Dunlin, with long bill creating a rather front-heavy appearance. Bill shape Dunlin-like, although relatively straighter over basal portion, becoming gently downwards-bent towards tip. Often suggests a large stint with an outsize, Dunlin-like bill rather than a small Dunlin. **Adult summer and Juvenile** are very dark brown above, with snipe-like stripes at sides of mantle and scapulars and whitish streaks on coverts formed by feather edges; this strong pattern is complemented by pale sides of head and breast, white lower underparts, and striking head pattern with blackish crown invaded at sides by 'split' white supercilia (in reality white lateral crown-stripes merging with the supercilia), bordered below by dusky eye-stripe and ear-covert patch. Worn birds in summer often become plain blackish-brown above as feather edges abrade. **Adult winter** is similar to winter Dunlin (autumn birds are patchy); in full plumage easily overlooked as small Dunlin, but is purer grey and white, has whiter lore and supercilium, and shows subdued version of characteristic crown pattern (sometimes very faint), darker grey eye-stripe, usually paler (dull yellowish-green) legs and marginal differences in shape. Carpal area of closed wing (often hidden) is darker. Feeds in small groups, walking briskly while picking from side to side or vertically probing open mud; freely mixes with other small waders. In flight, upperwing very dark, showing only very narrow or no wing bar (abraded summer birds lack bar), but rump pattern resembles that of Dunlin. In winter, has much darker lesser coverts than Dunlin, forming dark leading edge to wing in flight, and shows slightly more obvious wing bar; coloration and dark shoulder then recall winter Sanderling, but Broad-billed is smaller and lacks Sanderling's wide white wing bar. On breeding grounds, displays with fluttering and gliding song flight. Compare with Jack Snipe.

SEX/AGE Adult summer differs from juvenile in having head, neck and breast clearly streaked blackish (especially when worn), with streaks extending along flanks



(in juveniles, streaks fainter on buffer background and not extending onto flanks); fringes of scapulars and wing coverts wider and paler in juveniles compared with worn adult, creating more evenly-patterned appearance to upperparts. Adult winter described above; this plumage fully attained by early winter, whereas 1st-winter birds show vestiges of juvenile plumage into mid-winter.

VOICE Usual flight call a dry, trilled 'trrreet' or 'chrrreet', recalling Sand Martin rather than Dunlin; also a short, rather Little Stint-like 'trett'. On breeding grounds, utters rhythmic mechanical buzzing trills during song flight; 'suirr-suirr-suirr ...' interspersed with faster 'swirrrirrrirrr ...'.

STATUS/HABITAT Uncommon and localized. (Migrates through east of our region to winter from E Africa and the Gulf eastwards.) Breeds in interior of large, open wet bogs. In winter favours tidal mudflats, especially areas of mixed sand and wet mud, and also salt pans and brackish lagoons; also marshy fringes of freshwater pools and lakes, or marshy grassland, especially on passage.

STILT SANDPIPER *Micropalama himantopus*

Plate page 368

L 18–23 cm, WS 43–47 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Not unlike rather large, very long-legged Curlew Sandpiper when in juvenile or winter plumages, but legs much longer (especially tibia) and colour greenish or yellowish (not

blackish), neck longer, and bill, although appearing slightly drooped, is straighter and thicker with slightly swollen tip. Structure often suggests a small *Tringa*. **Adult summer** plumage distinctive: intensely blackish-

barred below and spotted and streaked on head, neck and upperparts, relieved only by whitish supercilium and rusty crown and ear-coverts; only possible confusion is of distant birds with summer female or juvenile Spotted Redshank, but latter have much finer bill and even longer red or blackish-red (not dull greenish) legs. **Adult winter** is drab greyish overall, whiter below and on distinct supercilium, with indistinct mottles and streaks over most of underparts, including flanks (Curlew Sandpiper is clean white below breast). **Juvenile** has strongly patterned buff and black upperparts (bolder and less scalloped than in juvenile Curlew Sandpiper), contrasting with rather plain (finely streaked) greyish throat, neck and breast (latter washed pale buff when fresh) and whitish lower underparts (indistinctly streaked on flanks and undertail coverts); darker crown and eye-stripe and whitish supercilium produce a distinctly capped appearance (similar to juvenile dowitcher). Juvenile Curlew Sandpiper has even fainter streaking confined to sides of neck and breast (breast washed peachy-buff), less marked head pattern, whiter throat and lower underparts, less rufous on mantle and upper scapulars, paler-centred lower scapulars and black (not yellowish) legs. See also structural differences described above. Stilt Sandpipers wade with erect carriage, neck stretched forwards and

bill angled down; they generally utilize the rapid 'sewing-machine' probing action of dowitchers. Also feeds on mud by pecking and probing. Mixes freely with other waders. In flight, shows plain upperwing and square whitish lower rump and uppertail coverts (white slightly obscured by dark streaking in summer plumage), the feet projecting prominently beyond the tail (Curlew Sandpiper has no foot projection and shows clear wing bar); in summer plumage, the very white underwing contrasts with dark, intensely barred, body. Compare with Lesser Yellowlegs and Wilson's Phalarope, both of which show similar wing and rump patterns in flight, and yellowish legs.

SEX/AGE See Identification for main plumages. All autumn birds are patchy: adults show vestiges of barring on flanks and scattered old blackish scapulars; juveniles have buff-fringed, black-centred tertials and some scapulars evident to October, with remnants to mid-winter.

VOICE Flight calls are a soft, rattled 'drrr' or 'krrr' and a low, hoarse, whistling 'djew', but relatively silent.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Europe, N Africa). In natural range, breeds in both moist and dry tundra, feeding mainly in pools. At other times, favours shallow freshwater and brackish pools and lagoons, but also occurs on tidal mudflats and sometimes sandy beaches.

BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER *Tryngites subruficollis*

Plate page 370

L 18–20 cm, WS 43–47 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Small, plump, yellow-legged, rather round-headed wader of drier habitats, with plain buff face and underparts and scaly upperparts. Overall plumage colour and pattern closely matched by juvenile Ruff, which also occurs in similar grassy habitats. Buff-breasted Sandpiper, however, is smaller (beware very small female Ruff), has slightly shorter legs (especially tibia) which are clear yellow (greenish, brownish or dull orange in juvenile Ruff), a longer projection of the black primary tips beyond the tertials, no dark eye-stripe and a shorter and finer bill (Ruff's bill has slight decurve and swollen tip). Juvenile Ruff is rich, almost orange-toned, buff on face and breast, with a clear-cut division between the breast and the white belly; by comparison, Buff-breasted Sandpiper is almost pinkish-buff, gradually paling on the lower underparts (sometimes whitish from lower breast down, but with no sharp division). The relatively larger eye of Buff-breasted Sandpiper is made even more prominent by a whitish 'spectacle', whereas juvenile Ruff has small dark marks in front of and behind the eye which give it the impression of having something of a squint. Buff-breasted Sandpiper shows a patch of clear black spotting at sides of breast (only weakly and diffusely indicated in Ruff). Often remarkably tame, allowing approach to within a few metres. Walks with rather high-stepping gait over short grass or tundra while pecking at ground. Stretches neck to peer with bold, staring eyes when wary, giving head a somewhat bulbous appearance; squats on ground at threat of overhead predator, rather than taking to wing like most other small waders. All similarities with Ruff are dis-

pelled in flight, as Buff-breasted Sandpiper appears chunky in shape, despite its long primaries, and the feet do not project beyond the tail; the small size and more erratic flight action recall a small wader rather than Ruff, which has more languid, slower and direct flight. Upperside shows at most only a thin and insignificant pale wing bar (Ruff has clear white wing bar and white patches at sides of uppertail coverts). In both species the underwing is white, but Buff-breasted Sandpiper shows a crescentic dark bar in the carpal area.

SEX/AGE Ageing difficult except in prolonged close view, but in autumn 1st-year birds tend to be paler below than adults, some being whitish below lower breast. Their upperparts are uniformly fresh (adults show a mixture of old and new feathers) and scaled whitish-buff rather than buff; most useful is pattern of wing coverts (especially median), which show broken dark centres forming dark subterminal crescents (coverts of adults lack crescents and have blackish central streaks and buffer fringes, latter abraded in autumn).

VOICE Relatively silent away from breeding grounds; occasionally gives a short, rolled 'prreet' when flushed.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Europe, Spitsbergen, Azores, Canary Is, N Africa). Exceptionally occurs in small parties. In natural range, breeds on dry, grassy tundra near moister feeding areas. Continues to steer largely clear of water at other times, occurring in short grassland, burnt areas and dry open flats (sometimes by lakes or pools); vagrants have often favoured areas of short grassland such as golf courses or airfields.

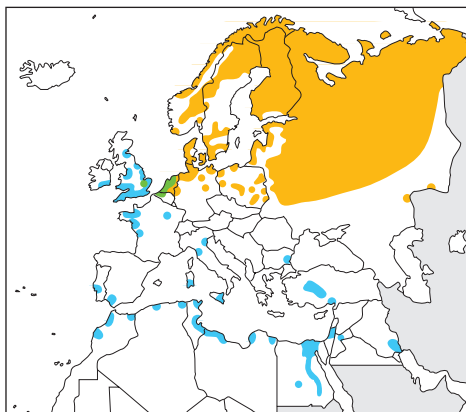
RUFF *Philomachus pugnax*

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Reeve (female)

L 26–32 cm (male), 20–25 cm (female),
WS 54–58 cm (male), 48–52 cm (female).

IDENTIFICATION Unusual and distinctive wader which is remarkably variable, both in size and in plumage and bare-part coloration. **Adult summer** males sport their highly variable ornamental plumes (and greyish, yellowish, orange or reddish facial warts) for a relatively short time in spring and early summer (roughly April to June); for most of the year they resemble the noticeably smaller females (Reeves) in shape and plumage. Summer males vary individually in both colour and pattern of their ruffs and head tufts; even with their ruff deflated the bulging neck and breast makes the head seem unnaturally small, and at a glance the blackest birds can suggest summer Spotted Redshank. Ruff colour varies from black through chestnut, cinnamon and buff to white, while patterning varies from heavy barring to fine vermiculations or even no markings at all. Moulting males often have extensive black blotching on the breast and are whitish on the face and head. **Adult winter** is plainer than summer female, the pinkish or bright orange legs inviting confusion with the redshanks, but the scaled upperparts, whitish area about base of bill and relatively shorter, slightly decurved bill provide easy distinctions; in flight, the wing and rump patterns are also quite different. Some individuals are very whitish on head and neck. **Juvenile** has warm buff face, neck and breast, strongly scaled upperparts, and dull greenish or yellowish-brown legs; the smaller females in this plumage are confusable with vagrant Buff-breasted, Sharp-tailed or Pectoral Sandpipers (q.v.). Ruffs are birds of freshwater marshes and meadows; in spring males gather to 'lek', often in considerable numbers, bowing with spread ruffs, jousting and jumping, or alternatively standing motionless for long periods. At other times, flocks or lone birds may be encountered in fields and marshes, often associating with other waders. In flight, easily separated from Common Redshank by lack of white on rump, back and secondaries; Ruff has a narrow but distinct white wing bar, widening on inner primaries, while the uppertail coverts show oval white sides divided by a dark centre (rarely, this division is unclear and the uppertail coverts appear completely white). The rather languid flight with shallow wingbeats is almost as distinctive as the upperpart pattern. The wings are relatively long and broad and the short tail allows the feet to project. A flying flock of waders may be identifiable as Ruffs by the marked size difference between the sexes.



SEX/AGE Male much larger than female, with ornamented summer plumage including large ruff and head tufts (and coloured facial warts); adults have pink or orange legs and bill base (apparent adults with greenish legs are probably 1st-summer birds). By July, adults of both sexes show black-blotched and barred upperparts; females are heavily scaled on head, neck and breast (as in spring), whereas males often have extensive white on face and head and patchy blotching on breast and upperparts. Greyer and whiter winter plumage acquired from late summer through the autumn; when complete, the face and underparts are unmarked whitish and the grey feathering of the upperparts has dark centres and narrow whitish fringes. Juveniles are quite different, having buff scaling to dark-centred feathers of upperparts, warm buff face, neck and breast (without whitish patch adjacent to bill base) and greenish to brownish legs; by mid-winter they are inseparable from adults, except possibly by leg colour, which persists in some into first summer.

VOICE Rather silent (even on breeding grounds); a low, single or double 'kuk' may be given in flight.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (Winters mainly south of the Sahara or in S Asia.) Breeds in damp meadows, bogs and fringes of freshwater marshes. At other times, muddy margins of freshwater or brackish lakes, pools and lagoons, rice fields, flooded grassland and even ploughed areas; sometimes tidal mudflats.

SNIPES

All snipes are very similar in appearance and present the observer with special problems. Unless displaying they are secretive, feeding among or close to open marshy or damp vegetation, probing soft muddy patches with their long bills. If alarmed, they crouch low, camouflaged by their cryptic plumage. Typically first seen when flushed, rising suddenly to fly a considerable distance before resettling among cover. Because of the basic similarity between the species, it is important to obtain good views of both the upperwing and the underwing patterns to be reasonably certain of a specific identification. The trailing edge of the wing is best viewed as the birds are alighting, the underwing and extent of toe projection as the birds circle overhead.

Underwing with whitish central area

Jack Snipe, Common Snipe (but see Geographical Variation)

Underwing uniformly dark-barred

Great Snipe, Pin-tailed Snipe, Swinhoe's Snipe

Wing with white trailing edge (beware abrasion!)

Jack Snipe, Common Snipe (but see Geographical Variation), Great Snipe (fresh)

Wing lacks white trailing edge

Great Snipe (worn), Pin-tailed Snipe, Swinhoe's Snipe

Only Common Snipe and Jack Snipe are widespread in our region. If another snipe species is suspected, then prolonged, critical viewing is important to establish the identification with certainty. On the ground check the following:

Extent of barring on flanks and belly • Comparative width of dark loreal stripe and buff supercilium immediately above • Whether tertial bars are even throughout or widen towards tip • Whether tail projects beyond wingtips • Presence or absence of white spots on wing coverts

All snipes have spectacular displays, which are species-diagnostic, but only Common Snipe is likely to be encountered in display by most observers. Tail structure, and to some extent pattern, is also very important, but can be assessed only in the hand.

JACK SNIFE *Lymnocyptes minimus*

L 17–19 cm, WS 38–42 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Smaller and shorter-billed than other snipes; the only one to lack a pale central crown-stripe and to have streaked, not barred, flanks. These features not always evident in the field, however, and flushing action often first clue to its identity. Rises very close to observer, often silently and from almost underfoot, fluttering up with rather hesitant wingbeats (often with rather up-angled body posture), either dropping after a short distance or rising high without frantic twisting and calling of Common Snipe. Shares white trailing edge to secondaries with Common, but short, pointed tail and markedly shorter bill clinch the identity of flying birds. Difficult to see on the ground, feeding more in cover than Common, but small, dumpy appearance and strongly patterned mantle and scapulars (wide buff stripes interleaved with blackish-brown glossed with green) are most obvious features. (The broad stripes on upperparts, more prominent than those of Common Snipe, are often noticeable on flushed birds.) Feeds with nervous, rocking body action. Usually solitary, but in winter, or on passage, loosely associates with Common.

VOICE Often silent when flushed, but not infrequently utters a single 'scah', weaker than call of Common. On breeding grounds, has similar flight display to Common, accompanied by peculiar muffled sound, 'kollorap-kollorap-kollorap ...', which has been lik-

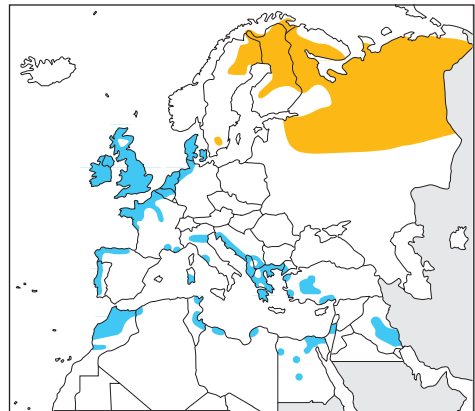


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ened to that of a distant galloping horse.

STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon, but very easily overlooked. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Germany, Poland.) Breeds in large wet bogs in boreal forest and bushy tundra zones. Outside breeding season, freshwater marshes, wet meadows, flooded fields and coarse grassy areas by pools and lakes.

COMMON SNIFE *Gallinago gallinago***Snipe**

L 25–27 cm, WS 44–47 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Much the commonest and most widespread snipe. Easily recognized as a snipe by combination of very long bill, relatively short legs and strongly striped and mottled plumage, but specific differences involve assessing subtle behavioural, plumage and structural features; see other snipe spe-

cies for discussion. Combination of very long bill, narrow white trailing edge to the secondaries and pale, unmarked central area to underwing is diagnostic of Common, if seen well (but some have darker underwing). Keeps close to cover of waterside vegetation, probing with jabbing movements of long

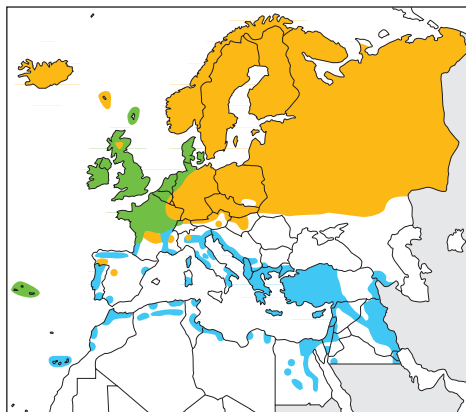
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bill. When alarmed, crouches, flushing suddenly at some 10–20 metres or less with harsh call and strong, vigorous flight action, flying high and for considerable distance before dropping back into cover. On breeding grounds, performs high aerial rising and falling display and readily perches on posts and poles, but at other times much more cover-loving. Often flushed singly, but large gatherings form at favoured marshes outside breeding season.

SEX/AGE Juveniles marginally separable by narrower and more broken pale striping on upperparts and unbroken pale wing-covert fringes (interrupted by dark feather centres in adults); by first winter, most are inseparable in the field.

VOICE Typical flight call, given by flushed birds, a short, harsh, rasping 'scaap' or 'schkape'. Displaying birds utter a rhythmic repeated 'chipper-chipper-chipper-chipper' both in flight and when perched, and produce a hollow, droning 'winnowing' sound through stiff tail feathers as they dive.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (both illustrated). Nominate race over most of our region, being replaced by *faeroeensis* in Iceland, Faeroes, Shetland and Orkney (winters western British Is); latter form is more rufous overall and has narrower black markings on upperparts. N American race *delicata* no longer accepted as having occurred in our region, but could still appear as a vagrant; darker, with narrower white trailing edge to secondaries and uniformly dark-barred underwing (thus suggesting Pin-tailed or Swin-



hoe's Snipes).

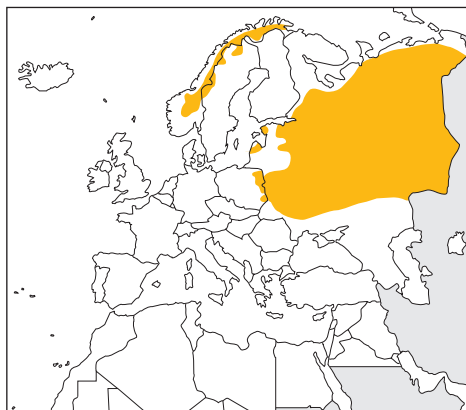
UNUSUAL VARIANTS Very rarely, melanistic birds occur in extreme west of range (these often termed 'Sabine's Snipe').

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Portugal, Yugoslavia, Albania, Romania.) Breeds in bogs and marshes, marshy margins of lakes, pools and rivers, wet meadows, sedge swamps and saltmarshes. At other times, occurs in similar habitats and also flooded farmland, ditches etc.

GREAT SNIPE *Gallinago media*

L 27–29 cm, WS 47–50 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Rare and very local. Larger, much bulkier and relatively shorter-billed than Common Snipe, often recalling Eurasian Woodcock in build and flight action when flushed (i.e. more rounded body and wings, and slower wingbeats). Wing pattern distinctive: prominent white tips to median, primary and greater coverts form two narrow white bands across entire length of wing (less obvious in juvenile), highlighting unmarked dark panel in between; secondaries have a narrow and inconspicuous white trailing edge when fresh (lacking in juvenile), but much less obvious than in Common; underwing uniformly dark-barred (unlike typical Common). The breast and flanks are more intensely barred than in other snipes and barring often extends to belly, especially in juvenile (other snipes have unbarred white central underparts). Has extensively white outer tail, visible if tail fanned (can look white-tailed) either when rising or upon alighting (although juveniles have less white than adults). On the ground, plumper and relatively shorter-billed than Common, with bold white spotting on wing coverts forming two or three bars across wing (most obvious in adults) and with more prominent barring on breast, rear flanks and thighs than in Common; white in tail often visible. Rises heavily with noisy wingbeats at close range, often from quite dry ground; flight action relatively slow and steady, without dashing impetus and frequent zigzags of Common, keeping low and often circling around behind observer to drop back into cover. Beware sluggish, silent, individual Common which can suggest this species. Sickly birds with feathers fluffed out appear remarkably bulky both on ground and in flight. Solitary, except when breeding. Most active towards dusk. On breeding grounds, gathers to display at communal leks, where males noisily jump and fight from tussocks with pouting breasts and upright stance, bill-fencing and



fanning tail to show the white, or fly low over arena. See also Eurasian Woodcock and Swinhoe's Snipe.

SEX/AGE Juvenile has narrow buff stripes on upperparts, less obvious white wing-covert spots, less white in tail and is more barred on belly compared with adult; as adult by end of first winter.

VOICE Often considered to be silent when flushed, but noisy wingbeats may mask weak croaking 'aitch-aitch-aitch' uttered when flushed and given intermittently during flight. Displaying birds noisy: a variety of sounds is produced, including bill-clattering, twittering, gurgling and bubbling sounds.

STATUS/HABITAT Scarce or rare and very localized, declining throughout range. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Germany, Denmark, Finland.) Breeds in grassy bogs and damp grassland, often surrounded by bushes or forest; locally even in quite dry wood-

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land. On passage (which mainly avoids W Europe), favours damp fields with short grass and hollows, marshland edges, meadows, sedge swamps. Often, but

by no means always, encountered in drier situations than Common Snipe. Winters south of the Sahara in similar habitats.

PIN-TAILED SNIPE *Gallinago stenura*

Pintail Snipe

L 25–27 cm, WS 44–47 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Breeds only in N Urals in our region. Very similar in general shape and behaviour to Common Snipe, but slightly shorter-billed and a little smaller, shorter-tailed and with relatively blunter wingtips if the two seen in the air together; shorter tail allows most of toe length to project (merely very tips of toes in Common). Most obvious difference is in wing pattern: underwing uniformly dark-barred (lacking unmarked pale central area shown by almost all Common); upperwing dull brownish with more contrasting pale mealy panel across median coverts, lacking obvious white trailing edge to secondaries (Common has blackish primaries and clear white trailing edge if seen well). With suspected vagrants, beware possibility of N American race of Common; latter is darker, however, and more richly coloured above, with narrow white trailing edge to secondaries, has more pointed wingtip and lacks prominent toe projection (see Common). Wing pattern and overall coloration matched by slightly larger, longer-tailed vagrant Swinhoe's Snipe (q.v.). On the ground, short tail (hardly projecting beyond wingtip) gives stumpy appearance to rear body and loreal stripe is narrower than in Common (so fore supercilium looks relatively wider), while tertials are narrowly barred throughout (lacking the wider black subterminal banding of Common), scapulars have narrower, less distinct buff fringes (so upperparts look less striped) and median coverts are more prominently vermiculated. In winter, favours slightly drier habitats than Common, but basically likely to be found in similar situations.



Flushing behaviour much as that of Common, although less inclined to fly so far or to rise so high in the air. In the hand: tail has 24–28 feathers (12–18 in Common), with outermost 5–7 pairs very narrow and pin-like (all feathers normal width in Common); wing 125–143.

VOICE Often silent when flushed, but will utter a single short 'scaap', rather weaker than that of Common Snipe. Aerial display includes rocket-like 'whooshing' drones produced through stiffened tail feathers (similar to, but less spectacular than, sound produced during display dive of Swinhoe's Snipe); also utters repeated high-pitched nasal squeaks, latter given by birds flying rapidly about territory at treetop height.

STATUS/HABITAT Scarce in restricted breeding range. (Winters in S Asia. Vagrant to Middle East.) Breeds in grassy marshes and bogs in forest tundra; sometimes in drier areas in uplands. At other times, found in similar habitats to Common Snipe, but also occurs in drier situations, such as dry rice stubbles.

SWINHOE'S SNIPE *Gallinago megala*

L 27–29 cm, WS 47–50 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Vagrant from E Asia (breeding Siberia and Mongolia). Shares with Pin-tailed Snipe the uniformly dark-barred underwing (lacking unmarked pale central area shown by almost all Common Snipe), dull brownish upperwing with mealy panel across median coverts and absence of obvious white trailing edge to secondaries (Common has blackish primaries and clear white trailing edge if seen well). Differs from Pin-tailed Snipe in being slightly larger and relatively longer-billed and, most importantly, lacks obvious toe extension beyond tail tip (only tips of toes project, as in Common). Rather bulky appearance and dark underwing suggest Great Snipe, but latter relatively larger, fatter and shorter-billed, rises with some wing noise, and has barred belly (when juvenile) and obvious white lines across wing coverts. On the ground, tail projection and loreal pattern recall Common rather than Pin-tailed; on the other hand, tertials are narrowly barred throughout (lacking the wider black subterminal banding of Common) and the breast is paler than in Common, recalling Pin-tailed in both of these respects. Has

tendency to favour drier ground than either Common or Pin-tailed, rising rather heavily and usually silently when flushed. In the hand: tail has 18–24 feathers (12–18 in Common), which become progressively narrower towards the outermost (all feathers normal width in Common); wing 137–151 (123–144 in Common). Beware possibility of N American race of Common, but latter is darker and more richly coloured above, has narrow white trailing edge to secondaries, has more pointed wingtip and is smaller and more slightly built overall.

VOICE Usually silent when flushed, but sometimes utters a single 'scaap', gruffer than that of Common, when rising. Has spectacular aerial display (only on extralimital breeding grounds), producing loud, rocket-like 'whooshing', through tail feathers and repeated nasal, creaking sounds.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Israel and perhaps Russian Caucasus). In natural range, breeds in moist forest clearings or boggy areas. At other times, found in similar habitats to Common Snipe, although often prefers rather drier situations (e.g. dry rice stubbles).

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DOWITCHERS

Both dowitchers are vagrants. They are medium-sized, plump-bodied, long-billed waders, resembling snipes in overall size and shape; unlike snipes, however, they feed openly on tidal flats or in freshwater marshes, freely mixing with other waders.

They are distinguished from godwits (even the smallest male Bar-tailed) by their much smaller size (body size about that of Common Redshank), shorter (greenish) legs, and wholly dark bills with slightly bulbous tips (godwits show extensive pinkish over basal portions of their finer-tipped bills). Swollen bill tip is most obvious in front-on view.

In flight, dowitchers show a whitish trailing edge to the secondaries and a white oval on the back, contrasting with barred tail and lower rump; the toes hardly project beyond the tail. Spotted Redshank has a similar upperpart pattern, but lacks the whitish trailing edge and normally flies with feet projecting beyond the tail. Occasionally, however, Spotted Redshank tucks its feet forwards in flight, giving a stumpy appearance to the rear body, and with its relatively long bill and white oval on back it can then suggest a flying dowitcher, but dowitchers have longer, thicker bills and very different calls.

The two dowitchers are very difficult to separate, and indeed they were formerly considered a single species; field differences between them have only recently been clarified (and perhaps still need fine-tuning). There is much confusion over the specific identity of older records from our region. Geographical variation in Short-billed complicates the issue. There will always be individuals, especially winter adults, which may not be separable on plumage features alone; it is the calls and juvenile plumages that are most distinct. Despite English names, bill length is of limited use as a field feature, as females are longer-billed than males in both species and there is much overlap; male Short-billed and female Long-billed are the two extremes, whereas many male Long-billed and female Short-billed have bill lengths which are easily attributable to the wrong species. Important features on which to concentrate are:

Calls • Tertian patterns of juveniles • Pattern of tail and uppertail coverts

SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER *Limnodromus griseus*

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L 25–29 cm, WS 45–51 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Call is the single most important aid to dowitcher separation. Averages straighter- and shorter-billed than Long-billed (which is slightly larger overall), but longer-billed females overlap in measurements and can have slight droop to bill like Long-billed (while male Long-billed have shorter, straighter bills than females, inviting confusion with Short-billed). Tail of Short-billed usually has white bars almost as wide as, or even wider than, dark bars, while the barring becomes quite broken, forming spotting, on uppertail coverts and lower rump; tail of Long-billed usually has rather fine white bars between the wider dark bars (up to double the width of the white bars), the barring usually extending well up onto rump. Some Short-billed have grey outer tail and grey subterminal shading to inner tail feathers. These tail features are best assessed while bird preening. **Adult summer** racially variable, but never shows Long-billed's combination of red extending over belly to ventral region together with intense spotting and barring on breast, flanks and undertail coverts (but not belly). Race *hendersoni* is most similar to Long-billed in having rusty-rufous extending (usually) to ventral region, but differs in having small whitish area on central belly (usually with some spotting) and sparser spotting and barring on breast and flanks; the scapulars are more widely edged and tipped rusty (or tipped grey) in fresh plumage (Long-billed has narrower rusty edges and white tips to fresh scapulars). Tends to be less deeply rufous below than Long-billed, but some overlap. By mid-summer worn birds also differ in that the upperparts of Long-billed become almost blackish as fringes abrade, whereas *hendersoni* retains some fringes and remains quite brown above; the spotting and barring on the underparts of Long-billed become indistinct when worn (except on breast), yet remain quite clear in

hendersoni. Other races of Short-billed differ from both *hendersoni* and Long-billed in being paler, more pinkish-orange, below, with whitish belly and often whitish rear flanks and ventral region; the breast, flanks and ventral region are very heavily marked with dark spotting and barring (like Long-billed, but latter tends to be more heavily barred on upper breast and lacks spotting on belly, unlike most Short-billed); unlike *hendersoni* (but like Long-billed), fresh scapulars have narrower fringes and white tips. **Adult winter** is almost inseparable from Long-billed on plumage, although many Short-billed have breast lighter grey, paler at the centre and weakly mottled, and the lower border of the grey is more diffuse than in Long-billed, which tends to have a more uniform, unmottled, darker grey breast which is cleanly differentiated from the white of the belly; marginal differences in tail pattern also useful (see above). See Voice. **Juvenile** plumages differ more markedly. Short-billed has marbled dark and buff upperparts created by wide rusty-buff (fading to pale buff) edges to the feathers, especially tertials and scapulars, with conspicuous buff marbling internally, the tertials appearing almost striped with dark and buff (Long-billed usually has neat, narrow rusty-buff edges to these feathers, although a very few individuals have a hint of buff marbling subterminally), giving plainer appearance above. Note: rarely Short-billed shows little or no buff marbling to tertials, while very rarely Long-billed show quite obvious buff marbling on tertials (although this is never as extensive and distinct as in typical Short-billed). Long-billed tends to look darker and greyer overall; in very fresh plumage, Short-billed has an almost orange wash below and marked spotting at the sides of the breast (Long-billed usually has less bright buff wash below and very little spotting on breast). Head and especially crown are slightly paler and greyer in Long-billed, which has less

distinct dark streaking on crown. **1st-winter** is much as adult winter, although some unmoulted juvenile feathers may be visible up to mid-winter to aid separation. **1st-summer** usually much as adult winter, but some are said to acquire rufous coloration but retain worn juvenile flight feathers. Both dowitchers feed in shallows, often to belly depth, with rapid vertical probing, recalling a sewing-machine. Often remarkably confiding if alone, but more wary when associating with other waders. See also introduction to dowitchers.

SEX/AGE Sexes similar, although females average larger and longer-billed than males in both species. See Identification for age differences.

VOICE Most useful aid to dowitcher identification. Usual call of Short-billed when flushed or in flight is a rapid, mellow, rattled 'tututu' or 'chu-du-du', very similar to flight call of Ruddy Turnstone. Compare with call of Long-billed.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 3 races, separable only in summer plumage (nominate and *hendersoni* illustrated). Nominant race (breeds east of

Hudson Bay, winters Atlantic seaboard from USA to Brazil) pinkish-orange, becoming white on rear flanks, belly and vent; heavily barred and spotted on sides of breast, flanks and undertail coverts. Race *caurinus* (breeds S Alaska, winters Pacific seaboard southwards to Peru) similar but slightly larger, with pinkish-orange extending over belly. Race *hendersoni* (breeds west of Hudson Bay to Alaska border, winters Atlantic seaboard of USA to Panama) has reddish extending to undertail coverts and has upperpart feathers more widely edged rufous-buff, no white tips to scapulars (shown by other races), sides of breast sparsely spotted and flanks weakly barred. It is not certain to which race(s) vagrants to our region belong, but in view of diagonal migration route perhaps *hendersoni* is the most likely.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). Far less frequent than Long-billed. In natural range, breeds in wet bogs, usually by pools or lakes, and wet coastal tundra. At other times, favours tidal mudflats and sandflats, and saltmarsh pools.

LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER *Limnodromus scolopaceus*

Plate page 383

L 27–30 cm, WS 46–52 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Vagrant from the Americas or possibly NE Siberia. See Short-billed Dowitcher for full discussion of identification problems. See also introduction to dowitchers.

SEX/AGE As Short-billed, although difference in size between sexes more marked in Long-billed.

VOICE Typical flight and contact call a single, or repeated, sharp 'kik'; if alarmed, often utters a more prolonged, shriller 'keek' (singly or in a short series),

recalling Eurasian Oystercatcher. Both calls quite unlike Ruddy Turnstone-like rattle of Short-billed.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Europe, Canary Is, N Africa, Middle East). In natural range, breeds in wet, grassy tundra, usually close to pools or lakes. At other times, muddy or grassy margins of freshwater and brackish pools, lakes and marshes; sometimes tidal mudflats, but typically avoids highly saline habitats, unlike Short-billed.

EURASIAN WOODCOCK *Scolopax rusticola*

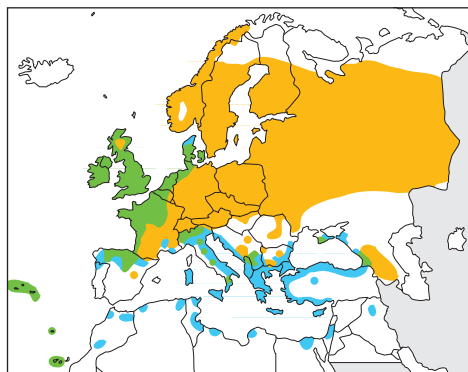
Plate page 381

Woodcock

L 33–35 cm, WS 56–60 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A plump, broad-winged woodland bird, with vermiculated and barred brown, owl-like plumage and crepuscular habits. Often only the very long bill gives this bird away as a wader. Spends the day among leaf litter on the woodland floor, flying to feed in damp patches and streamsides at dusk and dawn. Most easily observed in spring when 'roding' (the display flight): birds quarter their territories around dusk and dawn, flying with rather jerky wingbeats above treetop height, uttering peculiar quiet squeaking and groaning call notes (see Voice). Otherwise likely to be glimpsed only when flushed, the impression being of small gamebird with relatively uniform reddish-brown upperside and quite broad, blunt wings; the bird rises suddenly and silently (or with a swishing sound), zigzagging away through the trees to drop just out of sight of the observer. Flight action relatively slow compared to snipes. Compare with much rarer Great Snipe.

VOICE During roding display, utters an intermittent, strangely weak, high-pitched 'chissick', interspersed with low, guttural groaned 'aurk-aurk-aurk'. Usually silent when flushed, but sometimes utters a low 'scaap', recalling that of Common Snipe.



STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. Broadleaved, mixed or coniferous woodland with mixture of undergrowth, open areas, damp patches and streams. On passage may be expected in coastal scrub. Much affected by cold weather, when weakened birds may turn up almost anywhere, even in town gardens.

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa limosa*

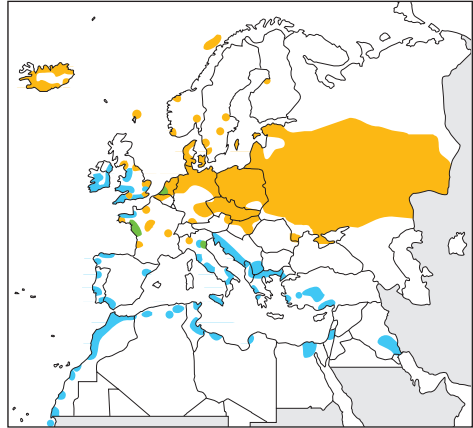
Plate page 385

L 40–44 cm, WS 70–82 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Large, long-legged wader with long, straight bill. Separable in all plumages from Bar-tailed Godwit (q.v.) by white band along length of upperwing and black tail; these features, however, are readily visible only in flight (or when wing-stretching). Other useful aids are relatively longer legs (especially tibia) and almost straight (not gently upcurving) bill. Intensity of red on underparts in summer plumage is racially variable, but red does not extend to ventral region as it often does in Bar-tailed (but many Bar-tailed whitish on lower underparts). Usually has much more extensive pale base to bill in summer (often two-thirds of length), with brighter, yellower tone (Bar-tailed male often has bill virtually all black, while female's bill typically has pinkish or yellowish-pink basal third). In winter plumage, unmarked brownish-grey upperparts lack streaking of Bar-tailed, but juvenile Black-tailed is mottled above in late summer and autumn. In flight, the striking wing pattern prevents any confusion with Bar-tailed. When seen overhead, a little of leg as well as toes project beyond tail; only tips of toes project in Bar-tailed. Sociable, except when breeding, flocking on muddy estuaries and freshwater marshes, probing shallow water with long bill. Compare also with similar-looking vagrant Hudsonian Godwit.

SEX/AGE Sexes similar, but female slightly larger, longer-billed, also less red below in summer plumage (but full plumage is not attained until birds arrive on breeding grounds). Juvenile has neat fresh rufous-buff and black spangling on upperparts, rufous-buff wash to neck and breast and slightly shorter bill; by first autumn mantle mostly grey, as adult, but mottled wing coverts persist to mid-winter. Adult winter plain dull ashy-grey above, shading to whitish on underparts.

VOICE Has variety of calls; a brief, repeated, yelped 'kip' or 'kip-kip-kip' may be heard from parties of flying birds and members of feeding flocks give a low,



hollow 'kett' or 'chuk'. During aerial display climbs high in sky, uttering excited, nasal 'wicka-wicka-wicka', 'keh-wee-wee-wee' and other calls.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Rather slight. 2 races (both illustrated), separable in summer plumage. Race *islandica* (breeding Iceland, Scotland, Norway, wintering Atlantic coast south to Iberia) is slightly shorter-billed and is rich rufous-chestnut below when in full plumage (but this may not be attained until on breeding grounds), the red reaching well down on flanks and belly; the flanks and belly are also heavily barred (belly unmarked in nominate race).

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Faeroes, Yugoslavia, Romania.) Breeds in lowland water meadows, grassy marshes and damp pastures (nominate race) or moorland bogs (*islandica*). At other times, favours tidal mudflats, freshwater or brackish lakes and marshes, and flooded grasslands.

HUDSONIAN GODWIT *Limosa haemastica*

Plate page 385

L 37–42 cm, WS 66–76 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Diagnostic black axillaries and underwing coverts are obvious in flight (other godwits have white underwings). Shares white upperwing bar and white band at base of black tail with Black-tailed Godwit, but both are relatively narrower (and wing bar is shorter). Like Bar-tailed, averages smaller and has relatively shorter legs than Black-tailed, and a distinct upcurve to more pointed bill. **Adult summer** in full plumage differs from Black-tailed in having deep red colour extending from breast to vent; reddish-chestnut colour is even deeper than in Bar-tailed and, unlike that species, breast and flanks are heavily barred, with some fine barring on belly. Unlike either, the sides of the head and neck are pale greyish with heavy dark streaking, contrasting with red breast (but some female Bar-tailed also have heavily-streaked neck, and beware variation in all three species due to wear). **Adult winter** has unstreaked ashy-grey upperparts, head, neck and breast, and a short supercilium, as in Black-tailed. **Juvenile** similar to juvenile Black-tailed, with equally variable patterning on upperparts, but has much more grey-brown,

less buff tone to neck and breast (but beware worn Black-tailed). In flight, the toe projection is shorter than in Black-tailed, but the blackish underwing is so striking that there is no likelihood of confusion (although compare with vagrant Willet). The few records for our region have been of birds associating with parties of Black-tailed Godwits.

SEX/AGE Female averages larger and longer-billed than male, and is paler and more patchily red below in summer plumage. Juvenile in late summer and early autumn has neat scaly pattern on upperparts but lacks reddish chestnut colour and barring on underparts.

VOICE Relatively silent away from breeding grounds. Calls include a soft 'chow-chow' and a sharp, nasal 'kip' or 'ket'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, breeds in wet grassy tundra, usually close to pools or lakes. At other times, tidal mudflats, freshwater or brackish lakes and marshes, flooded grassland and rice fields. Vagrants may mix with parties of Black-tailed Godwit.

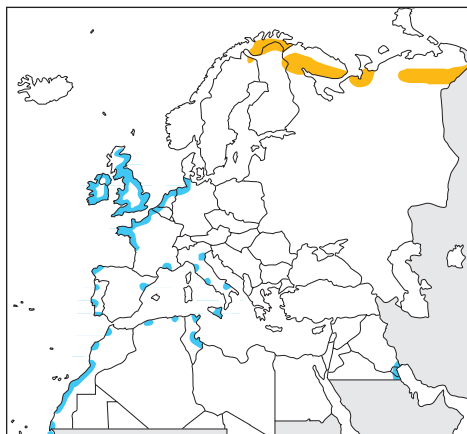
BAR-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa lapponica*

Plate page 384

L 37–41 cm, WS 70–80 cm.

IDENTIFICATION In flight, brownish upperwing, white rump (extending to point on back) and dull (barred) tail suggest Whimbrel, but easily prevent confusion with Black-tailed Godwit (q.v.). On the ground, these features are difficult to see, but compared with Black-tailed is stockier, with relatively shorter legs (especially tibia), and has distinct upcurve to bill. Overall size variable, with smallest males markedly smaller and shorter-billed than largest females; small individuals can suggest dowitchers (q.v.). **Adult summer** male in full plumage is brick-red below, the colour extending well onto vent (Black-tailed has whitish lower underparts, with prominent dark flank barring); summer females, however, have little or no red below, and can show weak barring on flanks. Unlike Black-tailed, bill of summer birds is almost wholly (males) or largely (females) dark. **Adult winter** has streaked upperparts (recalling Eurasian Curlew or Whimbrel), quite unlike plain greyish upperparts of adult winter Black-tailed. **Juvenile** Black-tailed, however, is scaly above in late summer and autumn and can be confusing, but feather-patterning on upperparts of Bar-tailed is more curlew-like (with jagged dark centres) and latter also has more prominent dark loreal area and ear-coverts and lacks rufous tone to neck and mantle. In flight, upperpart pattern and overall size similar to Whimbrel; best separated by wholly dark underparts of Bar-tailed (if in summer plumage), bill shape and call (Whimbrel usually quite vocal). In full flight (e.g. on passage), Bar-tailed has quicker beats on slimmer wings and shows more contrast between dark outer wing and paler brown inner wing; even if straight godwit bill not apparent, it carries head and bill slightly drooped on longer neck and migrating flocks fly in tight groups, rather than in lines.

SEX/AGE Sexes similar, but female larger and longer-billed than male; in summer plumage female much paler than male, often lacking red coloration. Juvenile differs from adult winter in having broad dark centres



and bright buff fringes to scapulars, buff notches along tertial fringes and warm buff wash to neck and breast. 1st-winter birds may be aged by retained juvenile tertials. 1st-summer birds often do not acquire summer plumage; many remain in winter quarters and have bleached and abraded wing feathers in comparison with adults.

VOICE Typical flight calls include a high-pitched, abrupt 'kik' or 'kiv-ik', often repeated in excitement, and a nasal 'ke-wuh'. On breeding grounds, utters a variety of calls, in display flight including a soft rapid 'a-wik...a-wik...a-wik' and 'ku-wew, ku-wew'.

STATUS/HABITAT Common (but uncommon as a breeding species). Breeds in moist grassy tundra, sometimes fringed by trees. Away from breeding grounds, favours sandy estuaries and shallow coastal bays, also estuaries with firm mud; locally visits adjacent brackish meadows, or salt pans. Occasional on passage at inland wetlands.

LITTLE CURLEW *Numenius minutus*

Plate page 386

Little Whimbrel

L 29–32 cm, WS 68–71 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Vagrant from E Asia (breeding NE Siberia). A very small curlew, only a little larger than European Golden Plover. Relatively short, thin and only slightly decurved bill, small bulbous head on slim neck and elongated rear body, coupled with small size, suggest vagrant Upland Sandpiper rather than Eurasian Curlew or Whimbrel. Differs from Upland Sandpiper in having dark eye-stripe, grey (not yellow) legs, tail more or less equal to wingtip (tail clearly longer than wingtip in Upland), bolder crown-stripping and shorter and straighter bill. In flight, the long wings and dark rump and tail suggest American Golden Plover; perhaps closest to Upland Sandpiper, but tail shorter and squarer (less pointed). Flight action light and buoyant with rather shallow beats, recalling male Ruff, both in general wing shape and in character of flight. Among the curlews, only vagrant American race of Whimbrel and virtually extinct Eskimo Curlew are similarly dark-rumped (and former also shares dark underwing coverts). Whimbrel is distinctly larger and bulkier (especially about the head), less buffy overall, more heavily marked below (with markings extending to flanks) and has complete dark loreal stripe (merely

dark spot before eye in Little Curlew), longer, thicker, more decurved and more two-tone bill, and different call. In flight, Whimbrel shows whitish underwing coverts (except American race), and secondaries and inner primaries are pale-barred and do not contrast strongly with wing coverts (Little Curlew has dark brownish underwing coverts and unbarred dark secondaries and inner primaries that contrast with pale panel on wing coverts). Differences from very similar Eskimo Curlew are discussed under that species. Vagrant Little Curlew most likely to be found associating with parties of Northern Lapwing, Ruff or European Golden Plover in fields, rather than on shoreline. Walks rapidly, feeding by picking and probing; when alarmed, stretches thin neck to peer at intruder and often squats on ground before taking flight.

SEX/AGE Juvenile differs from autumn adult in being overall more ashy, less warm buffish-brown (with whiter, greyer or ashy feather notches); neck and breast are suffused with ashy mottling, which forms weak barring along flanks. Adult has slight mottling of dark lateral crown-stripe (uniform dark brown in juvenile) and fine dark (but indistinct) streaking on neck

and breast. By mid-winter ageing difficult, unless some retained juvenile feathers present.

VOICE Flight call an excited, whistled 'weep' or 'qwee', repeated three or four times, recalling Whimbrel but sharper and higher-pitched.

ESKIMO CURLEW *Numenius borealis*

L 29–34 cm, WS 68–74 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Former transatlantic vagrant, now almost extinct. American counterpart of Little Curlew, which it closely resembles in basic shape, plumage pattern and grassland habitat. Eskimo is slightly larger, with longer wings (wingtips project markedly beyond tail tip, slightly or not at all in Little) and shorter legs (probably shows no toe projection beyond tail in flight, while toes often project in Little, but difficult to see except in good overhead flight views); bill is slightly longer and slightly more decurved. Compared with Little, it is more pinkish-buff overall (including belly, undertail coverts and ground colour of underwing), with stronger breast streaking and bold Y-shaped markings along flanks; Little is colder, ashy-buff, with whiter belly and undertail coverts, fine, indistinct neck and breast streaks (neck and breast virtually plain in juveniles) and flanks only faintly barred (appearing unmarked unless close). The dark loreal stripe of

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, breeds in sparsely wooded larch tundra, especially regenerating burnt or storm-damaged areas with few standing trees. At other times, short grassland (including airfields).

Plate page 386

Eskimo extends to bill base (typically merely a dark spot before eye in Little Curlew, which looks more bare faced in consequence). Compare with N American race of Whimbrel (juveniles of which are warm buff below and on underwing) and Upland Sandpiper.

SEX/AGE Juvenile similar to adult, but ground colour of mantle blacker, and edges of scapulars and tertials less strongly notched with pinkish-buff.

VOICE Descriptions of calls suggest similarity to those of Little Curlew.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (several old records from British Is, last in 1887). Formerly abundant, but excessive hunting, coupled with habitat destruction, forced it to verge of extinction by turn of last century; occasional reports suggest that it is not quite extinct, but future vagrancy must be highly unlikely. Habitats much as for Little Curlew.

WHIMBREL *Numenius phaeopus*

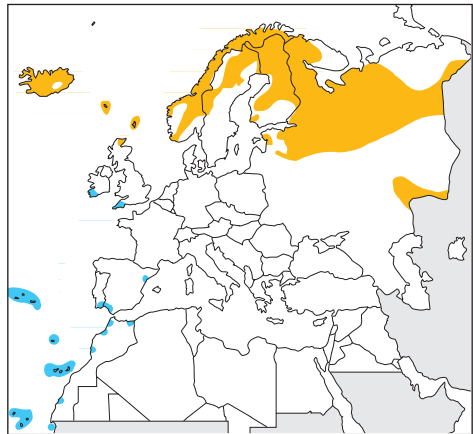
Hudsonian Curlew (*N. p. hudsonicus*)

L 40–46 cm, WS 76–89 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Although smaller than Eurasian Curlew, Whimbrel is one of the largest waders. Most easily separated from Eurasian Curlew by distinctive rippling call, invariably uttered when flushed. Whimbrel has darker, blackish-brown crown (with a narrow whitish central stripe) that contrasts more with pale supercilium, a darker eye-stripe, a shorter, darker bill (which is often deeper pink at base of lower mandible), relatively shorter legs and a darker overall appearance. The bill is straighter than in Eurasian Curlew over its basal two-thirds, appearing to bend suddenly into a decurve rather than being steadily decurved from the base. There are some problems, however: the pale central crown-stripe is difficult to see if bird in profile, especially on juvenile, and 1st-winter Eurasian Curlew has a darker crown than adult; additionally, male Eurasian Curlews are smaller and shorter-billed than females, and juvenile Eurasian Curlew is shorter-billed than adult. Behaviour much as that of Eurasian Curlew, but more coastal in habit away from breeding grounds, and carriage more horizontal both when standing and when walking. Picks food items from mud surface, rather than probing. In flight, shows less contrast above between inner and outer wing than Eurasian Curlew, owing to darker ground colour to plumage, but pattern basically similar, with clean white rump extending to point on back (except in dark-rumped vagrant N American race). Flight action quicker, with rather stiffer beats than Eurasian Curlew. Size and upperpart colour and pattern also similar in Bar-tailed Godwit (q.v.). Migrates in vocal (whinnying) flocks which form straggling lines or chevrons when flying high. Compare with similar but very rare Slender-billed Curlew.

SEX/AGE Females average slightly larger and longer-billed than males. Juvenile warmer and buffier than adult, and more brightly patterned owing to larger and

Plate page 387



more defined spotting and notching to wing feathers, with flank barring, dark stripe behind eye and pale central crown-stripe less defined; by mid-winter buff tones become whiter, but pattern usually still evident.

VOICE Usual call a rapid, whinnying or stuttering series of 6–8 short mellow whistles: 'didididididi' or 'puhuhuhuhuhu', given with varying intensity; sometimes accompanied by a single 'curlee' (like that of Eurasian Curlew) if suddenly flushed. Voice more varied on breeding grounds, including an initial Eurasian Curlew-like bubbling uttered during display flight and later a whinnying trill.

TAXONOMY/GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Quite marked. 3 or 4 races (nominate and *hudsonicus* illustrated). Race *alboaxillaris* (breeds Volga steppes east-

wards) has very white underwing and underparts, paler ground colour to upperparts and less barred flanks (thus confusable with Slender-billed Curlew). N American race *hudsonicus* ('**Hudsonian Curlew**'), a rare vagrant to W Europe and Azores, is sometimes treated as a full species. Easily identified by wholly dark rump and uppertail coverts and warm buff wash to underparts and underwing. Vagrants of E Siberian race *variegatus* also suspected to occur in our region (but perhaps only extreme variants of nominate race): a dark form

approaching American race, but lacks warm buff tones, having white lower underparts and intensely barred rump (appears dark), uppertail coverts and underwing. **STATUS/HABITAT** Fairly common. (Migrates high overland, so uncommonly recorded on passage in many areas. Winters mainly south of the Sahara and in S Asia.) Breeds on moorland and in tundra bogs (including those in forest zone); usually favours drier situations. At other times, tidal mudflats, sandy beaches, coral reefs and adjacent short grassland.

SLENDER-BILLED CURLEW *Numenius tenuirostris*

Plate page 386

L 36–41 cm, WS 80–92 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Extremely rare and severely endangered. Superficially resembles a pale Eurasian Curlew, but is much smaller (averaging smaller and slimmer than Whimbrel), with darker grey legs and bill than in either species. Bill of Slender-billed is shorter, less curved, finer and darker (with very little pinkish at base of lower mandible) than in either Eurasian Curlew or Whimbrel, becoming especially fine over distal portion, tapering gently to a sharp tip. Ground colour of upperparts paler than in Eurasian Curlew, making dark feather centres more contrasting; ground colour of underparts very white (Slender-billed appears paler below than either Eurasian Curlew or Whimbrel), with more clearly defined blackish streaks and spots. Adult has diagnostic rounded, thrush-like spots on sides of breast and especially on the flanks, although these markings are often largely hidden by folded wing, and are absent in juvenile. Eurasian Curlew often shows scattered spots amid more anchor-shaped bars on flanks, but even the most markedly spotted Eurasian Curlew will be larger and not have such a finely tapered bill as Slender-billed. Has more prominent whitish eye-ring than either Eurasian Curlew or Whimbrel. Relatively short legs, distinct dark lore stripe and small size suggest Whimbrel rather than Eurasian Curlew; indeed, even the sides of the crown are darker than the centre (which shows as a fairly indistinct, but still quite visible, pale line, a feature shown by few Eurasian Curlews). Whimbrel has thicker bill, with extensive pinkish over at least basal half of lower mandible, and rather straight bill base followed by rather abrupt decurve; pale median crown-stripe is much more prominent and contrasting. Nominative race of Whimbrel is much darker and less boldly dark-spotted, but very pale steppe race *alboaxillaris* confusing, having whiter tail, underwing and underparts than nominate race, all these features (and also breeding range) being suggestive of Slender-billed; *alboaxillaris*, however, has almost unmarked white flanks and typical Whimbrel voice and bill colour and shape. Wintering Slender-billed in recent years found associ-



ating with Black-tailed Godwits and Eurasian Curlews in damp pastures. In flight, shows basic pattern of Eurasian Curlew, but underwing whiter, ground colour to secondaries paler (producing more contrast between paler innerwing and dark outerwing) and ground colour of tail whiter (making dark barring stand out strongly); these features, however, are shown both by steppe race of Whimbrel and by long-billed eastern race *orientalis* of Eurasian Curlew and should be interpreted with caution.

SEX/AGE Female larger and longer-billed than male. Juvenile has more sharply defined and buffer notches to scapulars and tertials than adult and lacks bold spotting on flanks (having only dark streaks); acquires flank spots during first winter.

VOICE Usual call a short 'cour-lee', weaker and higher in pitch than that of Eurasian Curlew. Also a shrill, brief 'k'wee' in alarm.

STATUS/HABITAT Extremely rare and severely endangered. Suffered severe decline in recent decades, probably owing to destruction of both breeding and wintering habitats. Formerly bred in bogs at borders of steppe and taiga forest in C Siberia, but no currently known breeding sites. Migrated through E and SE Europe to winter at coastal lagoons and adjacent damp short-grass pastures (formerly apparently also saline lagoons) in NW Africa and rarely S Europe; others moved south to winter in Iraq lowlands. Now only regular winter sightings from Atlantic coast of Morocco, with fewer than ten birds known in total. Recently recorded in winter in Italy and may possibly still winter Tunisia and elsewhere.

EURASIAN CURLEW *Numenius arquata* **Curlew, Western Curlew**

Plate page 387

L 50–60 cm, WS 80–100 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Our largest wader. Its mottled and streaked brownish plumage and very long down-curved bill invite confusion only with Whimbrel or exceedingly rare Slender-billed Curlew (q.v.). (Note: beware juvenile males in late summer with relatively short bills, these particularly invite confusion.) Feeds singly, scattered over tidal flats or adjacent farmland, vigorously probing to depth of long bill or picking from surface of ground and mud. In spring, breeding

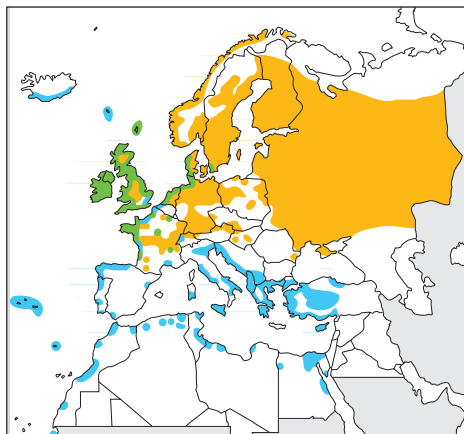
birds move to heathland and moorland, uttering evocative bubbling calls during rising and falling display flight. In flight, long bill and white rump obvious, contrasting with brownish upperwing, darkest on outer wing: a pattern shared by the two other larger members of the genus and by Bar-tailed Godwit. Flight action when flying high rather languid and gull-like. Can even give quite raptor-like impression when gliding during display (and long bill invisible).

SEX/AGE Female larger and longer-billed than male. Summer adult more yellowish buff-tinged than adult winter, which often has pink base to lower mandible. Juvenile buffier than winter adult, with relatively shorter and less strongly decurved bill, darker crown, less striped tertials and scapulars (having wider and less defined, dark brown rather than black, dark centres), finer and less obvious neck and breast streaking, and finer chevrons and smaller spots along flanks. 1st-winter birds difficult to age by mid-winter except by some retained juvenile scapulars and tertials.

VOICE Clear, far-carrying, ringing, rising 'cour-lee' is very familiar and uttered with varying emphasis, being particularly loud and raucous when alarmed; when agitated, has a loud, stammering 'tutututu' (higher in pitch and shorter than Whimbrel call). Long trilled, liquid bubbling phrases, although typical of breeding display, are uttered freely in winter.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Clnal. 2 races (both illustrated). Nominate race intergrades in E European Russia and W Siberia with eastern race *orientalis* (which occurs in Middle East on passage and in winter); latter is larger, with relatively even longer bill and legs, and whiter underwing, uppertail coverts, tail and lower underparts.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped



range, has bred Spain, Yugoslavia.) Breeds in grassy meadows, moorland, heathland, forest bogs, moist depressions in steppes and locally even in arable fields. At other times, resorts mainly to tidal mudflats and sandflats, and to a lesser extent margins of freshwater lakes, flooded fields, pastures and arable fields.

UPLAND SANDPIPER *Bartramia longicauda*

Plate page 380

Upland Plover

L 28–32 cm, WS 64–68 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Recalls European Golden Plover or Ruff in habitat preference and size, but has a very distinctive shape created by diagnostic long tail (projecting well beyond wingtips), rather short, fine bill (for a sandpiper), small bulbous head on long, slim neck and prominent dark eye set in a plain face. Most likely confusion is with vagrant Little Curlew, but Upland has much longer tail (equals wingtips in Little Curlew), shorter and straighter bill, yellow (not grey) legs and much more heavily marked underparts (especially lower breast and flanks); lacks dusky stripe behind eye. Vagrants are often remarkably tame, allowing approach to within a few metres. Feeds in plover-like fashion, walking and stooping to pick at invertebrates; also jabs at prey. Often feeds among taller grass than many other grassland waders; this, coupled with tame nature, makes it easier to overlook when hidden from view. In breeding season, often perches on fence posts and telephone poles. In flight,

shows plain dark upperside, lacking wing bar, but with slight contrast between darker outer wing and browner secondaries; the underwing appears dark, but is densely barred. Quite closely resembles Little Curlew, but tail is much longer and bill shorter and straighter.

SEX/AGE Juvenile differs from adult in lacking black barring on scapulars, tertials and wing coverts; the scapulars and wing coverts are brown-centred, with neat pale fringes (making upperparts appear scaly) and small dark subterminal spots, and tertials are dark brown, with buff notches along edges. Traces of these features should be visible to mid-winter.

VOICE Flight call a liquid 'kwee-lip' or a rolling whistled 'quip-ip-ip'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Europe, Azores). In natural range, breeds in grasslands, pastures and open grassy bogs. At other times, found in similar habitats, often far from water, as well as airfields, arable fields and open flats with little vegetation.

SPOTTED REDSHANK *Tringa erythropus*

Plate page 378

L 29–32 cm, WS 61–67 cm.

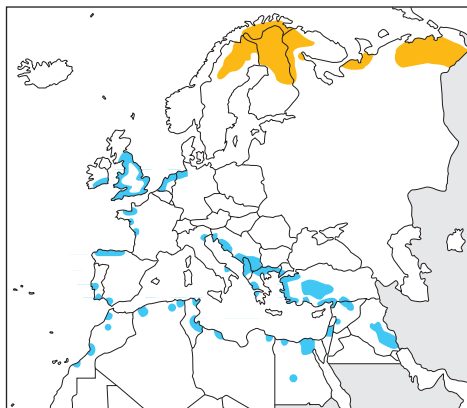
IDENTIFICATION Larger and more elegant than Common Redshank, with markedly longer bill and longer legs (especially tibia), but with legs similarly bright orange-red. **Adult summer** unmistakable, almost wholly sooty-black; even the legs are blackish-red. Patchy moulting birds can be matched by many Ruffs in pattern, but have much longer, straighter bill and show different wing and tail/rump pattern in flight. **Adult winter** is paler and purer grey above and whiter below than Common Redshank (recalling Common Greenshank), with a clear, narrow, whitish supercilium reaching behind eye which is highlighted below by a prominent blackish loreal stripe (standing out boldly between whitish malar area and supercil-

ium); Common has a more obvious whitish eye-ring and a rather faint dark line between eye and bill which does not stand out against dusky malar area and indistinct whitish supercilium. The longer bill of Spotted tapers towards a finer tip, and is more strikingly two-toned, being blacker, with black continuing to base of upper mandible, which gives sharper contrast to the red basal portion of lower mandible. The slight downwards kink at bill tip is often surprisingly obvious. **Juvenile** is distinctive in being closely barred with grey over entire underparts (unlike juvenile Common, which is also distinctly warmer, more buffish overall). Spotted tends to wade deeply (so that leg length not obvious) and has habit of feeding in tight

groups, wading quickly, often rushing and swimming, with head down in belly-deep water (Common Greenshanks also feed in this way, but Common Redshanks prefer walking and picking on open mud). In flight, looks quite different from Common: the upperwing is uniform brownish (lacking the conspicuous white secondary patch) and the white of the 'rump patch' is obvious only high up on the back. The longer bill and more projecting feet contribute to a lankier-looking bird, but sometimes (especially on passage) it will tuck feet forwards under belly, which gives a more compact shape to the flying bird, inviting confusion with a flying dowitcher (see Short-billed Dowitcher). Adult summer in flight shows black body and contrasting white underwing.

SEX/AGE Summer female less intensely black than male, with diffuse whitish supercilium, patchy barring and scaling on head and body, and whitish ventral region. See Identification for details of juvenile. 1st-winter much as adult, but shows some barring on underparts and fine white spotting on retained juvenile coverts (plain grey with fine pale edges in adult) into early winter. Many 1st-summer birds are heavily dark-barred below, but some remain in winter plumage.

VOICE Flight call a distinctive, but rather unobtrusive, sharp 'chewit'. On breeding grounds, gives a repetitive creaking, grinding 'krrew-ee krrew-ee ...', inter-



persed with typical flight call and tremulous whistles, both from perch and in flight.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally fairly common. Breeds in bogs, often amid forest tundra, or on dry slopes not far away. At other times, chiefly on upper reaches of muddy estuaries, salt pans and brackish lagoons; locally, freshwater marshes and lakes.

COMMON REDSHANK *Tringa totanus*

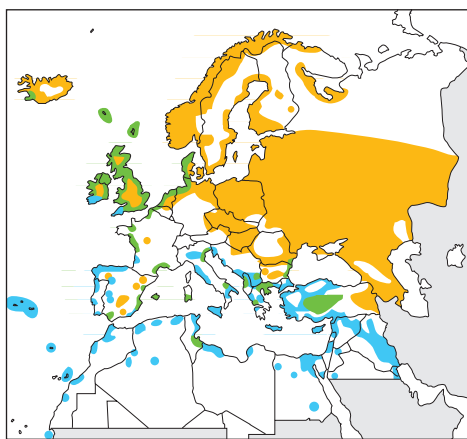
Redshank

L 27–29 cm, WS 59–66 cm.

IDENTIFICATION The 'standard' medium-sized wader over much of our region. Grey-brown sandpiper with orange-red bill base (in adults) and long, bright orange-red legs, the latter shared only by similarly sized Spotted Redshank (q.v. for discussion) and Ruff. On the ground, Ruff is scaly-patterned above, shows a distinct decurve to its bill and often has whitish about base of bill, whereas Common Redshank has a straight bill and almost unmarked grey-brown head, neck, breast and upperparts (except in boldly streaked summer plumage). Juvenile has buff-spotted upperparts, dark bill and yellowish-orange legs and can be confusing (unless seen in flight), suggesting both Wood Sandpiper and vagrant Lesser Yellowlegs. A noisy, nervous bird, bobbing head when suspicious before taking wing, its loud alarm calls alerting other waders to potential danger. Feeds by picking, both while wading and on open mudflats, rarely indulging in the belly-deep group feeding so typical of Spotted Redshank. In flight, there can be no confusion: the white secondaries and rump contrast with the dusky primaries and otherwise brown upperparts (Ruff has white patches at sides of uppertail coverts and a narrow mid-wing bar; Spotted Redshank has wholly brownish wings with a white patch high on upper rump). On breeding grounds, displays over meadows with rising and falling flight on shimmering wings, constantly calling. Compare also with Terek Sandpiper.

SEX/AGE Adult summer has variable amounts of black streaking on head, neck, breast, flanks and upperparts. Adult winter has almost plain grey-brown head, neck, breast and upperparts. Juvenile intensely spangled with buff on upperparts, with yellowish legs and bill base than adult; retained juvenile feathers visible until early winter, after which not safely ageable in the field.

VOICE Very varied. Alarm a loud, screaming 'tli-tli-tli-tli'; also frequently heard in flight is a relaxed piping 'TEU-hu' or 'TEU-hu-hu'. Anxiety call an emphatic 'chip-chip-chip-chip', given chiefly on breeding



grounds. During display flight, utters variable low but musical, yodelling 'tloo-tloo-tloo ...'.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight and variable, with at least 3 poorly defined races (nominate illustrated). Large race *robusta* (breeding Iceland and Faeroes, wintering NW Europe) has most extensive black streaking on head and underparts in summer plumage. Long-billed and long-legged birds (suggesting Spotted Redshank) occur on passage in Middle East, but origins are uncertain.

STATUS/HABITAT Common, locally abundant, but drainage of meadows has produced marked decline in south of breeding range. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Portugal, Switzerland.) Breeds in wet or moist grassland, including saltmarshes. At other times, mostly favours tidal mudflats, but also frequents freshwater and brackish lakes, lagoons and marshes, salt pans and sandy beaches.

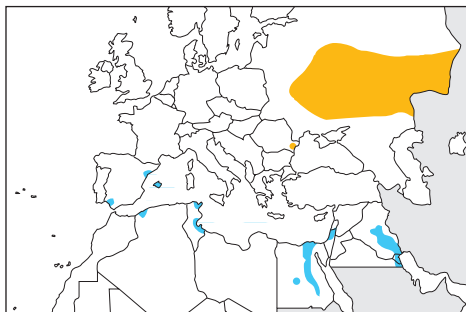
Plate page 378

MARSH SANDPIPER *Tringa stagnatilis*

Plate page 376

L 22–25 cm, WS 55–59 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Overall grey-brown and white appearance recalls Common Greenshank, but is much smaller (body size as Wood Sandpiper) and more delicate. Differs from either in having very long legs, and longer, darker, needle-like bill, creating an elegant, almost stilt-like shape. Legs typically dark dull greenish, but can be yellow or even orange (then suggesting vagrant Lesser Yellowlegs, but latter is obviously darker grey above and has longer projection of black primaries beyond tertials; in flight, shows square white rump like Wood Sandpiper, while Marsh has white tapering to a point on back as in Common Greenshank). Compare also with winter-plumaged vagrant Wilson's Phalarope. **Adult summer** is paler and greyer above than Common Greenshank (with more evenly distributed dark markings, extending to greater coverts and tertials) and has neater, more evenly distributed dark streaking and spotting on breast and flanks, a more distinct supercilium behind eye and less distinct dark lore stripe. **Adult winter** is usually more uniformly grey on upperparts than Common Greenshank (feathers lacking prominent dark subterminal bands or spots) and often less streaked on breast; crown is less heavily streaked, forehead paler, supercilium more prominent behind eye and lore pale or with just a dark spot in front of eye (lore stripe distinct in Common Greenshank, but often does not reach eye). **Juvenile** looks more buffish and intricately marked above than Common Greenshank and shows same differences in head pattern as adult winter, except crown is heavily streaked; in addition, dark patch on upper ear-coverts stands out more owing to limited streaking on lower face. Sides of breast only finely streaked and centre unmarked, unlike juvenile Common Greenshank. Readily mixes with other waders, but usually feeds alone or in scattered parties, wading and picking in shallow water. Bobs head when alert, like others of genus. In flight, the extensive V-shaped white rump patch extends well up onto back, almost dividing the wholly dark upperwings, a pattern shared only by Common Greenshank; compared with latter, Marsh is much smaller, with lower legs and feet prominently projecting beyond tail (which is less prominently barred, mainly in centre), and has different call. On breeding grounds, has similar display



flight (and also voice) to Common Redshank.

SEX/AGE Adult summer has streaked foreneck and breast and brownish upperparts mottled with black. Adult winter virtually unmarked brownish-grey above, darker and plainer on wing coverts and greyer (with narrow whitish scaling in fresh plumage) on mantle and scapulars; foreneck and underparts unmarked white. Juvenile has white supercilium, foreneck and breast, with brownish crown, ear-coverts and upperparts (the latter, including the wing coverts, finely marked with buff feather notches, creating a finely speckled appearance), but is almost inseparable from adult winter by early autumn unless retained juvenile coverts visible. Most 1st-summer birds remain in winter plumage.

VOICE Flight call a plaintive, mellow 'keeuw' (recalls call of Little Owl), often repeated three or four times in Common Greenshank-like manner, but tone less ringing. On breeding grounds, utters repeated 'chip' calls when alarmed and has yodelling display flight, both recalling Common Redshank.

STATUS/HABITAT Uncommon and localized. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Finland, Hungary, Austria, Latvia, Belorussia, W Ukraine, Moldavia. Winters mostly south of the Sahara and in S Asia.) Breeds by lowland lakes with grassy margins, in fresh-water marshes and in water meadows. At other times, freshwater and brackish lakes, lagoons and marshes, salt pans and locally tidal mudflats.

COMMON GREENSHANK *Tringa nebularia*

Plate page 376

Greenshank

L 30–34 cm, WS 68–70 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Fairly large wader, the largest *Tringa*, distinctly bigger, greyer and whiter than Common Redshank (but not winter-plumaged Spotted Redshank). Differs from either in having greyish or greenish legs and slight upcurve to stouter bill. Very distinctive in flight, having dark brownish upperwings like Spotted Redshank, but with much whiter rump and rear body, the white extending high onto back in a point, almost separating the wings (Spotted Redshank has more barred lower rump and uppertail coverts, with clean white restricted to a patch on back). Upside pattern matched by much smaller and daintier Marsh Sandpiper, but only toes of Common Greenshank project beyond tail (part of leg as well as toes projects in Marsh). Juveniles have brighter and often yellowish-green legs. Rarely, legs are bright clear yellow, and such birds are easily confusable with vagrant Greater Yellowlegs (q.v.), but both yel-

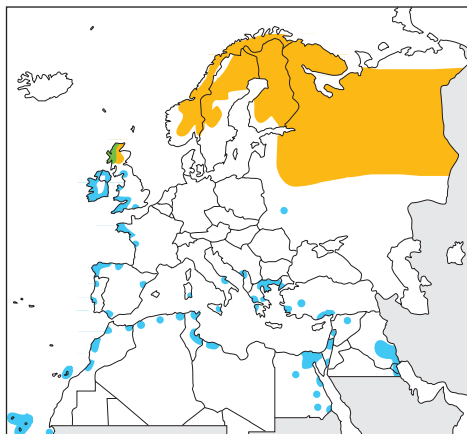
lowlegs have square white rump like Wood Sandpiper. Usually feeds alone or in scattered parties, wading, picking and skimming in shallow water; also dashes forwards with bill submerged in manner employed by Spotted Redshank. Generally rather wary, bobs head when alert, like others of genus, invariably calling when taking wing. On breeding grounds, readily perches on treetops and has spectacular dipping and climbing aerial display, sometimes at great height.

SEX/AGE Adult summer strongly streaked on head, neck and breast; mottled brownish-grey upperparts are marked by prominent black scapular centres, often arranged in irregular lines. Adult winter rather uniform grey above, darker and plainer on carpal area (mantle, scapulars and median and greater coverts with narrow whitish fringes and blackish subterminal arcs and spots, tertials with fine whitish and black

speckling along edges); foreneck, face and underparts unmarked white. Juvenile has more extensive streaking on foreneck and breast than adult winter (often with characteristic pale band extending from side of breast up side of neck) and rather dark, brownish upperparts (including wing coverts) which are finely marked with buffy-white feather edges, giving a finely speckled appearance; tertial edges more boldly marked than in adult; dark loreal stripe usually unbroken. Much as adult by first winter except for retained (worn) tertials and wing coverts. 1st-summer birds usually retain some worn juvenile feathers, especially tertials and wing coverts.

VOICE Flight call a loud, clear, ringing 'chew-chew-chew'; alarm a more Common Redshank-like 'kiu kiu kiu'. On breeding grounds, utters a variety of clear, melodious sounds, including a loud 'tew-hoo tew-hoo ...', during aerial displays.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Ireland.) Breeds in open or partly wooded moorland, or in dry areas (often adjacent to or among woodland) not far from bogs. At other times, favours tidal mudflats, mangroves, salt-



pans, coral reefs, sandy beaches, freshwater lakes, brackish lagoons etc.

GREATER YELLOWLEGS *Tringa melanoleuca*

L 29–33 cm, WS 70–74 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Resembles Common Greenshank in overall appearance and call, but bright yellow, often orange, legs normally an easy clue to identity (but beware occasional yellow-legged variant of Common Greenshank). In direct comparison, Greater Yellowlegs averages a little smaller, with a relatively smaller head, slightly weaker bill and relatively longer legs (especially tibia). In all plumages, is more pale-spotted above than Common Greenshank, especially along tertial edges, and shows spotted wing coverts (these virtually plain on Common Greenshank). Adult summer has dense, but fine, streaking on head and breast (coarser in adult summer Common Greenshank), and extensive barring on flanks (Common Greenshank has short streaks). Generally wary nature and feeding actions are similar to Common Greenshank. In flight, there should be no confusion as both yellowlegs have a square white patch on uppertail coverts, quite unlike the large white wedge which tapers to a point high up on the back of Common Greenshank. Fellow vagrant Lesser Yellowlegs is a small edition of Greater (latter is noticeably larger than Common Redshank, Lesser is markedly smaller), but the identity of lone birds can be problematic. Lesser has finer, shorter and straighter bill than Greater. Bill of Lesser is not longer than tibia and is distinctly shorter than tarsus; that of Greater is longer than tibia and equals or slightly exceeds tarsal length (judging relative bill length on a moving bird is difficult, however, especially when bird is wading). Under close scrutiny, the darker bill of Lesser is helpful in autumn and winter, being either all dark or paler only at the very base, whereas at least the basal third is paler in Greater (in breeding season, Greater can have all-dark bill); furthermore, the nostrils of Lesser virtually touch the edge of the feathering at the bill base, while a marked gap between the nostril and the feathering may be discernible on lighter bill base of Greater. Lesser also shows a slightly longer extension of the black primary tips beyond the tertials. Adult summer Greater is extensively barred on flanks, this barring extending onto undertail coverts and belly, where marks usually break up into scattered spots (Lesser has sparse flank bars and unmarked white belly). In other plumages the two

are very similar, although Greater tends to have more profuse and larger pale spots on upperparts, paler breast and (in adult winter) more barred flanks than in Lesser. Juvenile Lesser moults later than Greater (Lesser moults after arrival in winter quarters; Greater acquires plainer, greyer mantle and scapulars early in the autumn). Juveniles of both species have duller, slight green or brownish tinge to yellow of legs in early autumn, but conversely the yellowish-orange legs of older birds, when viewed against the light, can appear remarkably reddish. In flight, the square white rump patch is a little larger in Lesser, as longer tertials of Greater obscure sides of white area. Lesser also shows some leg as well as toes projecting beyond tail in flight, whereas bulkier, rather broader-winged Greater shows only toes. The secondaries and inner primaries of Lesser are dark and unmarked, uniform with outer primaries; Greater, however, shows some contrast between darker outer wing and slightly paler secondaries and inner primaries (these feathers are edged with pale notches, but are hidden by tertials and greater coverts when bird at rest).

SEX/AGE See Identification regarding adult summer. Adult winter paler, with browner and less defined streaking on head and breast, and flanks only weakly marked; lacks blackish markings to feathers of upperparts. Juvenile differs from adult winter in having darker ground colour to upperparts, contrasting with marginally larger (and initially buffish, not whitish) spots at fringes of upperpart feathers, but begins to attain winter plumage early in autumn; by September, colour lighter and closer to that of adult and ageing then more difficult, but by mid to late winter wing feathers more worn than in adult. 1st-summer birds usually retain some worn juvenile feathers, especially tertials and wing coverts.

VOICE Flight call a loud, clear 'chew-chew-chew', virtually as Common Greenshank's but last note dropping in pitch (compare with call of Lesser Yellowlegs).

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). Far less frequent than Lesser Yellowlegs. In natural range, breeds in forest bogs. At other times, freshwater and brackish pools, lakes and lagoons, flooded grassland and sheltered tidal mudflats.

Plate page 377

LESSER YELLOWLEGS *Tringa flavipes***Plate page 377**

L 23–25 cm, WS 59–64 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Resembles Wood Sandpiper, both on ground and in flight, but is larger (although smaller than Common Redshank) and stands taller on longer yellow or pale orange legs, with slightly longer and finer (often darker) bill, weaker supercilium and eye-stripe (apparent only in front of eye) and longer projection of black primaries beyond tertials (extending well beyond tail tip). Pale spots on upperparts of juvenile usually whiter than in Wood Sandpiper. Occasional yellow-legged individuals of Marsh Sandpiper (q.v.) can be confusing, but latter has longer and finer bill, tertials virtually concealing primary tips and quite different ‘rump’ pattern (with white wedge extending up back in Common Greenshank style). Another pitfall is juvenile Common Redshank in mid-summer; latter has yellowish-orange legs and is intensely pale spotted above, but compared with Lesser Yellowlegs has stouter bill, no obvious projection of blackish primaries, much more heavily marked underparts and quite different wing and rump patterns in flight. Greatest problem lies in separating the two yellowlegs, which are very similar on ground and in flight, although Lesser is at least a

third smaller than Greater and has darker, straighter bill which is shorter than tarsus; individual size variation within both species makes separation of lone birds difficult unless they can be compared alongside Common Redshank or Common Greenshank (see Greater Yellowlegs for full discussion). Compare also with Wilson’s Phalarope, which is also fine-billed, has yellow legs and has similar wing and rump patterns.

SEX/AGE As Greater Yellowlegs, but all plumages with finer pale spotting and summer adults less heavily marked below, especially on flanks and belly. Juvenile moults later than juvenile Greater, mantle and scapulars remaining darker until later in autumn.

VOICE Flight call flatter and more of a monotone compared with that of Greater Yellowlegs, a flat but slightly harsh ‘kiew-kiew’ or single ‘kiew’ (recalling Marsh Sandpiper).

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Europe, Azores, Canary Is). In natural range, breeds in drier forest bogs and grassy meadows amid forest. At other times, freshwater and brackish pools, lakes and lagoons, flooded grassland and sheltered tidal mudflats.

SOLITARY SANDPIPER *Tringa solitaria***Plate page 374**

L 18–21 cm, WS 55–59 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. A small, elegant sandpiper, somewhat intermediate between Wood and Green in structure (slightly smaller and slimmer than the latter, with more attenuated rear end due to greater primary projection; wingtips extend further beyond tail tip). Frequently yellowish legs and heavily spotted summer plumage are closer to Wood, while weak supercilium (chiefly in front of eye), white eye-ring and dusky underwing recall Green, a similarity enhanced in darker winter plumage. Mixes little with other waders; in fact, behaves much as Green Sandpiper, although less wary. Feeds quietly by streams, ditches and pools; bobs head and tail when alarmed. Easily separated from both Green and Wood in flight, as rump, uppertail coverts and tail centre are dark and uniform with rest of upperparts, and only outer tail barred (rump and uppertail coverts white, and tail wholly barred in the other two); the blackish underwing contrasts strongly with white belly as in Green (although underwing coverts and axillaries not quite as dark as in latter), but the relatively narrower wings and greater toe projection

suggest Wood. Compare also with Common Sandpiper.

SEX/AGE Adult summer has boldly streaked head, neck and breast band; whitish spots on mantle and scapulars contrast with plainer dark wing coverts. Adult winter and juvenile have head, neck and breast almost plain brown, hardly streaked, and wing coverts, mantle and scapulars dotted with small pale spots; juvenile has fresher plumage in autumn and early winter than adult and is warmer toned on neck and breast, with more buff-coloured spotting on upperparts. Legs vary from dull olive to yellowish at all seasons.

VOICE Call rather similar to that of Green Sandpiper, a sudden excited ‘peet’ or ‘peet-weet-weet’ when flushed (but does not give the inflected, disyllabic ‘klUUweet’ at the beginning of the series that is frequently uttered by Green).

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, breeds in similar habitats to Green Sandpiper. At other times habitats also similar; favours freshwater pools, lake edges, streamsides and ditches.

GREEN SANDPIPER *Tringa ochropus***Plate page 374**

L 21–24 cm, WS 57–61 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Medium-sized, very dark-and-white wader of freshwater habitats. Very wary; often first seen when flushed, it rises with rapid, twisting flight, towering high like a Common Snipe, revealing unique combination of rather broad blackish wings (dark on both surfaces) and square snowy-white rear end. Normally encountered singly or in pairs by quiet streams, ditches and ponds; larger gatherings form at favoured passage sites, but mixes little with other species, except Common Sandpiper. On ground, bobs and wags tail nervously like Common Sandpiper, and has similar contrast between white lower underparts and dark brown breast and upperparts. Green is larger

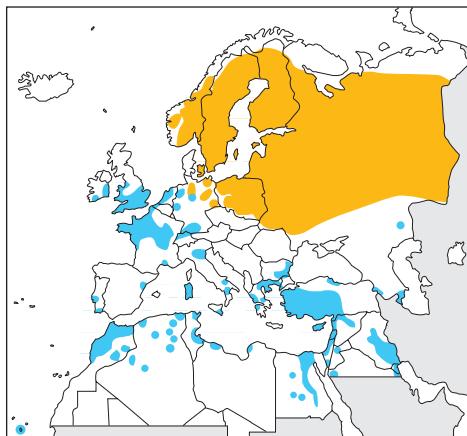
and stouter, however, and lacks white wedge at shoulder; indeed, brownish colour of breast extends downwards at sides to give sharp, inverted U-shaped demarcation between breast and belly. On breeding grounds, favours woodland or forest streams, laying eggs in disused squirrel dreys or bird nests, especially those of thrushes. Compare also with Wood Sandpiper and vagrant Solitary Sandpiper.

SEX/AGE Adult summer has noticeable intense blackish streaking on head and breast and slightly bolder (whitish) spotting on upperparts than in other plumages. Winter birds lack obvious streaking on greyish-brown head and breast and have finer (buffish)

spotting above; juvenile paler brown on mantle, with less defined, darker buff spotting than adult winter. Legs dark green or greyish-olive at all seasons.

VOICE Flight call a clear, musical and emphatic 'klUUweet-wit-wit'; alarm call a sharp 'wit-wit-wit'. Song a variable medley based on variations of call notes, given from perch or in display flight.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Britain, Italy, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Crimea, Russian Black Sea coast, Armenia.) Breeds in damp areas in woodland of various types, from forest streams and water-logged willow scrub to forest bogs. Away from breeding grounds, by variety of enclosed freshwater locations, from streams, small pools, ditches and sewage pools to lakesides, marshes and sheltered tidal creeks.

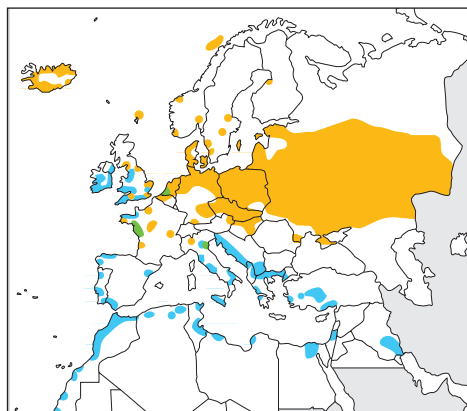


WOOD SANDPIPER *Tringa glareola*

L 19–21 cm, WS 56–57 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Elegant, fairly small wader of freshwater marshes. Combination of relatively short, straight bill, profuse whitish speckling on upperparts, pale supercilium, fairly long, greenish-yellow (usually) legs and elegant shape prevents confusion with most other waders. In flight, the upperside pattern is not unlike that of Green, although browner, with a smaller white rump patch; the underwing, however, is very pale (not blackish), the wings are narrower and the feet clearly project beyond the tail (only tips of toes project in Green). Both species readily give their diagnostic calls in flight. Overall coloration on ground not unlike that of juvenile Common Redshank, but latter is larger, with different voice and wing pattern. Compare also with Marsh Sandpiper and vagrant Solitary Sandpiper and Lesser Yellowlegs, all of which could be passed off as Wood Sandpiper. A fairly wary and nervous bird, bobbing head in typical *Tringa* fashion when alarmed; flushes easily, calling as it climbs high, typically being joined by others and flying for considerable distance before dropping. Sociable on passage, but generally feeds in scattered parties in open marshes, sedately walking on mud or in shallow water. When nesting sometimes uses disused nests of other birds in manner of Green Sandpiper, but more inclined to lay eggs in scrape on ground. Readily perches on trees on breeding grounds.

SEX/AGE Adult summer has intense blackish streaking and scaling on head, breast and flanks, bold whitish and black spangling on upperparts, and yellowish-brown, greenish or dark brown legs. Adult winter lacks markings on flanks, and has very faint streaking on pale neck and breast, clearer supercilium, dark eye-stripe and crown, smaller but clear pale spotting on upperparts, and yellower legs. Juvenile similar, but legs brighter yellow, spotting buffer and neck and



breast with intense brownish mottling.

VOICE Flight call a nervous, dry but high-pitched 'chiff-iff-iff', which may be speeded up into a longer sequence with the notes rising in pitch, not dissimilar to anxiety calls of Common Redshank or Marsh Sandpiper. A variety of other calls given on breeding grounds. Yodelling song, often given in display flight but also from perch, recalls that of Common Redshank: 'leeltee-leeltee-leeltee ...'.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (Rare breeder Scotland. In addition to mapped range, has bred Iceland, Netherlands, Poland. Most winter south of the Sahara.) Nests by open forest bogs and lightly wooded marshes. At other times, favours freshwater marshes, flooded grasslands, rice fields, lakesides, lagoons and pools; largely avoids estuarine flats and coasts.

TEREK SANDPIPER *Xenus cinereus*

L 22–25 cm, WS 57–59 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Very scarce in our region away from N Russia. Distinctive dirty grey and white wader, with long upcurving bill, short yellowish or orange-yellow legs and jagged, blackish scapular stripe and carpal area (latter often hidden). Overall body shape

and horizontal carriage suggest large, plump grey Common Sandpiper with too long a bill, or a small Common Redshank with unnaturally short legs, but confusion with other species unlikely. Sleeping individuals in wader roost can be passed off as winter

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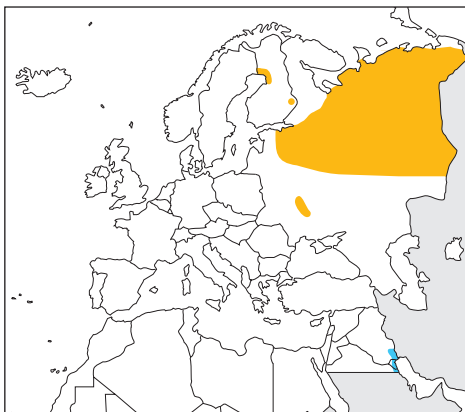
Plate page 375

Common Redshank if leg length and bill shape not apparent. Despite tubby appearance, is often very active, indulging in dashing feeding movements with head held low, swinging bill from side to side, but also walks slowly while picking at surface of mud. Bobs rear body like Common Sandpiper. Mixes freely with other waders on passage. Flight action rapid, often low over water, with long bill and short rear end producing front-heavy appearance. Upperwing pattern distinctive: shows relatively wide whitish trailing edge to secondaries and inner primaries recalling Common Redshank, but less contrasting; rump and tail greyish, the former often mottled darker in centre.

SEX/AGE Adult summer has blackish shaft streaks to feathers of upperparts and breast, blackish pattern on scapulars and orange-yellow (rarely orange-red) legs. Winter birds are virtually unmarked, plain greyish above, and have whitish breast centre and duller yellow legs. Juvenile similar to adult summer, but neck and breast are plain, feathers of upperparts have narrow buff fringes (sometimes with dark subterminal markings), and has less distinct blackish stripe on upper scapulars; legs clear yellow or greenish-yellow.

VOICE Flight call a low, rippled, trilling 'du-du-du-du-du...' (recalling Whimbrel); also gives a shorter and slower, more mellow, rather Common Redshank-like 'chu-du-du' when less alarmed. On breeding grounds, utters varied series of trisyllabic melodious, whistled phrases (e.g. 'klueeu'), often while in display flight.

STATUS/HABITAT Uncommon and localized. (Only a



few pairs regularly breed Finland. In addition to mapped range, has bred Norway, Latvia. Main passage is east of Black Sea to Persian Gulf, S Arabia and Africa.) Nests on sandy or muddy river banks and islets (often favouring areas with accumulations of driftwood), by wide, boggy streams and occasionally in wet meadows in taiga zone (also in mildly brackish habitats in areas such as Gulf of Bothnia). Winters on open tidal sandflats and mudflats and coastal lagoons; sometimes at inland lakes on passage.

COMMON SANDPIPER *Actitis hypoleucos*

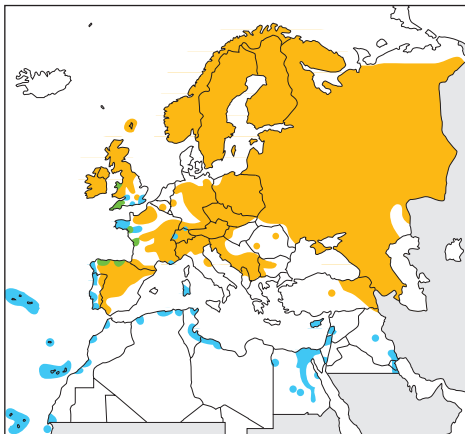
Plate page 373

L 19–21 cm, WS 38–41 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Small, solitary wader, characterized by habit of nervous tail-wagging when walking or standing and pure white lower underparts contrasting with rather plain brown upperparts. These features shared by Green Sandpiper, which is larger, darker above, shorter-tailed (so less attenuated at rear end) and lacks white 'shoulder wedge' of Common Sandpiper. Even more distinctive in flight: flies close to water surface with hesitant, flicking wingbeats that do not rise much above horizontal, intermittently gliding for brief periods on bowed wings, showing narrow white central wing band and prominent tail with white sides. Usually encountered alone, but forms small parties on passage, which gather together into larger groups towards dusk. When moving longer distances, readily flies higher, with stronger 'normal' wingbeats; then suggests a *Calidris*, but underwing shows strong pattern of wide dark leading and trailing edges and clean white centre. Feeds at or near water's edge, bobbing tail as it sedately walks and picks; bobs head and runs in short bursts when alert. Compare also with Temminck's Stint and very similar vagrant Spotted Sandpiper.

SEX/AGE Adult summer has streaked breast and indistinct bronze gloss to brown of upperparts (feathers of which show fine dark shaft streaks). Adult winter similar, but dark streaking virtually lacking and wing-covert feathers have fine dark subterminal bar and buff tip. Juvenile has paler breast centre than adult, more obvious subterminal dark bars and pale buff tips to wing-covert feathers, narrow buff edging to scapulars and rows of tiny buff notches along tertial fringes.

VOICE Call a clear, plaintive, ringing 'sweet-sweet-



sweet' or 'hee-dee-dee', which may be shortened to a single, short 'sweet' when alighting or a more prolonged 'sweet-sweet' when alarmed. Song an excited, prolonged medley of the call notes.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Netherlands, Denmark, Greece. Most winter south of the Sahara.) Breeds by flowing rivers and streams, chiefly in upland areas. At other times, a variety of freshwater and saltwater habitats, from lakes, marshes and salt pans to coasts and estuarine channels, but mostly avoids open tidal mudflats.

SPOTTED SANDPIPER *Actitis macularia*

Plate page 373

L 18–20 cm, WS 37–40 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. N American counterpart of Common Sandpiper, which it closely resembles in size, shape and behaviour; readily separable only in distinctive summer plumage. If the two seen together, Spotted is slightly smaller, with shorter tail (extending only a little beyond wingtip, while tail extends considerably beyond wingtip in Common) and slightly longer legs. The legs are usually pale pinkish in breeding season but yellow (often fairly bright yellow) or yellowish grey-green (occasionally pinkish or pale ochre) at other times; legs are typically nondescript grey-green or dull yellowish-brown in Common (rarely dull yellow). **Adult summer** has bold thrush-like spotting over entire underparts and is unmistakable. Upperparts have fewer but bolder dark markings compared with Common and bill is pinkish with dark tip. **Adult winter** is extremely similar to Common, but often has bright yellow legs in autumn (and rather different call). Upperparts differ subtly, as in adult summer, and patches at sides of breast are less well defined; lacks fine streaking on centre of breast and foreneck. May retain a few spots on underparts, especially along flanks. **Juvenile** has bolder, paler (buffish-white and dark) barring on wing coverts than Common and greyer (mouse-brown) upperparts; barring on wing coverts is more clean-cut also, arranged in irregular curving stripes. Spotted lacks fine buff spotting along fringes of tertials and scapulars shown by Common, instead having small pale buff and dark subterminal marks (as on wing coverts); additionally, the centre of the breast averages whiter, and the sides of head and neck greyer, both lacking the indistinct

dark shaft streaks shown by Common. In flight, wing and tail patterns differ, but it is difficult to interpret detail on flicking wings of flying bird and this is best seen when bird alighting or preening: white wing bar of Spotted is narrower and shorter than in Common, petering out on the secondaries (virtually lacking on inner secondaries), whereas in Common it extends conspicuously to base of wing; spread tail of Spotted shows less white and stronger barring on outer feathers than in Common, and being relatively shorter it can also suggest a stubbier rear end on the flying bird. Flickering flight action and gliding on bowed wings, teetering walk and solitary habits are as in Common Sandpiper.

SEX/AGE Sexes similar, although females tend to be more boldly spotted than males in summer plumage. Adult winter less extensively and less contrastingly barred on wing coverts than juvenile (which never has any dark spots on flanks), but ageing of worn winter birds tricky.

VOICE Single birds less inclined to call than Common Sandpiper, but often do so when alighting. Typical call a single quiet 'pit' or 'peet'; also gives a flat, double 'teet-teet' recalling Kingfisher or, if given more strongly ('tueet-ueet'), recalling Green Sandpiper. More vocal when in groups (in natural range), when also gives calls indistinguishable from those of Common Sandpiper.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe, Spitsbergen, Azores, Madeira, Canary Is, NW Africa). Has even bred once, in Scotland. In natural range, habitats as those of Common Sandpiper.

GREY-TAILED TATTLER *Heteroscelus brevipes*

Plate page 380

Polynesian Tattler, Grey-rumped Tattler, Grey-rumped Sandpiper

L 24–27 cm, WS 60–65 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Vagrant from E Asia (breeding NE Siberia). Medium-sized *Tringa*-like, slate-grey wader with unmarked upperparts and shortish yellow legs; recalls Common Redshank in overall proportions, but legs much shorter and relatively long wings and tail produce a long-bodied appearance. Unlikely to be confused with any other species recorded in our region. **Adult summer** has dark grey streaking on neck and narrow dark grey barring on breast and flanks. **Adult winter** and **Juvenile** have grey breast band and flanks, contrasting with whitish supercilium and white lower underparts. Forages alone, walking with sedate nature of Common Sandpiper, bobbing tail as it feeds. Strikingly dark in flight, the long, pointed wings and full tail giving it a distinctive

shape; the only relief is the contrast between the sooty-grey underwings and the white belly, the upperwings, rump and tail being uniform slate-grey. The flight action is quick, with strong wingbeats.

SEX/AGE Juvenile differs from adult winter in having inconspicuous whitish tips and fringe spotting to feathers of wing coverts, tertials, scapulars and tail. Some 1st-summer birds remain in winter plumage.

VOICE Flight call a clear, whistled, plover-like 'pyueee-pyueee' with rising inflection.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, breeds in rocky, upland areas along fast-flowing rivers and streams. At other times, favours tidal mudflats and especially sandy beaches and coral reefs.

WILLET *Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*

Plate page 384

L 33–41 cm, WS 70–80 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Recalls winter Black-tailed Godwit in general size, shape and colour, but has blue-grey legs and head and bill shape more like those of Common Redshank. These characters combined with stunning banded black and white wing pattern (on both surfaces) render Willet unmistakable in all plumages. Vagrant Hudsonian Godwit shares black underwing coverts, but lacks black band along primary tips on underwing of Willet and has much longer bill and black (not grey) tail. In behav-

iour recalls Common Redshank, and in general is equally nervous and noisy.

SEX/AGE Adult summer finely streaked and spotted with blackish on head, neck and breast, becoming scaly along flanks; upperparts spangled with black. Adult winter unmarked grey-brown on body, with narrow whitish eye-ring (like Common Redshank) and whitish lower underparts, throat and breast centre. Juvenile similar to adult winter, but browner overall and has narrowly notched dark and pale fringes to

wing feathers, most marked on coverts and tertials.

VOICE Alarm call a loud 'week' or sharper 'kip', repeated and increasing in tempo as bird becomes more agitated. Also gives a more disyllabic 'kerwick'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe, Azores). In natural range, breeds in coastal saltmarshes or around brackish or saline inland lakes. At other times, mainly sandy beaches, tidal mudflats and saltmarshes.

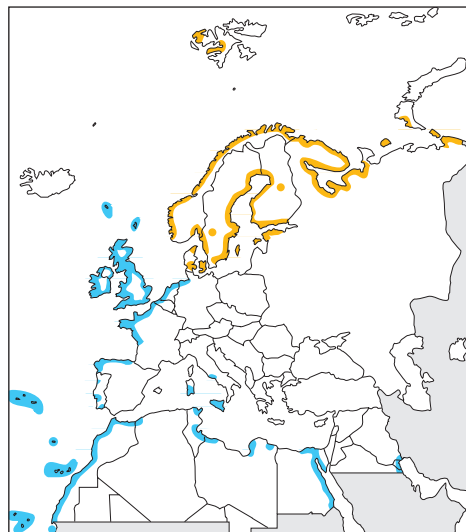
RUDDY TURNSTONE *Arenaria interpres* Turnstone

L 21–25 cm, WS 50–57 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Sociable, stocky, smallish wader; relatively short, bright orange legs, short, slightly upturned bill and distinctively variegated wing pattern render it unmistakable in all plumages. **Adult summer** has variegated black and white head and breast, contrasting strongly with pure white lower underparts, and chestnut and black on upperparts. **Adult winter and Juvenile** much drabber but equally distinctive: head and upperparts mottled blackish and drab brown, the blackish central and lower breast contrasting strongly with snowy-white of remaining underparts. Usually remarkably inconspicuous, even in summer plumage, walking and running in short waddling bursts as they energetically forage in small parties on stony shores and coastal rocks, frequently among tide-tossed seaweed and other debris; often the calls or the moving white bellies and bright orange legs are the first clues to the birds' presence. As their name suggests, frequently use their bills to turn over pebbles or other items while searching for food. If flushed, rattling call and complex variegated blackish and white pattern of upperwing, rump and tail are quite unlike those of any other wader of our region. Often remarkably confiding.

SEX/AGE Sexes similar, but male averages smaller and, in summer plumage, has brighter rufous-chestnut on upperparts and cleaner white markings on head. Juvenile much as winter adult, but wing and mantle feathers all neatly scaled with clear buff fringes, and head and breast respectively lighter brown and duller black; becomes much as adult by first winter, although more scaled pattern of coverts and tertials persists to late winter. 1st-summer birds show variable mixture of summer and winter plumages.

VOICE Typical call, given in flight, a staccato rattle of clear, short, nasal notes: 'tuk, tuk-i-tuk-tuk'. Sometimes given as a disyllabic 'chit-uk' that is frequently accelerated into an angry chitter during disputes. Alarm calls include a sharp 'teu' and, especially in breeding season, a strong, sharp 'TITwoooTITwoooRI-



Tititititititit ...' that ends in a rolling chatter.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (nominate illustrated). N American *morinella* (vagrant W Europe) averages smaller, and is richer, darker red-chestnut, with less extensive black on upperparts and whiter on crown and nape in summer plumage; winter birds tend to be more rufous above than nominate race.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Bear Is, Germany.) Breeds on dry coastal tundra and inshore islets. Away from breeding grounds, favours rocky shores, both along coasts and on estuaries; on passage, also sometimes turns up at inland freshwater lakes and rivers.

WILSON'S PHALAROPE *Steganopus tricolor*

L 22–24 cm, WS 39–43 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Larger than Red-necked Phalarope, but overlaps with Grey. In all plumages, the long, needle-fine black bill, clean white underparts, rather small head and relatively long neck help with its identification. As with all phalaropes, the female is larger and in summer plumage much more brightly coloured and patterned than the male. **Adult summer** has a white throat contrasting with rufous foreneck and a blackish band through eye and down sides of neck (where it becomes deep chestnut) onto mantle, and black legs. Adult female summer is unmistakable, but duller males might be confused with male Red-necked Phalarope in poor view, although latter has extensive dark grey on breast and flanks, buff stripes on mantle and scapulars and different rump and tail patterns. **Adult winter and 1st-win-**

ter differ from other phalaropes in their combination of yellowish legs, plain grey and white plumage and lack of broad black eye patch, dark hindcrown/ nape and white forehead/forecrown; whitish supercilium often extends well down into grey of sides of neck, but in some is obvious only in front of eye. Feeds both by wading and by swimming, picking invertebrates from water, mud or emergent vegetation; when walking, lifts feet up rather high as if doing a 'goose-step'. Spends less time swimming than other phalaropes and often feeds by running along waterside in a characteristic crouching fashion. In flight, shows plain wings, white uppertail coverts, and feet projecting beyond short grey tail: quite unlike *Calidris*-like wing and rump patterns of other phalaropes (compare with vagrant Lesser Yellowlegs and Stilt Sandpiper). Beware

Plate page 380

Plate page 372

occasional yellow-legged Marsh Sandpiper, which is also very plain grey and white in winter plumage and which has needle-like bill, but Marsh has much longer legs and white extending in 'V' up back as in Common Greenshank.

SEX/AGE Female larger than male; in summer plumage, has clear wide black band through the eye and down sides of neck that becomes deep chestnut on mantle side, with crown, nape, scapulars and mantle centre grey. Summer male much duller, although variable; foreneck paler rufous, crown, hindneck and upperparts browner, black eye and neck band narrow and less defined. Juvenile similar in pattern to adult

winter, but grey areas are dark brown, with neat buff fringes to feathers; legs fleshy. This plumage is lost quite early in autumn (so is unlikely to be seen in our region), and by mid-August most are as adult winter except for some retained buff-fringed, darker-centred tertials and wing coverts, but many are not safely aged in the field.

VOICE Rather silent, but a soft 'chew' may be given in flight.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Europe, NW Africa). In natural range, favours brackish and freshwater marshes, lakes and pools. Unlike other phalaropes, does not go to sea in the non-breeding season.

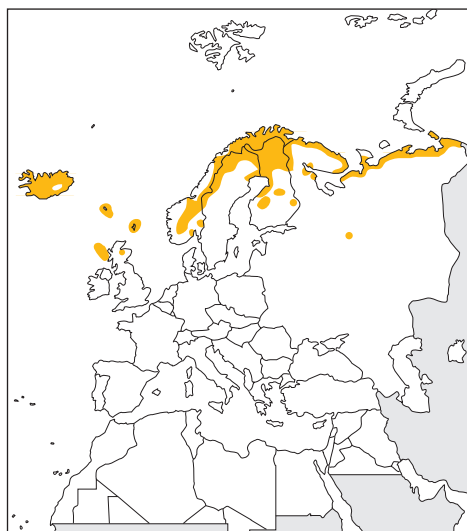
RED-NECKED PHALAROPE *Phalaropus lobatus*

Plate page 371

Northern Phalarope (N America)

L 18–19 cm, WS 32–36 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Small size and habitual swimming behaviour, unlike that of other waders, render phalaropes easily identifiable as such, but separating Red-necked from Red in other than summer plumage tricky. Red-necked is smaller and more elegant than Red, with relatively smaller head and longer neck. The most important factor, however, is bill structure: Red-necked has a fine, needle-like bill, often slightly decurving towards sharp tip, while Red has thicker bill which seems to be blunter-tipped; when viewed head-on, bill of Red-necked narrowly tubular, whereas that of Red slightly ridged along culmen and expanded at sides, giving angular cross-section. **Adult summer** Red-necked appears slate-grey, with contrasting white throat and belly (latter hidden when swimming), the rusty collar being obvious only at closer ranges. **Adult winter** of both species is grey above and has whiter head than 1st-autumn birds, lacking retained juvenile blackish-centred tertials and wing coverts of 1st-winter. Red is pure grey above, with narrow whitish feather fringes, forming no obvious pattern; Red-necked has slightly darker feather centres which create a slightly mottled appearance, and indeed whitish stripes are formed along mantle sides in fresh plumage. In full winter dress (Red is more likely in this plumage stage in our region), both species are almost white-headed, although Red tends to have a clearer black eye patch and rear crown than Red-necked; additionally, Red has small yellowish patch at base of lower mandible, although, if this is visible, then so is bill shape. **Juvenile** of both species has wholly black bill and is blackish above with buff feather edges (in Red-necked, these form snipe-like stripes at sides of mantle); Red-necked also tends to have wider black eye patch than Red, and the supercilium is very narrow just above the eye. In very fresh juvenile plumage, Red-necked is washed greyish-buff (sometimes with slight pinkish tinge) on white areas of supercilium and foreneck; these areas are brighter, more pinkish-buff in Red. By autumn, both look much whiter on foreneck and supercilium (although Red often shows a buff wash on neck up to early September); snipe-like mantle stripes of Red-necked then most useful clue (apart from bill shape). By late September, extensive pure grey areas appear on scapulars and mantle of Red, but little grey visible on Red-necked (which does not substantially moult upperparts until arrival in southern winter quarters); thus, October phalaropes with grey mantle and scapulars and dark-centred wing feathers are Red. In flight, summer Red-necked can be puzzling, resembling a small *Calidris* in shape, wing bar and dark rump centre; the wide slaty breast band contrasts with white throat and



underwing. Winter birds in flight are dark above, with a clear wing bar; they differ marginally from Red in darkness of upperparts, relatively shorter wings and faster, more twisting flight. Phalaropes are quite fearless of man, allowing close approach, so it should be possible to see bill shape on birds encountered ashore. They mostly feed by swimming with Common Moorhen-like jerking of the head and neck, rapidly picking at water surface, often spinning around on water to stir up invertebrates, but also by walking along margins of pools. Sociable; often found in large flocks on migration (in far east of our region). See also Red Phalarope.

SEX/AGE Female larger and in summer plumage more brightly coloured than male. 1st-summer birds seem not to acquire summer plumage; most probably remain in winter quarters, as few winter-plumaged birds are seen on spring migration or on breeding grounds. See Identification regarding juvenile plumage.

VOICE A short chirped 'kip', a harsh 'cherp' and a rather Eurasian Coot-like 'kerrek' are typical calls. Gives various warbling and twittering calls on breeding grounds.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common, even abundant. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Ireland, Estonia, Spitsbergen. Migrates overland to winter in Arabian Sea, thus merely a vagrant along Atlantic

seaboard away from breeding grounds.) Breeds by moorland bogs and tundra pools. On passage, by

shores of large freshwater lakes and small pools. Deeply pelagic in winter, as Red Phalarope.

RED PHALAROPE *Phalaropus fulicaria*

Plate page 371

Grey Phalarope

L 20–22 cm, WS 40–44 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Seen chiefly along Atlantic seaboard. Rather larger, chunkier and relatively larger-headed than Red-necked, with distinctly thicker and more angular bill at all seasons. Summer plumage highly distinctive, with entire underparts chestnut-red and contrasting with white face. Winter birds very similar in plumage to those of Red-necked (which see for full discussion); best identified by thicker, blunt-tipped bill. Autumn birds with extensive grey on mantle and scapulars, contrasting with dark-centred wing coverts and tertials, are immature Red. In flight, summer-plumaged birds show striking contrast between white underwing and chestnut underbody (appearing merely dark below in poor light); distinguished from summer Red Knot by dark rump and clear white wing bar. Winter birds in flight separable with difficulty from Red-necked by relatively chunkier build (with shorter, thicker bill), longer wings and less rapid, twisting flight; birds with obvious clean grey saddle and dark leading edge to inner wing would be Red. Difficult to separate from winter Sanderling if head pattern not visible, until bird settles on surface of water and gives the game away. Flight action rapid and fluttering, invariably hugging surface of sea. Usually encountered in flocks at sea, swimming buoyantly and picking at floating weed. Rare inland, although subject to occasional 'wrecks' which force large numbers towards European coasts following severe autumn gales. Equally tame as Red-necked when discovered ashore.

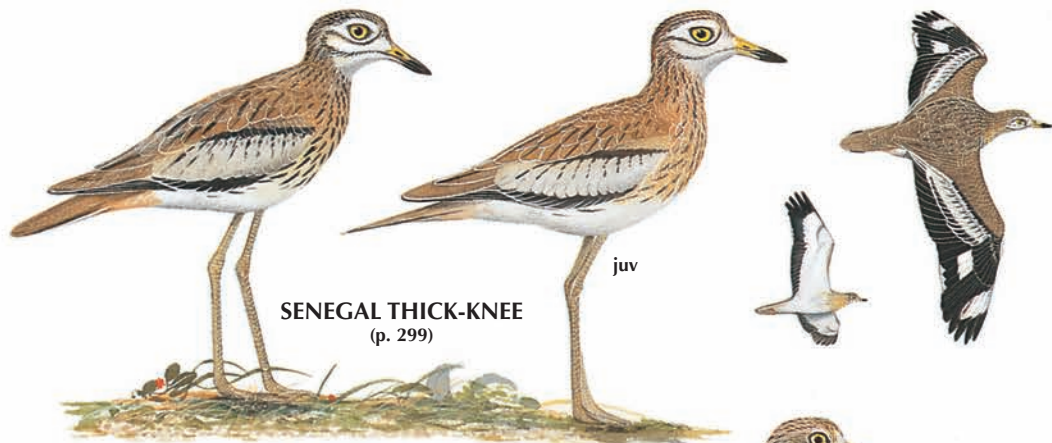
SEX/AGE Female larger and in summer plumage more brightly coloured than male (which has cinnamon speckling on dark areas of head and more extensive dark tip to bill). 1st-summer birds probably do not attain summer plumage; suspected to remain in winter quarters. See also Red-necked Phalarope.

VOICE Usual call a short, explosive 'pik', less chirped

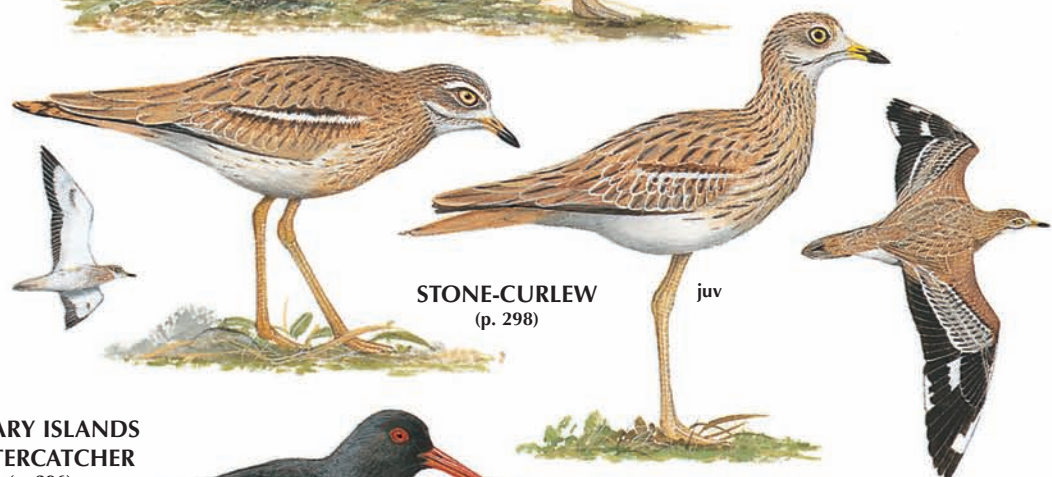


than call of Red-necked. Gives twittering or chirruping calls on breeding grounds, including a rolling 'prrrt'.

STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon Spitsbergen, but rare and localized breeder elsewhere in our region. Breeds by pools in coastal tundra. Only rarely recorded on spring migration. Sometimes common offshore in Atlantic on autumn passage to pelagic winter quarters off W and S Africa (when breeders of our region may be joined by birds from Greenland and eastern N America); regular in very small numbers along western coasts after strong winds. Exceptional inland.



SENEGAL THICK-KNEE
(p. 299)



STONE-CURLEW
(p. 298)

CANARY ISLANDS
OYSTERCATCHER
(p. 296)



summer

summer

summer

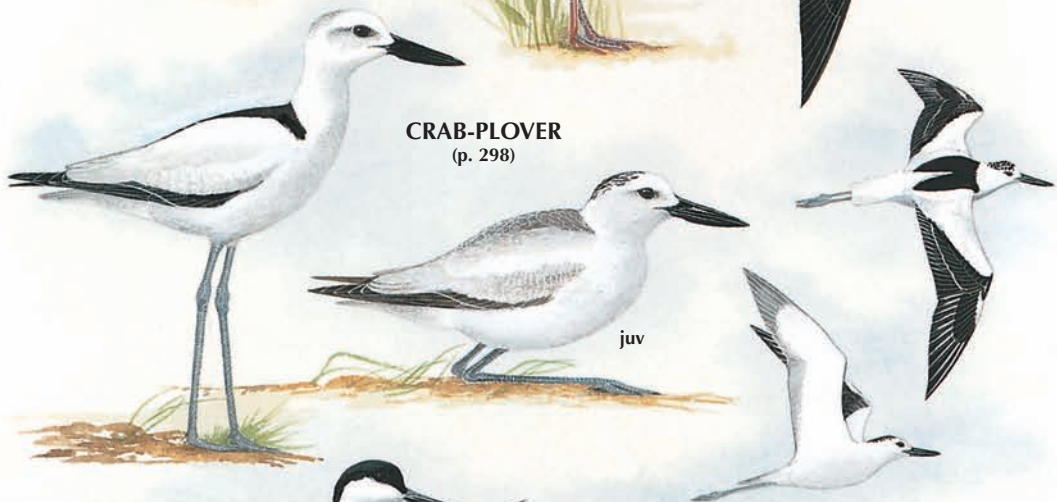
juv

EURASIAN
OYSTERCATCHER
(p. 296)

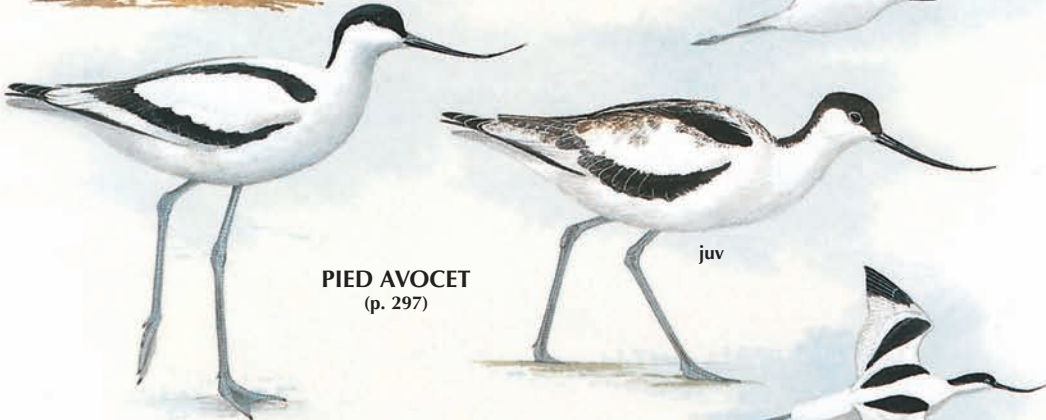
winter



**BLACK-
WINGED STILT**
(p. 297)



CRAB-PLOVER
(p. 298)



PIED AVOCET
(p. 297)



GREY PLOVER
(at same scale)



summer



winter

COLLARED PRATINCOLE
(p. 300)



summer



juv



juv



summer



summer



juv



summer



winter

BLACK-WINGED PRATINCOLE
(p. 301)



summer



juv



EGYPTIAN PLOVER
(p. 300)



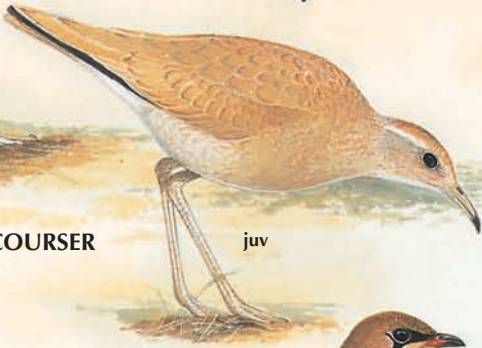
juv



CREAM-COLOURED COURSER
(p. 300)



juv



summer



summer



winter



juv

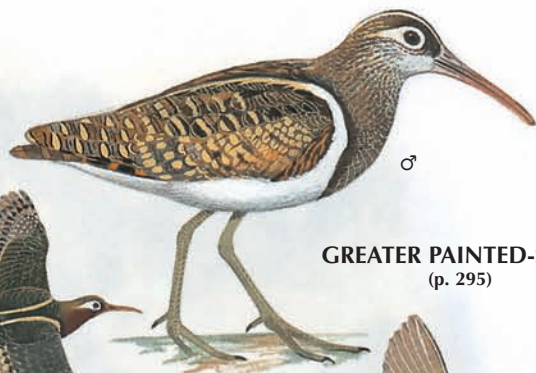


juv



summer

ORIENTAL PRATINCOLE
(p. 301)



GREATER PAINTED-SNIPE
(p. 295)



NORTHERN LAPWING
(p. 312)



LAPWINGS

SPUR-WINGED
LAPWING
(p. 310)



SOCIABLE LAPWING
(p. 311)



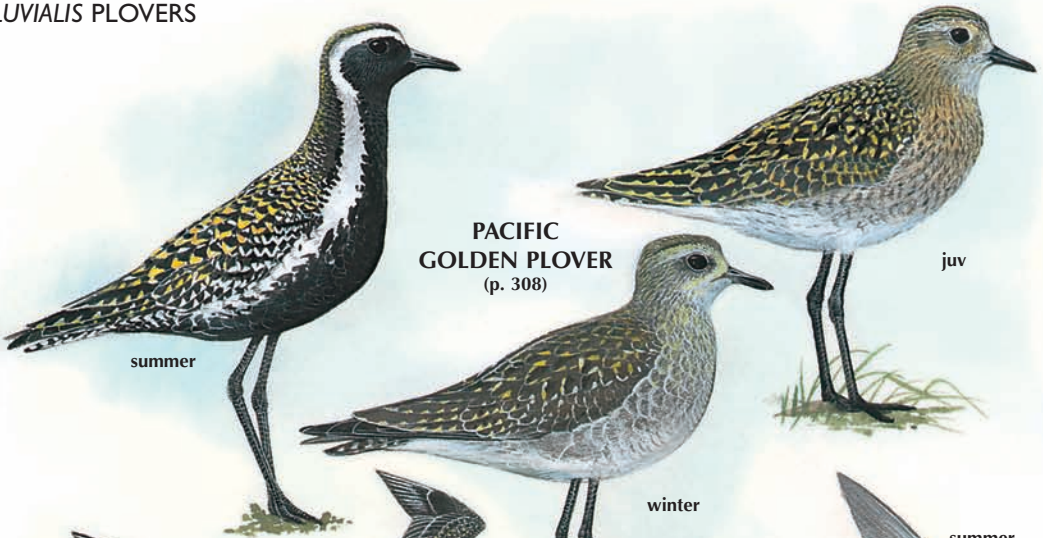
**WHITE-TAILED
LAPWING**
(p. 312)



**BLACK-HEADED
LAPWING**
(p. 311)

**RED-WATTLED
LAPWING**
(p. 311)

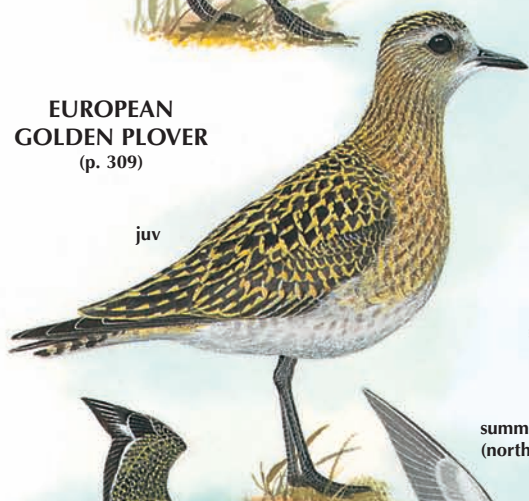
PACIFIC
GOLDEN PLOVER
(p. 308)



AMERICAN
GOLDEN PLOVER
(p. 308)



EUROPEAN
GOLDEN PLOVER
(p. 309)



GREY

summer



winter



winter

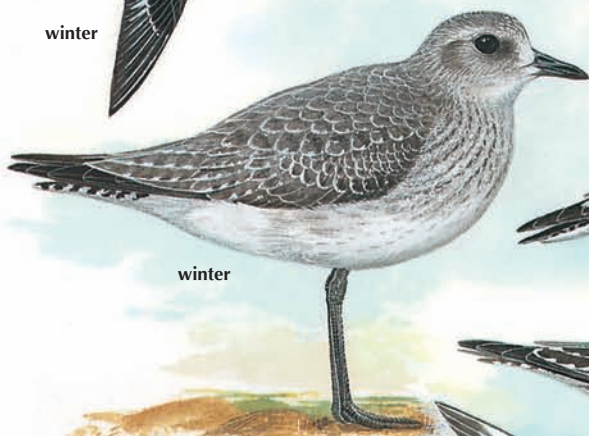
EUROPEAN GOLDEN



summer
(northern)



COMMON
RINGED



winter

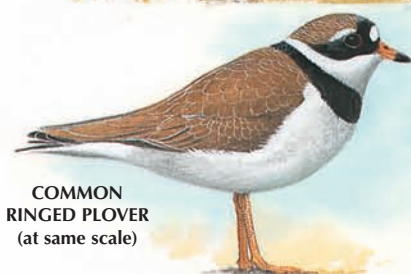


summer



juv

GREY PLOVER
(p. 310)

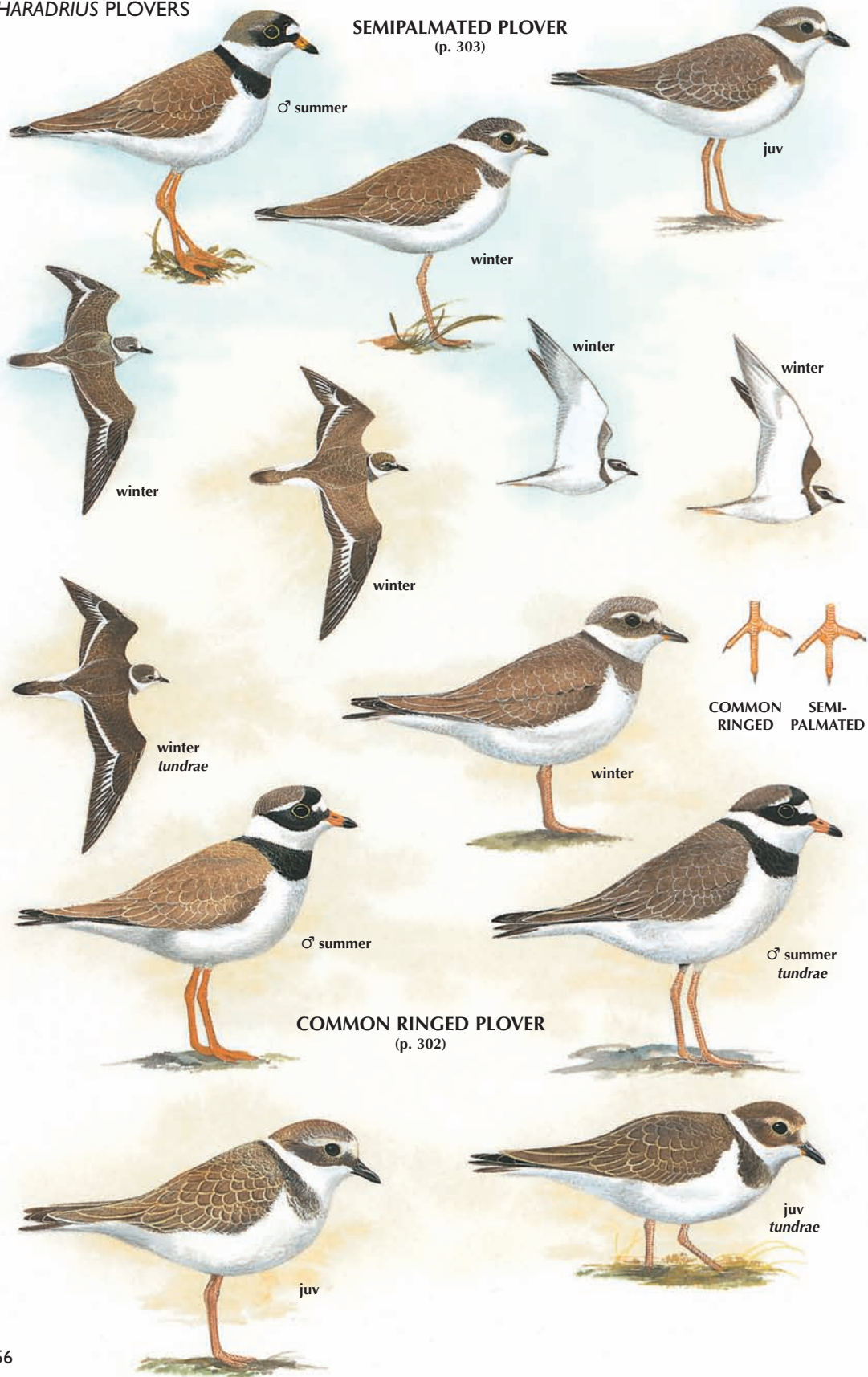


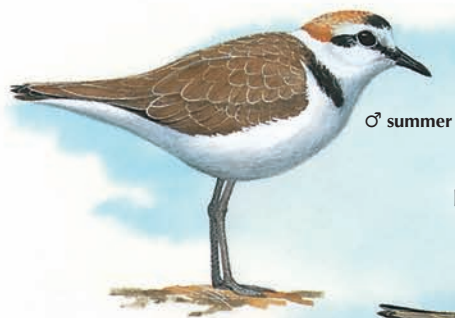
COMMON
RINGED PLOVER
(at same scale)



winter

CHARADRIUS PLOVERS

SEMIPALMATED PLOVER
(p. 303)

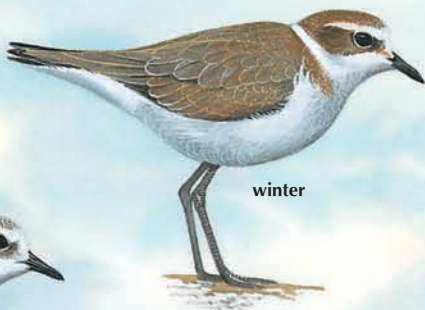


♂ summer



♀ summer (worn)

KENTISH PLOVER
(p. 305)



winter



winter



winter (worn)



juv



winter



winter



summer



summer



winter



winter

LITTLE RINGED PLOVER
(p. 302)



juv

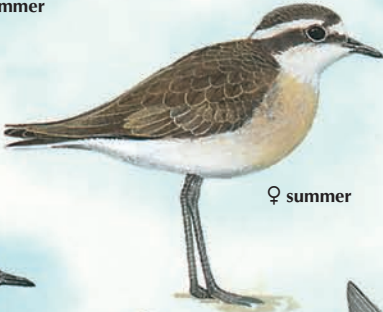
KITTLITZ'S PLOVER
(p. 304)



♂ summer



juv



♀ summer



winter



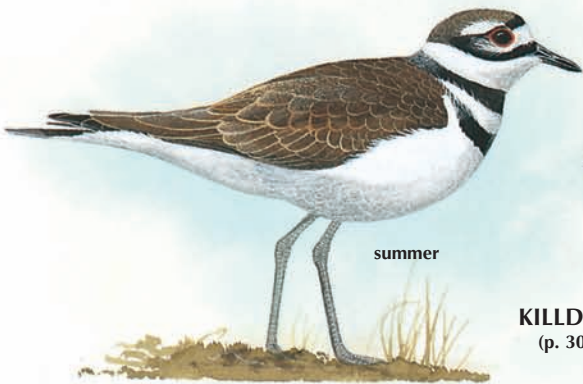
winter



winter



summer

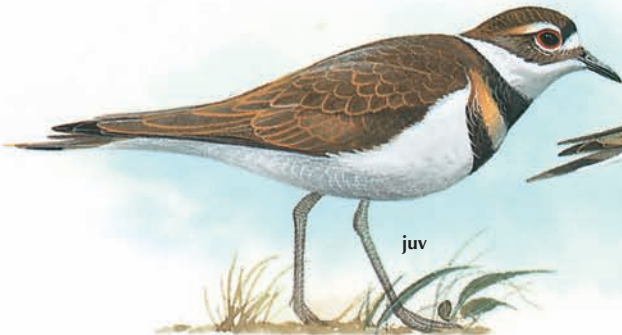


summer



winter

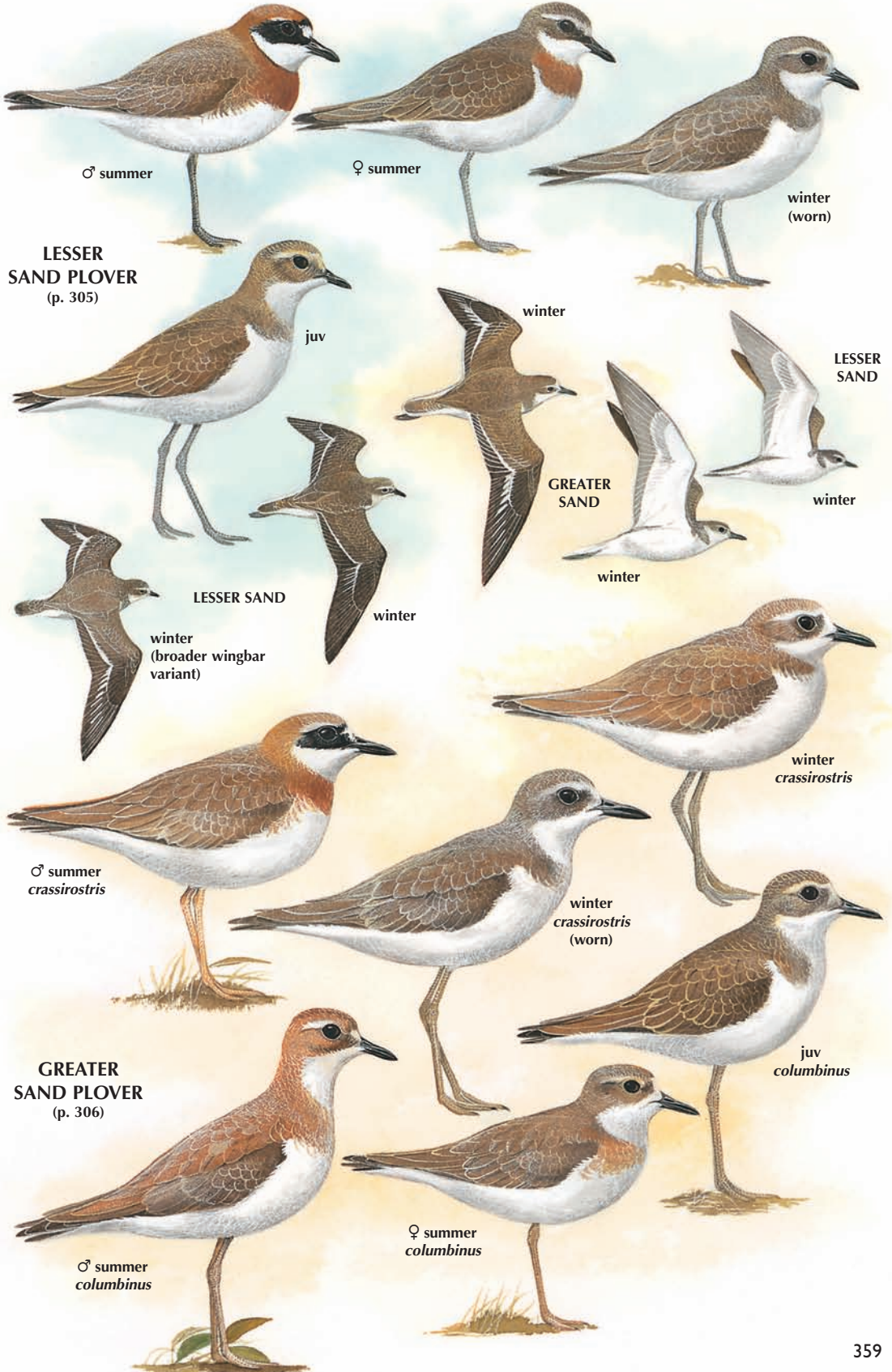
KILLDEER
(p. 303)



juv



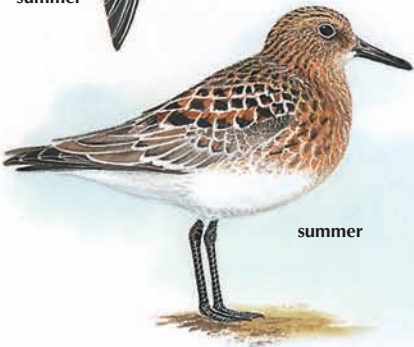
winter



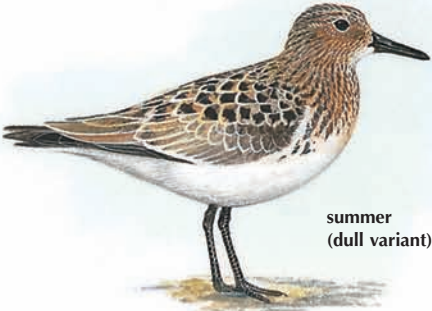




TEMMINCK'S STINT
(p. 318)



SANDERLING
(p. 314)





summer



summer
(worn)



winter



winter

LITTLE STINT
(p. 317)



juv



juv
(dull variant)



winter



juv



juv



winter



juv



juv



summer



summer
(worn)



winter

RED-NECKED STINT
(p. 316)



juv



juv
(dull variant)

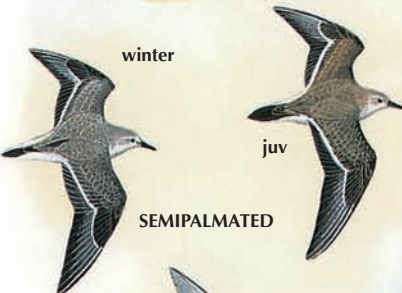


winter

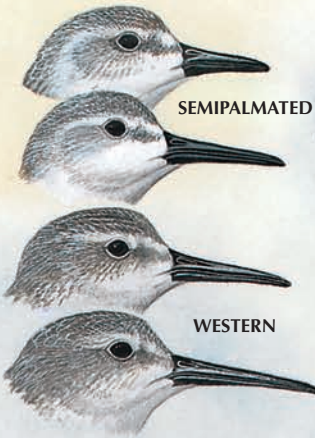
SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER
(p. 315)



WESTERN SEMIPALMATED



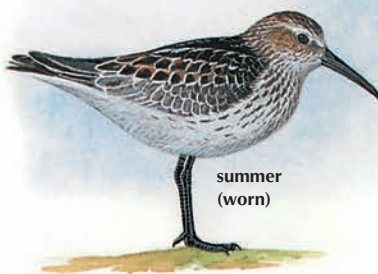
SEMIPALMATED



WESTERN

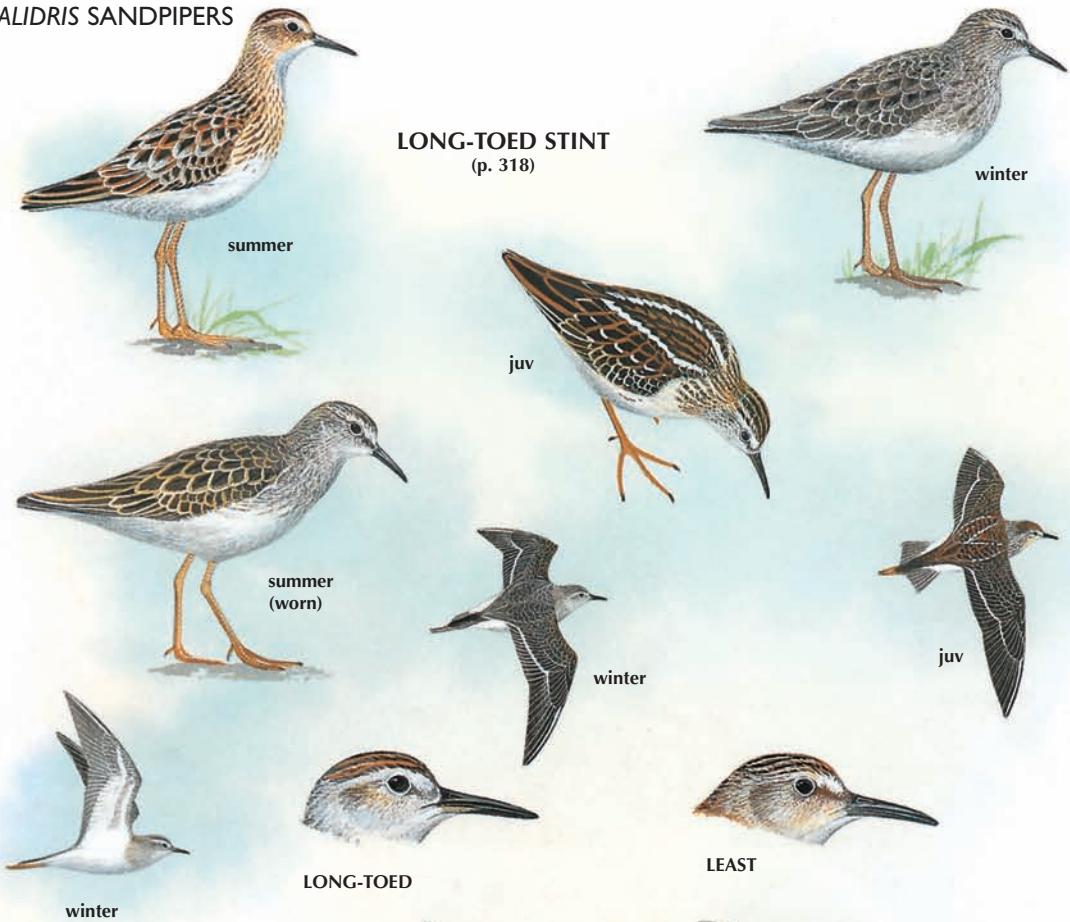


WESTERN SANDPIPER
(p. 316)

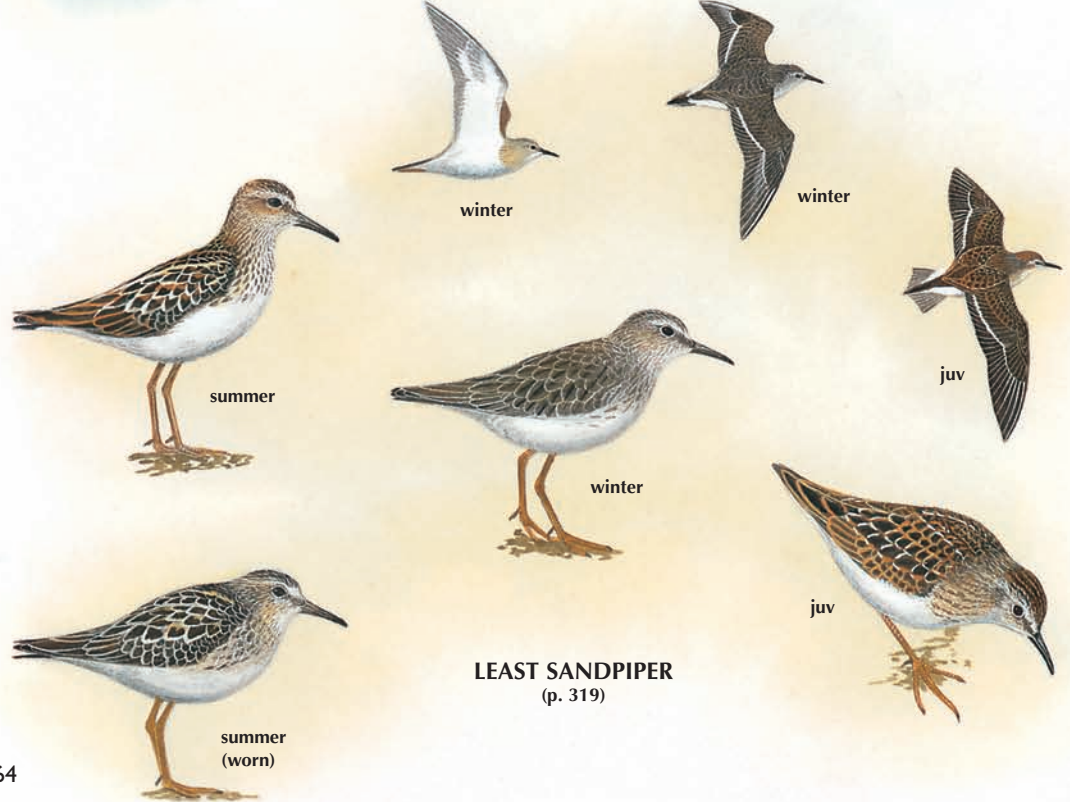


CALIDRIS SANDPIPERS

LONG-TOED STINT
(p. 318)



LEAST SANDPIPER
(p. 319)



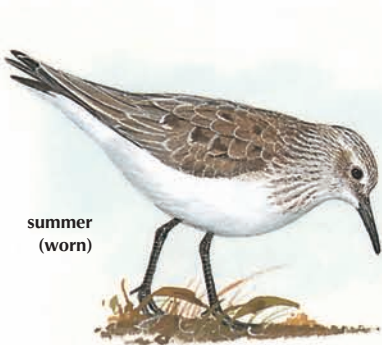


summer

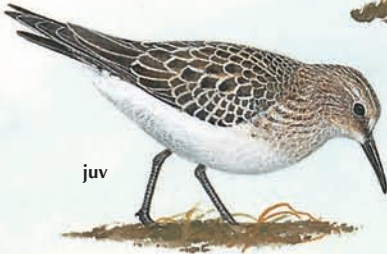


winter

BAIRD'S SANDPIPER
(p. 320)



summer
(worn)



juv



winter



winter



juv



winter



juv



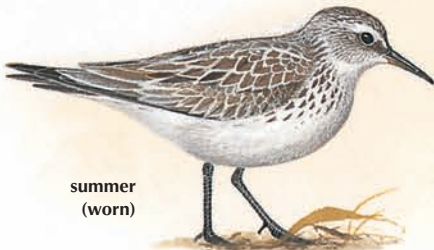
winter



summer



winter



summer
(worn)

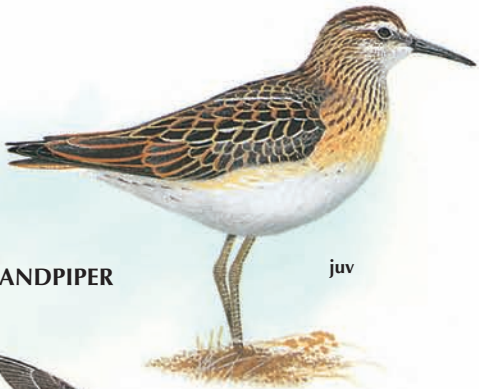
WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER
(p. 320)



juv



summer



juv

SHARP-TAILED SANDPIPER
(p. 321)



winter



juv



juv



juv



♂ summer

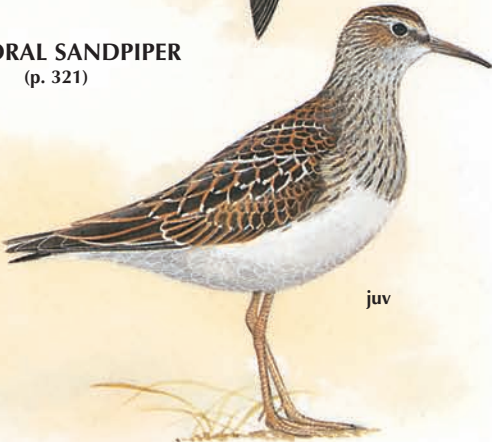


juv

PECTORAL SANDPIPER
(p. 321)



winter



juv

PURPLE
SANDPIPER
(p. 322)



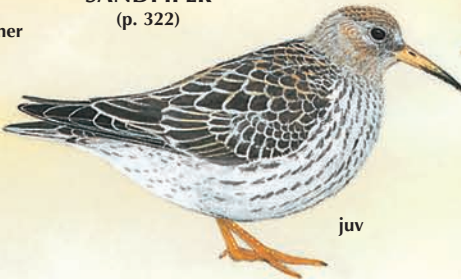
summer



winter



summer



juv



winter



summer



winter



juv



summer



summer
schinzii



summer



winter



juv
arctica



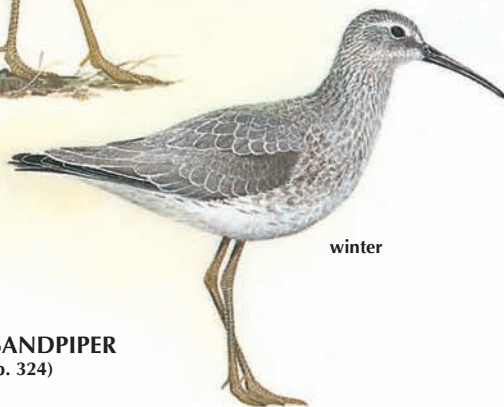
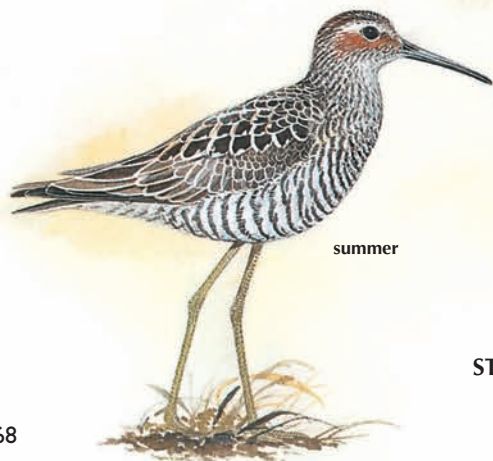
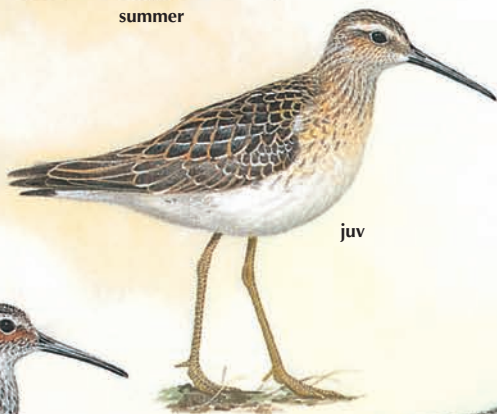
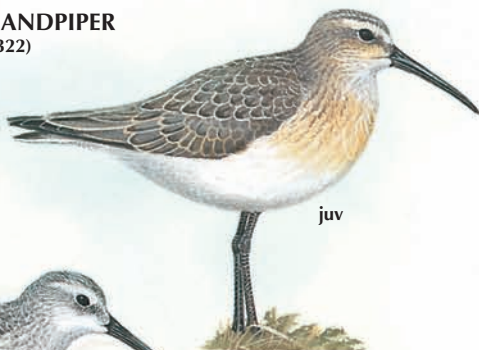
winter
sakhalina

DUNLIN
(p. 323)

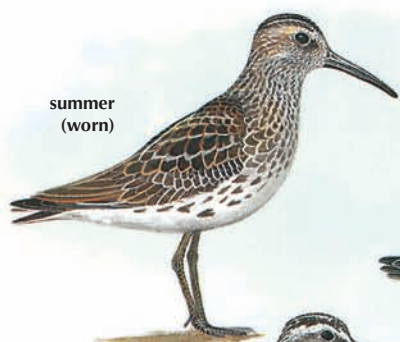


juv

(p. 322)

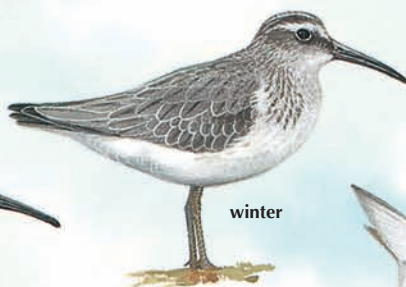


(p. 324)

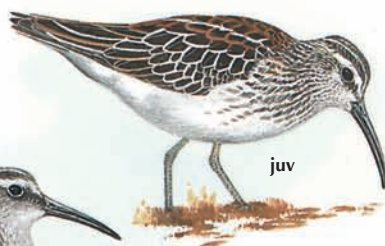


summer
(worn)

**BROAD-BILLED
SANDPIPER**
(p. 324)



winter



juv



summer



summer

summer



winter



summer



winter



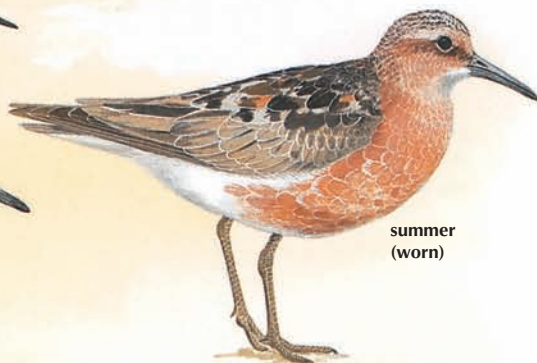
juv



winter



summer

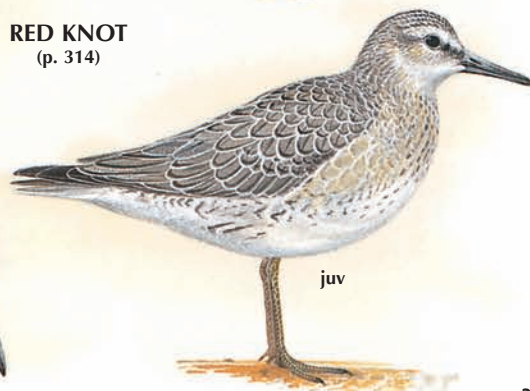


summer
(worn)

RED KNOT
(p. 314)



winter

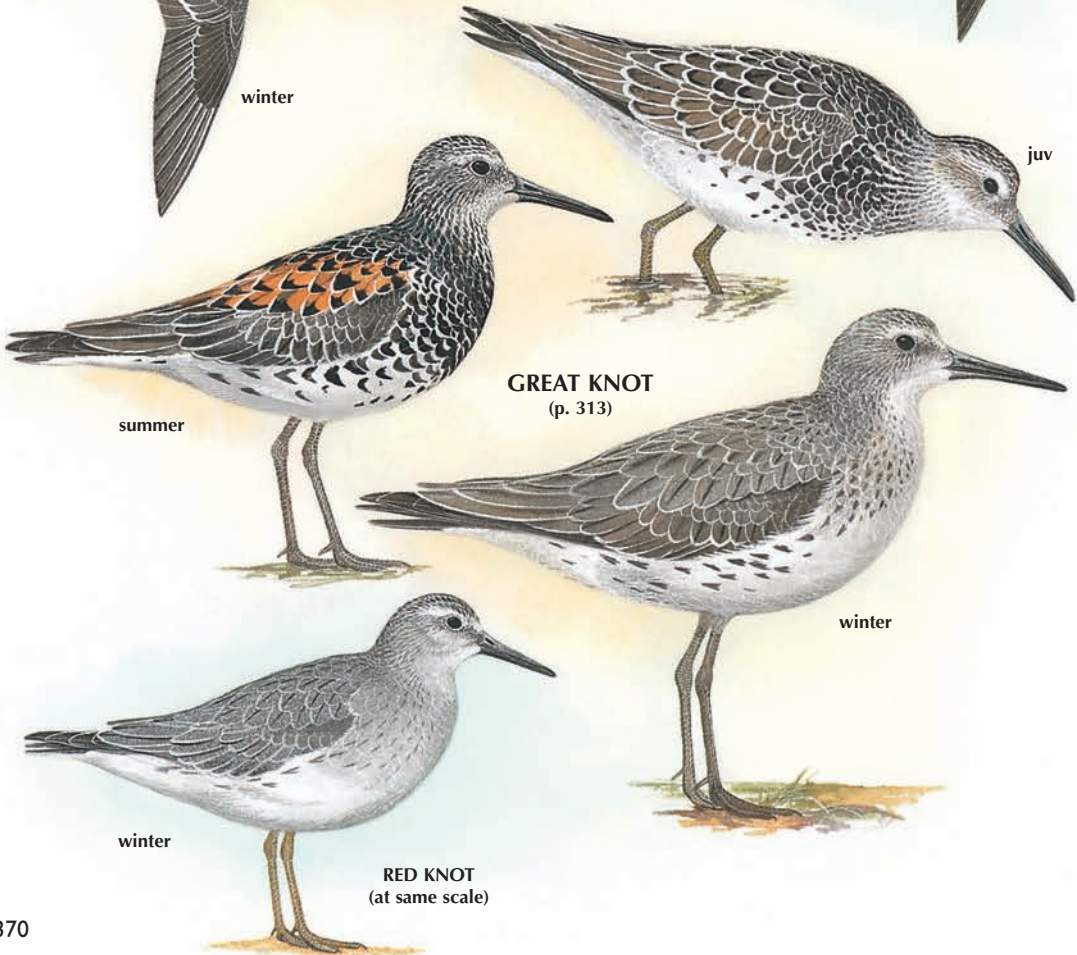


juv

BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER
(p. 325)



GREAT KNOT
(p. 313)



RED KNOT
(at same scale)



RED-NECKED PHALAROPE
(p. 345)



**RED PHALAROPE
(GREY PHALAROPE)**
(p. 346)





JACK SNIFE
(p. 327)



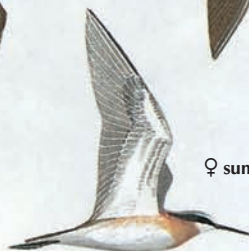
winter



juv



♀ summer



♀ summer



♂ summer

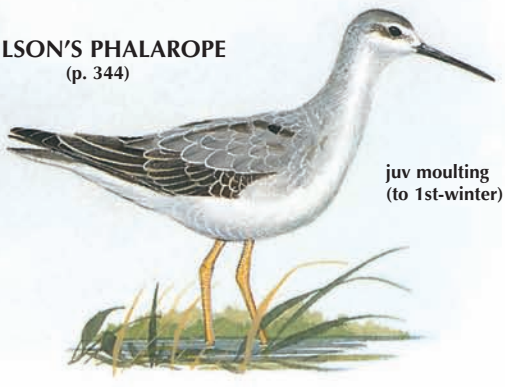


winter



juv

WILSON'S PHALAROPE
(p. 344)



juv moulting
(to 1st-winter)

**SPOTTED
SANDPIPER**
(p. 343)



summer

adult
moulting



winter



winter



summer



juv



juv



winter



summer



juv



summer

**COMMON
SANDPIPER**
(p. 342)



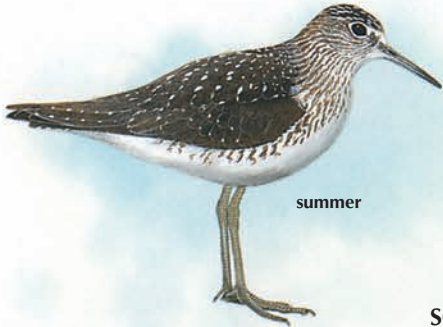
winter



juv



juv (worn)



summer



winter

SOLITARY SANDPIPER
(p. 340)



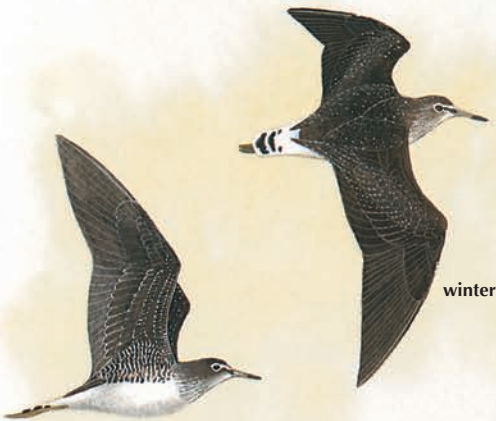
juv



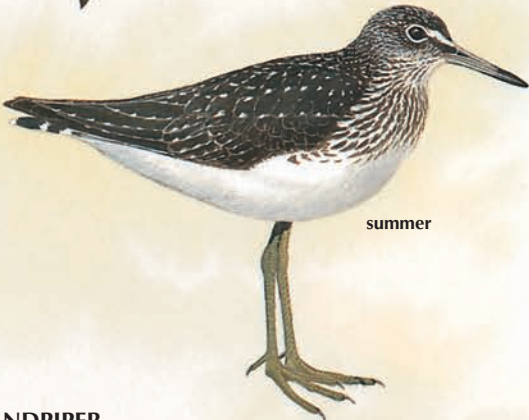
winter



winter



winter

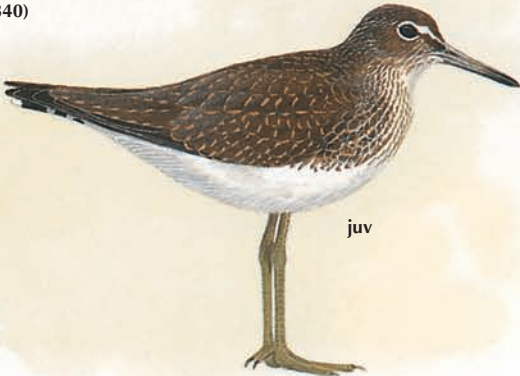


summer

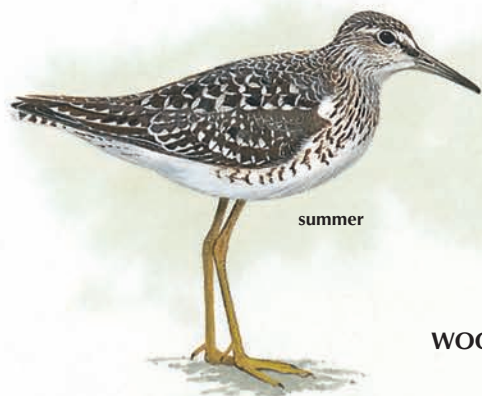
GREEN SANDPIPER
(p. 340)



winter



juv



summer



winter

WOOD SANDPIPER
(p. 341)



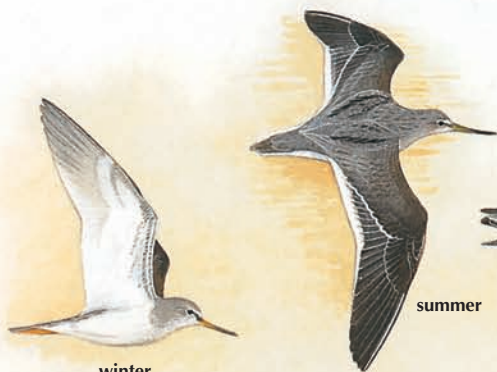
juv



winter



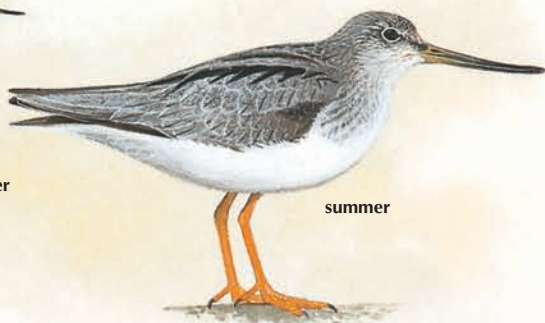
winter



winter



summer



summer

TEREK SANDPIPER
(p. 341)

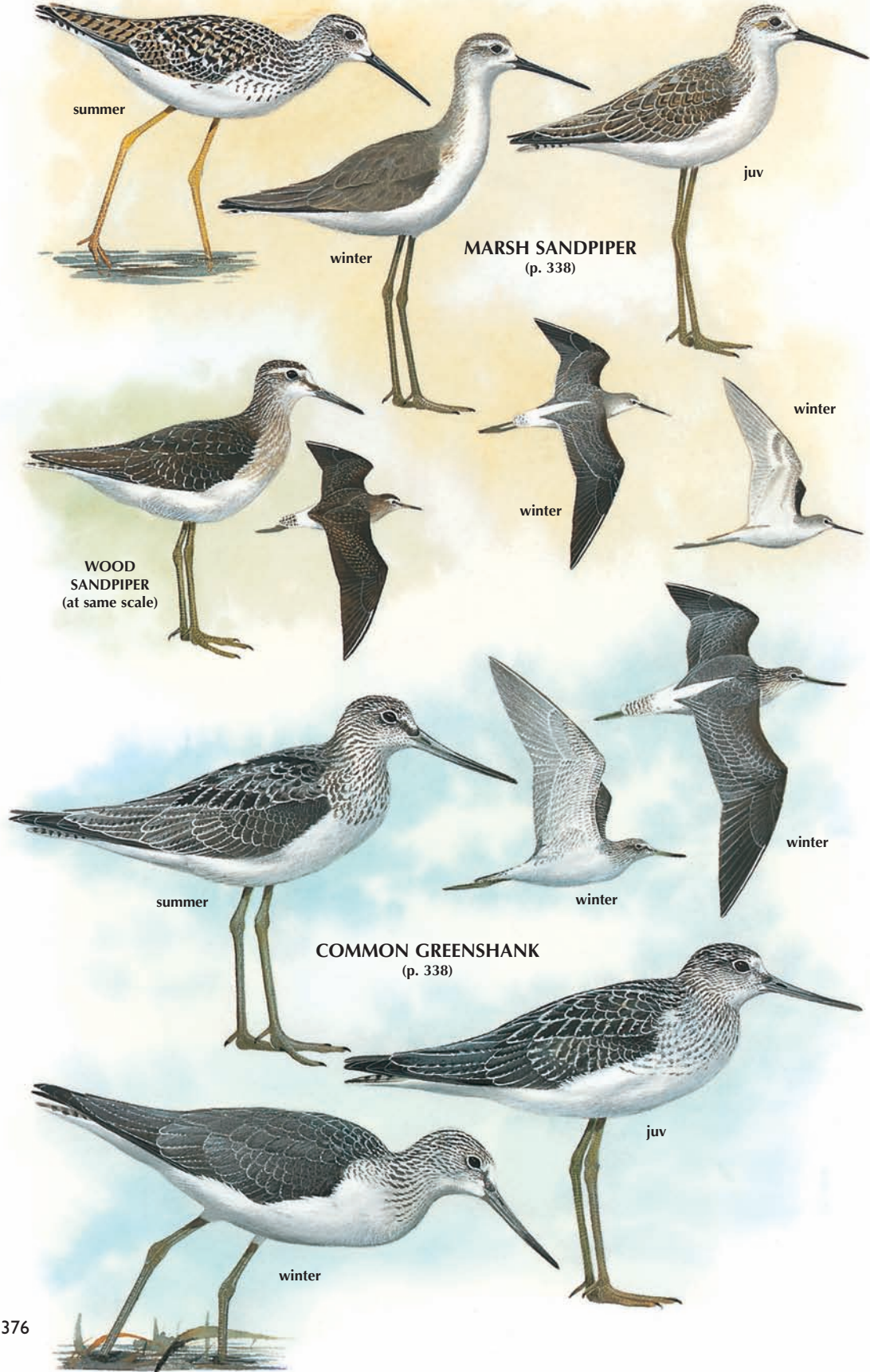


winter

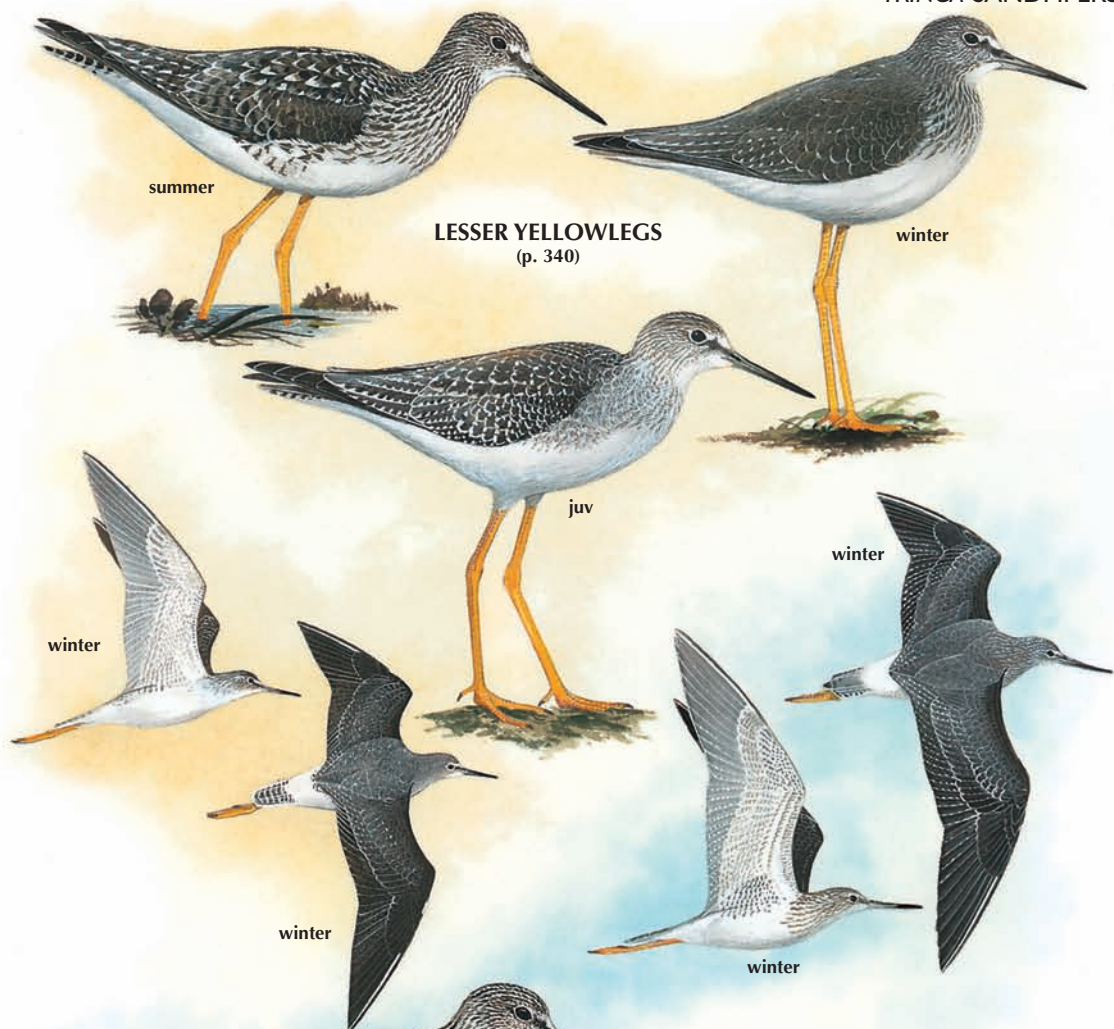


juv

TRINGA SANDPIPERS



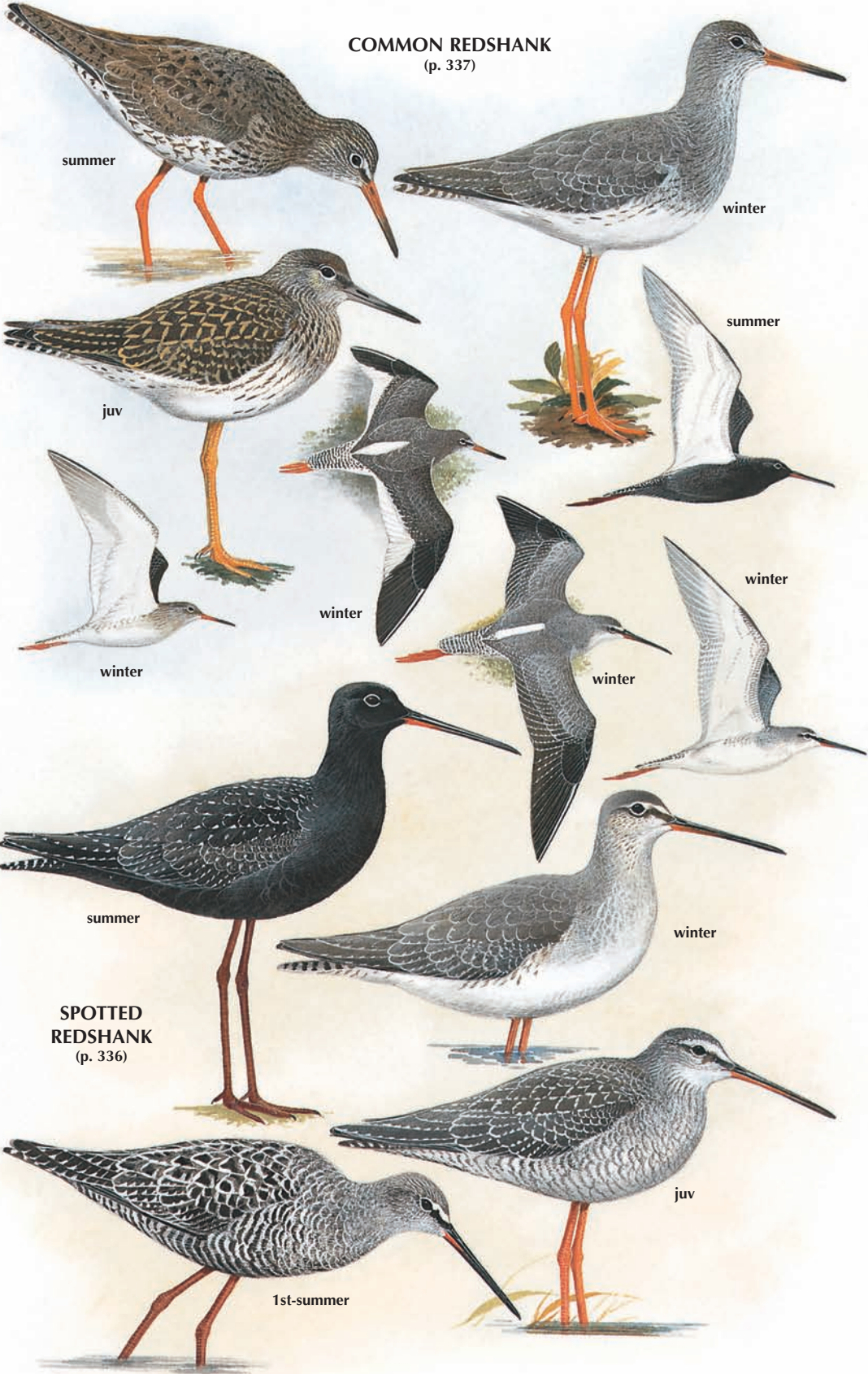
LESSER YELLOWLEGS
(p. 340)



GREATER YELLOWLEGS
(p. 339)



COMMON REDSHANK
(p. 337)





RUDDY TURNSTONE
(p. 344)

juv

winter

winter

winter

summer

winter

♂ summer

**GREY-TAILED
TATTLER**
(p. 343)

winter

juv

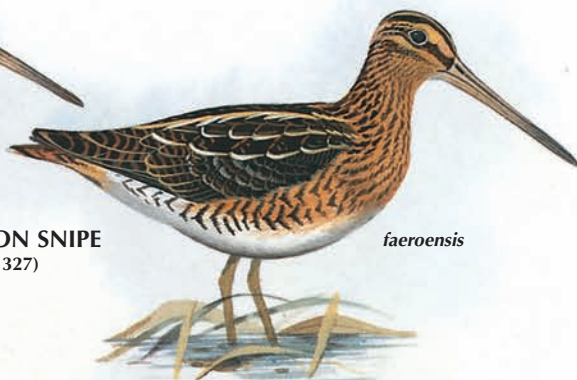
juv

juv

UPLAND SANDPIPER
(p. 336)



COMMON SNIPE
(p. 327)



faeroensis



dark variant



juv



JACK SNIPE



delicata



EURASIAN
WOODCOCK
(p. 331)

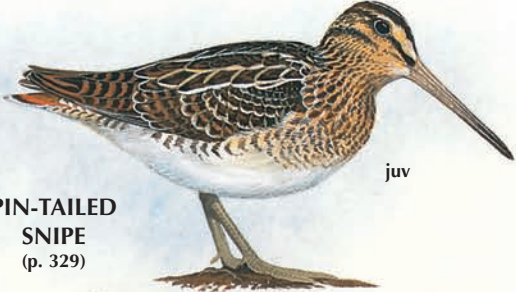


JACK SNIPE
(at same scale)





PIN-TAILED
SNIPE
(p. 329)



juv



PIN-TAILED



SWINHOE'S



SWINHOE'S
SNIPE
(p. 329)



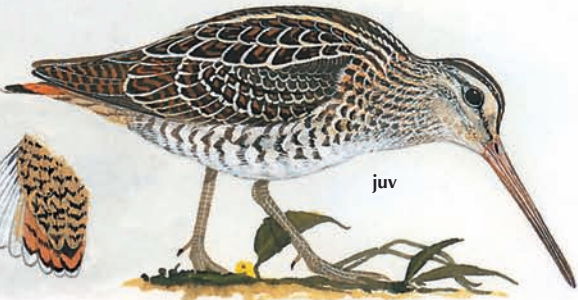
juv



GREAT SNIPE
(p. 328)



juv



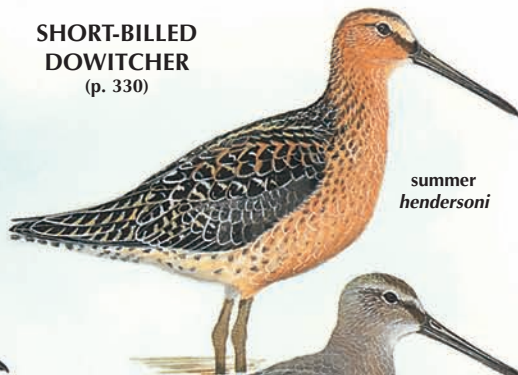
juv

DOWITCHERS

SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER (p. 330)



summer



summer
hendersoni



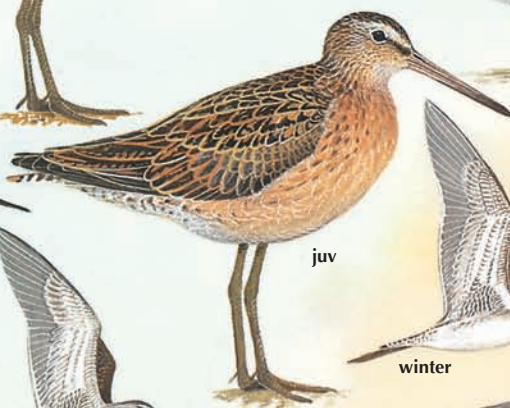
winter



1st-winter



winter



juv



winter



winter

LONG-BILLED

SHORT-BILLED



winter



1st-summer



summer



1st-winter



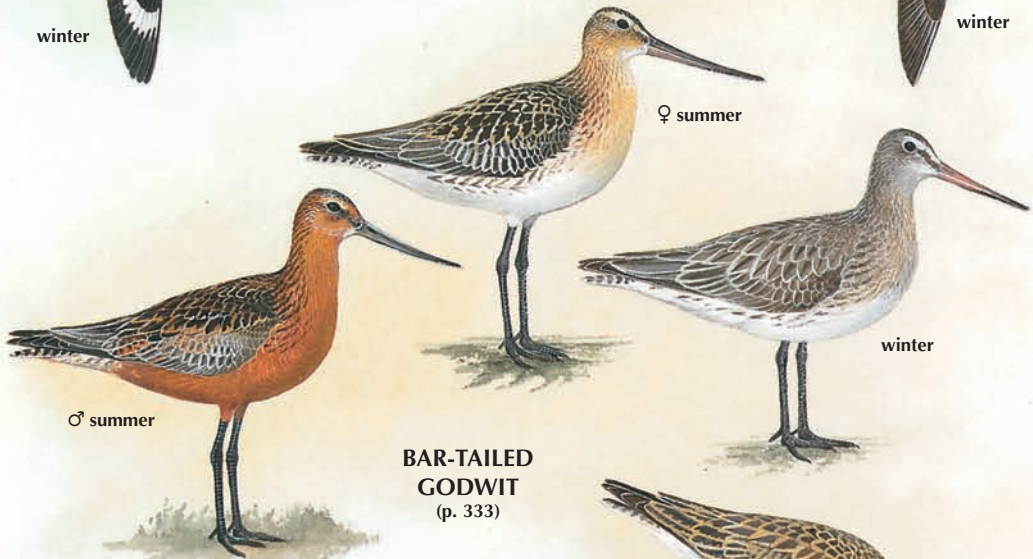
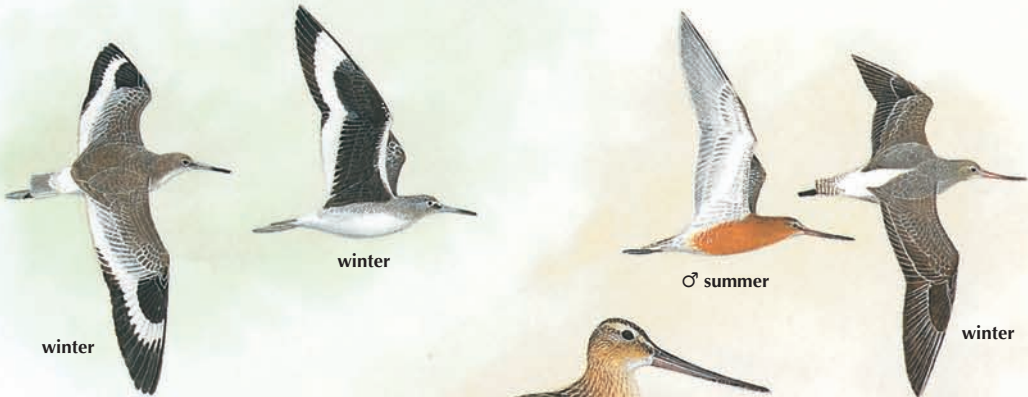
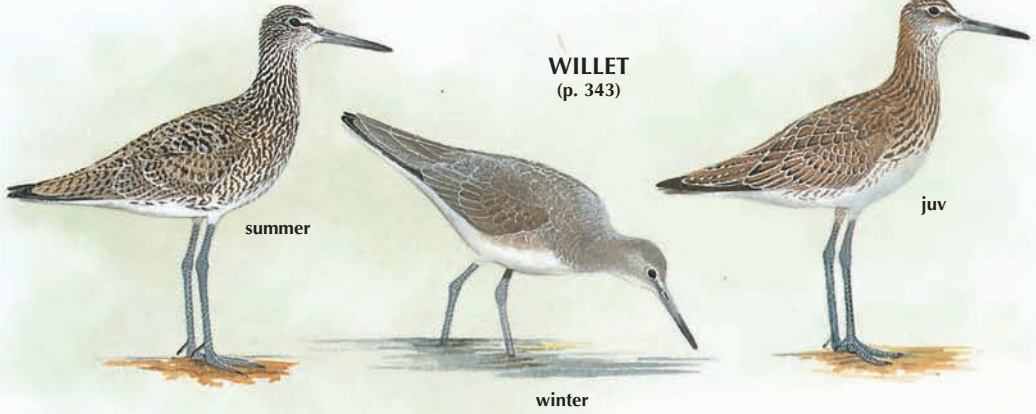
winter



juv

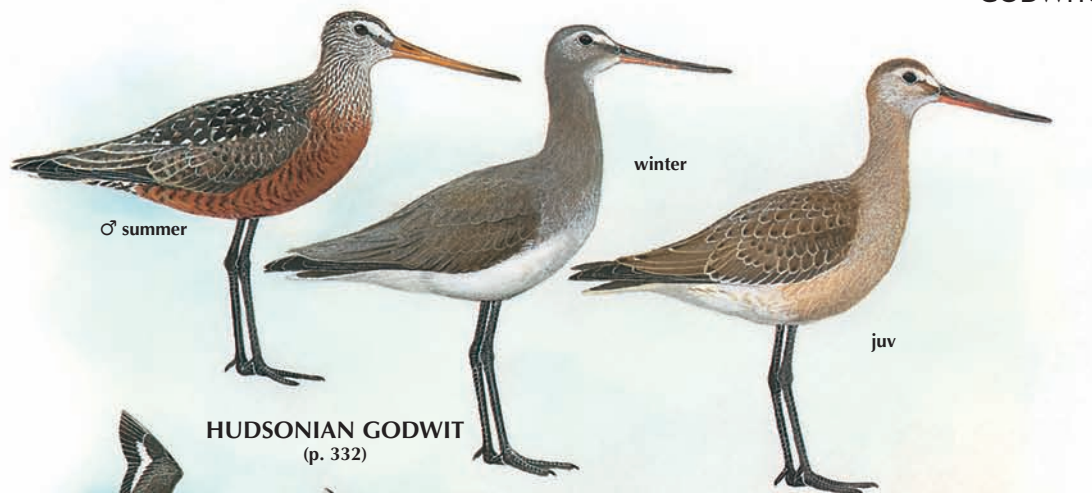
LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER (p. 331)

WILLET
(p. 343)

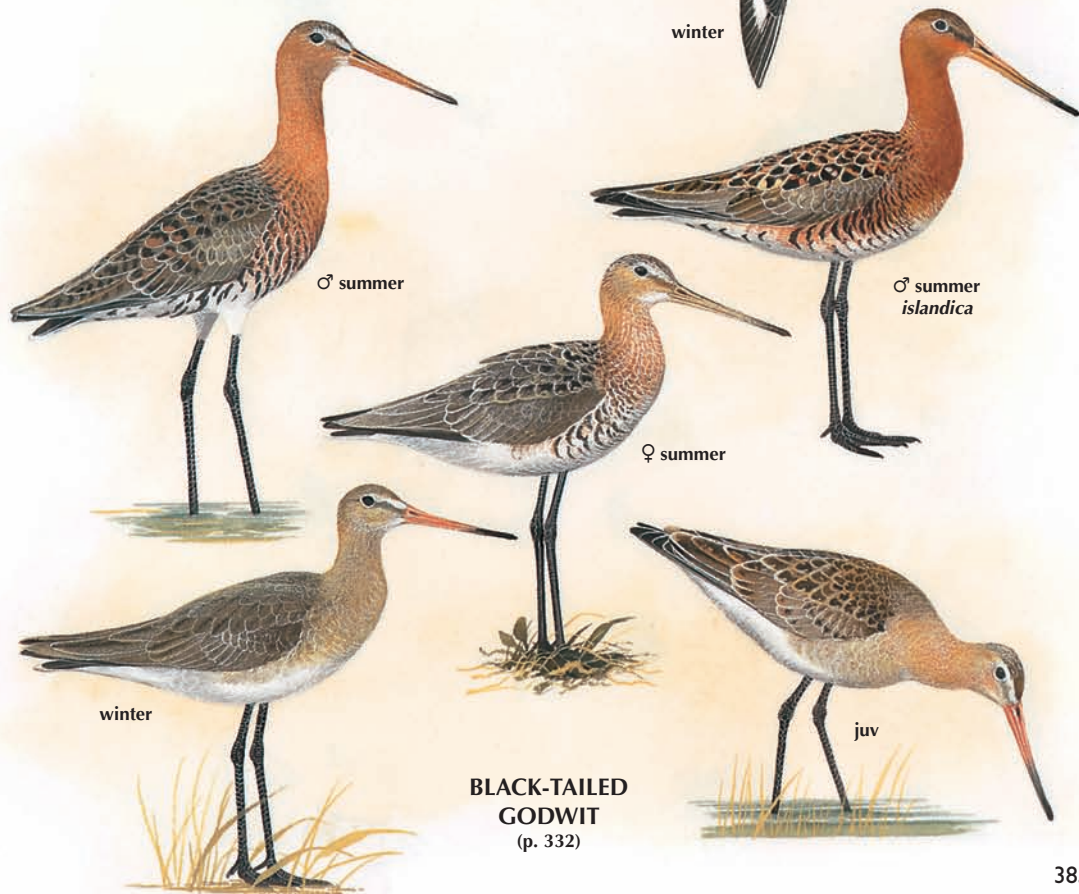
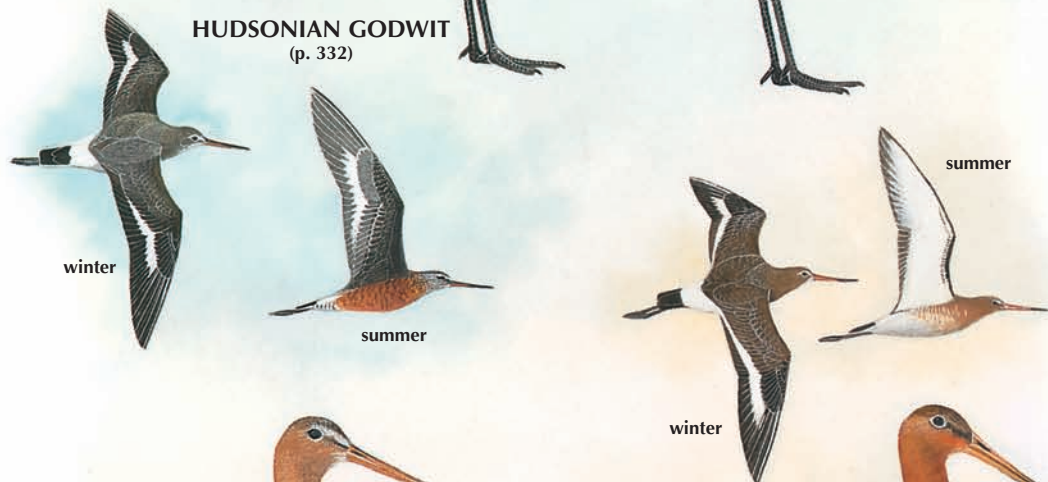


BAR-TAILED
GODWIT
(p. 333)





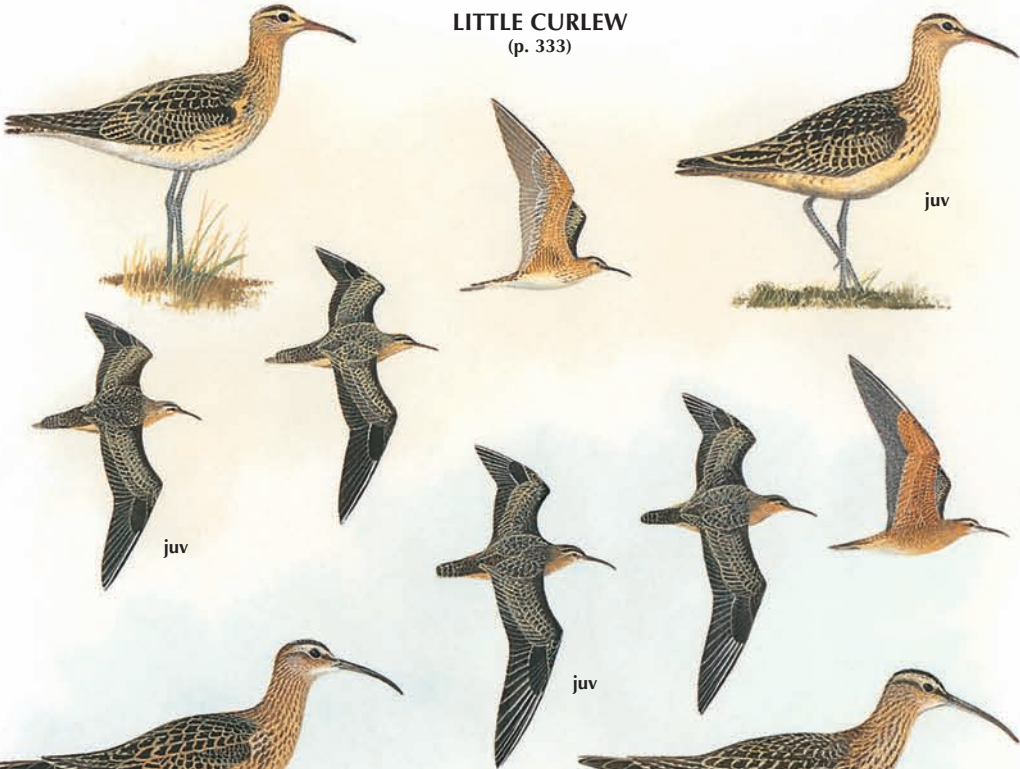
HUDSONIAN GODWIT
(p. 332)



BLACK-TAILED
GODWIT
(p. 332)

CURLEWS

LITTLE CURLEW
(p. 333)



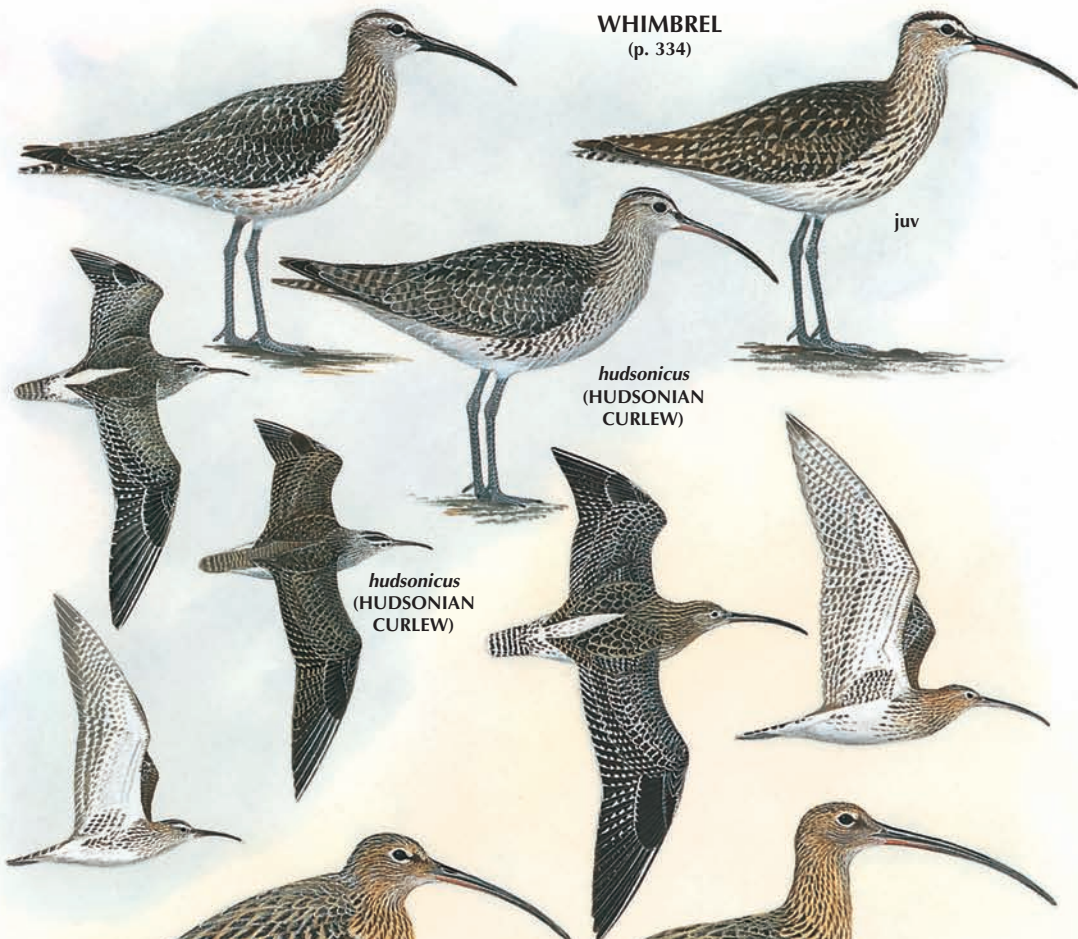
ESKIMO CURLEW
(p. 334)



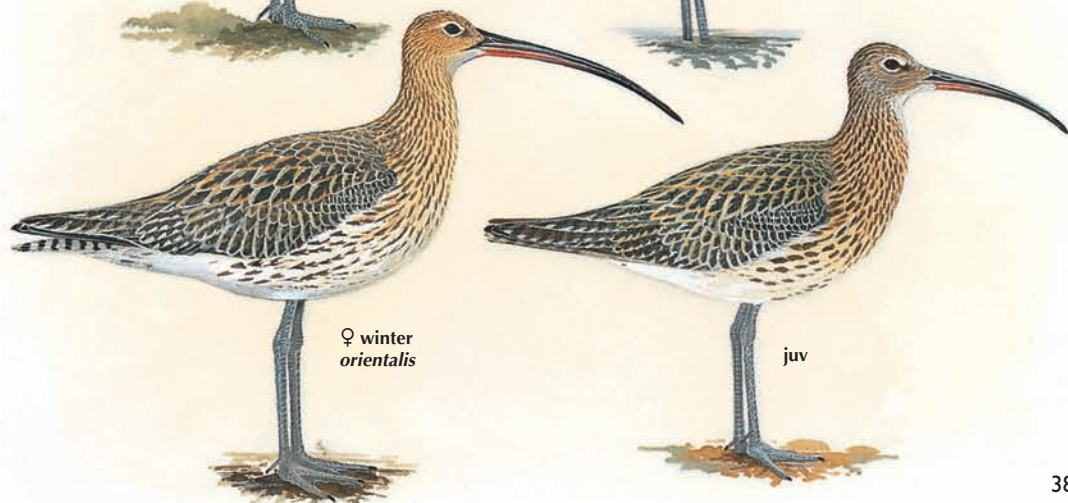
SLENDER-BILLED CURLEW
(p. 335)



WHIMBREL
(p. 334)



EURASIAN CURLEW
(p. 335)



SKUAS *Stercorariidae*

5 species (1 vagrant)

Small family of medium-large to large, northern-breeding seabirds closely related to the gulls. Large *Catharacta* skuas (Great and vagrant South Polar) built rather like gulls, but stockier with barrel-shaped body and broader wings. Smaller *Stercorarius* species (also known as jaegers) more elegant, with very long, narrow and pointed wings and, in adults, conspicuously elongated central tail feathers. Nest on ground in loose colonies, but at other times pelagic, generally keeping well offshore. Away from breeding grounds, most easily seen from boats or coastal watchpoints during passage. On migration often in small flocks, but usually solitary at sea. Rather silent, except at colonies. Both predatory and piratical, forcing other seabirds to drop or disgorge prey (an activity known as 'kleptoparasitism'). On breeding grounds Pomarine and Long-tailed feed chiefly on small rodents (and also berries in case of Long-tailed). *Catharacta* skuas frequently scavenge at corpses. At sea, most plumages appear very dark, almost blackish, often with a white flash at base of primaries. Flight is strong and steady, sometimes interspersed with soaring, dashing and twisting chases after other seabirds. Although gulls also indulge in these antics, they are far less agile on the wing than skuas. Immatures and winter adults of *Stercorarius* species are heavily barred on body, and the smallest species are often very pale on underparts. The elongated tail feathers of the adults break off through abrasion and do not attain their full length for several years. Full adult winter plumage is not acquired until winter quarters are reached and, as summer plumage is attained by early spring, adult winter plumages are unfamiliar to most observers in our region. Both adults and juveniles of the smaller skuas have dark and pale morphs, plus intermediates. Interestingly, these plumage morphs often differ with age: e.g. a dark-morph juvenile might well end up as a pale-morph adult.

Sexes similar, but females slightly larger than males. Much seasonal variation in the smaller *Stercorarius* species. In latter, adult plumage largely attained by second spring (but some traces of immature plumage visible until third summer). In large *Catharacta* species, effectively as adult by first summer.

The only other birds likely to be confused with skuas are large immature gulls (e.g. Herring Gull), but these lack the power and agility of the skuas on the wing and have different plumage pattern: in particular, they have a conspicuous whitish band across base of tail and uppertail coverts, and lack prominent pale wing flashes. Large shearwaters could be confused with skuas at a distance, but have very different structure and flight action.

Specific identification of smaller *Stercorarius* skuas is often difficult (except where reasonable views obtained of summer-plumaged adults); the difficulty is compounded by size variation and multiple plumages within each species. The study of the differences between the non-breeding plumages of the smaller skuas is still in its infancy and even experienced observers are reluctant to identify many individuals. The five species may be divided into two groups:

Smaller (*Stercorarius*) skuas (also known as 'jaegers'), consisting of Pomarine, Arctic (or Parasitic) and Long-tailed.

Large (*Catharacta*) skuas, consisting of Great and vagrant South Polar.

It is difficult to isolate useful features to concentrate upon when identifying skuas, owing to the high degree of plumage variability. While summer-plumaged adults are straightforward, other plumages are complex and difficult to separate. Structure and flight action can be useful with experience.

POMARINE SKUA *Stercorarius pomarinus*

Plate page 416

Pomarine Jaeger

L 46–51 cm (including tail up to 19 cm),
WS 125–135 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Rather larger and distinctly bulkier than Arctic Skua (or Parasitic Jaeger), with relatively heavier body, deeper belly, broader-based wings, heavier head and bill, and stouter neck; overall bulk can recall Herring Gull (Arctic's bulk recalls Mew Gull). Bill is obviously heavy and two-toned (with pale base and dark tip) at all ages, recalling 1st-winter Glaucous Gull and visible even at long range. The major identification problems revolve around small Pominarines and large Arctics. In flight, typically looks broad-bodied and even pot-bellied, with length of 'rear end' (i.e. extension of body behind wings to tip of tail, excluding extensions) about equal to wing

width (at a point roughly midway from carpal joint to base); 'rear end' is longer than wing width in both Arctic and Long-tailed, but markedly shorter in Great (and vagrant South Polar). Wing structure differs, with 'arm' being longer and broader than in Arctic while primaries are relatively shorter. Flight progression generally steady, being slower, heavier and less inclined to glide or 'shear' than Arctic. Away from breeding grounds, where feeds mainly on lemmings, eggs and young birds, more of a direct feeder (on fish) or scavenger (feeding on carrion) and less kleptoparasitic than Arctic. More aggressive in pursuit of other seabirds than Arctic, frequently attacking (and

sometimes killing) victims as opposed to harrying them to make them disgorge. **Adult summer** has broad and blunt-ended tail projections, not narrow and pointed as in Arctic, which are twisted at the tips and appear to form a diagnostic spoon-shaped 'blob'. Unless these broken off or regrowing, identification is simple. Plumage otherwise rather similar to Arctic, varying from birds with almost all-whitish underparts to uniform blackish-brown overall. Compared with Arctic, pale morph has breast band usually broader and more mottled, although sometimes absent (especially in males, many of which have only a dark wedge on each side of breast) and often a stronger buff wash to sides of neck, while flanks and lower belly are typically dusky or heavily mottled in females (less so, or even not at all in males). Arctics often have distinct breast band and brownish lower belly, but flanks are usually clean (except in intermediates). Coloration of cap, upperparts, breast band and ventral area is darker in tone in Pomarine. Dark morph all dark, with browner throat and sides of neck, looking more uniformly dark than dark morph Arctic, which shows more contrastingly darker cap. Intermediates exceptionally rare. **Adult winter** has shorter tail projections (or lacks them) and in pale morph body plumage is barred to varying extent, with irregular pale feather tips on upperparts (especially mantle, scapulars and uppertail coverts), recalling immature (but without barring on underwing coverts, which are uniform blackish). Best separated from Arctic by different 'jizz' (see structural differences above). **Juvenile** variable, but great majority fairly dark, differing from juvenile Arctic chiefly in overall bulk. Very pale juveniles are rare and very dark juveniles are uncommon, juvenile Pomarine typically being far less variable than either of the other two *Stercorarius* skuas. Dark tips to whitish greater underwing primary coverts divide the whitish bases of primaries from a whitish primary-covert crescent; this double whitish flash is often a very helpful character at short to medium range. (Note, however, that palest Arctics can show a suggestion of such a crescent and the very darkest Pominines may lack it.) Body generally slightly darker than underwing coverts in Pomarine, more uniform in Arctic, and ground colour to underwing coverts often paler, making barring stand out more. (In a few very dark Arctics, underwing coverts appear very dark and apparently unbarred.) Feather fringes to upperparts and barring on uppertail coverts and underparts less rufous in fresh plumage than in typical juvenile Arctic, with barring on both uppertail and undertail coverts more even, less wavy. Head more uniformly coloured (typically a deep grey-brown), with little or no sign of a paler nape, of darker streaking or of a paler area ('noseband') above bill base (all characteristic of Arctic), and uppertail coverts paler. Arctic often shows a contrast between paler nape and darker crown; darker birds showing combination of pale uppertail and undertail coverts and uniformly dark head (i.e. without paler nape) are Pomarine, while those showing obviously paler nape than uppertail coverts are Arctic. (Note, however, that 1st-summer Pomarine does show contrasting paler nape like Arctic.) Additionally, although bill colour and pattern much the same in both species, the black tip to larger, deeper bill of Pomarine is more conspicuous at longer range. Usually lacks obvious whitish tips to primaries shown by all but darkest Arctic and often visible at rest (although a few pale Pominines do have them), and has darker marginal coverts along leading edge of wing than in most Arctic. Also has blunt, not pointed, tips to central tail feathers, but this feature usually of limited value in the field. Because of body bulk, larger



individuals could be confused with Great Skua and especially with vagrant South Polar Skua at long range, but latter has more extensive white patch on upperwing and shorter 'rear end' (see above). See also vagrant South Polar Skua.

SEX/AGE Sexes similar, but adult male summer usually cleaner on breast and flanks (often lacking dark breast band and flanks entirely). Most of moult to winter plumage takes place in winter quarters, but projecting central tail feathers often lost (or damaged) earlier. Adult winter pale morph resembles immature, but underwing dark, not barred, and distinctive twisted tail projection often present. Adult winter dark morph little different from summer plumage, but can have only short tail projection. Paler 1st-summer individuals similar to juvenile (see Identification), but have more prominent tail projection, pale nape (like Arctic), and pale fringes to scapulars and upperwing coverts narrower or absent; dark individuals inseparable from dark juveniles. 2nd-winter pale morph much as adult winter pale morph but underwing barred like juvenile. 2nd-summer pale morph recalls adult summer pale morph, but tail projection short and extensive barring still present on underbody and underwing. Virtually as adult by third or fourth summer, but often retains some winter plumage on head, body and underwing. Fully adult plumage attained by fifth summer. Immature dark morph much as adult from second winter, but even more uniformly dark, without much contrast between darker cap and paler sides of face and neck. Becomes as adult by third summer. Ageing process inadequately studied.

VOICE Rather silent away from colonies, where gives a series of high, nasal screams during territorial disputes: 'g-waer, g-waer, g-waer ...'. Also gives a low harsh 'kek' when alarmed.

STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon. (Migrates SW and S, joined by breeders from Siberia, to winter in tropical Atlantic and Indian Ocean. Most move off western seaboard of Europe and Africa on migration, but minor passage route through Baltic and presumed to move high overland to reach Indian Ocean.) Breeds on coastal tundra; population in a given area varying according to lemming abundance. Away from breeding grounds pelagic. Only exceptionally observed inland.

ARCTIC SKUA *Stercorarius parasiticus*

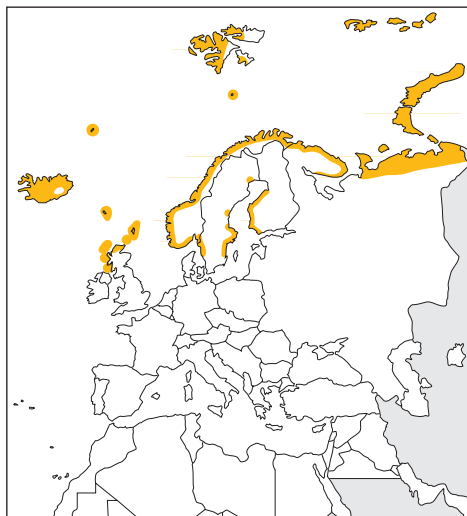
Plate page 415

Parasitic Jaeger

L 41–46 cm (including tail up to 18 cm),
WS 110–120 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Most widespread skua of our region, intermediate between larger Pomarine and smaller Long-tailed (but some marginal overlap in size). Body slimmer than in Pomarine and often seems slimmer than in Long-tailed owing to latter's rather bulging breast. Head and bill are relatively small, primaries are relatively long and 'arm' relatively short and narrow, the opposite of Pomarine. See those species for distinctions. The skua species most reliant upon kleptoparasitism at all seasons. When hunting, tends merely to chase rather than physically attack victims (usually terns and smaller gulls, which it forces to disgorge food), and only occasionally known to scavenge at corpses away from breeding grounds whereas Pomarine frequently does. Will also feed directly on fish and, when breeding inland, takes small rodents, eggs and young birds. Flight action more buoyant than Pomarine, indulging in spectacular aerobatics when chasing smaller seabirds; in strong winds, progresses for considerable distances by 'shearwatering'. Long, narrow wings and powerful, dashing flight create a falcon-like impression. **Adult summer** varies, as in Pomarine, from dark sooty head and body plumage through birds with greyish-brown underparts contrasting with blackish crown to those with almost wholly whitish underparts, with greyish-brown ventral region and sometimes a breast band (although latter less pronounced than on most Pomarines). The black of the cap is less extensive at the bill base than in the other two smaller skuas and it often shows a pale 'noseband' above bill base (unlike both Pomarine and Long-tailed). The elongated central tail feathers are pointed and appreciably shorter than those of adult Long-tailed (although some longer-tailed Arctics can be confusing). See also Geographical Variation. **Adult winter** has underparts heavily barred and recalls immature, but shows more prominent tail projections and is more sparsely and boldly barred on upperparts. **Juvenile** is very variable. Many appear all dark (except for white in primary bases, and often in tail base), but close views reveal rusty barring and slightly projecting pointed central tail feathers. Palest birds have warm buff or grey-buff ground colour to head and underparts with variable amounts of dark barring, at least on breast, flanks and lower belly (uppertail and undertail coverts are less clearly barred): some are very pale-headed (a feature more often associated with Long-tailed). White flash at base of primaries is also variable, and often more extensive than in Pomarine, but Arctic usually lacks white crescent on greater underwing primary coverts (see both Pomarine and Long-tailed).

SEX/AGE Most of moult to winter plumage takes place in winter quarters, but projecting central tail feathers often lost (or damaged) earlier. Adult winter resembles



immature, but underwing uniformly dark, not barred (but note that darkest juveniles and immatures have unbarred underwing) and has fairly prominent tail projection by end of season. 1st-summer similar to juvenile, but has more prominent tail projection, almost uniformly dark upperparts and, in paler morphs, paler underparts. By second summer paler morphs much as adult winter paler morphs but underwing barred as in juvenile and has mottled breast band (recalling Pomarine). By third summer paler morphs close to adult summer paler morphs, but tail projection not yet complete and vestigial barring present on underwing. Immatures of darker morphs virtually as adult by second winter. In all morphs full tail projection only attained by about fourth summer.

VOICE Noisy at colonies where gives a repeated loud nasal mewing 'i-i-i-i-er' and in flight a nasal 'gi-ooo'. Also gives a short harsh 'kek' or 'kook'. Rather silent at other times.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION No races recognized. Among adults, dark morph predominates only in southern portions of breeding range: e.g. 60% in British Is, less than 10% in Spitsbergen.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (Winters mostly in S Atlantic and Indian Ocean.) Breeds on coastal tundra, coastal moorland and offshore islands. Away from breeding grounds pelagic. Only occasionally observed inland on passage, but is regular in Black Sea and thought regularly to move high overland during migration.

LONG-TAILED SKUA *Stercorarius longicaudus*

Plate page 414

Long-tailed Jaeger

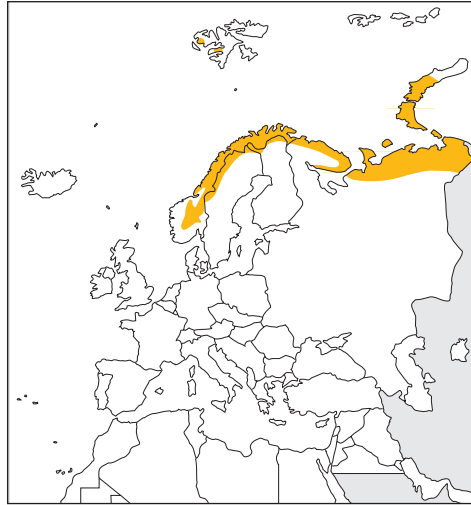
L 48–53 cm (including tail up to 29 cm), WS 105–115 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Recalls Arctic Skua (or Parasitic Jaeger) but a little smaller, with slimmer wings, rather longer 'rear end', slimmer belly (creating impression of relatively deeper chest), longer legs, more rounded

head and slightly shorter and stouter bill. Gives more elegant impression overall. White restricted to two, occasionally three, outermost primary shafts on upperwing, compared with at least five in Pomarine and usually in Arctic (but note that dark Arctic occasionally has white restricted to outer three or four

shafts). Problems arise with small Arctic and large Long-tailed, especially in winter plumage. In flight, often 'shearwaters' like Arctic, but may appear distinctly more buoyant, with a *Milvus* kite-like 'body lift' following each beat, and more erratic. Often hovers, at least on breeding grounds. Less piratical than other species at sea (and when it does kleptoparasitize, it tends to concentrate on terns rather than gulls), largely feeding directly on fish but also taking carrion. On breeding grounds depends mainly on lemmings and young birds, but often feeds on tundra berries and even recorded catching worms and flying insects.

Adult summer plumage is usually pale morph type, but while the existence of a completely dark morph in adults remains unproven, many intermediates exist and some have only throat and upper breast white (very rarely only throat). Best distinguished from pale-morph Arctic by structural differences, including greatly elongated tail streamers which often undulate during buoyant flight action, and (except in race *pallascens*, see Geographical Variation) by noticeably greyish belly that contrasts with white breast. (Note, however, that in some individuals grey is restricted to rear belly and ventral area, while very rarely it extends to breast, leaving only throat white.) In addition, the upperparts are less uniform than those of Arctic, with paler, grey-brown wing coverts and upperbody contrasting strongly with distinctly darker flight feathers in good light. Lacks breast band (but this often absent in Arctic also). **Adult winter** not so straightforward to identify, recalling immature but with uniformly dark underwing and longer tail extension. **Juvenile** very variable; unlike subsequent plumages, very dark birds are frequent (although never uniformly dark, as are some Arctics, unless heavily worn). Structural differences compared to Arctic and number of white primary shafts are important (see above). Overall plumage tone (created by the pale feather edges) always 'cold', not the warm buff or rufous of Arctic. Very pale birds more frequent than in Arctic; show pale greyish or buffish-white on head and underparts, with head often almost unmarked. Body plumage with some barring, although belly may be unbarred whitish and contrast with dull greyish breast band and barred flanks (a plain whitish belly is never shown by juvenile Arctic). Upperparts strongly marked with broad pale feather edges in fresh plumage, producing pale-backed appearance and contrast between pale wing coverts and dark flight feathers in palest birds at longer range. Uppertail and undertail coverts and underwing coverts more strongly barred than in Arctic. Intermediate individuals, as well as looking 'colder' overall than typical Arctic, have characteristic combination of whitish patch on upper belly, rather uniform breast and barred flanks (Arctic lacks pale upper belly patch and has barring or mottling on breast), while whitish or buffish feather fringes to mantle are narrow and uniform in width (typically rufous-tinged and more irregular in Arctic). Darkest birds are very dark and are more easily confused. They always have weakly indicated whitish or buffish fringes on upperparts (only visible at close range), while dark Arctic usually have rufous fringes (rarely buff or whitish) or are unmarked above; barring on tail coverts is whiter, not rufous or warm buff. Bill tip has more extensive black in Long-tailed, extending along cutting edges. Long-tailed usually lacks pale tips to more pointed primaries



shown by Arctic, but this feature is sometimes weakly indicated by Long-tailed and is useful only with close, standing or swimming birds. A useful aid even at moderate ranges is the central tail projection: blunt, usually with tiny pale tips, in Long-tailed, short points, which lack pale tips, in Arctic. **Immature** (from first summer) shows finely pointed tail projections which recall those of Arctic; identification at this age relies on jizz (see structural differences above) and the number of white primary shafts on upwearing.

SEX/AGE Most of moult to winter plumage takes place in winter quarters, but projecting central tail feathers often lost (or damaged) earlier. Adult winter resembles immature, but underwing uniformly dark, not barred, and has longer tail projection. 1st-summer recalls pale juvenile, but has darker head and breast, pointed tail projection and almost uniformly dark upperparts. Second summer much as adult summer, but cap less defined, some patchy barring on underparts, some barring on underwing, and upperparts darker and less contrasting (thus more like Arctic Skua); tail projection nearing full length. 3rd-summer close to adult, but tail projection often shorter and vestigial barring on underwing sometimes retained.

VOICE Noisy on breeding grounds where main territorial call a series of harsh rattles 'krrr-krrr-krrr-kri-kri-kri' followed by a repeated plaintive 'pheeue'. Also gives a short 'krik' or 'kreek' when alarmed. Rather silent at other times.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 2 races (nominatim illustrated). Race *pallascens* (breeding in Greenland and N America), occurs occasionally on passage in NE Atlantic; adult has whiter underparts than nominate race, with white extending to vent.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Jan Mayen. Migrates along Atlantic seaboard to winter in S Atlantic; possibly also winters in Indian Ocean.) Breeds on coastal and inland tundra, and offshore islands. Away from breeding grounds deeply pelagic. Only very occasionally observed inland on passage, but flocks thought to take short cuts regularly overland at high altitude.

GREAT SKUA *Catharacta skua*

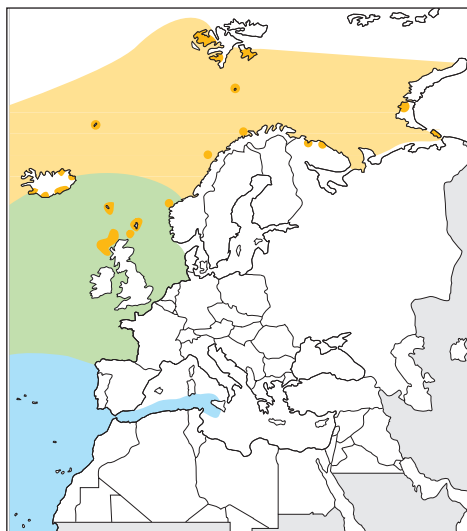
Plate page 417

Bonxie

L 53–58 cm (including tail up to 15.5 cm),
WS 135–145 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Largest and bulkiest of the skuas; although only size of Herring Gull, is much more solidly built with barrel-shaped body and broader wings. Compared to smaller *Stercorarius* skuas is conspicuously heavier, with broader wings and shorter tail, and much less variable in plumage. Noticeably short 'hand' (i.e. outer wing) emphasizes heavy-bodied appearance. All plumages rather dark and relieved only by the conspicuous large white flashes on the primary bases, visible on both wing surfaces. Body and wing coverts fairly variable in coloration, ranging from rather uniform dark brown in juveniles to rufescent brown with paler mottling in many adults (but even these tend to appear blackish-brown, apart from wing flashes, at longer ranges) or even quite pale and gingery in some. Smaller individuals, especially juveniles, which have less white in wings than adults (especially on upperwing), could be mistaken for juvenile Pomarine Skua at long range, but white wing flash more prominent, head and chest bulkier and 'tail end' relatively shorter in Great. Chases variety of seabirds, even Northern Gannets, sometimes forcing birds on to water and attacking them until food disgorged; will even kill seabirds up to size of Herring Gull, and also feeds on carrion and fish offal. Very aggressive at colonies, often sweeping in low to strike human intruders on the head. See also similar vagrant South Polar Skua.

SEX/AGE Adult has crown slightly darker than rest of body, and wing coverts and body indistinctly streaked. Males average darker overall than females and typically have a more dark-capped appearance. Juvenile has head and upperparts greyer and underparts more rufous in tone, almost uniform and unstreaked, but with weakly pale-spotted wing coverts. Also has slightly less extensive white at base of primaries than adult. Remains almost unstreaked until second winter, often bleaching paler with wear.



VOICE Generally rather silent away from breeding grounds, where gives a series of loud but rather plaintive, nasal wailing calls; 'piah piah piah piah ...' Alarm call is a short, harsh 'tuk' or 'gek', but gives a strangled 'kayaya' while making dive-bombing attacks on intruder.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (Mostly winters in S Atlantic. The most likely skua to be seen in N Atlantic in midwinter, but still rare at that season.) Breeds on offshore islands or coastal moorland, often close to other seabird colonies. Outside breeding season, deeply pelagic like other skuas. Only very rarely seen inland.

SOUTH POLAR SKUA *Catharacta maccormicki*

Plate page 417

L 51–54 cm, WS 125–135 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Vagrant (breeds Antarctica, wintering N to NW Atlantic and Indian Ocean). Closely resembles Great Skua in bulk and shape, but slightly smaller and slimmer-bodied, with relatively smaller head and slightly slimmer bill. White patch on upperwing and underwing tends to be narrower than in Great and central tail feathers tend to project more obviously, but there is much overlap. Unlike Great has distinct dark and pale morphs, but there is complete intergradation between these forms (although dark morphs are more common). In most plumages distinguished from Great by unstreaked or unmottled appearance (particularly to upperparts and neck), lack of any rufous in plumage (which is typically colder and greyer, especially on underparts) and by contrastingly pale nape (except in darkest birds). At reasonably close range some show, albeit rather indistinctly, a paler area on forehead at base of bill (least obvious on palest birds). **Pale morph** distinctive: head and entire underparts unmarked pale buffish-brown or greyish-white, contrasting with all-dark underwing and upperparts (apart from white wing flash); hindneck paler than head but less conspicuously than in intermediates. Some show obvious pale streaking on mantle

and scapulars (and fine pale streaks on wing coverts), but in palest adult Great (which never show same degree of plumage contrast between pale head/neck and underparts and dark mantle/scapulars and upperwing coverts) the prominent pale streaking extends to head/neck and wing coverts. Usually lacks distinct dark cap shown by most adult Great. Although pale morph is distinctive, beware occasional bleached or aberrant Great. **Dark morph** uniformly dark greyish-brown, darker on underwing and upperparts; often lacking pale collar in darkest birds, but pale forehead patch may be reasonably obvious if bird approaching head-on. Darkest birds, lacking fine pale streaking on hindneck, are most problematic and can be separated from some juvenile Great only with care and at close range, and even then not in all cases. Although the upperparts of dark morph South Polar are typically uniform blackish, some adults show a mottled appearance to the mantle and scapulars, possibly in worn plumage, and such patterning is normally, if weakly, shown by juveniles, although less prominently than in most Great. Juvenile Great typically show rufous markings on scapulars and upperwing coverts, and a distinct rufous tinge to underbody, but some are

uniformly dark, without any rufous, and thus very similar to South Polar. However, juvenile Great do not have fine pale streaking on hindneck or sides of neck (seen in many dark adult South Polars) and have head/neck paler than mantle and usually darker than underbody (the opposite of South Polar). Dark morph could also be confused with juvenile Pomarine Skua. Latter is smaller and slimmer, without barring on underwing coverts, axillaries and upper- and under-tail coverts, and with smaller white patch at base of primaries on upperwing and underwing (difference is most marked on upperwing); bill base and legs are paler. Paler intermediates are best identified by characters applicable to pale morph, darker intermediates by characters applicable to dark morph. **Juveniles** are similar to adults of respective morphs, but have pale bluish lower mandible, with blackish tip, more

greyish overall tones to plumage and no pale streaking on hindneck or sides of neck (and only faint pale streaking on mantle/scapulars and upperwing coverts). Bill feature is only rarely shown by adult Great, which usually has all-dark bill, but juvenile Great often has similar pattern, although the lower mandible colour is greyer.

SEX/AGE For juvenile characters see Identification.

TAXONOMY Formerly considered conspecific with Great Skua C. skua.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe, Morocco, Azores and Eilat, Israel). Disperses from Antarctic breeding grounds in northern summer and frequently observed in NW Atlantic from June to September, so may be more regular as pelagic visitor to NE Atlantic than the few existing records suggest. Also reaches N Indian Ocean.

GULLS Laridae

26 species (5 vagrant)

Gulls are a large group of medium to large birds that are familiar to all. Gulls have long, narrow, rather pointed wings but overall body structure ranges from slim and delicate, almost tern-like, to bulky and robust. Bills and feet are prominent, former ranging from quite sharply pointed to rather blunt, often with a prominent gonys angle on the lower mandible. Tails generally broad and rounded (but often appear square-ended). At ease on land, walking well. Flight strong and buoyant with rather slow and shallow wingbeats; flight characterized by much soaring, wheeling, gliding and swooping. Mainly feed by fishing or hunting for invertebrates and small vertebrates on land, or by scavenging both on water and land. Nest mostly on the ground, usually in colonies.

Sexes are similar, although males average larger (which may be noticeable if birds are paired). Most show some seasonal variation. Juveniles are distinct and adult plumage is only attained after two to four years, the larger species taking the longest to reach maturity.

Confusion with other types of bird is not a significant problem, but distant, soaring immature gulls (especially Herring Gull and other large species) can briefly suggest soaring raptors. Confusion with skuas is also possible at long range. See also introduction to terns regarding potential confusion between small gulls and terns, especially 'marsh terns'.

Gull identification is highly complex and shows similarities with that of raptors. Both groups contain species that take several years to reach maturity, with confusing intermediate plumage stages. Unlike the larger raptors, which are often easier to identify in juvenile plumage than when adult, gulls are usually easier when adult. In addition there are a number of large gulls that are very closely related and sometimes hybridize. Taxonomic authorities often disagree about the specific status of particular forms: for example, a case is sometimes advanced for uniting such widely accepted species as Herring, Lesser Black-backed and Iceland Gulls as one superspecies because of intermediate populations such as the 'Yellow-legged', 'Heuglin's', 'Kumlien's' and 'Thayer's' Gulls as well as other forms found elsewhere in the Holarctic faunal region. More recently the tendency has been to recognize several different species within the Herring Gull complex, including Yellow-legged, Armenian and Heuglin's. However, it is probably safest to say that all or most of the larger gulls are closely related and probably came from a common ancestor but that some populations have not yet reached complete species isolation. Generally speaking, the smaller gulls reach maturity by their second or third winter, while the larger species do not do so until their fourth, hence the greater array of intermediate plumages in the larger species. Knowledge of plumage sequences is a useful identification aid.

It is not uncommon, especially in summer, to come across strange-looking gulls. These are invariably birds with heavily worn plumage, in which dark feathering can become quite pale brown, even whitish-brown at times. The white primary tips are lost entirely with heavy wear, and delicate markings on the wing coverts bleach to a uniform mealy hue, lacking all pattern. Birds in primary moult also appear quite blunt-winged owing to incompletely grown feathers, making the bird fly with quicker wingbeats until growth is nearly complete. Needless to say, these are all traps for the unwary. Anyone with a serious interest in gulls should consult the standard reference by Grant (1986 *Gulls: a guide to identification*, 2nd edition). Because of the complexities of the family, it is difficult to isolate universal criteria, but points to concentrate on are:

Relative size • Wing pattern • Tail pattern • Mantle shade • Colour and shape of bill • Leg colour (and relative length)

SOOTY GULL *Larus hemprichii*

Plate page 424

Hemprich's Gull

L 42–45 cm, WS 110–120 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Heavily built, medium-sized gull of Red Sea coasts. Striking dark brown and white plumage, with very dark underwing, recalls skua at distance but confusion likely only with superficially similar White-eyed Gull (q.v.). Feeds about tidelines and scavenges about small ports; very sociable, often forming mixed flocks with White-eyed. Flight action slow, recalling larger gulls. **Adult summer** has sooty-brown hood coming down onto chest (as a dark 'bib'), contrasting with whitish half-collar, thin white eye crescents (often present only above eye) and grey-brown breast and flanks. The upperparts are dark greyish-brown and the underwing rather uniform dusky-brown (darkest on coverts). Bill greenish-yellow with red tip and black subterminal band. Legs greenish or yellowish-grey. **Adult winter** similar, but hood a little paler, and shows some white primary tips in very fresh plumage (which are soon lost). In flight, dark underwing and forebody conspicuously contrast with clean white belly, tail and trailing edge of wing. **Juvenile** overall medium greyish-brown, rather paler on head and breast than in adult, offering less contrast with white remainder of underparts. Broad pale fringes to mantle/scapulars and upperwing coverts create scaly effect, with two narrow pale wing bars. Upperwing shows some contrast between wing coverts and considerably darker brown flight feathers, and, as in adult, has conspicuous white trailing edge. Tail has broad blackish terminal band. Bill pale greyish with black tip. Legs greyish. **1st-winter and 1st-summer** are similar to juvenile but with dark grey-brown feathering on mantle/scapulars and inner



wing coverts, creating dark 'saddle', and hood and 'bib' becoming darker and more obvious in 1st-summer. **2nd-winter** closer to adult but hood and 'bib' are paler, white half-collar is lacking and dark secondary bar more obvious. Shows variable dark tail band, ranging from broad but rather irregular to vestigial. Bare parts are closer to juvenile, legs becoming greener and reddish bill tip developing by second summer or third winter. See also Laughing Gull.

SEX/AGE See Identification. Adult plumage is usually attained by third winter (but some 3rd-years still show vestigial dark markings on tail and less white in primary tips).

VOICE Poorly documented. Fairly silent away from breeding grounds, but a fairly Herring Gull-like 'kioow' may be heard from birds flocking at roosts. Alarm call a Herring-like 'ke-ke-ke-ke'. Long-call at breeding grounds a series of loud screaming notes that progressively shorten and drop in pitch; said to be less melodious than in Herring.

STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon. (In addition to mapped range, occurs as non-breeding visitor elsewhere on Egyptian Red Sea coast.) Breeds on arid offshore islands, but forages around mainland beaches, coral reefs and harbours.

WHITE-EYED GULL *Larus leucophthalmus*

Plate page 424

L 39–43 cm, WS 105–115 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Red Sea only. Striking dark and white plumage, with very dark underwing, recalls superficially similar Sooty Gull (q.v.), with which it often associates. Considerably more slender, more attenuated and greyer overall than Sooty Gull, with narrower (but equally long) bill, relatively smaller head on thinner neck, slimmer body and longer wings. Habits similar to Sooty Gull, with which it freely mixes. In flight, wing pattern similar to Sooty, although wings greyer; when flying towards observer, a narrow white leading edge to wing is usually apparent (absent or inconspicuous in Sooty). Flight action more languid, less ponderous than Sooty. **Adult summer** is distinctly bluish-grey on body, with an extensive black hood extending onto chest (hood is dark brown in Sooty). Obvious white crescents are present both above and below the eye (white obvious only above eye in Sooty). Whitish on sides of neck more extensive than on Sooty, coming well forward and often extending right across upper breast. Extent of white on lower underparts close to Sooty. Bill deep red becoming blacker towards tip (unlike Sooty of any age). Legs bright yellow (greenish or yellowish-grey in adult Sooty). **Adult winter** has hood mottled with whitish, sometimes to the extent that forehead and upper throat look whitish. In fresh plumage small white tips (less prominent than in Sooty) may be visible on inner primaries, but these soon wear away. Bare parts are duller than in adult summer. **Juvenile** browner than adult, although still greyer than Sooty, differing from



juvenile Sooty in structure, darker overall coloration above, contrast between darker crown and ear-coverts and paler forecrown and face (head much plainer in Sooty), narrower and darker breast band, more uniform mantle/scapulars and wing coverts (without such prominent pale feather fringes as in Sooty), greyer tinge to rump and uppertail coverts, and largely black tail (lacking narrow white tip of fresh Sooty). Bill greyish-black, blacker towards tip (pale greyish with black tip in juvenile Sooty). Legs dull pinkish-brown with a grey tinge (greyish in juvenile Sooty). **1st-winter and 1st-summer** are similar to juvenile but have more obvious dark mask extending from eye to nape and greyer (less brown) 'saddle', breast band and flanks. **2nd-winter** much closer to adult, only duller and browner-grey overall with some brown in wing coverts, a more prominent dark secondary bar (and less prominent white trailing edge), some dusky in tail, browner hood and 'bib' (often poorly developed), no white half-collar and intermediate bare-part colours. See also Laughing Gull.

SEX/AGE See Identification. Adult plumage attained by third winter.

VOICE Poorly documented. Generally silent away from breeding grounds. All calls lower in pitch and less harsh than those of Sooty Gull. A longish 'krooo' and short 'kook' recall Black-headed Gull, but are more hollow and clucking, almost chicken-like in tone.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. (In addition to mapped range, wanders in spring and summer north to Suez and Eilat.) Breeds on arid offshore islands, but forages around mainland beaches, coral reefs and harbours.

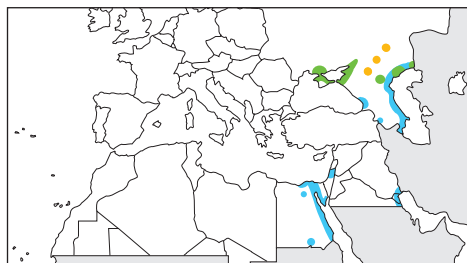
PALLAS'S GULL *Larus ichthyaetus*

Plate page 435

Great Black-headed Gull

L 57–61 cm, WS 150–170 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Very large gull of SE of our region. Averages larger and bulkier than Herring Gull (and related members of *argentatus* complex), with slightly longer legs, more loosely bunched secondaries, and distinctive head shape with angular hindcrown and noticeably flat forehead that slopes into rather long and heavy bill (creating rather 'butch' impression). On ground, walks more quickly than other big gulls. Typically found on seashores in small parties, but individuals may mix with other large gulls. Flight action slow and ponderous, recalling Great Black-backed rather than Herring-type, but wings narrower than in other large gulls. Very prominently projecting head and heavy bill, plus white eye-crescents both above and below dark eye, create a distinctive impression at all ages. **Adult summer** unmistakable as the only large gull with a black hood. Also has distinctive wing pattern (see below), prominent white eye-crescents, and greenish-yellow legs and bill, the latter with dark subterminal band and reddish tip. **Adult winter** similar, but head whitish, usually with dusky shading around eye that contrasts with white eye-crescents (recalling a huge winter Mediterranean Gull). Head pattern is variable; some very weakly-marked birds look more like Herring-type, others have a partial hood. Mantle coloration is fairly pale grey (but darker than in palest members of Herring complex such as *argenteus* Herring or nominate Yellow-legged). In flight adult appears narrower-winged in comparison with Herring-type, with distinctive pattern: medium grey forewing, paler grey secondaries and whitish primaries, the latter with black subterminal band and large white tip on outs. Underwing very white. At long range, upwearing pattern recalls that of 2nd-winter Mediterranean Gull. **Juvenile** has mottled brownish upperparts like the other large gulls, but unlike them the underparts are whitish apart from partial or complete greyish-brown breast band. Pale fringes to scapulars, wing coverts and tertials less distinct than in juvenile or 1st-winter Herring-type or Great Black-backed. White eye-crescents usually visible owing to dark brown bordering (mainly to front and rear). Bill dusky with brownish base, the latter becoming paler early in first winter. Wing pattern quite unlike that of juvenile or 1st-winter Herring-type or Great Black-backed: upwearing shows obvious contrast between dark-mottled lesser coverts and pale median and greater coverts (the others either show little contrast or have darker greater coverts); underwing coverts and axillaries are whitish with a few dark marks (the others are largely dark). Tail and uppertail coverts are white with a clean-cut dark subterminal band on tail (the others have dark spotting/barring on uppertail coverts and tail base, and less clean-cut dark subterminal band). Overall impression is of a huge juvenile Common Gull. **1st-winter** has head pattern as adult winter although typically with less extensive dark 'mask' through eye, (but usually enough to show pale eye-crescents); bill pale with black tip (unlike



most 1st-winter Herring-type or Great Black-backed), and legs greyish or pinkish, becoming greenish later in winter. Unlike other large gulls, has greyish mantle and scapulars. Confusable with 2nd-year Herring-type with grey 'saddle' and largely dark-tipped bill (especially Yellow-legged Gull of race *michahellis*), but leg colour often helpful and head and bill shape distinctive; nape typically shows a half-collar of brownish freckles, lacking in Herring-type. Appear to have more pointed wings than adult in flight, recalling enormous version of 1st-winter Common or Mediterranean rather than Herring-type, with narrow black tail band and pale grey-brown mid-wing panel offering some contrast with dark-mottled leading edge to inner wing (unlike 2nd-year Herring-type, which has broader or more smudged tail band and more uniform inner wing). Brownish half-collar and distinctive head shape also apparent in flight, the latter accentuated by black-tipped, pale bill. Underwing paler than in Herring-type, with more contrasting darker primaries and bar along secondaries. Beware occasional older immatures of other large gulls with oil-smudges on head: with such birds, wing and tail patterns and head shape most useful distinctions. **1st-summer** may show a partial dark hood and pale mid-wing panel becomes progressively greyer as median and greater coverts moulted. **2nd-year** much as adult but has more dark on primaries, primary coverts and elsewhere on wing, and usually at least a partial dark tail band. Dark summer hood is incomplete. **3rd-year** shows more dark on primaries than adult and has vestiges of tail band. **SEX/AGE** See Identification. Adult plumage acquired more rapidly than in other large gulls; sequence as for smaller 'black-headed' gulls and virtually as adult by third winter, although full plumage only attained by fourth winter.

VOICE Fairly quiet away from breeding grounds, but a low 'kyow-kyow' or a nasal, rather Common Raven-like 'kraagh' may be heard in flight.

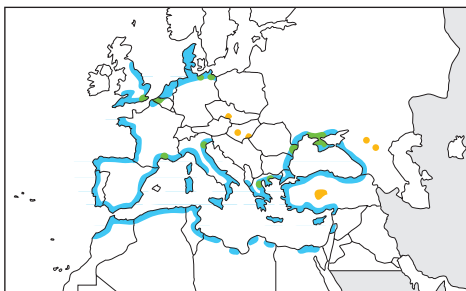
STATUS/HABITAT Generally local and rather uncommon, but fairly numerous in Caspian breeding areas. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Azerbaijan.) Breeds in open country by freshwater or brackish lakes and lagoons. Winters chiefly along seashores, especially mouths of rivers and by lagoons, but also locally around freshwater lakes.

MEDITERRANEAN GULL *Larus melanocephalus*

Plate page 418

L 36–38 cm, WS 100–110 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Slightly larger, bulkier and broader-winged than Black-headed Gull, with which it often associates, and has more angular head shape, heavier bill (which is slightly drooping towards tip) and longer legs that are usually very dark. **Adult summer** distinctive: a very pale, silvery-white gull, with black hood, prominent white eye-crescents and wholly white primaries. Bill dark red with black subterminal band or tip. **Adult winter** similar, but head whitish with variably extensive dusky mask through eye. In flight, appears very white both on upperwing and on underwing. Wings relatively broad and blunt-tipped, and this plus overall whiteness can suggest Ivory Gull at a distance, but otherwise very different structure, dusky facial mask and very pale grey tone of majority of upperwing prevent confusion. Upwings of both adult and 2nd-year not unlike Little Gull but latter much smaller, with tiny bill, dusky underwing and daintier flight. **Juvenile** has very weak mask, mottled brownish upperparts and blackish bill and legs; most similar to juvenile Mew Gull, but bill heavier, head less gently rounded and legs blacker. By first autumn mantle has become pale grey. **1st-winter** most likely to be confused with Black-headed, but shadow or mask through eye (rather than a dark spot on ear-coverts), dusky bill (with paler base, lacking strong contrast), dusky legs, and overall shape are best distinctions when not in flight. 1st-winter (and juvenile) easily distinguished from Black-headed in flight by having blackish (instead of predominantly white) primaries. They are more likely to be confused with corresponding plumages of Mew, but much paler grey mid-wing panel and mantle (latter shown by 1st-winter only) give a stronger contrast to the upperside pattern and tail band is often narrower. The underwing is also paler than in Mew, being almost unmarked except for contrasting darker outer primaries and secondary bar, and the wing shape is broader and shorter. **1st-summer** has similar wing/tail pattern to 1st-winter but shows anything from a partial or even complete



dark hood to a 1st-winter-like dark mask. Bill and leg coloration sometimes close to adult. **2nd-winter** recalls adult winter, but shows blackish wedges and subterminal marks to outer primaries. See also 1st-winter Ring-billed and much larger Pallas's.

SEX/AGE See Identification. Bill and leg colours of immature birds variable, but typically much dusker than in Black-headed Gull. Adult plumage attained by third winter.

VOICE Has a variety of calls on breeding grounds, but relatively silent away from them. In flight, a low almost cooing 'kyow' and a shrill, nasal (almost Arctic Skua-like) 'jeeah' sometimes given.

HYBRIDS Several instances of hybridization with Black-headed Gull recorded, the hybrids showing mixed characters of the two parent species both as regards plumage pattern and head and bill shape.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common (most numerous in Black Sea and E Mediterranean regions). (Sporadic breeding takes place, often among colonies of other small gulls, outside mapped range. Has bred Britain, Belgium, Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Estonia, Switzerland, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria.) Breeds by freshwater and brackish lakes, lagoons and marshes. Winters chiefly on coasts and estuaries, but occasionally inland with other small gulls.

LAUGHING GULL *Larus atricilla*

Plate page 419

L 36–41 cm, WS 105–120 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Slightly larger than Black-headed Gull and with considerably longer wings, legs and bill (latter distinctly long, heavy and rather drooped), and much darker overall coloration. Likely to be confused only with similar vagrant Franklin's Gull (q.v.). **Adult** has dark grey upperparts, darker grey than Mew Gull and similar in shade to race *graellsii* of Lesser Black-backed Gull. The long blackish primaries normally lack white tips, but can have small ones when fresh. Bill very dark red with black subterminal band in breeding season, blackish (often with red tip to upper mandible) at other times; legs reddish-black. Adult summer has black hood with prominent white eye-crescents. Adult winter has weak greyish mask and wash on hindneck and breast sides. In flight all ages show conspicuous white trailing edge to secondaries and have very long-winged appearance. Adults recall small version of *graellsii* Lesser Black-backed Gull, but have long, blackish, drooping bill and different head pattern. **1st-winter** is a medium-sized, dark greyish gull, with grey extending over hindneck, breast and flanks, contrasting with whiter forecrown, throat and belly; wing coverts are mottled brown. A dusky patch on ear-coverts often extends to

hindcrown. (Often shows some retained grey-brown juvenile feathering on head and body.) Long wings (producing an attenuated look), long black bill, rather long blackish legs and grey on head and underparts distinguish it from darkest juvenile Mew Gulls at rest (the most likely cause of confusion). In flight, confusable with dark juvenile Mew, but looks darker, more slate-grey rather than brown, with more uniformly dark wings (inner primaries barely paler than outer primaries and secondaries) and a broader blackish tail band and grey sides to tail, contrasting with whitish uppertail coverts and prominent white trailing edge to secondaries. Axillaries and underwing coverts often extensively dark. **1st-summer** similar but can have partial hood and some grey on wing coverts (especially median). **2nd-winter** closer to adult winter, but there is more extensive blackish on wingtip, extending further towards carpal joint, and hindneck, breast sides and flanks are grey; tail often shows vestiges of band and there may be some dark in secondaries. See also White-eyed Gull.

SEX/AGE Juvenile, unlikely to occur within our region, has greyish-brown head, neck, breast and flanks, and broad pale fringes to dark brown mantle

feathers and scapulars, creating scaly pattern. Adult plumage attained by third winter.

VOICE Usual cry a high-pitched laughing 'ha-ha-ha ...'. Other, shorter, calls may be heard.

FRANKLIN'S GULL *Larus pipixcan*

L 32–36 cm, WS 85–95 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Similar to Laughing Gull, but smaller and stockier, with more rounded crown, shorter and less drooping bill, shorter legs and (from 2nd-winter) more rounded wingtips. Typically appears smaller than Black-headed Gull, with which vagrants often associate, while Laughing is rather larger. All plumages show pale grey centre to tail (which is white in Laughing), but this difference is difficult to appreciate in the field. More of an inland freshwater species than Laughing in breeding season and often dips down in flight to pick food from water surface (less usual in Laughing). Unique amongst gulls in having two complete moults each year. **Adult** differs principally in having a diagnostic combination of prominent white tips to primaries and a whitish band dividing blackish subterminal area of outer primaries from grey bases. Note: white tips are usually lacking in Laughing but small ones may be present in fresh plumage. Identification of lone birds on ground can be difficult, although white primary tips are usually visible (and white band is sometimes apparent), but becomes easier in flight. Summer adults often have pink flush to underparts (rare in Laughing). Adult winter (and all immatures) have blackish-grey 'half-hood' over rear half of head, making white eye-crescents more conspicuous; Laughing has less obvious greyish smudge through eye and streaking on nape (but beware moulting Laughing with partial blackish hood). **1st-winter** has underparts, including breast, all

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe, Morocco). In natural range, favours a wide variety of coastal habitats ranging from beaches, salt marshes and estuaries to harbours and mangroves.

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white, whereas 1st-winter Laughing has extensive grey on breast and flanks. In flight, shows noticeably paler inner primaries with broad white tips, whiter underparts and underwing (lacking dark markings on axillaries and coverts), and a narrower dark tail band that does not reach outermost tail feathers (which are white, compared with grey in Laughing). Also shows distinct white tips to outer primaries, unlike Laughing. **1st-summer and 2nd-winter** are much as adult winter but have extensive blackish on outer primaries, with white more restricted. Some 1st-summer individuals have retained juvenile flight feathers and tail feathers. Structural differences and blackish 'half hood' should help distinguish difficult individuals from Laughing. Tail band usually absent by 1st-summer.

SEX/AGE See Identification. Juvenile, unlikely to occur in our region, has scaly pattern to mantle and scapulars (but pale fringes less distinct than in juvenile Laughing), and brownish tinge to hindneck and sides of breast. Unlike all other gulls apart from Sabine's, has a complete moult early in 2nd calendar year, after which it looks much as adult winter (but see Identification). Adult plumage is usually attained by second summer.

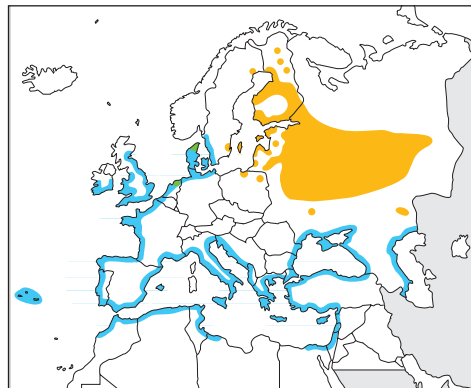
VOICE Usual call a soft 'kruk', but short harsher calls may be heard away from breeding grounds.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). Most likely to be found associating with Black-headed Gulls, both in coastal areas and inland.

LITTLE GULL *Larus minutus*

L 25–27 cm, WS 75–80 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Smallest gull in the world, with dainty slim black bill, relatively short legs, rather rounded wingtips and buoyant flight. Less of a scavenger than other gulls. Often perches on stumps in water. Despite strong association with freshwater in summer, is very much a marine species in winter. Sociable, migrating in flocks along coastlines. Flight action quick and agile, feeding over fresh water by dipping to surface in manner of marsh terns and often associating with them. Winter adults could be mistaken for winter-plumaged marsh terns but Little Gull is shorter and blunter-winged, with much darker underwing and paler upperwing, and usually a clear gap between dusky cheek spot and dusky centre of crown. Juvenile and first winter easily separated by W wing pattern (lacking in all marsh terns), while dark subterminal spots on primaries distinguish some 2nd-winter. At rest much more gull-like, lacking dagger-shaped bill and long wings that project far beyond tail of marsh terns. **Adult** has red legs and silver-grey upperparts with white primary tips. Adult summer has black hood but lacks white eye-crescents of other hooded gulls; underparts (especially breast) often flushed pink. Adult winter has dusky centre to crown and spot on ear-coverts, and grey hindneck. In flight, shows relatively blunt-tipped wings, the pale grey upperside (lacking any black on primary tips) contrasts strongly with blackish underwing, and both wing



surfaces have narrow whitish border (compare similar Ross's Gull). **Juvenile** has head pattern of adult winter, but more pronounced dark area on centre of crown and darker spot on ear-coverts. Shows extensive blackish-brown and whitish scaling on scapulars, dark mantle and breast sides, dark band across wing coverts and dusky outer primaries contrasting with pale grey inner primaries and greater coverts; legs pinkish. Tail has a dark subterminal band (and is sometimes slightly

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notched). Rare variant has all upperwing coverts (or even entire upperwing) almost wholly dark. **1st-winter** has pale grey mantle, more pointed wingtip than adult and very pale underwing. Upperwings show strong W pattern, with dark outer primaries and diagonal band across wing coverts, that is comparable only with 1st-winter Ross's Gull and Black-legged Kittiwake. Compare also vagrant Bonaparte's Gull. Birds moulting to first winter retain dark half-collar and can resemble juvenile Black-legged Kittiwake in pattern, but latter much bigger (larger than Black-headed Gull) with black legs, broader wings, whiter secondaries (lacking weak secondary bar of Little) and noticeably heavier bill. **1st-summer** shows a similar, but more faded wing pattern, and may show a partial or even a full hood, a pink flush on underparts and red legs. **2nd-winter** much as adult, but underwing coverts

paler than dusky underside to flight feathers and primaries can retain blackish subterminal spots, so upperwing similar to much larger 2nd-winter Mediterranean Gull.

SEX/AGE See Identification. Attains adult plumage by third winter.

VOICE Usual call a short, marsh-tern-like 'kik-kik'. In display gives a shrill 'ke-kay, ke-kay, ke-kay ...'

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (Breeding range is extending slowly westwards. In addition to mapped range, has bred Britain, Germany, Romania, Armenia, Sea of Azov region.) Breeds by lowland freshwater lakes and marshes, with extensive fringing vegetation, in open country. Outside breeding season chiefly found around inshore coastal waters and adjacent freshwater or brackish lakes and lagoons. Frequent at inland lakes on migration.

SABINE'S GULL *Larus sabini*

L 27–32 cm, WS 90–100 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Small, elegant Arctic-breeding species (pelagic at other seasons) with small head, long wings and shallowly-forked tail, although tail shape often hard to see. The wing pattern is diagnostic at all ages: black outer primaries contrast with white inner primaries and secondaries, and grey (or, in juvenile, brownish) wing coverts. Has faint dusky band on inner underwing (on greater underwing coverts), most obvious in juvenile. Overall impression is of a small juvenile Black-legged Kittiwake, but forewing is plain grey or brownish, lacking blackish diagonal band, and triangle of black on outer primaries is more extensive. Distant 1st-winter Black-legged Kittiwakes, particularly under some light conditions, can appear to have remarkably contrasting upperside pattern and worn 1st-summer birds show very white secondaries and may lack diagonal bar, providing a trap for the unwary. Sociable, migrating well offshore in small parties and only driven towards coasts during severe gales. Feeds by dipping and picking from water surface in manner of Little Gull. Swims buoyantly. Flight action buoyant and tern-like. **Adult summer** has blackish legs, a dark grey hood (with black lower border) and yellow-tipped black bill, the hood being retained well into the autumn and providing a helpful distinction from troublesome Black-legged Kittiwakes; the mantle and forewing are a darker grey than in Black-legged Kittiwake. **Adult winter** shows dusky shading over nape and ear-coverts and the primaries are worn, lacking white tips. **Juvenile** has black bill, slightly notched tail with black terminal band, pinkish legs, and brownish mantle, forewing, sides of head, neck and breast, retaining this plumage through the autumn; the brownish mantle/forewing and hooded effect create a very striking pattern, quite different from juvenile or 1st-winter Black-legged Kittiwake. Dusky band on underwing (greater underwing coverts) is also diagnostic. **1st-winter** is like juvenile but has adult-type head/neck pattern and grey mantle (and some wing coverts); breast and hindneck are sometimes tinged grey. **1st-summer** (rarely seen in our region) much as adult, but hood at most only partial, yellow bill tip often missing and white primary tips smaller, and may retain vestiges of tail band. Compare also juvenile and 1st-winter Little and Ross's Gulls.

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SEX/AGE See Identification. Unique amongst gulls in having complete pre-breeding moult in winter quarters and only partial post-breeding moult (but see Franklin's Gull); retains juvenile plumage through first autumn until arrival in southern winter quarters (and adult summer plumage mostly retained until arrival in south also). 1st-winter has full moult in late winter/early spring; 1st-summer usually remain in winter quarters. Attains adult plumage by second winter.

VOICE Away from breeding grounds, most frequently heard call is a tern-like grating 'krrrr'.

STATUS/HABITAT Local and uncommon as a breeding species in our region, but not uncommon on passage from breeding grounds in Greenland and Canada. Breeds by pools and marshes in tundra. Passes south during autumn well offshore in Atlantic, but westerly gales regularly drift birds to coasts of W Europe, especially Bay of Biscay and SW British Is. Much rarer on spring passage. Only exceptionally inland after severe storms.

BONAPARTE'S GULL *Larus philadelphia*

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L 28–30 cm, WS 90–100 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Very similar to Black-headed Gull, with which vagrants often associate, but distinctly smaller and neater, with smaller, black-coloured bill, relatively shorter legs, longer wings and slightly darker grey upperparts. Underwing pattern diagnostic at all ages: very pale grey or whitish, with primaries entirely white (outermost appearing translucent) apart from clear black trailing edge. Black-headed has primaries largely blackish: white is restricted to outer two or three primaries (which have black tips) and central primaries in particular are very dark and contrasting. (Occasional worn or aberrant Black-headed have much reduced dark on inner primaries, however.) Flight action more graceful and buoyant than Black-headed, with quicker wingbeats, particularly when hovering to pick food from water surface (a habit even more frequently indulged than in Black-headed, recalling Little). **Adult summer** has blackish-grey (not dark chocolate-brown) hood and sometimes more prominent white eye-crescents. Underparts more often strongly flushed with pink. **Adult winter** has grey hindneck and sides of neck and breast (concolourous with mantle etc.); in Black-headed these areas are very pale grey. Head pattern resembles Black-headed but markings are stronger and blacker. Upperwing pattern similar to that of Black-headed but, owing to slightly darker grey upperparts, the white 'outer wing' is more striking and the black tips to the primaries contrast even more sharply. Beware small individual Black-headed Gulls, particularly in worn plumage in late summer when grey on underwing may become faded. Leg colour usually paler than in Black-headed (pink or orange-red rather than dark red). Bill often all-black, but sometimes with a little reddish or brownish at base. **1st-winter** has neck/breast differing in same manner from Black-headed as in winter adult and somewhat darker wing-covert markings tend to give appearance of darker 'shoulder' when at rest. Has shorter, pinkish-coloured legs and small black bill, although usually some indis-

tinct reddish at very base (young Black-headed has orange or sometimes pinkish-yellow legs and larger dull pinkish or orange bill with black tip). Distinguished from Little Gull when at rest by lack of dusky cap (but beware birds in moult). In flight, more strongly and cleanly patterned above than 1st-winter Black-headed, with more clearly defined pale central panel. Dark bar across wing coverts is usually darker and dark trailing edge to wing is more clearly defined and narrower, with a broad pale central panel extending unbroken along length of wing as far as central primaries (Black-headed has dusky wedges on inner primaries and inner greater primary coverts, creating impression of broad, diffuse dark trailing edge to wing in this area and breaking up pale central panel). Outer greater primary coverts are usually marked with black (rare in Black-headed) and has more obvious white tips to inner and central primaries. As with Black-headed, there is a degree of individual variation in intensity of wing markings, some birds being so strongly marked as to suggest Little Gull. **1st-summer** has wing pattern more subdued owing to wear, making differences with Black-headed less obvious. Can also be confused with Little Gull, but this lacks the dark trailing edge to inner primaries and white eye-crescents. (Beware very worn Bonaparte's with indistinct dark trailing edge.)

SEX/AGE See Identification. Juvenile, unlikely to occur in our region, resembles juvenile Black-headed Gull in plumage, but is blacker above, lacking ginger tones, and has black bill. Much as adult by second winter.

VOICE Usual call a rasping tern-like 'tee-er'. Other short calls may be heard from birds away from breeding grounds.

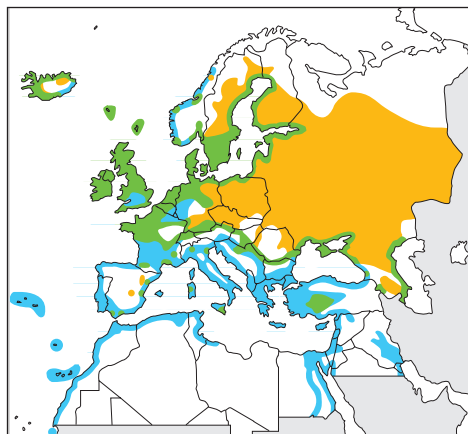
STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe, Azores). In natural range breeds (in trees) in marshy fringes of ponds and lakes in clearings in boreal forest zone. Winters in a variety of coastal habitats ranging from marine waters (often quite far offshore) to harbours, saltmarshes and estuaries. Generally uncommon inland at this season.

BLACK-HEADED GULL *Larus ridibundus*
Common Black-headed Gull

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L 34–37 cm, WS 100–110 cm.

IDENTIFICATION The familiar small gull of our region. In flight, contrasting white outer wing (with black trailing edge), visible at all ages on both surfaces (but often much more obvious on underwing), is distinctive (and matched only by much more localized Slender-billed Gull and vagrant Bonaparte's Gull, q.v.). Extensive white in outer wing an easy distinction in flight from Mew Gull in all plumages, as is overall paler upperside. Compare also Mediterranean Gull, which is superficially similar when at rest but has quite different wing pattern in all plumages. Smallest individuals or birds with extensive dark in wing can suggest other species. Freely mixes with other gulls and often becomes fairly tame where used to being fed. **Adult summer** has chocolate-brown hood (appearing blackish at distance) with white eye-crescents. Underparts sometimes flushed with pink. Bill and legs blackish-red. Compare Mediterranean and rather similar vagrant Bonaparte's. **Adult winter** has upperparts paler grey than slightly larger Mew and lacks white primary tips, but white primary bases often visible on folded wing. Unlike Mew, bill and legs deep red; bill often with dark tip. Winter adults



(and 1st-winters) have dusky spot on ear-coverts with variable but weaker extension onto rear crown and a

similarly variable weak marking about eye and onto mid-crown. Moulting birds show variable head pattern as dark hood attained or lost, often with dusky mask recalling Mediterranean. **Juvenile** very different with dark, scaly, ginger-brown mantle/scapulars and 'shawl' and brownish crown; this plumage worn only for short period but can be quite confusing. (Upper-part colour is very variable, sometimes being blackish-brown recalling Little Gull, sometimes rather cool grey-brown with extensive whitish fringing recalling Mediterranean.) Recently fledged birds are blunter-winged than older birds and have a more floppy flight action. **1st-winter** has brown mottles on wing coverts and dark tertials and tail band, and yellowish or pinkish-orange legs and bill, the latter with a black tip. In flight, shows narrow tail band, brown mottled band across lesser and median upperwing coverts and dark

band along tips of primaries; the variable dark wedges within the white panel on the outermost primaries can be quite extensive in some individuals (and some have very dark inner primaries). **1st-summer** typically heavily worn with all markings weaker, legs and bill base more orange; many have a partial hood (a few even complete).

SEX/AGE See Identification. Much as adult by second winter.

VOICE Usual call a rather high-pitched, screaming, rolling 'karr' or 'kreeay'; also a sharp 'kek-kek' when feeding.

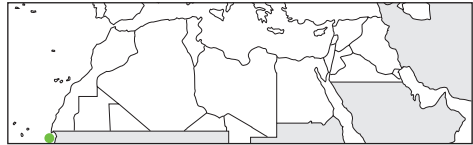
STATUS/HABITAT Common, locally abundant. Breeds in marshes by fresh and by brackish ponds and lakes. At all seasons may be encountered in great variety of habitats, from inshore coastal waters and estuaries to inland lakes, towns and cities, fields and rubbish dumps.

GREY-HEADED GULL *Larus cirrocephalus*

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L 39–42 cm, WS 100–115 cm.

IDENTIFICATION In our region usually confined to Banc d'Arguin, Mauritania. On land or water closely resembles winter Black-headed Gull but, if seen together, Grey-headed is larger with relatively longer legs, more sloping forehead, slightly longer and heavier bill, and obviously darker grey upperparts; in adults (and 2nd-years) the iris is pale (not dark), creating a very different facial expression. In flight, wings look slightly broader than Black-headed and wing pattern unlike that of Black-headed or Slender-billed in all plumages; shows extensive black in primaries and almost all-dusky underwing. White in outer wing is much reduced compared to either Black-headed or Slender-billed, consisting of an oblique white patch extending from the leading edge inwards across the centre of the 'hand' (i.e. from outer primary coverts to bases of central primaries). Adults (and to a lesser degree 2nd-years) also show two prominent white mirrors near wingtip. Flight action often rather different from that of Black-headed, with rather shallow, slow wingbeats interspersed with much gliding. **Adult summer** has medium grey hood (so quite unlike Black-headed in this respect), becoming paler over frontal half of head and darkening towards rear. **Adult winter** has head pattern recalling Black-headed but pattern is weaker, with lighter ear spot (palest birds may appear almost unmarked). Confusion possible with Slender-billed Gull, but upperparts darker grey and head shape not so sloping (with shorter feather extension onto base of bill). Often appears rather longer-necked than Black-headed and stance typically more upright, again recalling Slender-billed. **Juvenile** resembles Black-headed but is colder in coloration than all but a few of latter. For wing pattern differences see 1st-winter. **1st-winter** shares dark iris but often shows same differences in head pattern



compared with Black-headed as for adult, and dark tail band is a little narrower and often less extensive on outer feathers. Hindneck is often a darker shade of grey. Beware not infrequent variant of 1st-winter Black-headed Gull with more extensive dark than normal on outermost primaries, but this never so extensive as in Grey-headed, and dark underwing of latter, plus broader wings and greater bulk, should make separation straightforward.

SEX/AGE See Identification. Juvenile has brownish mantle and more extensive brownish markings on head than 1st-winter. 1st-winter and 1st-summer have grey mantle, but extensive brown mottles on upperwing coverts, much dark in secondaries and primaries, and dark tail band; becomes faded and worn during first summer. Often shows almost full hood in 1st-summer. 2nd-winter and 2nd-summer more like adult, but white mirror spots small or lacking at primary tips and shows traces of dark on secondaries and tertials (and sometimes on wing coverts). Unlike most other small dark-hooded gulls, does not attain adult plumage until third winter.

VOICE Typical calls a little harsher than in Black-headed Gull.

STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon. Small islands in shallow coastal waters in our region, but elsewhere favours large lakes and more locally large rivers, sea-shores and estuaries.

SLENDER-BILLED GULL *Larus genei*

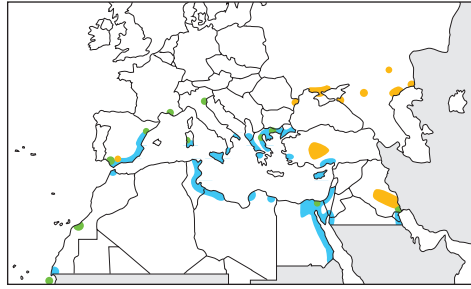
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L 42–44 cm, WS 100–110 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Unusual among smaller *Larus* in lacking dark hood in summer plumage; also has a pale (usually yellowish) iris at all ages beyond early juvenile. At all seasons recalls winter adult or immature Black-headed Gull, but head and bill shape distinctive: forehead more sloping, with greater extension of feathering onto bill base, and decidedly longer (and often heavier) bill. These features, coupled with dis-

tinctly longer neck and usually shorter primary projection (beyond slightly longer tail), give a peculiar, front-heavy appearance to foreparts; if neck extended appearance can be quite remarkably attenuated ('giraffe-necked'), and if retracted appears more 'pout-breasted' than Black-headed. Slightly larger size also helps when the two species are together. In flight, wing pattern almost identical to that of Black-headed

but whiteness, and overall appearance, of head and neck important features; appears attenuated, with relatively long neck, slightly drooped head and long bill, and distinctly humped back when wings lowered. Wings longer and broader than in Black-headed and flight action slower. Flocks generally keep discretely away from other gulls, but will sometimes associate with Black-headed Gulls. **Adult summer** has head and neck all white, with distinct rosy flush to white underparts producing some contrast in well-marked birds (but many Slender-billed show little pink and Black-headed often slightly pink-tinged). Bill very dark red, appearing blackish and contrasting strongly with white head, legs typically lighter red than bill, and iris pale. However, although iris pale even from an early age, the dark red orbital ring contrasts strongly with the white head and creates a surprisingly dark-eyed appearance at any distance (perhaps aided by a slight darkening of iris in breeding period). Care should be taken to discount occasional Black-headed with apparently all-white head; concentration on head and bill structure is therefore most important. Grey-headed Gull shows somewhat intermediate head shape between Black-headed and Slender-billed, is often very pale-headed and also has pale iris, but upperparts darker grey and has very different wing pattern. **Adult winter** has weaker rosy flush, a redder (less blackish) bill and often has a faint dusky ear spot (and sometimes a little dusky in front of eye and on crown) and pale grey wash on hindneck and sides of breast, so separation from Black-headed made harder. **Juvenile** resembles juvenile Black-headed, but paler and greyer-brown above, lacking ginger tones, with distinctly paler head with dark ear spot and partly hooded appearance only weakly indicated and sometimes lacking. **1st-winter** resembles 1st-winter Black-



headed in plumage, but head and bill shape distinctly different and head pattern weaker, with paler dusky ear spot rather lower on side of head, only a little dusky around eye (mainly to front) and wing markings paler brown (making wings look paler overall). Bill and leg colour often paler and more yellowish-orange than in Black-headed, with little or no black on bill tip. Tail band and upperpart pattern much as in 1st-winter Black-headed, but all markings lighter brown.

1st-summer has white head and wing/tail pattern much faded. Often has much grey in coverts and tertials, so looks very adult-like when at rest.

SEX/AGE See Identification. Much as adult by second winter, but bill and legs not as dark.

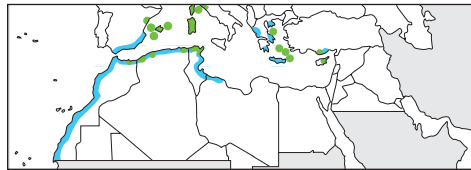
VOICE Calls lower-pitched and more nasal than those of Black-headed Gull.

STATUS/HABITAT Localized, but often fairly common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Canary Is, Tunisia.) Breeds chiefly beside lakes and lagoons, both saline and freshwater. Outside breeding season, chiefly in coastal areas at lagoons, estuary mouths and sheltered bays.

AUDOUIN'S GULL *Larus audouinii*

L 48–52 cm, WS 125–140 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Uncommon endemic to our region, breeding in Mediterranean and dispersing to Atlantic coast of Morocco. Overall appearance is of a smallish, rather elegant Herring-type gull, but long, rather shallowly sloping forehead (often seeming almost concave), flatter forecrown, more peaked hindcrown and greater extension of feathering onto base of rather uniformly thick bill give a different facial appearance; in addition, legs, bill and iris are dark at all ages and, in flight, tail looks rather short and narrow. Adults and older immatures are distinctly pale-mantled. Loosely associates with other large gulls away from colonies. Very much a marine feeder, patrolling sea with steady flight, gliding for longer periods than Herring, Yellow-legged or Armenian on slightly arched wings, deftly dipping to pick food items from surface. Does not often scavenge, unlike most other large gulls, but sometimes attends fishing boats. **Adult** has dark reddish bill (appearing blackish) with pale yellowish tip, quite unlike any other large gull. At longer range pale tip is invisible, creating a stubby-billed appearance. Sloping head shape and blackish-looking bill vaguely reminiscent of smaller and more slightly-built adult Slender-billed Gull, but bill shape both stouter and shorter. Upperparts paler grey than Herring, Yellow-legged or Armenian, especially compared with rather dark Mediterranean race *michahellis* of Yellow-legged, and at rest the white scapular and tertial crescents are much less distinct. Rump, underwing, flanks, sides of breast and hindneck are washed with pale grey, the latter areas giving some slight contrast to whiter head



in certain light conditions (with good view). Legs dark greyish or greenish (not rather pale pinkish or yellowish) and iris dark (combining with structural differences to produce very different facial expression compared with Herring or Yellow-legged). In flight, the wings appear slimmer and more pointed than in Herring, Yellow-legged or Armenian. The very pale grey upperswing contrasts only a little with white trailing edge to secondaries (unlike Yellow-legged in particular) but strongly contrasts with black in primaries on both wing surfaces. There is only one small white spot (mirror) in wingtip and this is often hard to see on upper surface (full adult Herring and Yellow-legged typically have two larger mirrors). Winter adult has brownish freckling on nape and sides of head (as seen in winter Yellow-legged and Armenian) but lacks the obvious extensive dusky streaking on nape, crown and around eye shown by winter Herring and some other large gulls. **Juvenile** may be confused with juvenile Herring, Yellow-legged, Armenian and Lesser Black-backed Gulls, especially the latter — the important structural differences should be taken into

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account. (Note: juvenile Audouin's is only likely to come into contact with juvenile Yellow-legged and Lesser Black-backed.) Audouin's has rather plain grey-brown head, breast and flanks with darker area about eye, contrasting with whiter crown and 'foreface' and often a darker patch on rear flanks that contrasts with very white belly and ventral region (latter only slightly mottled). The others show more extensive dark mask around eye and dark streaking on head, with strongly mottled brown ventral region (although at a distance some young Yellow-legged and Lesser Black-backed can appear to show a dark flank patch). Upperparts of Audouin's are very dark with prominent pale feather borders, giving a more scaly effect. In flight, the underwing is darker overall than in Herring, Yellow-legged or Armenian, with dark bands along coverts and a prominent pale band across bases of greater coverts and inner greater primary coverts; underwing is more uniformly dark on young Lesser Black-backed. The upperwing recalls young Lesser Black-backed, with very dark greater coverts and flight feathers, and lacks paler inner primaries of Herring-type, but differs from Lesser Black-backed in having a third (narrow) dark band across inner wing on median coverts (the three bands being separated by the neat whitish fringes to the median and greater coverts when fresh). The tail is almost all dark above, contrasting with whitish U of uppertail coverts (but some white visible at tail base from below), while in Herring-type and Lesser Black-backed there is a broad dark tail band and dark-barred uppertail coverts and base of tail. Bill is black (often paler at base) and legs are dark greyish. **1st-winter** can be identified by same features as juvenile; in addition has diagnostic grey scapulars with dark brown centres. Head and underparts are much whiter than in juvenile but has variable dusky mask behind eye and dusky half-collar at base of neck. **1st-summer** has pale grey mantle and head and under-

parts very pale and almost unmarked, with mottled half-collar at base of neck present until mid-summer; upperwing and tail as juvenile but abraded. Bill greyish (or pinkish) at base with black terminal half. **2nd-winter** more like adult but has dark secondary bar, extensive dark on outer wing, wing coverts often mottled (although greater, and frequently most, inner wing coverts pale grey), narrow dark subterminal band on tail, nape freckled brown (contrasting with whitish head and pale greyish-white underparts) and bill as in 1st-winter (or with reddish base). Plumage pattern not dissimilar to 1st-winter Mediterranean, but Audouin's larger, with different head and bill shape, grey wash on underparts, greyer legs and lacks strong dark mask. Looks more advanced than Herring-type, with mantle/scapulars and most of median and greater wing coverts pale grey, markedly contrasting with dark outer wing and secondaries (inner primaries usually look paler). Underwing is paler than in Herring-type and dark tail band is usually narrower and more sharply defined.

SEX/AGE See Identification. 2nd-summer similar to 2nd-winter but head and nape unmarked, wings faded and bill usually reddish at base. 3rd-winter almost as adult, but some dusky marks often remain on tail and dark carpal area more extensive; usually lacks white mirror spot on outermost primary. Attains fully adult plumage by fourth winter.

VOICE All calls hoarser and deeper than Herring or Yellow-legged Gulls.

STATUS/HABITAT Uncommon and distinctly local. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Lebanon.) Entire population breeds in small or medium-sized colonies on low, rocky islands in Mediterranean. After breeding moves to favoured sheltered sandy bays, gathering on beaches and at estuary mouths. Disperses down Atlantic coast of Morocco, where non-breeders also oversummer.

RING-BILLED GULL *Larus delawarensis*

L 43–47 cm, WS 120–130 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Resembles Mew Gull in all plumages, but typically slightly larger, with bulkier body, chunkier head (and broader nape), noticeably longer and stouter bill, slightly longer legs and more pointed wingtips. Often stands more upright than Mew. In flight, overall bulk and shape more reminiscent of larger Herring than of Mew, with wings slightly broader at base and more even in width along entire length than in Mew. Overall size and structure somewhat variable in all three, with some Ring-billed overlapping with Mew, but only smallest individual Herring approaching largest Ring-billed. Sociable, associating with other gulls and scavenging with them. Some vagrants to Europe have become exceedingly tame where fed. **Adult** has upperparts much paler grey than Mew (almost as pale as Black-headed Gull) with narrower and less contrasting white tertial and scapular crescents (both typically prominent in adult Mew, but narrower in 2nd-years). Bill yellow with wide, clear-cut black subterminal band (absent in adult summer Mew, which often has greenish tinge to yellow bill; adult winter Mew has a dusky subterminal band on duller, more greenish or greyish-yellow bill). Iris pale yellowish (very rarely so in Mew). Legs yellowish, brightest in summer plumage (a feature matched by Mew). Adult winter has brownish mottling on head and nape (averaging darker and more obviously finer-spotted than in Mew), and duller yellow bill than adult summer. In flight, shows smaller

white mirrors in wingtip than adult Mew, lacking large white 'blob' of that species, but pattern matched by Herring (and Yellow-legged). Paler grey upperparts than in Mew contrast strongly with black outer primaries, while underside of outer primaries blacker and more contrasting than in Mew or Herring. Wings broader overall, but more sharply pointed than in Mew Gull, more like Herring in shape apart from very pointed tip. **1st-winter** and other immature plumages more difficult to identify, but Ring-billed has a distinct character of its own once appreciated. All field features overlap to a certain degree owing to individual variation and it is important to identify a Ring-billed by working through a combination of characters. Differs from 1st-winter Mew in having strikingly clean bright pink bill with very wide black tip (or sometimes subterminal band later in season), recalling 1st-winter Glaucous Gull in coloration; young Mew (especially 1st-summer) can have similar pattern but bill is slimmer, weaker and duller pinkish or greyish. Typically 1st-winter Ring-billed has more extensive and more distinct brownish mottling and spotting and barring on head and underparts, extending onto flanks as crescentic bars, and more extensive brownish markings on ventral region than 1st-winter Mew, but later in winter markings are less extensive. However, some young Mews can be quite heavily marked, especially in early winter. Mantle paler grey than in Mew (see adult) but beware effect of varying light conditions, and indi-

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vidual variation. Early in winter, Ring-billed has some brownish and pale scaling to mantle/scapulars, producing a less clean-cut 'saddle' than in Mew (but beware 1st-winter Mew with some retained brownish juvenile feathering on mantle and scapulars; some Mews show much juvenile plumage even in late winter). Tertiaries typically blacker-brown than in Mew, with narrower pale fringes (but by late winter these may be heavily abraded in both species). Profile of folded tertiaries typically blunter, less rounded in Ring-billed, producing more 'squared-off' cloak to primary bases. On folded wing, paler grey greater coverts contrast more with dark tertiaries and mottled forewing than in Mew (and these feathers usually show dark brownish subterminal markings that are absent in almost all Mew). When fresh, centres to lesser and median coverts are darker, better defined and more pointed than in Mew, showing greater contrast with more distinct pale fringes. Larger average size and basic structural differences also help. In flight, wing shape important (see adult) and pattern more contrasting than in young Mew with pale areas (including mid-wing panel) paler and greyer, less brown-tinged, and dark areas darker. While most Mew have clean-cut mid-grey 'saddle', Ring-billed has pale grey saddle with some scattered brown mottling (although sometimes saddle unmarked). Underwing often shows more extensive brownish markings on coverts than Mew, but again this individually variable in both species. Tail band dingier, less clear-cut than in young Mew, usually with extensive dark mottling at base of tail and on uppertail coverts (an important character). Band is sometimes double, the outer being the narrower of the two. Small 2nd-year Herring Gulls (and also Yellow-legged Gulls) also pose a major problem; typically the tertiaries and greater coverts of Herring are mottled and barred, but if plumage heavily abraded then tertiaries may look rather plain, so basic structure of difficult birds is important. Herring typically has heavier build, longer bill (with sharper gonys angle) and often a pale iris (never pale in 1st-winter Ring-billed). Tail band is broader and less well defined, and underwing darker and more uniform (Ring-billed has distinct and contrasting dark markings on the otherwise pale coverts). Herring, as opposed to Yellow-legged, also has brownish-pink legs. **1st-summer** is heavily abraded on wings, with upperwing coverts looking worn and

mealy with no distinct pattern, and head and underparts only weakly mottled. Bill base and leg colour often becomes yellower, although still with pinkish tones (Mew often has greyish bill base in 1st-summer). **2nd-winter** similar to adult but outer primary coverts and alula dusky (visible in flight), and normally shows some dark markings in tail and secondaries (but both tail and secondaries often as adult by late winter). Trace of dark secondary bar or tail bar only rarely present in 2nd-winter Mew. Outer primaries look all-dark, but there is often a tiny white mirror spot near tip of inner web of outermost feather (visible on underside of folded wing, but not normally seen in flight); Mew shows one or two larger, more obvious white mirrors. Coloration of bare parts variable, with bill varying from almost whitish-pink to dull yellow or even dull greenish (with black band) and legs varying from pale greyish through greenish to dull yellow; iris usually pale (as adult) but sometimes dark (like 1st-winter or Mew). Note that some 2nd-year Mew show distinct broad dark band on bill. 3rd-year Herring Gull and Yellow-legged Gull often similar in wing pattern, but have inner primaries grey (apart from white tip), lacking short dark markings near tips of inner primaries shown by some Ring-billed (an easy distinction in flight if looked for), and usually more brownish patterning on wing coverts and tertiaries; they also usually show some red on gonys. See 1st-winter for further comments on distinctions from Herring and Yellow-legged Gulls.

SEX/AGE See Identification. Juvenile, unlikely to occur in our region, resembles juvenile Mew Gull but distinguished by structure, same differences in wing and tail pattern as for 1st-winter, pale-notched fringes and extensive pale internal markings to scapulars (uniformly pale-fringed with darker centres in Mew) and coarser markings on head and underparts. Becomes as adult by third winter.

VOICE Rather silent away from breeding grounds, but sometimes gives a mellow 'kowk'. 'Long-call' (given with head held back) higher, harsher and less nasal than in Mew Gull.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe, where rather regular, Spitsbergen, Morocco, Azores). In natural range, habitats much as Mew Gull. In our region likely to be found among flocks of other gulls, especially Black-headed and Mew, but seems to have a particular liking for freshwater pools adjacent to coast.

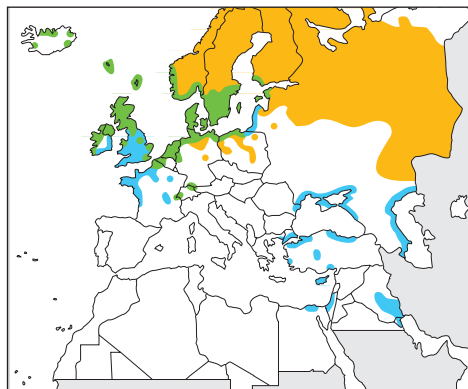
MEW GULL *Larus canus*

Common Gull

L 40–42 cm, WS 110–120 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Widespread medium-sized gull with relatively short, slim bill, rounded head and long primaries; size and basic structure, especially of head and bill, important at all ages. By no means the commonest gull in most of its range, making the name 'Common Gull' singularly inappropriate. Recalls small Herring Gull and especially Yellow-legged Gull in coloration, but only a little larger than Black-headed Gull. Looks much more elegant than the former owing to small, slim bill, rounder head and much 'gentler' facial expression (partly created by dark eye), relatively narrow wings (broadest in carpal area) and long 'hand'. Darker grey mantle and slightly larger size allows for ready identification when mixed with flocks of Black-headed. Adult Black-legged Kittiwake similar in size and mantle colour but has head smudges in winter, short black legs and more pointed wings lacking any white within neat black tips. For separation from vagrant Ring-billed Gull, which is very similar in

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all plumages, see that species. Mixes freely with other gulls, both inland and along the coast; readily feeds in fields, scavenges at rubbish tips, follows boats and attends sewage outfalls etc. **Adult** has medium grey upperparts, darker than *argenteus* race of Herring of W Europe, and the rather long primaries show prominent white tips and mirrors. White tertial crescents even more prominent. In flight, upperwing pattern recalls Herring but wings relatively narrow, the prominent white mirrors showing as a white blob at the tips, making the primaries seem quite blunt-tipped (this effect is less apparent in 2nd-winter birds). Iris dark (very rarely pale). In breeding season, bill and legs yellow, legs varying from greenish-yellow to almost orange-yellow. Adult winter similar, but head, especially nape, streaked and spotted with grey-brown, bill yellowish or greyish with a smudged dusky subterminal band and legs greyish, bluish-green or dull greenish-yellow. **Juvenile** differs from 1st-winter in having head, neck and breast very heavily mottled brownish, mantle and scapulars dark brown with pale feather fringes, and bill at first almost all dusky, becoming paler from base during first autumn; legs dark dull pinkish. Best told from juvenile or 1st-winter Herring or Yellow-legged at rest by much smaller size and structural differences outlined above, also by plain grey-brown greater coverts. Easier in flight when latter feature more obvious (as a greyish panel on upperwing) and clean-cut tail band visible (contrasting with cleaner, whiter tail base and uppertail coverts). **1st-winter** has fairly dark grey 'saddle' (sometimes with a few scattered brownish markings) contrasting with mottled brown wings, dull pinkish bill with black tip, and pinkish-grey legs; head and nape mottled brownish; even well into midwinter some birds retain

much juvenile plumage (even a dark bill), which can be confusing. 'Saddle' more contrasting and head and bill structure much daintier than in larger 2nd-winter Herring (or to a lesser degree Yellow-legged); in flight tail band is cleaner, less smudged. Upperwing pattern confusable with first year Mediterranean (q.v.) **1st-summer** has head and neck whiter and wings abraded, almost mealy, contrasting even more strongly with grey 'saddle' than in 1st-winter. **2nd-winter** close to adult but blackish on outer wing extends to carpal area and white mirror spots smaller. Often lacks white tips to primaries and sometimes a hint of dusky still remains in tail; bill base and legs typically greyer, with more extensive dark subterminal mark on former.

SEX/AGE See Identification. Attains adult plumage by third winter.

VOICE Most obvious call at all seasons a shrill, high-pitched, nasal laughing 'gleeoo' uttered with head stretched up and back or given in flight. Much higher in pitch than similar call of Herring. When alarmed gives a similar but shorter, repeated 'gleeu-gleeu-gleeu ...'. A shorter 'keow' also frequent: recalls similar call of Herring but more nasal.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (nominate illustrated). Nominate race grades into slightly larger and darker grey *heinei* from Moscow eastwards.

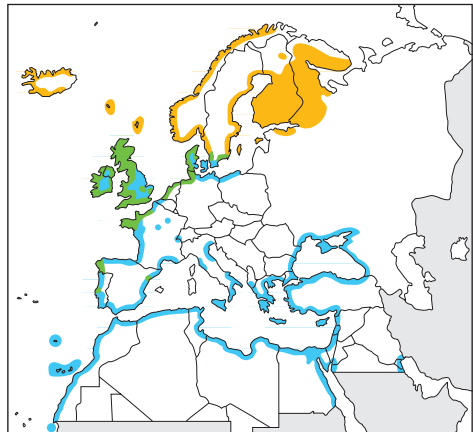
STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Czechoslovakia, Hungary.) Breeds in variety of habitats, from coastal marshes to moorland areas away from water; locally even on cliffs and inshore islets. Outside breeding season, may be found almost anywhere in lowland situations, from coastal waters and estuaries to inland lakes, farmland and city parks.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus fuscus*

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L 52–60 cm, WS 135–150 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Large gull averaging slightly smaller, but with relatively slightly longer wings, than Herring, Yellow-legged and Heuglin's Gulls (but close to Armenian Gull in size). Overall size varies with race; nominate race is smaller and slimmer than *graellsii* and *intermedius*. Sociable, freely mixing with other large gulls, scavenging together. **Adult** has mantle and upperwing black (nominate race), blackish *intermedius* or dark slate-grey (*graellsii*) and recalls larger and bulkier Great Black-backed Gull, but latter (which has mantle colour on average slightly darker than in *intermedius* and distinctly darker than in *graellsii*, but slightly paler than in nominate race) has almost white head in winter and whitish pink legs. Head heavily streaked in *graellsii*, moderately in *intermedius*, but only weakly in nominate race Lesser Black-backed, while legs typically yellow or orange-yellow in adults (rarely pinkish, mainly in autumn). Great Black-backed, even small individuals, typically looks bulkier with stouter neck, heavier bill and less slender wingtips. In flight, Lesser Black-backed typically shows different wingtip pattern with one or at most two small white mirror spots in black wingtip and only small white tips to outer primaries. Great Black-backed typically has much more white visible, with large white tips to outer primaries and extensive white tip to outer primary merging with large white mirror on second primary (but note that Lesser Black-backed sometimes has more extensive white mirror on outer primary, merging with white tip). Race *graellsii* of Lesser Black-backed only a few shades darker above than western races of Yellow-legged (q.v.), but



in autumn and early winter head and neck very heavily clouded with brownish-grey (almost forming a hood), whereas these Yellow-legged have head almost unmarked white (or at most finely dark-streaked) and are usually bulkier and slightly larger. **Juvenile** and **1st-winter** resemble corresponding plumages of Herring-type gulls, but are darker overall and lack obviously paler inner primaries, having flight feathers virtually uniformly dark along full length of wing (a key feature). Dark tail band is usually broader, blacker and more clean-cut, and tail base/uppertail coverts

whiter (making band stand out more). The outer greater coverts are dark, becoming slightly marbled subterminally towards body. Herring and Great Black-backed of corresponding age have lighter, more marbled and less conspicuously dark outer greater coverts and a noticeable paler wedge on inner primaries (Young Great Black-backed also has much paler ground colour to body and wings, with correspondingly more contrasting dark markings); even when at rest the greater-covert pattern is often discernible. Tertian pattern also useful when at rest; tertials are dark with narrow pale fringes in Lesser Black-backed while in the other two the fringes are broader and there are prominent pale notches along the sides (so feathers appear 'marbled' rather than largely uniform dark). Feather wear and bleaching can, however, cause problems and the feather patterning is really useful only in fresh plumage (i.e. until early winter). Underwing coverts are darker than in Great Black-backed and many Herring, while new 1st-winter scapulars are also often darker. Unfortunately young Yellow-legged, Armenian and Heuglin's Gulls tend to have tertials, outer greater coverts and underwing coverts (plus 1st-winter scapulars) close to that of Lesser Black-backed, but typically show Herring-like pale wedge on inner primaries (although this less marked on upwinging). In nominate race, nape and sides of neck are typically paler than in young Herring-type and contrast more with darker upperparts. In all races bill remains black into 1st-winter (bill often pale-based in Herring-type gulls). Compare also juvenile Audouin's. **1st-summer** has head and underparts paler than 1st-winter, contrasting with dark and very worn upperparts. Bill often has pale base. **2nd-winter** shows beginnings of adult mantle colour, so confusion with Herring, Yellow-legged or Armenian (but not nominate Heuglin's) is less likely. Legs turn from juvenile reddish-pink to yellowish from second winter onwards. Bill pale with dark subterminal mark.

SEX/AGE See Identification. 2nd-summer has adult coloration on mantle/scapulars and yellowish or bright yellow legs and bill (latter with dark subterminal mark); iris often pale. 3rd-winter close to adult but

retains dark subterminal bar on bill and some dusky marks in tail; legs often still pinkish. Attains adult plumage by 4th winter.

VOICE Resembles Herring Gull, but most calls deeper, gruffer and hoarser (long call being rather hurried towards end).

TAXONOMY Sometimes treated as conspecific with Herring Gull *L. argentatus*. Alternatively some authorities have treated the yellow-legged forms of the Herring Gull complex, currently given full specific rank as Yellow-legged Gull *L. cachinnans* and Armenian Gull *L. armenicus*, as conspecific with Lesser Black-backed Gull. Some authorities treat the northern forms *heuglini* and *taiymyrensis*, treated herein as a full species under the name Heuglin's Gull *L. heuglini*, as conspecific with Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus*.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Marked. 3 races (all illustrated). 1st-year birds not racially separable in the field. Nominate race smallest and slimmest, with black upperparts; head only weakly streaked (mostly on nape) in winter; breeds Scandinavia east to White Sea and winters from E Mediterranean to E Africa. Race *graellsii* has dark slate upperparts, contrasting strongly with black of primaries, and has very heavily streaked winter 'hood'; breeds Iceland and British Is to N Spain and winters from Britain southwards through W Europe to W Africa. Race *intermedius* similar to last, but mantle darker, some approaching nominate race, but always some contrast with black of primaries; winter 'hood' well streaked. Breeds Netherlands, Denmark and S Norway, wintering in same areas as *graellsii*.

HYBRIDS Surprisingly only very rarely hybridizes with Herring Gull, even though both species often breed in large mixed colonies. The occasional hybrid is almost inseparable from Yellow-legged Gull (q.v.), with which Lesser Black-backed also occasionally interbreeds.

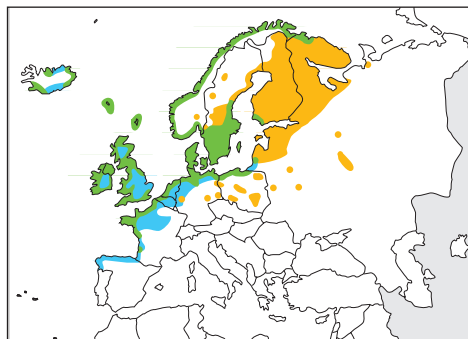
STATUS/HABITAT Common, locally abundant. Breeds on coastal dunes, low islands, moorland and locally on cliffs, inland moors and buildings. Away from colonies found in a variety of both coastal and inland habitats, including farmland, but winters primarily in inshore and offshore coastal waters, including harbours and estuaries.

HERRING GULL *Larus argentatus*

L 56–64 cm, WS 138–150 cm.

IDENTIFICATION The familiar large, grey-mantled, pink-legged 'seagull' of NW Europe. Sociable, scavenging about both seaside towns and inland rubbish dumps. Typically slightly larger and with less slender wingtips than Lesser Black-backed, but much overlap in measurements. The main risks of confusion are with closely related Yellow-legged Gull, with Lesser Black-backed Gull or with larger Great Black-backed Gull, but Armenian and Heuglin's Gulls also need to be considered: see those species for discussion. See also Mew Gull and vagrant Ring-billed Gull. **Adult** has yellow bill with red gonyx spot and pale yellow iris (like most large gulls), pinkish (or sometimes yellowish) legs and pale grey upperparts that contrast with black primaries. Grey of upperparts distinctly paler in western race *argenteus* (and vagrant *smithsonianus*), which are noticeably paler than in smaller Mew Gull, but latter overlapped by rather darker nominate race (see Geographical Variation). In flight, pattern similar to Mew, but Herring larger, bulkier, with broader wings and usually less extensive white mirror spots. In winter, head and nape heavily streaked with brown. **Juvenile and 1st-winter** overall a mottled greyish-brown with darker flight feathers and subterminal

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band on tail. Bill blackish, usually with extensive pale base, iris dark and legs dull pinkish. Appears similar to young Lesser Black-backed (q.v.), but upperparts less dark overall, tertial fringes more marbled with pale notches, inner primaries distinctly paler than rest of flight feathers, outer greater coverts less contrasting, underwing coverts paler and bill only occasionally all dark. 1st-winter almost identical to juvenile but head

and sometimes underparts often paler and scaly juvenile scapulars replaced by more complex, dark-barred feathers as winter progresses. **1st-summer** has head and underparts whiter than 1st-winter, and very faded dark areas on upperparts, wings and tail, making for a very pale overall impression (much paler than 1st-summer Lesser Black-backed). Bill often extensively pale at base. **2nd-winter** has pale grey adult colour beginning to appear on mantle/scapulars, so separation from dark-mantled species simplified. Head, underparts and rump white, with variable amount of dark streaking. Upperwing coverts sometimes with much clear grey and inner primaries also largely clear grey, enhancing pale 'window'. Tail base white, contrasting with rather solid blackish subterminal band. Legs dull pinkish and bill pale pinkish (or yellowish) with dark subterminal mark. (Bill more extensively pale at this stage than in other large gulls apart from Glaucous and Iceland.) **2nd-summer** similar to 2nd-winter but head and body entirely white, with clear grey 'saddle' of adult coloration on mantle/scapulars, contrasting with faded whitish and brownish tones of wings and tail. Iris usually pale and bill often yellowish with reddish spot on gonys (although still usually with extensive blackish subterminal mark).

SEX/AGE See Identification. 3rd-winter much more like adult even than 2nd-summer but dusky on outer wing extends to carpal area, brown mottling remains on wing coverts and bill often paler than in adult and with dusky subterminal mark. Adult plumage attained by fourth winter, but as with all large gulls individual variation makes precise ageing difficult. May breed in 'sub-adult' plumages.

VOICE Variety of calls. Most obvious sounds include an anxious 'gag-gag-gag', and a loud, wailing 'keeah-keeah-keeah-keeah-kau-kau ...' uttered with stretched neck (known as the 'long-call'). A shorter 'keeah' or 'keow' and a 'klu' of alarm often heard.

TAXONOMY Closely related to Yellow-legged Gull *L. cachinnans*, Armenian Gull *L. armenicus*, Heuglin's Gull *L. heuglini*, Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus* and Iceland Gull *L. glaucoideus*, all of which are sometimes regarded as conspecific.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 3 races (all illustrated). Nominate race breeds Iceland, Scandinavia, White Sea and Baltic region, dispersing as far as Bay of Biscay in winter, with birds presumed this race occa-

sional in C Europe: darker grey above than *argenteus*, overlapping Mew Gull in shade. Typically larger and more massive than *argenteus*, with paler bare parts, but much overlap. Some birds show extensive white on inner webs of primaries (especially visible on underside in flight); these thought to be from far north of range. Juvenile and 1st-winter tend to be paler than those of *argenteus*. Slightly smaller and lighter grey (almost as pale as Black-headed Gull) populations from Faeroes, British Is and W France to NW Germany separated as *argenteus*. These are less migratory. N American race *smithsonianus* has occurred as a vagrant to W Europe. Adult inseparable from *argenteus* but averages larger with a larger bill. Juvenile and 1st-winter are markedly different, being smoky-brownish (less streaked and mottled) on head and underparts, with uppertail coverts intensely barred brownish (not obviously whitish), all-dark tail and (important as a clinching point) very finely and closely barred undertail coverts (barring on undertail coverts of European Herring gulls wide and sparse). Tertiaries are blacker and lack strong marbling (like young Lesser Black-backed) while outer-greater-covert pattern can be as in other Herring or as in Lesser Black-backed. 2nd-winter probably inseparable. A population of mainly yellow-legged Herring Gulls in the eastern Baltic region named '*omissus*' has sometimes been treated as an intergrade between nominate *argenteus* and Heuglin's Gull *L. heuglini*. This form closely resembles *argenteus*, and as the latter also regularly shows yellowish or even yellow legs, is perhaps best incorporated within it. Herring Gulls with yellow legs are easily separated from all other yellow-legged large gulls in autumn/early winter by their heavily streaked heads.

HYBRIDS See Glaucous Gull for discussion of hybrid problem; hybridization also occasionally reported with Yellow-legged, Lesser Black-backed and Great Black-backed Gulls.

STATUS/HABITAT Common, often abundant. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Bear Is. Has colonized Iceland and spread along coast of W France in recent decades.) Breeds on sea cliffs, islands, moorland (even well inland), sand dunes and locally on buildings. Away from colonies, may be encountered almost anywhere, favouring harbours, bays, estuaries, rubbish dumps and farmland, but predominantly coastal or within reach of inland lakes and reservoirs for roosting.

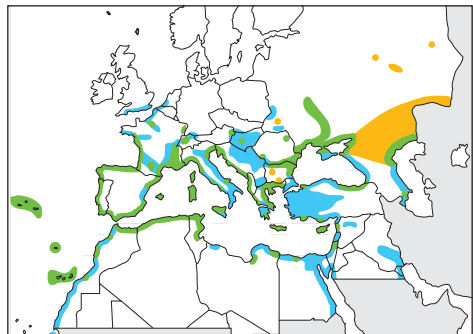
YELLOW-LEGGED GULL *Larus cachinnans*

Mediterranean Herring Gull

L 55–67 cm, WS 138–155 cm.

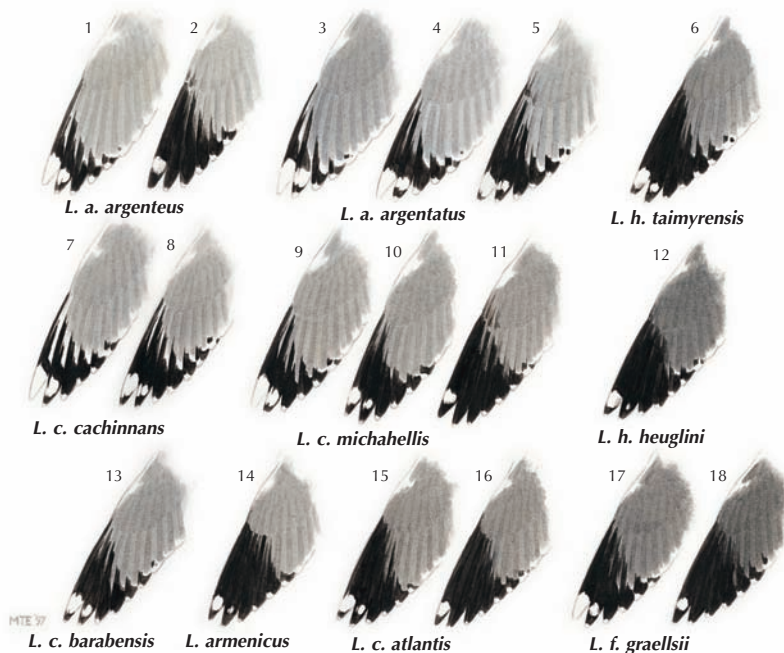
IDENTIFICATION Large, yellow-legged gull of Herring Gull complex breeding in S and E of our region. Following discussion relates to race *michahellis* of SW Europe and Mediterranean. **Adult** has medium grey mantle (slightly darker than *argenteus* Herring and similar in shade to Mew Gull or nominate race Herring), yellow legs, and tends to be larger, longer-bodied and slightly longer- and narrower-winged than *argenteus* race of Herring Gull. At rest often appears more sturdy than the latter, with squarer head (with steep forehead, rather flat crown and steep nape), a rather full-chested appearance, longer legs and attenuated rear end. The orbital ring is dark red (orange-yellow in Herring), giving a stronger emphasis to the pale iris (although eye can look dark at a distance), and the bill is brighter yellow, usually showing a more extensive red gonys spot than in Herring. Gape bright red (orange-yellow in Herring). The red gape and dark red orbital ring are, however, shared by Lesser Black-

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backed, with which it is more likely to be confused. In winter, unlike *gracillii* Lesser Black-backed, the head

WINGTIP PATTERNS OF ADULT OR NEAR-ADULT 'HERRING-TYPE' GULLS



1: Usually older adult males. 2: Near-adult/some adult females. 3: Typical northern. 4: Typical southern. 5: Near-adult/some southern adult females. 6: Typical? 7: Usually older males. 8: Near-adult/some adult females. 9: Usually older adult males. 10: Typical (especially females). 11: Near-adult. 12: Typical? 13: Typical? 14: Typical? 15: Probably older adult males. 16: Typical? 17: Older adult males (rare). 18: Typical.

is almost unmarked (although weak streaking is present on head and nape in fresh autumn plumage this disappears by mid-winter). Lesser Black-backed is never as pale above. (Mantle shade is similar in very occasional Herring x Lesser Black-backed hybrids, but close examination should reveal a more orange orbital ring and some pinkish tones to legs of such birds, although latter of no use in autumn/winter when Yellow-legged can show pinkish legs.) In flight, the white trailing edge to the secondaries is more contrasting than in Herring, the black on the upper-side of the outer primary tips is a little more extensive (extending further towards feather bases and also more often reaching the fourth innermost primary, as a subterminal mark), while the undersides of the outer primaries are purer black. **Immature** plumages somewhat in-between Herring and Lesser Black-backed. Juvenile, in comparison with juvenile Herring, is darker on head when fresh and has darker and browner body markings, darker tertials (narrowly fringed pale and lacking large pale notches on sides, as in Lesser Black-backed) and darker outer greater coverts (but not so dark as in some Lesser Black-backed). Unlike Lesser Black-backed, shows a weak pale area on inner primaries (less contrasting than in Herring). Subterminal dark band on tail is much darker than in Herring and contrasts more strongly with whiter tail base and uppertail coverts. By first winter, paler head and underparts can be quite striking and recall Great Black-backed and Heuglin's Gulls (q.v.). Shows very dark wings but paler, rather irregularly marked mantle/scapulars; 1st-winter Lesser Black-backed usually rather uniformly dark brown on both mantle/scapulars and wings, while Herring similarly lacks contrast, but is paler. Bill remains all black-

ish through first year, with good proportion dark-billed during second winter (few Herring have all-dark bills in second winter and most are pinkish at base by end of first winter). Plumage acquisition much as in Herring (but moults earlier in the year, so is more advanced at any given time), so shade of mantle useful in distinguishing older birds. Legs usually begin to turn yellowish during second autumn and become yellow by second summer, but much individual variation. Compare also very similar Armenian Gull and also Great Black-backed and Audouin's Gulls. See Geographical Variation for details of other races, especially *atlantis* which very closely resembles *graellsii* Lesser Black-backed.

SEX/AGE See Identification; ageing process otherwise as Herring Gull.

VOICE Similar to Herring but most notes deeper in tone, thus closer to voice of Lesser Black-backed Gull.

TAXONOMY Often treated as conspecific with Herring Gull *L. argentatus*, but form *michahellis* now breeds alongside *L. a. argentatus*, even in mixed colonies, in W France and behaves as a separate species. Form *michahellis* (**Yellow-legged Gull**) may even be specifically distinct from *cachinnans* (**Steppe Gull**). Form *atlantis* is so similar to Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus* that some authorities include it with that species.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 3 (or probably 4) races (*michahellis* and *cachinnans* illustrated). Race *michahellis* of Mediterranean and also Atlantic seaboard of SW Europe is discussed under Identification. After breeding, many disperse out of Mediterranean, down coast of W Africa and north to English Channel. Nominate race *cachinnans* breeds about shores of Black and Caspian Seas, perhaps intergrading with *michahellis* in Balkans/N Turkey; disperses

south to SE Mediterranean, N Red Sea and Persian Gulf. Compared with *micahellis* is paler grey above (between *argenteus* and nominate race Herring in tone), with much more extensive white on inner webs of outer primaries when adult. Long white 'tongue' on inner web of outermost primary is especially prominent and can often be seen when birds preening or wing-stretching. Head shape sometimes appears more Herring-like, with more shallowly-sloping forehead merging into longer and more prominently projecting bill, but others seem very similar in outline to *micahellis*. 1st-year has more obviously pale inner primaries on upperwing and much paler underwing than in *micahellis* (in these respects being closer to Herring Gull). Race *atlantis* breeds on Canary Is, Madeira and Azores, perhaps dispersing as far as African coast in winter. Compared with *micahellis*, it averages smaller and slightly darker grey above with more extensive black in wingtips and heavier dark streaking on head and nape in autumn/early winter (thus approaching *graellsii* Lesser Black-backed). 1st-year birds are also darker, having dark inner primaries

and outer greater coverts (thus possibly indistinguishable from Lesser Black-backed). Race *barabensis*, which breeds in Central Asia, probably reaches our region in winter in W Persian Gulf as this form, rather than Armenian Gull, now thought to be common winter visitor a little further east. Structure very similar to the latter, with rather small average size, steep forehead, rounded crown and rather small bill. Upperpart and bill coloration of adults very similar (with *barabensis* often retaining dark subterminal mark on bill through breeding season like Armenian), so separation difficult, but *barabensis* shows dark iris less frequently and tends to have longer bill with less extensive dark marking. Bill tip is not so abruptly blunt (often appearing slightly drooped). Wingtip pattern varies subtly, *barabensis* showing longer grey tongues on inner webs of outer primaries (with extensive grey on outermost, which is virtually all black in Armenian).

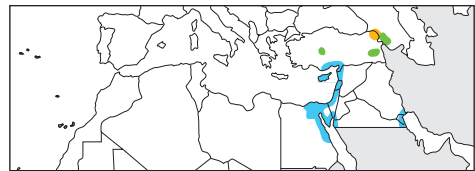
HYBRIDS Occasionally interbreeds with Lesser Black-backed Gull or Herring Gull.

STATUS/HABITAT Common, locally abundant. Habitats much as Herring Gull, but less often inland.

ARMENIAN GULL *Larus armenicus*

L 54–62 cm, WS 132–145 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Member of Herring Gull complex; nesting inland in Turkey, Armenia and Iran, wintering southwards. Similar to Yellow-legged, but averages smaller and slimmer, with steeper forehead, slightly flatter crown and shorter, relatively stouter, bill. **Adult** has upperparts rather dark grey (slightly darker than in *micahellis* Yellow-legged, and obviously darker than in nominate race *cachinnans*, a form with which it often comes into contact outside breeding season). Armenian is unusual in typically showing a blackish subterminal band on yellow bill partly obscuring red gonys spot (red spot may even be entirely absent) throughout the year, not just in autumn/winter; bill usually appears blunt and black-tipped at any distance, when yellow tip no longer apparent. Sometimes (mainly in breeding season) adults lack the dark band and have more typical large-gull bill pattern. Adult Yellow-legged often shows dark subterminal mark on bill outside breeding season, however, and this can be equally extensive. Also beware 3rd-year Yellow-legged with dark iris and dusky bill band. Iris dark, unlike all other adult large gulls of our region (except Audouin's and Pallas's), and so eye unusually prominent (even in winter, as head only very weakly streaked, as in Yellow-legged). Head/bill shape and dark iris often combine to create a rather gentle facial expression compared with many Yellow-legged or Heuglin's, but this is by no means a constant difference. Legs yellow, tone varying from greenish-yellow to orange-yellow. Has extensive dark in wingtip: the primaries show only very small white tips and there is normally only one mirror spot. The white scapular crescent is weak (prominent in most other Herring-type gulls, but not *micahellis* Yellow-legged) or even absent when worn. See also *barabensis* form of Yellow-legged, which is extremely similar and may well overlap in winter range. **Immature** plumages resemble those of nominate race Yellow-legged and are generally not safely separable until adult upperpart coloration and wingtip pattern discernible. Thus 1st-year birds have obviously paler inner primaries (recalling *argenteus* Herring) and underwing is relatively pale with dark lines of weak patterning (*micahellis* Yellow-legged has darker and more uniform appearance).



SEX/AGE See Identification. Ageing process as in Yellow-legged Gull but bill sometimes all black (apart from pale spot at extreme tip) even in 3rd-winter.

VOICE Probably broadly as Yellow-legged, but needs further investigation.

TAXONOMY Often treated as conspecific with Herring Gull *L. argentatus* or, when this treated as specifically distinct, as a race of Yellow-legged Gull *L. cachinnans*.

STATUS/HABITAT Localized but fairly common. (Winter quarters not yet fully determined: certainly includes E Mediterranean and N Red Sea, probably also W Persian Gulf, but see *barabensis* Yellow-legged.) Breeds inland by lakes, wide rivers and marshes. Some remain all year in breeding areas where lakes or rivers do not freeze over, but others disperse to coastal regions where habitats include beaches, lagoons and harbours.

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HEUGLIN'S GULL *Larus heuglini*

Siberian Gull

L 60–70 cm, WS 142–160 cm.

IDENTIFICATION E of our region. Nominate race is about size of *argenteus* Herring Gull but eastern *taimyrensis* is largest and bulkiest member of the

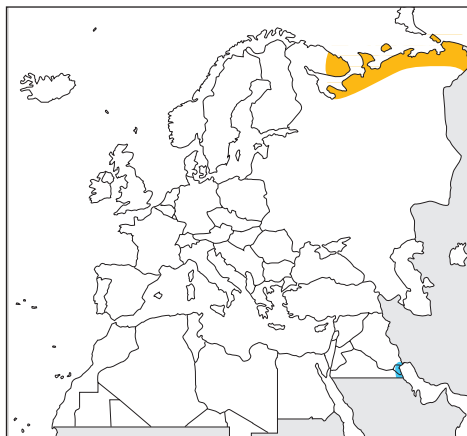
Herring-type complex and relatively longer-legged and longer-billed than the others. Following discussion concerns nominate race. See Geographical Vari-

ation for details of *taimyrensis*. **Adult** very similar to Lesser Black-backed of race *graellsii* with dark slate upperparts, yellow legs, and often only one small white mirror in wingtip, but averages slightly larger and heavier. For much of year may only be separable on range and by later moult, but in autumn/early winter has only rather weak dark-streaking on head (mostly concentrated on rear crown and nape), recalling nominate race Lesser Black-backed rather than heavily dark-streaked *graellsii* (or darker-mantled and equally heavily streaked *intermedius*). Dark wingtip sometimes less contrasting, compared with grey remainder of wing, than in *graellsii*, but by no means always. From nominate race Lesser Black-backed (with which it routinely comes into contact on migration and in winter quarters) it can be told by slate-grey rather than black upperparts, usually noticeably larger size and rather longer legs and bill. The dark slate (rather than blackish) upperparts and yellow (rather than pinkish) legs provide easy distinctions from adult Great Black-backed, which it marginally comes into contact with in NE Europe. **Immature** plumages need further study to establish field criteria. Juvenile may be inseparable from juvenile Lesser Black-backed. 1st-winter has distinctly pale ground colour to head and underparts, but fairly dark upperparts, and strongly suggests 1st-winter Lesser Black-backed in plumage; it differs in having a fairly obvious pale wedge on inner primaries, a paler greater-covert bar and somewhat paler mantle/scapulars. Subtle structural differences, as compared with nominate race Lesser Black-backed, may be helpful (see adult). Compared with 1st-winter Greater Black-backed it has darker upperparts, more solidly dark tertials with pale border (not strongly marbled with pale) and more strongly barred greater coverts. Dark tail band is usually solid and rather clear-cut (recalling Lesser Black-backed), not extensively admixed with white as in Great Black-backed. Overall size is usually distinctly smaller and bill less massive. 1st-winter Yellow-legged Gull very similar in plumage.

SEX/AGE See Identification. Ageing process thought to be much as Herring Gull (but moults later in season than *argenteus* Herring, Yellow-legged and Lesser Black-backed Gulls).

VOICE Very similar to Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls.

TAXONOMY Various treated as conspecific with Herring Gull *L. argentatus*, Yellow-legged Gull *L.*



cachinnans or Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus*.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 2 races (both illustrated). Eastern race *taimyrensis* (breeding N Siberia and wintering in eastern fringe of our region in W Persian Gulf and possibly Caspian) is usually considered a valid race but has been treated as an intergrade with pale, pink-legged race *vegae* of Herring Gull (which in turn may represent a full species in its own right, **Vega Gull**). Race *taimyrensis* averages distinctly larger than nominate *heuglini* (a few approach smallest Great Black-backed in size) and typically has paler upperparts, similar in tone to *barabensis* Yellow-legged or Armenian Gulls (but a little more slaty-grey when fresh), but darker than nominate Yellow-legged. Extent of black in wingtip is very similar to *barabensis* Yellow-legged or Armenian (i.e. much more extensive than in nominate Yellow-legged), but white tertial and scapular crescents are more obvious (i.e. similar to nominate Yellow-legged). Structure differs compared to all three forms, *taimyrensis* being larger and longer-legged, often appearing more 'butch' with a large Herring Gull-like head, a larger eye and a heavier bill.

HYBRIDS Nominate *heuglini* locally hybridizes with 'omissus' population of Herring Gull in Kanin Peninsula.

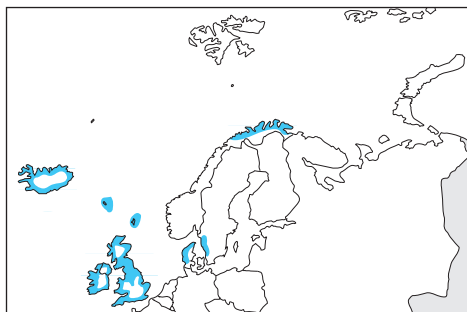
STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. (Passes through Black and Caspian Seas, where some may winter, to winter from E Mediterranean and Middle East south to E Africa.) Habitats as Herring Gull.

ICELAND GULL *Larus glaucoideus*

Kumlien's Gull (*L. g. kumlienii*); **Thayer's Gull** (*L. g. thayeri*)

L 52–60 cm, WS 140–150 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Arctic-breeding gull of Greenland and N America, wintering in NW of our region. Plumage of nominate race almost identical to larger Glaucous Gull, with which it overlaps in range (although tends to keep more offshore in winter), differing principally in size and structure. As Glaucous, lacks (or virtually lacks) dark in wingtips and both species are commonly referred to as 'white-winged gulls' or simply 'white gulls'. At all ages looks very pale, older birds having almost all-whitish appearance, especially in flight, normally an easy distinction from all but very similar Glaucous. Tends to take food from water surface while in flight more often than Glaucous. Beware pale, very abraded immature Herring Gulls with bleached pale primaries and occasional leucistic or even albino individuals; leucistic immature Herrings normally show darkish secondary



bar or dark shading in tail and different bill shape and pattern, and Iceland or Glaucous are not pure white.

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Breeding range marginally overlaps with Herring Gull, but no hybrids have yet been proven. Compare also adult Mediterranean and Ivory Gulls. Two forms (sometimes treated as separate species). **ICELAND GULL** (*L. g. glaucoides*) The regularly occurring form in our region. Typically recalls small, slender Herring, whereas Glaucous usually larger and bulkier than Herring, with deep chest, barrel-belly and stout neck. Iceland has longer, narrower primaries, more rounded head, smaller, shorter bill and relatively larger eye than Glaucous — in fact overall shape of smallest individuals can recall Mew Gull, as does more 'gentle' facial expression of Iceland (Glaucous typically looks more 'menacing', recalling Herring or Great Black-backed in this respect), although body is distinctly bulkier. Large Iceland and small Glaucous problematic but structural differences always important, even small Glaucous tend to have a relatively long, deep, oblong bill whereas Iceland has an insignificant bill which is often finer than in Herring. Longer, more slender primaries that extend beyond tail tip by at least a third of their exposed length (or alternatively by well over one bill length, as measured from the base of the forehead feathering) and slimmer, more pointed tertials are good Iceland features; Glaucous has shorter, broader primaries (extending beyond tail by about a quarter of their exposed length or even less, or alternatively by no more than one bill length) and bunched, broad and almost square-ended tertials. Caution should be exercised with birds in wing moult. Orbital ring of adult is red or brown compared to yellow (sometimes yellowish-pink or yellowish-orange) in Glaucous, while yellow of bill often has greenish tinge (not seen in Glaucous). In flight, can look surprisingly similar to Glaucous at a distance (when different structure of wingtip not very obvious), but Iceland has much less heavy 'front end' and lack of bulky head/bill and chest is generally apparent at all but long range. **Adult** usually paler grey above than palest Herring, with conspicuous white primaries (showing no dark at all). Adult winter shows extensive brownish streaking on head like Herring. In flight, the wings are relatively narrower (and slightly longer) than in Herring and the wingbeats tend to appear a little more buoyant. **Juvenile and 1st-winter** are pale, milky-tea coloured birds with fine mottling and barring on body and most of wings, and creamy-buff or whitish primaries; neither primaries, secondaries nor tail showing any solid dark whatsoever. Overall coloration somewhat variable, darkest birds approaching lightest young Herring in tone, but all markings fine and wavy, not blotchy. Darker birds show pale tea-coloured shading on inner webs of primaries and narrow, weak dusky subterminal chevrons. Glaucous almost identical in plumage but 1st-winter Glaucous has pale, clear pink bill with clear-cut black tip whereas similar-aged Iceland shows more black, often two thirds or more of bill, and the black (especially on lower mandible) is less clean, diffusing (especially along cutting edges) into pinkish or greyish base. Bill typically looks all-dark at any distance. (Note: occasional young Iceland, especially in late winter, has bill pattern much as Glaucous so overall size and structure must then be relied upon. **1st-summer** is very pale buff or whitish on head and body (including mantle/scapulars, which are sparsely, irregularly and inconspicuously barred with brown). Wings and tail often very faded and whitish. Base of bill often yellowish-pink. **2nd-winter** has variable amount of pale grey feathering on mantle (but being pale it is usually inconspicuous) and is paler overall than early 1st-winter (but still with mottling on wing

coverts); typically has pale iris and bill pattern resembling 1st-winter Glaucous, with pale pinkish basal two-thirds and sharply-demarcated dark tip (often with obvious pale area at extreme tip). See also 'Kumlien's Gull' below (and 'Thayer's Gull' under Geographical Variation). **'KUMLIEN'S GULL'** (*L. g. kumlieni*) Transatlantic vagrant (breeds NE Canada). Similar overall to nominate race Iceland (see above), apart from adult wingtip pattern and (in many) brownish or dark-flecked rather than pale yellow iris colour. Averages slightly larger, with marginally heavier bill. **Adult** shows dark or mid-grey lines and subterminal marks on outer primaries, most obvious on upperwing at rest (and often hard to discern in flight at any distance), whereas nominate race adult Iceland lacks these lines and marks, and has primary tips clean white. At rest, each of the outermost primaries shows a dark grey subterminal band and white tip (the precise extent of the marking being somewhat variable). This pattern approached by some *argentatus* Herring, but these are bulkier, broader-winged and longer and heavier-billed, with pale yellow iris, darker grey upperparts and black primary markings. Beware leucistic individuals of adult Herring, or Herring x Glaucous hybrids, with greyish rather than black in wingtips. As well as showing structural differences outlined above, these show more extensive dark in wingtip than Kumlien's. **Immatures** often very difficult to distinguish in the field from dark individuals of nominate race Iceland. 1st-winter is darker than typical 1st-winter nominate race Iceland with darker subterminal chevrons on pale brownish outer primaries, a certain contrast with paler inner primaries (not apparent in dark individuals of nominate race) and browner shading and less barring in tail, and bill usually all blackish. Older immatures may retain darker subterminal chevrons on pale brownish primaries until second summer; these contrast with whitish secondaries and whitish primary tips. Adult primary pattern becomes visible in 3rd-years, allowing field identification. Confusable with occasional leucistic immature Herring Gull or Herring x Glaucous hybrid, but never shows any dark on secondaries or dark subterminal band on tail. See also 'Thayer's Gull' under Geographical Variation.

SEX/AGE See Identification. 2nd-summer has extensive pale grey on mantle/scapulars; base of bill often yellowish and tip often pale, iris often pale. 3rd-winter close to adult but bill has dark subterminal band and faded pale brownish areas present on wing coverts and some barring on tail.

VOICE Calls slightly higher in pitch than Herring Gull, but similar.

TAXONOMY High-arctic representative of Herring Gull complex and sometimes treated as conspecific with *L. argentatus*. Races *kumlieni* and *thayeri* are sometimes treated as full species under the names **Kumlien's Gull** and **Thayer's Gull** respectively.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 2 races (both illustrated). See Identification. In addition, race *thayeri*, known as 'Thayer's Gull' is a suspected transatlantic vagrant (breeds arctic Canada, winters Pacific coast of N America). Sometimes considered a full species but extensive interbreeding with Kumlien's Gull has been claimed, and reported vagrants in W Europe have shown mixed characters; the occurrence of a pure Thayer's has yet to be confirmed in our region. Identification features are only briefly discussed here. Structure is intermediate between the other races of Iceland and Herring. Adult has more extensive dark area on upperside wingtip compared to Kumlien's (and these markings are blackish, not just grey), darker grey upperparts, brighter pink legs, red-purple orbital ring and a dark iris (a few adult Kumlien's also have dark

iris but these may be intergrades). A percentage of northern nominate race Herring show a similar wingtip pattern, but these are larger and heavier, with longer and heavier bill (lacking greenish tone often shown by Thayer's), a pale iris and a yellow or orange orbital ring. 1st-winters average darker than Kumlien's but share all-dark bill. Main differences are darker tip to upperwing (darker than rest of wing, with dark outer webs and tips to outer primaries but none of the dark subterminal arrowheads often shown by Kumlien's), brownish bar on secondaries, rather dark-centred tertials, neat, narrow, darker brown trailing edge to underside of outer primaries, broad brownish subterminal band on tail and darker reddish-pink legs and feet. Nonetheless, as there may be overlap, lone vagrants may not be safely separable from Kumlien's.

Beware bleached or leucistic young Herring, which may have similar tail and flight feathers, but Thayer's is a smaller bird, with structure much as in nominate race Iceland, although bill averages slightly longer and crown less rounded.

STATUS/HABITAT Nominate race breeds on coastal cliffs in Greenland, just outside our region. After breeding, disperses into sub-arctic inshore waters; common in Iceland and Faeroes in winter, with smaller numbers south to British Is and some east to Scandinavia. Usually encountered scavenging or associating with flocks of other large gulls in winter, preferring coastal waters and fishing ports but regular at inland gull roosts in British Is. A few oversummer in winter range. 'Kumlien's Gull' is a vagrant (W Europe).

GLAUCOUS GULL *Larus hyperboreus*

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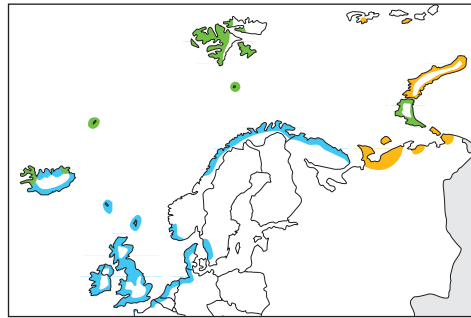
L 62–68 cm, WS 150–165 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Arctic-breeding large gull. A larger edition of nominate race Iceland Gull and almost identical in plumage at all ages. Best distinctions are size and structure: see Iceland Gull for full discussion. Glaucous usually larger and bulkier than Herring, with deep chest, barrel-belly, stout neck and often massive bill, recalling Great Black-backed in proportions (but shorter-winged and typically slightly slimmer-billed); Iceland recalls small, slender Herring or even Mew Gull in head and bill proportions. Glaucous has noticeably broad 'arm' in flight and relatively short 'hand'. As with Iceland, bleached, leucistic or albino individuals of other large gull species, especially immature Herring, can also cause confusion.

SEX/AGE As for Iceland Gull. Note: very pale, almost white, individuals previously thought to be 2nd-years are actually bleached and worn 1st-years (usually 1st-summer).

VOICE All calls hoarser (and sometimes deeper) in tone than Herring or Iceland Gulls.

HYBRIDS In Iceland widespread hybridization with Herring Gull had been reported, which would present a major identification problem, but this interpretation has now been disputed. Instead the suggestion is that



the so-called hybrids are in fact colonizing nominate race Herring.

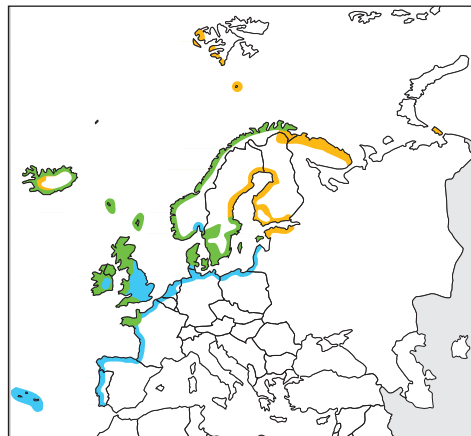
STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. Breeds on both coastal and inland cliffs, on grassy slopes and islets. In winter, forages with other large gulls in variety of coastal habitats, especially around fishing ports, and not infrequent at inland gull roosts. Some regularly oversummer in wintering areas.

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus marinus*

Plate page 431

L 64–78 cm, WS 150–165 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Widespread in N and W Europe. Largest gull in the world, with relatively long and deep bill, heavy head and neck, bulky body, and relatively stouter legs, broader 'arm' and shorter 'hand' than Herring Gull and its close relatives. **Adults** have pale pinkish legs and almost black upperparts. Darkness of upperparts is exceeded only by nominate race, and matched by race *intermedius*, of Lesser Black-backed Gull, but latter is smaller, more slender, with weaker bill and yellow legs. Lesser Black-backed has more slender wings with longer 'hand', a narrower white trailing edge to wing and much smaller white tips to outer primaries; the latter are an obvious feature of Great Black-backed, even at rest, and the outermost primary has an extensive white tip that coalesces with the white mirror on the next-to-outermost primary and forms a conspicuous white wingtip patch in flight. Race *graellsii* of Lesser Black-backed is dark grey, not so blackish, above, and both this race and *intermedius* have head heavily streaked in winter (hardly streaked in Great Black-backed). Largest individuals of



taimyrensis race of Heuglin's Gull overlap with smallest Great Black-backed, but former has weak winter head streaking, slate, not black, upperparts and legs often yellow (although frequently pinkish in autumn/winter); ranges do not overlap. Many Lesser Black-backed still have pinkish legs when nearing adult plumage stage: these are a pitfall for the unwary. Note that iris colour of adults, which is typically pale greyish (but sometimes pale yellow), often appears noticeably darker than in Lesser Black-backed. **Juvenile and 1st-winter** similar in plumage to those of Herring Gull (structural features useful) rather than Lesser Black-backed. Young Great Black-backed tends to have a paler ground colour to body, tail and wings, giving more contrast to the blackish markings, and head and breast markedly paler than rest of underparts, contrasting with stouter and blacker bill (often with small pale spot at tip). In flight, the panel on inner primaries is less strikingly pale than in Herring but gives some contrast, unlike the uniform dark flight feathers typical of young Lesser Black-backed. Narrower dark subterminal band on tail is usually admixed with white, frequently making it less clear-cut than in Herring. Overall, the wing pattern, bill coloration and greater bulk of Yellow-legged Gull is close to Great Black-backed, but the latter has

stronger and more contrasting markings on paler background on mantle and wing coverts, and frequently a less clear-cut dark tail band. See also 1st-winter Heuglin's Gull, which is very similar.

1st-summer typically very pale on head and underbody, with faded dark areas in wings and tail, and often a pale base to bill. **2nd-winter** usually has blackish-grey mantle/scapular feathering becoming apparent and pale base to bill. Flight action slower, with more powerful beats, than in Herring or Lesser Black-backed, with which they freely associate.

SEX/AGE See Identification. 2nd-summer has blackish-grey 'saddle' on mantle/scapulars and bill whitish or pinkish-yellow with subterminal dark mark and often some red on gonys; iris usually pale. 3rd-winter close to adult, but has some dusky towards bill tip, mottles on wing coverts and vestiges of tail band. Most are as adult by fourth winter, but some individuals may not acquire fully adult feathering until a little later.

VOICE All notes considerably deeper and gruffer than other large gulls; a deep, resounding 'oow-oow-oow' is distinctive.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. Habitats much as for Herring Gull, although more maritime and less frequent well inland even in winter.

ROSS'S GULL *Rhodostethia rosea*

L 29–31 cm, WS 85–90 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Vagrant from high Arctic (breeding NE Siberia, occasionally also arctic Canada and Greenland). A small gull similar to Little Gull in size, but in all plumages wings longer and more pointed, bill shorter and tail longer and wedge-shaped with slightly projecting central feathers (although tail shape difficult to see when closed). When at rest, very small bill, domed (and vaguely 'knobbly-looking') head, short legs, pout-breast and very long wings give it a distinctive shape. Flight action quick and somewhat tern-like, with rapid direct flight on long wings, the long wings making bird appear larger than it really is; swims buoyantly with long wings projecting well up, and hovers and picks from surface on deeply beating wings when feeding. **Adult** is pale grey above, with white secondaries and tips to inner primaries, and a dark edge to outermost primary. In summer plumage, which is unmistakable, a narrow black ring encircles upper neck and the underparts are often strongly flushed pink. Adult winter shows a dark crescent low down behind eye and a dusky shadow about eye (and sometimes a small cap of dark streaks on crown) plus a grey 'shawl' on hindneck, but lacks black collar and strong pink flush to underparts (although some show weak or moderate pinkish tinge). Bill black and relatively short; eye prominent; legs red. In flight, recalls adult winter Little Gull, but has longer, pointed (not blunt) wings and lacks obvious dusky cap; underwing mostly grey, contrasting with white secondaries and tips of inner primaries, but often appears dusky with effect of shadow (Little has very blackish underwing); white trailing edge to wing does not extend to outer primaries and outer web of outermost primary is black (unlike adult Little); tail appears quite long and pointed when closed, but wedge shape may be apparent when spread. Note that some adult Little Gulls in midsummer have pale underwings during moult and 2nd-winter Little has greyish-looking underwing and black outer web to outermost primary, but unlike Ross's latter often also has blackish subterminal marks

on the other outer primaries and underwing coverts paler than flight feathers. **1st-winter** similar to 1st-winter Little Gull and structure important (but note that young Little Gull has more pointed wings than adult). Crown, hindneck and sides of neck and breast pale grey, offering some contrast to whiter hood; lacks obvious dusky cap of Little. In flight, secondaries and inner primaries very white (indistinct broken subterminal band present on Little) and W pattern on wings blacker and more strongly contrasting. Tail has black band restricted to central (i.e. slightly longer) feathers appearing as a black blob rather than a conventional tail band. Underwing largely grey, contrasting with white trailing edge formed by secondaries and tips to inner primaries, and distinct black tips to outer primaries (young Little has whitish underwing with dark secondary bar, diffuse dark tips to outer primaries and dark outer web on outermost). Contrasting wing pattern may also superficially suggest juvenile Sabine's Gull. Compare also larger, bulkier juvenile Black-legged Kittiwake, and beware effects of moult and plumage wear on immature Little Gulls. **1st-summer** similar to 1st-winter, but more abraded, and often shows adult summer neck-collar and a pinkish tinge to underparts.

SEX/AGE See Identification. Juvenile, unlikely to be recorded in our region, is similar to 1st-winter but has black-brown mantle, scapulars, crown, hindneck and sides of breast (thus even more like Little Gull). Usually as adult by second winter, but some 2nd-summers have little pink tinge on underparts and only a trace of black collar.

VOICE Only call likely to be heard from vagrants is a soft, high 'kew'.

STATUS/HABITAT Breeds outside our region among open wet tundra or even in large bogs in forest tundra. Non-breeders perhaps regular in high-arctic seas of our region, even in summer (and has possibly bred Spitsbergen), but a vagrant further south. Usually winters along edge of pack-ice, but vagrants typically recorded associating with other gulls at coastal sites.

Plate page 422

BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE *Rissa tridactyla*

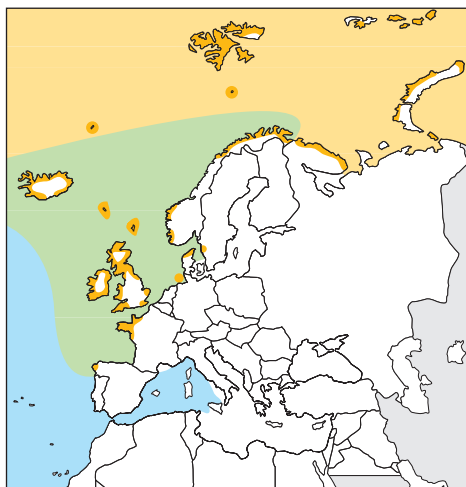
Plate page 423

Kittiwake

L 38–40 cm, WS 95–120 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Plump, short-legged medium-sized gull with upright stance when perched and sharply pointed wingtips in flight. Has rather large head with broad nape and slightly decurved bill. Highly gregarious, breeding in large, dense colonies and feeding in large packs at sea outside breeding season. A highly marine species, most keeping well offshore in winter; rare inland. Flight action very agile, banking and gliding for long periods on flexed wings in storm conditions, moving with buoyant, fairly rapid beats in calmer conditions. Short legs not adapted for walking, but readily perches on rocks, piers etc. even in winter.

Adult recalls Mew Gull in size and in having yellow bill, but is plumper, with very short black legs and solid black tips to wings. As in Mew, the medium grey upperparts appear strangely dark under some light conditions. In summer adults have a white head, but in winter head is clouded with an extensive grey smudge on ear-coverts, greyish on hindcrown and a grey 'shawl' across hindneck. In flight, the underwing is very white with neat black triangle at wingtip, whereas the upperwing is mostly two-toned grey, darkest on coverts of inner wing (which are concolorous with mantle) and palest on outer secondaries and primaries, contrasting with neat triangular black wingtip (lacking obvious white primary tips or mirrors) and conspicuous white trailing edge to inner secondaries: this pattern is unlike that of any other gull of our region. Wings shorter and narrower than in Mew, and flight action more rapid in calm conditions and more elegant in windy weather, often making long, shear-water-like arcs. In post-breeding moult the black tip may be lost and the consequently blunter wingtip can suggest adult Mediterranean Gull (but yellow bill and darker upperparts prevent confusion). **Juvenile and 1st-winter** are quite different, having black bill, head pattern as winter adult (but no grey 'shawl' on hindneck), black collar and tail band, and strong W pattern of black across upperwing, with black outer primaries and covert bar; the paler secondaries contrast with black covert bar, and under some light conditions contrast can be strong enough to suggest juvenile Sabine's Gull (which, however, has a brown forewing, nape and rear of head and lacks a diagonal black band across coverts). Underwing of juvenile shows less black at wingtip than adult, and is very white (with black restricted to tips of outer primaries and outer web of outermost). Bill becomes paler from base during first winter, and legs may be pinkish. Pattern also similar in much smaller 1st-winter Little Gull, but this is slimmer overall with noticeably smaller



head and bill, narrower base to wing, weaker flight action, weak subterminal band along secondaries, dusky cap, larger spot on ear-coverts and usually no dark collar (but young Little can retain dark juvenile collar until early winter); collar is progressively lost by young Black-legged Kittiwake during first winter. See also Ross's Gull. **1st-summer** has wing and tail pattern much faded. When moulting into 2nd-winter can show very white secondaries and lack dark diagonal bar on coverts, suggesting Sabine's Gull.

SEX/AGE See Identification. 2nd-winter much as adult but bill often dusky at tip and black on outermost primaries extends to primary coverts.

VOICE On breeding grounds, where very noisy, excited wailing 'kittiwaak-kittiwaak' is dominant sound. Also gives a gruff 'vek-vek-vek'. Relatively silent away from breeding cliffs.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. Partial migrant, most colonies deserted after breeding, dispersing south to NW Africa, with some entering W Mediterranean. Breeds in large colonies on coastal cliffs and islands, locally on waterside buildings. Outside breeding season mostly offshore, with flocks attending fishing boats and smaller numbers about coastal bays and ports. Rare inland, but 'wrecks' occur after prolonged storms, resulting in numbers being blown well inland from time to time.

IVORY GULL *Pagophila eburnea*

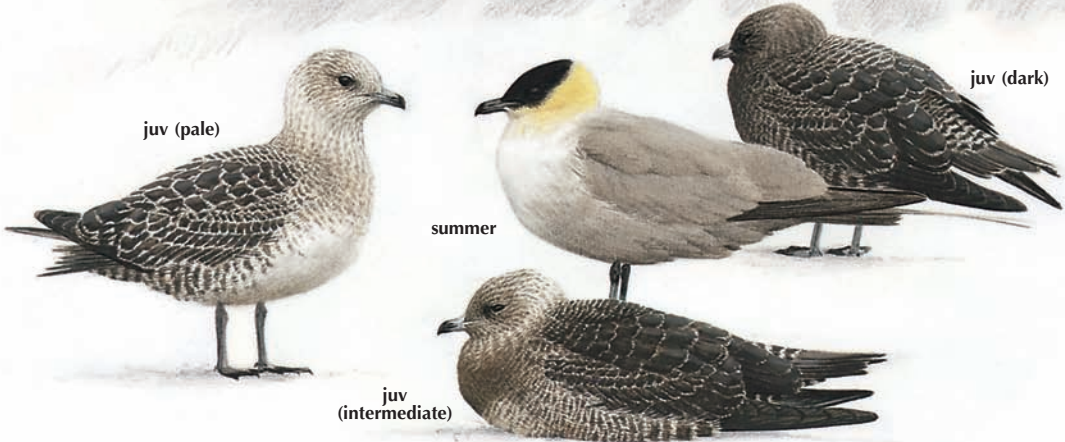
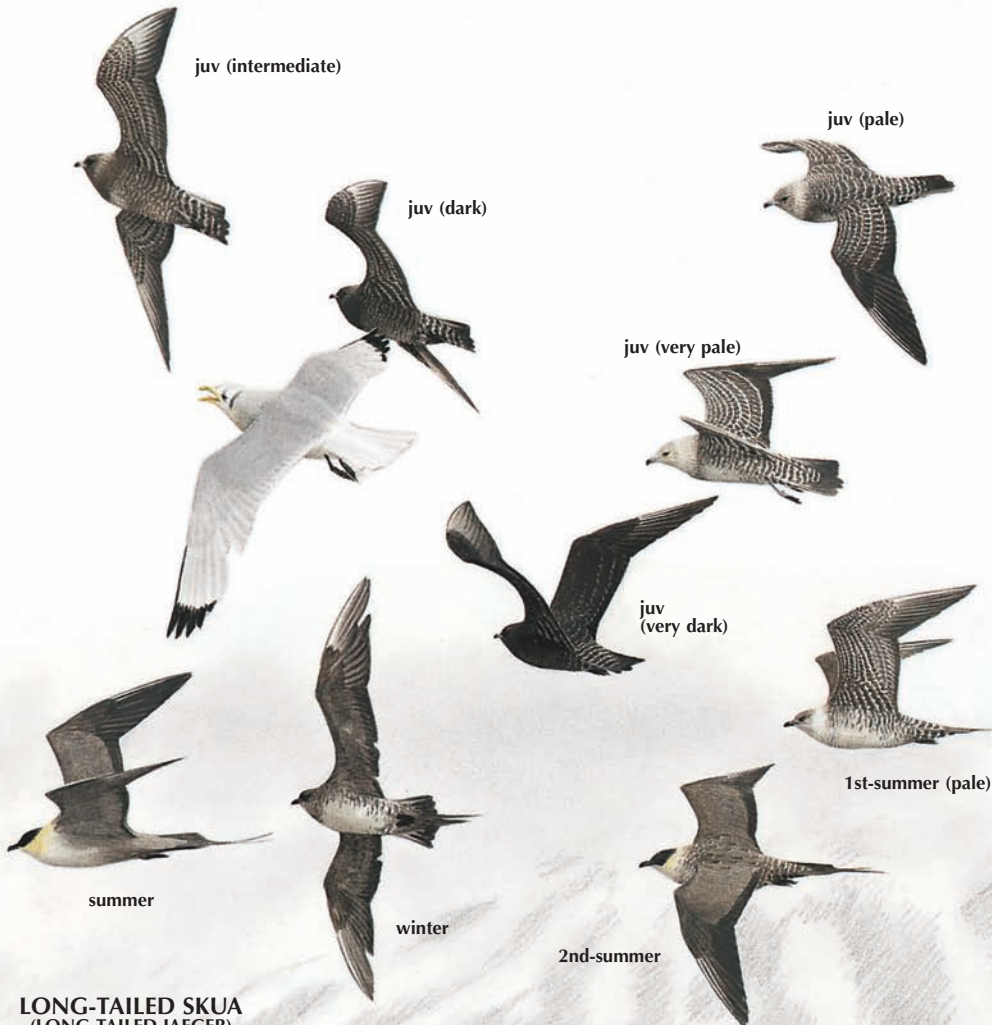
Plate page 418

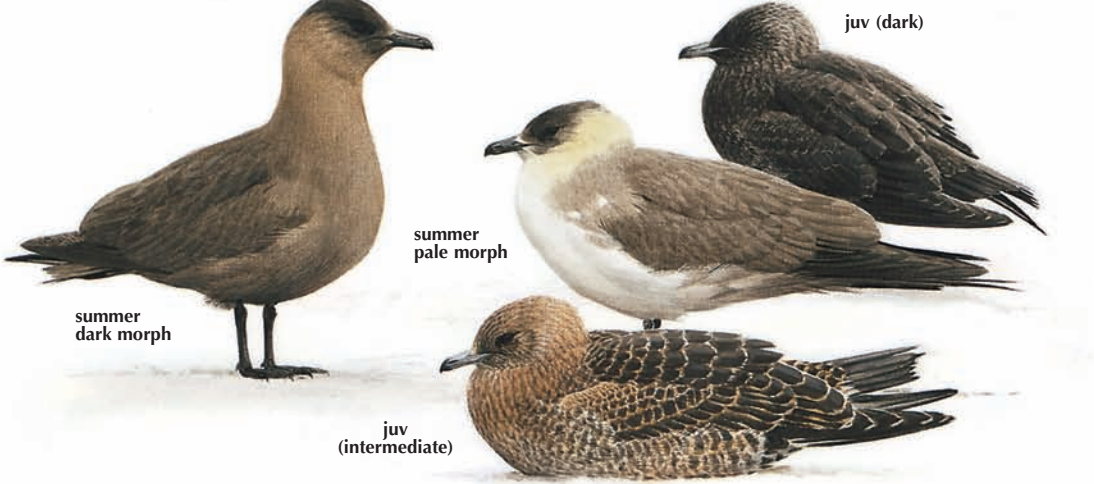
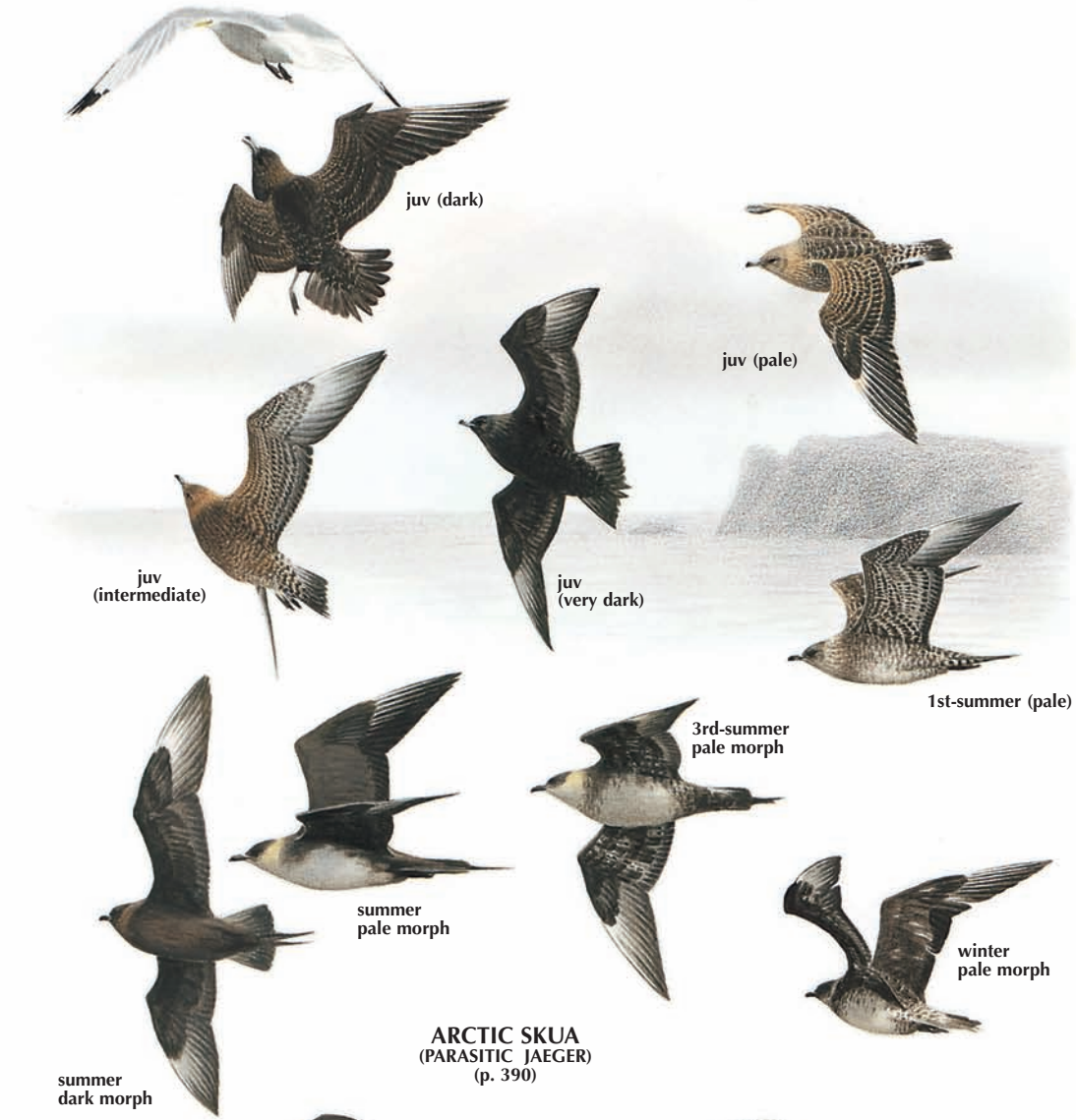
L 40–43 cm, WS 108–120 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Beautiful all-white gull of the high Arctic. Structure recalls Black-legged Kittiwake, but slightly larger and stockier, with longer body and rather longer and broader wings. On ground, rolling gait, with deep chest and short, sturdy legs, gives vaguely pigeon-like appearance. Very much a scavenger and quite aggressive, chasing larger gulls away. Usually remarkably confiding and approachable. Flight buoyant, with effortless strong beats; often takes food from water surface. Looks rather heavy-bodied in flight, with broad 'arm' but pointed 'hand'. Legs black

at all times. Unmistakable in all plumages. **Adult** all white, with dark eye, short and sturdy blackish legs, and yellowish tip to greyish or greenish bill (and sometimes a small orange patch at very tip of lower mandible). Beware occasional albino individuals of other gulls, notably Black-legged Kittiwake or Mew Gull, while distant flying Iceland and Mediterranean Gulls can also suggest Ivory Gull. Structure, as compared with nearby gulls of other species, and bill and leg coloration should resolve any problems. **Juvenile and 1st-winter** differ from adult in having a variable

SKUAS (JAEGER)







juv
(intermediate)

dark
morph

intermediate

SOUTH POLAR SKUA
(p. 392)

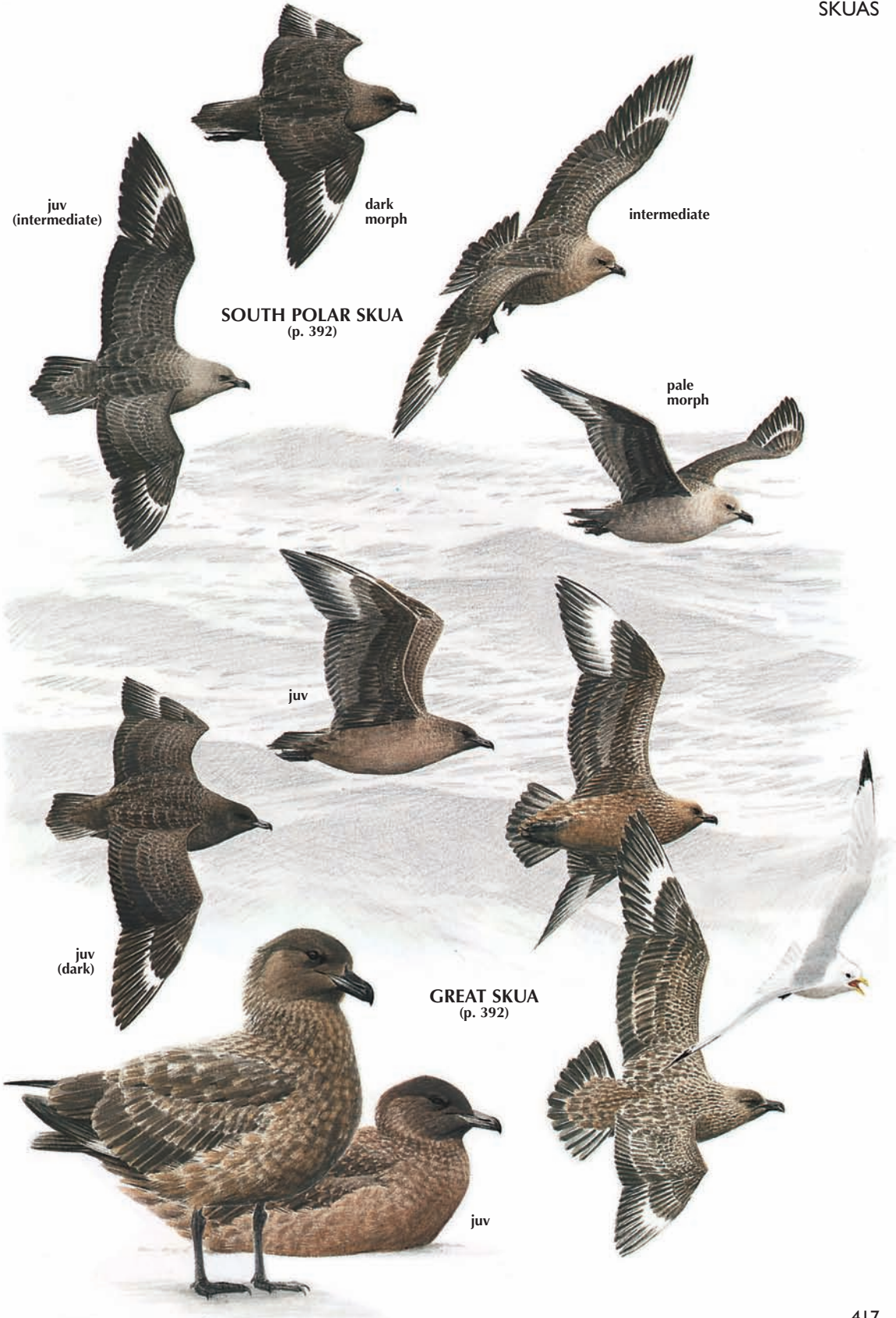
pale
morph

juv

juv
(dark)

GREAT SKUA
(p. 392)

juv



SMALLER GULLS

1st-winter

IVORY GULL
(p. 413)

summer

1st-winter

summer

1st-summer

1st-winter

1st-winter

2nd-winter

summer

juv

1st-summer

winter

MEDITERRANEAN GULL
(p. 396)

1st-winter

1st-summer

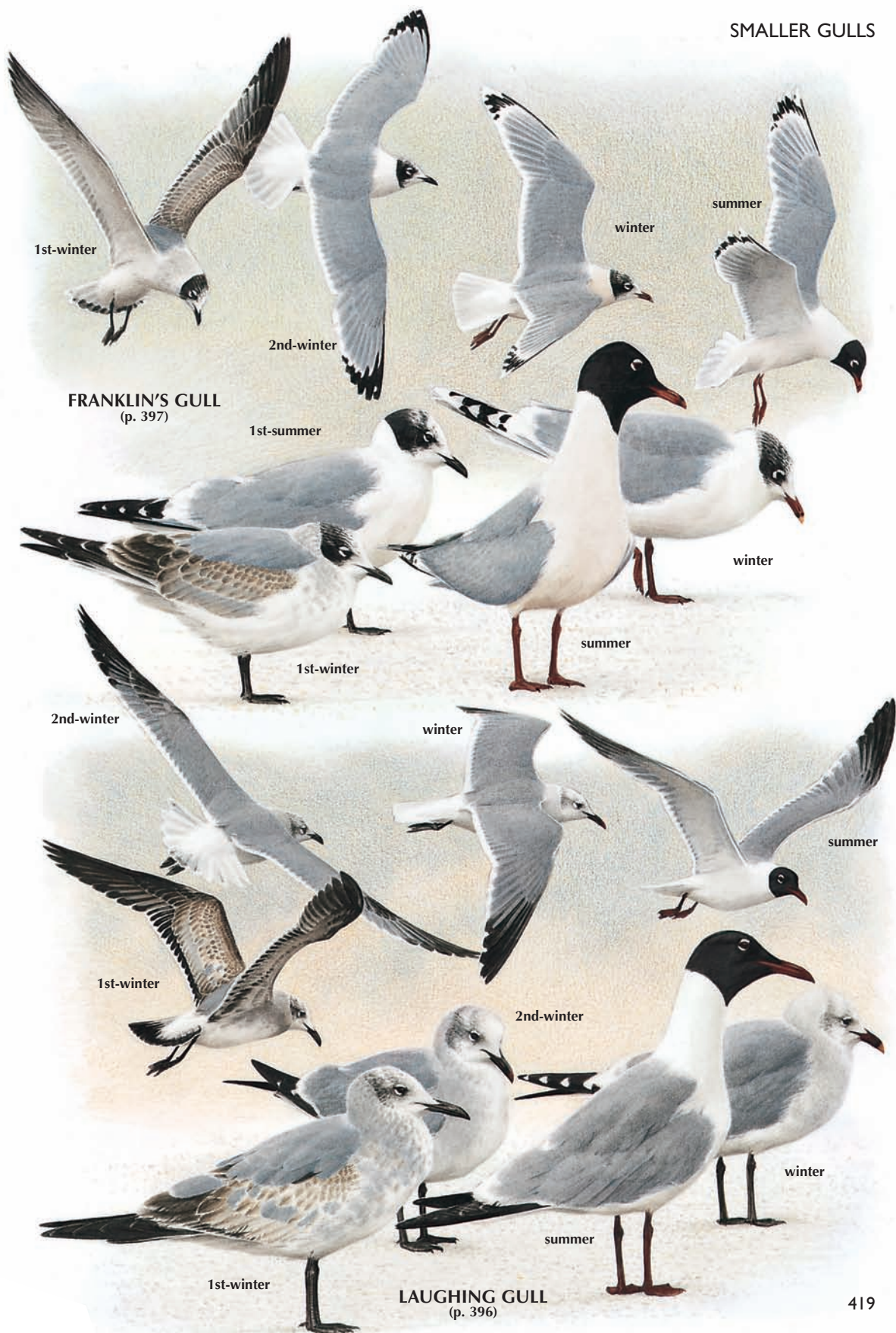
juv

2nd-winter

summer

winter





SMALLER GULLS



**BONAPARTE'S
GULL**
(p. 399)



**BLACK-HEADED
GULL**
(p. 399)



winter

1st-winter

summer

juv

summer

SLENDER-BILLED GULL
(p. 400)

winter

1st-winter

1st-winter

2nd-winter

summer

juv

winter

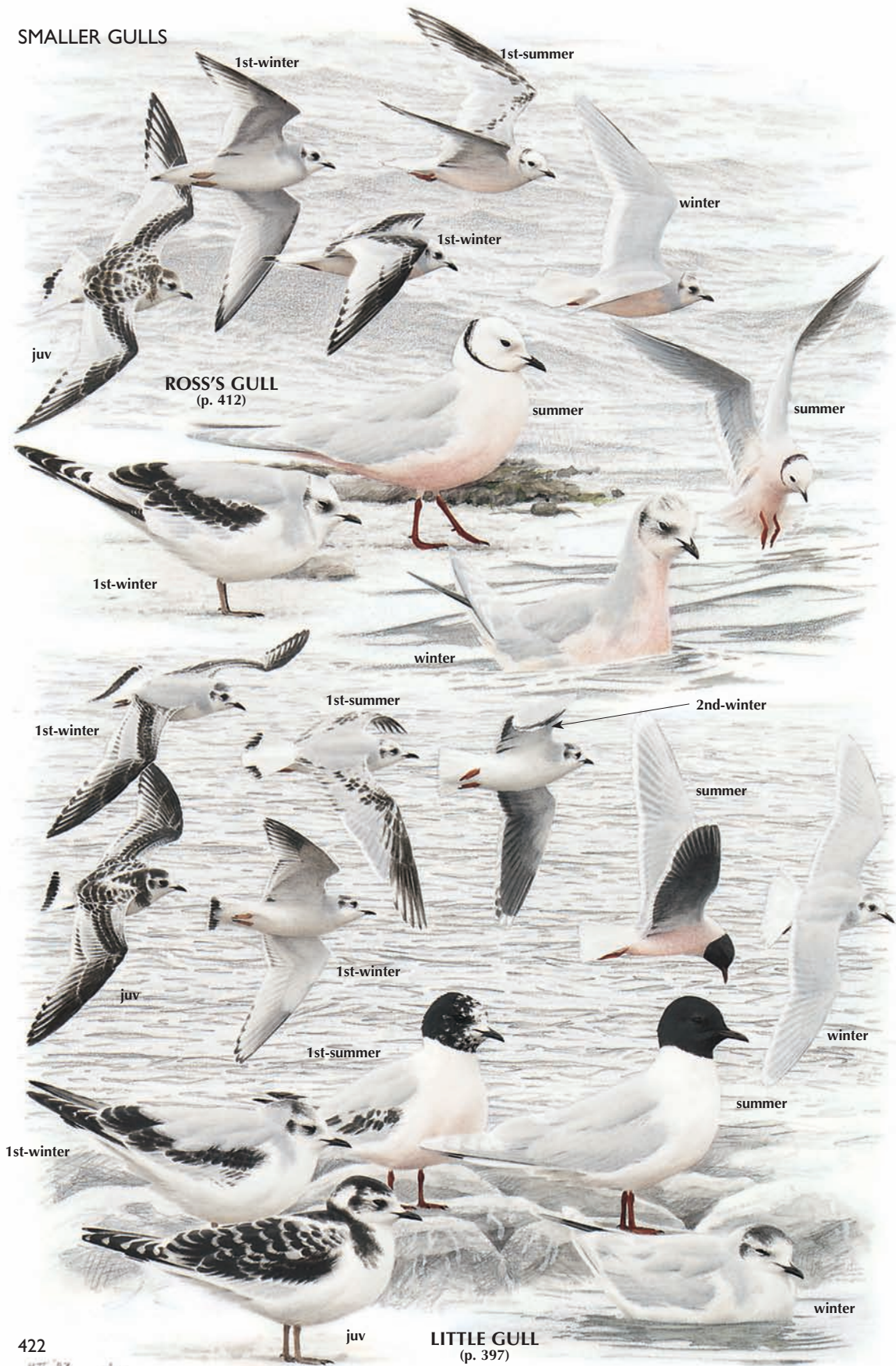
GREY-HEADED GULL
(p. 400)

1st-winter

summer

winter

SMALLER GULLS





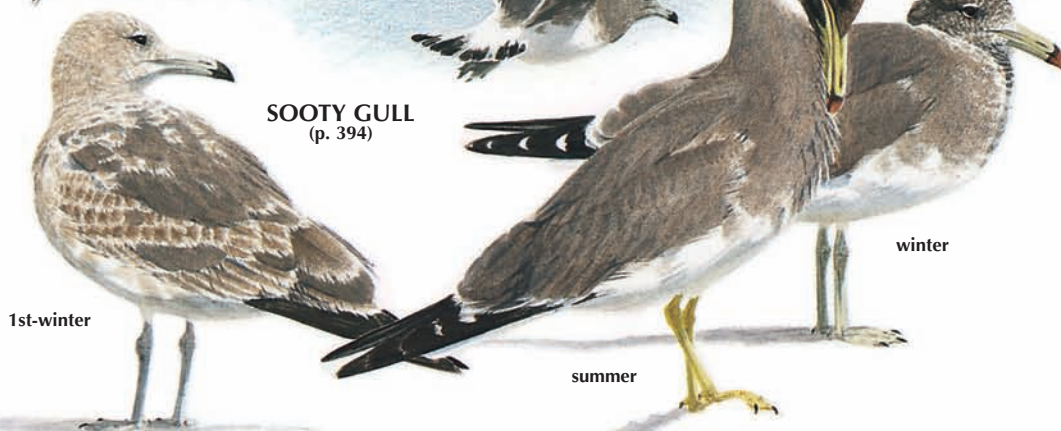
SMALLER GULLS

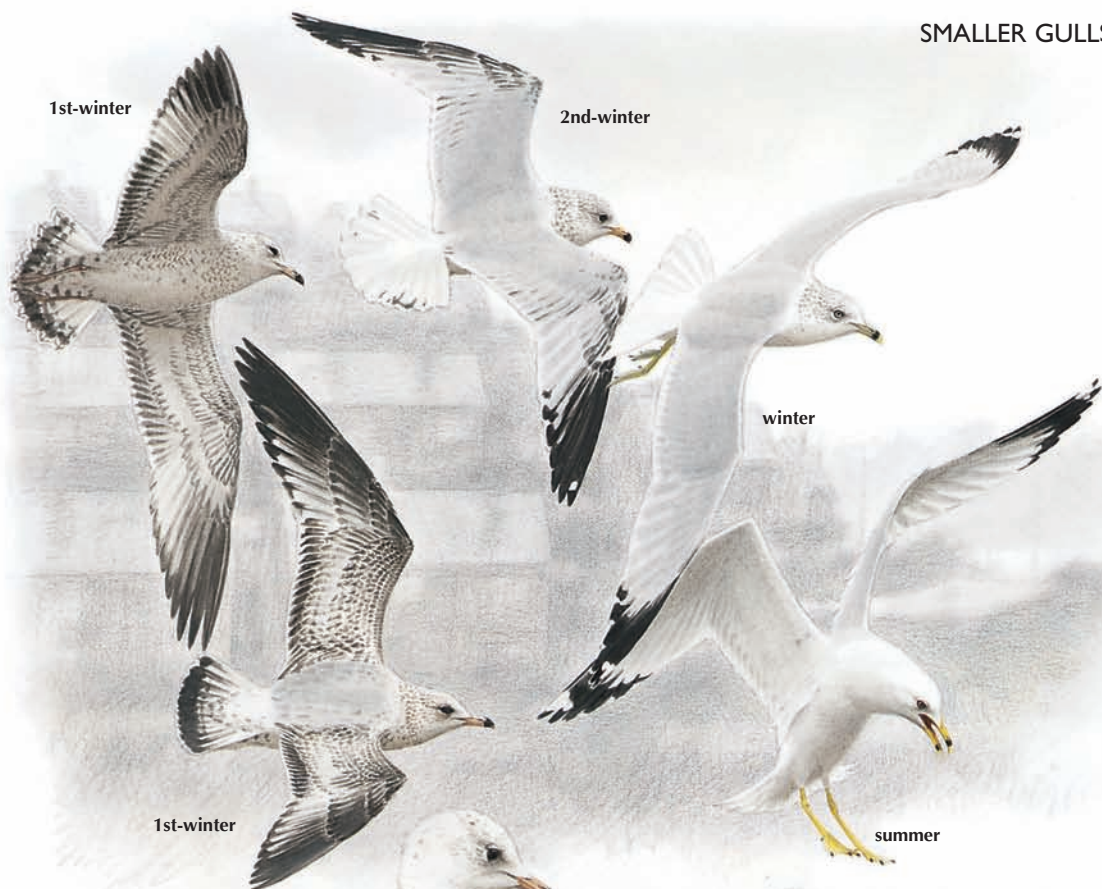


WHITE-EYED GULL (p. 394)

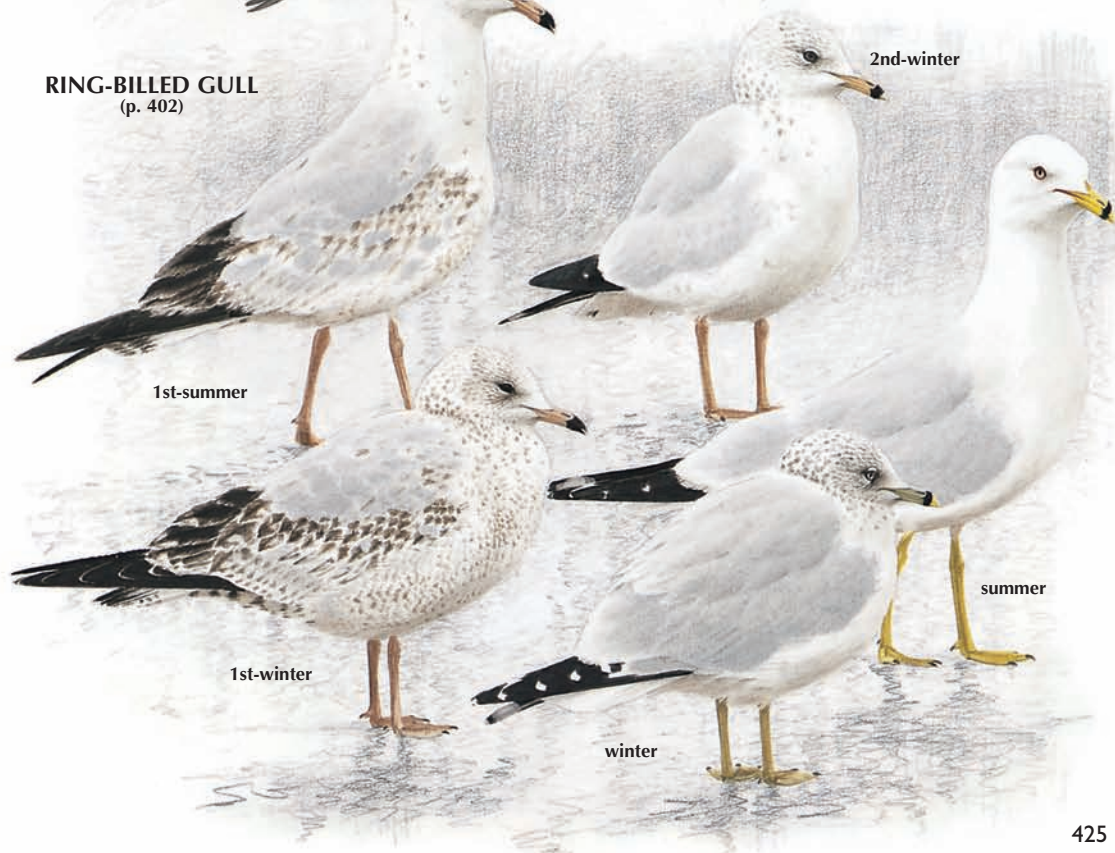


SOOTY GULL (p. 394)





RING-BILLED GULL
(p. 402)



SMALLER GULLS



MEW GULL
(COMMON GULL)
(p. 403)

1st-winter

1st-winter

2nd-winter

winter

summer

juv

1st-summer

summer

1st-winter

2nd-winter

juv

winter



HERRING GULL
(*argenteus* unless indicated otherwise)
(p. 405)

LARGE GULLS



YELLOW-LEGGED GULL
(*michahellis* unless indicated otherwise)
(p. 406)

HEUGLIN'S GULL
(p. 408)

winter
heuglini

1st-winter
taimyrensis

1st-winter
heuglini

winter
taimyrensis

1st-winter
heuglini

winter
heuglini

summer
taimyrensis

2nd-winter

summer

3rd-winter

1st-winter

2nd-winter

winter

1st-winter

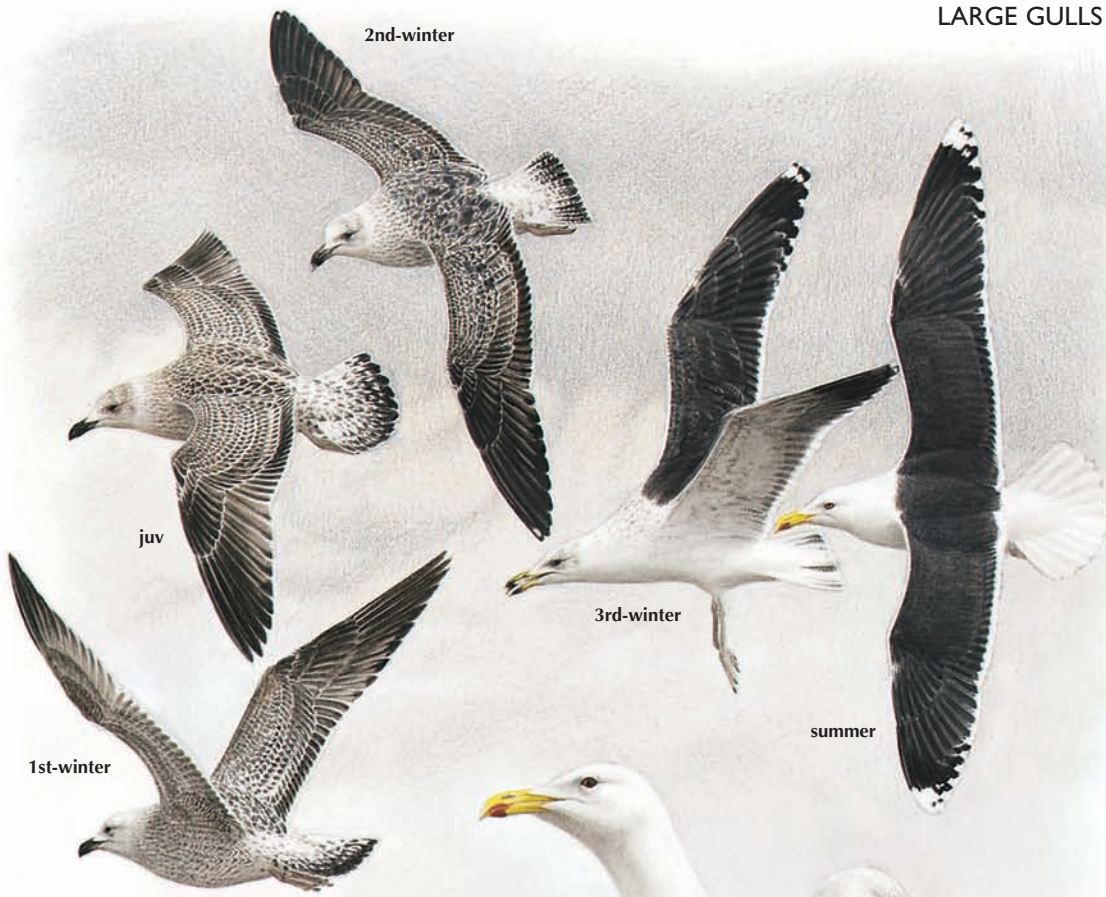
summer

ARMENIAN GULL
(p. 408)

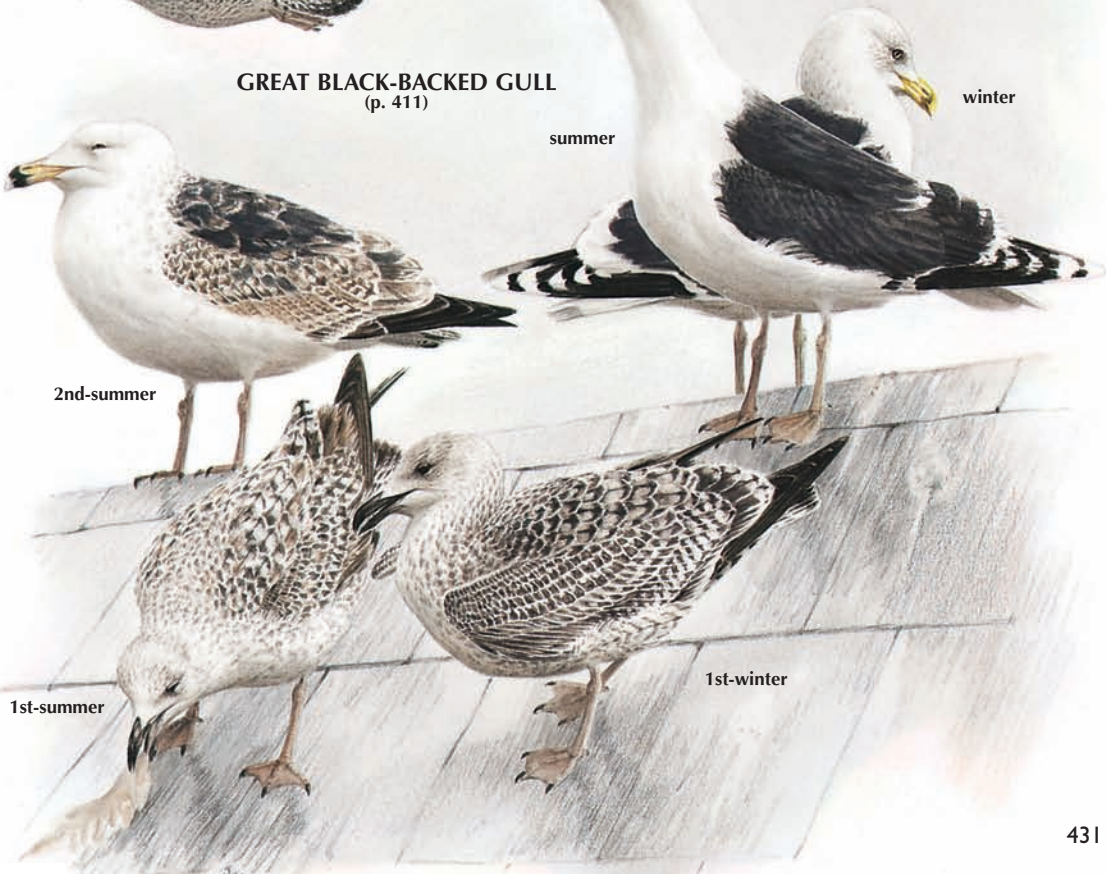
LARGE GULLS

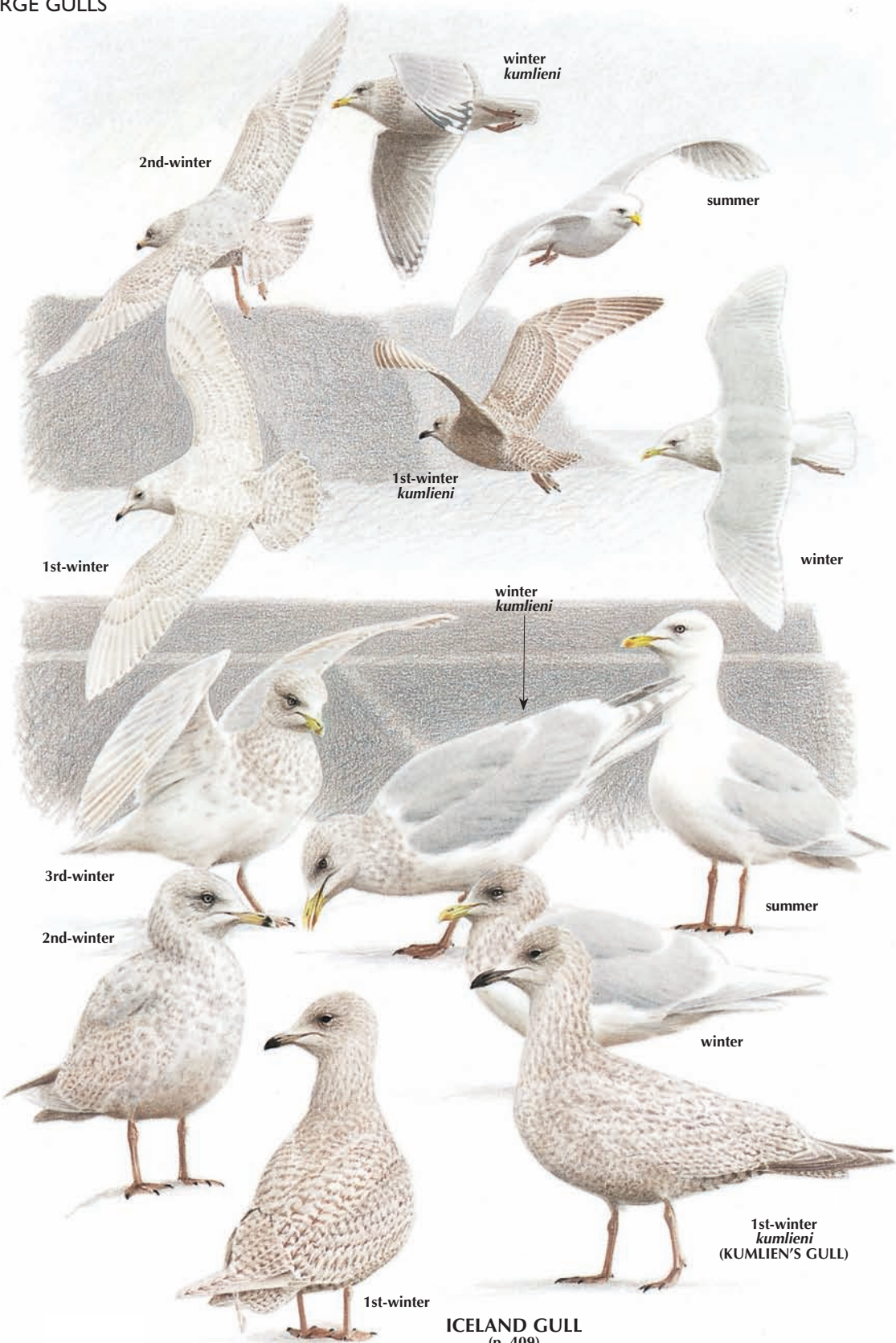
LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL
(*graellsii* unless indicated otherwise)
(p. 404)



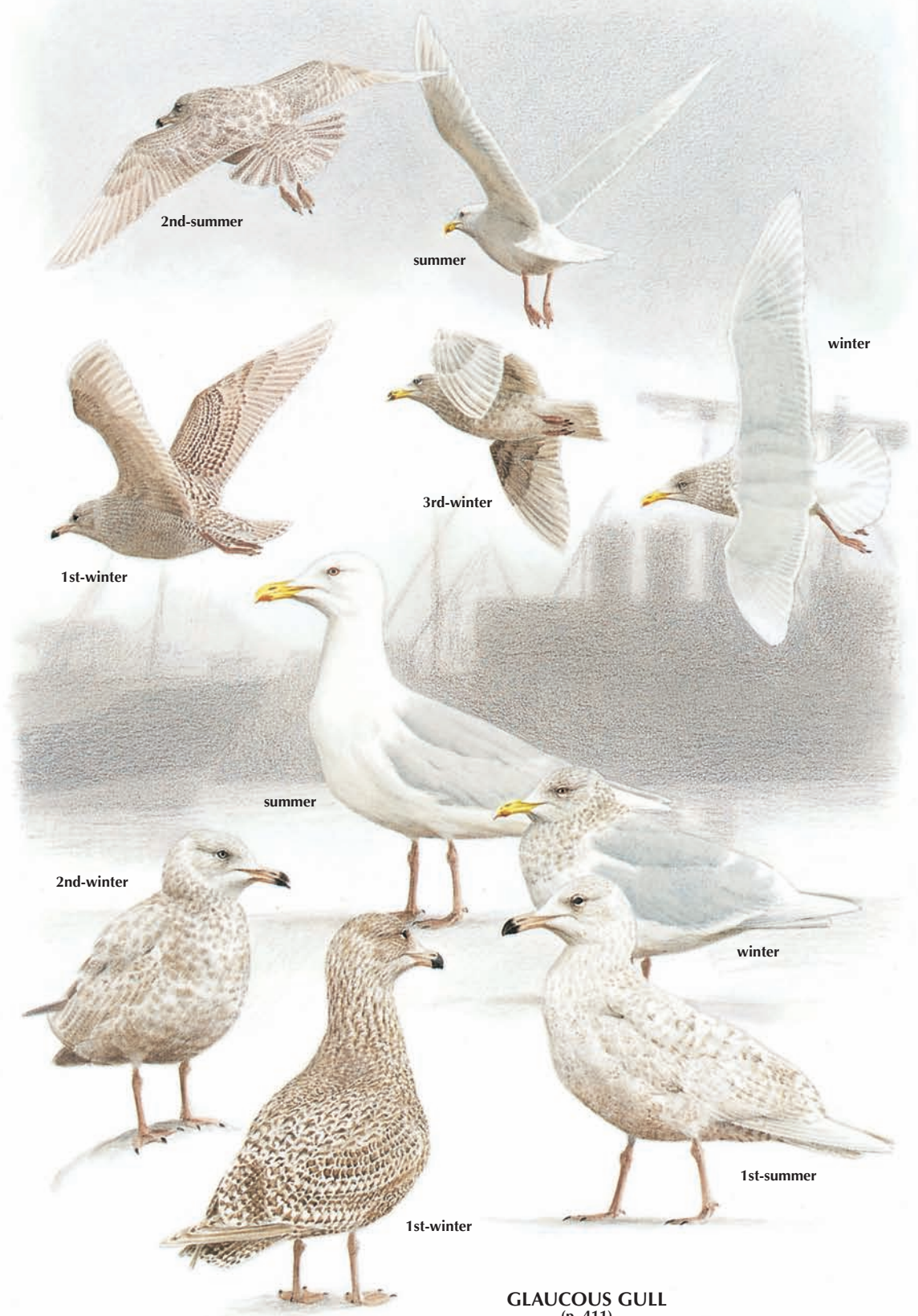


GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL
(p. 411)

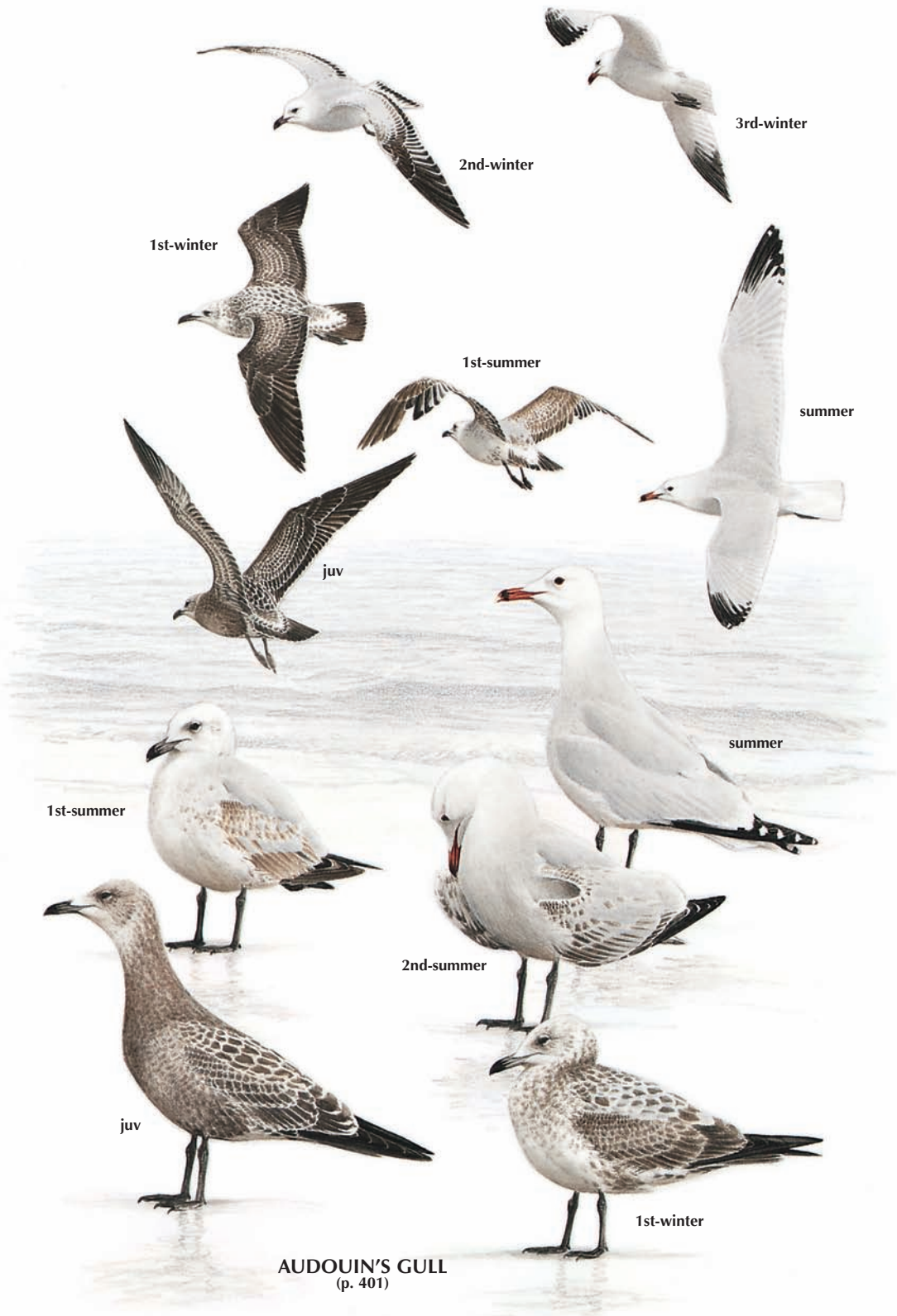




ICELAND GULL
(p. 409)



GLAUCOUS GULL
(p. 411)





MEDITERRANEAN GULL
(at same scale)

winter

1st-winter

2nd-winter

1st-winter

summer

juv

winter

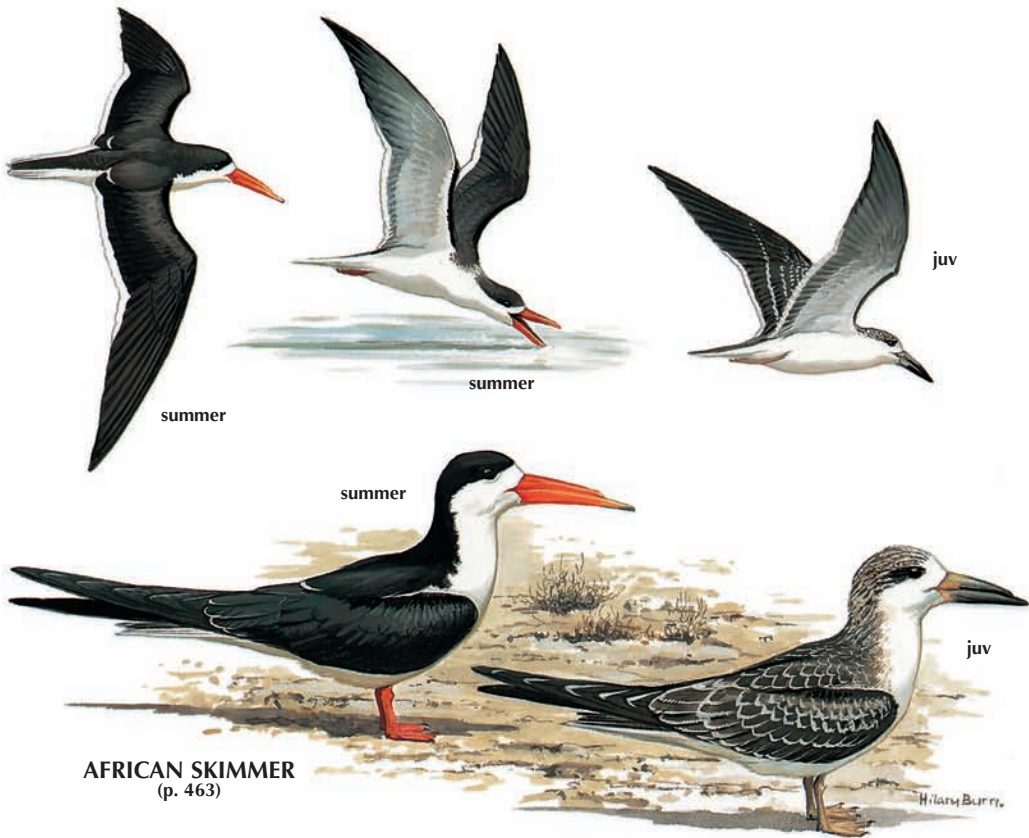
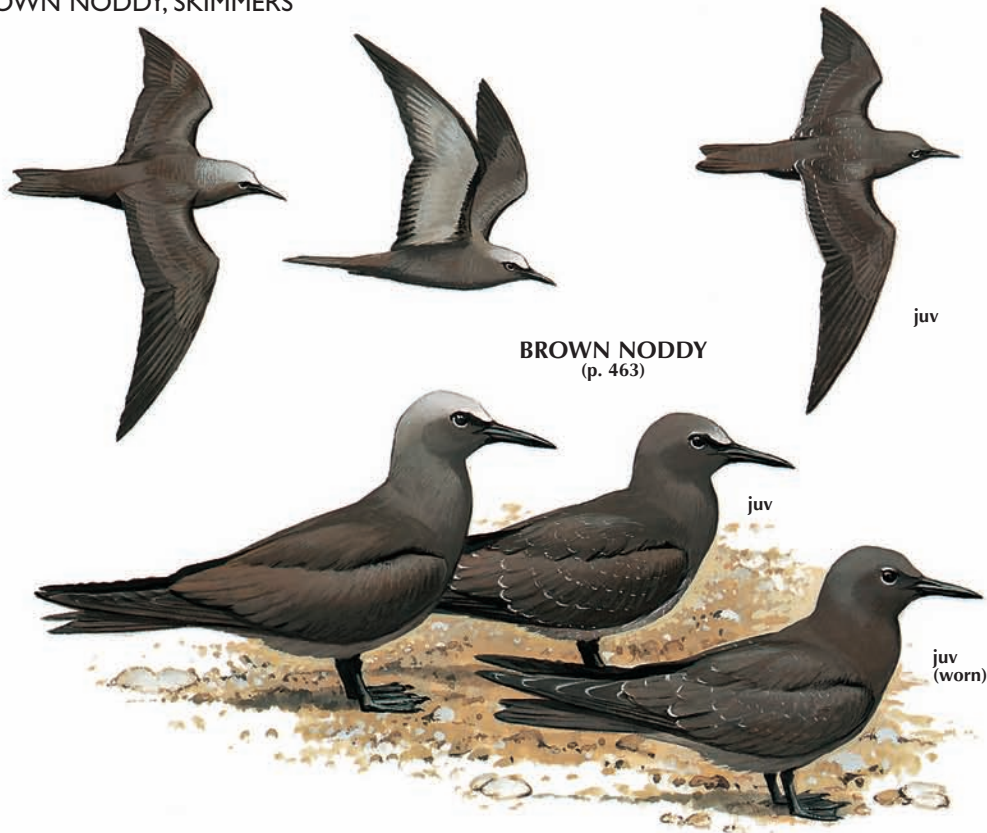
summer

2nd-winter

1st-winter

PALLAS'S GULL
(GREAT BLACK-HEADED GULL)
(p. 395)

BROWN NODDY, SKIMMERS



LARGE TERNS

1st-winter

winter

summer

GREATER CRESTED TERN (p. 451)

winter

summer

juv

winter

summer

1st-winter

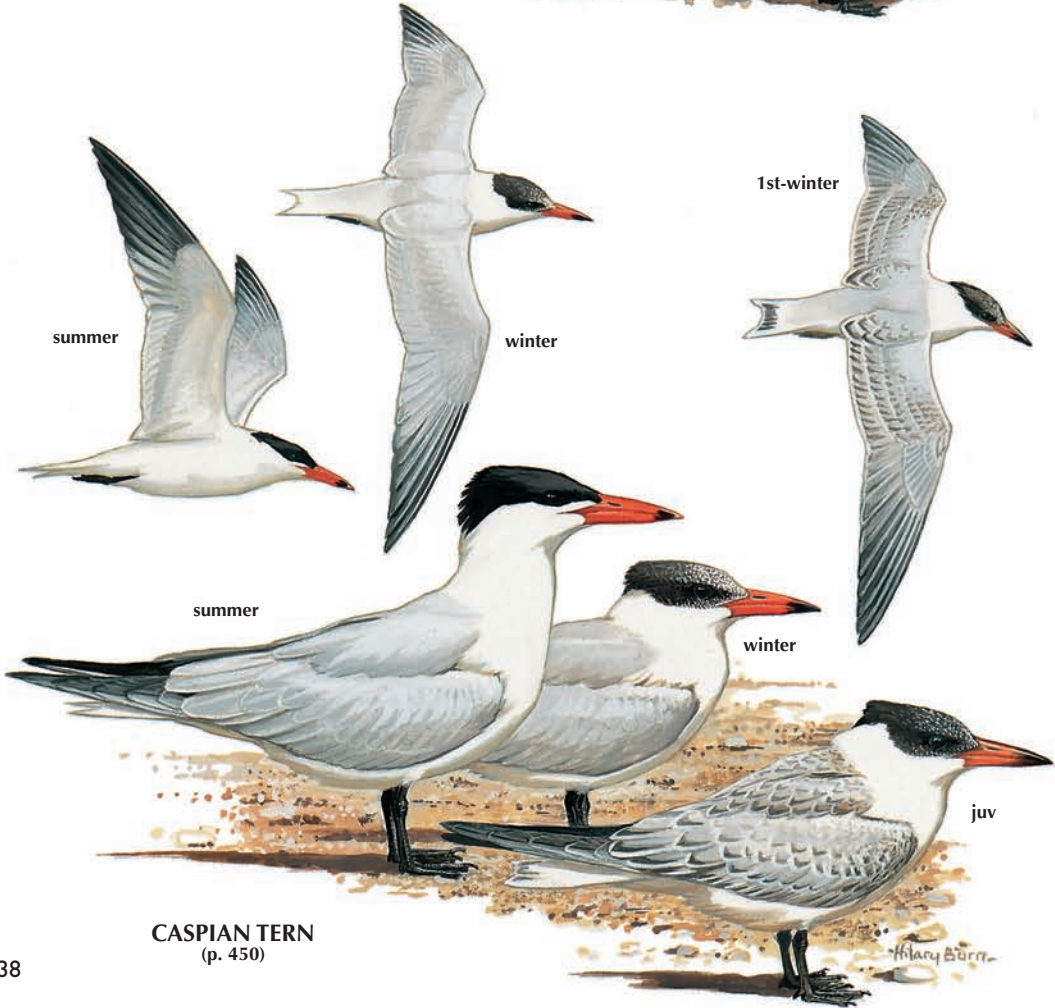
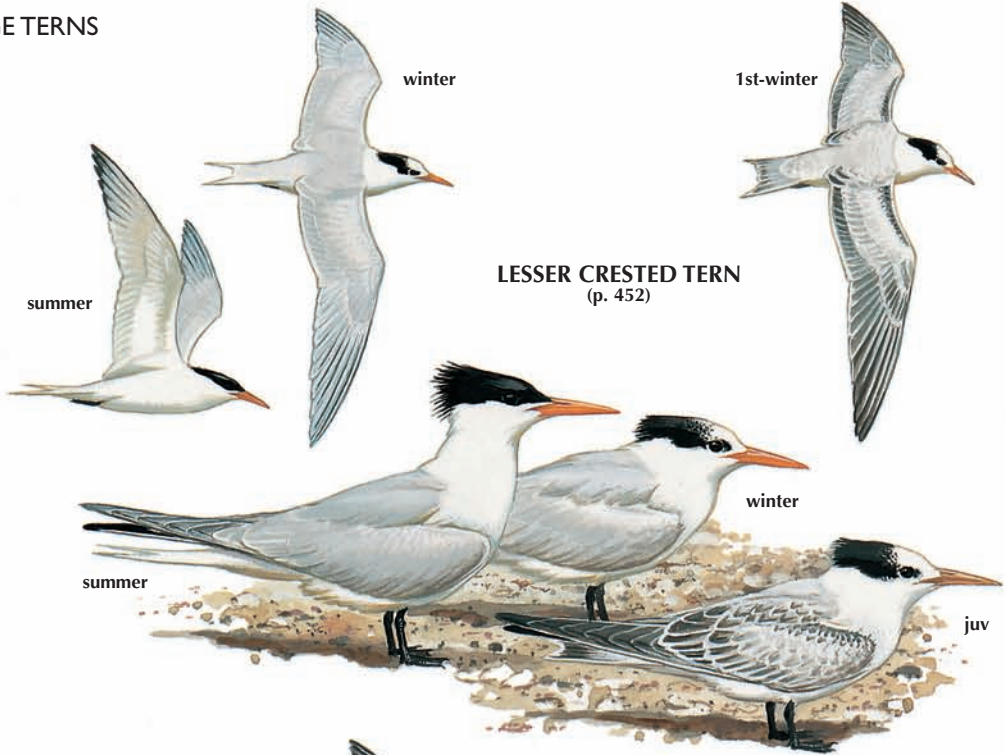
summer

winter

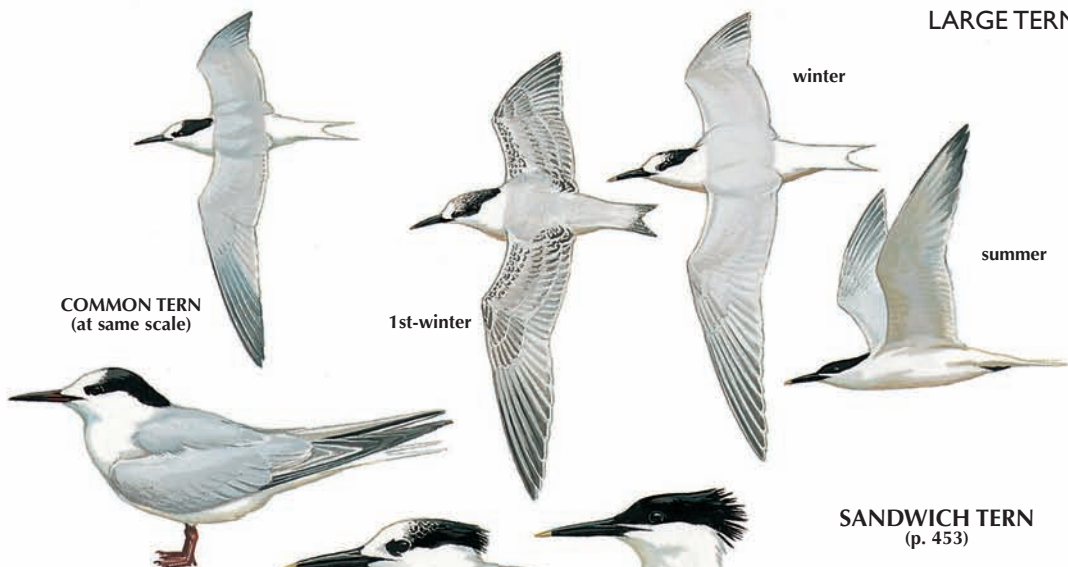
1st-winter

ROYAL TERN (p. 451)

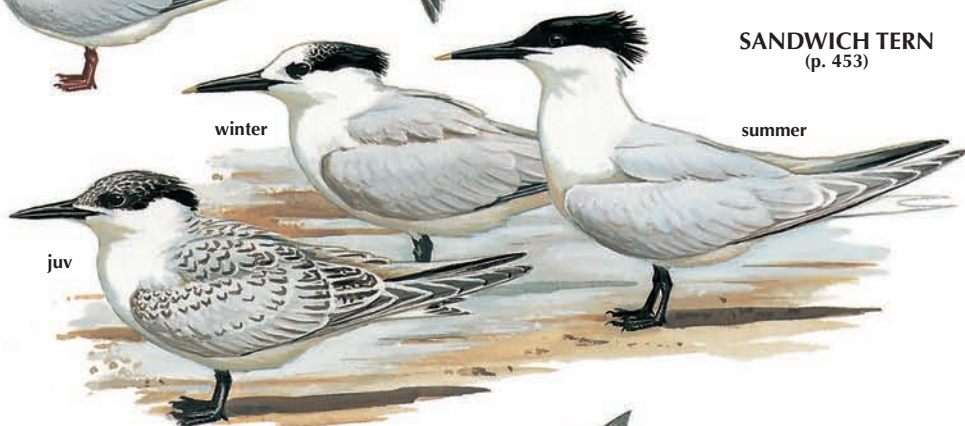
LARGE TERNS



COMMON TERN
(at same scale)



SANDWICH TERN
(p. 453)



1st-winter

winter

summer

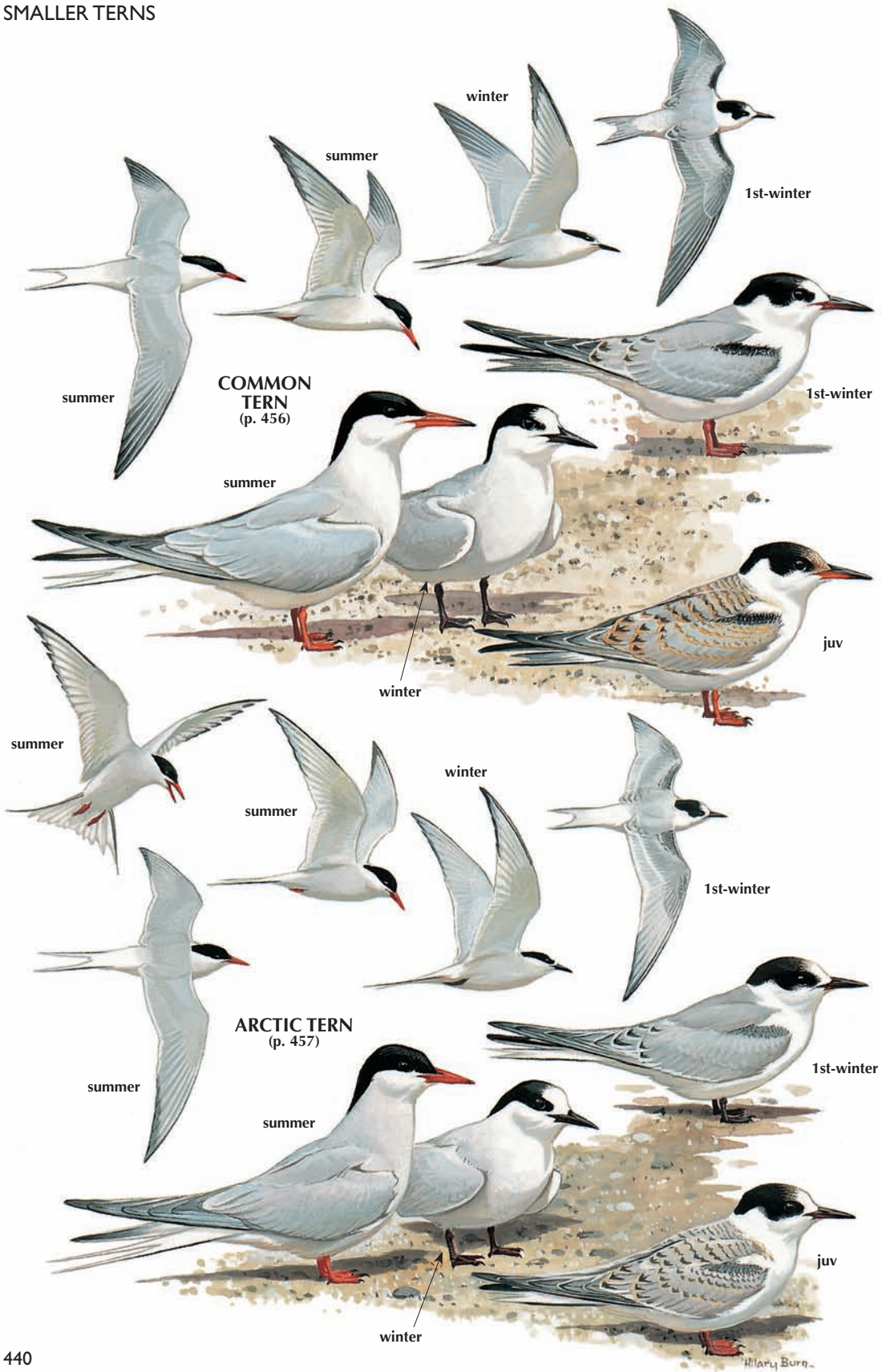
juv

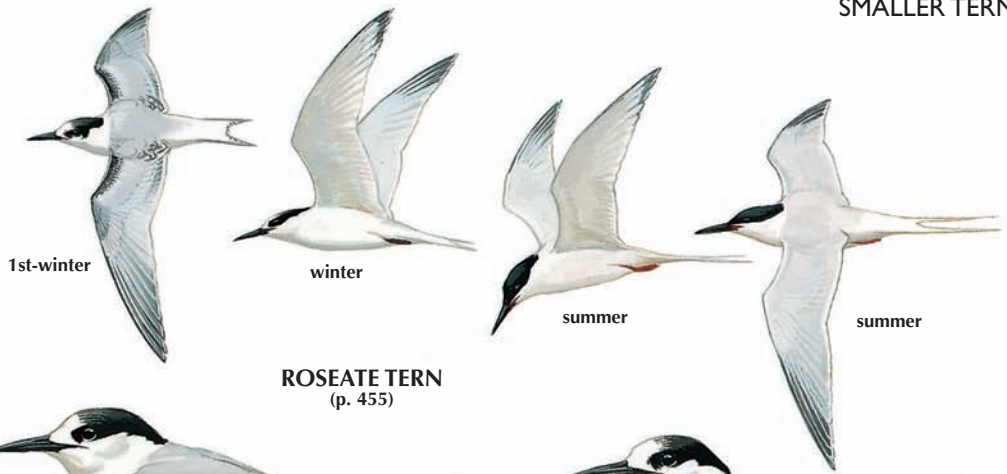
winter

summer

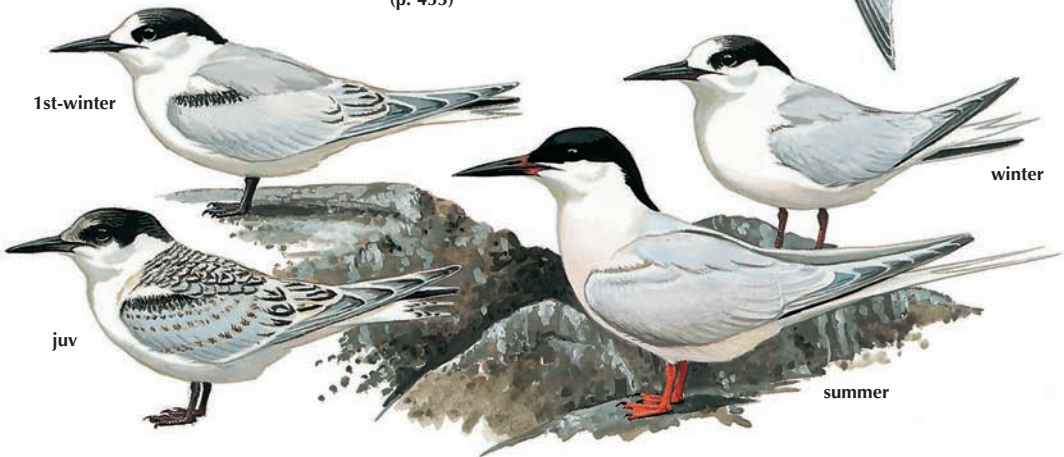


GULL-BILLED TERN
(p. 450)

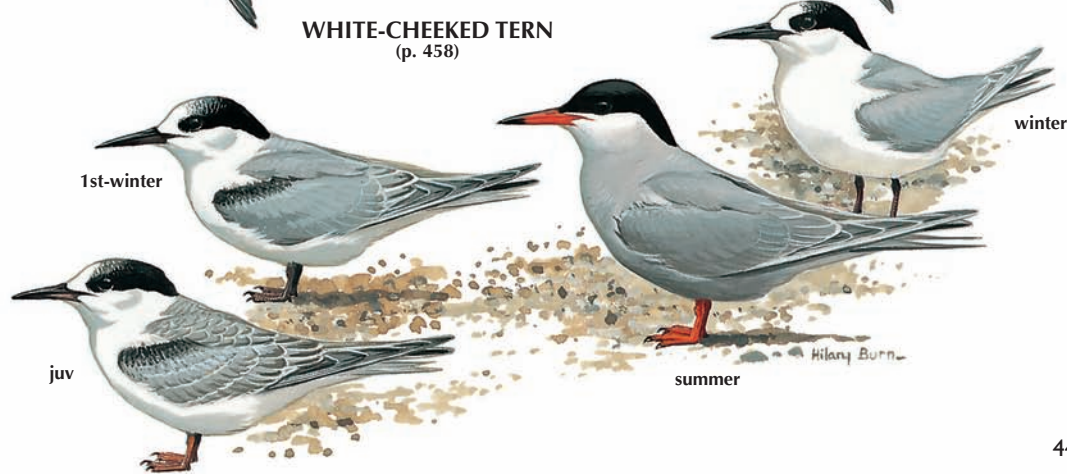




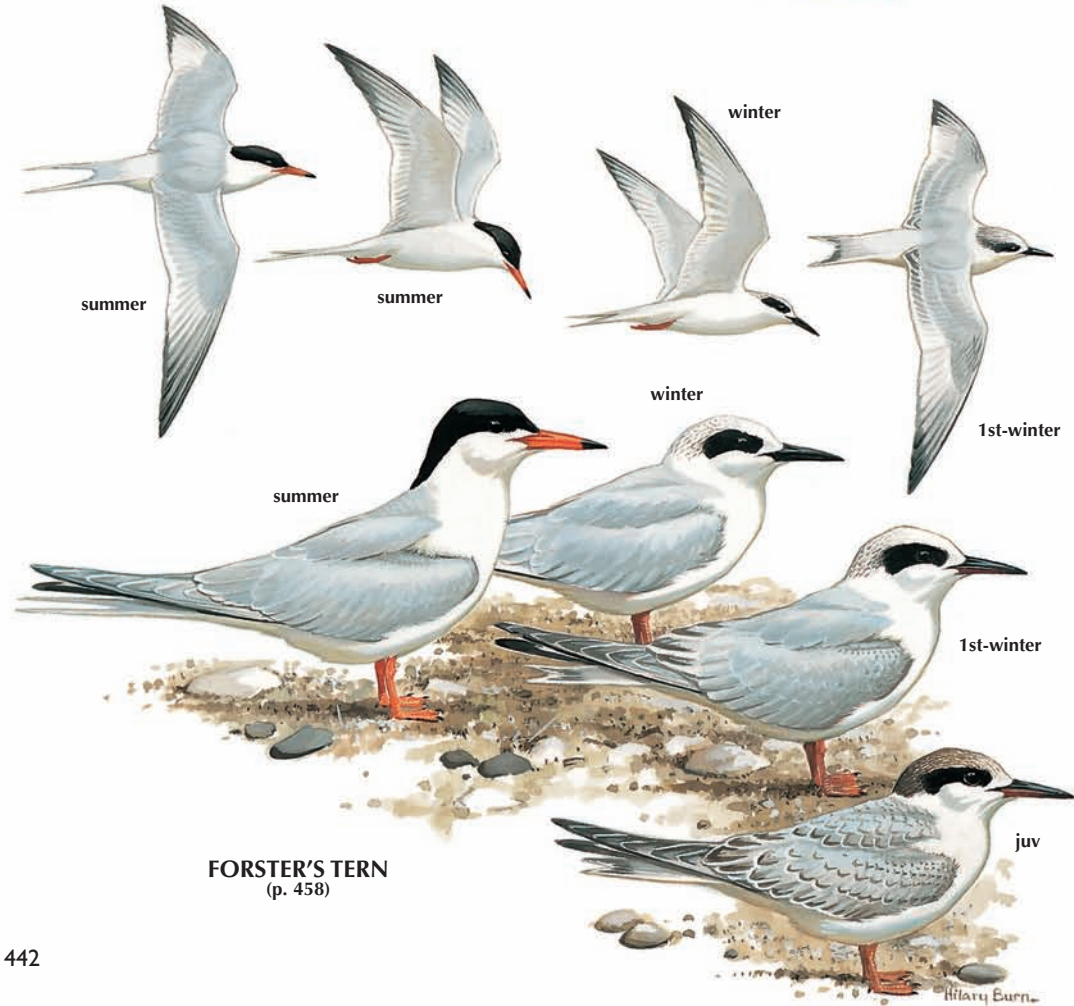
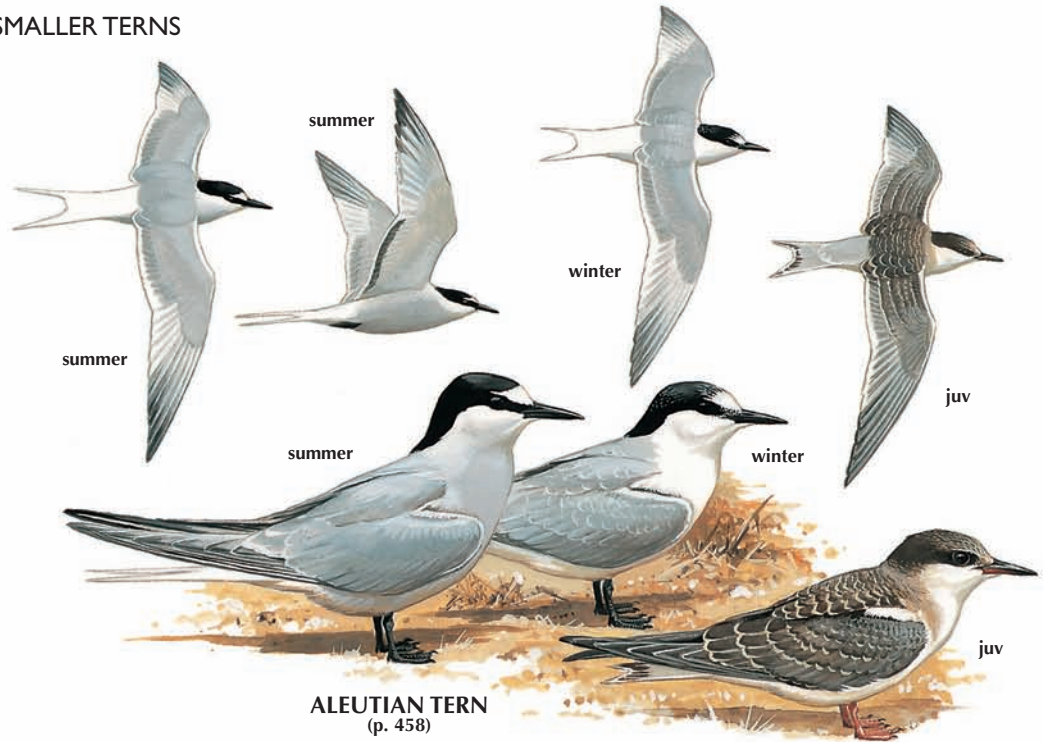
ROSEATE TERN
(p. 455)

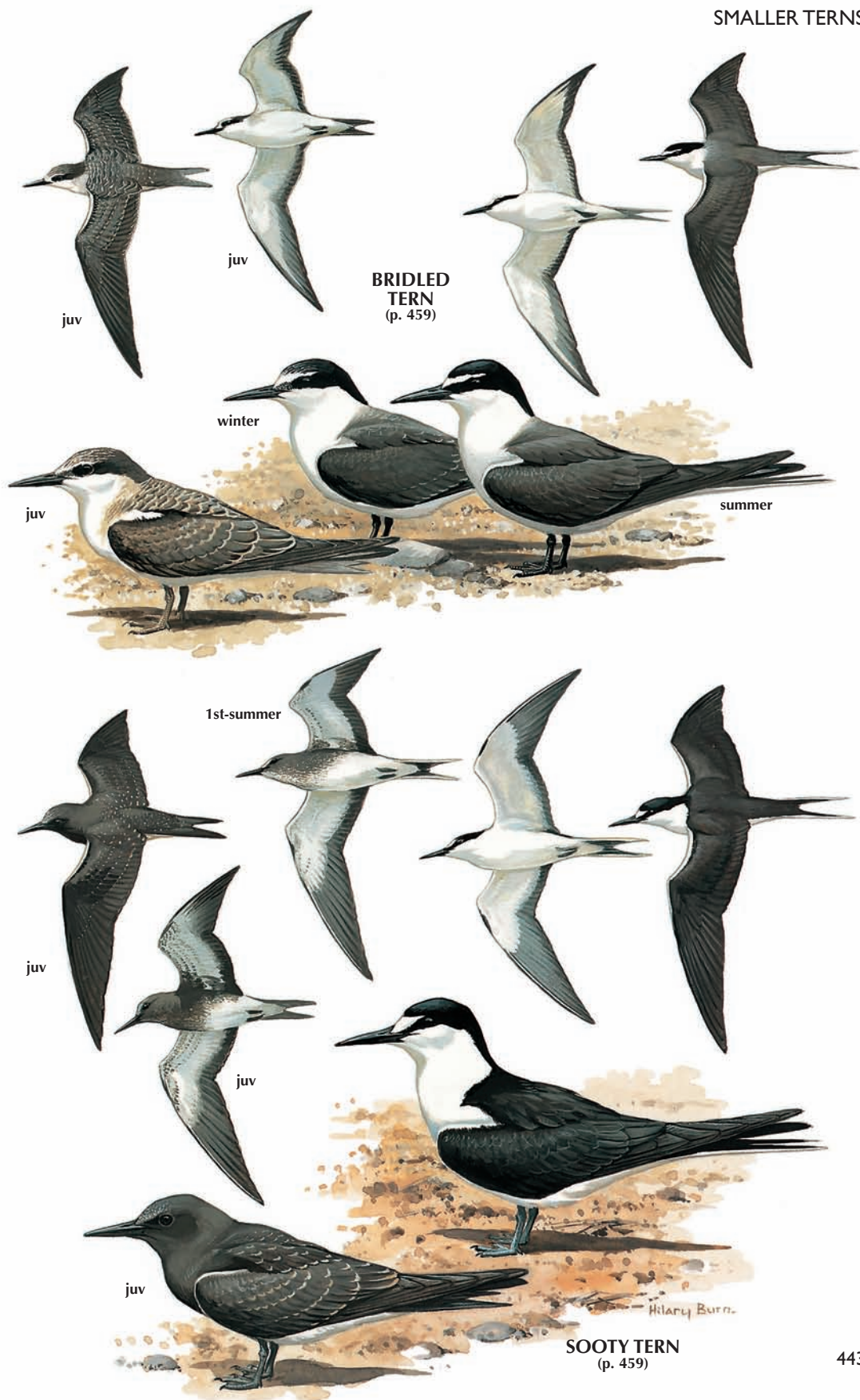


WHITE-CHEEKED TERN
(p. 458)

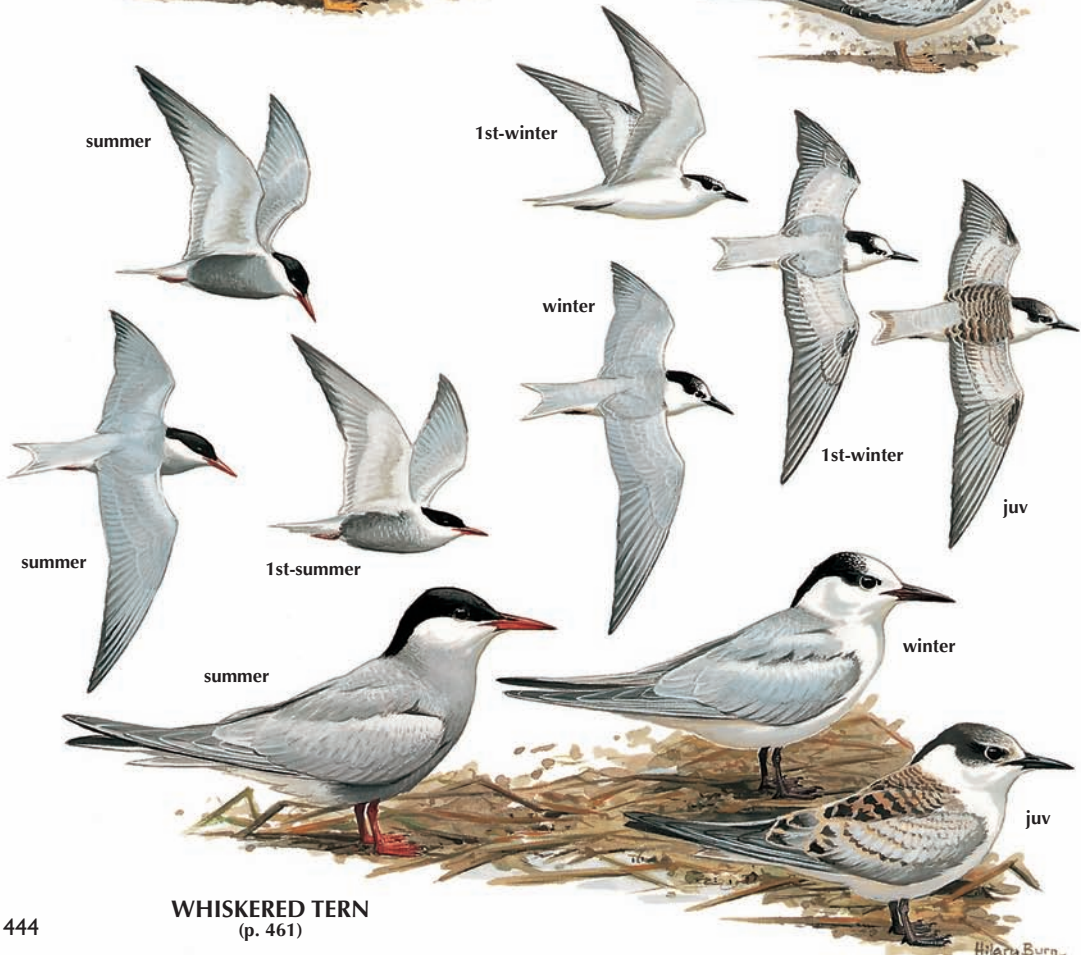
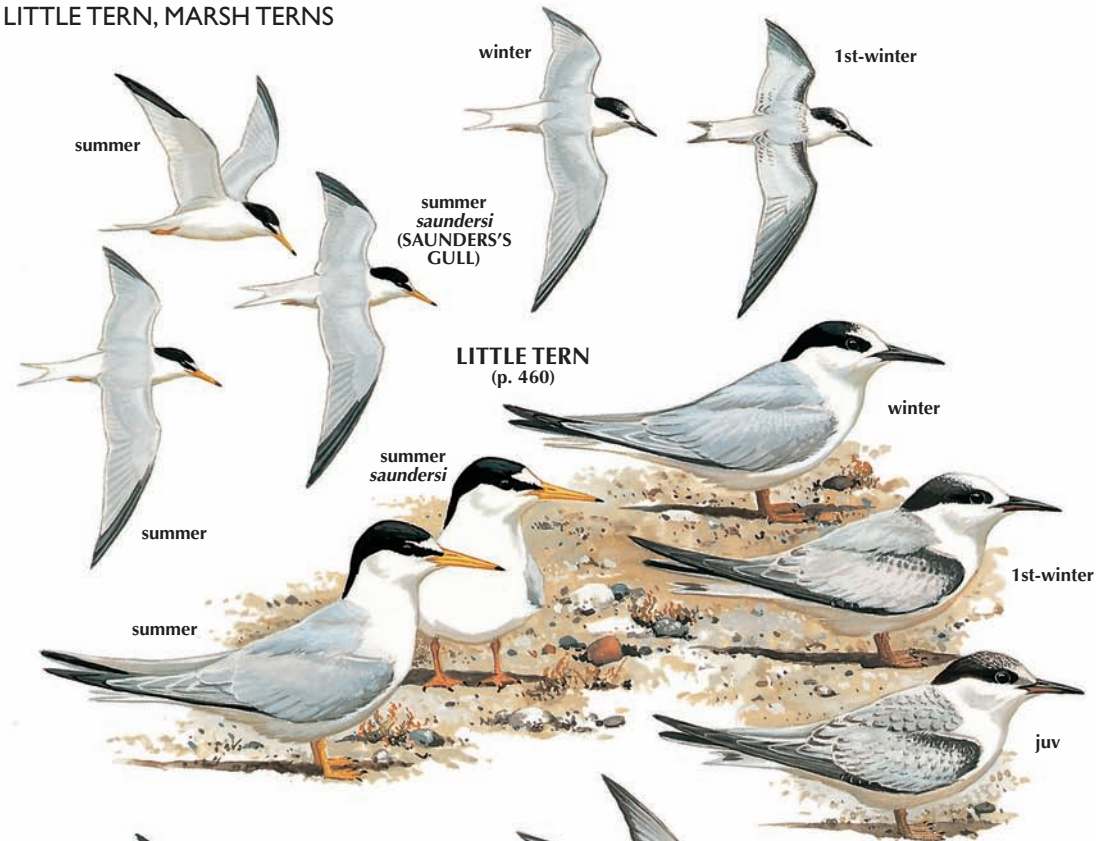


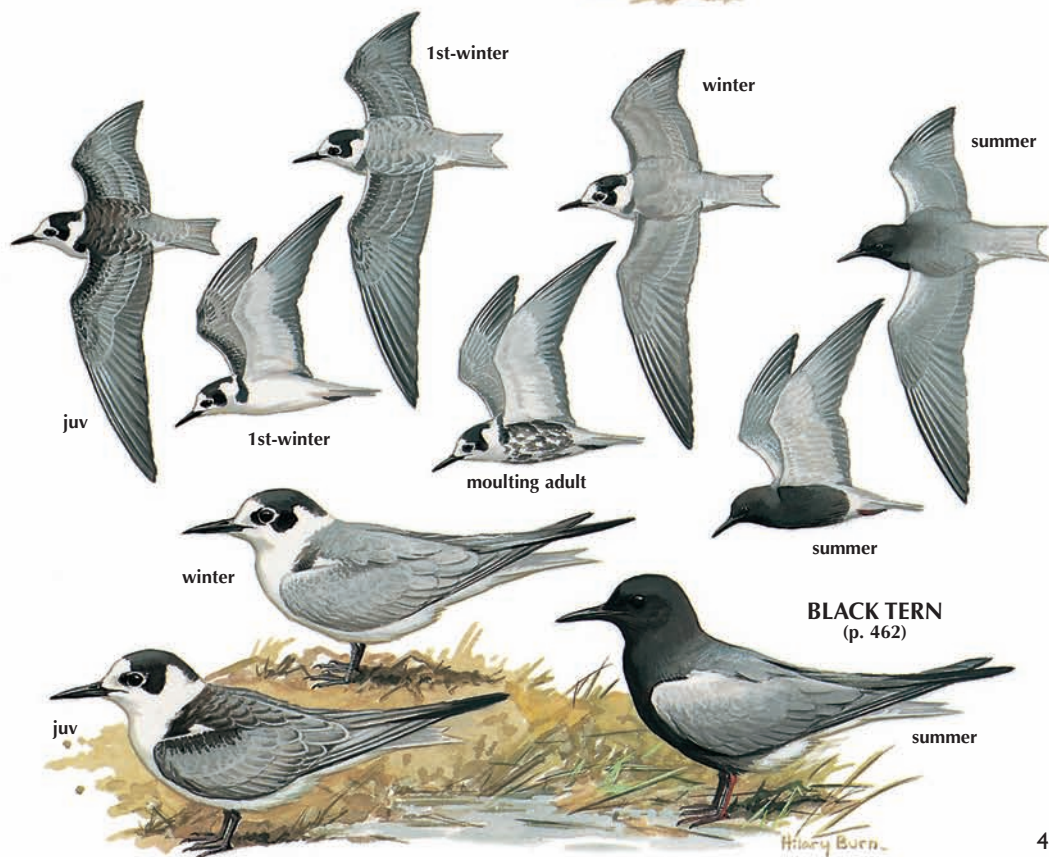
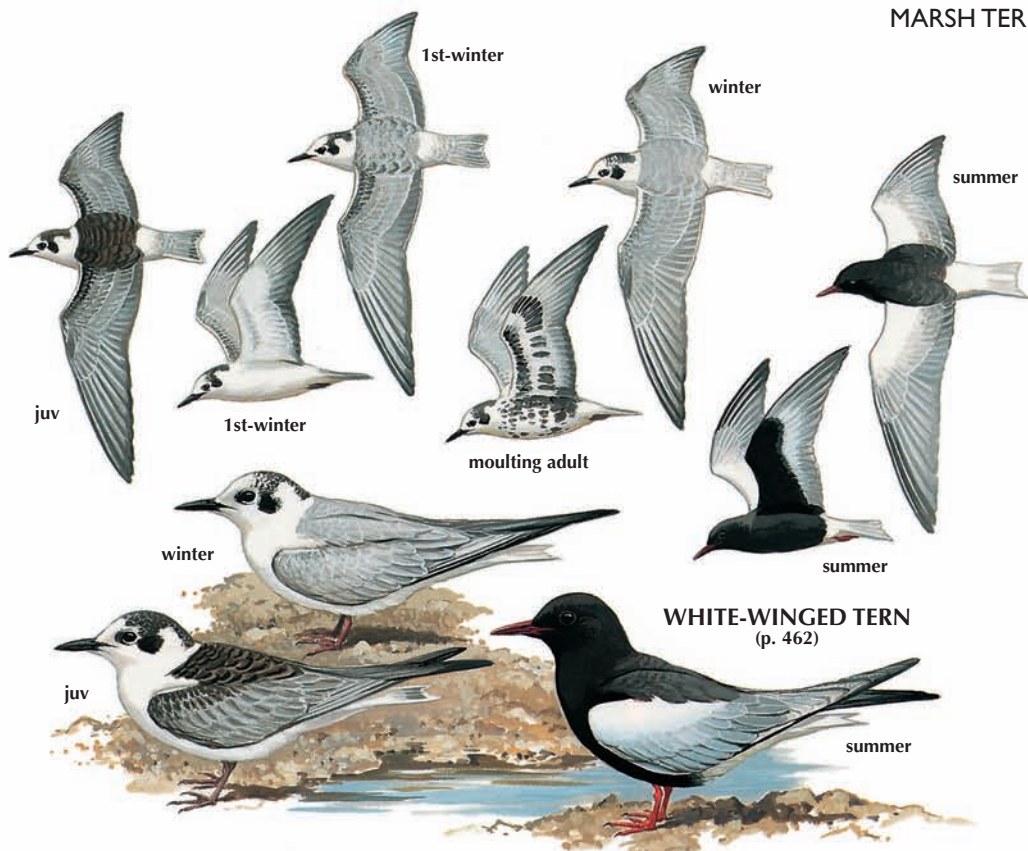
SMALLER TERNS





LITTLE TERN, MARSH TERNS







summer

summer
albionis
bridled morph

winter

COMMON GUILLEMOT
(COMMON MURRE)
(p. 464)

winter (late)

1st-winter

summer

winter

winter
(late)

summer

winter

summer

summer

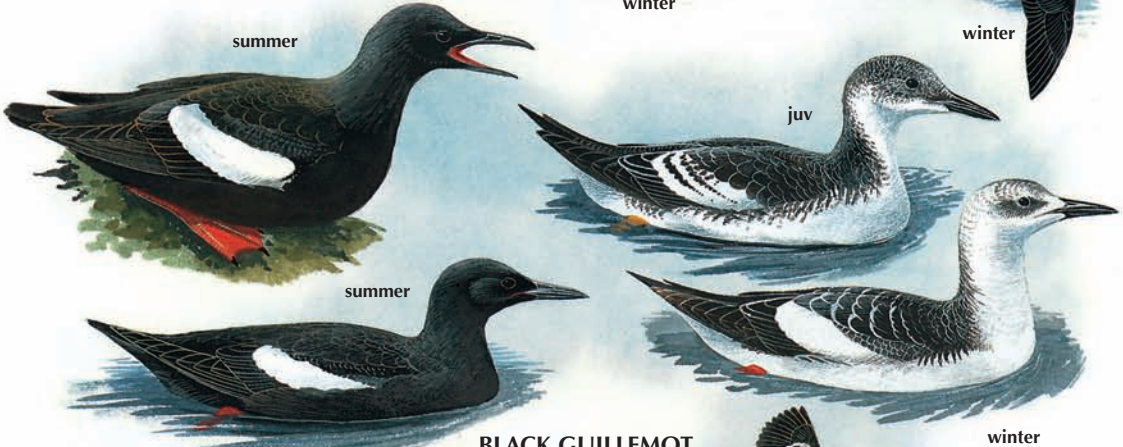
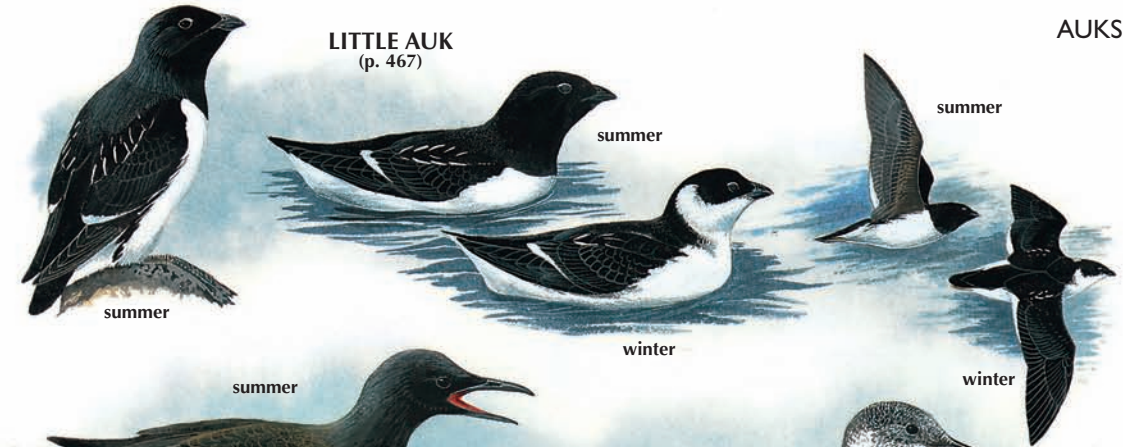
summer

summer

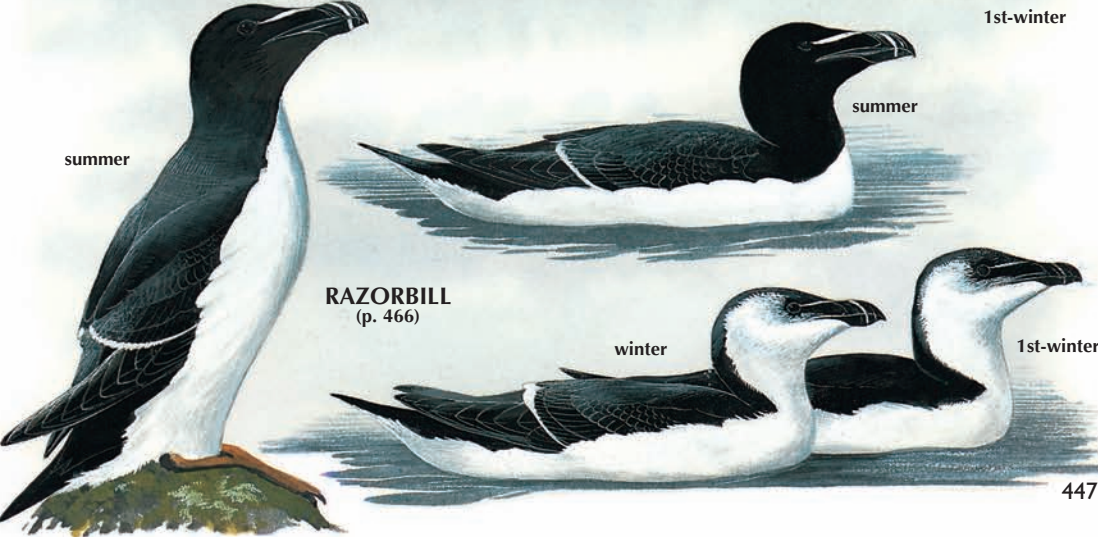
winter

1st-winter

LITTLE AUK
(p. 467)



BLACK GUILLEMOT
(p. 466)



RAZORBILL
(p. 466)

AUKS

ANCIENT MURRELET (p. 467)



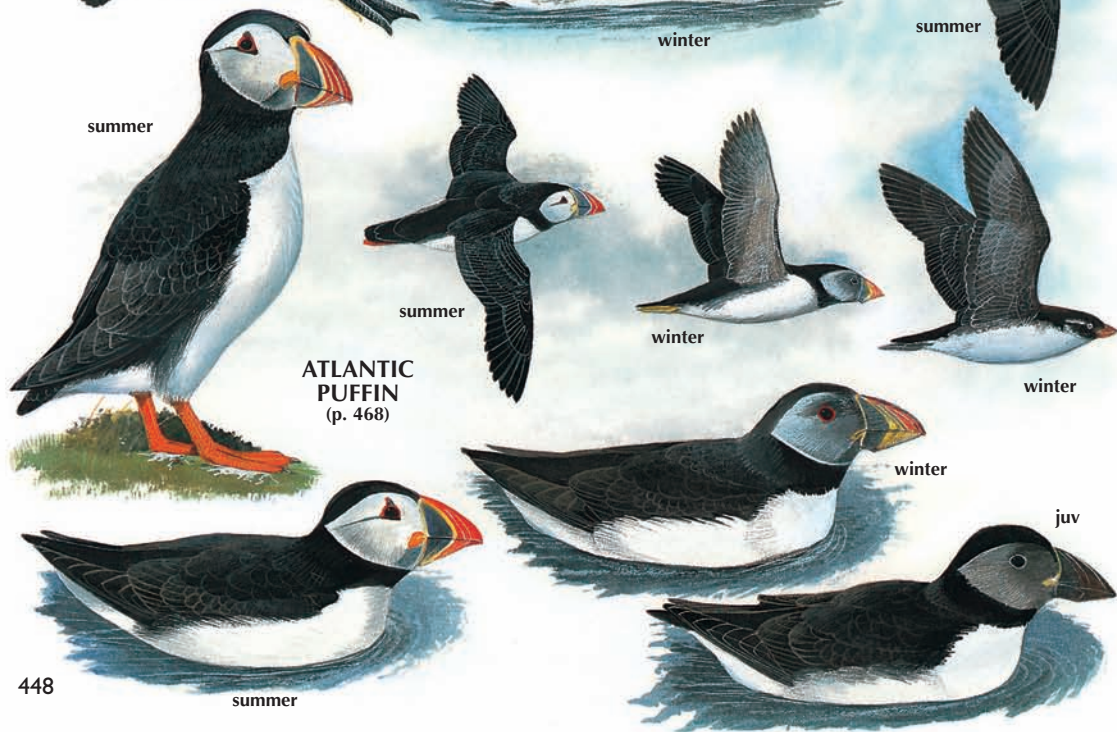
CRESTED AUKLET (p. 468)



PARAKEET AUKLET (p. 468)



ATLANTIC PUFFIN (p. 468)

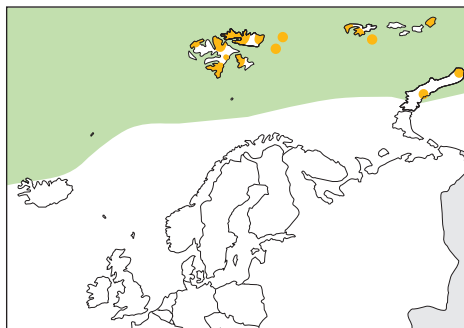


number of blackish spots at feather tips, particularly on upperparts, primaries, inner secondaries and tail, and an irregular dusky face patch (concentrated between bill and eye); bill greyish with yellowish tip. **1st-summer** has reduced dusky face patch and dark spotting on upperparts (or even lacks these features); bill often as adult.

SEX/AGE See Identification. As adult by second winter.

VOICE Most calls harsh, some tern-like, others not unlike Black-headed Gull.

STATUS/HABITAT Local and uncommon. Breeds in small, loose colonies on cliffs and flat ground. Disperses over arctic seas after breeding, probably keeping to edge of pack-ice, but small numbers reach as far south as N Iceland in winter. Sometimes found scavenging at fishing ports.



TERNS Sternidae

20 species (5 vagrant)

Elegant, streamlined, chiefly marine waterbirds with relatively long, slender, sharply pointed bills, short legs with webbed toes, short necks and long, narrowly pointed wings. *Sterna* species have deeply forked tails and often (in adults) elongated outermost feathers. Most terns are inshore coastal species but some *Chlidonias* or 'marsh' terns are almost confined to fresh water whereas other species are found in both coastal areas and inland (e.g. Common and Little Terns). Terns are gregarious birds, gathering together in flocks (often mixed) on beaches, sand-bars or islands when resting or breeding. They nest colonially (like many gulls), often in densely packed aggregations, laying their eggs in shallow depressions on the ground and mobbing predators *en masse*. Most terns feed by plunge-diving (although the marsh terns prefer to dip and pick from the surface layer without diving), and carry fish in their bills to feed their young. They do not normally swim, but on migration will alight and rest on the sea for short periods. Young birds (especially the young of the larger species) generally accompany adults on their southward autumn migration. The majority of species are very noisy, having harsh grating calls, the noise from within a nesting colony can be almost deafening. The smaller species are less vocal on the whole. Some calls are useful as aids for identification, whereas other species have similar calls (e.g. Sandwich, Lesser Crested, Elegant and Royal).

Sexes similar, although males average a fraction larger than females. The majority of terns have black crowns, white underparts and grey upperparts. After breeding, the forecrown becomes white and the colour of the bill and legs invariably becomes duller or even quite different. As most terns winter well south of our region, many observers are unfamiliar with full winter plumage. 1st-winter plumage usually resembles adult winter apart from some retained juvenile feathering in wings and tail. Immatures of several species remain in their winter quarters during their first summer, but a minority return to attend breeding colonies; such birds can be confusing. These first-summer birds have often been referred to as '*portlandica*' terns, a name originally given to 1st-summer Arctic Terns, but later more widely applied. Juveniles when recently fledged have blunter wingtips, slightly shorter and blunter bills and shorter tails than adults; this can confuse the unwary. Full wing and bill lengths may not be attained until the autumn, and young birds away from breeding colonies can look distinctly odd. With wear, the primaries of many terns become distinctly dusky, and as primaries are gradually moulted this creates a pattern of either dusky wedges or dark outer feathers on the upperwing; this effect is a useful species indicator with Common and Arctic Terns, which are otherwise a particularly tricky pair to sort out in flight.

Most terns are unlikely to be confused with other birds except, where views are poor, with small gulls, but beware confusing largest species, especially massively-built Caspian, with medium-sized or even large gulls. Features such as sharply-pointed bills, dark caps, narrowly pointed wings and forked tails easily distinguish terns from gulls on closer inspection.

With so many similar species and differing plumage stages, coupled with moult and individual variation, there is a variety of problems to overcome when faced with an unfamiliar tern. It is difficult to isolate a widely applicable series of points upon which to concentrate when working with this family but the following are the most useful overall:

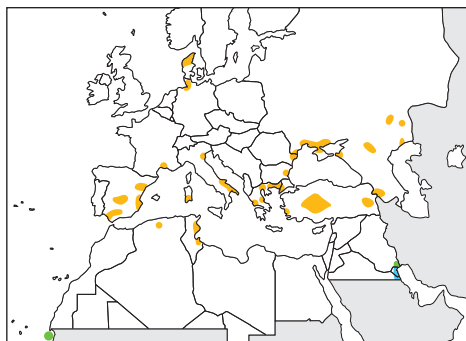
Bill colour and length • Leg colour and length • Extent of grey tone to upperparts • Rump colour (grey or white) • **Depth of tail fork • Prominence of dark trailing edge to primary undersides • Presence or absence of dark carpal bar along leading edge of wing**

GULL-BILLED TERN *Sterna nilotica*

Plate page 439

L 35–38 cm (including tail up to 14 cm), WS 100–115 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Thickset, medium-sized tern with relatively short tail and black bill and legs. Most easily confused with Sandwich but has longer legs and stouter, shorter bill. Juvenile Sandwich has a slightly shorter black bill compared with adult and lacks pale tip, but upperparts much more prominently patterned than in any Gull-billed and legs markedly shorter. Gull-billed lacks the elegant appearance of Sandwich, having relatively shorter, stouter neck which makes wings appear to be set further forward on body, and longer legs (together with shorter, stouter bill), add to vaguely gull-like impression when at rest. More of a freshwater species than Sandwich, but habitats overlap. **Adult** has whole of upperparts, including rump and tail, pale grey, whereas Sandwich has whiter rump and tail (but this is often difficult to appreciate in the field). Adult summer has more extensive black cap, reaching well down nape, and lacks 'shaggy' hindcrown shown by standing Sandwich. Adult winter has a blackish eye patch, and wholly pale crown and nape (in weakly marked birds the whole head may appear pale at longer range). In Sandwich the head lacks contrasting darker eye patch, and instead blackish extends from area around eye to hindcrown and nape. Head pattern of Gull-billed, however, is shared by smaller White-winged and vagrant Forster's. **Juvenile** shows similar head pattern difference to Sandwich as winter adult, but eye patch is dusky grey rather than blackish and hindcrown and nape are finely streaked with dark. On standing juvenile, the upperpart markings usually appear less distinct than in other terns (but some individuals are quite heavily marked, so more like Sandwich). In flight, appears very pale overall, recalling Sandwich, although dark grey tips to primaries show as a narrow dark trailing edge to wing; latter feature is lacking on upperwing of Sandwich and is less distinct on underwing than in Gull-billed. Both species often show a wedge of dark grey in primaries as a result of feather wear, but this is more contrasting in Gull-billed. Rather thickset body, short neck, rather broad head and relatively short,



stout bill, short tail and broad wings create a somewhat gull-like impression. Flight action graceful, but rather stiff, being more gull-like than in Sandwich, with wings held straighter, less back-angled; is less likely to plunge-dive than many other terns, mostly feeding by swooping down to pick food from water surface in manner of marsh terns. Often feeds over dry land in similar manner, and also hawks for flying insects in gull-like fashion.

SEX/AGE Juvenile resembles adult winter, but has pale brown markings on mantle, tertials and wing coverts. These largely lost by autumn. 1st-winter much as adult winter but some markings remain on retained juvenile tertials to first spring. 1st-summer much as adult winter.

VOICE Typical calls a low, nasal 'ger-erk' or 'kay-vek', deeper and less ringing than call of Sandwich, and a loud, metallic 'kak-kak'. Alarm call a nasal 'kvay-kvay-kvay'. Juveniles utter a high, squeaky, 'pe-eeep' or similar.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Britain, Austria, Hungary, Morocco, Algeria, Syria, Jordan. Almost all winter south of the Sahara.) Favours fresh and brackish lakes and inland rivers in open country; also deltas. Outside breeding, season also estuaries, coastal lagoons, river mouths and even inshore coastal waters.

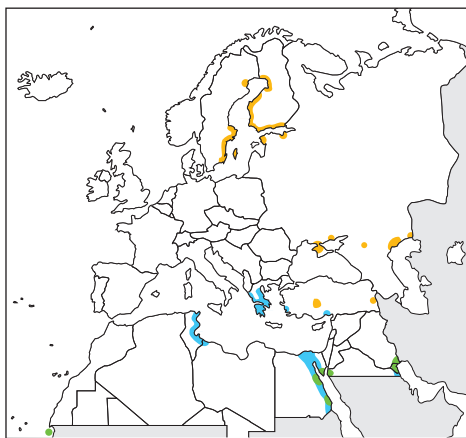
CASPIAN TERN *Sterna caspia*

Plate page 438

L 47–54 cm (including tail up to 15 cm), WS 130–145 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Huge, heavily built tern with relatively short tail and massive scarlet bill and black legs. Approaches larger gulls in size (being intermediate between Mew and Herring). Most easily confused with Royal, but latter has orange bill and is slighter and slimmer-winged, with underside of outer primaries merely dark-tipped, not wholly shaded dusky as in Caspian. Juvenile Caspian has bill more orange-red than adult (looks carrot-coloured), and is therefore more likely to be confused with Royal. Flight action often slow and heavy, with stiff, rather shallow wingbeats, but executes spectacular dives with great agility. Large head and bill and short tail contribute to a front-heavy appearance, whereas Royal has proportions closer to Sandwich. Diagnostic dark undersides to primaries are conspicuous in flight (Royal can show grey shading but never the dusky of Caspian). When standing among smaller terns literally dwarfs them. See Royal Tern.

SEX/AGE Cap all black in summer plumage; lores, forecrown and central crown intensely mottled white



at other times. Juvenile less strongly marked than other large terns. Resembles adult winter, but has orange-red bill, duller cap with pale buffish streaking, often yellowish-brown legs, brown scaly markings on mantle, scapulars, tertials and tail, and dusky secondary bar; upperwing markings become abraded during autumn. 1st-winter as adult winter but some juvenile markings remain, especially on tail, until first summer.

VOICE Typical calls are a distinctive loud, deep, croaked almost heron-like 'kraah' and disyllabic 'kra-

krah'. Juveniles utter a high, penetrating, squeaky 'slee-wee' when accompanying adults.

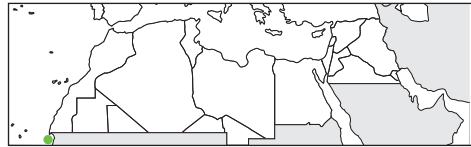
STATUS/HABITAT Localized and generally uncommon. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Corsica, Sardinia, mainland Italy, Germany, Denmark, Norway, Poland, Latvia, Romania, Tunisia, Syria. Most winter south of the Sahara.) Breeds mainly on offshore islands and sand-bars, but sometimes by brackish inland lakes or lagoons. Outside breeding season, chiefly sheltered coastal waters, coastal lagoons, sand spits and river mouths.

ROYAL TERN *Sterna maxima*

Plate page 437

L 45–50 cm (including tail up to 17 cm),
WS 125–135 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Atlantic coast of N Africa and Strait of Gibraltar. Large tern with (in adult) bright orange bill and black legs, noticeably smaller and slimmer than Caspian, with relatively longer, more deeply forked tail, slimmer wings, smaller head, longer, slimmer bill and (especially in adult) shaggier crest. In build, not unlike a large, bulky Sandwich. Confusable with Lesser Crested and vagrant Elegant (q.v.), but both of these are size of Sandwich, whereas Royal is markedly larger and stouter-billed. See also Greater Crested Tern. **Adult** has orange bill (deeper towards base and yellow towards tip) which lacks dusky subterminal mark often present on scarlet bill of Caspian (but note that juvenile Caspian has bill slightly more orange-red than adult). In summer and autumn usually shows much greater contrast on upperwing between dark unmoulted outer primaries and pale fresh inner primaries than in Caspian. Adult winter Royal has whiter forehead, forecrown and lores than Caspian, lacking mottled appearance except on hindcrown, and white almost encircles eye, being only narrowly interrupted by blackish ear-coverts and 'shadow' at front of eye (however, black becomes more extensive when acquiring summer black cap); winter Caspian has broader dusky (rather than black) 'mask' that envelops eye (and almost always gives a dark-capped impression, unlike 'bald-looking' Royal). **Juvenile** has less prominently scaled mantle than juvenile Caspian and very different upperwing pattern with dark 'hand' and three dark bars on 'arm', on leading edge, greater coverts and secondaries (upperwing in Caspian is rather uniformly pale). These features largely lost by first winter (although greater-covert and secondary bars often persist well into winter). Bill more yellowish-orange than in adult (sometimes even greenish tinged) and legs often yellowish. In flight, recalls a large Sandwich Tern in outline, having less bulky head and slimmer wings than Caspian; the underside of the outer primaries show a discrete dark trailing edge (Caspian has whole of outer primaries



dusky), although immature Royal has grey shading in front of dark trailing edge.

SEX/AGE Cap all black at onset of summer plumage (but forehead becomes white early in breeding season); head whitish with black hindcrown and ear-coverts at other times. Juvenile resembles adult winter, but has dark tail corners and very different upperwing pattern with dark forewing bar, greater coverts, primary coverts, primaries and secondaries; the dark tips to underside of primaries are broader (although less extensive than on Caspian) and bill and legs are yellowish, latter usually soon becoming dusky. 1st-winter has bill orange and legs often blackish; mantle and upperwing coverts greyer, less marked than in juvenile (retains some worn juvenile feathers), although tail corners, outer primaries and secondaries still blackish; plumages similar until middle of second winter, when becomes much as adult.

VOICE Typical call very similar to grating 'kirruk' of Sandwich Tern, but slightly deeper in pitch and more musical. Juveniles give a shrill 'wee-wee-wee' when accompanying adults.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (*albididorsalis* illustrated). W African race *albididorsalis* averages slightly smaller and slightly paler grey above than the vagrant nominate race of the Americas, but differences marginal and much overlap.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. Breeds on islands of Banc d'Arguin in Mauritania, small numbers dispersing after breeding season up Atlantic coast of N Africa as far as Strait of Gibraltar. Favours sandy bays, sand spits and river mouths, breeding on offshore islands.

GREATER CRESTED TERN *Sterna bergii*

Plate page 437

Crested Tern, Great Crested Tern, Swift Tern

L 46–49 cm (including tail up to 19 cm),
WS 125–130 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Red Sea and Persian Gulf. Large and distinctive tern, with slightly decurved, cool yellow or greenish-yellow (rarely orange-yellow) bill, short black legs, medium-grey upperparts, including rump and tail and white forehead (even in summer plumage). The darkest-looking large *Sterna* of our region. Range overlaps with that of much smaller and

paler Lesser Crested, which has straighter, finer, orange bill. Size and overall build resemble Royal Tern, but bill and upperpart coloration differ and ranges do not overlap. Adult winter has bill strongly tinged dull greenish (with dusky base), rather than pure yellow, and has crown pattern recalling that of Royal, but with more extensive white mottling on rear

and sides of crown. Juvenile resembles juvenile Royal in plumage pattern, but ground colour of upperparts darker grey, mantle/scapulars more heavily marked and head pattern more mottled. Bill dull greenish-yellow with dusky base (orange-yellow in young Royal). In flight, appears notably front-heavy, with bulky head, relatively long neck and drooped bill; the medium-grey mantle and wing coverts contrast with paler, silvery primaries and outer secondaries. Juvenile and 1st-winter wing pattern very bold, resembling that of Royal (q.v.), but note contrast between paler inner primaries and darker grey wing coverts, and presence of additional, but fainter, dark bar across median coverts. Underwing pattern resembles that of Royal as opposed to Caspian.

SEX/AGE Adult summer has bill yellow (rarely tinged orange), shading paler at tip, and crown all black with white band across forehead and lores. Adult winter has white forehead mottled with black and blackish 'mask' and hindcrown; bill dull greenish-yellow (with dusky base). Juvenile resembles adult winter, but has dark markings on mantle/scapulars and dark forewing bar, greater-coverts bar, primary coverts, primaries, secondaries and tail corners; legs often dull greenish-yellow, soon becoming dusky. 1st-winter has mantle and upperwing coverts greyer, less marked, although tail corners, outer primaries and secondaries still blackish; plumages similar until middle of second winter, when becomes very similar



to adult.

VOICE Typical call a grating 'krrrik', slightly deeper than that of Sandwich, recalling Royal. Juveniles give a shrill 'srii-srii' when accompanying adults.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Race *velox*, typified by comparatively dark, medium-grey upperparts, is sole form recorded from our region, but vagrants of southern race *thalassina* a possibility in N Red Sea. Latter is slightly smaller and much paler grey above, with whitish rump and tail, but is not yet recorded in our region; confusion potential with Lesser Crested much higher than for *velox*. Look for blunter, thicker and cool yellow bill, heavier and more angular head, and deeper breast.

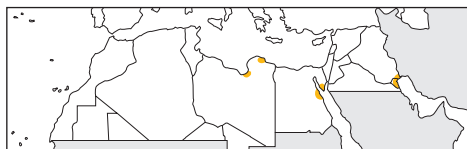
STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common non-breeding visitor throughout the year. Suspected to have bred in past on islands off Egyptian Red Sea coasts and has bred S Iraq, but recent confirmation of breeding lacking. Favours sandy bays, sandspits, river mouths and coral reefs, breeding on both inshore and offshore islands.

LESSER CRESTED TERN *Sterna bengalensis*

Plate page 438

L 36–41 cm (including tail up to 16 cm),
WS 95–110 cm.

IDENTIFICATION N Africa, Red Sea and Persian Gulf. Resembles Sandwich in overall size and build, but bill bright orange or orange-yellow, not black. Range overlaps with those of larger and darker Greater Crested (q.v.) and very similar, but larger, Royal. Confusion most likely with Royal, but Lesser Crested is noticeably smaller, being only fractionally larger than Sandwich, with relatively smaller head and bill is straighter, slimmer, and less deep at base. The legs are relatively shorter than those of Royal, but slightly longer than in Sandwich. **Adult** resembles Royal in plumage, but upperparts slightly darker grey (although much paler than in Greater Crested), contrasting somewhat with paler grey flight feathers; unlike Royal, forehead remains black well into breeding season, crest is shorter and rump and tail are pale grey rather than white. Bill is often yellower than that of vagrant nominate race of Royal outside breeding season (but very similar in colour to West African race *albidioralis*). **Juvenile** additionally differs from young Royal in having much weaker patterning on upperparts. In flight, overall appearance is of 1st-winter Sandwich with an orange or yellow bill. The pale grey rump and tail can be a useful distinction from Royal on close birds, although paler grey than rest of upperparts, and the underwing shows a weak dark shade along tips of primaries (lacking more extensive greyer shading of 1st-winter Royal). Juveniles and immatures have broadly similar upperwing (and uppertail) pattern to young Royal, but have less prominent dark bar on leading edge of 'arm', weaker dark secondary bar and only rather indistinct dark bar on greater coverts. Juvenile Sandwich has much more heavily marked mantle/scapulars but less boldly patterned upperwing. Vagrants not infrequent in W Europe, usually associating with Sandwich, and indeed mixed pairs have produced offspring on more than one occasion in recent



years; some of these European records, however, are now thought to be of Elegant. The suggestion that Sandwich may very rarely have a yellow or orange bill in our region has not been proven, but should be considered. With this possibility in mind and with birds standing next to Sandwich, concentrate on slightly deeper-based bill, wider white wedge between gape and black of forehead, and slightly darker grey upperparts and pale grey rump and tail of Lesser Crested. Compare also with very similar vagrant Elegant.

SEX/AGE Adult summer has bill bright orange-yellow shading yellower at tip and crown all black. Adult winter has forehead and forecrown white (with some black speckling on forecrown), black hindcrown and 'mask', and bill yellower. Juvenile resembles adult winter, but has brown scalloping on scapulars, brownish mottling on leading edge of wing, and brownish outer primaries, primary coverts, secondaries and tail corners; legs dull orange or yellow, usually soon becoming dusky. 1st-winter has mantle and upperwing coverts greyer, less marked, although tail corners, outer primaries and secondaries still dusky grey; plumages similar until middle of second winter, when becomes much as adult.

VOICE Typical call a harsh 'krrrik-krik', slightly shriller than, but similar to, that of Sandwich.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (nominate illustrated), but perhaps three warranted. Mediterranean birds are slightly larger and darker grey

above than those of Red Sea and Persian Gulf. Mediterranean birds currently included in race *torresii* (otherwise of Australasia). Birds of Red Sea and Persian Gulf included in nominate race, but those of Persian Gulf are intermediate in size, although close to nominate race in mantle shade, and are often included in *torresii*.

SANDWICH TERN *Sterna sandvicensis*

Plate page 439

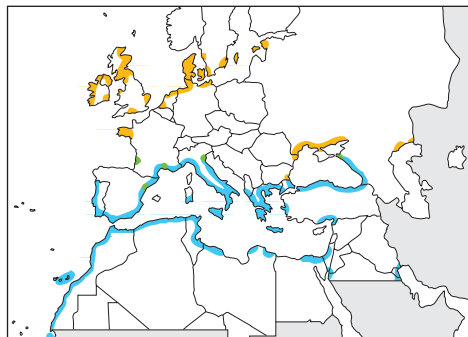
L 36–41 cm (including tail up to 16 cm),
WS 95–105 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Slender, rather short-tailed, medium-sized tern with relatively long black bill (unique among the 'crested' terns) and short black legs. Looks particularly pale in all plumages, generally appearing even whiter than most other pale terns (but not Roseate), and invariably utters harsh, grating call (although calls of Royal and Lesser Crested are similar). **Adult** has slightly ragged appearance to hindcrown, and inconspicuous pale yellow tip to black bill; in bright sunlight underparts often show weak rosy tinge, recalling Roseate (q.v.). Greatest risk of confusion is with Gull-billed (q.v.). **Juvenile** has slightly shorter bill than adult, lacking pale tip, which can suggest Gull-billed, but young Sandwich has fine scaling on upperparts, and shorter legs (see Gull-billed for fuller discussion); pattern of upperparts of juvenile Roseate is similar (see latter for distinctions). In flight, appears very pale overall, although dark tips to primaries show as a narrow dark trailing edge, and dark inner or outermost primaries contrast quite strongly when plumage worn; flight action graceful, with stronger (and often deeper) wingbeats than in smaller pale terns, diving rather more forcefully than Common or Arctic. Relatively long bill and short tail give impression of wings being set further back on body than in Common, and long bill generally carried angled downwards in flight. Flocks generally noisy, with harsh grating call often attracting attention long before birds are seen.

SEX/AGE Crown all black in summer plumage, but mostly white with black rear and sides at other times. Juvenile lacks pale tip to bill and has narrow blackish scaling on mantle and scapulars which is almost lost by autumn. 1st-winter resembles adult winter but some juvenile markings remain on tertials to first spring. 1st-summer resembles adult winter.

VOICE Typical call a deep, far-carrying, ringing, grating 'kirrruk', very distinctive over most of our region

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common but localized. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Lebanon and also, paired with Sandwich Terns, France and Spain. Regular elsewhere on coast of NW Africa, including Atlantic coast, on passage. Occasionally winters in extreme south of our region.) Favours sandy bays, sandspits and river mouths, breeding on offshore islands.



but matched by several similar-sized orange-billed terns. Also gives a clipped 'krik' or 'krik krik'. Juveniles utter a plaintive, high, squeaky, penetrating 'sweet-sweet-sweet' when accompanying adults.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Very slight. 2 races (nominate illustrated). Nominate race is the breeding form of our region, but ringing recoveries from W Europe show that N American race *aculflavida* occurs as a vagrant. Latter inseparable in field, but in hand outer 3–4 primaries, when fresh, show grey tip to outer web and only narrow (1 mm or less) white border to inner web that does not reach shaft. In nominate race, entire feather tip (i.e. both webs) has 2–4-mm-wide white border.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Norway, Poland.) Some winter in coastal waters in the south of our region.) Favours sandy coastal bays, sandspits and river mouths, breeding on low-lying inshore islands and undisturbed beaches. Rarely occurs inland on passage.

ELEGANT TERN *Sterna elegans*

Plate page 454

L 40–43 cm (including tail up to 18 cm),
WS 100–110 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant (breeds W coast of N America). Very similar to Lesser Crested in overall size and build, but bill usually distinctly longer, thinner (although depth at base similar) and more decurved (most obviously on upper mandible). Many individuals are extremely long-billed (with bill looking clearly longer than head), but immature birds with bill not fully grown (so shorter- and straighter-looking) are problematic; in addition males tend to have longer bills than females. Some Lesser Crested have bill of similar length, but with more marked gonydeal angle (gonydeal angle usually impossible to discern on Elegant). The identification of vagrant Elegant and Lesser Crested in Europe is still problematical: individuals of both species have been located among breeding colo-

nies of Sandwich Terns, a minority being identified as Elegant. The suggestion that Sandwich may very rarely have a yellow or orange bill in our region has not been proven, but should be considered. With this possibility in mind, the identity of other than very long-billed birds as Elegant is fraught with difficulty and requires careful analysis and comparison with accompanying birds. **Adult** typically has bill more reddish-orange than in Lesser Crested at all seasons, shading more contrastingly yellower along culmen and at tip (note that bill colour of both species brightest when at peak of breeding condition). Adults also have a relatively longer crest than either Lesser Crested or Sandwich, giving a very shaggy appearance to head, with feathers drooping further down nape when sleeked down;

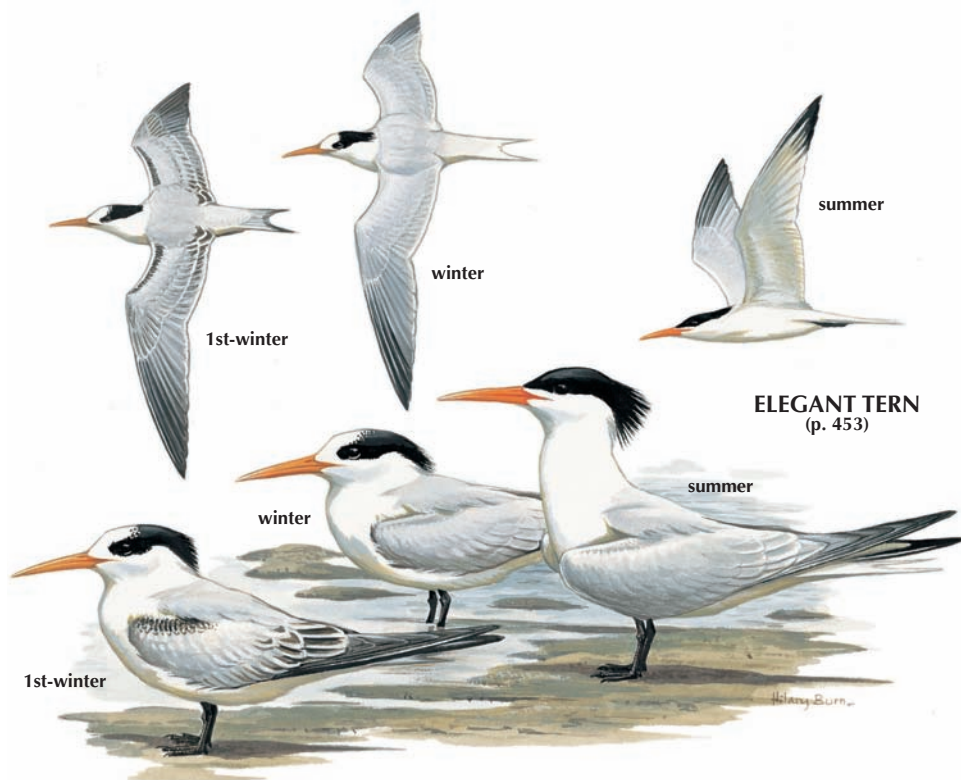
upperparts are similar in tone to those of Sandwich or fractionally darker, but slightly paler than those of Lesser Crested (but without direct comparison this is difficult to evaluate); the rump and tail are much paler grey than in Lesser Crested, appearing white in the field (and often contrasting with darker mantle and back). Additionally, when crown fully black there seems to be narrower white wedge below cap, between eye and bill, than in Lesser Crested (thus more as in Sandwich). Adult summer resembles Royal in plumage, but has upperparts slightly darker grey, contrasting slightly with paler grey flight feathers (primaries dusky when worn, however); forehead remains black well into or even throughout breeding season (forehead becomes whitish in most Royals quite early in breeding season) and crest even longer. Winter crown pattern resembles that of Royal, but rear-central crown blacker (streaked white in Royal) and has black surrounding and in front of eye (eye is almost isolated in both Lesser Crested and Royal). **Juvenile** similar in pattern to young Royal, but upperpart markings rather bolder than in Lesser Crested; bill more yellowish than in adults, but more orange than in young Lesser Crested; legs often yellowish. In flight, overall appearance is of Sandwich with a very slender bright orange bill, the virtually white rump and tail being a useful

distinction from Lesser Crested on close birds (although rump and tail paler grey than rest of upperparts in Lesser Crested); the underwing shows a narrow dark outermost web to outer primary and dusky primary tips (stronger than on underwing of Lesser Crested), and often a dusky wedge on inner primaries (latter seems to be absent in Lesser Crested), but this possibly an effect of wear. Juvenile and immature have stronger upperwing pattern than in Lesser Crested, with darker primaries, secondaries and leading edge to inner wing. 1st-summer may retain some dark in secondaries and primary coverts and, like worn adult, can have dusky outer primaries (Lesser Crested and Royal also have dusky primaries in worn plumage).

SEX/AGE Adult summer has crown all black, while adult winter has crown mostly white with black rear and sides. Juvenile has yellowish-orange bill, which is shorter than in adult, and narrow dark brownish scaling on mantle and scapulars which is almost lost by autumn. In 1st-winter some juvenile markings remain on tertials, secondaries and primary coverts to first spring or even into first summer.

VOICE Typical call a deep, rasping 'kerr-ick', very similar to that of Sandwich Tern.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). A coastal species, favouring similar habitats to Sandwich Tern.

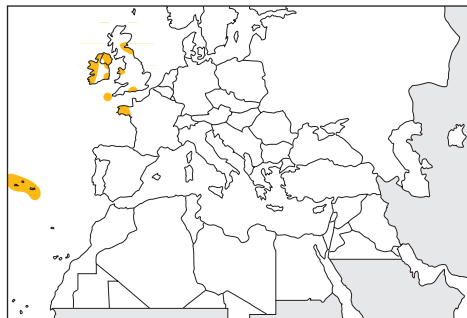


ROSEATE TERN *Sterna dougallii*

Plate page 441

L 33–38 cm (including tail up to 20 cm),
WS 72–80 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Very pale, almost whitish marine tern; a little smaller than Common, but usually has a distinctly longer and more slender bill and differs slightly in other proportions, having somewhat longer legs and shorter primaries. Differences in bill and leg length even greater compared with Arctic (but beware occasional unusually short-billed Roseate). The harsh calls are also distinctive, but coupled with long blackish bill and overall very white appearance can suggest Sandwich. Frequently mixes with other terns, especially coastal Common, although a much scarcer species throughout our region. **Adult** summer has extremely long tail streamers (proportionately the longest of all our terns), extending well beyond the tips of the primaries when standing and trailing behind (even moving about in wind or slipstream) in flight; only much greyer and shorter-billed Arctic approaches Roseate in this respect, but not to the same degree. Adult has pale pearly-grey upperparts that are distinctly paler than in Common or Arctic and clean white underparts (flushed rosy pink when fresh in spring) that lack the grey tinge shown by both Common and Arctic. The black cap is a little more extensive than in Common, contributing to a slightly longer, flatter, fuller-headed appearance. Bill is blackish, with red basal third or half when breeding (although can still be all blackish in spring); beware some spring Common which may retain quite extensive black on bill and vagrant Indian Ocean race *bangsi* of Roseate which has red bill with black tip. Legs are brighter orange-red than those of Common (like Arctic in this respect, but not so blood-red). White tips to primaries are visible on resting bird in good view. Adult winter has whitish forehead (from late summer), short, unremarkable tail streamers and (early in winter) dusky outer primaries; the bill has little or no red at the base and the legs are duller, but overall whiteness of body plumage, including upperparts (which through wear may be even whiter than in spring), and long bill are still apparent. Pink tinge to underparts is slight or absent. **Juvenile** different from majority of juvenile Commons, in fact more closely resembles juvenile Sandwich in plumage (although bill length and shape similar to Common, as bill of young Roseate does not reach full length until late autumn); has distinct white tips to primaries which form a conspicuous white stripe along almost full length of upperside of folded primaries (this feature not shown by Common and only to a small degree by Arctic); the tertials, mantle and scapular feathers are paler grey with buff tips, patterned with blackish subterminal chevrons and basal shaft marks, although some birds are more strongly marked than others (juvenile Common typically has finer dark subterminal bars and ginger tips to these feathers on a darker grey background). Thus, juvenile Roseate has strong black markings above, whereas the dominant pattern of juvenile Common is ginger-brown scaling, although some Commons have very noticeable dark subterminal bars producing strong black scaling recalling Roseate. (Juvenile Arctic is similar to Common but usually lacks ginger feather tips.) Additionally, Roseate has more extensive blackish on head, extending to forehead and anterior lores, the forehead and anterior lores being largely pale on most Commons and Arctics, but again there is some variation. Bill of Roseate is blackish (rarely with some pinkish at base of lower mandible), but base is orange in Common and initially in Arctic (although soon also blackish in latter, which is noticeably tiny-billed). Legs of Roseate are



likewise blackish (orange in Common and initially in much shorter-legged Arctic also, but blackish in the latter by autumn). Outermost tail feather is white, with dark spots at tips to other feathers (outermost tail feather blackish on both juvenile Arctic and juvenile Common). Juvenile Sandwich is much larger, with prominent dusky tail corners. Unlike Common or Arctic, but like Sandwich, starts moult to 1st-winter before leaving for winter quarters. During first autumn the upperparts of Roseate become progressively cleaner grey as juvenile feathers replaced, bill lengthens and legs become dull orange. In flight, Roseate is relatively shorter-winged than Common or Arctic, this, coupled with very white appearance (without conspicuous dark trailing edge to underside of primaries), more protruding head/bill and shallower, faster wingbeats, makes adults appear distinctly different, especially those with fully-grown tail. In all plumages, the white-tipped primaries (most easily seen on underside) are diagnostic but may be difficult to evaluate, as, although both Arctic and Common have a blackish line along the trailing edge of the primaries, this line is very narrow (and can be hard to see on moving wings) and there are some diffuse dusky subterminal markings on underside of primaries of Roseate. (Note: outermost primary of Roseate lacks white tip.) Adult summer often shows contrast between pearly-grey upperparts and dark wedge formed by worn dusky outer primaries (particularly noticeable from mid-summer onwards). Dark wedge is usually limited to outermost three primaries in Roseate, whereas in Common it consists of 5–6 primaries and is also less contrasting (Arctic completely lacks dark wedge). Young Arctic, which is also a very white-looking bird, can be problematical if dark trailing edge to primaries not seen, but they are noticeably small, and have a tiny bill and a dark line along full length of outermost tail feather (lacking in Roseate); additionally, juvenile Arctic has very white forecrown and smaller head than Roseate, weakly marked upperparts and whiter secondaries (lacking weak grey bar shown by Roseate, and Common). Roseate can often give impression of being front-heavy, particularly when tail streamers broken off, as the relatively heavy head and long blackish bill give the appearance of the wings being set further back along the body than in Common or Arctic. Hunting behaviour also slightly different, Roseate tending to quarter larger areas of water than the other two, with faster, shallower (often jerkier) beats, and little hovering; when plunge-diving tends almost to 'fly into the water', rather than vertically diving as Commons and Arctics do, and remains submerged for a fraction longer.

SEX/AGE See Identification. 1st-winter resembles

adult winter but some juvenile tail feathers, tertials and flight feathers are retained. 1st-summer resembles adult winter, but with relatively longer tail streamers, seemingly lacking carpal bar which is often present in 1st-summer Common and Arctic Terns.

VOICE Typical calls are a low, rasping 'kraak' or 'zraach', like a piece of cloth being torn, and a soft, slightly guttural 'cher-vrik' which is not that dissimilar to one of the calls of Sandwich Tern, although less forceful, much less harsh and not so far-carrying (recalls Spotted Redshank). A variety of other calls may be given on breeding grounds. Juveniles utter a plaintive, higher-pitched 'ker-vick' or 'krip' when accompanying adults.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight (apart from bill colour). 2 races (nominate illustrated). Vagrants

reported from Red Sea and Persian Gulf presumed to be of race *bangsi*, which is poorly differentiated except in breeding season, when bill colour is red with black tip (in this respect resembling Common Tern).

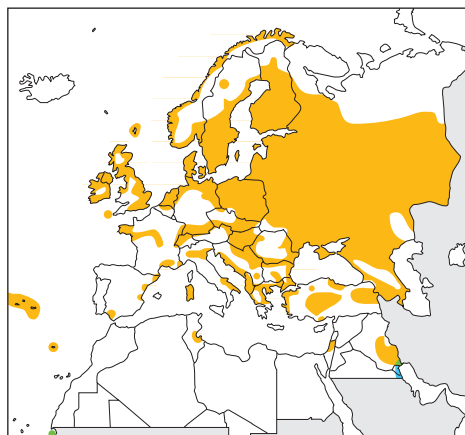
HYBRIDS Very rarely hybrids have been reported from pairings with Common Tern, the offspring showing mixed characters.

STATUS/HABITAT Rare and rapidly decreasing. (Bulk of breeding population is in Azores and Ireland. In addition to mapped range, has bred Germany, Spain, Salvage Is, Tunisia. Winters in tropical W African waters, with passage off Atlantic coasts of N Africa and SW Europe.) Favours waters around small islands, sandy coastal bays and river mouths, breeding on low-lying inshore and offshore islands; also occurs occasionally in estuaries on passage, but exceptionally rare inland.

COMMON TERN *Sterna hirundo*

L 31–35 cm (including tail up to 17 cm), WS 75–85 cm.

IDENTIFICATION The most widespread and familiar tern of our region, occurring both by inland rivers and lakes and along coasts. Very similar to Arctic (q.v. for fuller comparison), from which it differs principally in structure rather than plumage, being slightly larger, with longer bill and legs, larger head, and relatively broader wings and shorter tail (latter in adult summer only). At all ages, subtleties in wing pattern important (see below). **Adult** summer has moderate tail streamers (tail tip equals wingtip, or falls short of it, when perched), and orange-red legs and bill, the latter with a black tip (occasionally bill all red, suggesting Arctic, and in spring and late summer often has extensive blackish on bill, suggesting Roseate); underparts nearly white, with grey wash of varying intensity on many birds. Adult winter similar, but has shorter tail streamers, blackish bill (with reddish at base), orange-red legs, white forehead, and (initially) darker outer primaries, carpal bar and inner secondaries. **Juvenile** shorter- and broader-winged than adult when recently fledged (although primaries reach full length soon after breeding grounds are left). Such birds may look distinctly odd; the upperpart feathers have broad ginger tips and narrow dark subterminal bar, giving a brown-mantled appearance in flight (but ginger fringes soon wear off), the carpal bar is prominent and visible both at rest and in flight, and flying birds show dull greyish primaries and outer tail. In flight, slightly larger, with longer bill, larger head and relatively broader wings than Arctic, but subtleties of wing pattern more important: adult Common has broader dusky trailing edge to underside of primaries and has translucent inner primaries only, whereas Arctic has whole of primaries translucent (this best seen with bird against the light); on upside, adult Common often shows variable dark wedge on either inner or outer primaries, whereas Arctic has uniform grey primaries above. This last difference is a moult effect, the dark wedge being formed by worn older feathers contrasting with fresh newer ones on Common, a species that never completes a moult of all primaries at one time whereas Arctic has a complete primary renewal at each moult; in mid-winter (December to February), however, Common has freshest primary growth with no or little contrast, and this feature is then invalid. Juvenile has darker carpal bar than juvenile Arctic and secondaries are darker and greyer, so trailing edge of inner wing never looks paler than greater/median coverts (a key feature). Flight action markedly more buoyant than Roseate, with faster downstroke than in



Arctic. Dives strongly from a height, often at an angle, tending not to 'step-hover' like Arctic, but generally giving a single hover before a full dive. When feeding over freshwater lakes tends to pick food items from surface in manner of a *Chlidonias* tern instead of diving. See also similar Roseate, Forster's and White-cheeked Terns.

SEX/AGE See Identification. 1st-winter resembles adult winter but retains some juvenile markings on mantle/scapulars and tertials until mid-winter and some juvenile flight feathers are retained until first spring or even first summer. 1st-summer resembles adult winter, but has relatively longer tail streamers and a duskier carpal bar.

VOICE Alarm call a screeched 'kreeeah' or 'kreeerr', a little lower in pitch than that of Arctic Tern (and sometimes sounding disyllabic). More frequently heard from migrants or feeding birds is a short, often repeated, 'kik'. Other calls include a rapid 'kye-kye-kye ...' and a characteristic 'kirri-kirri-kirri'. Juveniles also utter a shrill, repeated 'kee' when accompanying adults.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Only nominate race recorded from our region but birds showing some of the characters of highly distinctive eastern race *longipennis* breed in W Siberia and similar individuals recorded on migration in Middle East. Race *longipennis* has all-black bill, dark brownish-red legs, darker grey cast to body and more white on central tail feathers.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. In addition to mapped

Plate page 440

range, has bred Faeroes, Portugal, Canary Is, Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Cyprus, Lebanon, Kuwait. (Winters chiefly in sub-Saharan African coastal waters, but small numbers winter on coasts in southern parts of our region.) Breeds on low-lying inshore islands,

sandspits, quiet beaches, and inland along slow-flowing rivers and by lakes in open country. On passage, occurs chiefly along coasts and lower reaches of estuaries, and is regular inland at freshwater lakes, although in winter is purely coastal.

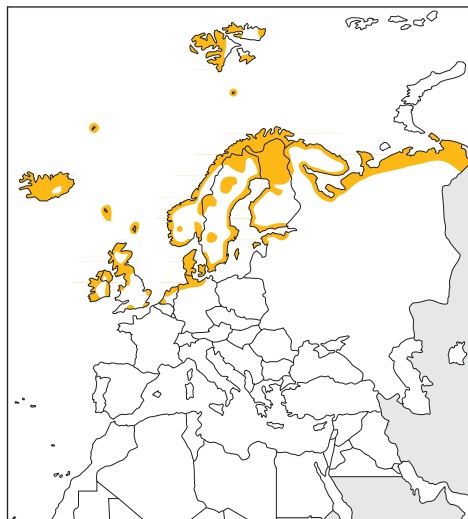
ARCTIC TERN *Sterna paradisaea*

Plate page 440

L 33–38 cm (including tail up to 20 cm),
WS 75–85 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Northern and western parts of our region. Predominantly coastal in zone of overlap with Common Tern. Very similar to latter, and separation difficult unless good views obtained. Overall appearance when perched rather more squat and attenuated than Common, an impression created by relatively smaller, more rounded head (with steeper forehead), shorter bill, relatively shorter body with deeper breast, extremely short legs (may even appear 'legless') and slightly smaller size. Differences in overall shape and wing pattern also important in flight (see below).

Adult summer has longer tail streamers than Common (extending a little beyond wingtips when perched, whereas in Common the two are of roughly equal length) and shorter and darker red legs and bill (bill normally lacks black tip of Common, but some spring birds have blackish tip as vestiges of winter coloration remain); underparts typically greyer than most Common, with whiter sides of head, but a pronounced grey wash below often present on Common also. When standing with Commons, the smaller black cap of Arctic may be apparent, the black not extending so far onto nape as in that species; additionally, the primaries lack the dusky wedges which may become apparent with wear on Common. Adults do not acquire full winter plumage until in Antarctic winter quarters, whereas Common attains majority of winter plumage in autumn. Adult winter Arctic basically resembles summer, except that forehead becomes white, bill becomes blackish and tail streamers are shorter. **Juvenile** distinctly smaller overall and smaller-headed than juvenile Common, with shorter, finer, blackish bill and very short blackish (orange-red when recently fledged) legs; the upperparts are less patterned, with carpal bar much fainter, scalloped markings less ginger, and whiter secondaries and primaries (juvenile Common has prominent dusky carpal bar and bright orange-red legs); whiteness of plumage recalls Roseate. Shows less white on forehead and below eye. In flight, adult appears smaller-headed, shorter-necked and longer-tailed than Common, with wings appearing to be set further forward on body and narrower 'hand'; overall a more elegant bird. The upperwing is very uniform in tone, lacking variable dark wedge on outer primaries which is usually shown by Common and Roseate from mid-summer until early winter; from below, against the light, the whole of the underside of the flight feathers is uniformly translucent (only inner primaries look translucent on Common), and the dark trailing edge of the primaries is very narrow (often invisible), thus suggesting Roseate. Juvenile shows only a diffuse or at most a moderately distinct darker grey carpal bar (not a distinct blackish bar as in Common) that is positioned further back from leading edge of wing, paler primaries with blackish tips (primaries are darker grey and more uniform in Common)



and whiter secondaries (Common shows weak grey secondary bar). Flight action is more delicate than in Common, with faster, shallower wingbeats (body rises and falls with beats, giving a more 'elastic' impression); when feeding, rapidly beats wings and dives with distinctive step-hover action (recalling Little Tern). Small size, whiteness and feeding action can cause distant juveniles to be mistaken for Little Tern. See also Common and Roseate Terns.

SEX/AGE See Identification. 1st-winter resembles adult winter but may retain some juvenile markings on upperparts until mid-winter. 1st-summer resembles adult winter, but has relatively longer tail streamers.

VOICE Alarm call a screeched 'kree-ah' or 'kree-err, a little higher, less harsh and more rising in pitch than that of Common Tern. More frequently heard from migrants or feeding birds is a short, often repeated, 'kik'. Other calls at colonies include a hard, rattling 'kt-kt-kt ...' when chasing off other birds, and a shrill, plaintive 'pee-pee-pee'. Juveniles utter a shrill, repeated 'kee' when accompanying adults.

STATUS/HABITAT Common to locally abundant. (In addition to mapped range, has bred France, Belgium, Poland. Winters chiefly in Antarctic waters. Only very exceptionally recorded in winter in our region. Main passage on Atlantic seaboard, but vagrants recorded east to Red Sea and Persian Gulf.) Breeds on low-lying inshore islands and coastal beaches, locally also along rivers and at freshwater lakes. On passage, occurs chiefly along coasts; found inland only under exceptional weather conditions.

ALEUTIAN TERN *Sterna aleutica*

Plate page 442

L 32–34 cm (including tail up to 17 cm),
WS 75–80 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Vagrant (breeds N Pacific). A highly marine species. Recalls Arctic Tern in size and shape, but easily distinguished by much darker grey upperparts contrasting with white rump and tail, noticeably shorter tail streamers, black bill and legs, greyer underparts and clear-cut white forecrown and black loreal band. Greyness of underparts, black bill and dark legs shared by eastern race *longipennis* of Common (which may possibly occur in our region), but latter has black forecrown, longer bill, somewhat longer tail streamers and quite different underwing pattern and calls. Crown pattern and dark secondaries suggest both Sooty and Bridled, but latter species both have blackish rump and tail (except for outer-most tail feathers), much duskier or blacker upperparts and whiter underparts. Adult winter Aleutian has much whiter underparts than adult summer, and white of forehead extends diffusely onto forecrown; darker upperparts and distinctive underwing pattern remain important features. Immature plumages little

known. In flight, has relatively narrow ‘hand’ (creating elegant impression, rather as in Arctic) and has markedly deep and relatively slow wingbeats. Underwing differs from that of all other similar-sized terns in having dusky bar along secondaries; like Common, inner primaries are contrastingly translucent when overhead and the dark tips to the primaries are relatively wide.

SEX/AGE See Identification. Juvenile (unlikely in our region) has reddish-yellow legs and lower mandible, and is dark grey above, scaled buff-brown, with pale grey rump and tail, blackish primaries and carpal bar and dusky nape. Greater coverts are broadly tipped with white. 1st-summer resembles adult winter.

VOICE Flight call very distinctive, a soft, whistled and rather wader-like ‘twee-ee-ee’, quite unlike call of any other tern.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). An oceanic tern, breeding on low-lying coasts and islands. Winter habits unknown, but most likely deeply pelagic.

FORSTER'S TERN *Sterna forsteri*

Plate page 442

L 33–36 cm (including tail up to 18 cm),
WS 73–82 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Resembles Common Tern, but build distinctly bulkier, with relatively longer and stouter bill, larger and more angular-looking head, slightly longer and thicker legs, and shorter, relatively broader wings. Adult summer very similar to Common in plumage and bare-part coloration, but lacks grey wash on underparts and has pale grey tail with white outer edges (white with blackish outer edges in adult Common, but grey in tail is pale and often hard to determine in Forster's). Bill base and legs tend to be more orange, less red than in Common and there is usually more white on the lores. In addition to structural differences mentioned above, tail usually projects beyond wingtips when at rest (equal in Common), although this is partly a function of shorter wings. In flight, looks very uniformly pale above and shows characteristic pale, silvery-white flight feathers that contrast with darker grey coverts (but contrast reduced when primaries worn); has relatively wide dark trailing edge to primaries both above and below (unlike slimmer, smaller-headed Arctic). Only inner primaries are translucent, as in Common. Flight action relatively slower and steadier than in Common, diving suddenly and forcefully in manner of Sandwich. **Adult winter** much more distinctive,

having a blackish ‘mask’ through eye (recalling winter Gull-billed) contrasting with white crown and nape; bill becomes blackish by early autumn. Long bill renders confusion with Gull-billed unlikely, although flight action, rather heavy body and winter head pattern suggest this species.

SEX/AGE See Identification. Juvenile (unlikely in our region) only weakly marked with brownish above, lacking dark carpal bar of young Common and other similar smaller terns, and has very similar facial pattern to winter adult. Bill is usually blackish, lacking orange base shown by most Common. 1st-winter very similar to adult winter, but has shorter tail streamers and dark tips to tail feathers.

VOICE Alarm call a nasal ‘kyarr’ or ‘kwarr’, shorter and lower-pitched than that of Common Tern. Also gives a rapid ‘kek-kek-kek ...’ and a harsh ‘kerr’.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). (Winters further north in the Americas has many other terns, and vagrants have overwintered, or even been first located as wintering birds.) In natural range, favours inshore coastal waters, estuaries and brackish marshes. Breeds mainly inland at freshwater marshes and lakes, but also along low-lying coasts and on inshore islands.

WHITE-CHEEKED TERN *Sterna repressa*

Plate page 441

L 32–34 cm (including tail up to 16 cm),
WS 75–83 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Red Sea and Persian Gulf. Slightly smaller and stockier-bodied than Common, with relatively longer bill and legs and shorter, narrower wings. **Adult** summer is slate-grey both above and below, including rump and tail, contrasting with white sides of head; the elongated tail streamers, deeply forked tail, long orange-red (but black-tipped) bill and grey ventral region provide an easy distinction from Whiskered. Adult winter is white below, and both bill and legs are black; the forehead shows a small amount of white



but crown often wholly black; grey rump and deeply forked grey tail, dark grey upperparts and long bill

prevent confusion with all other terns. (Beware *longipennis*-like Common Terns, known to migrate through N Red Sea, but these have white rump and tail and different underwing pattern.) Moulting birds show variable dusky patching on underparts and may lack tail streamers. In flight, underwing typically shows a characteristic broad dusky trailing edge to both primaries and secondaries that contrasts with the whitish centre (the pale central panel being accentuated by greyer lesser underwing coverts), but in some light conditions underwing can appear more uniformly whitish. In fresh birds upperside of flight feathers are lighter grey than wing coverts but flight feathers darken with wear. Feeds offshore in dense flocks which are constantly on the move, dipping to pick from surface of water or executing short, floppy dives. **Juvenile** recalls juvenile Common in having a dusky carpal bar, dusky secondary bar (which becomes

paler when worn) and brown scaling on upperparts. Rump often paler grey than in adults, contrasting with dark outer tail feathers, and bill blackish with most of lower mandible reddish. Underwing pattern, with wide dusky band along both primaries and secondaries, and whiter centre to overall greyish-white underwing, is easiest distinction from juvenile Common and Whiskered (latter also has stouter bill and shorter legs).

SEX/AGE See Identification. 1st-winter and 1st-summer resemble adult winter, but lack tail streamers and show blackish carpal bar, outer tail and primaries; not fully adult until second spring.

VOICE Alarm call resembles that of Common Tern: call a harsh, rasping 'kee-arrrh'; also gives a shorter 'keep' or 'kep'.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common to abundant. (Winters in Indian Ocean.) Breeds on offshore islands, visiting coastal bays, sandspits and coral reefs.

BRIDLED TERN *Sterna anaethetus*

Plate page 443

L 34–36 cm (including tail up to 18 cm),
WS 77–81 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Subtropical seas at southern fringe of our region. Blackish upperparts (including rump and tail) contrasting with white underparts shared only by very similar Sooty Tern, differences being apparent only if seen well or in good light conditions. Bridled appears about size of Common Tern, but is longer-winged and longer-billed. Compared with Sooty, is a little smaller, slightly slimmer and relatively longer-tailed, but such differences of little value in our region where Sooty only a vagrant. Most useful feature is shape of white forehead patch: in Bridled, the white extends back to rear of eye as a supercilium (Sooty has a wider but squarer white patch that merely reaches eye), and the black loreal stripe of Bridled is wider than in Sooty and extends to base of upper mandible (in Sooty, this stripe is narrower and more tapering, narrowly joining with gape). If light conditions permit, a clear contrast can be seen between black crown and greyish mantle in Bridled, whereas there is virtually no contrast between crown and uniformly blackish upperparts of Sooty. Bridled has mantle greyer than wings in good light, sometimes giving pale-collared effect, but distant birds often show little contrast. Atlantic race of Bridled has rump and tail dark greyish (blackish in Sooty), whereas Indian Ocean race has only mantle distinctly greyish. In Sooty, only the outermost tail feather is white (a feature shared by Indian Ocean race of Bridled), but Atlantic race of Bridled has outermost three feathers white. Adult winter and 1st-winter show extensive pale mottling on crown, but supercilium normally evident (although dark loreal stripe usually less distinct and sometimes lacking), and whitish fringes to mantle feathers. Juvenile has white underparts (unlike juvenile Sooty, which appears dusky below). Flight action buoyant and graceful. Underwing similar in both species, basically white with dark flight



feathers; Sooty, however, has underside of primaries wholly blackish, whereas Bridled has underside of primaries mostly whitish with just a dusky trailing and leading edge to 'hand' (an easy distinction, even for quite distant birds). Typically found well offshore in small parties, feeding chiefly by dipping to pick small fish from surface layer or by hovering and making short plunge-dives (Sooty rarely dives). Often perches on floating driftwood. See also vagrant Aleutian Tern.

SEX/AGE See Identification. Juvenile usually has obvious pale feather fringes to upperparts and merely has whitish tips to tail feathers, lacking white outermost feathers of adults; head pattern obscured by whitish streaking, but whiter supercilium evident. 1st-winter often retains juvenile tail and some wing coverts but is otherwise close to adult winter, although black loreal stripe less obvious.

VOICE Typical calls include a staccato, yapping 'wep-wep' of alarm on breeding grounds. Feeding parties utter a variety of short, harsh calls.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (*antarctica* illustrated). Race *melanoptera* of Atlantic and Caribbean has greyer rump and tail and more extensive white in outer tail feathers than *antarctica* of the Red Sea and Persian Gulf (see Identification).

STATUS/HABITAT Local and uncommon in our region. Breeds on both inshore and offshore islands, dispersing over offshore waters at other times.

SOOTY TERN *Sterna fuscata*

Plate page 443

L 36–39 cm (including tail up to 19 cm),
WS 82–94 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Vagrant from tropical and subtropical seas. Blackish upperparts (including rump and tail) contrasting with white underparts shared only by very similar Bridled Tern; Sooty, however, is somewhat larger, approaching Sandwich Tern in size, whereas

Bridled is about size of Common Tern. Sooty has uniform blackish upperparts which hardly contrast with black crown, a larger white forehead patch which does not extend back over eye, narrower, shorter and more tapering loreal stripe, and dusker underside of

primaries. Distinctions are more fully discussed under Bridled. Juvenile and 1st-winter differ markedly from Bridled in having dusky-brown head and underparts (including underwing), and conspicuous whitish spotting on scapulars and wing coverts. Confusion more likely with Brown Noddy, but latter has wedge-shaped tail (not obviously forked), longer, heavier bill and lacks pale spotting above; 1st-winter Sooty generally shows some whitish on ventral region and has paler central underwing, unlike Brown Noddy, which is almost uniformly dark above and below. Flight action strong and purposeful, often soaring and wheeling high into the air, diving down to pick food from water surface. Unusual in that it rarely dives.

SEX/AGE See Identification. 1st-winter birds become progressively paler on crown, lower underparts and

on underwing; by first summer closer to adult, but has some brownish below, lacks white in outer tail, and has more diffuse crown pattern. Even 2nd-summer shows some brownish markings on underparts.

VOICE Call, usually given only about breeding islands, a high-pitched 'ker-wacki-wah' or 'wide-awake'; also a shorter 'kraark'.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Rather slight. 2 races (nominate illustrated). Most vagrants have been of nominate Atlantic/Caribbean race, but Gulf of Aqaba vagrants presumed to be of race *nubilosa* which has weak grey wash to lower underparts and underwing when in fresh adult plumage, but bleaches whiter.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe, Azores, Salvage Is, Tunisia, Israel). In natural range, breeds on offshore islands. Pelagic outside breeding season.

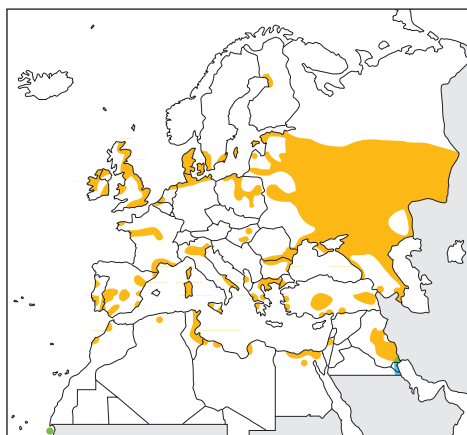
LITTLE TERN *Sterna albifrons*

Saunders's Tern, Saunders's Little Tern (*S. a. saundersi*)

L 22–24 cm (including tail up to 9.5 cm),
WS 51–56 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Tiny, narrow-winged tern with well-forked, but short, tail and relatively long, slender bill, found on both coasts and large inland river systems. Adult summer has yellow bill with black tip, yellow or orange legs and white forehead patch; these features, coupled with very small size, render identification relatively straightforward. In autumn and winter, adult winter resembles 1st-winter in having black bill and dusky carpal bar (see Sex/Age). In flight (and also at rest), blackish in outermost primaries forms a stripe at outer edge of wing which contrasts with pale grey and white of remainder of plumage; has markedly fast, flickering, rather jerky wingbeats and distinctive feeding action, hovering with bill down and then diving suddenly. Short tail, rather uniformly narrow wings and rapid, jerky wingbeats produce a distinctive 'stunted but hyperactive' impression. Juvenile has slender blackish bill with yellowish base to lower mandible, dull pinkish to yellowish-brown legs, and scaly patterning (initially with an obvious buff tinge, and strong blackish markings) on upperparts; even if this combination of characters cannot be discerned, very small size and hovering feeding action are distinctive. *Chlidonias* terns approach Little Tern in size, but are easily distinguished by relatively broader wings, stouter bills, almost square tails and different feeding action (apart from Whiskered, they do not hover or dive, and even Whiskered does so only sometimes and less forcefully). Juvenile and 1st-winter Arctic Terns can be confusing when seen with Common Terns as they often appear distinctly small and also hover before diving, but they have shorter bills than Little, are larger and lack dark in primaries. Little Terns are inshore birds, usually encountered in pairs or very small parties; they freely mix with other terns at tern roosts, when their tiny size is especially apparent.

SEX/AGE See Identification. Adults may lose black tip to bill during summer; adult winter has wholly blackish bill, dusky-yellow feet, speckled forehead and greyer (not whitish) rump and tail, and dusky carpal bar. 1st-winter can be difficult to separate from adult winter, but shows more extensive dusky carpal bar, darker primaries (not just outermost) which are fresh, not abraded as in adults, and dark subterminal spots on tail feathers. 1st-summer often shows vestiges of dusky carpal bar, a more mottled crown than in adult, and winter bare-part coloration. Has most complex moult sequences of all terns of our region, which makes ageing difficult.



VOICE Typical calls include a sharp 'kik-kik' and a harsh, rasping 'kyik' of alarm, and also a rapidly repeated 'kirrikikki, kirrikiki'. Juvenile gives a piping 'piepp'.

TAXONOMY The form *saundersi* is often treated as a separate species under the name **Saunders's Tern**, but no consistent and significant morphological or other differences have yet been established between *saundersi* and *S. a. albifrons* and the two forms appear to intergrade in S Iraq and the NW Persian Gulf.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight but complex. 3 races (nominate and *saundersi* illustrated). Race *guineae* of Banc d'Arguin, Mauritania, averages smaller than nominate race and usually lacks black bill tip in breeding season (but this feature is absent or largely lacking in a small proportion of nominate race also). Race *saundersi* ('Saunders's Tern'), which breeds from S Red Sea and C Persian Gulf to Pakistan and has occurred as a vagrant in N Red Sea and possibly NW Persian Gulf, averages fractionally smaller (L 21–23 cm, WS 50–53 cm). Adult summer differs in having slightly paler grey upperparts, brownish or yellowish-brown legs (orange or yellow in Little), greyer rump and tail uniform with upperparts (white or pale grey in Little), squarer and more extensive white forehead (lacking supercilium effect), and blacker outer primaries (three rather than two outer primaries black and less suffused with grey; rarely, however, Little may

Plate page 444

have black on three outer primaries, too); Saunders's is also marginally smaller than Little. Non-breeding adults seem to be rather darker grey on upperparts (including rump and tail) than Little, and the dusky carpal bar a little more extensive; winter plumage attained earlier (July) than in Little Tern, which attains winter plumage from September to November. Variation within Little Tern produces birds which may show some of these features, and indeed hybridization between nominate race and *saundersi* seems likely in NW Persian Gulf, where many apparent intermediate specimens are known. On breeding grounds *saundersi* is a coastal form, whereas in adjacent areas Little is usually found in freshwater habitats (although

reaching coast in Iraq), but outside breeding season distributions overlap. Conclusive identification of *saundersi* outside breeding period, or away from known breeding areas, is therefore fraught with problems and may not be possible in the field. Seasonal and age differences as nominate race. Voice has been inadequately studied; calls seem similar, although some calls said to lack chattering quality of those of nominate race.

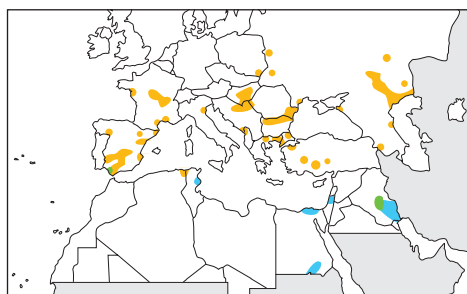
STATUS/HABITAT Locally fairly common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Czechoslovakia, Austria, Yugoslavia, Cyprus, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan.) Shingle banks and sand-bars along coasts and broad inland rivers, and low-lying inshore islands.

WHISKERED TERN *Chlidonias hybridus*

Plate page 444

L 23–25 cm (including tail up to 9 cm), WS 74–78 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Small, stocky freshwater tern. Larger and bulkier, with relatively broader wings, often stouter bill, more deeply notched tail and slightly longer legs than Black or White-winged. Somewhat intermediate in structure between the two other marsh terns and the smaller *Sterna* species, but closer to former. As with other *Chlidonias*, at rest the wings project well beyond tail. **Adult summer** distinctive: overall dusky-grey (with an almost silvery cast to the wings in strong light), with contrasting black crown and whitish cheeks, underwing and undertail coverts, a coloration matched only by adult summer White-cheeked Tern (q.v.) of Red Sea and Persian Gulf and suggested by some Arctic Terns (and *longipennis*-like Common Terns), but tail of Whiskered always shorter and only very shallowly notched in comparison. **Adult winter** similar to adult winter White-winged in being overall very pale grey above and white below (both lack breast smudge of Black); structural differences are important for separation. Whiskered also lacks vestigial black markings on underwing coverts often present on White-winged, black on crown extends back from eye in a more *Sterna*-like fashion (not extending below eye level behind eye), the mid and hindcrown is distinctly streaked (rather than mottled), nape lacks white-collared effect of both White-winged and Black (but this not always evident in pale winter plumage), and the wings lack the slightly darker leading edge to the coverts often shown by the other two marsh terns but often show dark outer primaries when worn (or darker lines along primaries when plumage fresh). **Juvenile** shows a dark saddle like most young marsh terns but lacks breast smudge of Black (or shows a small, weak smudge) and is thus most similar to White-winged. Again structure all-important (see above), especially stout bill, less rounded crown and distinctly notched tail (White-winged has tail almost square). Whiskered has more extensive dark on hindcrown and nape (nape widely dark almost to mantle), whereas White-winged has narrow stripe of dark on nape and massive extension of white up onto hindcrown from sides of neck (creating partially hooded effect); the rump is only slightly paler grey than the tail (in White-winged the rump is distinctly whiter), the upperwing is more uniformly pale and generally the forewing lacks the darker shade along the lesser coverts shown by White-winged (but some Whiskered do show a distinct dark shade here). Scapulars and tertials show pale buff fringes that contrast with blackish subterminal markings (White-winged lacks obvious pale fringes and subterminal



markings much less distinct, but beware effects of wear). The overall slightly larger size, stouter bill and more notched tail of Whiskered in comparison with the other two marsh terns can cause confusion with juvenile *Sterna* terns (especially White-cheeked), which have shorter tails, blunter wings and grey-washed rump and tail in comparison with adults, but Whiskered has diffuse (not clearly defined) dark trailing edge to primary undersides and lacks dusky carpal bar on upperwing. Both these latter features less apparent on juvenile Arctic, however, but this has shorter legs than Whiskered, deeper tail fork and more patterned wings; beware also 1st-summer Arctic. Feeding action of dipping to water surface typical of all three marsh terns, but note that Common and Arctic Terns readily feed in this manner over fresh water; Whiskered will also plunge-dive like a *Sterna* tern, but more weakly. Flight action tends to be faster and steadier, more *Sterna*-like, than Black or White-winged. Sociable at all seasons, but forms looser and more scattered gatherings than the other marsh terns. Readily perches on posts, trees and overhead wires.

SEX/AGE See Identification. 1st-winter resembles adult winter but retains some juvenile feathers on upperparts until about mid-winter. 1st-summer often patchy or even all whitish below.

VOICE On breeding grounds, utters a hoarse, rasping 'kersch' when overhead, likened to rusty nail being drawn from a plank. Other calls include a short 'kek', often repeated.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Belgium, Netherlands, Germany, Lithuania, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Portugal, Morocco, Tunisia. Most winter south of the Sahara.) Breeds by lowland freshwater marshes, fishponds etc. with fringing or emergent vegetation. Outside breeding season, found at more open lakes and reservoirs, locally also coastal lagoons and estuaries.

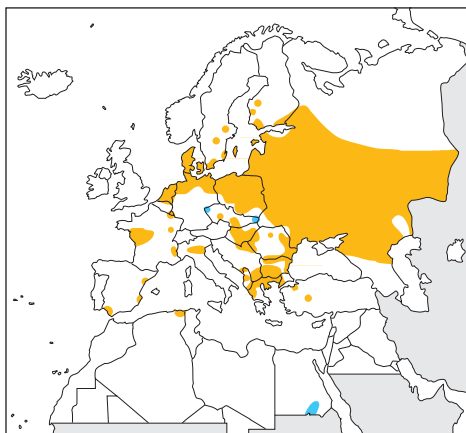
BLACK TERN *Chlidonias niger*

Plate page 445

L 22–24 cm (including tail up to 8 cm), WS 64–68 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Small tern of fresh water (passage and breeding) or coastal waters, estuaries and lagoons (passage and winter). Compared with *Sterna* species, is shorter-winged and shorter-tailed, with only a slight tail fork (tail looks square-ended when spread). At rest, wings project well beyond tail. Flight light and buoyant, usually patrolling fairly low over water, or hovering before dipping in typical marsh tern fashion to daintily pick prey from water surface, sometimes splashing onto surface; also catches flying insects, sometimes rising high into air. Highly sociable, both on breeding grounds and on passage. **Adult summer** distinctive, being blackish-grey overall (darkest on head and underparts) with contrasting white vent and underwings; White-winged has much blacker head and body plumage, whiter rear end and striking black (not whitish) underwing coverts. Becomes very patchy-looking on head and underparts by late summer as moult proceeds. **Adult winter** and **Juvenile** are white below, with contrasting relatively dark grey upperparts, including rump and tail; a solid dusky smudge at the sides of the breast is distinctive and not shown by the other two marsh terns. A weak breast patch is shown by some Whiskered, however, and structural differences, head pattern and paler upperpart ground colour are useful in such cases (Black has head pattern closer to White-winged). See White-winged and Whiskered for fuller discussion. Note that vagrant American race of Black can have dusky breast patch obscured by dusky sides of body (see Geographical Variation).

SEX/AGE Sexes similar, but in summer plumage female is greyer below, being sootiest on head. Juvenile resembles adult winter, but mantle and leading edge of forewing markedly darker (can have a saddle effect suggesting White-winged, q.v.). 1st-winter resembles adult winter but retains some juvenile feathering on upperparts until about mid-winter. 1st-



summer has mostly winter plumage, and even 2nd-summer birds are distinctly patchy below.

VOICE Usual call a weak, sharp 'kik' or 'kik-kik'. Also gives a short, shrill, nasal 'kyeh'.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (nominate illustrated). Vagrant N American race *surinamensis* (has reached Iceland) is much blacker on head and body in summer plumage and has whiter leading edge to upperwing than nominate race; juveniles have dusky flanks as well as breast patches.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Britain, Austria, Israel, Armenia. Almost all winter south of the Sahara.) Breeds by freshwater lakes, fishponds and marshes with extensive emergent or fringing vegetation. On passage, found at more open lakes, lagoons and estuaries, and along coasts.

WHITE-WINGED TERN *Chlidonias leucopterus*

Plate page 445

White-winged Black Tern

L 20–23 cm (including tail up to 7.5 cm), WS 63–67 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Small freshwater tern of east of our region. Closely resembles Black in size and structure, but bill usually smaller, head more rounded, tail less notched and wings marginally broader and blunter. **Adult summer** striking, with jet-black head, underparts and underwing coverts contrasting with silvery underside to flight feathers, white upper forewing and white 'rear end'; Black has all-whitish underwing and is duller and greyer overall, including 'rear end' (but note that vagrant American race of Black is blacker on head and body and has whiter leading edge to upper forewing than nominate race). When perched, blacker body, whiter shoulders and ventral area, and red legs are useful features of White-winged in comparison with Black. **Adult winter** much closer to Whiskered, being markedly pale overall, but through autumn and well into winter most have vestiges of black underwing coverts in form of scattered, or lines of, black feathering (features never shown by Black or Whiskered); black on crown almost disappears, leaving a dusky patch behind eye (recalling much larger Gull-billed) and a grey smudge on hindcrown. Different head pattern and usually smaller bill gives rise to 'sweeter' facial expression than in Black. Birds with



wholly white underwing best separated from Whiskered by structure (see Whiskered), especially virtually square tail and small bill, and by head pattern, much whiter rump and indistinct narrow greyer leading edge to wing coverts. Compare also 2nd-winter Little Gull. **Juvenile** lacks diagnostic breast smudge of Black, and has striking blackish-brown saddle contrasting with very white rump and mostly pale wings (Black usually has less obvious dark saddle that

contrasts less against grey rump and darker wings); juvenile Whiskered also has a strong saddle and can be confusing, but structure useful (White-winged has a small, slim bill, more rounded crown, virtually square tail and is smaller than Whiskered). Juvenile White-winged has a prominent vertical black patch behind eye (extending below eye level) joining black crown centre, and the sides of the head behind the eye patch are very white, almost meeting at the nape to form a wide collar, but divided by a narrow blackish line down nape (juvenile Whiskered has black not or only just extending below eye level, and wider blackish line down nape, producing less of a collared look); the rump is much whiter than the pale grey tail (little contrast in Whiskered) and the leading and trailing edges to the upperwing are darker than in Whiskered, forming a border to pale central upperwing. Juvenile Black is more strongly patterned above than adult winter Black, with the saddle sometimes being remarkably contrasting, but Black has dusky breast smudges, only slightly paler grey rump and darker lesser coverts than in White-winged; conversely, some White-winged are paler-saddled than usual. Like the other *Chlidonias*, this is a very gregarious species and feeds with typical dipping marsh-tern manner, but

unlike Black is rarely seen feeding over the sea.

SEX/AGE Sexes similar, but adult female summer duller black with grey-washed tail. 1st-winter shows some vestiges of juvenile saddle (especially on upper mantle) until mid- to late winter, and by mid-winter (when outside our region) outer primaries very dark and abraded in comparison with newly moulted adult primaries. 1st-summer birds basically in winter plumage or merely show patches of black on head and body; those with patches of white in otherwise full summer plumage are probably 2nd-summer birds.

VOICE Usual calls are a loud, harsh, high-pitched 'kreek' and harsh, creaking, rather Grey Partridge-like 'kesch'.

HYBRIDS Very rarely, mixed pairing of Black and White-winged has been recorded, and some particularly problematical birds encountered may be hybrids.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Belgium, Germany, Italy, Austria, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Estonia.) Breeds by freshwater lakes, fishponds and marshes with extensive emergent or fringing vegetation. Outside breeding season, also on more open lakes, estuaries and coastal lagoons but not normally at sea (except on migration over the Mediterranean etc.).

BROWN NODDY *Anous stolidus*

Plate page 436

Common Noddy

L 38–40 cm (including tail up to 15 cm),
WS 77–85 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Vagrant from tropical and subtropical seas. Dusky seabird with long wings and long, wedge-shaped tail, perhaps likely to be recognized as a tern only by long, slender bill. Dark sooty-brown plumage relieved only by whitish crown (in adults), quite unlike any other seabird of our region, although juvenile Sooty Tern similar in overall size and coloration, but has less imposing bill, a clearly-forked tail and pale spots and marks on upperparts. Flight steady and direct, with slow beats, circling to skim down and pick food items from surface of the sea or briefly hovering with fanned tail before dipping to water. Tail looks pointed when closed, but, while central feathers are being moulted, shows a shallow fork when spread. Compare dark juvenile skuas, which have short bill and

tail, are generally larger and have even more powerful and determined flight action. Could also be mistaken at a distance for an all-dark shearwater, especially Wedge-tailed, but flight action very different and tail longer. Perches readily on buoys and posts inshore.

SEX/AGE Juveniles have less obvious pale crown than adults (with pale often restricted to forehead and forecrown), a thin pale line above eye, and indistinct pale fringes to feathers of upperparts and wing coverts. Pale crown can vanish in worn birds.

VOICE Generally silent away from breeding colonies.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). Vagrants from Indian Ocean may possibly occur in future in Red Sea or Persian Gulf. Pelagic, breeding on offshore islands.

SKIMMERS *Rynchopidae*

I species

A small family of tern-like birds, noted for the remarkable structure of their bills and peculiar feeding actions (see species text).

Unlikely to be confused with any other birds, due to their highly distinctive appearance.

AFRICAN SKIMMER *Rynchops flavirostris*

Plate page 436

L 38–40 cm, WS 125–135 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Egypt only. Unmistakable if seen well, recalling a large, bulky, pied-plumaged tern with

a large, heavy head and an enormous and grotesque bill: upper mandible much shorter than protruding

lower. Adults have orange bills, becoming yellowish towards tip, and red legs; the blackish-brown upperparts contrast with white underparts and band along trailing edge of secondaries. Juveniles have bill and legs brownish-yellow, and browner, scaly upperparts. Feeds by flying low over water with head and bill drooped and most of lower mandible submerged, leaving a V-shaped wake behind. Flies with a peculiar flickering action as it skims the surface for fish. In normal flight, wingbeats are steady and quite tern-like. Rests in tern-like fashion on sand-bars, with wings projecting well beyond short tail. Usually in

small parties.

SEX/AGE Adult winter has nape mottled whitish and whole plumage duller. 1st-winter resembles adult winter, but has brownish (not whitish with dark centre) tail, mottled lores and white (not dark) leading edge of wing; but these juvenile features are lost during first winter.

VOICE Call a relatively loud, forceful 'kip'.

STATUS/HABITAT Very rare but regular visitor to Nile valley of Egypt (chiefly Lake Nasser, where has bred) from sub-Saharan Africa. Favours slow-flowing shallow rivers or open lakes with sand-bars and sandy islets.

AUKS (or Alcids) Alcidae

9 species (3 vagrant)

Small to medium-sized seabirds, with plump bodies, stout necks and short tails. Overall shape, especially of guillemots (or murre), recalls penguins of Southern Oceans, this similarity enhanced when ashore by upright stance of most species. Auks are so well adapted to a marine existence that legs of limited use on land, birds merely resting on tarsus, but Atlantic Puffin an exception. All species fly with rapid, almost whirring wingbeats low over sea, with torpedo-shaped, long, plump bodies and relatively narrow, pointed wings giving appearance unlike other seabirds. They feed entirely by diving, swimming low in water with neck retracted and short tails often elevated and diving with partially opened wings to 'fly' underwater. Almost all auks are sociable species, breeding in large colonies on islands and remote cliffs by colder northern seas; lay one or two eggs on cliff ledges, in crevices, under boulders or in burrows (latter habit only exhibited by Atlantic Puffin in our region). Juveniles of species nesting on sheer cliffs leave breeding sites by jumping into sea when still tiny and partially downy; these juveniles may be easily confused with Little Auk if alone, but are normally accompanied by adults until full size attained (during first autumn). Northern populations of some species migrate southwards in immense numbers for winter and are then a major component of the pelagic seabird population off NW Europe. Particularly susceptible to oil pollution, many washed ashore moribund or dead during spillages.

Auks are unlikely to be mistaken for other kinds of birds, although female and immature Long-tailed Ducks have a rather auk-like quality both on the water and when flying.

Identification within the family mostly straightforward (except for the two guillemot species). Points to concentrate on are:

Overall size and shape • Facial pattern • Bill shape and coloration • Position of white areas of plumage

COMMON GUILLEMOT *Uria aalge*

Plate page 446

Common Murre, Guillemot

L 38–43 cm, WS 64–73 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Overall coloration much as slightly smaller Razorbill, but easily distinguished at short to medium range by slender, all-dark bill and rounded, not pointed, tail. Southern breeding populations dark brown on head and upperparts, hence paler above than much blacker Razorbills, but more northern populations almost as black above. 'Bridled' morph (see Geographical Variation) even easier to separate as a result of white eye-ring and backward projection. Adult winter has foreneck and most of sides of head white, with narrow black line running back from eye. Some show a dark semi-collar at base of neck. On water, when swimming buoyantly, tail less prominently elevated than in Razorbill. In flight, foreparts

less heavy, more pointed and more projecting, and rear end slightly stubbier than in flying Razorbill (with feet projecting beyond tail, unlike Razorbill), but basic plumage pattern and flight action similar. Underwing coverts not uniformly white as in Razorbill and paler flight feathers less contrastingly dark. See also very similar Brünnich's Guillemot. Breeds in densely packed congregations on cliff ledges, with large flocks on sea below (Razorbills typically breed in scattered pairs). Juveniles leave ledges when still tiny and often get 'lost' at sea; beware confusing these with Little Auk.

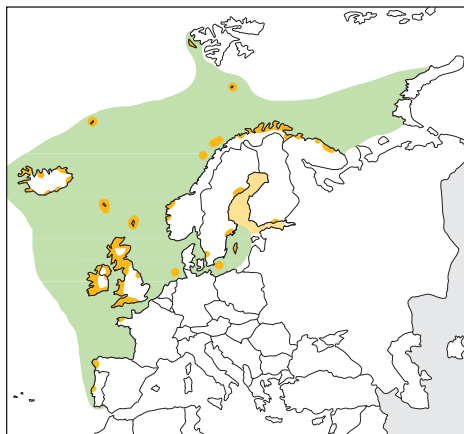
SEX/AGE Adult summer has head and neck blackish-brown, with much white at other seasons. Juvenile attains 1st-winter plumage at sea in late summer,

when resembles adult winter but flanks lack dark streaks. 1st-summer resembles adult summer, but has variable amounts of white on head and neck.

VOICE On breeding cliffs, quite noisy, with guttural 'arrrr' being dominant sound. Less vocal away from breeding grounds, but juveniles on sea utter far-carrying plaintive whistled 'peeeoeee'.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION The 'bridled' morph (known as 'Bridled Guillemot') occurs only rarely in south of range but becomes increasingly frequent towards the north (reaching 50% or more in extreme north); it has a narrow white eye-ring, extending into a white line behind the eye. Racial variation rather slight and somewhat clinal. 3 races (n nominate and *albionis* illustrated). Arctic population *hyperborea*, breeding from northern Norway and Bear Is east to Novaya Zemlya, is darker above than nominate race and has the most prominent flank streaking. Southern race *albionis*, breeding from S British Is and Heligoland southwards, has head, neck and upperparts lighter and browner than nominate race and weaker flank streaking.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally abundant. Breeds on sheer cliff faces, often in enormous numbers. Colonies become fewer and smaller towards south of range.



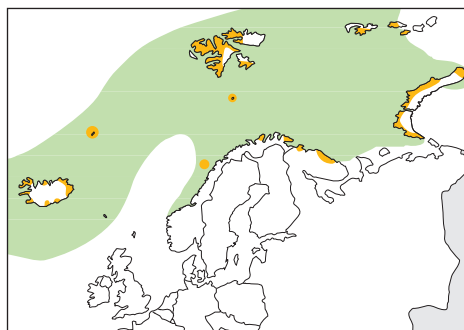
After breeding, disperses widely over open seas, but some remain close to breeding cliffs. Often visits sheltered bays and occasionally estuaries, but only accidental inland.

BRÜNNICH'S GUILLEMOT *Uria lomvia*

Brünnich's Murre, Thick-billed Murre

L 39–43 cm, WS 65–73 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Confined to arctic waters, although range widely overlaps with that of Common. Very similar to Common (matching northernmost Commons in size and averaging slightly larger than southern populations) and thus easily overlooked or confused; several of its structural and plumage features are subject to pitfalls, making identification of out of range individuals problematical. Brünnich's has a distinctly thicker and stubbier bill with strongly decurved culmen and a white stripe towards base, a slightly thicker neck, and slightly bulkier overall appearance. The white bill stripe is sometimes absent in Brünnich's, perhaps only in first autumn, and may be very weakly indicated on some Common. Beware partially grown Common in late summer, with bill shorter than adult's; and especially adult birds carrying fish in bill near breeding colonies, with partially opened bill not only looking thicker than normal, but also showing fish as silver line along cutting edges. Unlike in most Common, the flanks are unstreaked, but streaks may be concealed by folded wing in Common and are weak or absent in juveniles and many adults (especially southern populations). Upperparts are almost black (darker than all but northernmost Commons and closely approaching Razorbill) and in summer plumage the white of the underparts comes up onto foreneck in a higher point than in Common (visible only when seen head-on), but when swimming with neck retracted this feature is less evident. In winter plumage, blackish extends down sides of head to well below eye, and has a dark semi-collar that contrast with whitish throat, and pattern thus quite unlike typical winter Common but confusable with 1st-winter Razorbill, which has smaller bill and more dark on sides of head than adult (but 1st-winter Razorbill has thicker, stubbier bill than Brünnich's, with more pronounced gonys and deeper culmen but no white stripe at base, and shows pointed, not rounded tail); even moulting Commons with extensive dark on head show whitish mottling on sides of head behind eye. Brünnich's moults somewhat later than most



Common Guillemot populations, having dark head in autumn when many Commons are in 'winter' plumage, and remains in 'winter' plumage later than most Common; many Common, however, attain summer plumage in mid-winter, so caution needed. 1st-winter Brünnich's has shorter bill and some have more dusky throat than adults, emphasizing stocky appearance of forebody. Flight action much as Common, but primaries a little longer and narrower than in Common, giving slightly longer-winged appearance, this coupled with bulkier head and neck, shorter, thicker bill, more hunched outline (and blacker plumage than in southern Common) give different, rather Razorbill-like impression. In adult summer, angle of slope between black hood and white underbody is steeper than in Common, making black hood appear more extensive and 'solid', again more like Razorbill in this respect. Underwing coverts and axillaries cleaner white than in Common, but lacks Razorbill's contrast with darker flight feathers. Breeds in congregations on arctic cliffs, often forming mixed colonies with Common.

SEX/AGE Adult winter has throat and foreneck white. Shows two types of juvenile plumage, one resembling adult winter, the other resembling adult summer with blackish-brown instead of white cheeks, foreneck and

Plate page 446

sides of neck. 1st-winter resembles adult winter but has bill shorter, bill stripe less distinct and throat mottled dusky (in some). 1st-summer resembles adult summer, but some white mottling on throat normally evident.

VOICE Similar to Common Guillemot.

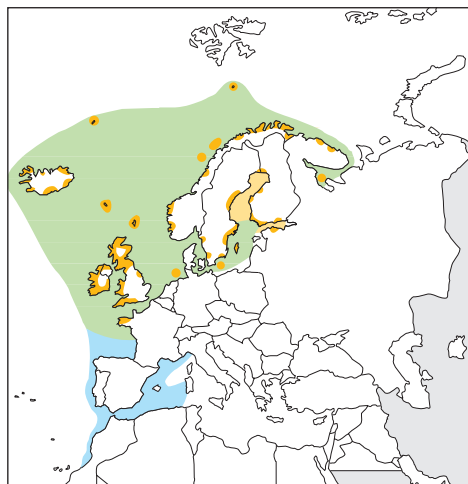
STATUS/HABITAT Locally abundant, but southernmost colonies small and mixed with Common Guillemots. Breeds on sheer cliff faces on arctic coasts and islands. Outside breeding season, disperses over northern seas, probably more deeply pelagic than Common.

RAZORBILL *Alca torda*

L 37–39 cm, WS 63–68 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Basic size and overall coloration much as the two guillemots, but Razorbill has large, broad bill and pointed, not rounded, tail. When resting on water with tail cocked, tail is more prominent than in guillemots. In summer plumage, head, neck and upperparts deep black; look noticeably blacker than in southern race of Common Guillemot, and marginally darker than in northern forms (fractionally darker than Brünnich's). Massive, blunt-tipped bill an easy distinction at short to moderate range, giving almost rectangular shape to head-and-bill outline. White line between eye and bill visible at close range. Winter birds lack dark stripe across sides of head of winter Common Guillemot and have less extensive white on sides of head, so that in rear view black of hindneck is broader. Winter Brünnich's Guillemot has much more extensive blackish on head than Razorbill, with white confined to throat and foreneck, and bill is noticeably slimmer and sharply pointed. 1st-winter and juvenile Razorbill has much smaller bill than adult, lacking white loreal line and bill markings, the sides of the head are dusky, and the whole effect recalls winter Brünnich's Guillemot; the bill, however, is still much stouter than in Brünnich's, with strong curve only at tip (the whole of the upper mandible being gently curved in Brünnich's). In flight, resembles the guillemots, but bulky head and stout rectangular head/bill give distinctly blunt appearance to forebody in contrast to the more pointed rear end (longer tail hides feet, unlike in Guillemots); both head and tail held higher, with bill often slightly pointed upwards. In good light, Razorbills generally appear distinctly blacker above when flying with southern guillemots. Shows more white on sides of rump than guillemots, so black centre of rump looks narrower; undervying more contrasting with whiter coverts and blacker flight feathers. Scattered pairs or small groups breed on rocky cliffs, nesting in crevices or among boulders; does not form dense congregations on breeding cliffs like the two guillemots. Juveniles leave cliffs when still tiny and often get separated from parents at sea; beware confusing such birds with Little Auks.

SEX/AGE Adult winter has throat, sides of head and



foreneck white. Juvenile attains 1st-winter plumage at sea in late summer, when resembles adult winter, but bill smaller, lacking white stripe of adult, and sides of head dusky, with white mostly on throat; also lacks white loreal stripe (most obvious in adult summer). By first summer resembles adult summer, but some white mottling on throat normally evident and wing feathers abraded.

VOICE On breeding sites, typical call is a guttural, growled 'goarr'. Juveniles give a plaintive, tremulous piping whistle on sea, which is less far-carrying than that of young guillemots.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (*islandica* illustrated).

STATUS/HABITAT Locally abundant. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Spitsbergen.) Breeds on both sheer cliff faces and boulder piles below cliffs. After breeding, disperses widely over both inshore and offshore waters; occasionally found on estuaries, but only accidental inland (usually after storms).

BLACK GUILLEMOT *Cephus grylle*

Tystie

L 30–32 cm, WS 52–58 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Rather small, relatively long-necked guillemot of inshore waters, differing markedly in character from the large guillemots of the genus *Uria*. **Adult summer** unmistakable, being sooty-black with conspicuous white wing coverts and bright red legs; very rarely, may totally lack white in wing. **Adult winter** is whitish with grey-barred upperparts and black flight feathers; although less conspicuous in this plumage, it is equally distinctive. **Juvenile** is more heavily barred than adult winter, with dusky forehead, and the white wing patches are obscured by dusky feather tips; has

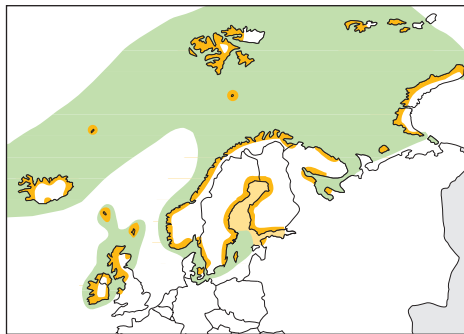
brownish legs. In flight, striking wing pattern, with white upwerving and undervying coverts distinctive; shared by no other auk or auk-like bird. At long range on water, birds in winter or juvenile plumage confusable with Long-tailed Duck or even male Smew, but rapidly whirring wings, white wing patches of adult and straight, auk-style flight path make confusion in flight unlikely. Less sociable than other auks, usually in pairs or small parties keeping close inshore. Walks with greater ease than guillemots or Razorbill, but less mobile than Atlantic Puffin when on land.

SEX/AGE Juvenile plumage described under Identification. 1st-winter whiter below than juvenile, but retains dusky markings on wing coverts and legs similarly brownish; by first summer much as adult summer, but some dusky markings remain within white wing patch.

VOICE Typical call a weak, high-pitched, whistling 'peeeeh'; heard chiefly around breeding sites.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Complex but rather slight, with much local variation. 5 races (*arcticus* illustrated). Northernmost race *mandtii*, breeding Jan Mayen, Bear Is and Spitsbergen, shows especially pale upperparts in winter plumage. Race *islandicus* of Iceland is a distinctive form with a narrow dusky bar across white wing patch in all plumages.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (Most sedentary of all auks of our region, with majority of birds remaining inshore close to breeding colonies; northern popu-



lations more dispersive.) Rocky coasts and islands, avoiding sheer cliffs without boulder piles at foot.

ANCIENT MURRELET *Synthliboramphus antiquus*

Plate page 448

L 21–22 cm, WS 40–43 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Vagrant from N Pacific. Recalls Little Auk in size, but has striking white sides of head and neck, black throat and clean grey upperparts in all plumages. Head shape also different, with rounded forehead, small stubby pale bill and flat crown. Unlikely to be confused with Little Auk if seen well. Flight typically fast on whirring wings, but tends to hold head up, and unlike Little Auk shows whitish, not blackish, underwing contrasting with dusky flanks, features which contribute to a distinctive appearance if seen at close to medium range. There are other members of this N Pacific genus which might turn up in our region, and consultation with

appropriate regional field guides therefore essential. Beware also Razorbill and Common Guillemot juveniles, which leave cliffs when still tiny and little more than chicks.

SEX/AGE Adult winter lacks broken whitish band along sides of hindcrown. 1st-winter as adult winter, but has black of throat obscured by pale feather fringes.

VOICE Calls include a low, piping whistle and a series of metallic clinking notes.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). Pelagic away from breeding colonies (on islands with mixed rocky and grassy slopes).

LITTLE AUK *Alle alle*

Plate page 447

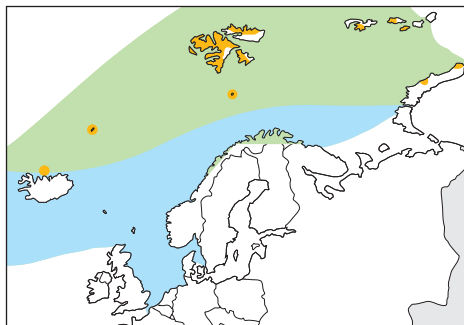
Dovekie (N America)

L 17–19 cm, WS 34–38 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Tiny, starling-sized auk of northern waters. Its small size renders it almost unmistakable, although beware small lone guillemot or Razorbill juveniles in late summer which bear a certain resemblance (but Little Auk has minute, stubby bill and whitish lines on scapulars at close range). Typically looks squat and short-necked when on water, but when stretching can show surprisingly long neck. In flight, a very small, blunt-fronted (apparently almost bill-less) seabird with rapid, auk-type flight, showing white underparts which strongly contrast with blackish underwing (Razorbill and guillemots have white underwing coverts). Most likely confusion is with Atlantic Puffin, which is smaller than the other larger auks and has similarly greyish underwing, but Little Auk has almost wader-like wing action owing to narrower and relatively longer wings than Atlantic Puffin and relatively shorter body and smaller head without obvious bill projection. If seen close, look for white trailing edge to secondaries. Breeds in huge numbers about arctic islands. In northern seas, in large flocks after breeding.

SEX/AGE Adult summer has dark head and breast; extensive white sides of head and throat at other times. Juvenile resembles adult summer when just fledged, but lacks tiny white spot above eye and has mottled throat; soon moults into 1st-winter plumage, which is indistinguishable from adult winter.

VOICE Variety of calls given on breeding grounds,



including a twittering, chattering 'kri-ri-ri-kikiki-kik-ki' and a whinnying 'whuwhuwu' of alarm, but basically silent in winter.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (nominate illustrated).

STATUS/HABITAT Locally abundant. (Formerly bred more commonly Iceland.) Breeds among scree and on steep, boulder-strewn slopes. After breeding, disperses over polar seas, especially in areas of broken pack-ice, but regular south to northern British Is. Disperses well south of normal range in some winters; most frequent auk inland during occasional 'wrecks' after severe winter storms.

CRESTED AUKLET *Aethia cristatella*

Plate page 448

L 23–24 cm, WS 43–47 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Vagrant from N Pacific. Distinctly larger than Little Auk, with whole plumage (including underwing) sooty-grey, pale iris and short, stout finch-like bill. In summer plumage, bill and swollen gape bright orange, and has narrow tuft of white plumes behind eye and prominent tuft of forward-curving black feathers on forehead (giving a comical appearance to birds on land). Adult winter has shorter crest, bill more dusky, lacks swollen gape and white plumes behind eye are indistinct or lacking. Juvenile lacks crest and white plumes and has smaller dusky bill. In flight, appears totally dark grey or blackish, and relatively longer-winged than Little Auk. Confusion possible with oiled Little Auk or recently-fledged Atlantic

Puffin (swimming low in water with white underparts concealed), or with occasional variant of Black Guillemot which lacks white wing patch, but bill shape should prevent confusion with all these pitfalls. See also vagrant Parakeet Auklet.

SEX/AGE See Identification; juvenile/1st-winter plumage retained until first summer, when becomes as adult.

VOICE Generally silent away from breeding colonies, where flocks give guttural, rather sandgrouse-like calls.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (only record being at sea north of Iceland). Pelagic away from breeding colonies (on steep grassy and rocky slopes on mainland coasts and islands).

PARAKEET AUKLET *Cyclorhynchus psittacula*

Plate page 448

L 23–25 cm, WS 44–48 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Vagrant from N Pacific. Distinctly larger than Little Auk, approaching size of juvenile Atlantic Puffin, and with blackish-grey head and upperparts, white underparts, pale iris and short but deep and stout bill. In summer plumage, has narrow plume of white feathers behind eye and bright orange-red bill, but lacks forehead crest and uniform dark appearance of similar-sized (but slightly smaller) vagrant Crested Auklet. Adult winter and 1st-winter similar, but have foreneck and throat whitish and duller, white plume behind eye indistinct or lacking and brownish-red bill. In flight, white underparts contrast with dark underwing, recalling both Little Auk and Atlantic Puffin in this respect, but is distinctly larger than Little Auk, closer to Atlantic Puffin, with

wings relatively narrower than in latter species; tends to fly higher than most other auks. In addition, lacks white trailing edge to secondaries and white streaks on scapulars shown by Little Auk, and in winter plumage has more extensive dark on head. Confusion most likely with recently fledged Atlantic Puffin, but redder, shorter bill, pale iris, white streak behind eye and lack of capped appearance are useful pointers.

SEX/AGE See Identification. 1st-winter plumage, attained after short juvenile period, is as adult winter.

VOICE Generally silent away from breeding colonies.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (N Europe). Pelagic away from breeding colonies (on steep grassy and rocky slopes on mainland coasts and islands).

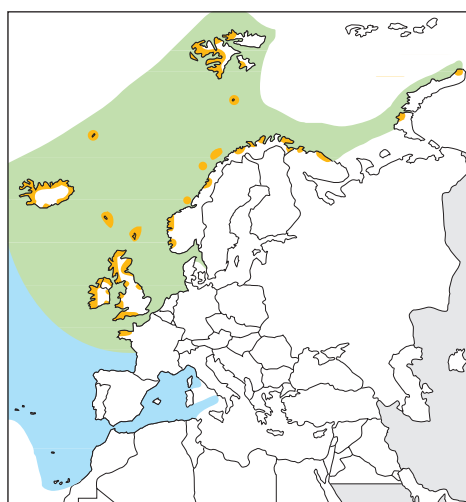
ATLANTIC PUFFIN *Fratercula arctica*

Plate page 448

Puffin

L 26–30 cm, WS 47–63 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Medium-sized, plump auk with relatively large head, short rear body and massive bill. All plumages show black collar and crown, contrasting with whitish or grey sides of head, and orange-red legs, although latter yellowish or dusky-pink outside breeding season. Massive brightly coloured bill of adult summer renders species unmistakable (although bill is surprisingly inconspicuous at longer ranges). Adult summer has sides of head whitish, contrasting with black crown and collar, and huge, triangular orange-red bill with blue and yellow bands over basal portion. Outer sheath of bill is shed after breeding season and adult winter has noticeably smaller, duller bill (with yellowish-brown base and reddish periphery) and greyish sides of head. Juvenile drabber, with even smaller (but still large) dusky bill with reddish periphery; leaves breeding cliffs when fully fledged, unlike most other auks. In flight, distinctly stockier, shorter-bodied and larger-headed than similar Razorbill and *Uria* guillemots, with mostly pale head and greyish underwing (appearing dark), whereas other larger auks have white underwing coverts. The bright red feet are generally far more obvious than bright bill at a distance. Upperwing rather broader and shorter than in other larger auks, lacking narrow white trailing edge to secondaries of Razorbill and *Uria* guillemots. Manoeuvres in air above colonies more expertly than larger auks. Smaller size, especially of still smaller



juvenile/1st-winter, and dark underwing may suggest Little Auk, but latter substantially smaller still, with narrower wings (with white trailing edge to secondaries when very close), more wader-like flight and

minute bill. Breeds colonially in burrows excavated on grassy slopes and in crevices in cliffs and boulder slopes. Unlike other auks, walks with comparative ease when ashore. When on water, breast rides higher than in other auks, giving species a characteristic appearance.

SEX/AGE Adult winter has darker grey sides of head, yellower legs and duller, yellowish-brown bill with reddish periphery. Juvenile smaller than adult, with smaller, but long, deep and pointed dusky bill and dingy-pink legs, attaining summer plumage and soft part coloration by first summer, although face then still duskier than in adult.

VOICE Relatively silent away from colonies, but low, growling, often repeated 'arr' freely given on breeding grounds.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Complex and slight, except for differences in size. 3 races (*grabae* illustrated).

STATUS/HABITAT Locally abundant. (Formerly bred Germany, Sweden.) Breeds on rocky and grassy coastal slopes and islands, often in huge numbers, but southern colonies smaller and decreasing in size. Disperses over northern waters after breeding. More deeply pelagic than other auks, resorting to inshore waters only during breeding season. Very exceptional inland after severe storms.

SANDGROUSE Pteroclididae

7 species

Medium-large birds that are probably more closely allied to waders than to pigeons, sandgrouse strongly recall grouse or partridges when on the ground owing to their plump bodies, small heads and cryptic plumage. Relatively long, elongated body slopes towards rear (with belly pattern often hidden by somewhat drooped wings), and long, rather loose uppertail coverts frequently spread out to conceal wingtips. Despite short legs can run rapidly for short distances, but gait typically a slow walk with tail held horizontal. Sandgrouse pick at ground like pigeons when feeding. Fast, dashing flight, and relatively long, pointed wings recall large plovers (high-flying flocks are quite golden plover-like). Sandgrouse are generally birds of open, arid country, sometimes feeding in dry fields. Flocks fly considerable distances to favoured drinking places, typically from early to mid morning, but some species do so at other times. Large numbers, sometimes of several species, may gather at one drinking site. Far-carrying, mainly guttural calls draw attention to flying flocks. At other times usually encountered singly, in pairs or in small groups. Generally shy and wary. Nest on ground.

Sexes differ. Little or no seasonal variation. Juveniles largely resemble adult females but are separable.

Complete post-breeding moult commences shortly after nesting and finishes by autumn. Pin-tailed also has a partial pre-breeding moult. Post-juvenile moult, complete apart from some outer primaries, commences shortly after fledging and finishes within a few months.

Identification fairly straightforward if good views obtained. Points to concentrate on are:

Belly and underwing pattern • Head colour and pattern • Call

LICHTENSTEIN'S SANDGROUSE *Pterocles lichtensteinii*

Plate page 494

L 24–26 cm, WS 48–52 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Smallest sandgrouse. Locally distributed in N Africa and Middle East. Has stocky appearance and very closely barred plumage. Mainly crepuscular and nocturnal. Flight generally lower and weaker than that of other sandgrouse, flying to and from drinking places after dusk or before dawn. Will even drink down wells. Frequently roosts in daytime under acacias. Habits make this the most unobtrusive sandgrouse. **Adult male** easily distinguished in good view by striking black and white bands across forehead, broad yellow eye-ring (highlighting large dark eye), and orangey-buff breast with two black bands. **Adult female and Juvenile** lack conspicuous patterning of adult male. Confusion at all likely only with adult female or juvenile Crowned, but corresponding Lichtenstein's look somewhat smaller, with darker, greyer appearance and broader, more distinct pale eye-ring; lacks strong yellowish-buff wash on face shown by Crowned (extending to throat in adult female). In good view, fine, close dark barring overall, large dark eye with extensive pale surround, relatively



dark crown, longer, finer bill (with pinkish tinge), and pale buff tips to greater coverts and scapulars make separation straightforward. In flight, shows pale wing bar on greater coverts in all plumages (golden-buff in adult male, pale buff in adult female and juvenile), unlike Crowned, but lacks obvious contrast between pale underwing coverts and dark flight feathers shown by latter.

SEX/AGE Juvenile closely resembles adult female, but barring on upperparts less distinct and grey rather than dark brown; flight feathers also grey rather than dark brown. Pale tips to primaries more obvious.

VOICE Typical flight call a low, weak, whistling (almost Eurasian Wigeon-like) 'quwheeto' (first syllable

audible only at close range) or 'witch-ouuu'. When flushed, often gives a rapid series of harsh, nasal, almost duck-like quacks: 'qua qua qua' or 'quark quark quark'.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (nomi-

nate illustrated).

STATUS/HABITAT Local and uncommon (but easily overlooked). Apparently predominantly sedentary. Rocky wadi beds and hillsides with scattered acacias in desert hills; avoids open desert and cultivation.

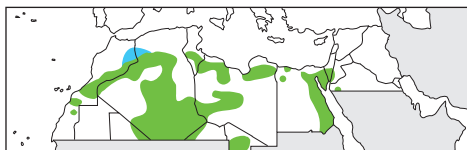
CROWNED SANDGROUSE *Pterocles coronatus*

Plate page 494

Coroneted Sandgrouse

L 27–29 cm, WS 52–63 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Fairly small sandgrouse of N Africa and Middle East. From moderate distance appears rather uniform sandy-buff with contrasting blackish flight feathers. Most likely to be confused with Spotted, especially in flight, but lacks elongated central tail feathers and dark streak on belly (although both hard to see on Spotted at a distance). Best feature is different wing pattern. Crowned has wholly dark brown flight feathers and primary coverts, contrasting strongly with rest of wing coverts, which are pale sandy. In Spotted primaries are dark only near tips, so most of wing appears pale sandy (with rather indistinct dark trailing edge). Underwing-pattern differences are equally obvious: Crowned has whitish underwing coverts which contrast strikingly with dark brown flight feathers; Spotted lacks contrast between buff underwing coverts and greyish-buff primaries, although darker, greyish-brown secondaries stand out along trailing edge. Flying flocks of Spotted look more 'uniform' owing to both sexes looking sandy below, without great contrast in underwing, whereas flocks of Crowned are more 'dimorphic', with obviously greyer-looking females. **Adult male** also differs from adult male Spotted in good view in having a different head pattern including characteristic black mask across chin and forehead (but mask is lacking in immature male Crowned); lacks grey on sides of neck, lower foreneck and upper breast. **Adult female and juvenile**



also differ from adult female or juvenile Spotted in having dark vermiculations (rather than dark spots) on body and wing coverts, with dark markings extending onto belly, not just across breast and lower foreneck. (See also Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse.)

SEX/AGE Juvenile closely resembles adult female but barring weaker and more broken, throat whitish; primaries (apart from two outermost) have obvious buff tips.

VOICE Typical flight call a loud, far-carrying, rolling, guttural, chattering 'chga-chagarra', sometimes also a whistling, plaintive 'wheek' (like begging call of young gull), quite different from voice of Spotted.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 3 races (nominate and *atratus* illustrated). Nominate race (N Africa west of the Nile) is the palest, *atratus* (status uncertain: may occur Iraq/N Saudi Arabia) the darkest.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. Somewhat nomadic. Flat or rolling stony or partly sandy desert, locally desert hills and mountains, with minimal vegetation.

SPOTTED SANDGROUSE *Pterocles senegallus*

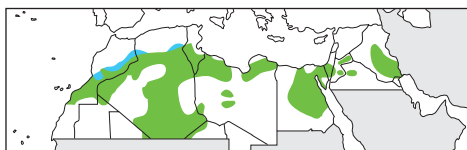
Plate page 494

L 30–35 cm, WS 53–65 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Medium-sized sandgrouse of N Africa and Middle East with elongated central tail feathers (hard to see at a distance and lacking in juvenile). Larger and distinctly bulkier than Crowned Sandgrouse, with which it is most likely to be confused. See Crowned for discussion.

SEX/AGE Juvenile resembles adult female, but has rather pale grey-brown wavy barring on upperparts and grey-brown crescentic-markings on upper breast and lower foreneck (rather than dark spots), throat is whitish and belly streak dark brown (instead of black). Lacks elongated central tail feathers. Primaries (apart from outermost) have obvious buff tips.

VOICE Typical flight call a far-carrying, liquid, musical 'whitoo whitoo' or 'quitoo quitoo', quite unlike



guttural chattering of Crowned.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. Somewhat nomadic. (In addition to mapped range, may breed Syria.) Flat or rolling desert and semi-desert with sparse vegetation (occasionally in areas with widely scattered low scrub). Generally in areas with more vegetation than Crowned, but does overlap locally.

CHESTNUT-BELLIED SANDGROUSE *Pterocles exustus*

Plate page 494

L 31–33 cm, WS 48–51 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Rather small sandgrouse of Egypt (now almost extinct in our region). Elongated central tail feathers hard to see at a distance (and lacking in juvenile). Simple to identify in flight: the only sandgrouse with combination of dark belly and dark

underwing (Black-bellied has striking white underwing coverts and axillaries). Belly and underwing can appear almost black in poor light. Upperwing pattern recalls Crowned, with dark flight feathers and primary coverts contrasting with pale inner coverts, but (in

adult) has obvious white trailing edge to secondaries and inner primaries. **Adult male** on ground rapidly differentiated from any other species by dark chestnut belly and plain greyish-yellow head and throat. Has single narrow black breast band (edged with white).

Adult female and Juvenile less distinctive. Best separated from adult female or juvenile Crowned and Spotted by dark belly and by orangey-yellow patches on wing coverts. From adult female or juvenile Black-bellied by chestnut rather than black belly, orangey-yellow patches on wing coverts, lack of black throat mark, smaller size and considerably less bulky appearance.

SEX/AGE Juvenile resembles adult female but is darker on upperparts and breast, with fine dark crescentic markings (instead of bold spots) on upper breast and lower foreneck, no black breast band, and

conspicuous pale buff tips to scapulars and lesser and median coverts. Lacks elongated central tail feathers. Primaries (apart from outermost) have conspicuous pale tips.

VOICE Typical flight call a far-carrying, guttural but melodious, gurgling or chuckling 'kut-arr kut-arr' or more complex 'whit kut-arr wit wit-ee-er kut-arr-arr'.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (*floweri* illustrated), including vagrant *erlangeri*.

STATUS/HABITAT Apparently extinct as a breeding species in our region. Formerly bred along the Nile and in the Faiyum in Egypt, perhaps also in Jordan. In recent decades only recorded as a rare vagrant to Jordan. Somewhat nomadic (elsewhere in range, at least). Flat or rolling semi-desert and dry cultivation with sparse vegetation (sometimes among widely scattered scrub).

BLACK-BELLIED SANDGROUSE *Pterocles orientalis*

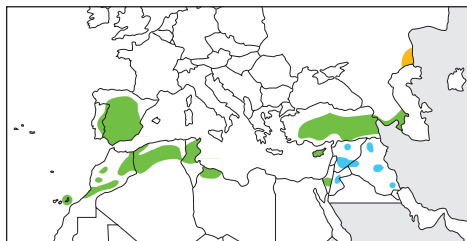
Plate page 495

L 33–35 cm, WS 70–73 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Largest and bulkiest sandgrouse, with rather broad-winged appearance. In flight, easily identified by unique combination of black belly, white underwing coverts and axillaries, and dark grey flight feathers (black belly patch much smaller and flight feathers pale in Pallas's). On ground, best distinguished by black belly (sometimes partly hidden by drooped wings) and by unmarked pinkish-buff lower breast bordered above by black breast band. **Adult male** also shows distinctive combination of grey head and neck with chestnut chin and sides of face bordered below by black throat patch.

SEX/AGE Juvenile resembles adult female, but upperparts, throat and breast cinnamon-pink with less distinct markings (rather fine and crescent-shaped). Primaries are edged and tipped rufous-buff.

VOICE Typical flight call a far-carrying, distinctive, liquid bubbling 'tchowrrr-rerr-rerr' or 'churrll-urrrll-urrrll' (suggesting bubbling call of Black Grouse).



GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (nominate illustrated).

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. Nomadic and partly migratory. Flat or rolling dry steppe and semi-desert with sparse to moderate cover of low vegetation, sometimes also dry cultivation. Locally tolerates widely scattered scrub.

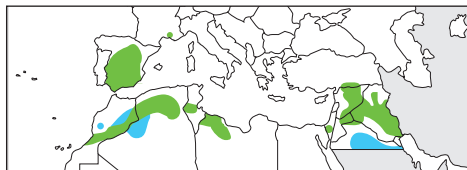
PIN-TAILED SANDGROUSE *Pterocles alchata*

Plate page 495

L 31–39 cm, WS 54–65 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Fairly large sandgrouse with elongated central tail feathers (hard to see at a distance and lacking in juvenile). Easily distinguished by white belly which contrasts with rufous brown breast (bordered by black). At close range, shows characteristic dark eye-stripe. Adult male looks rather greenish-tinted above. In flight, white underwing coverts and axillaries combine with white belly to give unique appearance to underside. Often forms very large flocks.

SEX/AGE Adult male winter has mantle and scapulars buff with black barring, throat largely white (some dark marks on lower throat), crown and nape barred with dark brown and face spotted with dark brown. Adult female winter has mantle and scapulars rufous-buff barred with black, and dark brown spotting on face and lower throat. Juvenile resembles adult female winter, but markings on head less distinct and shows whitish streak behind eye. Patterning on underside subdued, with chin white, a broad pale buffish band across throat and breast with wavy brown barring and whitish belly; no black bands across breast. Lacks



elongated central tail feathers. Primaries (apart from outermost) have conspicuous pale tips.

VOICE Typical flight call a loud, distinctive, nasal, ringing 'katar katar' or 'ga-ng ga-ng' or 'ga-ng ga-ng arrrr' (somewhat recalling Western Jackdaw).

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (nominate illustrated).

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common, sometimes abundant. Nomadic and partly migratory. (In addition to mapped range, formerly bred Portugal.) Flat, sandy or silty, dry steppe and semi-desert with sparse vegetation, locally stony plains and dry cultivation. Locally tolerates widely scattered scrub.

PALLAS'S SANDGROUSE *Syrhaptes paradoxus*

Plate page 495

L 30–41 cm, WS 63–78 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Fairly large sandgrouse of N Caspian region with distinctive, elegant, streamlined appearance owing to slim build with very elongated central tail feathers and elongated tip to longest primary (both features hard to see at a distance and lacking in juvenile). Note that body size substantially less than that of Black-bellied; total length and wingspan measurements, which include elongated central tail feathers and elongated tip to longest primary, give exaggerated impression. Flight particularly powerful. Easily distinguished in flight owing to combination of largely pale underparts (including most of underwing) and conspicuous black patch on lower belly (markedly smaller than that of Black-bellied, but much larger than in Spotted). Greyish primaries appear paler than rest of upperwing. On ground, when black patch on lower belly often hidden, plain grey breast distinguishes from all but adult male Black-bellied. From latter by primarily sandy rather than rufous upperparts, lack of solid black band across breast, and largely orangey (adult male), yellow-orange (adult female) or buff (juvenile) head. In good view also told by elongated central tail feathers and wingtips, and chestnut greater coverts. At long range, when seen from front, can superficially resemble Grey Partridge.

SEX/AGE Adult female resembles adult male but is duller overall with dark spots on sides of breast and wing coverts, dark-streaked ear-coverts and a blackish band below yellow-orange throat. Lacks black-barred



breast band. Juvenile resembles adult female, but head and breast buff, with black crescentic markings on breast; dark belly patch smaller, and barring on upperparts finer, browner and more V-shaped. Lacks elongated central tail feathers, elongated tip to outer primary, blackish 'necklace' and chestnut on greater coverts. Primaries (apart from outermost) have buff tips.

VOICE Typical flight calls a low-pitched but far-carrying gurgling, bubbling 'puk-pur-purr' or 'kukerik kukerik' and a sharp 'tchep' or 'quet'.

STATUS/HABITAT Uncommon. Perhaps only irregular, mostly non-breeding visitor in mapped area. (Sometimes erupts westwards as far as W Europe and has even bred in Britain, Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Moscow region, Ukraine and Crimea.) Silty semi-desert or dry steppe with moderate amounts of low vegetation. Has bred during eruptions in grassy coastal sand dunes.

PIGEONS & DOVES Columbidae

14 species (3 vagrant)

In our region, the members of the Columbidae fall quite clearly into two groups, the larger, bulkier pigeons (genus *Columba*) and the smaller, more slightly built doves (genera *Streptopelia*, *Oena* and vagrant *Zenaidra*). Division is, however, confused by use of vernacular name dove for several pigeon species. Most are sociable outside breeding season, often forming large flocks. Migration takes place by day. Most pigeons and doves are ground-feeders, but some species also feed in trees. Flight is fast and direct, birds taking flight with a loud clatter of the wings. Aerial displays given by several species in breeding season. Have distinctive cooing songs. Nest in trees, on rocky ledges or in rock holes and crevices (also on buildings in case of Rock Dove).

Sexes identical in most species. Little or no seasonal variation. Juveniles may closely resemble adults, and be difficult to separate, or may be quite distinct.

Complete post-breeding moult commences shortly after nesting and finishes by following winter or spring. Complete post-juvenile moult commences shortly after fledging (except in some late-hatched European Turtle or Oriental Turtle Doves, which migrate south in completely juvenile plumage and moult entirely in winter quarters) and typically finishes in autumn or winter (but some flight feathers, or even body feathers, replaced as late as following spring or summer in late-hatched individuals).

Identification generally straightforward so long as good views obtained. Points to concentrate on are:

Upperwing and tail pattern • Underwing coloration

ROCK DOVE *Columba livia*

Plate page 496

Rock Pigeon; Feral Pigeon (feral populations)

L 31–34 cm, WS 63–70 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Best-known pigeon of our region through familiarity with feral populations in urban

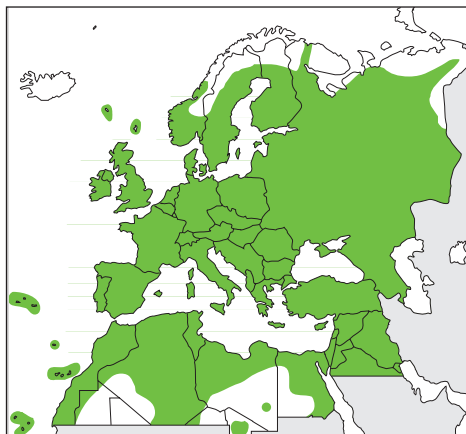
areas. Wild populations over most of range, and wild-type individuals in feral populations, easily identified

by combination of white rump patch (actually lower back and upper rump) and two long black bars stretching right across rear of inner wing (see Stock Dove and Yellow-eyed Dove). The only pigeon (as opposed to dove) with a largely white underwing. From central Sahara to Middle East most wild populations lack white rump patch and have back and rump entirely grey, but upperwing pattern and largely white underwing remain diagnostic. Feral populations highly variable, with both wild-type individuals and many other colour varieties ranging from pale grey to dark grey, black, white and reddish-brown. Some varieties highly variegated with mixture of greys, blacks and whites in plumage. Feral birds generally have larger cere and deeper bill than pure wild birds. None of feral types should be confusable on good view with any of other pigeons of our region, but beware feral birds with grey underwing coloration and grey rump which could be mistaken for Stock Dove on poor view.

SEX/AGE Compared with adult, juvenile has all plumage duller and brownish-tinged, with dark bars on wings and tail less distinct; lacks gloss on neck (which is grey).

VOICE Advertising call the familiar muffled cooing of the feral pigeon: a moaning 'oorh' or 'oh-hoo-oorh', with slight rise in pitch on middle syllable.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Quite considerable. 6 races (nominata and *palaestinae* illustrated). Some races are paler than nominata, some are larger or smaller, and some have grey rumps. Race *palaestinae* (Sinai and N Saudi Arabia to Syria) is a small, pale, grey-rumped form. Birds from Madeira, Azores and Cape Verde Is with very dark upperparts and variably white or grey rumps are probably derived from feral stock.



STATUS/HABITAT Common or abundant, but only patchily distributed in areas with few large human settlements outside the natural range of the species. The natural range extends northwards to the Faeroes, N and W British Is, W and S France, Italy, the Balkans, the Crimea and the S Urals (but excludes Cape Verde Is, Madeira and Azores, where the wild populations are thought to be feral in origin, and large parts of the Sahara and Arabian Deserts). Wild populations occur in a wide range of open habitats (from humid to desert), where cliffs, caves, ruined buildings, wells or sea cliffs provide nesting sites. Feral populations mainly inhabit towns and villages where buildings etc. provide nesting sites, foraging into surrounding open countryside.

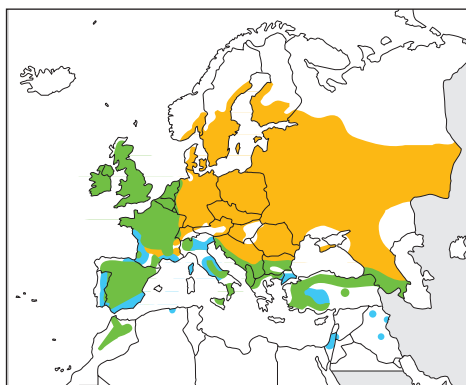
STOCK DOVE *Columba oenas*

Stock Pigeon

L 32–34 cm, WS 63–69 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Superficially rather similar to Rock Dove, although slightly broader-winged and shorter-tailed. On good flight view, easily distinguished from typical Rock Dove by lack of white rump patch, grey rather than whitish underwing (with pale grey coverts and grey flight feathers becoming blackish towards tips), pale ash-grey panels on upperwing and only very short, inconspicuous dark bars on inner wing (often hard to see in flight). Note, however, that some feral Rock Doves have grey rump and underwing, while some wild populations also have grey rumps, so care is required. On ground, separation less easy, but much less extensive wing bars and, at close range, reddish bill with pale tip (rather than black bill) are diagnostic of Stock. Often found in mixed flocks with Common Woodpigeon, but at all times lack of white wing crescents makes confusion with this larger, longer-tailed, deeper-breasted and less compact species unlikely. Flight action more rapid.

SEX/AGE Adult female very similar to adult male, but is tinged brown on mantle, scapulars and tertials, with less extensive gloss on neck and with vinaceous tinge on underparts duller, greyer and restricted to upper breast. Juvenile resembles adult female, but all plumage duller and brownish-tinged, with dark bars on wings even less extensive and less distinct, and pale wing panel less prominent; lacks gloss on neck (which



is grey), and vinaceous tinge on underparts restricted to upper breast and very indistinct.

VOICE Advertising call a repeated low, growling 'ooo-uh' or 'ooo-er' (first syllable gruffer and more drawn out).

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common, but uncommon in many areas. Open woodland with old trees, forest edges, copses and adjacent cultivation; locally town parks or beaches on low-lying coasts.

Plate page 496

YELLOW-EYED DOVE *Columba eversmanni*

Plate page 496

Yellow-eyed Stock Dove, Yellow-eyed Pigeon, Pale-backed Pigeon

L 29–31 cm, WS 60–62 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Asian vagrant (breeds C Asia). This rather small pigeon could be confused with either Rock Dove or Stock Dove, as it has characters which recall either. White 'rump patch' on back and upper rump recalls Rock (although more extensive, extending to upper back), but Yellow-eyed lacks long black bars on inner wing, has less clearly defined dark band on tail and has duller, browner-grey mantle, scapulars and tertials. Underwing is whitish-grey, becoming blackish on wingtip and along trailing edge, rather than largely whitish as in Rock or grey (with blackish wingtip and trailing edge) as in Stock. Pattern thus closer to that of Rock. Beware feral Rock with grey underwings and/or less distinct tail and wing bands. In flight, white 'rump patch' provides instant separation from Stock and lacks distinct pale panel across middle of wing (having much of wing pale with broad but ill-defined darker trailing edge), but on ground, when back/upper rump often hidden, differences more subtle. Appears more compact as tail slightly shorter and wings longer, with duller, browner mantle, scapulars

and tertials (especially obvious when worn, but beware juvenile or adult female Stock which also have brownish tinge on these areas) and less clearly defined dark band on tail. On close view, yellow eye-ringing (and yellowish-brown eye) is diagnostic. Vinaceous tinge on breast generally duller and greyer than in Stock (but juvenile and some adult female Stock also duller here).

SEX/AGE Juvenile closely resembles adult, but has little or no gloss on neck or vinaceous tinge on breast (which are grey); dark wing bars tinged brown and even less distinct.

VOICE Little known. Advertising call (unlikely to be heard in our region) said to be a subdued Stock Dove-like 'oo-oo-oo'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Volga and Ural river basins). Species has sharply declined this century and may now be threatened. In natural breeding range, favours loess (soil) cliffs cut by rivers, groves (especially of old poplars) and old orchards, visiting nearby cultivation.

COMMON WOODPIGEON *Columba palumbus*

Plate page 497

Woodpigeon

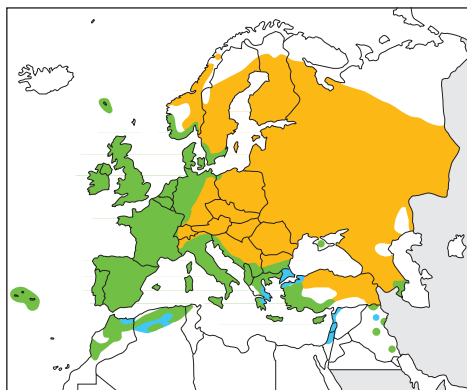
L 40–42 cm, WS 75–80 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Largest pigeon of our region and rendered unmistakable in flight, even at long range, by its highly conspicuous white wing crescents (pale grey wing panel of Stock Dove, q.v., in no way compares). Even on ground white wing crescents quite obvious along bend of wing, and adults show conspicuous white neck patch. Typically has rather horizontal posture and slow, portly gait compared with smaller pigeons. Juveniles on ground require a little more care, but large size, typical gait and white crescent showing along bend of wing make identification straightforward. Takes off (and lands) with noisy clatter of wings. Has greyish underwing. When displaying, climbs steeply with rapid wingbeats, then gives one or more loud wing-claps before gliding down on outstretched wings held horizontally and with tail spread (frequently giving raptor-like impression).

SEX/AGE Juvenile resembles adult, but lacks white patch and gloss on neck (which is grey); most of body plumage duller and tinged slightly brownish (on breast, vinaceous tinge replaced by vinaceous grey-brown).

VOICE Advertising call a repeated mellow, muffled, rather mournful cooing 'ooo COOOH coo coo-coo'. The first unit is very soft and audible only at close range and the stress is usually on the second unit; at any distance sounds like 'COOOH coo coo-coo'. Minor variations in pitch and stress are frequent.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 4 races (nomi-



nate illustrated). Race *azorica* (Azores) can have neck patches pinkish-buff. Endemic race *maderensis* of Madeira is extinct.

STATUS/HABITAT Common, locally abundant. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Iceland and formerly bred Madeira.) Forest edges or clearings, woodland, cultivation with scattered trees and locally parks and large gardens. Outside breeding season, also open, treeless expanses of cultivation.

TROCAZ PIGEON *Columba trocaz*

Plate page 497

Long-toed Pigeon

L 38–40 cm, WS 72–76 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Endemic to Madeira, where it is the only surviving pigeon other than feral Rock Dove. Easily separated from similarly-shaped but apparently extinct local race of Common Woodpigeon by darker coloration overall, lack of conspicuous white wing

crescents (but note that Trocaz does show indistinct pale crescents on upperswing) and pale subterminal band on tail. Has dark grey underwing. Often feeds with Rock Doves of predominantly dark local population. From some superficially similar individuals with

dark upperparts (lacking obvious dark wing bars), dark rump, dark underwing and strong vinaceous tinge on breast can be told by larger size, longer tail, broader wings and especially by pale subterminal band on tail and silvery neck patch. At close range red bill of adult also diagnostic. Closely resembles Bolle's Pigeon of Canaries but latter differs in having darker, more slaty upperparts, vinaceous tinge on underparts more extensive (extending to belly), no silvery neck patch, no paler grey crescent on wing coverts and dark terminal band on tail narrower (sometimes almost absent).

SEX/AGE Juvenile resembles adult, but has upperparts from mantle to rump and inner wing coverts tinged sepia-brown, primaries and primary coverts dark



brown, and head and underparts duller, lacking gloss on neck (which is grey) and with rufous-brown rather than vinaceous tinge on breast. Bill dark grey.

VOICE Advertising call a muffled 'coo-coo coooo cook', recalling Common Woodpigeon.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. Deep mountain valleys and ravines with cliffs and crags among forest of laurel and tree heath. Visits nearby cultivation.

BOLLE'S PIGEON *Columba bollii*

Bolle's Laurel Pigeon

L 35–37 cm, WS 65–68 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Fairly large pigeon endemic to Canary Is. Likely to be confused only with Laurel Pigeon or dark feral Rock Dove (see also Trocaz Pigeon). Separation from Laurel straightforward on good view of adult Bolle's. Tail pattern of most Bolle's quite different, with broad pale grey subterminal band and narrower blackish terminal band (instead of just a broad whitish terminal band), but beware some Bolle's with almost no dark terminal band visible. Despite superficial similarity of tail pattern, such individuals still show dark tail base and rump typical of Bolle's (these areas are pale grey in Laurel). In addition, mantle and upperwing slate-grey rather than sepia-brown (contrasting with pale grey rump and base of tail in Laurel). In close view, adult Bolle's has red bill (whitish in adult Laurel), gloss restricted to sides and back of neck (extends to crown, throat and breast in Laurel) and vinaceous tinge on belly not so obvious. Juvenile more problematic as upperparts from mantle to uppertail coverts and inner wing coverts sepia-brown, so giving Laurel-like impression. Separable with care by different tail pattern (but again beware some Bolle's with almost no dark terminal band visible) and by sepia-brown not just on mantle but also on back, rump and uppertail coverts (grey in Laurel). Bolle's typically seen in fast flight low over treetops, while Laurel (which has broader, blunter wings) often seen soaring over crags or flapping along quite slowly (almost Eurasian Jay-like). Has dark grey underwing. May be told from superficially similar



dark feral Rock Doves with dark upperparts (lacking obvious dark wing bars), dark rump, dark underwing and strong vinaceous tinge on breast by longer tail (and broader wings) and especially by pale subterminal band on tail. On close view, adult may also be distinguished by red bill.

SEX/AGE Juvenile resembles adult, but has upperparts from mantle to uppertail coverts and inner wing coverts sepia-brown (darker than in juvenile Trocaz), head and underparts duller with no gloss on neck, and vinaceous tinge on underparts replaced with rufous-brown (more extensive than on juvenile Trocaz, extending to belly and sides of neck). Bill blackish.

VOICE Advertising call recalls Common Woodpigeon, but weaker and more guttural: a repeated 'ruk ruk gruuk guk' or 'ruor ruor ruor rup' with stress on the first and third units, and with short fourth unit.

TAXONOMY Sometimes considered to be conspecific with Trocaz Pigeon *C. trocaz*.

STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon. (Breeds Tenerife, Gomera and La Palma only.) Montane forest of tree heath and laurel, visiting nearby cultivation.

Plate page 497

LAUREL PIGEON *Columba junoniae*

L 37–38 cm, WS 64–67 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Large pigeon endemic to Canary Is. Only real risk of confusion is with Bolle's Pigeon (q.v. for discussion).

SEX/AGE Juvenile closely resembles adult, but has upperparts slightly warmer brown and underparts rufous-cinnamon rather than vinaceous; slight gloss on neck but gloss otherwise lacking; pale terminal band on tail less clearly demarcated from grey base. Bill blackish.

VOICE Advertising call a crooning 'pu-pu-pooo'; also gives a similar 'up-poooo'.



STATUS/HABITAT Uncommon. (Breeds Tenerife, Gomera and La Palma only.) Ravines, gorges and crags among montane tree heath and laurel forest, visiting nearby cultivation.

Plate page 497

AFRICAN COLLARED DOVE *Streptopelia roseogrisea*

Plate page 499

Pink-headed Dove, Pink-headed Turtle Dove, Rose-grey Dove; Barbary Dove (domesticated form)

L 29–30 cm, WS 45–50 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Medium-sized dove of the southern edge of the Sahara. Very similar to Eurasian Collared Dove but ranges do not overlap. African Collared is slightly smaller, less bulky and shorter-tailed, is somewhat browner (less greyish) above, and has white rather than grey vent and undertail coverts, so showing rather more contrast on underparts. Central tail feathers are somewhat darker than rump and back (uniform in Eurasian Collared), and when fanned in flight more extensive dark grey bases of rest of tail feathers make tail appear considerably darker than that of Eurasian Collared. Black half-collar on neck often somewhat broader. Pinkish-vinaceous tinge on head and underparts often no more obvious than in Eurasian Collared (and as with Eurasian Collared may appear entirely lacking). In hand, outer web of outermost tail feather white (black in Eurasian Collared). Domesticated form, known as Barbary Dove, is often paler on upperparts and underparts than wild population, and has much paler, buff-brown primaries (dark brown in wild African Collared and Eurasian Collared).

SEX/AGE Juvenile resembles adult, but lacks black half-collar and has faint pale buff fringes to scapulars



and wing coverts.

VOICE Quite different from Eurasian Collared Dove. Advertising call a short, abrupt note followed by a prolonged, rolling coo, the whole recalling cock crowing: 'KOOK r-r-r-r-r-r-OOoooooooooooo'. Often followed by a short 'qua' sound audible only at close range. Also a nasal, jeering 'heh heh heh'.

TAXONOMY Barbary Dove *S. 'risoria'* is in actual fact the domesticated form of this species.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common in Tibesti region. May be regular at Abu Simbel in extreme S Egypt. (Also resident in Gebel Elba area of Egypt, just outside our region.) Open acacia thornbush in plains and hills; also locally frequents better-vegetated areas or rocky wadis with acacias in desert mountains.

EURASIAN COLLARED DOVE *Streptopelia decaocto*

Plate page 499

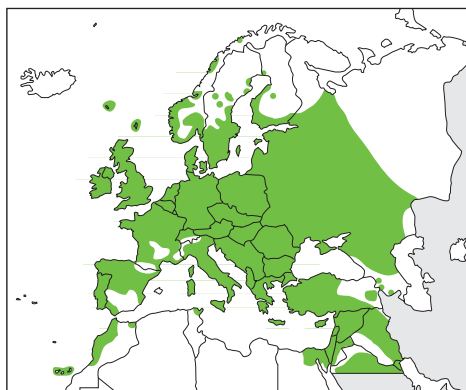
Collared Dove

L 31–33 cm, WS 47–55 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Fairly large, rather long-tailed dove. Unlikely to be mistaken. Pale, very uniform greyish-sandy overall coloration, largely pale upper-side to tail, single black half-collar (in adult) and whitish underwing separate it from all other doves (and pigeons) with the exception of African Collared Dove (q.v.). Does not overlap in range with African Collared, but for 'out-of-range' individuals beware possibility of escaped domesticated form of latter known as 'Barbary Dove'. In flight, looks longer-tailed and broader-winged than European Turtle Dove and is much paler overall with whitish (not grey) underwing and less distinct tail markings (median and outer feathers have broader, more diffuse whitish tips and greyish rather than black bases).

SEX/AGE Sexes virtually identical, but adult female is browner on crown and nape (not clean pinkish-grey) and has even weaker vinaceous tinge on underparts. Juvenile closely resembles adult female, but lacks black half-collar on neck and has more obvious pale fringes on upperparts and wing coverts.

VOICE Advertising call a repeated loud, low-pitched cooing 'koo-KOOH-ku' or 'doo-DOOH-du', with emphasis on longer second syllable and with third syllable often ending quite abruptly (Common Wood-pigeon's call has several more units and tails off towards end). Also a harsh, nasal 'whaaa' or 'kwurr', especially when alighting.



STATUS/HABITAT Common, locally abundant. Has expanded range westwards and northwards in spectacular manner this century. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Iceland, Lebanon, Syria.) In most of range, associated with man: farmyards and nearby cultivation or groves, orchards, oases, parks, gardens, grain stores, docks etc. Locally found away from the vicinity of habitation, in areas with scattered trees, copses or thickets, especially in southeast of range.

EUROPEAN TURTLE DOVE *Streptopelia turtur*

Plate page 498

Turtle Dove

L 26–28 cm, WS 47–53 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Medium-sized dove, easily distinguished from longer-tailed Eurasian Collared Dove when adult by much richer coloration, including

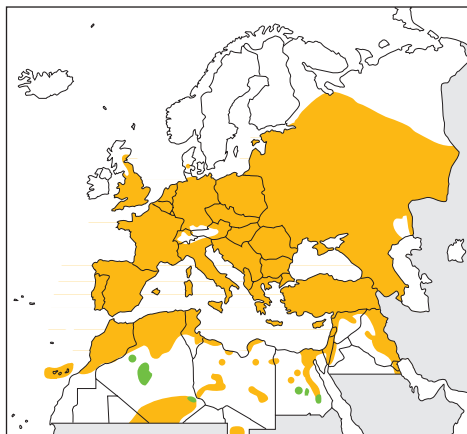
strongly variegated scapulars, tertials and wing coverts (showing broad rufous or yellowish-buff fringes surrounding dark feather centres), and by complex patch

of black and white (or bluish) crescents on neck, largely dark tail with narrow white terminal band to all but central feathers and darker (grey) underwing. Juvenile duller, lacking neck patches, so somewhat more difficult to identify, but has obviously darker scapulars, tertials and wing coverts with contrasting pale fringes and shows same differences in tail pattern and underwing. Wings more pointed and beats less hesitant than Eurasian Collared, with flight more dashing, swerving from side to side. (See also Laughing Dove and Oriental Turtle Dove.)

SEX/AGE Sexes virtually identical but, when fresh, adult female is duller overall with, in particular, buff tinge to grey forehead, duller grey crown and brown (instead of bluish-grey) nape. Juvenile much duller and browner overall, with grey of head and neck and vinaceous of underparts replaced by drab brown, no neck patches, narrower, pale rufous-buff fringes on scapulars, tertials and wing coverts, and dark feather centres much less defined; eye-ring pinkish instead of red. Some birds migrate south in wholly juvenile plumage.

VOICE Advertising call a repeated deep purring, somewhat tremulous, distinctive, but hard to transcribe: 'toorrrr toorrrr' or 'wurrrr wurrrr' (often more than two units together).

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 4 races (nominate and *rufescens* illustrated). Range from rather paler than nominate race to darker and more richly coloured in *rufescens* (Egypt), which is strongly rufous on upperparts, buff rather than grey on crown and slate-grey on underwing. Palest birds are *arenicola* of Middle East, which are paler than nominate



race on crown and nape (these buff in female) and on breast, paler from mantle to uppertail coverts (and sandy- or rufous-tinged rather than greyish olive-brown), and have paler rufous fringes to scapulars and wing coverts together with smaller dark feather centres (so look plainer-winged, less variegated).

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Ireland, Finland, Madeira.) Forest edge, open woodland, copses, groves, orchards, oases, hedgerows, cultivation and locally town parks. On migration, in open country far from trees.

ORIENTAL TURTLE DOVE *Streptopelia orientalis*

Plate page 498

Rufous Turtle Dove

L 33–35 cm, WS 53–60 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Asian vagrant (breeds C Asia and W Siberia eastwards). Fairly large dove that closely resembles European Turtle Dove. On ground, larger size, considerably greater bulk and slow gait with less pronounced head-bobbing recall pigeon rather than dove. In flight, greater bulk, broader wings and heavier flight recall Common Woodpigeon or Stock Dove more than European Turtle. **Adult** can be separated with care. Plumage quite similar to European Turtle, especially in western race *meena*, but looks slightly darker (obviously darker in nominate race) and on good view subtle but important differences in pattern of scapulars and wing coverts can be seen. In Oriental Turtle, scapulars, inner wing coverts and tertials have obviously rounded dark feather centres surrounded by rather diffuse rufous fringes, creating a characteristic scaly impression; coverts usually appear contrastingly paler than scapulars. In European Turtle, the dark feather centres are narrower and obviously pointed rather than rounded, with clean-cut broad rufous fringes; coverts do not look noticeably paler than scapulars. (Note, however, that some *meena* show less marked difference in patterning.) In flight, narrower pale fringes of Oriental Turtle make inner wing look darker, less obviously rufous. Also, pale tips on greyish outer median and greater coverts are broader than pale edges, creating one or two indistinct whitish wing bars (lacking in European Turtle, which has a cleaner, more uniform and more contrasting pale grey area on outermost lesser, median and greater coverts, extending to carpal area, unlike most Oriental Turtle although matched by some *meena*). Oriental Turtle has clean bluish-grey rump and back (these are brownish-tinged in most European Turtle, but a few

look quite clean bluish-grey). Nape and hindneck brown in *meena* and dark greyish-brown in nominate race, approximately same colour as mantle and contrasting with grey forehead and crown (nape and hindneck pale grey as in rest of head in typical European Turtle, contrasting with brown or rufous-brown mantle, but note that some races have rufous-brown nape and hindneck). Obviously darker appearance of nominate race compared with European Turtle is further enhanced in flight by darker underparts (belly and undertail coverts are greyish-tinged, not clean white). The following differences are likely to be of help only if views excellent. Oriental Turtle has more extensive, more obvious pale tips to primaries. In *meena*, underwing is medium grey (as in European Turtle); in nominate race, underwing is darker, slate-grey. The tips of the tail feathers are pale bluish-grey in nominate race but white in most *meena* and in all European Turtle. In addition, the outer web of the outermost tail feather is edged grey-white (usually showing an extensive dark area towards the shaft) in nominate race; in *meena* it is edged with white (usually with only a limited dark area near shaft) and in European Turtle it is entirely white. Pale feathers in neck patch are usually bluish-grey rather than white (but some *meena* have quite whitish feathering and a few European Turtle are bluish-grey) and patch has 4–6 dark bars (typically 3–4, occasionally 5, in European Turtle). Oriental Turtle has indistinct reddish or greyish eye-ring, but European Turtle has prominent red diamond-shaped patch of bare skin around eye. Breast darker-toned and less pure pink: brownish-pink in *meena* (although occasionally almost as European Turtle), greyish-pink in nominate race. Observers should also bear in mind

that juvenile European Turtle in autumn, especially if sickly with fluffed-up plumage, can appear dark and bulky with heavy flight and show indistinct neck patches (just moulting through); such birds show a more scaly pattern on the wing coverts than adult European Turtle, with a hint of pale bars, and can suggest adult Oriental Turtle in brief view. (Paler juvenile coverts may contrast with darker, newly moulted scapulars.) **Juvenile** extremely difficult to separate from juvenile European Turtle and requires excellent views. Oriental Turtle is somewhat darker overall, with, in particular, darker, greyer head, neck, mantle and breast and darker feather centres in scapulars, tertials and inner wing coverts. Pale feather edgings of breast, tertials, scapulars and wing coverts somewhat more rufous, less buff. Crown and nape tend to be as dark as mantle (often a little paler in European Turtle). Pale throat frequently stands out more against darker underparts. Often has a bluish-grey tinge to brown of back and rump (greyish-brown in European Turtle).

Pale tips and edges to primaries more sharply defined. No eye-ring (juvenile European Turtle has indistinct pinkish eye-ring). Structural and tail pattern differences as in adult.

SEX/AGE Sexes virtually identical, but adult female often tinged brown on crown (not clean grey) and breast usually browner. Juvenile rather distinct, differing much as in European Turtle. Some birds migrate south in wholly juvenile plumage.

VOICE Advertising call (unlikely to be heard in our region) a low, hoarse, mournful cooing 'hroo-hroo oo-oo', with two more grating notes followed by two clearer cooing notes, recalling Common Woodpigeon and quite unlike deep purring of European Turtle Dove.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 2 races (both illustrated). More significant differences outlined under Identification.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Europe, Middle East). In natural range forest edges and clearings, woodland, groves and nearby cultivation.

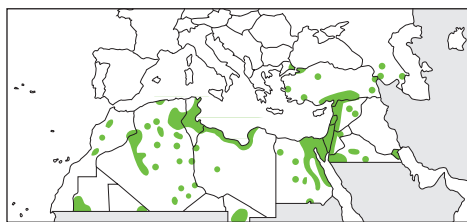
LAUGHING DOVE *Streptopelia senegalensis*

Plate page 498

Palm Dove

L 25–27 cm, WS 40–45 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Fairly small dove of N Africa, Middle East and Turkey. Likely to be confused only with European Turtle Dove or Eurasian Collared Dove. Compared with European Turtle, is smaller, with shorter, broader wings and longer tail, and has much less variegated upperparts. Compared with Eurasian Collared, which it resembles in structure, is considerably smaller and more colourful. Flight action resembles that of Eurasian Collared, being more laboured than European Turtle. **Adult** easily distinguished from either by extensive bluish-grey area on wing and distinctive broad necklace of dark speckles; lacks dark feather centres on upperparts shown by European Turtle. In flight, shows grey underwing and dark breast contrasting with whitish belly like European Turtle, not whitish underwing and rather uniformly pale underbody as in Eurasian Collared. Tail pattern differs from either: has broad white tips and black bases to outermost feathers grading diffusely to all-grey on next-to-innermost. Note that populations living in urban areas often look rather dark owing to plumage staining. **Juvenile**, which is duller and lacks necklace, is darker than juvenile Eurasian Collared and shows extensive dull bluish-grey area on wing and grey underwing; not unlike juvenile European Turtle, but again extensive dull bluish-grey area on wing (with white feather tips) diagnostic. On close view, eye dark (pale in juvenile European Turtle).



SEX/AGE Some adult females are duller overall. Juvenile resembles typical adult but is duller overall, lacking pink tinge on head and underparts; lacks necklace, and many wing feathers have narrow whitish tips.

VOICE Advertising call a distinctive, bubbling laugh that rises, then falls: 'ha-ha-hoo-hoo hoo-hoo-hoo' or 'p-oooo pe-poo-ooo pup oo', with slight variations.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 5 races (nominate illustrated) including vagrant *cambayensis* and *ermanni*. Vagrant eastern races duller, but some individuals of breeding races of our region equally dull, lacking rufous tones on wings and upperparts.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. Mainly associated with human habitation, occurring in towns, villages, gardens, orchards, oases and associated cultivation, but locally in scattered acacias far from habitation.

NAMAQUA DOVE *Oena capensis*

Plate page 499

Long-tailed Dove

L 26–28 cm (including tail 11–12 cm), WS 28–33 cm.

IDENTIFICATION By far the smallest dove of our region and largely restricted to S Israel. Unmistakable, with extremely long, graduated tail (almost half total length) and rufous outer wing and underwing. On ground, adult male quite striking with black foreparts, but adult female looks a small sandy-grey bird with very long black tail. Graduated tail shape obvious only when alighting or taking off. Juvenile has much shorter tail initially, but very small size, and highly variegated upperparts, with much pale buff spotting



on wings and buff band across back with black borders, make confusion highly unlikely.

VOICE Not very vocal. Advertising call a soft but deep, mournful 'po-oo-oo' (or 'hu huuooooo'), with

first unit most emphatic, dropping in pitch at beginning of second unit before rising at end.

STATUS/HABITAT Uncommon. Has only recently colonized S Israel, where probably mainly a summer

visitor. Has occurred in several areas inside our region in Egypt and could breed there. (Also breeds just outside region, in Gebel Elba area of Egypt.) Acacia thornbush, palm groves.

AMERICAN MOURNING DOVE *Zenaida macroura*

Plate below

Mourning Dove

L 30–31 cm (including tail 13–15 cm), WS 40–45 cm.

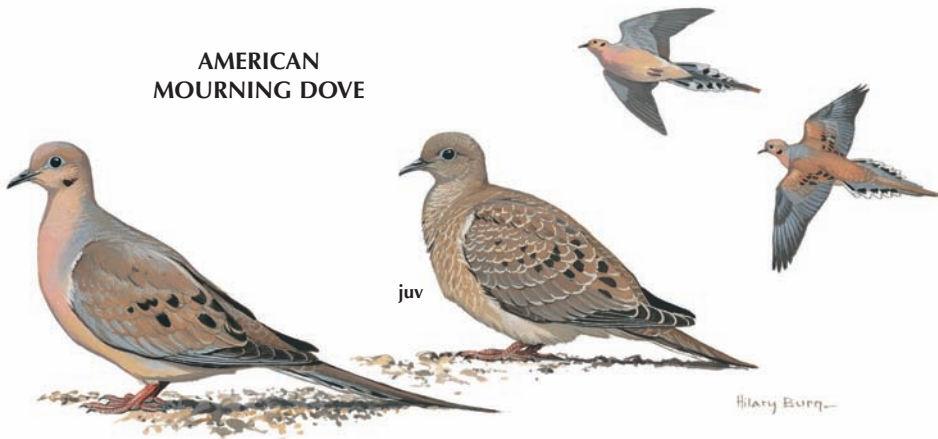
IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. A small, warm-coloured, cinnamon-brownish dove (smaller than European Turtle Dove) with a long, graduated tail. Latter has bluish-grey outer feathers which are broadly tipped with white (with dusky subterminal marks); the white being most obvious when tail spread upon alighting. On ground, look for large blackish spots on inner greater-coverts and tertials, and small black mark at side of neck (latter absent in 1st-autumn birds). Feeds on ground in open country and about

habitation. Unlikely to be confused with any other species (but see female Namaqua Dove).

SEX/AGE Juvenile is greyer and heavily speckled on wings and breast, but lacks neck patch; by first autumn much as adult but neck patch often absent.

VOICE Advertising call (unlikely to be heard in our region) is a mournful 'oowoo-woo-woo-woo'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In its natural range a bird of farmland, scrub, open woodland, parks and large gardens.



PARROTS Psittacidae

1 species (established escape)

This primarily tropical family is represented by one established escaped species in our region. (Other parrots, including Budgerigar, *Melopsittacus undulatus*, escape regularly, but none has yet become established.) Parrots are so familiar as a family that they are unmistakable.

ROSE-RINGED PARAKEET *Psittacula krameri*

Plate page 509

Ring-necked Parakeet

L 38–42 cm, WS 42–48 cm.

IDENTIFICATION The only parrot of our region and as such unmistakable with its lime-green plumage, long, pointed tail and large, rounded, hooked bill. Flight swift and direct. Feeds mainly on fruit and grain. Nests in holes in trees (occasionally in buildings or walls). Beware other escaped parakeets, particularly Alexandrine Parakeet *P. eupatria*, which is larger, with

red shoulder patches, obviously larger bill and yellowish-horn rather than greenish-grey legs.

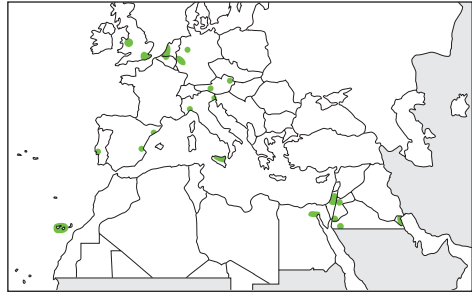
SEX/AGE Adult female lacks blue tinge on rear crown and black and pinkish-red collar shown by males of two years of age or more. Complete post-breeding moult commences shortly after nesting and takes 4–5 months. Juvenile closely resembles adult female, but

has yellowish tinge to plumage, shorter tail and pink bill with pale tip. Post-juvenile moult commences about 12 months after fledging and finishes 4–5 months later. Complete apart from some flight feathers.

VOICE Typical call a loud, harsh screeching 'kee-a' or 'kee-ak'.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 3 races (*manillensis* illustrated). Established escaped populations apparently derive from two S Asian races: *borealis*, which has all-red bill, and *manillensis*, which has black lower mandible (and sometimes black tip to upper mandible). A record from Cape Verde Is refers to escape or genuine vagrant of nominate race of sub-Saharan Africa, which has black tip to red upper mandible and black lower mandible with reddish base. Note that lower mandible hard to see.

STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon. An established escape. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Iraq.)



Often associated with human habitation, occurring in parks and gardens, but also orchards, oases and cultivation with groves of trees.

CUCKOOS Cuculidae

8 species (4 vagrant)

Cuckoos are medium-sized (or in some cases fairly small or fairly large) perching birds with slightly decurved, rather weak-looking bills, short legs and relatively long, broad, graduated tails. Most are highly migratory insectivores, specializing in feeding on hairy caterpillars. The fairly large, heavy-billed Senegal Coucal is an exception. All have distinctive calls, generally heard only in the breeding season. Members of the genera *Cuculus* and *Clamator* are nest parasites, laying single eggs (rarely more) in individual nests of passerine birds. Like raptors and owls, cuckoos may be mobbed by other birds. Often perch conspicuously on wires, on dead snags in treetops or on bushes, especially when calling, but often skulk in cover. Sometimes feed on ground (regularly in case of Senegal Coucal).

Sexes generally similar. Little or no seasonal variation. Juveniles range from fairly distinct to very like adult, but all are separable.

Complete post-breeding moult takes around four months (in winter quarters in migratory species). Post-juvenile moult carried out in first autumn/winter (in winter quarters in migratory species). Complete apart from some flight feathers.

Confusion with other birds mostly unlikely in the case of most cuckoos, but *Cuculus* species are an exception. Overall shape and coloration of both Common Cuckoo and Oriental Cuckoo recall Eurasian Sparrowhawk, but they can be quickly distinguished by more pointed wings and by small head with thin, unhooked bill.

Identification straightforward, apart from separation of Common Cuckoo from Oriental Cuckoo and vagrant Yellow-billed Cuckoo from vagrant Black-billed Cuckoo. Points to concentrate on differ markedly between species, so no rules of thumb.

JACOBIN CUCKOO *Clamator jacobinus* Pied Cuckoo, Black-and-white Cuckoo

L 31–33 cm (including tail 12–14 cm), WS 45–50 cm.

IDENTIFICATION This medium-sized, long-tailed vagrant cuckoo from sub-Saharan Africa is likely to be confused only with Great Spotted (especially juvenile), but easily separated by lack of obvious spotting on upperwing, which is uniformly dark apart from conspicuous white patch at base of primaries (juvenile shows some inconspicuous spots on wing coverts and white patch is smaller). There is a dark morph (but this is rare in sub-Saharan Africa adjacent to our region) with plumage entirely black apart from white patch at base of primaries.

SEX/AGE Underparts of adult lose buff tinge when

worn, becoming off-white, with more obvious greyish streaking. Juvenile resembles adult, but dark brown replaces black in plumage and has underparts dingier and more obviously yellowish-buff, some inconspicuous buff spotting on wing coverts, and white patch at base of primaries smaller.

VOICE Advertising call (unlikely to be heard in our region) a loud, shrill, fluting 'klee klee kleeuu kleeuu' or 'piu piu pee-pee-piu pee-pee-piu'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (N Chad). In natural range, acacia thornbush, woodland, cultivation with scrub and trees.

Plate page 500

GREAT SPOTTED CUCKOO *Clamator glandarius*

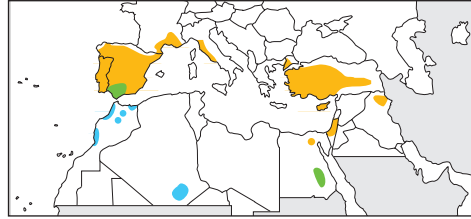
Plate page 500

L 38–40 cm (including tail 14–18 cm), WS 58–61 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Large, heavily built, long-tailed cuckoo of Mediterranean basin and adjacent areas. Conspicuously spotted upperwing and adjacent upperparts render it unmistakable. Crest is often inconspicuous. Flight action Common Cuckoo-like, but unusually long, rather loose-looking tail adds to distinctive rakish overall impression. In breeding-season display flight, rises steeply into air and then descends with tail fanned. Mainly parasitizes magpies, of both species. (See also Jacobin Cuckoo.)

SEX/AGE Juvenile resembles adult, but dark areas of plumage are browner overall. Has blackish hood and conspicuous rufous-bronze in primaries; spots cream-coloured; underparts warmer buff. Retains some rufous-bronze in primaries until first summer.

VOICE Advertising call of male when perched a clear, regularly repeated, raptor-like 'kleekok'. In display flight a loud, rasping, cackling 'cherr-cherr-che-che-che-che', recalling Ruddy Turnstone. Typical call of female a rolling, bubbling 'gi-gi-gi-gi-gi-gi-gi-



ku-ku-ku-ku', recalling European Green Woodpecker.

STATUS/HABITAT Generally uncommon, but locally more numerous. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Sardinia, Greece, Algeria, Tunisia and Lebanon, and may have bred Morocco, Yugoslavia, Syria and Jordan. Most winter south of the Sahara.) Open pine or oak woodland, olive groves, thickets, cultivated areas with bushes and trees.

DIEDERIK CUCKOO *Chrysococcyx caprius*

Plate page 500

Didric Cuckoo, Dideric Cuckoo

L 18–20 cm, WS 32–35 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Very small, short-tailed vagrant cuckoo from sub-Saharan Africa or S Arabia. Much smaller than any other cuckoo of our region and as such unlikely to be misidentified. Green and copper tints in plumage often appear dark, even blackish in some lights. When perched out in open seems shrike-like, often dropping onto prey in similar fashion. Sometimes clings to tree trunks in woodpecker fashion while feeding.

SEX/AGE Adult female duller, with barring on throat and breast. In both sexes, iridescence reduced when worn. Juvenile resembles adult female but has upper-

parts largely rufous initially, showing more green with wear, with no white spotting on wing coverts, throat and breast blotched and streaked rather than barred, and bill initially reddish.

VOICE Advertising call of male a clear, mournful 'dee-dee-deederik' with emphasis on the first syllable of the third unit. Typical call of female 'deea-deea-deea', with emphasis on the last unit. Neither call likely to be heard in our region.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Cyprus). In natural range, thornbush, woodland, open savanna, swamps, cultivation with trees and bushes.

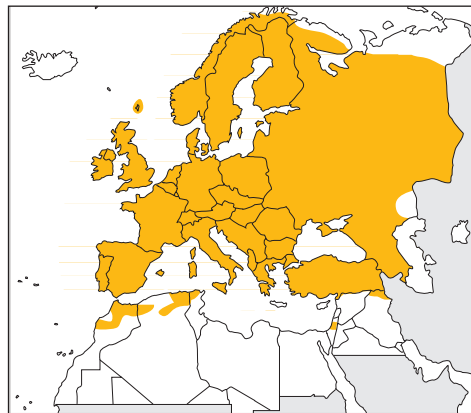
COMMON CUCKOO *Cuculus canorus*

Plate page 501

Cuckoo, European Cuckoo

L 32–34 cm, WS 55–60 cm.

IDENTIFICATION This fairly large cuckoo with its familiar, unmistakable call is much the most widespread and best-known species of our region. In most of our region, very unlikely to be confused with any other cuckoo (but closely similar Oriental, q.v., a major problem locally). Regularly perches out in open, sometimes with tail cocked and spread and wings drooped. Alights in clumsy fashion. Swift, direct and generally low flight with rapid wingbeats, raptor-like shape and rather uniform coloration (with barred underparts or more general barring) regularly lead less experienced observers to mistake Common Cuckoo for an *Accipiter* hawk or small falcon. Barred underparts recall Eurasian Sparrowhawk, while uncommon rufous morph recalls female kestrel. Flight is in fact rather different, being weaker than that of a raptor; has shallower wingbeats (wings generally not rising above horizontal) and more continuous flapping action, without a period of gliding after a series of flaps as in Eurasian Sparrowhawk. Wings are pointed, not rounded as in Eurasian Sparrowhawk and other *Accipiter* species. Common Cuckoo also has rather small head with thin, pointed bill (head/bill often held slightly raised above horizontal in flight, producing



distinctive outline). White markings in tail (latter sometimes difficult to see) also unlike those of any raptor.

SEX/AGE Adult males are always of grey morph. Adult

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight and clinal, but of significance as regards separation from Oriental Cuckoo. 3 races (nominate illustrated). Birds of south-west of our region (*bangsi*) smaller than nominate race, about same size as Oriental, and adult females of grey morph have more extensive and richer rufous-brown tinge on sides of breast. Race *subtelephonus* of C Asia and Iran eastwards (migrant through Middle East) slightly paler grey above than nominate race. Most importantly, *subtelephonus* and populations of nominate race from SE Europe to C Siberia have narrower dark barring on underparts, making separation from Oriental slightly easier (see Oriental for discussion).

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped range, may breed Cyprus, Syria, Lebanon.) Forest edge and clearings, woodland, scrub, heaths, moors, marshes, coastal dunes and open country, including cultivation, with trees and bushes.

L 30–32 cm, WS 51–57 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Fairly large cuckoo of the north-eastern fringe of our region. Virtually identical to Common Cuckoo, and in many situations inseparable in the field unless calling; more of a forest species. Compared with typical Common, is a slightly smaller and less heavily built bird (although Commons of race *bangsi* of Iberia and NW Africa are as small as Oriental) with slightly shorter and somewhat more deeply based bill and fractionally shorter tail. Tends not to hold wings and tail so limply as Common, and so often appears more compact, but this is by no means diagnostic. Shyer than Common, typically calling from perch high in tree emerging from forest canopy. **Adult** grey morph's potentially useful plumage and structural differences all (apart from underwing pattern) show some overlap with Common. While many Commons can be separated with confidence from Oriental, identifying a lone, silent grey-morph individual as an Oriental is difficult and frequently impossible. Oriental is rather darker and more bluish-grey (less ash-grey) above, with reduced contrast between grey rump and black tail. In typical Common, there is noticeable contrast between paler rump and dark tail in good view (but a few Commons are as dark as Oriental, with correspondingly reduced contrast). In Oriental, barring on underparts is always quite broad (averaging broader than in Common, but some overlap occurs) and thus more conspicuous than in many Commons. In eastern *subtelephonus* race of Common, barring on upper belly ranges from 0.7 to 1.6 mm wide, in south-eastern and eastern populations of nominate race from 1.2 to 2.1 mm (mainly 1.5–2.0 mm), and in western and northern populations of nominate race and in *bangsi* race of Common from 1.5 to 2.4 mm (mainly 1.8–2.1 mm), compared with 2.0–2.5 mm in Oriental. (Note that in both species barring is even broader on flanks than on upper belly.) Within breeding range of Oriental in our region, local Commons have on average narrower barring on underparts, and with experience this can be a useful field mark for identifying the more extreme individuals of either species. In such cases, the dark bars on upper belly of Oriental seem to the eye to be almost as broad as the pale bars, while in Common they seem very obviously narrower than the pale bars. Note, however, that even

Plate page 50 I



here many individuals of either species cannot be safely identified by width of barring. Identification of vagrant Orientals further west in our region by width of barring alone is hopelessly unreliable owing to high degree of overlap with local Commons. A combination of other indications should be looked for. Barring on underparts extends onto ventral region in Oriental (generally narrow and indistinct or even absent in Common, but beware some individuals with heavier ventral barring). Ground colour of belly and ventral area usually deeper, more yellowish- or ochre-tinged (instead of creamy-white in Common, but again some individuals show similar coloration to Oriental). Given good view, Oriental's underwing looks quite different from that of Common and is a very useful field feature. Underwing of Oriental is rather dark overall, with a conspicuous, contrastingly pale bar across the middle (formed by whitish bases of inner primaries and greater underwing coverts), while Common has a rather pale underwing overall owing to paler ground colour to underside of flight feathers, more extensive white spotting on primaries and whitish (instead of medium-grey) greater primary and median underwing coverts (both areas being finely barred with dark). Adult female Oriental often has dark barring on rufous-brown-tinged area on sides of breast slightly coarser than in Common. Uncommon adult female rufous-morph Oriental is rather easier to identify: dark barring above is both blacker and noticeably broader, being same width as rufous bars (instead of obviously narrower as in Common, but beware juvenile Common which has broader dark barring than adult). Rump and uppertail coverts are quite strongly dark-barred (this area often clear rufous

in Common, or with a few dark spots or short bars), sides of head and chin are much more heavily marked and tail is more heavily and more evenly barred (barring often broken and narrowing towards sides of tail in Common). **Juvenile** is darker than juvenile Common on sides of head, sides of neck and especially sides of breast (looking dark brown with some buff or rufous mottling), while barring on underparts is rather even and broad from throat to belly (breast heavily barred in Common, contrasting with widely spaced barring on belly that averages narrower than in Oriental). Juvenile shows same distinctive underwing pattern as adult, but dark areas greyer, not so dark, and so contrast with whitish band less obvious. In addition, juvenile rufous-type Oriental has blacker and more distinct dark barring above than corresponding juvenile Common.

SEX/AGE Adult males are always grey morph; adult female grey morph differs from male in same way as in Common. Juveniles can be divided into the same

two basic types as in Common, but some intergradation occurs; differ from adults as in Common. Grey type is commonest, but rufous type is not uncommon.

VOICE Advertising call of male a distinctive, rapid, hollow, vibrant 'poo-poo-poo-poo' (almost always 4 syllables but occasionally more) and a related but more muted 'poo-poo poo-poo poo-poo poo-poo poo-poo poo-poo' (typically 6–8 disyllabic units, with equal stress on both syllables). Sounds somewhat like air being blown into a bottle and is very reminiscent of call of Eurasian Hoopoe, but latter sounds somewhat less emphatic and usually consists of 3 units (but sometimes 2, rarely 1 or 4–5) in each phrase (thus 'poo-poo-poo'). Bubbling call of female rather like that of Common.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. (May breed irregularly to west of mapped range. Migrates southeast to winter in SE Asia and Australasia.) Forest, including both dense areas and edges and clearings, woodland.

BLACK-BILLED CUCKOO *Coccyzus erythrophthalmus*

Plate page 501

L 27–31 cm, WS 38–42 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. This fairly small, slim cuckoo is likely to be confused only with vagrant Yellow-billed. Both are rather uniform dull brownish above and dull whitish below, giving vaguely dove-like impression. Both tend to skulk in vegetation, flying between cover with shallow wingbeats and frequent glides. Black-billed has bill largely black, with a pale bluish-grey base to lower mandible, while Yellow-billed has most of lower mandible and cutting edge of upper mandible yellow; bill of Black-billed also finer and slightly less decurved. Black-billed has grey underside to tail with narrow white tips (bordered subterminally by blackish) to median and outer feathers (pale tips are particularly indistinct when worn); Yellow-billed has black underside to tail with extensive white tips to median and outer feathers. Difference can be hard to see unless tail spread or underside clearly visible. In juveniles and first autumn birds, tail pattern differences are less marked. Black-billed has underside of tail grey with narrow and rather indistinct white tips to median and outer feathers (subterminal blackish bars are lacking); Yellow-billed has underside of tail dark grey, rather than black, and broad white tips to median and outer feathers are less clearly defined (but still much larger and more prominent than in Black-billed). Eye-ring of adult Black-billed is

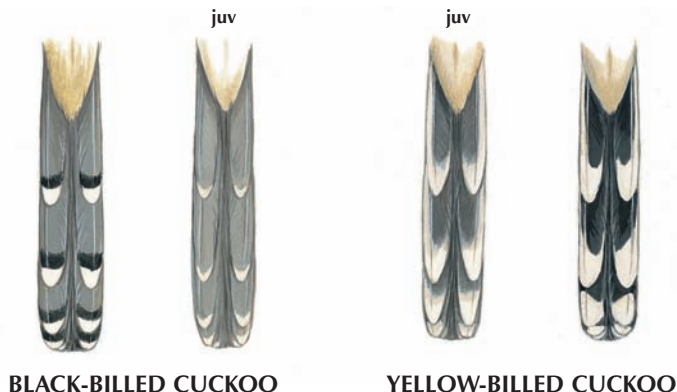
red (yellow in adult and 1st-winter Yellow-billed, grey in juvenile Yellow-billed), but note that juvenile and 1st-winter have yellow eye-ring. Flight feathers of adult Black-billed uniform brown, but distinctly tinged rufous in Yellow-billed in all plumages. Note, however, that juvenile and first autumn Black-billed has rufous tinge to flight feathers, although contrast not so obvious as in Yellow-billed. Upperparts of Black-billed tend to be browner, less grey-tinged, and throat and breast tend to be less white than in Yellow-billed, but these differences subtle and hard to see.

SEX/AGE Juvenile resembles adult, but has warmer, rufous-brown tinge above and inconspicuous pale feather fringes, rufous tinge to flight feathers and narrower tail feathers that lack obvious dark subterminal bar and have more diffuse whitish tips; eye-ring yellow. Post juvenile moult starts early, so unlikely to be recorded fully in juvenile plumage in our region. 1st-winter much as adult, but has yellow eye-ring and retains juvenile flight feathers and tail until reaching winter quarters.

VOICE Advertising call (unlikely to be heard in our region) a monotonously repeated, fast, rhythmic, hollow 'cu-cu-cu' or 'cu-cu-cu-cu'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe, Azores). In natural range, forest edges, woodland, riverside thickets.

UNDERTAIL PATTERNS OF AMERICAN CUCKOOS



YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO *Coccyzus americanus*

Plate page 501

L 28–32 cm, WS 40–48 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Likely to be confused only with quite similar Black-billed Cuckoo (q.v. for discussion).

SEX/AGE Juvenile closely resembles adult, but is warmer, more rufous-brown, above with indistinct pale fringes to feathers, and flight feathers are more extensively rufous than in adult; tail pattern less distinct than in adult, with tail base grey, not blackish, below and white feather tips less well defined; eye-rings greyish. Tail feathers often narrower than in adult. Post juvenile moult starts early, so unlikely to be

recorded fully in juvenile plumage in our region. 1st-winter much as adult, but retains juvenile flight feathers and tail until reaching winter quarters.

VOICE Advertising call (unlikely to be heard in our region) a rapid, hollow, wooden 'ka-ka-ka-ka-ka-ka-ka-ka ...' that usually slows and falls in pitch to a 'kow-kow-kowlp-kowlp-kowlp' at the end. Much longer than call of Black-billed.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe, Azores, Morocco). In natural range forest edge, open woodland, thickets, open country with trees and bushes.

SENEGAL COUCAL *Centropus senegalensis*

Plate page 500

L 40–42 cm (including tail 15–22 cm), WS 50–55 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Very large, exceptionally heavily built cuckoo of Egypt. Equally at home on the ground or in trees. Its large size and bulk, long broad blackish tail and rufous wings render it unmistakable. Very much a ground-feeder, walking slowly between bushes or along field edges in a rather ponderous, sedate manner reminiscent of a long-tailed gamebird (hence its Indian name 'crow-pheasant'). Flight low, heavy and clumsy, with several wingbeats followed by a glide. Often almost crash-lands onto perch.

SEX/AGE Juvenile resembles adult, but has rather indistinct dark barring on upperparts and upperwing, rather indistinct buff barring on tail and warmer tone on underparts; eye yellowish-brown or greyish rather than red. Some barring still present in first summer.



VOICE Advertising call a highly distinctive, far-carrying but hard-to-locate series of deep hollow hoots: 'hoo-hoo hu-hu-hu-hu-hu-hu-hu-hu-hu-hu' (pitch rising on first two units, then falling progressively). Slight variations occur, and pairs will duet.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. Cultivation with trees and bushes, palm groves, orchards, reedbeds.

OWLS Tytonidae & Strigidae

17 species

Owls consist of two closely related families, the barn owls (Tytonidae), represented by a single species in our region, and the typical owls (Strigidae). Owls are fairly small to large predatory birds, predominantly nocturnal or crepuscular, with short tails (apart from Northern Hawk Owl) and rounded wings. Well-known (vaguely human-faced) appearance created by large rounded head (sometimes with 'ear' tufts) and large, glaring eyes set in flattened face, with relatively small bill and short neck. Broad facial disc helps to conduct even slight sounds to large ears. Can turn head through up to 270 degrees, giving exceptional all-round visual and auditory capability. Have strongly hooked bills like those of raptors, but relatively smaller and partly hidden by feathers of facial disc. Feet large and powerful, with strong curving claws. Soft, loose feathering makes owls seem larger than their actual body size. Plumage coloration typically cryptic. Fly soundlessly (ghostlike). Most species feed on small mammals and to a lesser degree small birds and large insects (but larger species can take much larger prey and some smaller species specialize on insects). Larger species avoid highly populated areas. Barn Owl is only member of Tytonidae in our region, differing most obviously from typical owls in its strikingly heart-shaped facial disc.

Sexes generally identical (but adult female larger). Little or no seasonal variation. Juveniles closely resemble adults once last obvious traces of down lost. Easy to separate before then, generally difficult thereafter.

Post-breeding moult commences shortly after nesting and lasts for 2–5 months, but in many (especially larger) species not all flight feathers, tertials, wing coverts, scapulars and tail feathers replaced annually. Post-juvenile moult commences at fledging or not long after, and is completed within a few months at most: complete apart from flight feathers, tail, tertials and some upperwing coverts, replacement of which completed in second or third calendar year in most species, but not until fourth, fifth or even sixth in largest.

Misidentification of perched or flying owl as a raptor is possible given only a poor view, but under

better circumstances big-headed appearance with large eyes set in flattened face prevents confusion. Separation of one owl from another in flight often difficult, especially at night, but generally straightforward when perched. Beware effect of lights at night, which often make owls look much paler than they really are. Points to concentrate on are:

Size • Facial pattern ('expression'), including presence or absence of ear tufts • **Upperwing and underwing pattern** (genus *Asio*) • **Call**

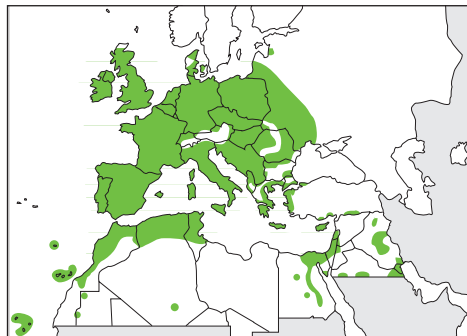
BARN OWL *Tyto alba*

L 33–35 cm, WS 85–93 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Rather distinctive medium-sized owl, about size of Long-eared and slightly smaller than Tawny but with longer wings. Has distinctive heart-shaped facial disc and, unlike many owls, dark eyes. Overall appearance of pale races of Barn is much paler than that of any other owl except much larger adult male Snowy (q.v.); even darkest races look very pale on face and underwing. Not only has very white facial disc, but white, buff or rufous-buff underparts lack the dark streaking or barring of all other owls except adult male Snowy (although in some races the fine dark spotting on the underparts is quite noticeable). The only medium-sized owl to nest regularly in buildings. Not infrequently hunts by day (typically late in day, but occasionally at other times) as well as at night. Flight rather like that of Short-eared, being slow and buoyant, with steady flapping of rather long wings, but is characteristically wavering and also somewhat jerky as body rises slightly with each wing-beat. Legs often dangle in flight. Compared with other rather long-winged medium-sized owls (i.e. Short-eared, Long-eared and Marsh), wings much paler and more uniformly coloured above, lacking conspicuous dark crescent below. Darker races can look superficially closer to Short-eared in poor flight view, but they are not so long-winged, lack heavy dark streaking and barring above and do not show dark carpal area that contrasts with pale yellowish patch at base of primaries. Pale races can look almost gull-like when hunting in daytime.

SEX/AGE Adult females generally more yellowish-tinted on breast in palest races, more richly coloured on entire underparts in darker races; tend to have more extensive dark spotting below. Juvenile down lost by fledging, at which time closely resembles adult.

VOICE Advertising call a shrill, hoarse, drawn-out, hissing scream: 'shrrreeeeee', rather tremulous when



given in flight. Given by both sexes, but female's weaker and lower-pitched. Alarm call a similar long, hissing scream. Begging call of young a drawn-out, hissing, snoring sound.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Marked. 8 races (nominate and *guttata* illustrated). Some races very similar to pale nominate race, but some have obvious yellowish tinge and more obvious dark spotting on underparts. Races *guttata* (C Europe to Ukraine), *gracilirostris* (E Canary Is) and *detorta* (Cape Verde Is) particularly dark overall, being darker grey above and darker, rufous-yellow, below.

STATUS/HABITAT Generally fairly common, but locally scarce. (In addition to mapped range, may breed Libya, Syria and Kuwait, and more widely in Morocco, Algeria and Turkey.) Nests in barns and other suitable buildings, including towers and ruins, less often in hollow trees, caves, large holes in cliffs and old wells. Open country (especially cultivation) with scattered trees, scrub and hedgerows; also oases.

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PALLID SCOPS OWL *Otus brucei*

Striated Scops Owl, Bruce's Scops Owl

L 20–21 cm, WS 54–64 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Small, mainly insectivorous owl of Middle East, likely to be confused only with extremely similar European Scops. (As with latter species, overall striated plumage pattern and ear tufts make confusion with other small owls unlikely given reasonable view.) Adult can be separated from adult European Scops on good view with careful attention to plumage detail (or much more easily by voice). Pallid Scops has paler overall coloration than most European Scops, being either pale creamy-grey or pale creamy-buff (most European Scops range from a somewhat darker grey to distinctly rufous-brown). Lacks rufous-brown tones in plumage (in European Scops of rufous type, present especially on ear tufts, centre of crown, nape, from



mantle to uppertail coverts and on inner scapulars, wing coverts and breast; in European Scops of grey type, present to a lesser degree on ear tufts, centre of crown, lesser coverts and sometimes mantle and inner

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scapulars). Note, however, that worn adult European Scops in late summer is paler than when fresh, with less obvious rufous tinge where present, and adult European Scops of race *turanicus*, which partly overlaps range of Pallid Scops, is distinctly pale grey even when plumage fresh. Consequently, the following differences are best used to separate the species. Pallid Scops has facial disk distinctly paler than in European Scops, with almost no contrast between area around eyes and rest of disc (distinctly darker in European Scops). Has less obvious pale spots on outer scapulars, buff rather than white, contrasting less with rest of upperparts. Underparts paler and more uniform, with finer dark striations, lacking the fine dark bars and broader white bars on the feathers shown by European Scops. Gives much cleaner, more precisely striated look to underparts. Dark striations on upperparts are also more obvious than in typical European Scops owing to paler background colour. Juvenile differs from juvenile European Scops in having barred (rather than closely freckled and vermiculated) upperparts and less closely barred and vermiculated underparts. In hand, adult or fully grown juvenile can be seen to have broader, more rounded wing, with tip of 10th (outermost) primary in closed wing falling between tips of 4th and 5th primaries (rarely equal to 5th); in European Scops, it falls between 5th and 6th

(or is equal to 6th). Adult also lacks small white spots on nape and mantle.

SEX/AGE Juvenile resembles adult, but body plumage much softer-looking (almost downy); upperparts and coverts grey with fine whitish barring (becoming coarser on median and greater coverts), underparts with fine dark streaks, cross-bars and vermiculations.

VOICE Advertising call of male a soft, repeated, hollow, low-pitched, Stock Dove-like 'boo ... boo ... boo ...', delivered at a rate of about one unit per second, thus about three times faster than call of European Scops.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight, but of significance for identification. 2 races (both illustrated). Race *exiguus* (Turkey, Iraq and, at least in winter, Israel) is distinctly pale creamy-grey, while *obsoletus* (Syria, Iraq; perhaps only a winter visitor from breeding areas further east) is pale creamy-buff with slightly finer and more distinct dark striations on body.

STATUS/HABITAT Common in Iraq, but uncommon and localized elsewhere. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Israel and may breed Syria, Jordan. Winter status uncertain in Turkey and Iraq; may be only a summer visitor.) Cultivation with trees and bushes, palm groves, riverine woodland, thickets, parks, large gardens. Favours more arid areas than European Scops.

EUROPEAN SCOPS OWL *Otus scops*

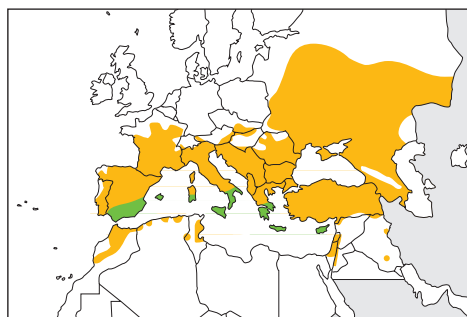
Scops Owl, Eurasian Scops Owl, Common Scops Owl

L 19–20 cm, WS 53–63 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Apart from Eurasian Pygmy, the smallest owl of our region (thrush-sized) and largely insectivorous. Overall coloration ranges from distinctly grey to distinctly rufous-brown. The striated plumage pattern (on both upperparts and underparts) and ear tufts separate it from all other small owls apart from very similar Pallid Scops (q.v. for discussion). Note, however, that ear tufts inconspicuous when lowered, head then often looking very rounded. European Scops is slimmer than Little, the only small owl frequently encountered in the same areas, usually perches more upright, and has quite different facial expression (with bill positioned well below eyes and a triangular-shaped darker stripe extending from crown to bill, partly dividing facial disc); its fine vermiculations and streaks are very different from 'spotty' plumage of Little. Unlike Little, is markedly nocturnal. If flushed, flies away without marked undulations (unlike Little); a series of wingbeats alternate with a glide on slightly down curved wings.

SEX/AGE Adult becomes a little paler overall when worn. Juvenile closely resembles adult but paler overall, with less obvious rufous tinge, shorter ear tufts, only very small white spots on lower scapulars (and not so boldly bordered with black), less distinct dark streaking on upperparts and narrower dark streaks on underparts.

VOICE Advertising call of male a short, clear, plaintive whistle, 'tyuu', monotonously repeated about every three seconds for long periods. Beware confusion with quite similar but shorter sounds made by tree frog and



especially midwife toad. Will duet with female, the latter giving a similar but softer, higher-pitched call.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 6 races (nominate illustrated). Some races slightly darker than nominate, with more obvious dark streaks above, others extremely similar. From an identification viewpoint most interesting race is *turanicus* (Iraq and perhaps SE Turkey), which is distinctly paler grey than grey type of nominate race (does not have rufous-brown type), with more distinct black streaks on upperparts. See Pallid Scops Owl.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Germany and may breed Syria.) Open broadleaved woodland, groves, orchards, parks, large gardens, cultivation with clumps of trees and locally in open coniferous woodland.

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EURASIAN EAGLE OWL *Bubo bubo*

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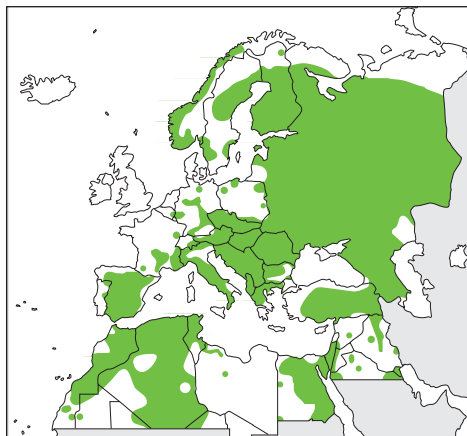
Eagle Owl, Northern Eagle Owl; Pharaoh Eagle Owl, Desert Eagle Owl (*B. b. ascalaphus*)

L 60–75 cm, WS 160–188 cm (but race *ascalaphus* L 47–59 cm, WS 126–149 cm).

IDENTIFICATION With the exception of small, southern race *ascalaphus*, the largest and much the most powerful owl of our region. A massive bird, many times heavier than Long-eared, with very strong bill and feet. Easily identified in reasonable view by huge size, thickset (almost barrel-shaped) body, large ear tufts, and distinctive facial expression created by prominent black brows (bordered above by pale) above deep-set, glaring orange-yellow or orange eyes set in dusky facial disc. Plumage coloration quite variable, but all but some *ascalaphus* have heavy dark streaking across breast contrasting with paler belly. Distinctive southern race *ascalaphus* averages around 75% of size of typical forms, with distinctly triangular-shaped dark marks rather than streaks on breast. Coloration highly variable, some almost as dark as nominate race, others much paler and sandier, with much less extensive dark marking (on underparts, restricted to some triangular spotting on breast), paler facial disc and yellow eyes. Structure also somewhat different, with shorter ear tufts, narrower wings, shorter tail, longer legs and more slender toes and claws. In spite of these differences, even palest individuals retain much of the distinctive character of Eurasian Eagle Owl outlined above, and confusion unlikely. In flight, has very broad wings (lacking pale panel on base of primaries shown by Great Grey) and flight quite rapid and powerful with stiff and fairly shallow wingbeats, rather than slow flaps, recalling Common Buzzard in style. In side view, head looks much more 'pointed', less flat, than in other large owls and tail looks unusually short. Feeds on wide variety of prey, both large and small, regularly taking prey as large as crows, ducks and hares, even other owls and raptors up to size of Northern Goshawk.

SEX/AGE Adult slightly paler when worn. Juvenile at fledging beginning to resemble adult, but typically has fluffy buff down on head (except facial disc), underparts, uppertail coverts and some wing coverts, narrowly and indistinctly barred with blackish. Ear tufts rudimentary. Immature may be aged up to first spring on good view by retained juvenile tertials that are shorter and narrower than in adult, with fine, rather diffuse dark barring (instead of broad and bold).

VOICE Advertising call of male a loud, deep, far-carrying but muffled hoot, 'HOO-o' or 'BUHu', with emphasis on first syllable (from distance only 'hoo' heard). Confusion likely only with first part of call of Ural Owl (q.v.). Advertising call of female similar but



higher-pitched and hoarser. Female also gives a hoarse, drawn-out, barking 'REEHew'. Call of *ascalaphus* somewhat different: 'WAHa' (with the emphasis on the first syllable) or 'hooWAHa' (with the emphasis on the second syllable). Alarm call a shrill, nasal 'ka-ka-kaKAYu'. Begging call of older young a hissing, rasping 'chach' or 'chueesh', sounding rather like wood being planed.

TAXONOMY Distinctive race *ascalaphus* sometimes considered a full species (**Pharaoh Eagle Owl** or **Desert Eagle Owl**), although it intergrades with race *interpositus* in Middle East.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Marked. 8 races (nominate, *sibiricus*, *turcomanus* and *ascalaphus* illustrated). Extremes of colour variation in our region in relation to nominate race represented by very pale, whitish *sibiricus* (Urals), rather pale and yellowish *turcomanus* (N Caspian region) and very small and often pale race *ascalaphus* (N Africa and Sinai to W Iraq). For details of latter see Identification.

STATUS/HABITAT Generally uncommon; rare in many areas. (In addition to mapped range, formerly bred Sicily and has bred Denmark, Luxembourg. May breed Lebanon, N Chad.) Favours broken terrain with cliffs, rocky crags, piles of boulders or ravines among open woodland, scrub, grassland or sparsely vegetated semi-desert and even desert country. Locally ruins, margins of cultivation, rubbish dumps.

BROWN FISH OWL *Ketupa zeylonensis*

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L 54–57 cm, WS 145–150 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Very large eared owl of Middle East. Likely to be confused only with Eurasian Eagle Owl, but is somewhat smaller than typical forms of latter, less heavily built, with distinctly different facial expression created by flatter brows, rather shaggy, droopy ear tufts (but beware Eurasian Eagle Owl with depressed tufts), narrow dark streaking on underparts, and longish bill positioned higher up fairly ill-defined facial disc. Rather loose plumage generally adds to shaggy, unkempt look at close range. Has unfeathered yellowish or greyish tarsi. Flight rather slow with deeply flapping wingbeats, producing audible wing



noise at close range (unlike other owls). Feeds on freshwater crabs, fish and frogs. When hunting fish by sailing low over water, dangles its longish legs.

SEX/AGE Adult slightly paler when worn. Juvenile at fledging closely resembles adult (but upperparts buff rather than cinnamon, with finer dark streaking

and feathering of head, body and wing coverts softer-looking).

VOICE Advertising call an explosive deep, hollow, moaning 'hu who-hu' (with noticeable slight pause after first unit). Sometimes gives a longer version, becoming almost laughing near end: 'oof uh-oof uh-oof uh-oof uh-oof uh-oof u-uh-h-HA-oo-oo-oof'. Also

a harsh descending scream: 'ooooahrrrr'.

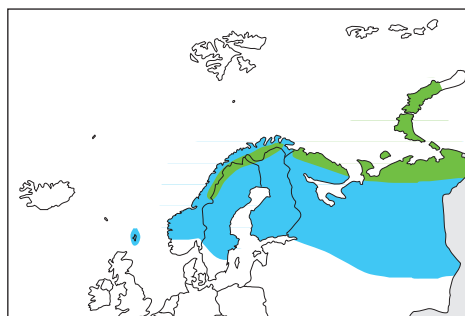
STATUS/HABITAT Very rare (may now be extinct N Israel, S Syria). Still occurs S Turkey and could still occur N Syria, SE Iraq. Largely undisturbed wadis and valleys in hill country with perennial streams or rivers and with clumps of trees or bushes. (In S Asia, also in flat, well-watered country.)

SNOWY OWL *Nyctea scandiaca*

L 53–66 cm, WS 142–166 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Very large size and white plumage (heavily marked with blackish in female and young male, but only slightly in old male) render this nomadic, open-country arctic owl unmistakable. Beware brief glimpses of underside of much smaller white-breasted Barn Owl or even unusually pale (heavily worn) Short-eared Owl leading to misidentification as this species. Snowy regularly hunts by day, but mainly crepuscular (less active at night). When on ground often sits upright, but sometimes rests on breast, looking very cat-like. In spite of white or largely white plumage, often surprisingly hard to detect on stony tundra amongst the many pale rocks (this especially applies to young females, which look quite grey at a distance). Flight quite fast, with deep wingbeats; wings look more pointed than in other large owls. When in pursuit of flying prey remarkably rapid and agile, almost raptor-like.

SEX/AGE Older adult males have only a small number of blackish marks on plumage, but younger birds more heavily marked. Immature closely resembles adult female, but young female even more heavily and extensively barred with blackish (looking rather grey at a distance), whereas young male has narrower blackish barring than adult female; patch of retained dark brownish-grey downy feathering sometimes visible on hindneck (but often hidden). Juvenile at fledging resembles immature, but retains some dark brownish-grey downy feathering on crown and sides of head, neck, underparts and wing coverts. Facial disc pre-fledging is blackish.



VOICE Rather silent away from nest. Advertising call a loud, hollow, muffled 'gawh', somewhat recalling Great Black-backed Gull. Alarm call of male a loud, grating 'krek-krek-krek-krek-krek', very like call of agitated female Mallard; that of female similar, but higher-pitched. Female also gives a repeated, shrill, mewing 'biw', interspersed with a high-pitched, piping 'see-uuw' or 'see-uuw-ee'.

STATUS/HABITAT Rare, but local concentrations occur in good lemming years. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Iceland, S Norway, Shetland. In some winters, disperses further south than mapped area.) Tundra with raised hummocks, tussocks or rocks for use as lookouts, cover and nest sites. In winter also fields, grassland, marshes.

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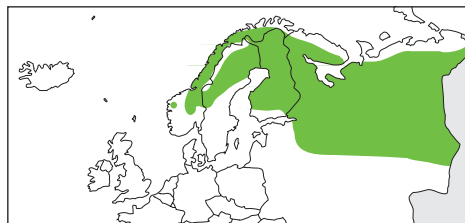
NORTHERN HAWK OWL *Surnia ulula*

Hawk Owl

L 36–39 cm, WS 74–81 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Very distinctive medium-sized owl of N Europe: unusual not only in structure but also in its largely diurnal habits. Long tail and unique facial pattern (with broad black sides to whitish facial disc) render it unmistakable given reasonable view. Not likely to be confused with any other owl, but long tail, rather pointed wings and barred underparts can give impression of large female Eurasian Sparrowhawk when seen briefly in flight. Large, broad head with distinctive facial pattern and extensive white spots and marks on upperparts quickly dispel such ideas. Flight rapid and direct, with rather fast wingbeats. When in pursuit of small birds or when mobbing predators, remarkably agile for an owl. Alights rapidly on perch, often swooping in. Initially posture rather horizontal, but then jerks upright and slowly lowers tail, looking very hawk-like when seen from a distance. Often perches conspicuously on tops of trees beside clearings or in more open forest. Fearlessly attacks human intruders at nest.

SEX/AGE Juvenile at time of fledging resembles adult, but has softer, more downy head, body and coverts:



head (other than facial disc) and upperparts greyer and white marking less extensive, underparts duller (off-white) with paler, less distinct dark barring (lacking altogether on ventral area); whitish on facial disc a little less extensive, replaced by black.

VOICE Advertising call (given in broad daylight as well as at night or during dimmest hours of day) a very drawn-out, vibrant, bubbling, somewhat tremulous 'ulyu-lyu-lyu-lyu-lyu-lyu-lyu-lyu-lyu ...', each call lasting up to 8–9 seconds and consisting of up to a hundred units. Recalls Tawny's bubbling trill, but call

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much longer. Alarm call a shrill, high-pitched, Merlin-like 'qui qui quiquiquiqui ...'. Begging call of female a hoarse, drawn-out 'kshee-lip'. Begging call of young a wheezy, hissing 'ksssssitt' (with stress on final, higher-pitched, 'itt').

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (nominate illustrated), including vagrant *caparoch* from N America.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. (In some years breeds further south in Scandinavia than mapped and has bred Estonia. From time to time irrupts southwards in winter, occasionally reaching south side of Baltic and south-central Russia.) Forest with clearings and edges (bordering open moorland, bogs or cultivation), open woodland. Outside breeding season, penetrates deeper into cultivated areas.

EURASIAN PYGMY OWL *Glaucidium passerinum*

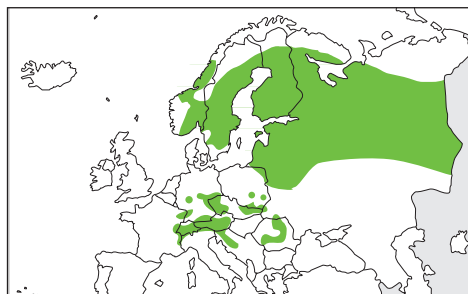
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Pygmy Owl

L 16–17 cm, WS 34–36 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Tiny owl, no larger than a Common Starling, which it fleetingly resembles when passing overhead. In good view, longer (thus more obvious) tail, dark barring on breast and flanks, short white brows, white-spotted facial disc and lack of large, obvious white spotting on scapulars distinguish adult from superficially similar adult Tengmalm's and dark races of Little, even if tiny size not obvious. Tengmalm's also has much larger head and much paler and much more distinct (black-bordered) facial disc with very different expression, looking wide-eyed with astonishment rather than fierce and annoyed (Eurasian Pygmy gives impression of a frowning elf). All these features, except barring on breast and flanks, and white-spotted facial disc, can also be used to separate juvenile. Flight markedly undulating, woodpecker-like, over long distances; swift, dashing and agile when in pursuit of prey. Tends to perch rather upright, but sometimes more horizontal, often waving tail from side to side, or flicking it up and down. Sometimes sits with tail half-cocked. Hunts mostly at dusk and dawn, but also during day (not at night). Often detected in daylight by its rhythmic call, frequently delivered from the top of a tall spruce.

SEX/AGE Juvenile resembles adult, but head, upperparts and wing coverts darker and with only indistinct pale spotting, facial disc darker, upper breast uniformly dark rather than barred, lower breast and flanks without dark barring, and dark streaks on underparts less distinct. Immature closely resembles adult, but lacks white eye-like marks on nape and has paler (rufous-brown), poorly defined barring extending right across breast (compared with well-defined, blackish barring barely meeting in centre of breast in adult); often warmer-toned above, with only small buff specks on crown (instead of larger white spots that often run together to form short bars).



VOICE Advertising call of male (delivered at dawn and dusk, sometimes in daytime but rarely at night) a repeated, soft but far-carrying, fluting whistle: 'hyew' (once every 1–2 seconds). Quite like call of European Scops (q.v.), but shorter and repeated more frequently. Also recalls Common Bullfinch. At close range, sounds more like 'hyewk'. When excited intersperses slightly shorter, lower-pitched, vibrating hoots between usual calls: 'hyew ... huhuhu ... hyew ... huhuhu ... hyew'. Female sometimes gives a similar but more nasal 'hyeek'. Both sexes give a series of shrill, fluty notes, especially when establishing territory in autumn: 'cheek-cheek-cheek-cheek-cheek-cheek ...'. Sounds like a bicycle pump with finger over the hole, rising in pitch and speed of delivery. Female and young beg with thin, Robin-like 'tseeeeh', falling in pitch at end.

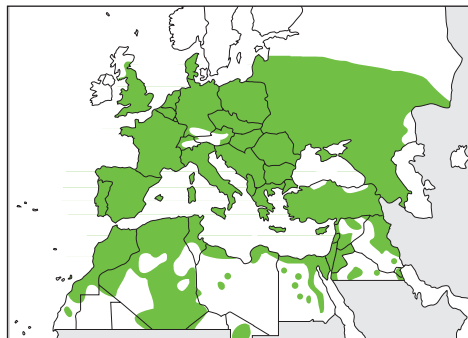
STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon (but elusive in late spring and summer in spite of crepuscular and diurnal hunting). Coniferous and mixed forest (only in uplands in south), often visiting clearings, bogland edges etc. while hunting. Sometimes frequents broadleaved woodland, farms or even gardens in winter.

LITTLE OWL *Athene noctua*

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L 21–23 cm, WS 54–58 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Much the most familiar small owl of our region. Active by day as well as by night (especially dimmest hours of day). Palest forms are unmistakable. Darker forms could be confused with smaller Eurasian Pygmy or larger adult Tengmalm's (q.v.), but in practice confusion most unlikely as Little is not a forest bird and has different character, with broad head, long, flat pale brows (giving face a frowning expression), white chin and lower cheeks (bordered below by a darker necklace, broken in the centre) and long, conspicuous legs. (See also European Scops and Pallid Scops.) Less arboreal than most owls. Often perches prominently on posts, wires, rocks or buildings. Sometimes very upright, at other times quite crouched when perched, looking like a squat, brown-



ish lump, but long legs generally visible. When agitated, stands upright and bobs dementedly. Can walk, run or hop quite freely on ground. Flight markedly undulating (woodpecker-like) over long distances, bursts of wingbeats interspersed with short glides. When in pursuit, more direct.

SEX/AGE Juvenile resembles adult, but has rather indistinct buff rather than white spots on upperparts (spots virtually lacking on crown and from back to uppertail coverts); in darker races upperparts are also paler and greyer-brown, while dark marks on underparts are paler and less distinct.

VOICE Typical call a loud, sharp, clear, mewing 'kEE-ew'. Advertising call of male a mellow, whistling 'goooek', longer than call of European Scops and rising in pitch abruptly at end. Recalls short whistling

call of Eurasian Curlew. Female gives a similar call, but higher-pitched and more nasal. When alarmed, gives a loud, shrill, Common Tern-like 'kyitt kyitt'. Begging call of young a drawn-out hiss.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Marked. 7 races (*vidalii* and *lilith* illustrated). Race *vidalii* (Iberia northwards and eastwards to Britain and Baltic Republics) is darkest, *lilith* (Cyprus and inland in Middle East from Israel to SE Turkey) is palest. In general, there is a cline of decreasing colour to the south and east, but exceptions occur.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. Flat or hilly open country of all kinds (ranging from cultivation to desert); either with scattered trees or broken by gullies, banks, stone walls or rocky slopes. Also old orchards, palm groves, quarries, ruins, villages.

TAWNY OWL *Strix aluco*

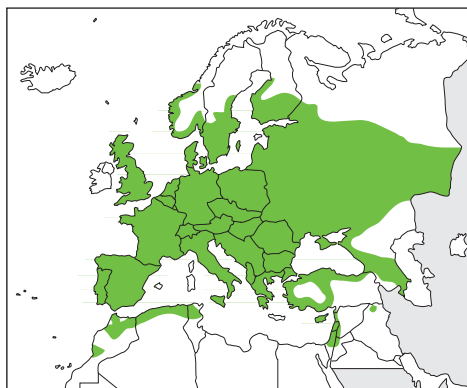
L 37–39 cm, WS 94–104 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Commonest and best-known owl over much of our region. This medium-sized owl has the classic, rather kindly 'wise-owl' appearance, with broad, rounded head on rather dumpy body, large dark eyes in centre of dusky facial disc (divided by triangular dark stripe from bill to crown), and typically hunched-up posture. Shows marked colour variation from rufous to various shades of grey and even dark brown (see below), but given reasonable view unlikely to be confused (see Hume's, Ural and Long-eared for discussion). When suddenly illuminated at night can look very pale, as do many owls, leading to possible misidentification as Barn. Strictly nocturnal; normally only seen in daylight when found at roost (presence often given away by mobbing passerines). In flight, looks broad- and comparatively short-winged (Long-eared and Barn have longer, narrower wings) and flight action rather direct and powerful, with fairly shallow wingbeats. Wings held somewhat down curved when gliding. Will sometimes aggressively defend young from human intruders.

SEX/AGE Juvenile on fledging resembles adult so far as facial disc, flight feathers and tail are concerned, but retains down on head (except facial disc), body and most wing coverts. Head (apart from facial disc) greyish, upperparts and wing coverts dark grey barred with white, yellowish-buff and white or pale cinnamon-rufous and white. Underparts white, yellowish-buff or pale cinnamon-rufous, barred indistinctly with grey.

VOICE Advertising call of male is the familiar, distinctive hooting 'HOOOO hu huhuhu hoooooo', with a pause of around 2–4 seconds after the initial 'hoooo' and before the abrupt, rather subdued 'hu', followed by a wavering 'huhuhu hoooooo' (the final, drawn-out hoot being distinctly trembling). Female gives a hoarse, slightly higher-pitched, less consistent version. Both sexes frequently give a sharp 'ke-WIK' and sometimes give a prolonged tremulous, bubbling trill: 'llu-llu-llu ...'. Alarm call a rapid, sharp, angry 'kvik kvik kvik'. Begging call of young a hoarse 'psee-ep'.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 6 races (*sy/vatica* illustrated). Overall coloration varies from



rufous to grey, dark grey or pale grey, with intermediates in many areas. Proportions of each type vary markedly across region. Rufous type widespread, but absent in NW Africa, Iraq and Urals. Grey and pale grey types widespread in N and C Europe (from Britain to Urals) and in Balkans, grey type (sometimes called intermediate type) commonest in the west, becoming less common further east (and absent in Urals), pale grey type rare in west but becoming progressively commoner further east. Dark grey type widespread in south but uncommon further north and absent from Scandinavia, Germany, Austria and Balkans eastwards to Urals. Pale grey type is even paler and whiter, less buffy, overall than grey type. Dark grey type has whiter, less buffy ground colour than grey type, but appears much darker overall owing to more extensive dark markings throughout. From Caucasus to NE Turkey a dark brown morph, very dark brown overall (and with a dark brown facial disc), occurs quite commonly, in addition to rufous and dark grey types.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. Forest and woodlands (of all types, but especially broadleaved), parks, large gardens, open country with hedgerows and scattered trees.

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HUME'S OWL *Strix butleri***Hume's Tawny Owl**

L 35–38 cm, WS 90–98 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Medium-sized owl of Egypt and Middle East. General appearance recalls Tawny, but is slightly smaller and noticeably less bulky, with distinctly longer legs, much paler underparts (lacking strong dark markings), paler facial disc (which lacks blackish border) and pale, orange-yellow eyes that contrast with black surround (eyes dark in Tawny). Has bolder, more contrasting dark barring on flight feathers and especially on tail (where dark bars are much broader than in Tawny). Dark central crown-stripe is more prominent, owing to paler sides of crown. Could be confused with Barn Owl in poor view, but different appearance of facial disc (divided by dark triangular stripe from crown to bill, as in Tawny, and less well defined and not so obviously heart-shaped), pale eyes, shorter, more rounded wings and darker, more obvious barring on wings and tail should prevent misidentification. Confusion with small southern race *ascalaphus* of Eurasian Eagle Owl (q.v.) more likely, especially with pale, rather unmarked type. Latter is much larger, with much heavier body (substantially broader than head), large ear tufts (though these sometimes hard to see when lowered), at least some conspicuous dark marks across breast (some are heavily marked), and a differently shaped facial disc with broadly triangular forecrown above prominent brows (in Hume's, disc rather heart-shaped with narrow dark triangular stripe from forecrown to bill). Strictly noc-



turnal. Flight rather like Tawny. Perches prominently on rocks or posts.

SEX/AGE Juvenile at time of fledging has rather downy feathering on head (except facial disc), body and wing coverts. Head (apart from facial disc), upperparts and wing coverts paler and more cinnamon-rufous, less grey than in adult. Underparts paler and whiter, less warm buff, with indistinct dark barring.

VOICE Advertising call a mellow, hooting 'hooooo ... huhu huhu', with a shorter pause after the initial 'hooo' than in Tawny and lacking tremulous quality of second part. Recalls Eurasian Collared Dove. Sometimes just gives a single 'hooooo'. Also has a rapid 'hu-hu-hu-hu-hu-hu-hu-hu-hu-hu ...' when agitated, and a short throaty cough.

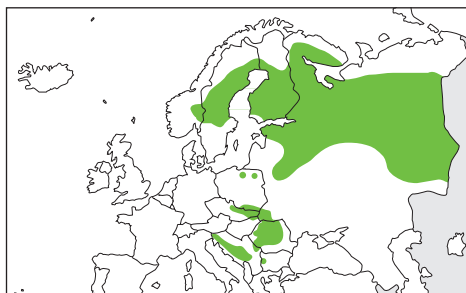
STATUS/HABITAT Uncommon or rare. Desert hills and mountains, inhabiting deep wadis and rocky slopes, especially where permanent water or ground-water allows palms, acacias or other trees and bushes to grow. Will visit human settlements in such areas.

URAL OWL *Strix uralensis*

L 60–62 cm, WS 124–134 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Large owl that is not so large as Great Grey but much larger than Tawny and more elongated, with longer, rather pointed tail. Has distinctive saturnine facial expression: rather blank-looking, creamy-grey facial disc is almost round (without dark central divide from forecrown to bill, or rather obvious blackish border shown by Tawny), and eyes are dark and rather small (obviously smaller than in Tawny). Prominent dark streaking on head, upperparts and underparts more clean-cut than in Tawny. Likely to be confused only with Great Grey, or pale northeastern forms of Eurasian Eagle Owl, in poor flight view. Coloration paler and less grey than Great Grey, and lacks conspicuous pale orangey-buff panel at base of primaries and broad dark terminal band on tail. Much smaller than Eurasian Eagle Owl, with flatter face, longer tail and broader dark barring on flight feathers. Confusion with smaller Short-eared unlikely but possible. Short-eared differs most obviously in having yellowish-buff overall appearance, yellow eyes surrounded by dark patches, much more variegated upperwing patterning (with prominent yellowish-buff panel on upperside of primaries) and striking dark carpal patch and dark tip on otherwise pale underwing. Flight direct and powerful, with rather slow wingbeats interspersed with glides (recalling Common Buzzard in action and appearance as it flies away through trees). Almost entirely nocturnal. As with Tawny, often very aggressive at nest site.

SEX/AGE Juvenile at fledging resembles adult as regards facial disc, flight feathers and tail, but retains much downy feathering elsewhere. Head (except facial disc) and underparts range from whitish-grey to whitish-brown with rather broad but indistinct dark



barring. Upperparts and wing coverts greyish or brownish with white barring.

VOICE Advertising call of male a deep, far-carrying, hooting 'WHOOhoo whoohoo oWHOOhoo', with a gap of around 3–4 seconds after the initial part of the call. Also a 'hooohooohooohooohoo', rising to a crescendo before falling away (more guttural than similar call of Short-eared). Female has hoarser versions of both calls. Alarm call a short, barking 'waff' or 'waff-aff'. Begging call of female a harsh 'kuVEHK'. Begging call of young a hoarse, shrill 'psee-ep', similar to that of Tawny.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 3 races (*liturata* illustrated).

STATUS/HABITAT Generally uncommon, but scarce or rare in south of range. (In addition to mapped range, formerly bred Germany, Austria; has bred Lithuania, Latvia.) Forest and woodland (typically coniferous or mixed, but mainly mountain beech forest in south). Prefers more open sections or edges,

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hunting over adjacent clearings, meadows and cultivation. Favours moist areas and often found quite

close to habitation. In winter, also found around fringes of settlements and in parks.

GREAT GREY OWL *Strix nebulosa*

L 65–70 cm, WS 134–158 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Very large grey owl of N Europe. As long as some Eurasian Eagle Owls but not nearly so heavily built (although loose feathering makes it look big-headed and big-bodied), with rounded wings and long, rather pointed tail. Unmistakable in all but poor view. Has unforgettable large, almost round facial disc with series of concentric dark circles radiating out from small, staring yellow eyes, and furry white brows. From some angles, could be confused in flight with Ural or Eurasian Eagle Owls, but is greyer than either, with conspicuous pale orangey-buff panel on base of primaries and broad dark terminal band on tail. Flight feathers less obviously barred than in Ural. If seen from side, huge, flat-faced head is distinctive. Eurasian Eagle Owl has much more 'pointed' head and markedly shorter tail. Flight is steady and determined, with deep, slow wingbeats. Frequently active in daylight, perching for long periods on fairly low stumps, poles or bushes before launching itself in pursuit of voles. Nests in old raptor nests or on tree stumps.

SEX/AGE Juvenile at fledging resembles adult as regards facial disc, flight feathers and tail, but retains much downy feathering elsewhere. Head (except facial disc) and underparts brownish-grey with fairly indistinct dark barring, upperparts and wing coverts blackish-brown barred with white. Facial disc pre-fledged is black.

VOICE Advertising call of male a series of 8–12 deep

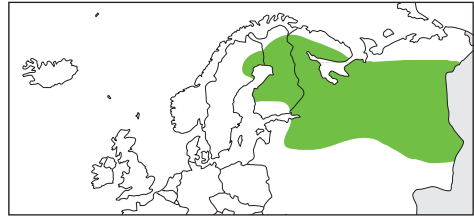


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but rather weak, muffled, pumping hoots: 'buoo buoo ...', lasting around 6–7 seconds and falling in pitch and intensity towards the end. Call is not far-carrying (at most a few hundred metres) and difficult to locate. Also a muffled 'woo-oo woo-oo' given by male and weaker 'woo woo' by female. Female begging call a repeated weak but high-pitched 'chiepp' or 'kyiep', rather like begging call of young Tawny Owl. Alarm calls are a deep, drawn-out, growling 'grrrrrrrrrok' and a harsh, grunting 'groom-groom-groom'. Begging call of young a hissing 'ziepp', like that of female but hoarser.

STATUS/HABITAT Uncommon. (In addition to mapped range, has bred NE Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, N Norway.) Mature coniferous or mixed forest, visiting adjacent clearings, bogs, meadows and abandoned fields.

LONG-EARED OWL *Asio otus*

L 35–37 cm, WS 90–100 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Only medium-sized owl with long ear tufts and pale, yellowish-orange eyes. Slightly smaller than Tawny and longer- and narrower-winged. Easily distinguished by ear tufts (although these not visible in flight, and sometimes hard to see if lowered when perched), pale eyes, lack of tapering dark stripe from crown to bill, more clean-cut streaking on underparts, and striking wing pattern with contrasting dark carpal patch and pale, golden-buff panel on base of primaries on upperwing and conspicuous dark crescent on carpal area on underwing. Confusion much more likely with similar Short-eared. When perched and long ear tufts visible, separation easy, but, when tufts lowered and hard to see, must rely on larger head with yellowish-orange rather than yellow eyes and rather uniform dark streaking on entire underparts, not heavily concentrated on throat and breast. Facial expression ranges from round-faced and wide-eyed, rather like typical Short-eared, to rather long and pinched when half-asleep. In flight has slightly broader, more rounded wings, but this difference not easy to appreciate in field. Wing pattern differs, however. Upperwing lacks whitish trailing edge on secondaries and inner primaries of Short-eared and, while both have dark carpal patch, Long-eared has finer and more extensive, less blackish barring on ends of primaries and has less extensive, warmer-coloured pale panel on primary bases. Lacks the sharp contrast shown between very dark wingtip and extensive pale panel shown by Short-eared. On underwing both show conspicuous dark crescents on

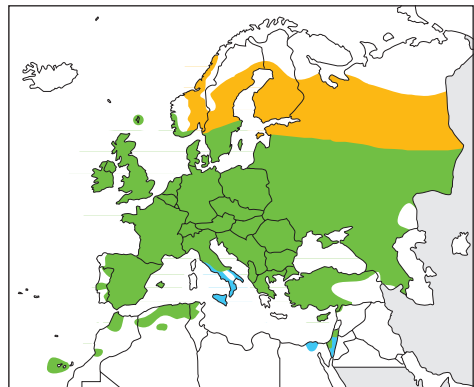


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carpal area, but, as with upperwing, Long-eared has finer and more extensive, less blackish barring near wingtip, lacking obvious solid blackish wingtip of Short-eared. Barring on tail also less obvious and upperparts in general look less variegated. Flight rather leisurely, almost gull-like, with several slow, stiff wingbeats alternating with long glides, banking and sideslipping. Generally glides with wings held level. Flight action quite different from Tawny's but close to that of Short-eared. Rarely active in daytime except on migration. Small numbers will roost together in winter. Generally nests in old nests of corvids.

SEX/AGE Adult females usually more richly coloured on facial disc and underparts, more boldly dark-streaked on upperparts, and underwing coverts rich buff instead of whitish. Juvenile at fledging resembles adult as regards facial disc, flight feathers and tail, retaining much downy feathering elsewhere; head (except facial disc), underparts, upperparts and wing coverts whitish-buff, closely but narrowly and rather indistinctly barred with greyish. Immature may be aged on exceptional view up to first spring owing to retained juvenile flight feathers and tail with extra dark bar (thus 5 bars, rarely 4–6, on outer primaries compared with 3–4, rarely 5, in adult, and 5–6 bars on tail beyond uppertail coverts compared with 4 in adult).

VOICE Rather silent outside breeding season. Advertising call of male a repeated, soft, muffled (cooing) but quite far-carrying 'ooh'; sounds rather like air being blown into an empty bottle. First call of series

typically softer and lower-pitched. Female gives a very weak, nasal (lamb-like), drawn-out 'paah' or 'peh-ev'. Alarm calls are a sharp, barking 'kvik kvik kvik' and yelping or squealing sounds. Begging call of young a shrill, mournful, drawn-out and far-carrying 'peeeeeee-e', sounding rather like the noise of a gate with squeaky hinges.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (nominate illustrated).

STATUS/HABITAT Generally fairly common, but locally scarce. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Majorca and may breed Syria, Lebanon.) Woodland, copses, thickets and clumps of trees or small plantations in open country (cultivated or uncultivated), hunting over adjacent open country. Mainly but by no means always associated with conifers. Outside breeding season (and locally when breeding), in treeless areas such as moorland, coastal dunes, steppe and semi-desert.

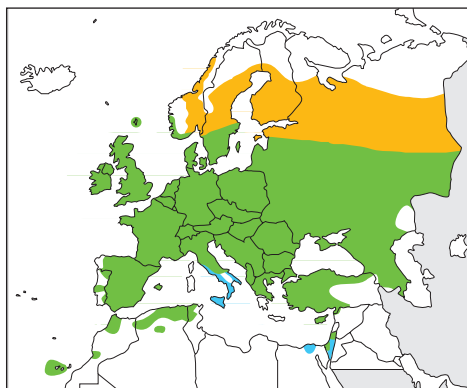
SHORT-EARED OWL *Asio flammeus*

L 37–39 cm, WS 95–110 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Medium-sized owl of open country (not a forest or woodland bird), frequently active by day (especially early and late). Small ear tufts visible only when agitated. Often looks very pale from below in flight, but Barn Owl is paler still, without obvious wing pattern and with whiter, distinctly heart-shaped facial disc. Confusion most likely with rather similar Long-eared (q.v. for discussion). Has longer, narrower wings than other owls and flight rather stiff-winged, with a series of slow, rowing wingbeats (body tending to rise slightly with each stroke) alternating with rather wavering glides (wings held in shallow V) and abrupt, but highly accomplished, banking and sideslipping. Recalls gull or harrier quartering the ground. Nests on ground.

SEX/AGE Adult female has distinctly deeper buff ground colour overall, including facial disc and underwing coverts: Difference most noticeable on underparts, which are rather uniform deep buff when fresh (belly noticeably whitish or pale buff, contrasting with darker buff breast in fresh male); dark markings bolder than in male, and usually lacks white at sides of facial disc. Ground colour of adult whiter, less buff, when worn; in heavily worn adult male, almost white. Juvenile at fledging resembles adult as regards flight feathers and tail, but much downy feathering persists elsewhere. Head (excluding facial disc), upperparts and wing coverts dark greyish-brown, barred with buff. Throat greyish; rest of underparts warm buff, with fine and very indistinct dark barring on breast and flanks. Facial disc blackish in centre with buff crescents on each side (disc is all blackish pre-fledging).

VOICE Advertising call of male, given mainly in display flight, a repeated low-pitched, hollow, rather



muffled 'boo-boo-boo-boo-boo ...'; also makes rattling wing-claps, striking wings in rapid succession below body (sounds like muffled hand-claps). Both sexes, but especially female, have a hoarse, rasping 'cheeee-op'. Alarm call a harsh, barking 'chef-chef-chef'. Begging call of young a drawn-out, wheezing 'psssss-sip'.

STATUS/HABITAT Generally fairly common, but locally scarce. (Often breeds outside mapped area when numbers high, occasionally south to Spain, Malta, Greece, Turkey and Israel.) Moorland, rough grassland, marshes, bogs, young forestry plantations, sand dunes and (in breeding season only) tundra. Outside breeding season, also open cultivation with grassy banks and ditches.

MARSH OWL *Asio capensis*

L 35–37 cm, WS 90–95 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Medium-sized open-country owl of Morocco. Likely to be confused only with slightly larger Short-eared or similar-sized Long-eared. Flight action and wing shape resemble those of Short-eared, but flight is less wavering and has more rounded wings. Easily separated from both species by rather uniform dark sepia-brown head, body and wing coverts (underparts somewhat paler from lower breast to

ventral area), contrasting with pale buff facial disc and dark eyes (appearing much larger than they really are at a distance owing to dark surrounds: bird appears to have two 'black-eyes'). Wing pattern closer to Short-eared than to Long-eared (with noticeably dark wingtips and whitish trailing edge on secondaries and inner primaries), but dark inner coverts make dark carpal patch less obvious, while darker secondaries

Plate page 503

Plate page 503

SANDGROUSE

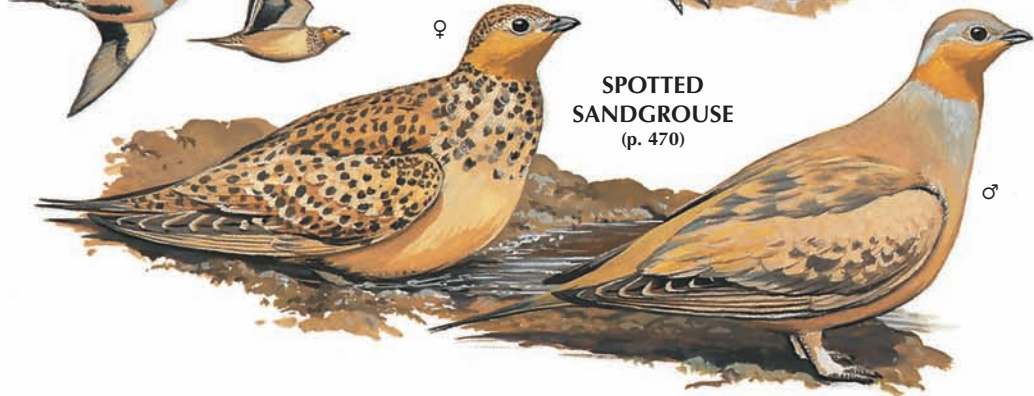
LICHTENSTEIN'S
SANDGROUSE
(p. 469)



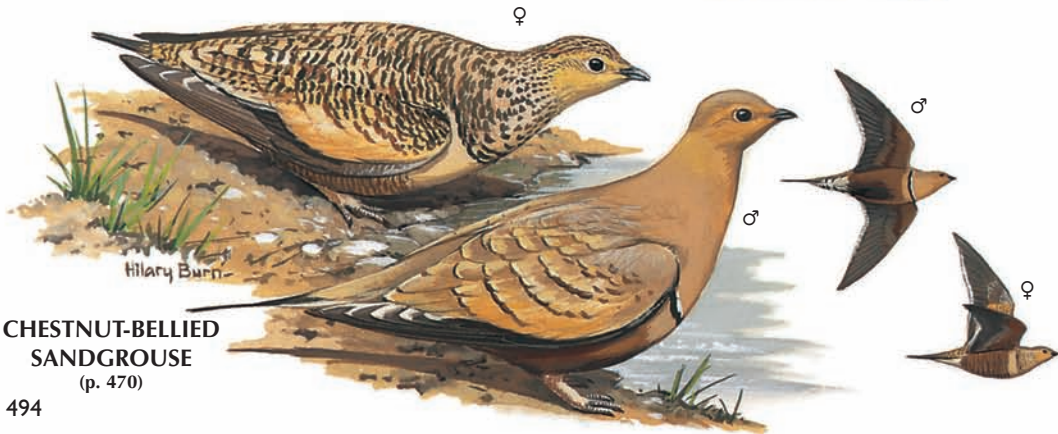
CROWNED SANDGROUSE
(p. 470)

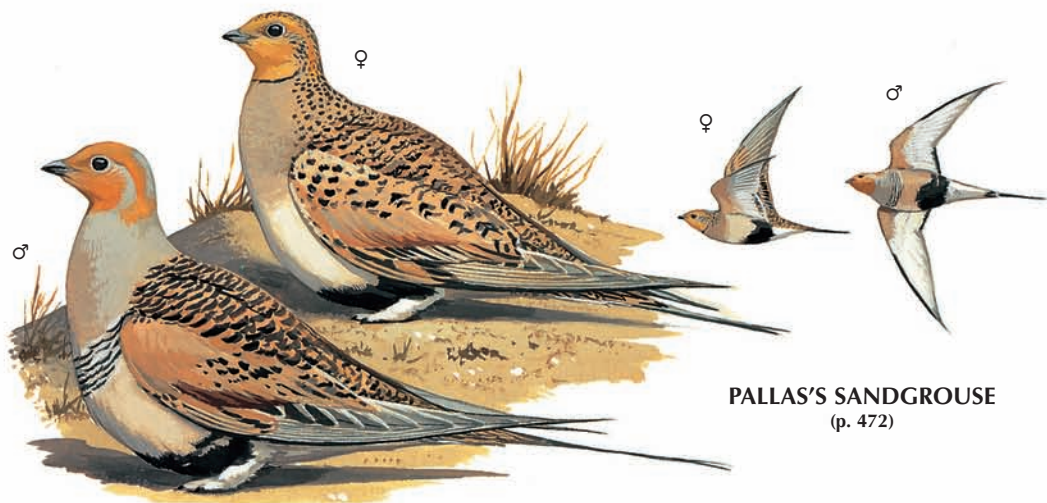


SPOTTED
SANDGROUSE
(p. 470)

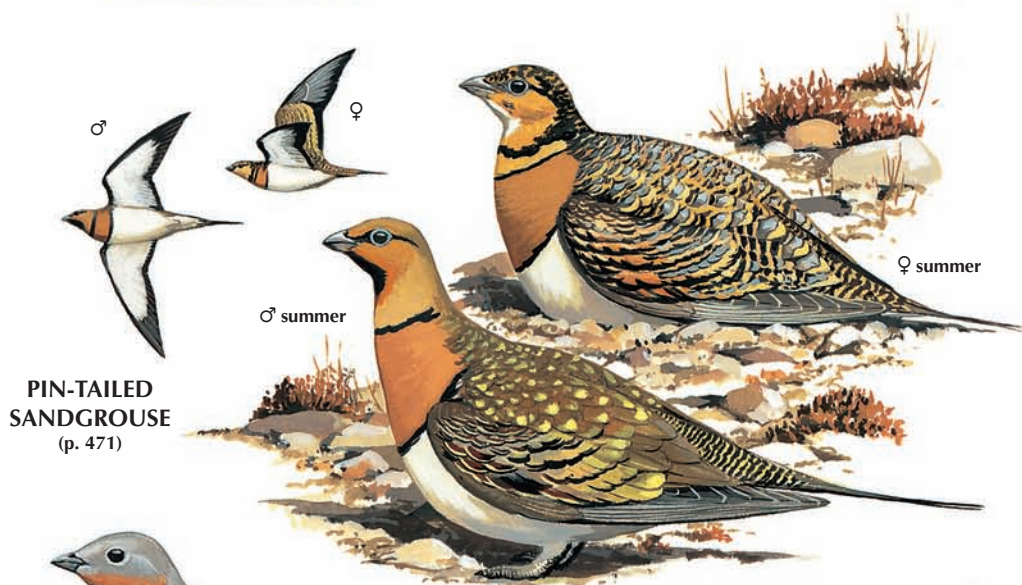


CHESTNUT-BELLIED
SANDGROUSE
(p. 470)





PALLAS'S SANDGROUSE
(p. 472)



PIN-TAILED SANDGROUSE
(p. 471)



BLACK-BELLIED SANDGROUSE
(p. 471)

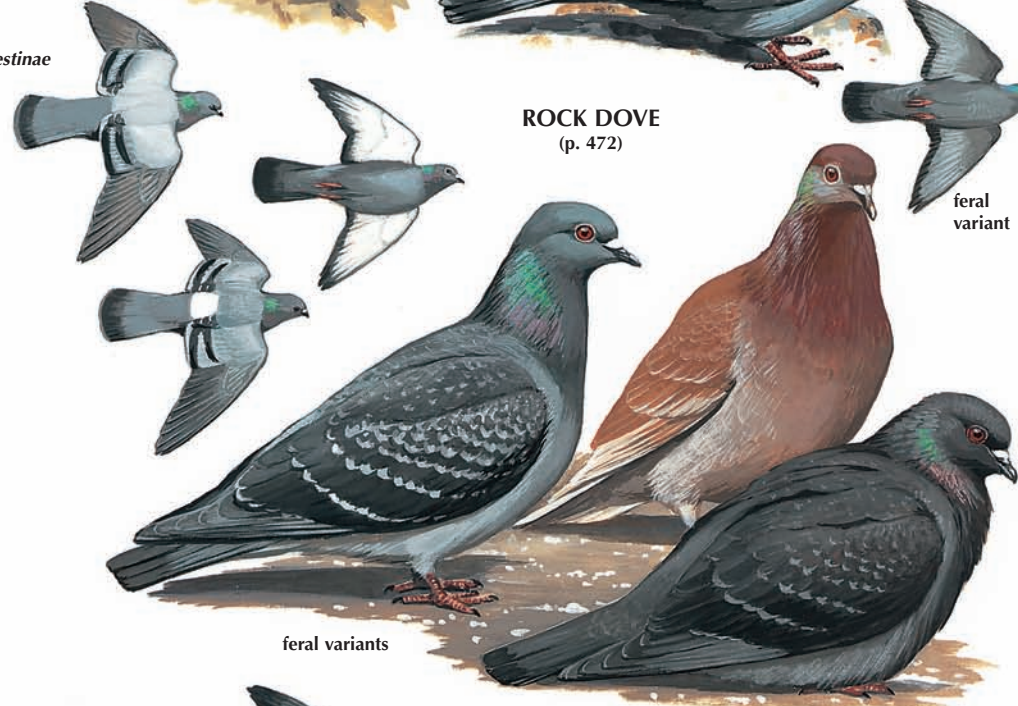
Hilary Burn.



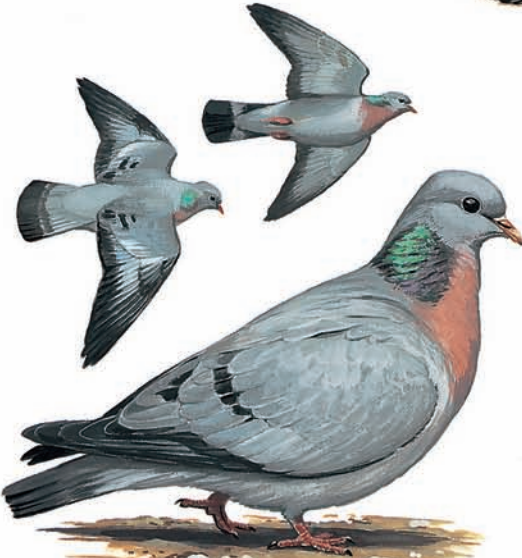
palaestinae

ROCK DOVE
(p. 472)

feral
variant



feral variants



STOCK DOVE
(p. 473)



YELLOW-EYED DOVE
(p. 474)

Hilary Burn.

COMMON WOODPIGEON
(p. 474)



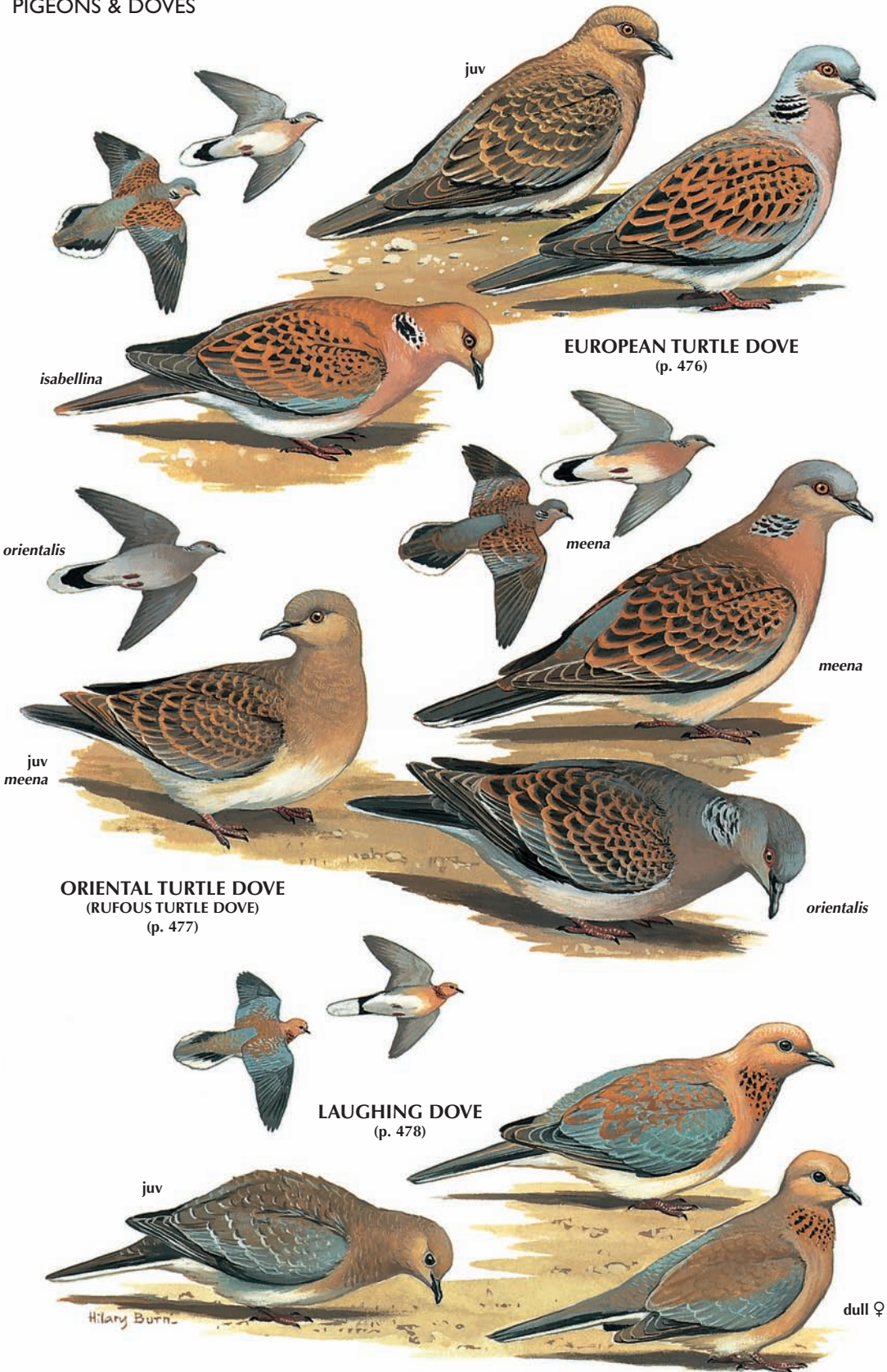
**TROCAZ PIGEON
(LONG-TOED PIGEON)**
(p. 474)



BOLLE'S PIGEON
(p. 475)



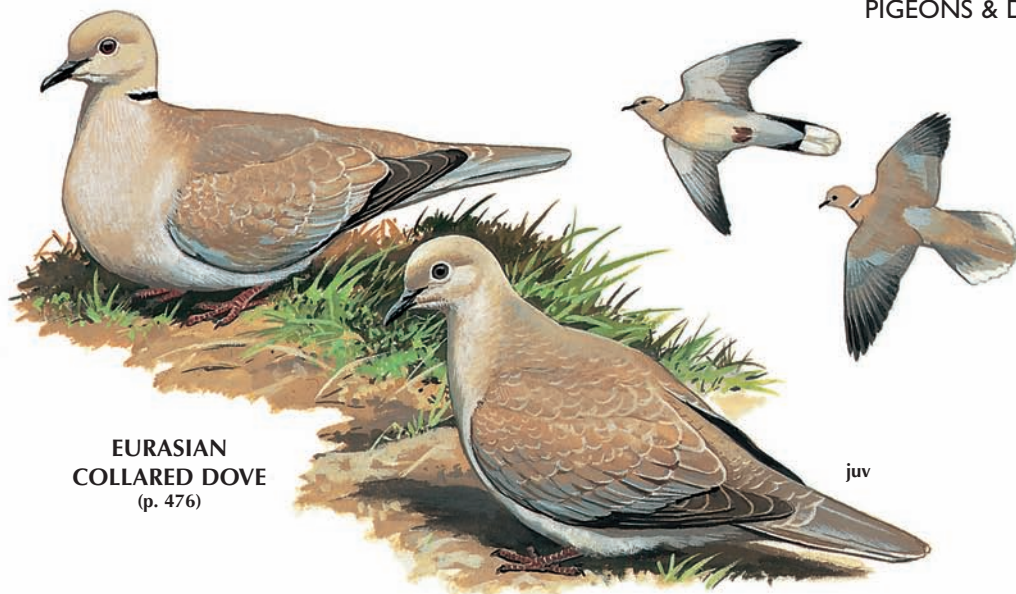
LAUREL PIGEON
(p. 475)



EUROPEAN TURTLE DOVE
(p. 476)

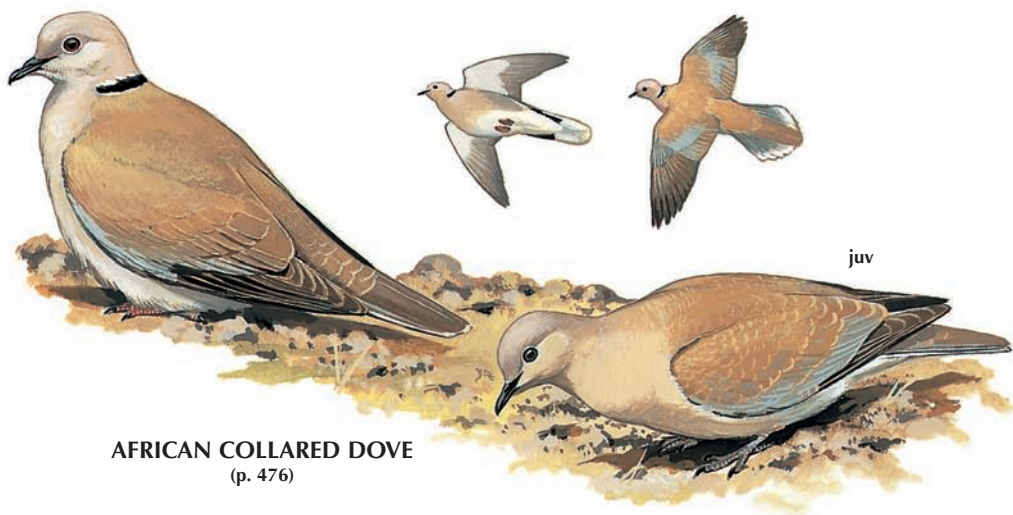
ORIENTAL TURTLE DOVE
(RUFIOUS TURTLE DOVE)
(p. 477)

LAUGHING DOVE
(p. 478)



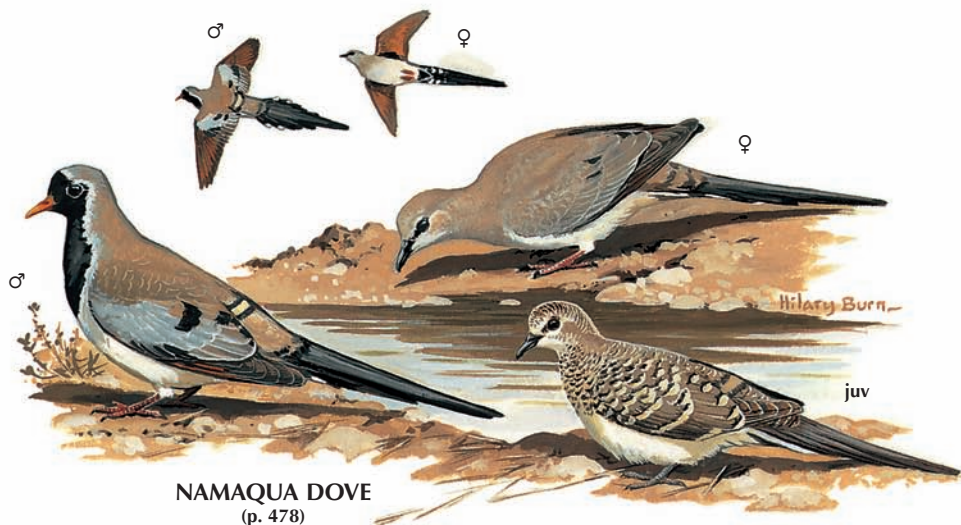
EURASIAN
COLLARED DOVE
(p. 476)

juv



AFRICAN COLLARED DOVE
(p. 476)

juv



NAMAQUA DOVE
(p. 478)

juv

CUCKOOS



JACOBIN CUCKOO
(p. 480)



GREAT SPOTTED CUCKOO
(p. 481)



DIEDERIK CUCKOO
(DIDRIC CUCKOO) (p. 481)

SENEGAL COUCAL
(p. 484)



OWLS

PALLID SCOPS OWL
(STRIATED SCOPS OWL)
(p. 485)

obsoletus



exiguus



exiguus

EUROPEAN SCOPS OWL
(p. 486)

grey type



rufous type



EURASIAN PYGMY OWL
(p. 489)



lilith



LITTLE OWL
(p. 489)



NORTHERN HAWK OWL
(p. 488)



juv



TENGMALM'S OWL
(p. 515)



Hilary Burn

BARN OWL
(p. 485)

♂



LONG-EARED OWL
(p. 492)



SHORT-EARED
OWL
(p. 493)



MARSH
OWL
(p. 493)

Hilary Burn.

OWLS

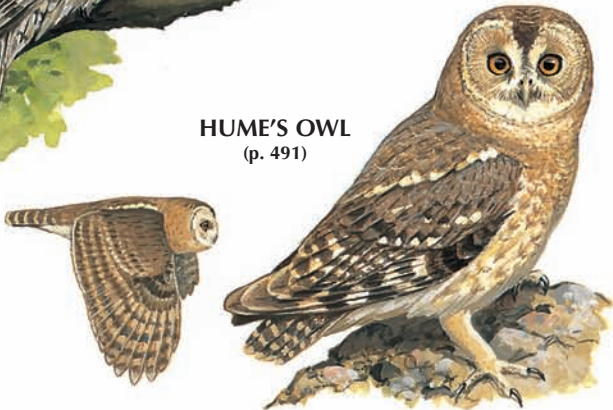
rufous
type

grey
type



TAWNY OWL
(p. 490)

HUME'S OWL
(p. 491)



URAL OWL
(p. 491)



TAWNY OWL
(at same scale)

GREAT GREY OWL
(p. 492)



EURASIAN EAGLE OWL
(p. 487)

sibiricus



BROWN
FISH
OWL
(p. 487)



ascalaphus
(PHARAOH
EAGLE OWL)



turcomanus



♂



♀

♂

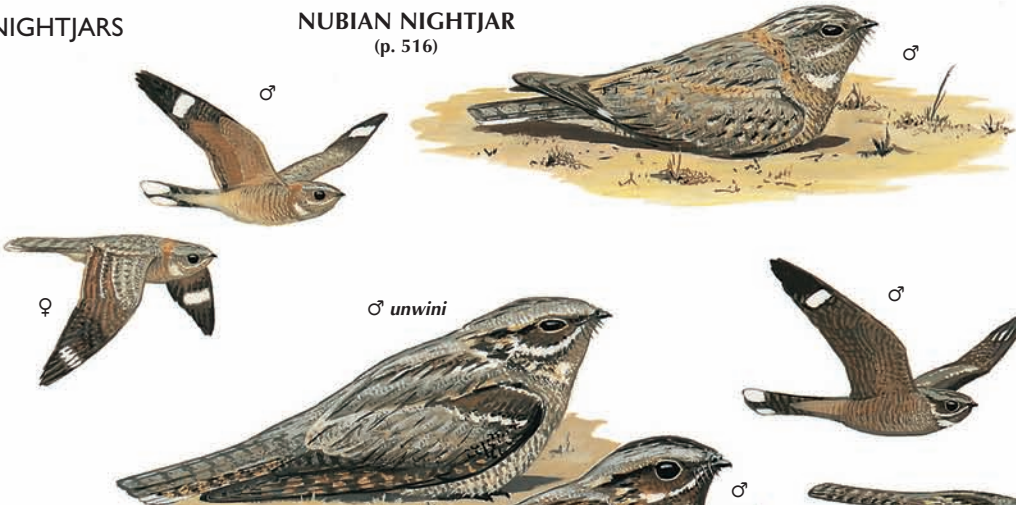
SNOWY OWL
(p. 488)

♀

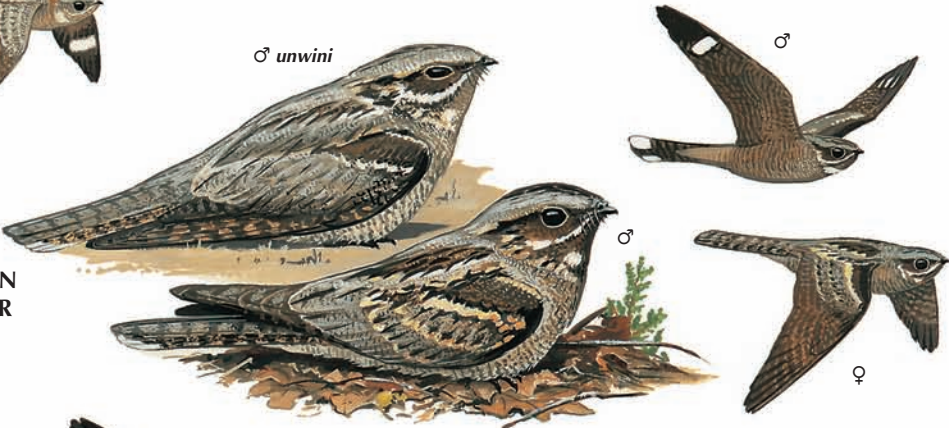
Hilary Burn

NIGHTJARS

NUBIAN NIGHTJAR
(p. 516)



EUROPEAN NIGHTJAR
(p. 516)



RED-NECKED NIGHTJAR
(p. 517)

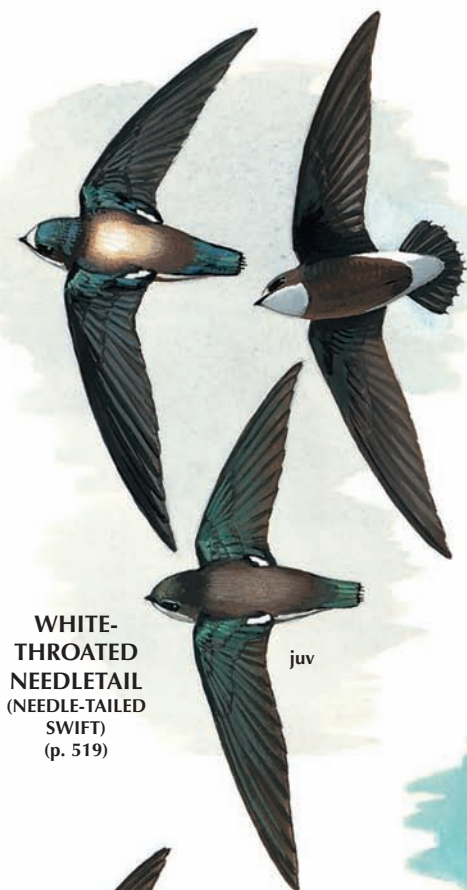


COMMON NIGHTHAWK
(p. 518)



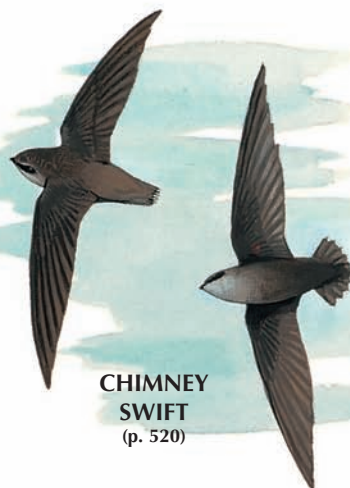
EGYPTIAN NIGHTJAR
(p. 517)





**WHITE-
THROATED
NEEDLETAIL**
(NEEDLE-TAILED
SWIFT)
(p. 519)

juv



**CHIMNEY
SWIFT**
(p. 520)

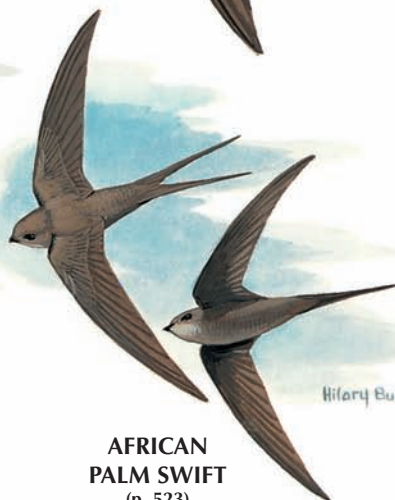


**PACIFIC
SWIFT**
(p. 522)



**WHITE-RUMPED
SWIFT**
(p. 523)

**LITTLE
SWIFT**
(p. 523)



**AFRICAN
PALM SWIFT**
(p. 523)

Hilary Burn.

SWIFTS

CAPE VERDE SWIFT
(p. 520)

PLAIN SWIFT
(p. 520)

COMMON SWIFT
(p. 521)

PALLID SWIFT
(p. 521)

juv

juv
pekinensis

juv

pekinensis

juv
illyricus

illyricus

ALPINE SWIFT
(p. 522)

Hilary Burn.

PARAKEETS, KINGFISHERS

ROSE-RINGED
PARAKEET
(RING-NECKED
PARAKEET)
(p. 479)



COMMON
KINGFISHER
(p. 525)



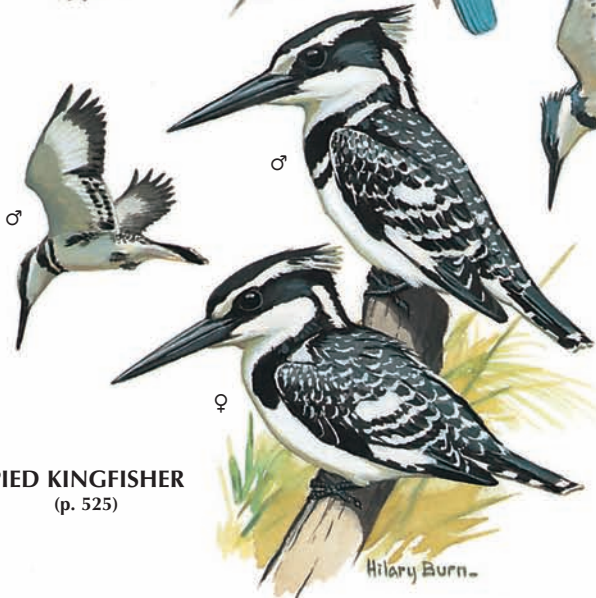
GREY-HEADED
KINGFISHER
(p. 524)



WHITE-THROATED
KINGFISHER
(p. 524)



PIED KINGFISHER
(p. 525)

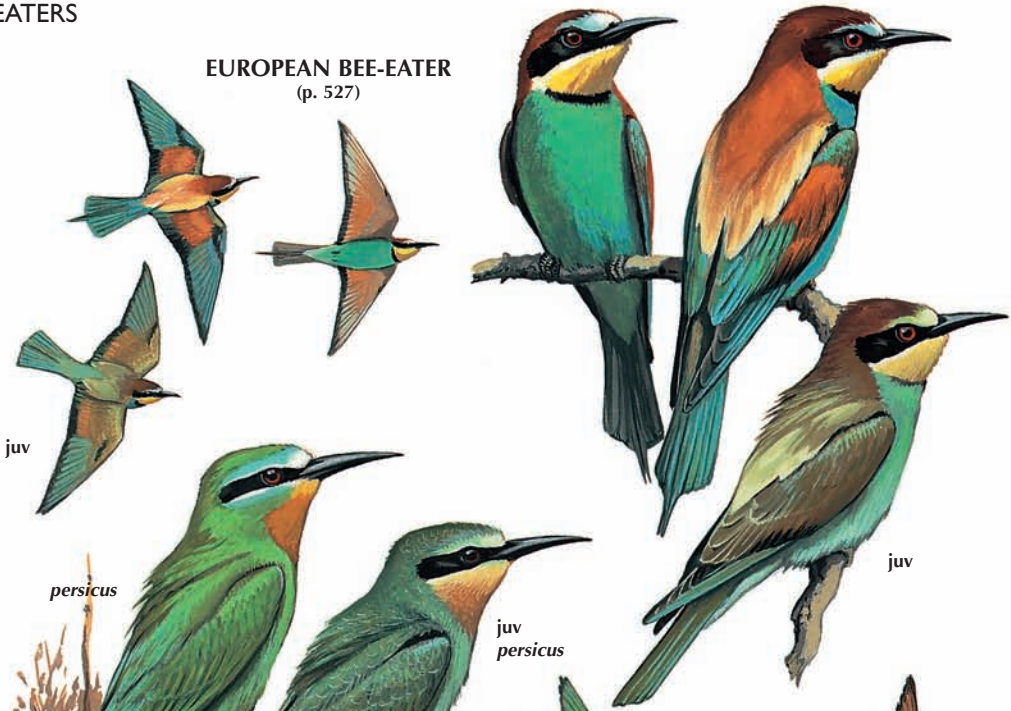


BELTED KINGFISHER
(p. 525)



BEE-EATERS

EUROPEAN BEE-EATER
(p. 527)



persicus

juv
persicus

juv

BLUE-CHEEKED
BEE-EATER
(p. 526)



chrysocercus

juv

cleopatra

cyanophrys

juv *cleopatra*

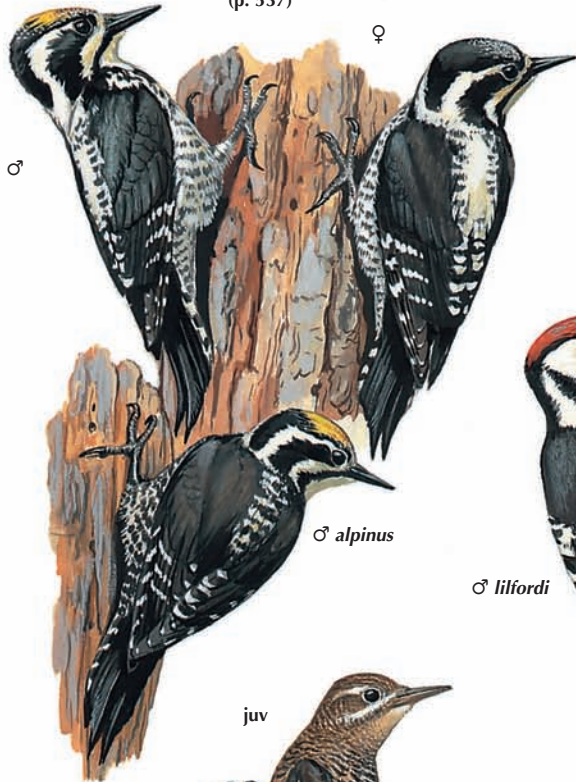
GREEN BEE-EATER
(LITTLE GREEN BEE-EATER)
(p. 526)



Hilary Burn-



THREE-TOED
WOODPECKER
(p. 537)



WHITE-BACKED
WOODPECKER
(p. 535)



♂ lilfordi

juv



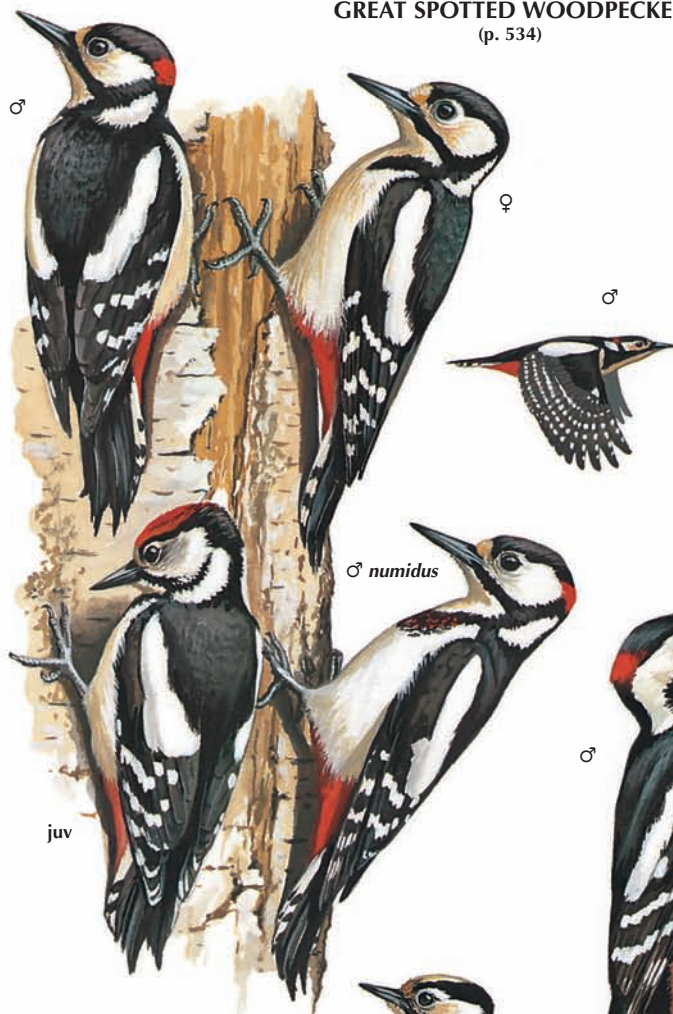
YELLOW-BELLIED
SAPSUCKER
(p. 533)

BLACK
WOODPECKER
(p. 533)

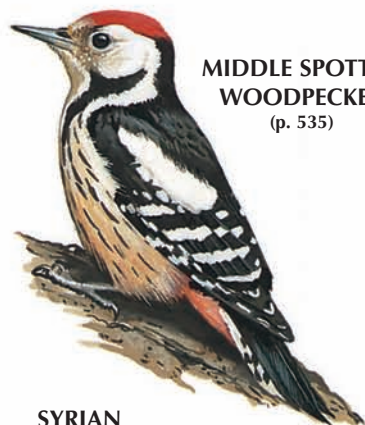


Hilary Burn

GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER
(p. 534)



MIDDLE SPOTTED WOODPECKER
(p. 535)



SYRIAN WOODPECKER
(p. 534)



LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER
(p. 536)



EURASIAN WRYNECK
(p. 531)



WOODPECKERS

GREY-HEADED WOODPECKER
(p. 531)

EUROPEAN GREEN
WOODPECKER
(p. 532)



LEVILLANT'S GREEN
WOODPECKER
(p. 533)

NORTHERN
FLICKER
(p. 531)

and inner primaries make pale trailing edge even more conspicuous. Small ear tufts visible only when agitated. Flight action like Short-eared, but lighter and even more agile. Mainly nocturnal/crepuscular, but sometimes active by day. Nests on ground.

SEX/AGE Adult when worn is duller, more earthy-brown. Juvenile at fledging resembles adult as regards facial disc, flight feathers and tail, but much downy feathering persists elsewhere; head (except facial disc), upperparts and wing coverts blackish-brown with narrow buff barring, scapulars, wing coverts and tertials with conspicuous pale tips, and breast finely barred dusky and whitish.

VOICE Advertising call of male in display flight a loud,



croaking, rather frog-like or crow-like 'kaa' or quicker 'quark-quark' (also given when flushed). Female gives a deep, harsh, rasping, cat-like 'sheeow'. Alarm call a high-pitched mew or squeal. Begging call of young a soft, far-carrying 'too-eeee' (rising in pitch).

STATUS/HABITAT Local and generally uncommon. Marshes and moist rough grassland, hunting over adjacent open cultivation and pastures.

TENGMALM'S OWL *Aegolius funereus*

Plate page 502

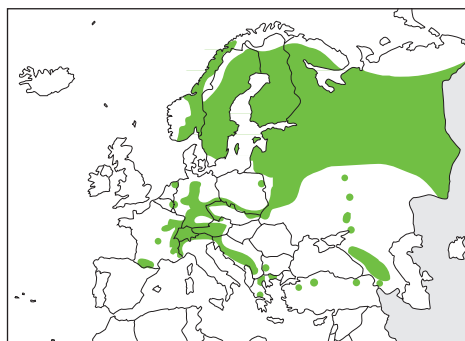
Boreal Owl (N America)

L 24–26 cm, WS 54–62 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Fairly small owl with a distinctive wide-eyed, astonished expression (created by staring pale yellow eyes with black surrounds in large, prominent facial disc). Unmistakable in good view. Slightly smaller Little of dark races not dissimilar to adult if face hidden (sharing pale spotting on upperparts and dark markings on underparts), but has quite different expression with frowning look created by long, thin, rather horizontal white brows, and has darker and much less prominent facial disc. In any case, Tengmalm's is distinctly nocturnal and not normally found in similar habitat to Little. Confusion of adult with very small Eurasian Pygmy (q.v.) possible only in poor view. Newly fledged juvenile's largely chocolate-coloured plumage, with white restricted to brows, moustaches and spotting on wings and tail, is unique and unmistakable. Flight rapid and direct, with series of fast wingbeats interspersed with short glides, lacking strong undulations of Little (more like Tawny, but more agile). Rather unobtrusive, only occasionally perching in prominent positions. Usually nests in Black Woodpecker holes (but freely uses nestboxes).

SEX/AGE Immature closely resembles adult and difficult to separate, but warmer above (more russet), white spots smaller and markings on underparts heavier.

VOICE Advertising call in breeding season is a series of highly distinctive, soft but very far-carrying, rapid, deep, whistling hoots: 'po-po-po-po-po-po ...' (calls last from one to five or more seconds and consist of up to 25 or more syllables, but usually only



5–7, with much variation in pitch and tempo; lower-pitched calls are slower, higher-pitched faster). Also a nasal 'kuwake' and (especially late summer and autumn) a short, smacking (squirrel-like) 'chiak'. Begging call of young a short, hoarse, explosive 'psee'.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (nominate illustrated).

STATUS/HABITAT Generally fairly common, but scarce in south of range. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Denmark, Romania, Crimea.) Coniferous and mixed forest and woodland. Tends to favour old mixed forest with a preponderance of tall conifers, but will occupy quite young conifer plantations or secondary woodland where nestboxes provided.

NIGHTJARS Caprimulgidae

5 species (1 vagrant)

Medium-sized, nocturnal and crepuscular insectivores, nightjars have large, rather flat heads, small bills (but extremely large gape when bill opened), long tails and long, rather pointed wings. Roost in daytime lengthways along branch or on ground. Plumage various shades of grey and brown, strongly vermiculated and remarkably cryptic, blending with tree bark or the ground. Nightjars become active at dusk, hawking insects while on the wing and utilizing their extremely wide gapes to capture prey. Silhouette strongly recalls small falcon with longish tail (e.g. kestrel), but flight action quite harrier-like. Flight usually completely silent and very buoyant, with stiff wingbeats interspersed with rather slow, almost floating glides and banks (wings held in shallow V). Very agile, twisting and turning abruptly or virtually hovering when

in pursuit of prey. Land abruptly on ground or on branch. Do not normally walk much, if at all. Not very gregarious, but gatherings occur during migration. Advertising calls of *Caprimulgus* species are strange and un-bird-like, consisting of rather mechanical churrings or knockings; males wing-clap during display flights.

Sexes differ only slightly. Minimal seasonal variation. Juveniles generally differ only slightly from adults and are difficult to separate.

Complete post-breeding moult commences shortly after nesting and finishes in autumn or winter (in winter quarters in strongly migratory species). Post-juvenile moult commences within a few months of fledging and finishes by winter, complete apart from some or all flight feathers (and sometimes tail feathers and some wing coverts).

If seen well, nightjars unlikely to be confused with any other kind of bird, but when flushed suddenly in daytime can give *Accipiter* (i.e. sparrowhawk) impression as bird rapidly twists and turns as it flies away. At dusk or dawn can initially give impression of small falcon, but distinctive, buoyant flight (vaguely harrier-like) soon gives away correct identity.

Visual separation of one nightjar from another generally difficult, especially at night (when plumage patterning either impossible to determine or colours bleached away by powerful lighting, making even darker species seem rather pale). Frequently diurnal, high-flying vagrant Common Nighthawk is an exception. Distinctive calls are diagnostic, however. Points to concentrate on are:

Presence or absence of white spots on wings and tail • Size and precise location of such spots if present • Overall coloration (if seen by day) • Call

NUBIAN NIGHTJAR *Caprimulgus nubicus*

L 21–22 cm, WS 46–53 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Rather small nightjar of Red Sea region, distinctly smaller than Egyptian or European (the only others likely to be encountered in this area), with shorter tail and more rounded wings. In flight, shows large white patch on primaries, with white extending across five outermost feathers and virtually cutting across wing (patch extends only across three outermost in Red-necked and adult male European; in adult female and juvenile European, and in Egyptian, patch is lacking); patch particularly large in adult male. In good view underlying pattern diagnostic, with blackish wingtips (and large white patch) strongly contrasting with pale (cinnamon-buff) coverts and virtually unbarred rufous bases to secondaries and inner primaries. Large white tips on outer tail feathers of adult male the largest of any nightjar. Flight action faster than that of European and even more agile, with rather jerky movements created by slight but noticeable pause after each upbeat. Tends to hunt quite low over ground. Generally becomes active only when quite dark. On ground adult looks rather pale buffy-grey, but not easy to separate from nominate race of Egyptian (which is sandier-grey) or greyer populations of European (which are darker and greyer): small size and shorter tail not always apparent. Adult in fresh plumage can be separated from either by rufous-buff half-collar on nape (but when worn half-collar loses rufous tinge and is less distinct). Adult also differs from Egyptian in generally rather more heavily marked,



Plate page 506

duskier-looking underparts, and from European by lack of contrasting blackish lesser coverts and extensive blackish patch on scapulars.

SEX/AGE Adult female difficult to separate from adult male, but has slightly smaller and slightly less distinct white patches on primaries and shorter white tips to outer tail feathers. Adult when worn is paler overall, and half-collar lacks rufous tinge and is less distinct. Juvenile resembles worn adult female, but is even paler overall and has tips of outer tail feathers whitish-cinnamon instead of white (pale tips are larger in male than in female).

VOICE Advertising call of male a soft, hollow, rather barking 'kiu kiu' or 'kwua kwua' (recalling distant yapping dog), repeated for long periods at intervals of 1–4 seconds. Sometimes call consists of three units.

STATUS/HABITAT Uncommon. Apparently partly migratory, probably wintering in S Arabia. (Also breeds in Gebel Elba area of Egypt, just outside our region.) Open tamarisk scrub or acacia thornbush, palm groves.

EUROPEAN NIGHTJAR *Caprimulgus europaeus*

Nightjar, Eurasian Nightjar

L 26–28 cm, WS 57–64 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Much the most widespread and familiar nightjar of our region, smaller than Red-necked but larger than Egyptian (q.v. for discussion). Has butterfly-like display flight with wings held above body in between beats, giving occasional wing-clap.

SEX/AGE Adult female lacks white patch on primaries and white tips to outer tail feathers; pale throat

patches often smaller and tinged buff. Worn adult has plumage duller and underparts a little paler. Juvenile resembles adult female, but is paler overall and has even smaller throat patches.

VOICE Advertising call of male a distinctive, far-carrying hollow churring that lasts up to five minutes or more, recalling mole-cricket or a distant low-powered

517

on base of primaries (formed by whitish spots on inner webs). Underside very pale and featureless, with unbarred creamy-buff ventral area, no white patch on primaries and no obvious dark tips to outer primaries (in last respect unlike all other *Caprimulgus* nightjars). Pale tip to outermost tail feather does not stand out against rather pale tail. White throat patches often indistinct. On ground, pale, sandy-coloured *saharae* unlikely to be misidentified. Nominate race greyer and more likely to be confused. A good feature of Egyptian is rather pale wingtips with contrasting dark bars (wingtips much darker in all other nightjars). Even nominate race is paler and sandier than paler races of European, and lacks contrasting dark patch on forewing (formed by blackish lesser coverts) and extensive blackish patch on scapulars. Dark barring on all but central tail feathers distinctly narrower. Dark streaks on crown and mantle less prominent. Compared with adult Nubian, is somewhat sandier, with less obvious dark marking on underparts (particularly on lower breast and flanks), and lacks fresh-plumaged Nubian's rufous-buff half-collar on hindneck. Very similar to juvenile Nubian when on ground: best separated by rather pale wingtips (see above). Flight much as European, but looks even more ghostly owing to pale coloration and tends to keep low.

SEX/AGE Sexes virtually identical, but adult female has pale buff rather than white tip to outermost tail feather. Nominate race when fresh is darker overall, appearing sandy-grey with slight pinkish tinge, but

when worn becomes paler overall and rather isabelline-grey on upperparts and breast (see below as regards *saharae*). Juvenile resembles adult female but even paler, with no obvious dark markings on crown, scapulars, tertials or wing coverts; throat patches indistinct or absent. Juvenile female lacks pale buff tip to outermost tail feather.

VOICE Advertising call of male a rapidly repeated, hollow, resonant, somewhat metallic 'tok-tok-tok-tok-tok ...' or 'kowrr-kowrr-kowrr-kowrr-kowrr ...' (about three sub-units given per second), vaguely recalling exhaust sound of old-fashioned motorboat or hollow clicking of human tongue rapidly striking palate. Each bout lasts about five seconds or more, then brief pause before next bout. Delivery slower and less regular towards end of bout.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (both illustrated). Race *saharae* (NW Africa to Nile) has less extensive grey vermiculation on upperparts and breast, appearing paler and more pinkish-sandy, less greyish, overall than nominate race. When worn appears even paler, and overall colour fades to yellowish-isabelline with only a slight greyish tinge.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common, but generally uncommon. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Israel and Jordan, and may breed S Algeria.) Semi-desert and desert fringes with sparse low scrub, dry uncultivated ground (generally with scattered scrub and especially near rivers, irrigation canals or wetlands), low sand dunes with scattered scrub.

COMMON NIGHTHAWK *Chordeiles minor*

Nighthawk

L 23–25 cm, WS 59–68 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant, with about same bulk as European Nightjar but much shorter-tailed and with slightly longer and markedly more pointed wings. Long, pointed wings and short tail with shallow fork create even more falcon-like impression in flight than in other nightjars. Erratic bursts of wingbeats punctuated by slow wheels and sudden, agile swoops recall huge swift. Often hawks high in sky. Frequently active by day (especially early and late). Perches in open more than other nightjars, utilizing stones, posts and even wires. Distinctive jizz plus large, conspicuous white band halfway from bend of wing to wingtip (white patch much nearer wingtip in other nightjars) make confusion unlikely. Primaries are unbarred black (apart from white band), again unlike other nightjars of our region. Has no white spots on tail tip, but adult male has white subterminal band. At rest looks rather monochrome, with adults looking quite blackish, but juvenile paler and greyer. Confusion again unlikely: tail does not extend beyond wingtips, unlike in other nightjars (although in Nubian projection is less marked). White patch on primaries often conspicuous even when wing closed, typically appearing just beyond greater coverts. (In other nightjars, patch, if visible at all, is much closer to wingtip.) Triangular throat patch of adult the largest of any

nightjar, extending unbroken across centre of throat (patch white in male but buff in female).

SEX/AGE Adult female is buffier on underparts, with buff rather than white throat patch; lacks white subterminal band on tail, and white patch on primaries narrower. Pale areas become whiter on worn adults. Juvenile resembles adult female, but is greyer and paler overall (especially on upperparts): pale buff throat patch poorly defined; longer lesser coverts, median coverts and flight feathers with whitish tips; outer tail feathers more regularly barred, lacking much broader dark terminal bar.

VOICE Advertising call, given in flight in breeding season, a nasal, rather insect-like 'peent' or 'beerp' repeated every few seconds.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Only nominate race of north and east of N America recorded from our region so far. This is darkest form of all. Races breeding from Great Plains south are distinctly paler and greyer or sandier (especially on upperparts). Difference especially marked in juveniles.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe, Azores). In natural range, breeds in open woodland, clearings and burnt areas, open scrub and regularly on roofs of large buildings, hunting over virtually any kind of habitat.

Plate page 506

SWIFTS Apodidae

11 species (3 vagrant)

Swifts are fairly small to medium-sized birds that are totally adapted to an almost permanently aerial existence, spending much of their lives on the wing (some species even regularly 'roost' overnight on the wing). Flight typically fast and agile, with much twisting and turning, although at times quite leisurely. Soar high into sky after insects, gliding at speed, sweeping, diving, turning and banking, making observation of fine plumage detail difficult. Their perching capability is extremely limited, being reduced to ability to cling vertically to rocks, walls or tree trunks (leaves in case of African Palm Swift) with their tiny feet when roosting or *en route* to nest site. Hirundines (swallows and martins) are, by contrast, quite adept at perching. All are aerial insectivores and most are strongly migratory. Highly sociable, gathering in large numbers over suitable feeding areas such as lakes, freely mixing with swallows and martins. Have screaming cries, often delivered as they sweep at high speed up under eaves of buildings or cliff faces on approach to nest sites. Nest in buildings or holes and crevices in cliff faces, less commonly in hollow trees and in more specialized sites.

Sexes similar. Minimal seasonal variation. Juveniles mostly very similar to adults and separable only with difficulty. Usually indistinguishable in field once plumage worn.

Complete post-breeding moult commences shortly after nesting (even during nesting in Alpine), or is delayed until reaching winter quarters, and finishes during winter. Post-juvenile moult commences in early winter and finishes during late winter or spring; often complete, but in some species flight feathers and some wing coverts retained.

Compared with swallows and martins, swifts are more streamlined, having much longer and narrower wings (resembling a flying cigar with sickle-shaped wings), and all but Alpine appear all dark at any distance (at least on underside), unlike most hirundines. Hand section of wing extremely long, arm short. Flight action of swifts typically much faster, stiffer, more direct and more powerful than that of hirundines, which typically have slower, often rather fluttering flight, partly folding wings during beats (unlike swifts).

Over most of our region only Common Swift and to lesser extent Alpine Swift normally occur, making identification straightforward. Otherwise swift identification frequently very difficult, although range differences are helpful. Against strong light swifts appear very dark, and subtle gradations in plumage cannot be seen until conditions optimum (e.g. when bird passes relatively slowly against background of hills, trees etc.). Even white rumps can be hard to see at times, especially when birds remain overhead. Points to concentrate on are:

Presence or absence of white belly or rump patch (and size of latter) • **Tail shape and degree of tail fork** (if any) • **Extent of pale throat patch**

For basically all-dark species also:

Overall coloration (precise shade of dark) • **Presence or absence of any slight contrast in wing coloration**

In all cases, try to make comparisons of coloration or structure with other species if present. Note that partial albinism has been recorded occasionally, especially in Common Swift, even producing rare examples with white bellies or white rumps which can superficially suggest other species.

WHITE-THROATED NEEDLETAIL *Hirundapus caudacutus*

Plate page 507

Needle-tailed Swift, White-throated Needletail Swift

L 19–20 cm, WS 50–53 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Asian vagrant (breeds C Siberia eastwards). This powerful, fast-flying swift is the second largest recorded in our region, being as large-bodied as Alpine but with shorter wings and tail. Shape is highly distinctive (vaguely bat-like) with heavy, bullet-shaped body, short tail and unusually broad but sharply-pointed wings (resembling in outline a *kukri*, the traditional Gurkha knife). Tail normally looks square-ended, but is regularly fanned when banking (looking like a rounded blob at such times). Shape alone is diagnostic to experienced observer; additional important characters are white V-shaped patch on ventral area and, even more obvious in adult, the large pale, silvery saddle on the upperparts (pale saddle much less obvious in juvenile, however). Small white patch on tertials often hidden by scapulars. White throat patch large and obvious. The needle-

like points on the tail feathers are normally invisible in the field. Flight often extremely fast, with rapid, powerful wingbeats and long swoops and glides on slightly bowed wings, but sometimes quite leisurely.

SEX/AGE Saddle of adult is pale buffish-brown when fresh, silvery-white when worn. Juvenile resembles adult but is duller, less glossy, overall, with less conspicuous pale saddle (darker, browner, less silvery); lacks white forehead and has less distinct pale throat patch and ventral patch (whitish rather than pure white).

VOICE Typical call (unlikely to be heard in our region) a rapid, high-pitched rippling twitter.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Europe). In natural range, forest and woodland (nests in trees or cliffs), feeding over these habitats and also over meadows, marshes, lakes, hillsides and mountainsides.

CHIMNEY SWIFT *Chaetura pelagica*

Plate page 507

L 12–13 cm, WS 31–32 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. This small, all-dark swift with rather short, cigar-shaped body and square-ended tail (rounded when fanned) is unlikely to be confused. Shape somewhat recalls much larger White-throated Needletail, but overall coloration dark greyish-brown, slightly paler and greyer on throat and upper breast. Little Swift somewhat similar in overall shape, but has obvious white throat patch and white rump (edges of latter generally visible even when bird overhead). Needle-like points to tail feathers not normally visible in the field. Flight can be rather fluttering when feeding (especially when low down), almost bat-like (and bat-like impression further enhanced by

general outline of bird), but is often typically swift-like. In display flight, holds wings upwards in V-shape and rocks from side to side.

SEX/AGE Juvenile closely resembles adult but has darker throat and breast, contrasting only slightly with rest of underparts.

VOICE Typical call (unlikely to be heard in our region) a staccato chattering ‘chip chip chip chip ...’ (with varying speed of delivery).

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe, Canary Is). In natural range, towns, villages, farms, woodland (nests in chimneys, buildings and trees), feeding over these habitats and also over lakes and other open areas.

CAPE VERDE SWIFT *Apus alexandri*

Plate page 508

Alexander’s Swift

L 13 cm, WS 34–35 cm.

IDENTIFICATION This small, all-dark endemic swift of Cape Verde Is recalls Plain Swift in plumage detail, but is slightly smaller and considerably paler and greyer-brown overall (paler than Pallid Swift), with a more conspicuous whitish throat patch. Both Common Swift and Pallid Swift are considerably larger and bulkier, with slightly more deeply forked tails. Common is darker and blacker overall, while Pallid is a little darker overall but has even more extensive whitish throat patch, pale forehead and, in good light, more contrast in wings (darker outer primaries contrasting with paler inner primaries and secondaries). Flight action similar to Common and Pallid, but often quicker and more fluttering.

SEX/AGE Fresh juvenile has narrow white edgings to tips of secondaries and inner primaries (but some fresh adults have similar secondaries). Probably inseparable in the field.



VOICE Typical call similar to scream of Common, but less piercing and harsher, somewhat reeling.

TAXONOMY Sometimes considered to be a race of Plain Swift *A. unicolor* or even Common Swift *A. apus*.

STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon. May be partly migratory, with some of population perhaps visiting African mainland. Arid, mountainous ridges and deep valleys, sea cliffs; locally towns and villages.

PLAIN SWIFT *Apus unicolor*

Plate page 508

L 14–15 cm, WS 38–39 cm.

IDENTIFICATION This fairly small swift, an endemic breeder in Madeira and Canary Is, is very similar to Common but somewhat smaller and slightly narrower-winged, with rather more deeply forked tail and even less distinct pale (greyish instead of whitish) throat patch. Throat patch often impossible to discern in field, but as in Common quite conspicuous in some circumstances. As with Common, in some light conditions shows contrast between dark underwing coverts and slightly paler (semi-translucent) flight feathers. When plumage fresh, is a touch browner than Common (not so black), with some indistinct whitish fringes above and especially below (most obvious in juvenile, but, even so, visible only in exceptional view), recalling Pallid Swift. Pallid is somewhat larger, with chunkier head, broader and blunter wingtip, less deeply forked tail, pale forehead, more extensive and more obvious pale (whitish) throat patch, paler brown overall coloration (especially compared with worn Plain), and contrasting pattern on flight feathers (darker outer primaries contrast in good light with paler inner primaries and secondaries). When worn, overall coloration as Common, and whitish fringes lacking. Flight action often more fluttering than Common or Pallid, with faster wingbeats and more erratic twisting and turning. On



average, occurs at higher altitudes (and feeds higher in sky) than Pallid on Canary Is. (See also Cape Verde Swift.)

SEX/AGE Slight seasonal variation (see Identification). Fresh juvenile closely resembles fresh adult (although at a time when adults are worn), but has somewhat more obvious pale feather fringes, especially below.

VOICE Typical call a hoarse, screaming ‘sriii’, very similar to scream of Common but not so harsh and rasping as that of Pallid.

TAXONOMY Sometimes considered to be a race of Common Swift *A. apus*.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. Some or even most of population appear to leave breeding range during winter, perhaps migrating to adjacent coast of N Africa (where dark swifts have been reported at this season) or continuing south of Sahara. Possibly even breeds coastal W Morocco. Mountainous ridges, deep valleys, sea cliffs and locally towns and villages, hunting over woodland and open country.

COMMON SWIFT *Apus apus*

Plate page 508

Swift

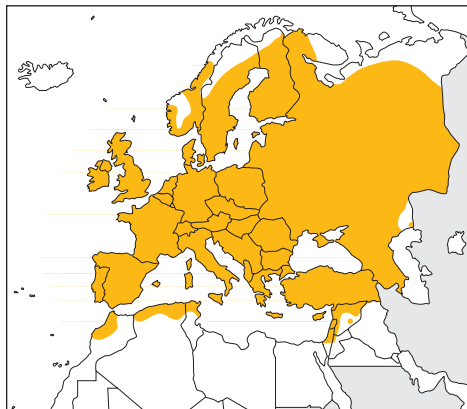
L 16–17 cm, WS 42–48 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Much the most widespread and familiar swift of our region. The yardstick by which other all-dark swifts are compared. (See Pallid Swift, Plain Swift and Cape Verde Swift for discussions.) Overall dark sooty-brown coloration relieved only by whitish throat patch (most obvious in breeding season when carrying food balls to nest site, at other times generally hard to see unless views excellent). Against the light looks black. Only a little contrast in wings (and even then only visible in certain light conditions) between dark wing coverts and slightly paler (semi-translucent) flight feathers. Wingbeats not so fluttering as in smaller species of swift. Partial albinism has been recorded occasionally, birds with scattered white patches being most frequent, but rare individuals have rump or belly white, superficially suggesting other species. Special care should therefore be exercised when identifying lone, out-of-range swifts.

SEX/AGE Adult when worn is slightly duller and browner, less black. Juvenile separable with difficulty given close view: is blacker, less glossy, and has many narrow whitish feather fringes; pale throat patch whiter and more extensive.

VOICE Typical call a shrill, piercing scream: 'srreeee' (with variations in volume, pitch and duration).

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight, but of significance for identification. 2 races (both illustrated). Race *pekinensis* (breeding from Iran and perhaps E Iraq eastwards, migrating through Middle East) is a little paler and browner than nominate race, with



more extensive and whiter throat patch and some contrast (visible in favourable light conditions only) between dark outer primaries and browner inner primaries and secondaries. (See Pallid Swift.)

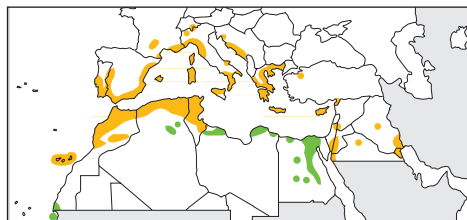
STATUS/HABITAT Common, locally abundant. Towns and villages, locally woodland, sea cliffs, gorges, and cliffs in hills and mountains (nesting mainly in buildings but locally in caves or crevices in cliffs, hollow trees or tree holes); feeds over these habitats and also over virtually any other habitat. Habitually feeds over lakes.

PALLID SWIFT *Apus pallidus*

Plate page 508

L 16–17 cm, WS 42–46 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Very similar to Common, differing in its somewhat paler overall coloration and slight but important plumage and structural details. Separation requires care, especially where no comparisons can be made. Structurally, Pallid has a slightly stouter body with a broader head, slightly broader wings with blunter wingtips, and a somewhat shallower tail fork with blunter tail tips. All these differences are subtle, but overall effect is of a slightly heavier bird. Overall plumage coloration is somewhat paler and more grey-brown, less sooty, in typical Pallid (but see comments about race *illyricus* below). Darker areas of plumage are less uniform than in Common. Has darker saddle on mantle and darker leading edge of wing (from lesser coverts across carpal area onto outer primaries) contrasting quite noticeably in good light with paler crown/nape, rump and remainder of coverts and flight feathers. Contrast between darker outer primaries and paler remainder of flight feathers can also be seen on underwing. Pallid has narrow pale fringing to many body and covert feathers in fresh adult as well as in juvenile plumage, giving slightly mottled effect in good view (and even in worn plumage pale fringes often still show on rump or ventral area). Pallid has more extensive whitish forehead and throat patch, latter extending under entire head, not just to below eye as in typical Common, giving Pallid an almost pale-headed appearance when seen from the front in good light. (Beware whitish throat patch of Common looking more obvious when carrying food ball to nest, and see comments below regarding race *pekinensis* of Common.) Sides of face are paler, so dark eyepit stands out more (creating somewhat masked effect). Of course, these subtle



plumage features visible only in good viewing conditions, as when bird well lit and flying against hillside, building etc. Against the light, Pallid overhead can look as dark as Common, although in reasonable light Pallid is often surprisingly obvious when among sooty-black-looking Commons. Beware misidentifying worn adult Commons in autumn that look browner than fresh blackish juveniles. Lone birds frequently the most difficult to identify. Flight action is typically a little slower and less agile; tends to glide more than Common on average. Race *pekinensis* of Common, which migrates through Middle East, is intermediate in plumage between typical Common and nominate race of Pallid, being paler and browner than nominate race of Common and with larger and whiter throat patch (extending behind eye), paler forehead and ventral area, and some contrast between dark outer primaries and paler inner primaries and secondaries. Presents more of a problem, especially when considering Pallid of darkest race *illyricus* (which is almost as dark overall), but all structural differences outlined above still apply, and in addition does not show darker saddle

WHITE-RUMPED SWIFT *Apus caffer*

Plate page 507

L 14 cm, WS 34–36 cm.

IDENTIFICATION This small white-rumped swift of S Spain and Morocco is much rarer and more localized than Little, with which it is most likely to be confused. White-rumped differs in having a long, deeply forked tail (rather short and virtually square-ended in Little), which it frequently holds closed, forming a long spike, and a rather narrow, somewhat crescent-shaped white rump patch (broad and square-shaped in Little). In White-rumped, the rump patch can be hard to see even from above and is invisible from below. In Little, the large patch extends onto the sides of the rump, being conspicuous from above and possible to discern even from below. White-rumped has markedly narrower and more pointed wings than the rather broad-winged Little, and also has narrow white tips to the secondaries, visible only in very good conditions. Flight action is particularly agile and graceful, with fast, rather fluttering wingbeats. (See also vagrant Pacific Swift.)

SEX/AGE Juvenile closely resembles adult. When fresh, tips of primaries narrowly fringed white and tips



of secondaries more broadly fringed white than in adult, but probably inseparable in the field.

VOICE Not very vocal, but usual call a rapid, rather guttural chattering 'chu cheet-cheet-cheet-cheet-cheet-cheet' (first unit lower-pitched and with slight pause afterwards). Not so shrill as calls of many swifts.

STATUS/HABITAT Scarce and very localized. Only rare winter records from our region, and arrives in breeding areas late in spring, so perhaps mainly winters south of the Sahara. Breeds in nests taken over from hirundines, especially Red-rumped Swallows, or Little Swifts. Mostly valleys and gorges in rugged hills and mountains, rarely more open country when suitable nest sites available.

LITTLE SWIFT *Apus affinis*

Plate page 507

House Swift

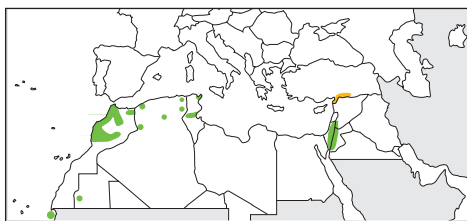
L 12 cm, WS 34–35 cm.

IDENTIFICATION This small swift of NW Africa and western Middle East is easily identified by combination of broad white rump patch and virtually square-ended tail. When tail tightly closed a small notch is visible, but when fanned it looks quite rounded. (See White-rumped Swift for discussion, and also vagrant Pacific and Chimney Swifts.) Often associates with Common House Martins, but easily separated by largely dark underparts (and by lack of obviously forked tail). Flight action less graceful than that of most swifts, less agile and often rather fluttering (shape and wing action combine to give bat-like impression at times), interspersed with rather short glides.

SEX/AGE Juvenile closely resembles adult but is duller, almost without gloss, and has narrow pale fringes to median and greater coverts when fresh.

VOICE Typical call a high-pitched, clear, rippling twitter (impossible to transcribe, but to some almost lark-like). Also a rapid, thin (almost insect-like) 'sik-siksiksiksik ...' (when chasing each other).

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Minimal. 2 races (*gali-*



lejenensis illustrated).

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Lebanon. Partly migratory, especially in Middle East, with part of population wintering south of the Sahara.) Towns, villages, gorges and cliffs (breeding in buildings, under bridges, in caves or on cliff faces, sometimes utilizing old nests of Common House Martins or Red-rumped Swallows), feeding over these habitats and adjacent country.

AFRICAN PALM SWIFT *Cypsiurus parvus*

Plate page 507

Palm Swift

L 16 cm (including tail 8–9 cm), WS 33–35 cm.

IDENTIFICATION This small and very slender greyish-brown swift (formerly of S Egypt) with long, narrow wings and exceptionally long and deeply forked tail (created by elongated outer tail feathers) is unlikely to be confused with other swifts. Uniform coloration and swift-like character preclude confusion with swallows. Generally keeps tail closed in flight, so that it looks pointed rather than forked. Flight action fast, fluttering and agile, almost swallow-like at times. Holds wings below horizontal when gliding. Typically feeds low over treetops.

SEX/AGE Juvenile closely resembles adult, but tail shorter and less deeply forked, with much blunter tail tips; initially plumage is warmer, more rufous-tinged, less grey overall.

VOICE Typical call a soft, high-pitched chittering.

STATUS/HABITAT Formerly a rare visitor (or perhaps resident) in extreme S Egypt along the Nile, but not recorded since the Aswan High Dam destroyed all suitable habitat. South of the Sahara always associated with palms (in which it attaches nest to frond) in thornbush, wooded savanna and cultivated country.

KINGFISHERS Alcedinidae

5 species (1 vagrant)

Kingfishers are rather squat, powerful-looking, small to medium-large perching birds with huge dagger-shaped bills, large heads, short tails and very small legs. Some, as their name suggests, are primarily fish-eaters and gain their prey by plunge-diving into rivers, pools or lakes, either from a perch or when hovering, while some feed primarily on terrestrial prey and can be found far from water. Flight between perches rapid and direct, typically low over water or ground (but some species hover well above water surface). Nest in holes excavated in banks. Rather solitary. All are highly colourful, and their characteristic shape makes confusion with any other type of bird unlikely.

Sexes usually differ only slightly (but in some differences more marked). Little or no seasonal variation. Juveniles closely resemble adults but are separable.

Complete post-breeding moult commences shortly after nesting, typically finishing before winter (but continuing until spring in Grey-headed). Common retains a few flight feathers until following summer. Post-juvenile moult commences about two months after fledging, typically finishing before winter (but again continuing until spring in Grey-headed); complete apart from some or all flight and tail feathers.

Identification straightforward. Points to concentrate on are:

Overall plumage coloration and pattern • Bill colour

WHITE-THROATED KINGFISHER *Halcyon smyrnensis*

Plate page 509

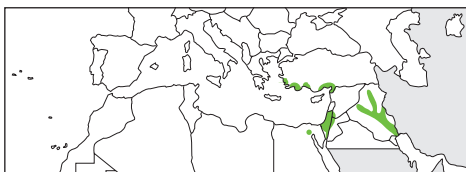
White-breasted Kingfisher, Smyrna Kingfisher

L 26–28 cm, WS 40–43 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Large kingfisher of Turkey and Middle East. Unmistakable. At any angle, combination of chestnut head and massive red bill is diagnostic. White throat and centre of breast really conspicuous only when facing observer. A largely terrestrial feeder, often found away from water, sitting prominently on branches, posts, wires etc. Only rarely plunge-dives for fish. Flight action powerful and relatively slow, displaying largely bright blue upperwing (with pale blue patch on base of primaries) and striking large white patch on underwing. In poor flight view (from behind) can suggest European Roller (q.v.) as it sweeps up onto perch.

SEX/AGE Juvenile resembles adult, but chestnut and blue areas paler and duller, some indistinct dark crescents on centre of breast, bill pale orange-yellow with dusky base and tip (becoming orange-red), and legs greyish-orange (becoming orange-red).

VOICE Typical call a loud, raucous cackling ‘chake ake ake-ake-ake-ake’ (somewhat recalling alarm call



of Common Blackbird, but drier, more rattling). Male also gives an extended, penetrating, tremulous musical whistle ‘kilililililili ...’ that slows down and drops in pitch towards end.

STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon but localized, especially in north of range. Some dispersal occurs outside breeding season. (In addition to mapped range, has probably bred Lebanon.) Lowland cultivation with trees and bushes, often where there are irrigation ditches, canals, fishponds, lakes, streams or rivers; also well-watered, richly vegetated wadis in arid hills.

GREY-HEADED KINGFISHER *Halcyon leucocephala*

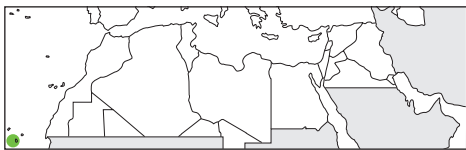
Plate page 509

Chestnut-bellied Kingfisher

L 21–22 cm, WS 32–34 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Medium-sized kingfisher of Cape Verde Is. Unmistakable. Adult's combination of greyish-white head, upper mantle and breast, and red bill is diagnostic. Juvenile has blackish bill with reddish base, but grey head, upper mantle and breast (contrasting with black lower mantle, scapulars and inner wing coverts) are unmatched by any other kingfisher of our region. Typically perches prominently on shrubs, small trees, posts or wires. A terrestrial feeder.

SEX/AGE Adult female often a little duller. Head and breast of adult become whiter when worn. Juvenile resembles adult, but is duller and has buff tinge to head and breast, with fine dark scaling on these areas; bill black (becoming red at base), legs pinkish-grey



(becoming pinkish-red).

VOICE Typical call a rapid, harsh, reeling ‘it-it-it-it-it-it-it ...’. Also a rapid, staccato ‘chi-chi-chi-chi-chi ...’ and a rapid warbling twitter.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. Cultivation with bushes and trees, orchards, gardens, scrub.

COMMON KINGFISHER *Alcedo atthis*

Plate page 509

Kingfisher

L 16–17 cm, WS 24–26 cm.

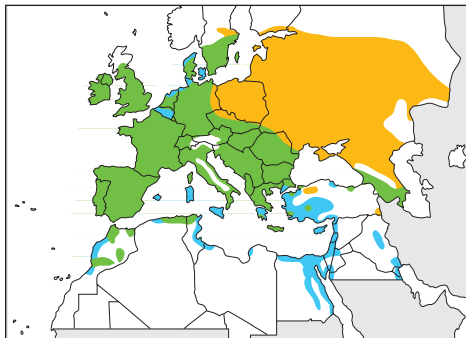
IDENTIFICATION Much the smallest kingfisher of our region and much the most widespread and familiar. Usually seen on a convenient waterside perch, often low down, peering intently down at surface. In spite of bright coloration, often surprisingly difficult to make out. When in rapid, whirring flight low over surface, interspersed with short glides, can be just a blur of blue and orange (with area from mantle to tail a brilliant, shining blue). Often first detected when uttering its loud, distinctive call.

SEX/AGE Adult female has lower mandible partly or even entirely red. Juvenile closely resembles adult, but is duller and greener above, with orange-chestnut of underparts sometimes grey-tinged; bill black with whitish tip, legs brown.

VOICE Typical call a shrill, high-pitched, penetrating whistle: 'tsee' or more complex 'tsee ti-tee ti-tee ti-tee' (with other variations).

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Minimal. 2 races (nominate illustrated).

STATUS/HABITAT Common, but frequently localized (especially in arid or polluted areas). (In addition to



mapped range, has bred Libya, Egypt, Lebanon and Iraq, and may breed Syria.) Rivers, large streams, canals, freshwater lakes, fishponds. Outside breeding season, also saline lagoons, estuaries and sheltered coastlines.

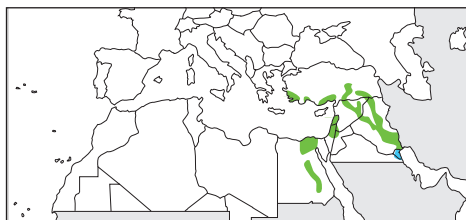
PIED KINGFISHER *Ceryle rudis*

Plate page 509

L 24–26 cm, WS 45–47 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Large kingfisher of Egypt, Middle East and Turkey. Striking pied plumage, with one or more black breast bands, 'striped' head pattern and marbled upperparts, renders it unmistakable. More conspicuous and sociable than other kingfishers, often perching in small parties. Flight rather slow and often quite high, frequently hovering high above water before plunging purposefully. Hover-and-dive action recalls Little Tern in style.

SEX/AGE Adult female has one broad but broken breast band (two complete bands, lower one narrower, in adult male). Juvenile closely resembles adult female, but breast band usually unbroken and greyish-black rather than black; has some blackish scaling on white areas on head and neck, and on throat.



VOICE Typical calls are a repeated, noisy, penetrating 'kwik' or 'kik' and a high 'TREETiti TREETiti'.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. Rivers, canals, lakes, fishponds, marshes, coastal lagoons and adjacent sheltered coastal waters.

BELTED KINGFISHER *Ceryle alcyon*

Plate page 509

L 28–35 cm, WS 47–52 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Unmistakable. Great size and predominantly bluish-grey and white plumage (with rufous lower breast band and flanks in female) are diagnostic. Even larger than Pied, with a more obvious shaggy crest, an all-dark head and no black and white marbling above. Often perches high up on waterside trees or wires. Flight slow and even more powerful than Pied, often travelling quite high between feeding places. Frequently hovers before plunging, but typically for shorter periods than Pied.

SEX/AGE Adult female has rufous flanks and a second, rufous, breast band below bluish-grey band. Juvenile closely resembles adult of same sex, but has rufous feather fringes on upper breast band; young male also differs from adult male in having rufous tinge on flanks.

VOICE Typical call a loud, harsh, clattering rattle: 'rikety-krik-krik-krik'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe, Azores). In natural range, rivers, streams, ponds, lakes, marshes, estuaries; locally even sheltered coastal waters.

BEE-EATERS Meropidae

3 species

Brightly coloured, medium-sized birds with slim bodies, elongated central tail feathers, pointed wings and long, thin, somewhat decurved bills. Most members of the family are found in tropical regions. Bee-eaters are insectivores, catching large insects on the wing, either during swallow-like aerial manoeuvres or by sudden swoop and chase from exposed perch such as wires. Nest in holes excavated in banks (European and Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters nest colonially). The two larger species migrate by day, often giving themselves away by their liquid bubbling calls even when high overhead. Characteristic shape and vivid colours make bee-eaters highly unlikely to be mistaken for other birds.

Sexes similar. Minimal seasonal variation. Juveniles resemble adults but are separable.

Complete post-breeding moult commences shortly after nesting and finishes by autumn (Green) or winter (migratory species). Partial pre-breeding occurs in winter quarters in migratory species. Complete post-juvenile moult commences about three months after fledging and finishes by end of winter.

Identification straightforward (and only one species is widespread). Points to concentrate on are:

Throat colour • Upperpart colour • Underwing colour • Length of tail projections

GREEN BEE-EATER *Merops orientalis*

Plate page 510

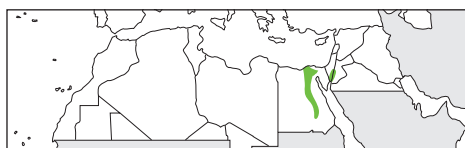
Little Green Bee-eater

L 22–25 cm, WS 29–30 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Rather small, largely green bee-eater of Egypt, Israel and Jordan. Small size not always apparent in field if no comparison possible, but easily distinguished from larger Blue-cheeked by green instead of yellow and rufous throat (race *cleopatra* and juvenile of race *cyanophrys*) or by blue throat (adult of race *cyanophrys*). Adults also differ in having black gorget (although this less distinct in *cyanophrys*). Adult *cleopatra* has longer tail streamers than Blue-cheeked, but in contrast adult *cyanophrys* has shorter streamers. At any age, coppery underwing is paler and wing has more obvious dark trailing edge both above and below. Wings are relatively shorter and less pointed. Less gregarious than other bee-eaters, often met singly, in pairs or in small parties. Tends to perch at lower levels. Less aerial than other bee-eaters, typically hunting low over ground with short circular flight before returning to same or nearby perch.

SEX/AGE Juvenile duller overall, lacking elongated central tail feathers and black gorget.

VOICE Typical calls a repeated subdued trilling 'tree',



sometimes quite shrill, and a sharper 'tit-tit-tit' or 'prrit'.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Quite marked. 2 races (both illustrated). Adult of race *cyanophrys* (Israel/Jordan) differs from adult of race *cleopatra* (Egypt) in having blue instead of green throat, forehead and supercilium, less distinct black gorget (bordered below by blue), bluer-green breast, belly and ventral area, and darker upperparts; central tail feathers much less elongated. Juvenile *cyanophrys* has blue areas of plumage replaced with dull green and resembles juvenile *cleopatra*, but is darker above.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. Cultivation with trees and bushes, canal and river banks, arid country with acacias.

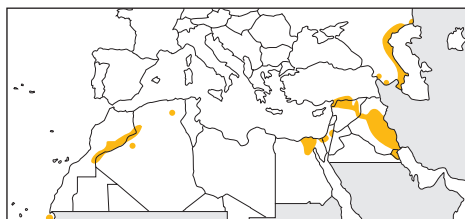
BLUE-CHEEKED BEE-EATER *Merops persicus*

Plate page 510

L 27–31 cm, WS 46–49 cm.

IDENTIFICATION This rather large bee-eater of N Africa, Middle East and Caspian region differs markedly from European Bee-eater (q.v.) in its predominantly bright green plumage and rufous-chestnut throat with yellow only on chin; lacks narrow black gorget shown by adult European. Elongated central tail feathers of adult are longer, and has longer, finer bill, giving Blue-cheeked a longer, more streamlined look than European. Narrower black face mask bordered above and below by pale bands (frequently whitish-looking rather than bluish) give Blue-cheeked distinctive facial expression, even at a distance when colours hard to see. In flight from below looks quite dark-throated (European looks pale-throated), and underwing much darker and obviously coppery overall with narrower, less obvious dark trailing edge. (See also Green Bee-eater.)

SEX/AGE Adult winter slightly duller overall. Juvenile



markedly duller (with pale whitish-green rather than bluish around facial mask) and lacks elongated central tail feathers; rufous of throat extends up to dark facial mask; iris brown instead of deep red.

VOICE Typical call a rapid, rippling trill, 'priip' or 'diripp', frequently repeated. Very similar to call of European but more disyllabic, hoarser (less liquid),

more shrill. Call is actually slightly higher-pitched overall than European's (but ending is slightly lower-pitched).

TAXONOMY Often treated as conspecific with Madagascar Bee-eater, *M. superciliosus*, with the name Blue-cheeked Bee-eater being used for the enlarged species.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (both illustrated). Race *chrysocercus* (NW Africa) has slightly longer elongated central tail feathers and is more yel-

lowish-green than nominate race. Some *chrysocercus* show less white on forehead and around black face mask, but this is very variable.

STATUS/HABITAT Generally uncommon, but locally fairly common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Lebanon, Jordan.) Open cultivation with some trees and bushes or dry uncultivated country with scattered bushes (especially tamarisk). Almost always found in close association with water in form of rivers, irrigation canals, lakes or marshes.

EUROPEAN BEE-EATER *Merops apiaster*

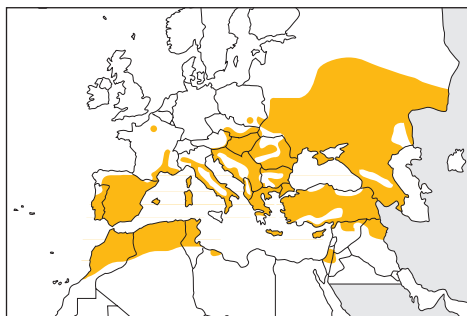
Plate page 510

Bee-eater

L 27–29 cm, WS 44–49 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Much the most widespread bee-eater and the only one without all-green upperparts. Diagnostic features of adult are yellow throat (and chin), rather broad dark face mask (especially behind eye), and chestnut from crown to mantle and on wing coverts, grading to buffy-yellow on back, scapulars and rump (contrasting with greenish-blue remainder of plumage). Has rather short supercilium, ending just behind eye. In flight from above looks pale-backed, with much more variegated plumage than any other bee-eater. In flight from below looks pale-throated, with pale buffy underwing (coppery-tinged only on base of secondaries) and conspicuous dark trailing edge. Juvenile (see details under Sex/Age) easier to mistake for Blue-cheeked, but pale yellow throat (as well as chin), broader dark face mask and chestnut on crown and nape still diagnostic. Shorter supercilium, paler, less coppery underwing and pale scapulars (if present) are also useful. Compared with adult Blue-cheeked, also lacks elongated tail streamers. Flight action graceful and agile, prolonged glides and banks on outstretched wings interspersed with bursts of rapid, deep wingbeats; suddenly interrupted by rapid twisting and turning in pursuit of prey. When moving purposefully (e.g. on migration), flight consists of steady, somewhat hesitant flapping, interspersed with glides.

SEX/AGE Adult female not always separable, but often greenish-tinged on yellow scapulars and rump, with less deep chestnut on crown and mantle, blue of underparts tinged greenish and dark gorget narrower and less defined. Adult winter of both sexes is tinged green above and has less distinct dark gorget. Juvenile resembles adult winter but is even duller, with pre-



dominantly dull green upperparts (chestnut restricted to crown and nape and even here green-tinged), paler yellow throat and pale bluish-green on remainder of underparts; dark gorget is very indistinct, and elongated central tail feathers are lacking. Some juveniles have pale green scapulars, recalling pale-backed look of adults, but others have rather uniform dull green upperparts. Iris brown instead of deep red.

VOICE Typical call a highly distinctive mellow, liquid (almost 'bubbling') 'pruup' or 'pruuk', frequently repeated, with variations.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Britain, Belgium, Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Sicily, Canary Is.) Dry, flat or rolling open country and valleys, both cultivated and uncultivated, and with or without trees and bushes. More locally, woodland edges and large clearings.

ROLLERS *Coraciidae*

4 species (2 vagrant)

Medium-large, colourful, relatively large-headed, large-billed, broad-winged, crow-shaped birds of open or fairly open country, usually seen perched on prominent perches in trees, on posts or on wires. Most members of the family are found in the tropics, and only one species is widespread in our region. Unlikely to be mistaken for other birds. Most, including the widespread European Roller, are predominantly blue-coloured with a striking wing pattern. Behaviour of typical rollers somewhat shrike-like, dropping from perch to pick prey from ground. Flight action strong and direct, with slightly hesitant flapping wingbeats. Nest in holes in trees or walls. Usually rather solitary (but migrants sometimes form parties).

Sexes similar. Minimal seasonal variation. Juveniles resemble adults but are separable.

Identification straightforward. Points to concentrate on are:

Wing pattern and coloration • Head colour • Tail length

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L 30–32 cm, WS 66–73 cm.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Minimal. 2 races (n nominate illustrated).

STATUS/HABITAT: Generally uncommon, but locally fairly common. (Declining in northwest of range.) In addition to mapped range, formerly bred Germany, Denmark and Sweden, and has bred Finland, Switzerland.) Dry or fairly dry, flat or rolling country and wide valleys, inhabiting open woodland (especially oak or pine), woodland edges and clearings, groves, orchards and cultivation with scattered trees; locally in semi-desert terrain with banks or ravines.

Plate page 511

by violet-blue rather than black on upperside of flight feathers. In flight, shows brighter blue rump and more extensive pale turquoise on tip of tail in all plumages. A little more agile on wing than European, with quicker, less floppy wingbeats. Display flight similar.

VOICE Typical call a very European Roller-like 'rak' or 'rak-ak'. Also a loud 'aaaarh'. In display flight, gives a European-like 'ga-ga-ga-ga-gaa-gaa-gaa-aaaaa aaaaa'. Sounds a little less harsh and crow-like, more chuckling in tone, than European.

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pean, with even more strikingly patterned, more rounded wings in flight. At any age, easily distin-

guished from adult European by duller, greener crown and median and greater coverts, duller, less rufous saddle, and purplish-brown or reddish-brown (with fine whitish streaking) on cheeks, throat and breast. In flight, striking wing pattern with conspicuous pale turquoise subterminal panel on violet-blue-tipped primaries (visible from both above and below) is quite different from that of European. Tail pattern is also different, with broad violet-blue terminal band contrasting with pale turquoise subterminal band (on all but central feathers). At rest is rather similar to juvenile European, but crown is brighter and greener, coloration on cheeks, throat and breast is darker and browner than equivalent areas on juvenile European, and lower edge of closed wing is violet-blue and pale turquoise rather than black. In flight, very different wing and tail patterns prevent confusion. Adult also lacks broad whitish band on forehead and above eye typical of juvenile *Coracias*. Can be separated from Abyssinian Roller by same characters (plus lack of highly elongated outermost tail feathers in adult). Flight action, including dis-



play flight, quite similar to European.

SEX/AGE Juvenile closely resembles adult, but is a little duller overall (with vinaceous-buff rather than purplish-brown on throat and cheeks, green rather than blue-green crown and brownish tinge on median and greater coverts).

VOICE Typical call a harsh 'chak' (or 'chak-chak', sounding like two stones being knocked together). Rather more barking (Western Jackdaw-like) than European. In display flight, various screeching and cackling calls, often variations on the typical call.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. Open country (cultivated or uncultivated) with bushes and trees, palm groves.

BROAD-BILLED ROLLER *Eurystomus glaucurus*

Plate page 511

L 29–30 cm, WS 55–58 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Smallish vagrant roller from sub-Saharan Africa. Rather uniformly dark overall appearance (pale only on rear of underparts and base of tail) precludes confusion with any other roller. Fairly short but deep bill (conspicuously yellow in adult), short tail and rather pointed wings that lack striking patterning are important differences from typical *Coracias* rollers. Most active at dusk. Generally perches out in open on conspicuous perch. Rather compact, hunched-up appearance, large head and short but deep bill give falcon-like impression (especially from front, when shortness of tail not immediately apparent). Falcon-like (or bee-eater-like) impression enhanced by habit of suddenly leaving perch and climbing with rapid wingbeats in pursuit of prey, or hawking high in air with bursts of rather fluid wing-

beats interspersed with sudden wheeling turns and swooping dives.

SEX/AGE Juvenile much duller than adult, with horn-brown bill (yellow at base of lower mandible), underparts brown from throat to upper breast (instead of purple), pale turquoise of underparts extending to lower breast but extensively mottled with greyish-brown, and upperparts from crown to rump and lesser and median wing coverts dull rufous-brown (instead of rich rufous-chestnut). Underwing coverts and axillaries largely pale blue (instead of purplish).

VOICE Typical calls are a harsh, cackling 'crik-crik-crik' while in flight and, when perched, a guttural, nasal 'giaow grrrd grrrd-grrrd g-r-g'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Cape Verde Is). In natural range, wooded savanna, forest edges and clearings.

HOOPOES Upupidae

1 species (often treated as a monotypic, i.e. single species, family)

EURASIAN HOOPOE *Upupa epops*

Plate page 511

Hoopoe

L 26–28 cm (including bill 5–6 cm), WS 42–46 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Unmistakable medium-sized bird with long, slender, decurved bill and strikingly patterned deep pinkish-buff, black and white plumage. Primarily a terrestrial feeder, probing the ground with its long bill with short, jerky, bobbing head movements. Constantly changes direction while walking along. The enormous crest is usually held closed, giving a claw hammer-like shape to the head, but when alighting, or when agitated, is fully fanned. When walking across dry, pale-coloured ground, often surprisingly unobtrusive until it takes spectacularly to the wing, only to seemingly vanish again as it drops back

down to the ground. Flight action is very floppy (like a giant butterfly) and broadly undulating (recalling Eurasian Jay), although somewhat stronger when well underway, with the mass of black and white bands on the extremely broad wings creating an unforgettable impression. Nests in holes in trees, banks and walls. Usually solitary or in pairs, but may form small parties on migration.

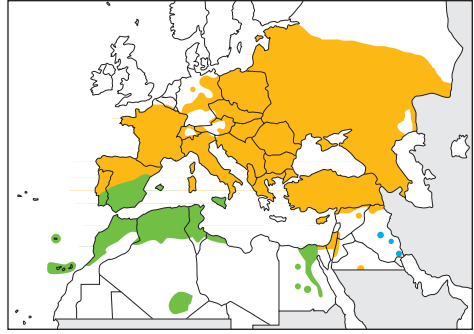
SEX/AGE Sexes virtually identical, but adult female generally slightly duller, with virtually no pink tinge to side of head, breast and flanks; has whitish chin. (Note, however, that worn male is often identical to

rather fresh female.) Complete post-breeding moult commences shortly after nesting and finishes during winter. Possibly a partial pre-breeding moult. Juvenile closely resembles adult female initially, apart from noticeably shorter, less decurved bill, but later, when bill as in adult, is generally even duller and greyer on head and body. Post-juvenile moult usually takes place in winter (but sometimes starts late summer); complete apart from flight feathers and some or all tail feathers and tertials.

VOICE Advertising call of male a highly distinctive, low, hollow 'poo-poo-poo', rather soft but far-carrying, and sounding like air being blown into a bottle. (See Oriental Cuckoo, which has very similar advertising call.) Also gives a harsh Eurasian Jay-like 'schaahr' when agitated.

TAXONOMY Race *senegalensis* is sometimes (together with other sub-Saharan races) treated as a race of **African Hoopoe** *U. africana*.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 3 races (nominate illustrated). Race *senegalensis* (Hoggar, S Algeria, and, outside our region, in the Sahel) differs in being distinctly smaller, with deeper rufous head and less subterminal white on feathers of crest. Adult male often shows more extensive white on secondaries compared with other races of our region, but white



barring at tips of secondaries often reduced.

STATUS/HABITAT Generally common, but uncommon and local in north of range. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Britain, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Lebanon. Most winter south of the Sahara.) Dry or fairly dry, flat or rolling country and valleys, inhabiting cultivated or uncultivated areas with trees and bushes, woodland edges, orchards, groves, oases; locally in steppe or semi-desert lacking trees but with banks or gullies.

WOODPECKERS Picidae

13 species (2 vagrant)

Small to medium-large, generally pied or greenish woodland birds adapted to feeding on wood-boring insects, having strong, dagger-shaped bills and exceedingly long, extensible tongues. Combination of strong feet and stiff tail feathers allows easy progression up and down vertical tree trunks; woodpeckers have highly distinctive shuffling, sliding motion on trunks and branches. (Eurasian Wryneck is atypical and has relatively small head and bill, and rather long soft tail.) Flight strongly undulating, almost bounding; a few rising flaps followed by a short descending glide. Typically fly only fairly short distances at a time between trees. Usually solitary. Most species advertise their presence by hammering on dead, hollow branches or trunks, an action known as 'drumming'. Nest in holes in trees. Some species feed partly on ground, especially on ants.

Sexes mostly differ slightly (typically in coloration of head). No seasonal variation. Juveniles mostly resemble adults but are generally separable.

Complete post-breeding moult commences shortly after nesting and finishes during autumn. Eurasian Wryneck also has partial pre-breeding moult. Partial post-juvenile moult commences at about fledging and typically finishes in autumn or early winter (but not until spring in vagrant Yellow-bellied Sapsucker); complete apart from all or some secondaries and often tertials and some wing coverts.

Share tree-climbing habits with nuthatches and treecreepers. Confusion with treecreepers most unlikely owing to latter's tiny size, cryptic coloration and fine, decurved bills. Nuthatches superficially woodpecker-like, but smaller than all but Lesser Spotted Woodpecker and uniform grey-coloured on crown and upperparts (a few have black on crown), lacking the complex pied patterning of all small woodpeckers.

Separating woodpeckers themselves mostly straightforward, but some species differ only subtly and require more care. All breeding species of our region with exception of very large Black Woodpecker and aberrant Eurasian Wryneck fall into two main categories: green-type species (genus *Picus*, with greenish upperparts) and pied-type species (genera *Dendrocopos* and *Picoides*, with strikingly patterned black and white upperparts). Points to concentrate on are:

Overall coloration (i.e. pied, greenish or other) • **Colour of crown** • **Colour of malar stripe** (green type only) • **Presence or absence of white scapular patch** (pied type only) • **Colour of ventral area** (pied type only)

EURASIAN WRYNECK *Jynx torquilla*

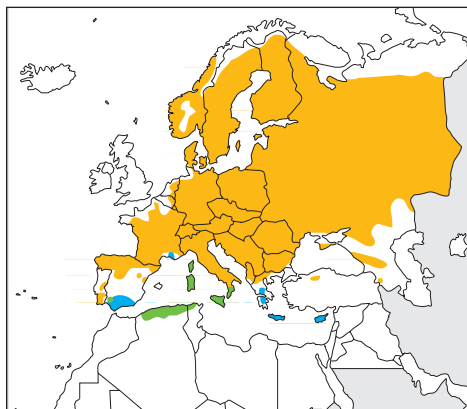
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Wryneck

L 16–17 cm, WS 25–27 cm.

IDENTIFICATION This small, aberrant woodpecker is a most curious bird, looking and behaving much more like a smallish passerine than a woodpecker. Resembles a large warbler, a small shrike, or even a small, slender thrush with beautifully vermiculated, cryptic plumage (in a poor view looks rather uniform greyish-brown, however). Has relatively small head and small bill, and relatively long, rather soft tail. The short legs are the only woodpecker-like feature. Unmistakable at close range, when its almost nightjar-like plumage pattern and colour can be seen well, but at a distance tends to be identified more by elimination than by anything else. Rather lacking in obvious plumage features from any distance, but from above and behind dark brown bands bordering crown, extending from centre of nape to mantle and along edge of scapulars stand out in good light. Does not clamber up tree trunks (although occasionally clings to trunk), and drums only softly by tapping on branch. Shy, unobtrusive and rather sluggish, often staying hidden in trees or bushes, but sometimes feeds on ground, hopping about with tail slightly raised. Often sits quietly for long periods on branch or overgrown wall. When pressed, defends itself by fanning tail, erecting crown feathers into short crest, extending neck and twisting and turning head from side to side (hence its vernacular name). Flight is low and somewhat undulating with fairly long glides on partly-closed wings, usually over comparatively short distances between trees or bushes.

SEX/AGE Juvenile very closely resembles adult at any distance, but is a little duller and browner. Has crown and hindneck browner, less grey, with more obvious dark and white barring, less well-defined black area from hindneck to mantle, and feathering of back, rump and uppertail coverts soft and loose with creamy-white ground coloration and some narrow dark barring (instead of tight grey feathering with fine dark speckling). Ground colour of tertials and outer scapulars warmer (rufous-cinnamon), less grey. Cream



spots on tips of longer wing coverts less well defined. Throat, upper breast and flanks less rich buff, dark barring paler (grey rather than black) and less sharply defined. Tail with more pronounced black barring.

VOICE Advertising call, often revealing presence for first time, a repeated clear, ringing but plaintive 'quee-quee-quee-quee ...' (each unit falling in pitch at end). Stronger, more-metallic sounding and more plaintive than similar call of Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, recalling Common Kestrel or Eurasian Hobby.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 4 races (nominate illustrated).

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common, but locally decreasing. (In addition to mapped range, is now only irregular breeder in Britain, where once widespread, and has bred Mallorca. Most winter south of the Sahara.) Woodland (with edges and clearings, favouring broadleaved but also found in coniferous), open woodland, orchards, parks, large gardens. Outside breeding season, also in scrub.

NORTHERN FLICKER *Colaptes auratus*

Plate page 514

Common Flicker, Yellow-shafted Flicker

L 31–33 cm, WS 48–52 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Large, distinctive transatlantic vagrant woodpecker. In flight, white rump patch combined with largely yellow underwing are diagnostic. When perched, shows unique combination of brownish upperparts with obvious blackish barring, large black breast patch and clean black spotting on whitish-buff lower breast, flanks and belly (undertail coverts, like wing linings, are yellow). Face is richer buff and crown and sides of neck darker grey than in any of the green-type woodpeckers. Confusion unlikely (but beware poor flight view of juvenile European Green, which is similar in size with black spotting and

barring on underparts and a pale yellowish rump patch). Spends much time feeding on ground, mainly on ants, often quite far from trees.

SEX/AGE Adult female lacks black malar stripe. Juvenile resembles adult male, but malar stripe duller and less distinct, especially in female.

VOICE Typical calls are a loud, rapid 'wik-wik-wik-wik ...', a squeaky 'wik-er wik-er' (or 'flik-a flik-a') and a loud 'klee-yer'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, forest edges and clearings, open woodland, open country with scattered trees, parks and large gardens.

GREY-HEADED WOODPECKER *Picus canus*

Plate page 514

Grey-faced Woodpecker

L 25–26 cm, WS 38–40 cm.

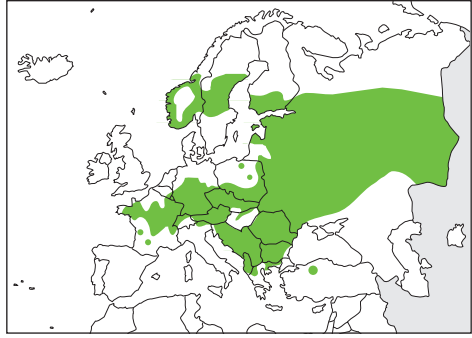
IDENTIFICATION This large, green-type woodpecker is a little smaller and more slightly built than European

Green, with longer tail. Easily separated from typical European Green by distinctly grey head with red

restricted to forecrown (male) or entirely absent (female). Has much less extensive black on face, with only narrow black loreal and malar stripes (enhancing grey look of head when seen from side) and a dark eye, creating a very different facial expression. Note that European Green Woodpecker of race *sharpei* (occurs Iberia and Pyrenees, so does not overlap in range) is superficially similar, with distinctly grey face, black only on loreal area (and malar stripe in female) and shorter bill, but crown and nape entirely red (and malar stripe also largely red in male) and eye whitish. In flight from behind looks rather similar to European Green, but rump duller yellow-green, less golden, and appears slimmer overall with longer tail. Flight action a little faster and less lumbering than European Green. Shy and wary; often very unobtrusive in late spring and summer. Keeps more to cover than European Green, feeding less on ground in open. (See also Levaillant's Green Woodpecker.)

SEX/AGE Adult female lacks red forecrown, has narrower malar stripe and some black streaking on forecrown. Juvenile closely resembles adult female, but slightly duller and usually has some barring on flanks. (Juvenile male has patch of red on forecrown, but less extensive than in adult male.)

VOICE Advertising call a loud, far-carrying, slow, musical 'pee-u-pee-u-pee-u-pee-u-pee-u ...', resembling 'yaffle' call of European Green but more musical, with fluting quality, slowing down towards the end (rather than slightly accelerating) and with a



marked fall in pitch (thus seeming to fade away). Lacks full-throated laughing quality of European Green. Also a short, sharp 'kik' and a repeated 'kyakyakyakyak ...' when agitated, both resembling equivalent calls of European Green. Drums more frequently and more loudly than European Green, with rapid bursts averaging over a second in duration (starting feebly but rising to a crescendo towards end).

STATUS/HABITAT Generally uncommon. Forest (often around edges and clearings), open woodland, riverside groves, marshy woodland, parks; outside breeding season, also gardens. Reaches higher altitudes more often than European Green in upland regions, and found regularly in coniferous forest as well as broadleaved.

EUROPEAN GREEN WOODPECKER *Picus viridis*

Plate page 514

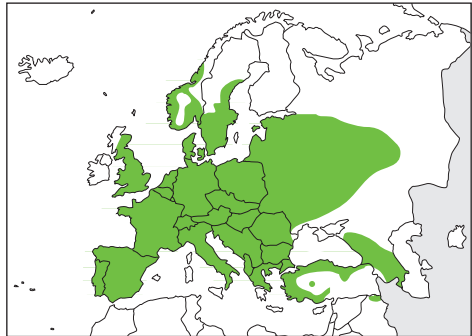
Green Woodpecker, Eurasian Green Woodpecker

L 31–33 cm, WS 40–42 cm.

IDENTIFICATION This large woodpecker is the most widespread green-type species of our region. Typical adult European Green can be separated from other green types by combination of all-red crown and nape and solid black mask between crown and malar stripe. Juvenile unlikely to be confused, as has unique pattern of heavy dark markings on face, sides of neck and underparts, and has pale spotting on wing coverts and upperparts. Race *sharpei* distinctly different (see below) and more difficult to differentiate from Grey-headed or Levaillant's Green Woodpeckers (q.v.), but does not overlap in range with either. In very poor view, could possibly be confused with female or juvenile Golden Oriole (q.v.). Spends much time feeding on ground (especially at ant nests), often in open well away from trees. Moves on ground with clumsy hops, carriage often rather upright. Rather shy, often flying considerable distances when disturbed in open country.

SEX/AGE Adult female lacks red centre to malar stripe. Juvenile considerably duller, with heavy blackish streaking and spotting on face, sides of neck and breast, becoming broken barring on rest of underparts. Malar stripe less distinct. Most of upperparts and wing coverts with conspicuous whitish spotting. Rump duller, less yellow. Red crown strongly mottled with grey (and, in male, red of malar stripe less distinct).

VOICE Advertising call the loud, well-known 'yaffle', a full-throated, laughing 'kleu-kleu-kleu-kleu-kleu ...', often accelerating slightly towards the end (occasionally slowing slightly, when more like Grey-headed, q.v.). Female's call is less hard and closer in quality to Grey-headed. Also a sharp 'kuk', and in flight or when agitated often gives a rapid, shrill 'kyukyukyukyuk' (with emphasis on last syllable). Drums much less frequently than most woodpeckers



and often rather softly (although can be loud); duration around 1 second.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Marked between typical races and race *sharpei*, otherwise slight. 3 races (nominate and *sharpei* illustrated). In *sharpei* (Iberian peninsula and Pyrenees), face (and to a lesser degree upper breast) distinctly greyer and black restricted to lores. Male has red malar stripe with just a narrow black border below and behind. Female has black malar stripe. Bill shorter. Juvenile has dark markings on face, sides of neck and underparts paler and less distinct.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped range, formerly bred Sicily.) Forest (with edges and clearings), open woodland, groves, orchards, parks, large gardens, open country with scattered trees; even visits grassy clifftops far from trees. Generally favours broadleaved woodland, but locally in open coniferous woodland.

LEVAILLANT'S GREEN WOODPECKER *Picus vaillantii*

Plate page 514

Levaillant's Woodpecker

L 30–32 cm, WS 41–43 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Only green-type woodpecker in NW Africa, so no risk of confusion. Closely resembles female of southwestern race *sharpei* of European Green Woodpecker. Females of any age can be separated by largely black crown (in some, black almost entirely replaced by grey), with red restricted to patch on hindcrown, and also by narrower, less distinct blackish line on lore and broader and paler greyish supercilium. Adult male more difficult, having all-red crown and nape, but shows same differences in face pattern. In good view, more obvious dark barring can be seen on lower flanks. Juvenile male can be separated from similar juvenile female *sharpei* by lack of dark markings on face, sides of neck, throat and upper breast, less bold barring on remainder of underparts and virtual absence of pale spotting on upperparts and wing coverts, as well as by same differences in facial pattern described for adults. Often on ground out in open, like European Green.

SEX/AGE Adult female has red restricted to hindcrown. Juvenile resembles adult of same sex but duller, with narrow greyish barring on underparts from lower breast downwards and less distinct black malar



stripe. Male has more obvious grey mottling on crown.

VOICE Advertising call a European Green-like 'kleu-kleu-kleu-kleu-kleu ...', almost identical to that of European Green but units sound less disyllabic to some. Also a sharp 'kik' or 'chik' and, when agitated, a rapid 'chek-chek-chek chek-chek chek chek', a little softer than equivalent calls of European Green. Drums loudly and much more often than European Green, duration around 1 second.

TAXONOMY Sometimes treated as a race of European Green Woodpecker *P. viridis*.

STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon, but rather localized. Open woodland and woodland edges (both broadleaved and to a lesser extent coniferous) in hills and mountains, locally in areas with scattered trees and even visits bare slopes.

BLACK WOODPECKER *Dryocopus martius*

Plate page 512

L 45–47 cm, WS 64–68 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Much the largest woodpecker of our region. Its very large size (between Western Jackdaw and Carrion Crow) and virtually all-black plumage render this magnificent woodpecker unmistakable except when view very poor. Could then be confused with corvid as flight rather slow, flapping and uneven (only slightly undulating), recalling Spotted Nutcracker, but combination of long pale bill, long neck and long pointed tail distinctive. Often shows more conventional, woodpecker-style undulations immediately prior to landing on tree trunk. When climbing trunk, does so with strong, jumping action. Shy and often unobtrusive in spite of size. Often gives away presence by highly distinctive, far-carrying calls, or extremely loud drumming delivered from a large dead pine or other tree.

SEX/AGE Adult female has red restricted to hindcrown. Juvenile resembles adult of same sex, but duller and greyer, especially on underparts. Red on crown partly obscured by black, occasionally absent.

VOICE Typical call when perched a highly distinctive, loud, drawn-out, clear (almost electronic-sounding) 'bleeeep' or 'kleeeoh'. In flight, gives a distinctive grating but fairly musical, far-carrying 'krri-krri-krri-krri ...' (or softer 'kreuk-kreuk-kreuk-kreuk-kreuk ...'). Advertising call a loud, ringing 'kweee kwee-kwee-kwee-kwee-kwee ...', very like European



Green Woodpecker's yaffle but slightly higher-pitched and without drop at end, sounding wilder. Drums frequently, giving a loud, rapid, resonant sequence lasting 2–3 seconds; sounds louder than any other woodpecker (recalls machine gun).

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. (In addition to mapped range, formerly bred Sicily.) Mature broadleaved or coniferous forest and larger woodlands, regularly visiting less mature woodland and smaller stands of trees outside breeding season.

YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER *Sphyrapicus varius*

Plate page 512

L 19–20 cm, WS 32–34 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Fairly small woodpecker, somewhat resembling pied type of our region. Adult easily distinguished from all except Three-toed by black cheeks (face looks black with white stripes, instead of white with black stripes). Easily told from Three-toed by red on crown (and by red

throat in male, unique among woodpeckers recorded in our region), large white patches on wing coverts and white barring on central tail feathers. (Note, however, that a few females have red reduced to forecrown or even absent.) Juvenile, with its mottled brownish head, breast and upperparts down to back,

unlikely to be confused. Could momentarily suggest Eurasian Wryneck, but strikingly patterned pied wings and tail utterly different. Flight gently undulating, revealing largely white rump (a feature shared only with much larger Northern Flicker). Rather quiet and unobtrusive, but often approachable, spending long periods softly tapping rows of holes in tree bark, to which it later returns to feed on the exuding sap and the insects attracted by it.

SEX/AGE Adult female has white throat, and red on crown often less extensive; sometimes crown black apart from red on forecrown, or even entirely black. Juvenile has head (apart from whitish chin and whitish lines behind eye and from forehead to below cheeks)

brown, mottled darker, and breast similar but darker markings scale-like; mantle, scapulars and back dark brown with whitish feather fringes. Unusual among woodpeckers in that it often does not attain full adult body plumage until first spring, but some adult feathering, including some red feathers on crown (and throat in male), present by first autumn.

VOICE Rather silent. Most frequent call a slurred, nasal, cat-like mewing 'cheerrrr', falling in pitch. Drumming (unlikely to be heard in our region) consists of a rapid series of strikes followed by several spaced-out taps.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, forests, woodlands, groves, orchards.

GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER *Dendrocopos major*

Plate page 513

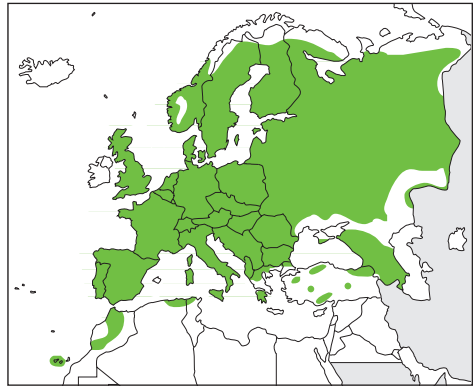
L 22–23 cm, WS 34–39 cm.

IDENTIFICATION The commonest and most widespread woodpecker of our region. Medium-sized as woodpeckers go, but one of the largest pied types. Large white scapular patches separate it from all but very similar Syrian (q.v.) and smaller Middle Spotted (q.v.). Flight strongly undulating, with white wing-covert/scapular patches clearly visible. Feeds mostly in trees, working main trunks and larger branches. Frequently drills holes to obtain sap and insects attracted to it. Sometimes feeds on ground, but much less than European Green and rarely seen far from trees. White areas of plumage, especially underparts, can become strongly buff-tinged or even rufous-tinged through contact with tree trunks, particularly in breeding season. Like other woodpeckers is often rather shy and inconspicuous, attracting attention by sharp call, drumming or sounds of feeding.

SEX/AGE Adult female lacks red on upper nape. Juvenile closely resembles adult female, but has red centre to crown (bordered below by black) and paler, pinker ventral area.

VOICE Typical call a short, sharp, high-pitched, explosive 'kik' (or 'pik') or slightly softer and lower-pitched 'chik', rather similar to calls of some other pied-type species. Drums frequently, loudly and very rapidly (the fastest of the woodpeckers), accelerating through series before abruptly fading away; duration around 0.5–0.8 seconds.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Generally slight, but locally fairly marked. 15 races (*anglicus* and *numidus*



illustrated). In Iberian peninsula and Morocco some individuals of local races have a red centre to black breast band, and in *numidus* of Algeria and Tunisia all individuals have black breast band intermingled with red and more extensive red on ventral area, reaching to mid-belly.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. Forests and woodlands of all types; to a lesser extent groves, orchards, parks, large gardens. In area of overlap with Syrian Woodpecker, mainly in coniferous forest or woodland, often at higher altitudes.

SYRIAN WOODPECKER *Dendrocopos syriacus*

Plate page 513

L 22–23 cm, WS 34–39 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Medium-sized, pied-type woodpecker that closely resembles Great Spotted. Best separated by lack of black band joining black malar patch to nape (giving Syrian a simpler, more 'white-faced' look). In addition, the ventral area is paler and pinker (resembling juvenile Great Spotted in colour) and, on close view, the tail patterns can be seen to differ. In Syrian, outer feathers black with some white spots or bars towards tips; in Great Spotted, white with some black bars towards tips. This feature most visible when tail spread against tree trunk. Has other differences not usually of much use in field. Flanks are often slightly streaked, white barring on wing slightly bolder, pale patch on forehead is whiter and slightly larger, and in male red patch on upper nape is slightly more extensive. Juvenile can be separated from juvenile Great Spotted by differences in face and tail pat-

terns (and also wing barring) discussed above, but beware occasional juvenile Great Spotted with black band from malar patch to nape ill-defined or even absent. Ventral area is even paler pinkish-red than in juvenile Great Spotted, and has more obvious dark streaks on flanks and pinkish-red band across breast (red on breast lacking or minimal in all but southwestern races of Great Spotted). Behaviour resembles that of Great Spotted, but is less of a forest bird. (See also Middle Spotted Woodpecker.)

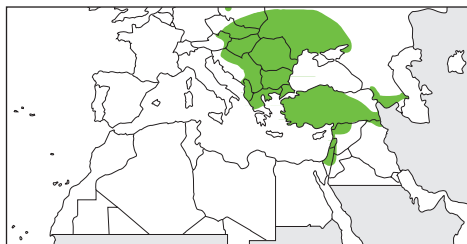
SEX/AGE Adult female lacks red on upper nape. Juvenile closely resembles adult female, but has red on centre of crown, paler pinkish-red ventral area, pinkish-red band across breast (in some, not so obvious) and more obvious dark streaks on flanks.

VOICE Typical call very similar to that of Great Spotted, but slightly softer and lower-pitched, more 'cheuk'

or 'keuk' than 'chik' or 'kik'. Drums frequently and loudly, rapid pace recalling Great Spotted but duration longer, 0.8–1.2 seconds, dying away towards end.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (nominate illustrated).

STATUS/HABITAT Common. Range is expanding northwards and westwards. Typically prefers more sparsely wooded country than Great Spotted, inhabiting groves, open country with scattered trees, orchards, parks and large gardens, but also extensive broad-leaved woodland.



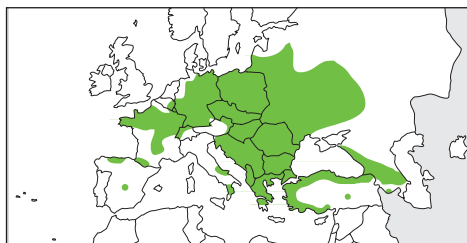
MIDDLE SPOTTED WOODPECKER *Dendrocopos medius*

Plate page 513

L 20–22 cm, WS 33–34 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Medium-sized, pied-type woodpecker with white wing-covert/scapular patches. Smaller than Great Spotted and Syrian (the only other species with white scapular patches), and on good view easily told from either by all-red crown (juvenile Great Spotted and Syrian also have red crown, but this is bordered below by black), black of malar stripe stopping well short of base of bill, black stripe from rear of malar stripe stopping short of union with nape (thus appearing intermediate between Syrian and adult Great Spotted), smaller white scapular patches, and pale pinkish-red ventral area merging into noticeably dark-streaked, yellowish-buff breast, belly and flanks. Pattern of outer tail feathers resembles that of Great Spotted rather than Syrian, being white with some black barring near tips. Reduced patterning on face gives Middle Spotted a rather 'blank-faced' expression at a distance compared with other pied-type species, although Syrian quite similar. Beware, however, some juvenile Great Spotted with rather indistinct forward section of malar stripe and indistinct or even incomplete stripe between rear of malar stripe and nape. Bill is noticeably shorter and finer than in larger pied-type species, being used more to probe than to hammer. Feeds quite high in canopy of old trees, working the middle-sized and smaller branches rather than the trunks and main branches. Frequently feeds on sap. Often perches passerine-like across branches, rather than along them. Restless, regularly changing trees while feeding. Shy, unobtrusive and less inclined to cross open areas than Great Spotted. (See also White-backed Woodpecker.)

SEX/AGE Sexes virtually identical, but adult female often has slightly duller crown, with some yellowish-brown feathering visible at rear, and pale buff tinge to



white of forehead and throat. Juvenile closely resembles adult, but crown duller (without yellowish-brown at rear), ventral area paler pink, and breast, belly and flanks paler yellowish-buff and less distinctly dark-streaked.

VOICE Advertising call (mainly by male) a distinctive, repeated nasal mewing, 'gueueah ... gueeah ... gueeah', like axle in need of greasing or begging cry of young raptor. Has short, sharp contact call typical of the genus: 'teuk' or 'keuk', softer, lower-pitched and not so far-carrying as that of Great Spotted or Syrian. Often gives a rattling 'kik keuk-keuk-keuk' that sounds like a series of contact calls run together. Drums only rarely; sequence weak, at constant speed and not far-carrying; duration 1–2 seconds.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 3 races (nominate illustrated).

STATUS/HABITAT Generally uncommon, but locally fairly common. (In addition to mapped range, formerly bred Denmark and S Sweden, and has bred Netherlands.) Broadleaved forests and woodlands (especially hornbeam and oak, but locally alder), old orchards, mature parks.

WHITE-BACKED WOODPECKER *Dendrocopos leucotos*

Plate page 512

L 24–26 cm, WS 38–40 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Largest of the pied-type woodpeckers and much larger than Lesser Spotted or Three-toed, the only others that lack white scapular patches. Confusion with either most unlikely. Lesser Spotted is tiny by woodpecker standards, has very small bill, lacks pinkish-red on ventral area, and has black-and-white barred back and lower scapulars (although this area can look very white at times) and black rather than white rump. Three-toed is much smaller than White-backed, with very different face pattern (has distinctive black mask), and actually looks more 'white-backed' (has white stripe right down upperparts from mantle to rump, although this barred black in southern *alpinus*); has much less white barring on

wing (lacking the conspicuous broad white upper bar of typical White-backed), no pinkish-red on vent and no red on crown. Confusion more likely with Great Spotted, Syrian or Middle Spotted, as broad white upper bar across wing coverts and scapulars present in northern races of White-backed can resemble white scapular patch of these species in brief view (but on good view transverse position of this bar across wing can be seen to be quite unlike strongly longitudinal scapular patch). When seen from rear, heavy white barring extends right across closed wings, including all tertials (unlike Great Spotted and Syrian; in Middle Spotted white barring extends across most of tertials but is narrower). Back and rump are largely white

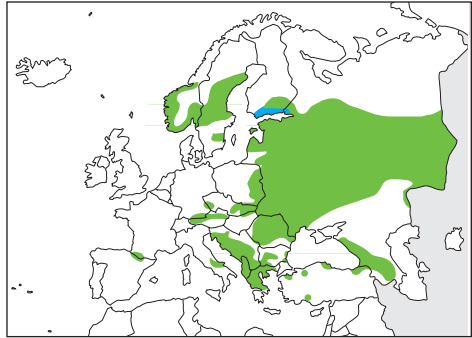
(black in Great Spotted, Syrian and Middle Spotted), but wings frequently obscure all or most of this area. Longer-bodied than Great Spotted or Syrian, with an even longer bill. Face pattern rather variable (see below), but different underpart coloration, with paler, pinkish-red ventral area grading into obviously dark-streaked, creamy or yellowish breast and upper belly and flanks, enables rapid separation even when upperparts hidden. Middle Spotted has similar underparts, but is considerably smaller and shorter-billed. Even if upperparts cannot be seen well, White-backed can be separated from Middle Spotted by black malar stripe reaching base of bill and, in close view if male, by black border to red crown. Feeds much as Great Spotted, but more inclined to descend to ground level to forage among fallen timber.

SEX/AGE Adult female lacks red on crown. Juvenile closely resembles adult male, but has duller and less extensive red on crown (particularly restricted in female).

VOICE Contact call a short, sharp 'kiuk' or 'kok', quieter and lower-pitched than Great Spotted, recalling Common Blackbird. Sometimes gives a chattering series of such calls. Drumming loud and long, recalling Three-toed, but with accelerating series of strikes that fade away slightly at end; duration 1.5–2 seconds or more.

TAXONOMY Race *lilfordi* ('Lilford's Woodpecker') is sometimes considered a full species as it overlaps geographically with nominate race in E Yugoslavia, although *lilfordi* occurs only at higher altitudes.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 3 races (nominate and *lilfordi* illustrated). Compared with nominate race, *uralensis* (Urals) is white rather than



creamy on lower breast and upper belly and flanks, with less distinct dark streaking, lacks black line behind ear-coverts and has bolder white barring on wings. Race *lilfordi* (Caucasus, Turkey, SE Europe, Italy, Pyrenees) is very distinctive, having rump black and back and longer scapulars barred black and white, instead of mainly white; black line behind ear-coverts reaches nape, malar stripe broader, white barring on wings (especially uppermost bar) narrower, and lower breast and upper belly and flanks tinged yellowish and more heavily dark-streaked.

STATUS/HABITAT Generally uncommon or even rare, but locally fairly common. (In addition to mapped range, formerly bred Corsica.) Mature broadleaved or mixed forests and woodlands with much dead or fallen timber, frequently adjacent to lakes, rivers or streams; locally in purely coniferous stands.

LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER *Dendrocopos minor*

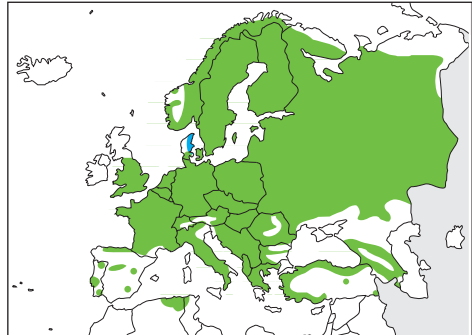
Plate page 513

L 14–15 cm, WS 25–27 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Much the smallest woodpecker, and along with Great Spotted much the most widespread pied type. Very small size and compact appearance (enhanced by small bill) make confusion unlikely. White-barred upperparts, without white scapular patches, combined with lack of pinkish-red on ventral area eliminate all but larger Three-toed (q.v.). Works small branches in canopy, as well as main trunks and branches, often hanging upside-down in tit-like fashion on outermost twigs. Creeps and hops along branches, keeping body aligned with branch in typical woodpecker fashion, but lacks the more jerky movements of the larger species. Flight action rather weak and fluttering over short distances, although more determined and strongly undulatory when well underway. Shy and unobtrusive.

SEX/AGE Adult male has red centre of crown; adult female has a buffy-white patch restricted to forecrown. Juvenile closely resembles adult female (but with forecrown red in male and greyish-buff in female); black of upperparts duller and browner, and streaking on underparts less distinct.

VOICE Advertising call a repeated, weak, shrill 'kee kee kee kee ...' or 'pee pee pee pee ...', recalling Eurasian Wryneck or Common Kestrel, often slowing towards end. Also has typical short, sharp contact call of genus, 'pik' or 'chik', but much weaker than that of Great Spotted and not so often heard. Drumming frequent, but quieter and higher-pitched than Great Spotted, also longer and without acceleration; duration 1.2–1.6 seconds. Interval between each series typically shorter than in other woodpeckers, sometimes so



short that it seems merely like a brief pause in a 3-second series.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate, involving both coloration and size. 9 races (*communitus* illustrated). Variation frequently involves ground colour of underparts and pale areas on head, which vary from very whitish in nominate race to buff-brown in darkest race *quadrifasciatus* (S Azerbaijan). In race *danfordi* (Turkey, Greece) the black stripe behind the ear-coverts continues to the nape.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped range, formerly bred Sicily.) Broadleaved and mixed forests and woodlands (avoiding dense stands), groves, orchards, parks, large gardens and, locally, scrub with scattered trees. Outside breeding season, even occasionally in reedbeds.

THREE-TOED WOODPECKER *Picoides tridactylus*

Plate page 512

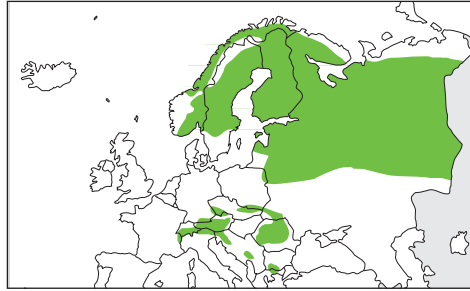
Northern Three-toed Woodpecker

L 21–22 cm, WS 32–35 cm.

IDENTIFICATION This fairly small woodpecker is distinctly different from all other pied-type species breeding in our region, having a basically black face with white patterning as opposed to a white face with black patterning. This feature alone makes confusion unlikely (but see Yellow-bellied Sapsucker), and lack of pinkish-red on ventral area further eliminates all but Lesser Spotted. Broad white band down upperparts in typical Three-toed is unique in dividing the dark upperparts in two from the mantle downwards (all other typical pied-type woodpeckers have black mantle), but this feature obscured in southern *alpinus*. White on upperparts in typical form contrasts with largely black wings, which lack bold white markings typical of other pied-type woodpeckers. Golden-yellow on crown of male and of juvenile of either sex also diagnostic. Shy, quiet and rather sluggish, spending long periods quietly working away at one tree or even one branch. Generally feeds rather low down, often on fallen trunks or stumps, and moves only short distances if disturbed. Rings trees with holes to obtain sap.

SEX/AGE Adult male has forecrown golden-yellow; adult female has forecrown black, streaked with white. Juvenile closely resembles adult male, but black of plumage duller and browner, white band down centre of upperparts less extensive and sometimes partly dark-banded, and yellow on crown duller and occasionally restricted or absent.

VOICE Not very vocal. Has short but rather soft contact call, 'kyeuk' or 'kyuk', usually much weaker and less sharp than contact call of Great Spotted (but sometimes sharper, more like latter's 'kik'). Drums frequently and loudly. Series accelerates as in Great Spotted, but is noticeably longer and slower; duration



1.0–1.6 seconds. Most resembles Black Woodpecker, but is shorter and less uniform.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Quite marked. 3 races (nominate and *alpinus* illustrated). Race *alpinus* (Alps to SE Europe) much darker than nominate race, with white band down centre of upperparts being heavily barred with black and only reaching as far as back, rump black with white spots, narrower white stripes on head, and heavier dark barring on underparts and outer tail feathers. Juvenile even more heavily marked above and below, with white on upperparts restricted to some white spotting. Race *crissoleucus* (Urals) is paler than nominate race, with whiter forehead, broader white stripes on head, more extensive white on upperparts and wings and outer tail feathers, and less obvious dark barring on underparts.

STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon. Coniferous forest (especially spruce, fir and larch), favouring boggy patches and burnt, lumbered or windthrow areas where much decayed timber. Locally in birch woodland. In south of range, only in mountainous terrain.

TYRANT FLYCATCHERS Tyrannidae*2 species (both vagrant)*

A complex family of small to fairly small flycatcher-like birds found in the Americas and occurring only as vagrants in our region. Tyrant flycatchers favour a wide variety of habitats, from forest to scrubland and open country; North American species are mostly arboreal. Like the true flycatchers of the Old World, most sit out on prominent perches and sally forth into the open air in pursuit of insects, often returning to the same perch afterwards. Songs typically consist of fairly simple clear, squeaky or buzzy whistles.

Sexes usually similar, showing little or no seasonal variation. Juveniles usually closely resemble adults. Adults typically undergo a complete post-breeding moult, followed by a partial pre-breeding moult (mainly in winter quarters). Juveniles undergo a partial or complete post-juvenile moult in late summer or autumn, attaining adult plumage by first autumn or, in many species, during second calendar year.

Difficult to separate at first sight from true flycatchers, but most have heavier, broader-based bills (visible when seen from below). Often appear larger-headed than true flycatchers and, indeed, more thickset in general. Many species have two quite conspicuous, parallel wing bars across the wing coverts, and these easily differentiate them from all true flycatchers of our region.

One of the species which has occurred in our region is of the particularly difficult-to-identify genus *Empidonax*. Several other similar *Empidonax*, as well as other kinds of tyrant flycatchers, are equally likely to make a trans-Atlantic crossing in the future. Identifying many of these species in the field requires extreme care and attention to critical detail, to behaviour and calls as well as to plumage coloration; even then, it may not always be possible to arrive at a positive identification.

If an unusual bird has double wing bars and an obvious pale eye-ring and is behaving like a flycatcher, with upright stance, then it may well be an *Empidonax* and points to concentrate on are:

Prominence of pale eye-ring • Extent of primary extension (with details of spacing between primary tips)
• Colour of lower mandible • Extent of olive or yellow tones in plumage • Call

All plumage features vary according to feather freshness, although arguably the most likely plumage to be seen in our region would be fresh-plumaged 1st-winter. Viewing conditions, and degree of light falling on the bird, can cause significant changes to subtle plumage tones.

Field identification of *Empidonax*, much the most difficult tyrant flycatcher genus, is still developing as ideas on speciation within the genus change. N American field guides provide only limited help, and reference to the series of five papers by Whitney & Kaufman (1985–1987, *Birding* 17: 151–158, 277–287; 18: 153–159, 315–327; 19: 7–15) is recommended.

EASTERN PHOEBE *Sayornis phoebe*

Plate below

L 16–18 cm.

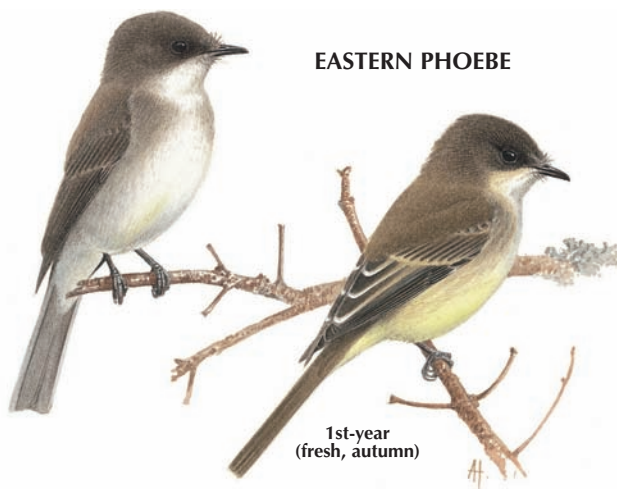
IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Recalls a large Spotted Flycatcher, but lacks any form of streaking on forehead and underparts and has very black bill and legs, and longer tail. A relatively easy bird to identify compared with many members of this family, the relatively dark brown hood, wings and tail offering a contrast with the dull brown of the remainder of the upperparts and mostly fairly clean off-white underparts (sides of breast are dusky). Unlike *Empidonax* species, lacks a pale eye-ring and distinct pale wing bars, and has an all-dark bill. Sits in upright manner on exposed perches, regularly pumping fairly long dark tail. Autumn birds, espe-

cially immatures, may show yellow wash on underparts.

SEX/AGE Autumn adult has weak yellowish wash on underparts. Juvenile shows two weak buffy wing bars and has more obvious yellow wash on underparts and browner tinge above, but these features soon wear and by autumn looks much as adult.

VOICE Call a sharp, clear 'chip' or 'tsyp'. Song a harsh, emphatic 'fee-be' (the origin of the species' English name), with the second syllable harshest.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, occurs in wooded or partly wooded habitats, almost always near rivers or streams.



EASTERN PHOEBE

1st-year
(fresh, autumn)

ACADIAN FLYCATCHER *Empidonax virescens*

Plate page 729

L 14–15 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Distinguished from superficially similar but quite distantly related Old World flycatchers by combination of prominent pale double wing bars, lack of white in tail, pale eye-ring and yellowish lower mandible. There is usually some yellowish on underparts, particularly on belly and undertail coverts, a dusky wash across breast (strongest on sides) contrasting with whitish throat, and the upperparts are distinctly greenish-olive. Behaviour recalls Spotted Flycatcher, perching upright

and flycatching from mid-level perch, preferring partial shade. Although combination of plumage features renders confusion with Old World flycatchers unlikely, separation from several other similar Nearctic *Empidonax* species (none as yet recorded from our region) is difficult (see family introduction).

SEX/AGE Sexes similar; worn-plumaged birds (e.g. late in breeding season) almost lack yellow on underparts and have wing bars whiter and quite abraded, while fresh-plumaged birds (e.g. in autumn) have

underparts, often including throat, very yellow and wing bars distinctly buff. Juvenile dull white below (with dusky wash on breast), with buff feather fringes to upperparts and wing bars distinctly broader and buffy (not white or yellowish), but after autumn moult becomes yellowish below like autumn adult. Autumn immatures may still show buffer wing bars.

VOICE Usual call an emphatic, rising, 'peet' or 'peep'. Migrants, however, not inclined to call. Song an emphatic whistling 'peet-seet' (with second part higher-pitched). Also gives a rapid high 'ti ti ti ti ti'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Iceland). In natural range, favours mature mixed woodland with clearings, swamps.

LARKS Alaudidae

22 species (1 vagrant)

Small to fairly small ground-dwelling birds of open country, with plumage mostly either brownish and well streaked or sandy and relatively unmarked. Larks have long tertials, cloaking primaries on folded wing, a feature also shared by pipits and wagtails. Several species show some form of crest, although often indicated merely by a ruffled look to rear crown. Most larks feed in a crouched ground-hugging posture, with legs inconspicuous. Most species have distinctive and often rich and musical songs, performed in aerial display flights, and distinctive contact calls when on the wing or flushed. Larks are ground-nesters, several species being locally abundant in suitable habitat, forming almost scattered colonies. Most are gregarious, especially outside breeding season, when large flocks may be formed, feeding in cultivations and stubbles. On ground, even quite large numbers may be difficult to spot owing to their cryptic coloration and crouched posture. In flight, they are relatively broad-winged and short-tailed birds, with rather hesitant, undulating flight progression when well underway. Unlike many passerines, larks migrate both by day and by night.

Most species have sexes similar in plumage (exceptions being Black-crowned Sparrow-lark and Black Lark). Juveniles are mottled and scaled rather than streaked for the first few weeks of life, but then moult into a plumage resembling that of adults; in most species there is little seasonal variation, but in streaked species streaking more prominent in worn plumage and background colour tones warmer in fresh.

Confusion most likely with pipits, which are slimmer, longer-legged birds, with thinner bills and no crest, that habitually wag their tails. Larks are less prone to perching on trees and wires than pipits, but some species readily perch on bushes when singing. Song flights differ in character with pipits typically showing an abrupt downward-angled parachuting end to their display flight which is different from the hovering display flight, with gradual vertical descent, of most larks.

Several tricky identification problems exist within the group, and it is difficult to isolate useful characters to concentrate on which apply to larks as a whole.

BLACK-CROWNED SPARROW-LARK *Eremopterix nigriceps*

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Black-crowned Finch-lark

L 10–11 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Very small, stubby-billed, short-tailed and broad-winged lark of arid, sandy regions. Adult male unmistakable, with crown centre, throat, entire underparts and underwing coverts black, contrasting with large white cheek patches, white forehead and sandy upperparts. Other plumages nondescript: pale sandy little birds, almost unmarked except for fine, weak streaking on crown, nape and breast (streaking on latter especially is variable in extent) and darker centres to median coverts; most distinctive feature is the black underwing coverts, readily visible in flight, and some blackish in outer tail feathers. Fairly sociable, forming small flocks outside breeding season. Posture very squat, although head often carried high. Runs about pecking at ground in finch-like manner, usually with wings held slightly away from body at 'shoulders'. Easily overlooked owing to tiny size; most obvious in breeding season, when male giving song flights. Flight strongly bobbing, with several flaps and a pause. Females and



juveniles differ from all other sandy larks of our region in having short, very stout pale bill (culmen strongly decurved, shorter and stouter than in all other small larks), virtually unstreaked upperparts, very small size and blackish underwing coverts. Thick-billed Lark is much bigger and shows white secondaries in flight. Compare also Dunn's Lark.

SEX/AGE Some adult females have suggestion of adult male head pattern. Juvenile resembles adult female but has pale scaling on upperparts and grey barring on crown; many become as adult after first moult some 2–3 months after fledging, but young males have pale

fringes to dark underparts and often female-type plumage on head and only patchy black on underparts until next moult 6–8 months after fledging. Existence of 'winter' (i.e. non-breeding) plumage in male not proven.

VOICE Most frequent call, given when flushed, a short repeated 'djip'. Also gives a short, weak 'brup' in flight and a short 'zree' of alarm. Song a repeated double phrase, 'whit-teeurr', given in aerial display during which bird climbs steeply with rapid wingbeats, continues to sing in undulating, more or less circular pattern, descending after a minute or so in a series of dipping swoops before settling. Occasionally sings from top of bush or on ground.

DUNN'S LARK *Eremalauda dunnii*

L 14–15 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Very localized small lark of southern edge of Sahara and Arabian desert. Bulky, broad-bodied species with stout, relatively long bill and relatively large head. Overall coloration of upperparts sandy-rufous, mostly weakly and diffusely streaked with darker rufous, although streaking prominent, and often dusky, on crown and nape. Head of Arabian race shows fairly strong pattern, most obvious features (especially if front-on) being diffuse dark brownish malar stripe and line on lower lore that continues to rear below pale eye-ring, the former connecting with band of variable dark streaking on breast. These features plus a weak, broad pale supercilium, fairly prominent pale eye-ring and fairly well-demarcated dull rufous ear-coverts, latter bordered fore and aft with darker shading, combine to make up a distinctive pattern. Saharan race not so distinctive, as it lacks dark malar stripe and line from lower lore to lower border of pale eye-ring. The prominent yellowish-horn bill is relatively longer, broader and deeper at base than in the fairly similar Desert and Bar-tailed Larks, and has a strongly curved culmen. The tertials are longer than in Desert and Bar-tailed, almost cloaking folded primaries, with merely tips of longest exposed; in Desert and Bar-tailed about half the primaries are exposed. Given reasonable views there is little room for confusion with either, but Dunn's overlaps in habitat with Bar-tailed, which has much smaller bill and lacks pattern on head and breast, with at most faint streaking in centre of breast and none elsewhere. Most strongly marked female Black-crowned Sparrow-larks can suggest smaller Saharan race of Dunn's, but former are smaller, with very short bill (albeit deep, with strongly curved culmen), and lack prominent streaking on head and breast. Saharan nominate race Dunn's may be mottled greyish, and extreme individuals can show greyish loreal patch and malar stripe, but such birds lack rufous tone to wings and have black underwing coverts. Most streaked individuals of Arabian race can recall Lesser Short-toed Lark, but bill much more massive in Dunn's, which also lacks white in outer tail and has almost plain wings. Hindneck greyish in Arabian race, contrasting with rufous-tinged crown and remainder of upperparts, but Saharan race entirely sandy-rufous above. In flight, overall shape recalls Desert Lark, with

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 3 races (*melanauchen* illustrated). Arabian race *melanauchen* is greyer above, less sandy than other races, with black on lower hindneck in male and grey-buff rather than cinnamon breast band in female. Nominant race (Cape Verde Is) is a little darker and rather more rufous-sandy above than *albifrons* (southern edge of Sahara).

STATUS/HABITAT Local and generally uncommon in our region. Partly nomadic, moving with changing feeding conditions. (In addition to mapped range, may breed Tibesti region, N Chad.) Sandy and gravel plains, with sparse vegetation; also edges of cultivation outside breeding season.

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relatively broad, long wings and short tail; wings appear pale dull rufous above and below, with diffuse darker tips to primaries (recalling Bar-tailed), but tail appears largely blackish, with only central feathers and extreme outer edge sandy (pattern thus differs markedly from those of Desert and Bar-tailed Larks, but is difficult to see unless tail fanned when alighting). Sociable, forming quite large, tight flocks outside breeding season. Generally very confiding; tends to scuttle behind vegetation rather than flying if approached too closely. Digs at base of desert plants with aid of strong bill.

SEX/AGE In worn adult plumage, underparts whiter, streaking may be more prominent above and pale edges to outer tail can disappear. Juvenile similar to adult, apart from whitish feather tips to head and upperparts and pale borders to wing feathers.

VOICE Call when flushed, a low, insignificant, liquid 'prpp' or a fuller 'cheeoop', often repeated. Song, given either from ground or in slowly flapping display flight, followed by rapid descent, a series of squeaky, plaintive whistling notes, interspersed with scratchy warbling phrases.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Fairly marked. 2 races (both illustrated). Nominant race of the Sahara is slightly smaller than *eremodites* of Arabian peninsula and relatively shorter-tailed, with slightly shorter and stubbier bill and with plumage more sandy-rufous overall; lacks the malar stripe, and has breast, crown and nape streaked rufous rather than brownish or dusky.

STATUS/HABITAT Scarce, localized and probably somewhat sporadic breeding species in our region. Apparently nomadic. (In addition to mapped range, breeds occasionally in Israel, where mostly an irregular visitor, NE Sinai and SW Jordan. May also breed northern Red Sea coast of Saudi Arabia.) Sandy or gravel areas in desert and semi-desert, with scattered shrubs and sparse vegetation.

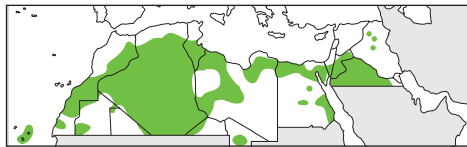
BAR-TAILED LARK *Ammomanes cincturus*

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Bar-tailed Desert Lark

L 14–15 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Similar to typical forms of Desert Lark, but smaller, with slightly shorter tail, thinner legs, smaller and more domed head and shorter, weaker and more pointed bill. Almost uniform sandy-buff, but has greyish wash above, slightly darker breast sides and pale cinnamon-rufous wings. Lacks any form of streaking (easily differentiating it from short-toed larks of genus *Calandrella*), but in very close views weak darker mottling may be visible on centre of breast. In flight, the pale rufous flight feathers contrast well with the otherwise mainly sandy plumage, especially on underside; the outer primaries have dusky tips which form a dark trailing edge, but the distinctive tail pattern (rump and tail pale rufous, latter with clear-cut blackish terminal band) can be difficult to discern, and best seen if bird spreads tail when alighting. Plumage can be closely matched by some forms of Desert, but latter has relatively larger head, with flatter crown and longer, almost thrush-like bill (bill of Bar-tailed more bunting-like, and often yellower). Typical forms of Desert have whitish throat and upper breast, with diffuse darker streaking on breast, and rest of underparts pinkish- or rufous-buff; Bar-tailed has whitish belly as well as throat, with breast and flanks washed with buff and little or no streaking on breast. Further, Desert usually has greyish-brown centres to tertials, while in Bar-tailed these are usually pale rufous, although there is some overlap. Several forms of Desert have rufous in wings and tail, and some of these are smaller and shorter-billed than is typical, so caution is required. Tail pattern always differs, however, with Desert never showing clear-cut blackish terminal band like Bar-tailed but instead a broad, diffuse dark triangle, pointing towards tail base (while dark reaches almost to tail base on central feathers in Desert, it is restricted to terminal third in Bar-tailed). Additionally, Bar-tailed appears to be daintier, with more spindly legs, and holds forebody higher off ground than Desert,



which typically adopts a more crouched posture, with legs less conspicuous. Runs well, but jerkily. Flight jerky and bounding. Generally shyer and less approachable than Desert, with marked preference for flat desert, Desert preferring hilly or rocky slopes. See also female Black-crowned Sparrow-lark and Dunn's Lark.

SEX/AGE Sexes similar. Juvenile has narrow pale fringes to feathers of upperparts and narrow dark tips to crown feathers, which are lost at post-juvenile moult. Dark tips to outer primaries often indistinct or lacking.

VOICE Occasionally utters a short, soft chirruping 'jupp', a more buzzing 'prreet' or a thin, high 'see-ou' in flight. Song distinctive: one or two weak, short 'zik' notes followed by a prolonged, penetrating, squeaky, rising 'st'eeeeeeeee', the latter being the most audible part of song unless bird close and sounding not unlike a squeaky gate being slowly opened. Uttered from ground, or in strongly undulating yo-yo-like song flight. Alternatively, at least in some areas, a longer, three part 'turr-ree tre-le tree-tree-you'.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (both illustrated). N nominate race confined to Cape Verde Is, is rather darker and more sandy-rufous than race *arenicolor*, which occupies the remainder of the range in our region.

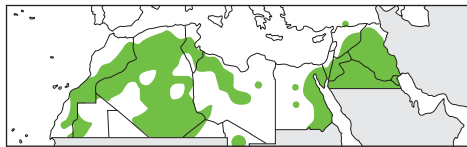
STATUS/HABITAT Relatively local but not uncommon in suitable habitats. Seemingly more localized in east of our region than in Sahara. Flat stony or sandy desert or semi-desert, with sparse low vegetation.

DESERT LARK *Ammomanes deserti*

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L 16–17 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Medium-sized lark, larger and bulkier than Bar-tailed, with longer tail, relatively longer, stouter and blunter (thrush-like) bill, larger and flatter head and overall more squat appearance. Some races, however, are smaller and shorter-billed than others (see Geographical Variation). Great variation in overall plumage coloration (only a selection is illustrated), which reflects colour of the local habitat: most populations are pale greyish-brown, but some are very pale sandy, whereas others are very dark grey; some races even have pronounced rufous tones to wings and tail, thus suggesting Bar-tailed, but adult invariably shows more extensive weak streaking on throat and breast than latter (although streaking inconspicuous or absent in juveniles) and may show a weak malar stripe. Song different from that of Bar-tailed, and shows marked preference for barren or rocky hills rather than flat desert. More confiding than Bar-tailed, and posture usually more crouching. In flight, broad wings and relatively short tail give shape recalling Crested Lark. Shows duller rufous in wings and tail than Bar-tailed, and if tail spread shows merely ill-defined dark triangle (pointing towards tail base),



rather than clean blackish terminal band. See Bar-tailed for further discussion.

SEX/AGE Sexes similar, although female distinctly smaller if pair seen together. Juvenile has narrow pale fringes to feathers of upperparts and streaking on throat and breast reduced or absent; as adult after first moult.

VOICE Often utters a sweet, liquid 'churree' when flushed and has several other similar, but shorter and more often repeated, calls when alarmed. When feeding, gives a soft 'chee-lu'. Song, which is regionally variable, a rather short, repeated 'chip-rheep' or trisyllabic 'chur-rer-ee' (Middle East) or a clear, ringing, rich 'zur'dee' (NW Africa), uttered in slowly undulating song flight or from ground or boulder. Song phrase much fuller and less penetratingly squeaky than Bar-

tailed, often accompanied by a few short call notes. NW African song type recalls song of Tawny Pipit.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Very complex, with overall coloration depending on coloration of local soils. 9 races (payni, *isabellinus* and *annae* illustrated), but even within populations there is variation depending on local soil types. There is also clinal intergradation between forms, with situation especially confusing in southern regions of Sahara. Because coloration often helps to distinguish between Desert and Bar-tailed Larks, racial differences are summarized here. 1: *algeriensis* of N Algerian Sahara, Tunisia and W Libya is pale and sandy, with cinnamon-pink wash to upperparts. 2: *payni* of SE and S Morocco is darker greyish-cinnamon, with darker pinkish-buff underparts than *algeriensis*. 3: *mya* of C Algerian Sahara is larger and with heavier bill than *algeriensis*, and more sandy, less grey, tones. 4: *whitakeri* of W Algerian Sahara to Libya and Tibesti (N Chad) is still larger than *mya*, with longer bill, darker grey-brown upperparts,

distinctly rufous rump and tail, warm buff underparts and prominent breast streaks. 5: *deserti* of E Egypt, Sinai, Israel, S Jordan and NW Saudi Arabia; resembles *whitakeri* but is smaller. 6: *isabellinus* of N and W Egypt, W Israel and Dead Sea region east to Iraq, overlapping with nominate race in parts of Egypt and Israel, is pale sandy, like *mya*, but smaller, with pinkish rump and rufous tail (latter with darker central triangle). Birds of Dead Sea region are greyer, with prominent fine breast streaking, and have been named '*fratercula*'. 7: *annae* of black lava desert of N Jordan and S Syria is a most distinctive race, coloured dark sooty-grey with rufous rump. 8: *coxi* of Syria and N Iraq is like *isabellinus* but larger. 9: *cheesmani* of E Iraq is like *coxi*, but darker above and pinkish-brown below.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. Barren desert hills, rocky gullies and stony wadis with some sparse vegetation; generally avoids flat desert or sandy soils. Often about isolated buildings.

GREATER HOOPOE LARK *Alaemon alaudipes*

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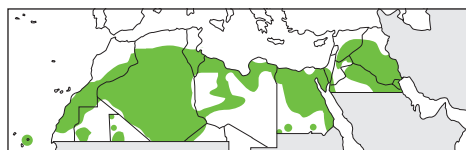
Hoopoe Lark

L 18–20 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Unmistakable, slender, long-legged, long-billed desert lark showing conspicuous white wing bands in flight (when hardly recognizable as a lark). Sandy-grey overall, with dark spots on upper breast and dark eye-stripe and moustachial stripe, long decurved greyish bill and long whitish legs. (Note: coloration individually variable: a minority are very grey above, largely lacking sandy tones, and some individuals have reduced breast spotting). In flight, the bird is dramatically transformed by the coloration of its long, broad, blunt wings which show two broad white bands contrasting with blackish outer primaries and blackish band on secondaries and inner primaries above, and largely white undervwing contrasting with blackish outer primaries and blackish band on inner primaries and secondaries below; generally flies only for short distance with floppy, buoyant wingbeats (except when displaying; see Voice). Runs fast and well with body horizontal, pausing with head held up, reminiscent of a courser. Usually found singly or in pairs. Unlikely to be confused, but white in wings not visible on ground. See also Dupont's Lark.

SEX/AGE Adult female smaller and rather shorter-billed than male, with breast streaking diffuse and restricted. Juvenile lacks breast markings and has broad pale scalloping on upperparts; bill slightly shorter and pinker than in adult. Much as adult after first moult, but bill often pinkish to first summer.

VOICE Calls include a weak 'rheep' when flushed, a plaintive 'too' of alarm and a short buzzing 'zee'. Song flight remarkable: male rises steeply into air from



top of mound or bush, then rolls over (even sometimes loops the loop) and either descends rapidly with wings closed or slowly in spirals with wings outspread. Before, during and after this performance utters far-carrying song: a series of clear, mournful, piping whistles, broken by a prolonged squeaking trill (latter given both when perched and during descent). Sequence at first accelerating in delivery and then, after trill, slowing down again; 'too too-too too-too-too-too trrr-eeeeeeeeee teew teew teew teew teew'.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Racial variation slight. 3 races (nominate illustrated). Throughout range two colour morphs occur. Rufous morph (with sandy-rufous upperparts apart from greyish nape) most frequent everywhere; grey morph (with grey upperparts) infrequent but most regular in Middle East. Intermediates also occur.

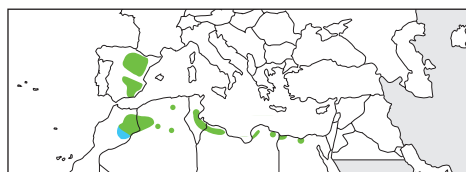
STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (In addition to mapped range, may breed Tibesti region of N Chad and Banc d'Arguin, Mauritania.) Favours relatively flat, open sandy desert with scattered shrubby hummocks and mounds, or dune slacks.

DUPONT'S LARK *Chersophilus duponti*

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L 18 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Shy and elusive species of arid plains with sparse vegetation. An elegant, fairly large lark, with long legs and rather long, slightly decurved bill. Stance often upright, with relatively small but bulbous head on slim, rather long neck; runs with body horizontal and bill held slightly up. The plumage is heavily streaked both above and below, the streaking below forming a wide breast band which contrasts with whitish lower underparts, whereas upperparts are



mottled with whitish spangles between the heavy dark streaking (streaks rufous in eastern race). Despite its distinctive appearance Dupont's Lark is very difficult to find: it is shy and wary, keeps close to low cover and tends to run very quickly on its long legs, preferring to seek concealment behind vegetation rather than flying. Most active at dawn and dusk, being especially difficult to locate in daytime. In flight, looks broad- and rounded-winged, and shows white outer tail feathers. Most likely confusion is with long-billed N African races of Crested Lark, but latter are bulkier, have buff outer tail feathers, and lack heavily streaked or mottled appearance to upperparts; crest is usually obvious, although can be lacking during moult, and there is no sign of the pale median crown-stripe usually present in Dupont's. Nominate race not especially short-tailed (although tail looks rather narrow), but race *margaritae* (Algeria to Egypt) is shorter-tailed than Crested Lark. Best method of finding this elusive lark is to visit breeding areas at dawn and dusk and listen for distinctive song (see Voice). Compare juvenile Tawny Pipit, which has much shorter bill.

SEX/AGE Juveniles are almost unstreaked above, having upperparts scaled with pale feather fringes and dark feather centres.

VOICE Calls infrequently, but voice includes a fluty whistle and a nasal 'hoo-ee'. Song flight distinctive: bird rises very high on slow, almost alternately flapping wings, and hangs for a while before dropping back to ground like a stone. Song, delivered in flight or from ground or perch, consists of a few sweet, clear, thrush-like notes followed by a penetrating, nasal, rising 'djeeee'; this latter part of song is the most audible and is far-carrying.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Rather marked. 2 races (both illustrated). Nominate race (Spain, Morocco to C Tunisia) is streaked dark brown; race *margaritae* (Algeria south of nominate race to NW Egypt) is streaked rufous and has significantly shorter tail.

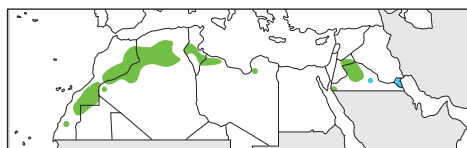
STATUS/HABITAT Everywhere described as uncommon or scarce, but clearly overlooked owing to shy nature. Recently found to be relatively widespread in relict patches of suitable breeding habitat in arid steppe country of NE Spain, where few records for several decades. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Portugal.) Favours dry steppe with feather grasses and low *Artemisia* shrubs, with bare areas between clumps of vegetation, and also well-vegetated semi-desert. After breeding will resort to cultivation, stubbles etc. with other larks.

THICK-BILLED LARK *Rhamphocoris clotbey*

L 17 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Desert-dwelling lark of distinctive appearance, both in flight and on ground. Massive pale bill, large head and bulky body coupled with blackish facial patches, broadly streaked underparts (with streaks coalescing to form blackish patches on central underparts) and unstreaked pinkish-brown upperparts render adults unmistakable. Juveniles lack black on head and underparts, although these may be faintly indicated, and are less distinctive (compare smaller Dunn's, Desert and Bar-tailed Larks), but bill stouter than in any other plain-looking lark and in flight shows distinctive wing pattern. In flight, a bulky, short-tailed lark with broad, but sharply pointed, wings; upperwing has blackish outer primaries and bases to secondaries and inner primaries contrasting with sandy forewing and broad white band along trailing edge of secondaries and inner primaries (recalls Common Redshank in pattern); underwing blackish with striking white secondary/inner primary band. Flight generally low and bounding, typically not flying far when flushed. Generally rather approachable; usually found in pairs or small parties in breeding season, but in autumn and winter may be encountered in flocks of 40–50. Runs rapidly and freely hops, with stout body held low, legs almost hidden, but massive head and bill held high. Compare White-winged Lark, which has similar upperwing pattern but white underwing.

SEX/AGE Adult female a little smaller than male, with



facial pattern duller and underpart markings with broader pale fringes, therefore not forming such intense blackish patches, but may be difficult to sex when plumage worn; underwing dark grey rather than blackish. Juvenile, described above, has greyer underwing like female; much as adult after first moult.

VOICE Calls include a low, far-carrying 'coo-ee', a harder 'co-ep' in flight and a quiet 'shree'. Song flight poorly documented: said to rise high in air and sing for a while before descending in parachute flight (perhaps in zigzag fashion); song also given from ground. Song rather insignificant, a mixture of sweet warbling and jingling notes.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally fairly common, but often rather uncommon. Partly nomadic. (In addition to mapped range, may breed N Egypt and NE Libya.) Favours flat, stony desert, especially rocky plateaus, with scattered low plants, but will tolerate quite well-vegetated habitats; also encountered at edges of cultivation and even on arid coastal plains outside breeding season.

CALANDRA LARK *Melanocorypha calandra*

L 18–19 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Large, bulky lark superficially resembling Eurasian Skylark but with relatively longer, broader, yet more pointed, wings, slightly shorter tail, bulkier head and longer, stouter bill. Large black patches at sides of upper breast are very prominent in males in spring and summer but smaller in females and largely obscured by pale feather fringes in fresh

plumage in autumn. Note that some Eurasian Skylarks may give a hint of having such patches, especially when crouching with breast streaking compressed. On ground, easily confused with similar Bimaculated Lark (q.v.), but latter has different wing and tail patterns. In flight, distinguished at all ages from other larks by combination of blackish underwing highlight-

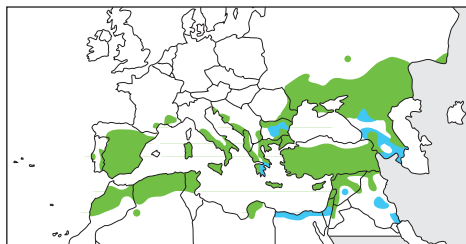
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ing conspicuous white trailing edge to secondaries and inner primaries. When hovering high in sky in song flight, long wings and rather deep, slow, stiff wingbeats lend it an almost raptor-like air. Shows white outer tail feathers like Eurasian Skylark but darker upperside to primaries creates stronger contrast with forewing. Sociable; even in breeding season seems to be almost colonial, and forms large flocks in autumn and winter, often with Corn Buntings. Rather wary, running rapidly and flushing easily. Stance typically upright; readily digs with large bill while feeding. Compare also female Black Lark.

SEX/AGE Sexes similar, but female smaller. In fresh plumage, pale feather fringes obscure breast patches. Juvenile has head and upperparts distinctly mottled (a result of dark feather centres and pale scallop-shaped fringes), outer tail feathers washed buff, narrower white trailing edge to wings and breast patches obscured; soon resembles adult, but 1st-winter birds have slightly narrower white trailing edge to secondaries.

VOICE Utters Eurasian Skylark-like calls when flushed, but also has distinctive nasal 'kleerp', more reedy and rattling than call of Eurasian Skylark, and a harsh, rolling 'tshreet'. Song and song flight recall Eurasian



Skylark, but tends to climb in more circling flight, hanging in sky with deeply beating wings while singing louder, perhaps sweeter and deeper, song than latter. Song interspersed with harsher and stronger notes, including typical nasal call notes, but equally as mimetic as Eurasian Skylark.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 3 races (nominate illustrated).

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Corsica.) Favours grassy plains and plateaus, and open cultivation; also found in areas of rather arid, sparsely vegetated steppe, but avoids desert or semi-desert.

BIMACULATED LARK *Melanocorypha bimaculata*

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L 16–17 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Turkey, Transcaucasia and parts of Middle East, where range widely overlaps with that of Calandra Lark. Resembles Calandra in having relatively large head and bill and large black patches at sides of upper breast, latter often meeting on centre of breast; easily distinguished in flight by different wing and tail patterns. Compared with Calandra, Bimaculated is somewhat smaller, and has an even larger bill, both in length and depth, and a shorter tail. In flight, broad wings and dull brownish coloration recall Crested Lark but very short tail recalls Wood Lark; wing lacks white trailing edge of Calandra, is more uniform above (lacking contrastingly darker primaries) and is buffish-brown rather than blackish on undersurface (although effect of shadow may make undervang appear dark like Calandra's); the relatively shorter tail lacks white edges of Calandra but instead shows a distinct whitish tip (obvious when alighting with tail spread). (Note: juvenile Calandra has narrower, less distinct white trailing edge to wing than adult, while Wood Lark and Rock Sparrow share whitish tip to tail.) Other plumage features resemble those of Calandra, variation within both species according to plumage wear and location making comparison of these features difficult, although Bimaculated tends to have a stronger facial pattern (especially in fresh plumage in autumn), with darker loreal line, longer and whiter supercilium and more prominent, warmer brown ear-coverts (containing more obvious whitish patch below eye). As with Calandra, breast patches may be partially obscured in fresh plumage. When worn, Bimaculated tends to look paler, more buff-toned above than corresponding Calandra. Behaviour much as that of Calandra, but shows preference for drier and more



semi-arid country, although in parts of Turkey the two species breed in the same areas.

SEX/AGE Sexes similar, but female smaller. Adult in fresh plumage has pale feather fringes obscuring breast patches and shows very narrow pale tips to secondaries; when heavily worn, pale tail tip may be lost. Juvenile has head and upperparts distinctly mottled (owing to dark feather centres and pale scallop-shaped fringes) and breast patches partly (sometimes wholly) obscured; resembles adult after first moult.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 3 races (nominate illustrated).

VOICE Calls include a Eurasian Skylark-like 'churru' and similar 'chup'; also a short, liquid 'plip'. Song and song flight resemble those of Calandra; song almost equally as varied and mimetic, but containing fewer harsh notes. Sings both in flight and when perched.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Kuwait.) Rolling plateaus with dry, sparse vegetation and dry cultivation, stony hill and mountain slopes; less often in flat plains than Calandra. Outside breeding season occurs in various forms of dry cultivation, stubbles etc.

WHITE-WINGED LARK *Melanocorypha leucoptera*

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L 18 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Large lark breeding on Caspian steppes. Recalls Eurasian Skylark in overall shape but

bill markedly stouter, although less so than in other *Melanocorypha*. Shows conspicuous white secondar-

ies in all plumages, although this apparent only in flight. On ground, adult appears strikingly white on 'face' and underparts, with prominent dark eye set in pale surround, and has weak rufous streaking and fine dark streaking of varying intensity on breast and flanks (rufous streaking weak or absent in female). In addition, male has crown and ear-coverts rufous. The upperparts are sandy-grey with darker streaking, relieved by rufous-chestnut lesser, median and primary coverts (rufous more obvious in male) and a white stripe on folded secondaries. In flight, rufous forewing may be apparent (especially in male) but attention is drawn most to the striking broad white band along trailing edge of secondaries and inner primaries, which contrasts with blackish bases to secondaries and inner primaries and with largely blackish outer primaries; the underwing is even whiter, except for blackish outer primaries and bases to inner primaries and secondaries; tail shows white outer feathers. In flight, the wings appear to be markedly longer and narrower than those of Eurasian Skylark, but this mainly an illusion created by white trailing band; when species seen overhead against a pale sky, the impression of long and narrow wings can be striking. Relatively wary; stands upright with short crest ruffed up when alarmed. Runs well but legs not long. Sociable, breeding in loose colonies in suitable habitat and forming large flocks outside breeding season, when it freely associates with other larks. Confusion unlikely (even for juvenile) if seen well, but compare Thick-billed Lark, which has similar upperwing pattern. Beware winter Snow Bunting, which has black (not pale) legs, smaller, stubbier bill, relatively shorter tertials and longer primaries, blacker tail centre and white on median coverts (compare illustrations for plumage variation). When faced with a potential vagrant, the possibility of a partial-albino of a commoner lark species should be considered. Similar Mongolian Lark *M. mongolica* has been reported as an escape in western Europe; this species has broad black breast patches (like Calandra) and long white supercilia meeting on nape, but has wing pattern as in



White-winged.

SEX/AGE There is marked individual variation in intensity of rufous on head and amount of streaking on underparts, with duller males being perhaps 1st-summer birds though this not proven; this complicates sexing. Adult female lacks rufous crown and ear-coverts and has duller rufous 'shoulders' than male and more prominent streaking on breast; dull males seem to have some rufous on forehead and rump in comparison with females. Juvenile has pale scaling on upperparts and quite extensive dark mottling below, but becomes as adult by late summer (but see comment above about possibility of 1st-year males being duller).

VOICE Calls of flushed birds, which include a harsh 'tcher-ee', resemble those of Eurasian Skylark, but calls in general tend to be more emphatic and deeper, less chirruping. Song flight often very high, bird circling with deeply beating wings while singing, dropping like a stone from great height at end of song period. Song resembles that of Eurasian Skylark, but perhaps sweeter and uttered with jerky phrasing, many notes higher in pitch. Overall less varied and sustained than Eurasian Skylark's, with rapidly repeated phrases, but including much mimicry; also sings from ground or mound.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. Marked dispersal in winter. Extensive ploughing of steppe habitat has caused contraction of range and reduction in numbers. Dry grassy and shrubby steppe (especially *Artemisia* steppe) with grasses that are not too lush; also edges of cultivation in winter.

BLACK LARK *Melanocorypha yeltoniensis*

L 19–20 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Large, thickset lark breeding on Caspian steppes. Has relatively broad, although long, wings and stout bill. Unlike almost all other larks, shows striking sexual variation, not only in colour but in size, with male (the largest lark of our region) much larger than female. **Adult male** in worn plumage (spring/summer) sooty-black (apart from a few narrow pale feather fringes on upperparts), with contrasting stout whitish bill; in fresh plumage (autumn/winter), black body plumage obscured with broad whitish feather fringes, especially on head, upperparts, breast and flanks, making bird appear either piebald or whitish with blackish wings unless close views obtained; by spring most of these have abraded away, although some indistinct pale scaling usually remains on nape and upperparts. In flight, appears relatively long-winged. Usually travels low with gentle undulations, but on breeding grounds males typically seen swinging about in harrier fashion over grassland with wings held well forward and raised in a wide 'V'. Summer male probably unmistakable when on wing (although vaguely reminiscent of Western Jackdaw); winter males can appear whitish with blackish wings and tail. **Adult female** markedly smaller than male (could almost be another species), with blackish-brown



feather bases and pale fringes to body plumage, most extensive on underparts; in fresh plumage, underparts mostly white, with dusky mottling, and has ill-defined facial pattern, but with wear blackish mottling below becomes more apparent, forming Calandra-like dark patches at breast sides; overall dark dull brown above with buffish feather fringes and darker, blackish-brown, wings and tail. At any season is browner and more mottled than male, with whitish lower underparts (latter always blackish in male). In flight female recalls a Crested Lark in shape, but tail, entire underwing and upperside of flight feathers blackish-brown, latter giving marked contrast with paler and browner forewing. Dark underwing recalls Calandra Lark, but white trailing edge is lacking. Unlike other large larks,

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except Bimaculated, lacks pale in outer tail feathers, and legs are blackish (a feature only shared with Horned and Temminck's Larks). **Juvenile** resembles fresh-plumaged adult female, but upperparts edged warmer buff, face paler and flank markings weaker; young males having blacker wings than females. Unlike most other large larks, lacks pale outer tail feathers (a feature shared by Bimaculated, but latter is smaller and has dark neck patches). A remarkable lark, breeding in loose colonies on steppes. Males markedly outnumber females on breeding grounds, and in autumn and winter large single-sex flocks are formed, with male flocks being largest. On breeding grounds, male often stands with wings drooped and tail cocked in Common Blackbird-like fashion. Generally wary, but more approachable in winter, when may be found mixing with other larks, especially White-winged.

SEX/AGE Sexually dimorphic, with distinct seasonal variation (see Identification). Juvenile described under Identification; much as adult by first autumn.

VOICE Calls poorly documented; not unlike those of

Eurasian Skylark, but more trilled and of buzzing quality. Song flight often high, rising vertically on deeply flapping bat-like wingbeats (wingtips almost touching on upstroke), parachuting slowly back to ground, circling in slow glide with wings held in wide 'V' before alighting; sings both in flight and from ground. Song resembles those of both Eurasian Skylark and White-winged Lark. Compared with former, phrases shorter, higher in pitch, more varied and including much more mimicry; compared with latter, both slightly slower and a little lower in pitch.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. Marked dispersal in winter, especially in severe weather; females and juveniles move further from breeding areas than males. Extensive ploughing of steppe habitat has caused contraction of range and reduction in numbers. Dry grassy and low shrubby steppe, especially *Artemisia* steppe with grasses that are not too lush, and often by steppe lakes; also edges of cultivation in winter.

GREATER SHORT-TOED LARK *Calandrella brachydactyla*

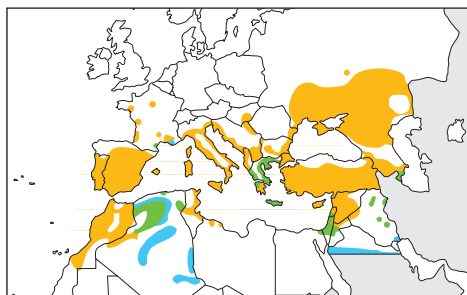
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Short-toed Lark

L 13–14 cm.

IDENTIFICATION The most widespread small lark of our region; appears much smaller than Eurasian Skylark. Looks pale overall, with relatively long, stout-based and sharply pointed, rather finch-like, bill. On ground, may recall a pale female House Sparrow. Underparts strikingly pale, usually virtually unstreaked (weak streaking present in juvenile, 1st-winter and some adults) except for small dark patch at sides of lower neck; neck patches most obvious in spring and summer and especially when bird stretches neck, appearing thinner if bird hunched and obscured by brownish feather tips in fresh autumn plumage. Head shows distinct pale supercilium and rusty- or cinnamon-tinged crown with dark streaking (crown may be ruffed up into a short crest), producing a slightly 'capped' appearance. Upperparts vary from sandy-brown to grey-brown, with darker streaking, offering some contrast with plainer wings, latter having prominent band of dark feather centres on median coverts (contrasting with pale, largely unmarked lesser coverts). In flight, underparts appear whitish and unmarked, contrasting with dark underside to tail; upervwing shows no pale trailing edge, but outer tail feathers distinctly white, contrasting with blacker penultimate feathers and greyish tail centre. Flight light and bouncing when flushed, stronger when well underway; flocks keep close together, twisting and turning and seeming to 'flow' together over ground in manner of small waders or finches. Generally wary, flushing easily and usually flying considerable distance. Small size compared with Eurasian Skylark normally readily apparent; flight call distinctive. Typically feeds in low, crouched posture, running in short bursts between pauses to peck at ground. Very sociable, forming large flocks outside breeding season. See rather similar Lesser Short-toed and Hume's Short-toed Larks for discussion on separation. Compare also Oriental Skylark and female Black-crowned Sparrow-lark.

SEX/AGE In fresh autumn plumage, neck patches of adult obscured and breast buff. Juvenile has whitish scaling and dark mottling on upperparts; breast has dusky mottling often forming weak breast band, and neck patches indistinct. By first autumn much as fresh adult, but breast streaking often persists well into first winter.



VOICE Usual call, given by flushed birds and from among flying flocks, a repeated, dry, rattling 'chirrup' or 'dreet-it-it'; other calls include a shorter, rather Eurasian Skylark-like 'chirp' and a plaintive 'teeoo'. Song flight relatively high, the bird bouncing jerkily up and down as it flies in small circles; also sings from ground. Song consists of a series of short, slurred, well-spaced, Eurasian Skylark-like phrases, including frequent repetition of call notes and some mimicry.

TAXONOMY This form is sometimes treated as conspecific with the **Red-capped Lark** *C. cinerea* of sub-Saharan Africa and S Arabia, with the name Greater Short-toed Lark being used for the enlarged species.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 8 races (nominate, *artemisiana* and *longipennis* illustrated). Differ chiefly in overall colour tone of upperparts, but in fresh plumage some races confusingly similar. Several races not only intergrade, but intermingle in winter; variation owing to plumage wear and bleaching makes separation unsafe in the field. Racial variation summarized here to aid comparison with races of Lesser Short-toed Lark. 1: nominate race, breeding over most of European range and in coastal regions of NW Africa, is warm brown and prominently streaked above. 2: *hungarica* of Hungary is buff and greyer but similarly dark-streaked; has a weaker bill and duller, greyer underparts. 3: *rubiginosa* of N Africa and Malta has finer streaking and is more rufous in tone, with pinkish-sandy upperparts and more contrasting rufous crown. 4: *hermonensis* of Middle East from Sinai to extreme S Turkey is also finely streaked,

but rather buff, less rufous, than N African race and has crown more uniform with upperparts. 5: *woltersi* of extreme NW Syria and adjacent S Turkey resembles *hermonensis*, but is paler and greyer (although paler and less heavily streaked than *artemisiana*). 6: *artemisiana* of most of Turkey and Transcaucasia is buffish-grey and quite heavily streaked, although not quite so strongly as nominate race. 7: *longipennis*, inhabiting area north of Caucasus, is finely streaked, rather

small-billed, and greyish-sandy. 8: *dukhunensis* of C Asia has occurred in Middle East as a vagrant; this form is appreciably larger and slightly stouter-billed than other races, with distinctly dark brown and heavily streaked upperparts and buff-washed underparts, and distinctly dark legs.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (Most winter south of the Sahara.) Dry plains, steppes, semi-desert and dry cultivation.

HUME'S SHORT-TOED LARK *Calandrella acutirostris*

Plate below

Hume's Lark

L 13–14 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Asian vagrant (breeds C Asia). Very similar to Greater Short-toed Lark, with field characters inadequately studied, but slightly stockier and with distinctly darker, greyer, upperparts and breast, contrasting with white of remainder of underparts. Field identification made more difficult by racial variation in Greater Short-toed; greyer, more eastern populations of latter (*longipennis*) are most similar to Hume's. Identification may well begin with distinctly different flight call and continue with detailed comparison of plumage and structure. Bill usually slightly finer than in most Greater Short-toed, with blacker cutting edges, culmen and tip; crown less prominently streaked, particularly on forecrown; supercilium less prominent, being more diffuse above and in front of eye; dark loreal stripe present (lacking in Greater Short-toed, which shows plain lores, but effect of shadow if head viewed from an angle can make this species seem to have dark lores); ear-coverts plainer, lacking darker shadow at rear and with less obvious pale crescent below eye. Upperparts darker and greyer

than in Greater Short-toed, with contrasting rufous wash to uppertail coverts (but latter virtually impossible to see in field). Underparts similar to Greater Short-toed in having dark neck patch and in lacking streaking on breast, but shows complete and distinctly buffish-grey breast band contrasting with rest of underparts (Greater Short-toed often has some mottling at breast sides and, if buffish on most of breast, is typically whitish on breast centre). Behaviour as Greater Short-toed Lark. **In the hand** Hume's has longest four primaries more or less equal in length; in Greater Short-toed, 5th primary is distinctly shorter than longest 2nd–4th.

SEX/AGE Ageing probably not possible after juvenile stage.

VOICE Typical calls lack dry tone of Greater Short-toed: a sharp 'tree' or rolling, rattled 'dreeep'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Israel). On breeding grounds more a bird of high mountain plateaus and slopes than Greater Short-toed, but descends to semi-arid plains and dry cultivation in winter.



HUME'S SHORT-TOED LARK

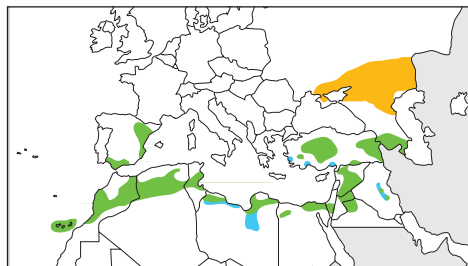
(fresh, autumn)

LESSER SHORT-TOED LARK *Calandrella rufescens*

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L 13–14 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Similar to Greater Short-toed Lark in size and shape, but a plainer-looking bird with well-streaked breast. Racial variation as complex as in Greater Short-toed; overall coloration therefore often unimportant for identification, although useful in Iberian Peninsula, where Lesser is much duller, greyer and more heavily streaked than local Greater Short-toed. Typically has slightly shorter and stouter (less conical) bill and relatively smaller and more rounded head; the extent of tertial cloaking is important, since in Lesser the tertials extend well down the folded wing but leave more of the primary tips exposed (at least three), whereas in Greater Short-toed the tertials almost conceal the primaries, leaving just one or two tips exposed; the dark-centred median coverts are less prominent than in Greater Short-toed. Head pattern



less striking than in Greater Short-toed, with supercilium duller and more diffuse and lacking dark stripe behind eye; if seen well when head-on, supercilia

meet narrowly on forehead whereas they are divided on forehead in Greater Short-toed; crown less 'capped' than in Greater Short-toed, uniform in colour with upperparts, and feathers may be raised to create a short crest. Breast well streaked, streaks forming a complete band and often extending towards flanks; in fresh plumage, the streaking is less evident owing to extensive feather fringes, but shows as a diffuse breast band. In many aspects of its plumage Lesser Short-toed recalls a miniature Eurasian Skylark. The main problem with *Calandrella* larks revolves around obtaining adequate views on the ground and being aware of the pitfalls created by 1st-autumn Greater Short-toed, which often shows some streaking on breast sides and lacks dark patch on neck sides, and similarly aged Lessers, which can have breast streaking somewhat obscured. Some Lessers of darker races, with prominent breast streaking, can show appearance of a dark neck patch created by streaks merging when neck retracted, although the prominence of the streaking should prevent confusion. In flight, overall appearance recalls Greater Short-toed. Similarly sociable. Calls, song and song flight differ, although both species can give a confusing variety of calls. Compare also Dunn's Lark and Oriental Skylark.

SEX/AGE In fresh adult plumage, breast streaks less prominent than when worn. Juvenile has whitish scaling and dark mottling on upperparts, and breast only weakly mottled; by first autumn much as fresh adult.

VOICE Usual flight call differs from that of Greater Short-toed, an equally dry, but more slurred, buzzing 'chirrip' or 'prrrr' (recalls Common House Martin), sometimes uttered as a double 'prr chrrr'. Song flight less high up than that of Greater Short-toed (although both will sing from ground), flying in wide circles. Song phrases longer than in Greater Short-toed, more melodious and varied, with briefer pauses, interspersed with call notes and mimicry; delivered without the flight undulations of singing Greater Short-toed.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Considerable in overall colour tones and intensity of markings. 9 races (*minor*, *apetzii* and *aharonii* illustrated). All are summarized below to aid comparison with local races of Greater Short-toed. 1: *apetzii* of Iberian Peninsula is grey or buffish-brown and heavily streaked. 2: nomi-

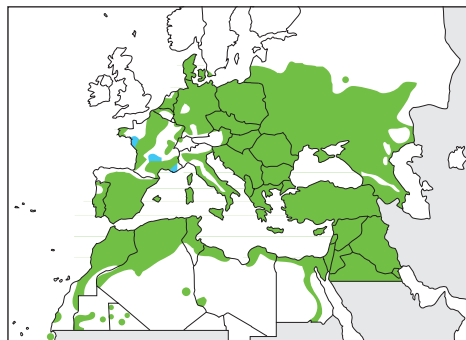
nate race, confined to Tenerife, Canary Is is warm brown with strong streaking. 3: *polatzeki* of the inner Canary Is (Gran Canaria, Lanzarote and Fuerteventura) is sandy and finely streaked (note that Greater Short-toed is only a vagrant to the Canary Is). 4: *minor* of most of N Africa and Middle East as far as W Iraq and S Turkey is buffish-sandy and finely streaked. 5: *nicolli* of the Nile delta is greyish-brown with prominent streaking. 6: *pseudobaetica* of E Turkey, NE Iraq and Transcaucasia is a small, relatively dark greyish-brown, heavily streaked form. 7: *heinei* occupies breeding range of species north of Caucasus (wintering across Middle East) and is greyish-brown with fairly intense streaking. 8: *aharonii* of C Turkey is a rather large and heavy-billed form, very pale ashy-grey with fine streaks, latter indistinct in fresh plumage but distinct when worn. 8: *persica* of E and SE Iraq is also large and heavy-billed, very pale, yellowish-sandy, with fine streaking. Some authorities split Lesser Short-toed Lark into two species, with extralimital eastern races named **Asian Short-toed Lark** *C. cheleensis*. Included within this latter species is form *leucophaea*, which has been reported in the past from the steppes to the north of the Caucasus. Its presence within our region needs confirmation. Populations of *leucophaea* occur within the range of *heinei* to east of our region, seemingly without interbreeding. It is distinctly different from *heinei*, being extremely pale grey, with very faint darker streaking (in fresh plumage appearing almost unstreaked in field), and has a broader and whiter supercilium, more extensive white in outer tail and slightly different wing formula. The two large-billed pale races, *aharonii* of C Turkey and *persica* of E Iraq are sometimes included with *cheleensis*. Former is not known to intergrade with overlapping *minor*, but these two races, however, have wing formula typical of true Lesser Short-toed as opposed to *cheleensis* group.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. Breeds in loose colonies in arid plains and foothills, dry steppes, saline flats, stony or sandy semi-desert with broad, sparsely vegetated wadis and dry cultivation. Outside breeding season, less attached to cultivation than Greater Short-toed.

CRESTED LARK *Galerida cristata*

L 17 cm.

IDENTIFICATION See discussion under more localized Thekla Lark for distinguishing these two very similar and variable species. Plumper, shorter-tailed and broader-winged than Eurasian Skylark, with long, spiked crest and longer, heavier, more curved, bill. Most races are paler and more weakly streaked than Eurasian Skylark, with streaking most obvious on breast, but there is considerable geographical variation in both general coloration and extent of streaking. In flight, shows broad wings that lack white trailing edge (usually visible on Eurasian Skylark) and fairly short tail with warm buff or cinnamon on outer feathers (white in Eurasian Skylark); underwing sandy-buff; flight action slow and hesitantly flapping. When depressed, longest feathers of crest project slightly beyond rear crown; when erect, crest is fan-shaped with long, spiked points towards front. Eurasian Skylark often shows a fairly prominent ruffed up crest and juvenile Crested has a short crest, so identification should not be based on crest alone. Usually met with singly or in family parties, never forms flocks. Favours roadsides and dry, dusty tracks; often about habita-



tion. Runs rapidly with fairly upright carriage and crest raised; feeds by digging in crouched posture with crest depressed. Apart from Thekla Lark, confusion unlikely, but, in flight, coloration and shape not unlike those of both Desert and Bimaculated Larks. Long-

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billed races, especially *macrorhyncha* and *randonii* of Algeria, strongly suggest Dupont's Lark (q.v.) if crest and tail pattern not visible.

SEX/AGE Juvenile mottled and scaly, with shorter crest; much as adult by first autumn.

VOICE Most usual call is a sweet, mellow, 'swee-tee-too', often slightly abbreviated, that is quite distinctive in tone. When flushed, often gives a mewling 'du-ee'. Song variable, usually given in comparatively low song flight or from ground (rarely from perch); basically a series of sweet, fluty warbling phrases interspersed with some mimicry and repetitions of the typical call. Sounds slower and clearer than Eurasian Skylark's, without extended repetitions of latter.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Considerable in overall ground colour, intensity of streaking and bill size and shape. 24 races (nominate, *arenicola* and *nigricans* illustrated). See Thekla Lark for comparison of overlapping races. European forms become progres-

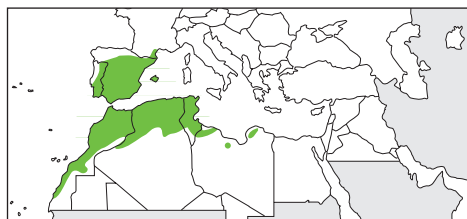
sively greyer towards the east. Middle Eastern races basically paler and more sandy than European populations. N Africa produces greatest diversity (as with Thekla); populations there have distinctly longer bills than European forms and some are very rufous, others very pale, with upland forms being generally darker than lowland desert populations. Over a comparatively small area in some parts of N Africa (notably Morocco and Algeria), different forms may be encountered, compounding the risk of confusion with Thekla. The darkest race of all is *nigricans* of the Nile delta.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. Most or all leave NE of range in hard winters. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Norway, Finland, Estonia, Leningrad region.) Dry open country, favouring dry cultivation, wasteland, roadsides, dry steppe and semi-desert; often about rural habitation, open industrial zones etc. Locally in mountains.

THEKLA LARK *Galerida theklae*

L 17 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Very similar to Crested Lark, with identification criteria for both species complicated by racial variation. Separating these two species problematic, although Thekla occurs only in SW Europe and N Africa. Compared with Crested, Thekla is a little less plump and more heavily streaked, has more evenly fanned crest when erect (less spiky), and has shorter, straighter, blunter and relatively deeper-based bill. Note that both species have longer bills in N Africa (but relative differences maintained), and some Middle Eastern populations of Crested (where Thekla absent) have prominent breast streaking suggesting Thekla. Nominate race of Thekla of SW Europe and *erlangeri* of N Morocco have more extensive and blacker breast streaking on a whiter background than Crested, the streaks extending towards upper flanks and also across sides of neck onto nape and mantle (which are streaked blacker than in Crested); underwing greyish (buff in Crested, but pale southern forms of Thekla have more sandy underwing, and also beware effect of shadow); rump and uppertail coverts more rufous, contrasting with greyish-brown upperparts in flight (Crested lacks contrast). Race *erlangeri* is darkest of all, with brownest upperparts and broadest, blackest streaking above and below. Inland N African situation more complex owing to variety of intergrading forms of Crested which may be encountered. Race *ruficolor* of C Morocco, coastal Algeria and N Tunisia has breast streaks less intense and is warmer, more rufous-toned above than nominate race, but the upperparts have broad blackish streaking (much more intense than in local forms of Crested, which also have longer bill). Populations of Theklas over S and W Morocco (south of Anti-Atlas) named *aguirrei* resemble C Moroccan *ruficolor*, but have narrower dark streaks above and on breast and are more rufous-washed above; they are, however, distinctly shorter-billed than local forms of Crested. Race *superflua* of northern Algeria and C Tunisia is variable, paler and greyer or more sandy than *ruficolor*, with less contrasting rufous rump and weaker streaking above and on breast; compared with local Crested races, it has heavier breast markings, shorter bill (beware Tunisian race *arenicolor* of Crested, which is small-billed) and more streaked upperparts. Southern portion of Algerian range, S Tunisia and NW Libya inhabited by palest race *carolinae*, which is a small form with weak rufous streaking above and narrow, mostly rufous,



breast streaks; this race easily confused with *arenicolor* Crested, and perhaps best distinguished by rufous, rather than greyish, streaking on breast and upperparts. NE Libya and NW Egypt inhabited by birds referred to *carolinae* but often a little greyer above; races of Crested here are often brownish-grey above, with fine dark streaking, and have dark breast streaking (thus distinctions for *carolinae* Theklas almost reverse of those applicable to other N African forms). Thekla generally occupies rocky and bushy habitats, unlike Crested, but, where Crested absent, also occurs in open lowlands (e.g. Balearic Is). Carriage typically more upright than Crested's and tends to peck, rather than dig, while feeding, and perches on bushes more readily. Generally more confiding. Song much more sustained and varied than that of Crested, readily singing from tops of large shrubs and other prominent perches. **In the hand** wing formula usually differs. Crested has short outermost primary usually shorter than primary coverts (0–8 mm shorter); Thekla usually has outermost primary equal to or longer than primary coverts (although varies from 3 mm shorter to 4 mm longer). 5th primary 2–5 mm shorter than wingtip in Thekla, 5–9 mm shorter in Crested.

SEX/AGE Juvenile mottled and scaly, with shorter crest.

VOICE Typical call resembles that of Crested Lark, but pitch slightly lower, more muffled, and final syllable longer, more sustained, before fading away. Full song quite different: prolonged, rich, varied and melodious (especially so in N Africa), including both mimicry and trilling, Eurasian Skylark-like phrases, sometimes recalling a *Hippolais* warbler. Sings mostly from bush tops or in relatively low song flight, as well as from ground; some populations possibly regularly sing in prolonged high, circling song flight (compare song of Crested).

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Marked. 6 races (nominate, *erlangeri* and *carolinae* illustrated). See under

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Identification above.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (In addition to mapped range, may breed extreme NW Egypt.) Favours rocky slopes with bushes and trees, small stony fields, bushy upland steppe and mountain

slopes; unless Crested absent, usually shuns lowland open cultivation (where Crested often common), and less often about habitation, although habitats do overlap to a certain degree (and upland populations may descend lower in winter).

WOOD LARK *Lullula arborea*

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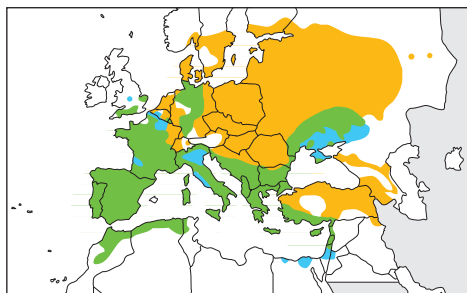
Woodlark

L 15 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A dumpy, heavily streaked lark with broad wings and short tail. On ground, shows prominent white supercilia virtually meeting on upper nape, unstreaked rusty-brown ear-coverts and breast band of long dark streaks extending to flanks. A large blackish spot, bordered on either side by whitish (formed by blackish primary coverts with their broad whitish tips and the whitish tips to the alula) is sometimes obvious along edge of closed wing and is diagnostic. In flight, has distinctive broad-winged and short-tailed appearance, lacking white trailing edge to secondaries or white in outer tail, but close views reveal small black and whitish patch at bend of wing and whitish tail tip. Flight action rather slow, with deep, rather jerky undulations; a series of rapid flaps being followed by a glide on closed wings. Confusion unlikely, but both Bimaculated Lark and Oriental Skylark show similar wing shape and tail length in flight. Beware short-tailed juvenile Eurasian Skylark, which leaves nest before tail fully grown and shows less white in outer tail than adult. Not sociable, being generally found in pairs or family parties, but sometimes associates with Eurasian Skylarks in winter. Feeds on ground, but readily perches on trees or bushes in breeding season.

SEX/AGE Juvenile mottled and scaled; much as adult by first autumn.

VOICE Usual calls are a clear liquid, but ringing, full 'loo-ooet' or softer, more mellow 'deedlooeet', given by both rising and perched birds. Rises in spirals (not verti-



cally like Eurasian Skylark) to great height in song flight. Song, also given from perch or ground, a beautiful series of sweet, clear, rising and falling trills interspersed with repeated, descending, rather melancholy 'loo-loo-loo-loo' phrases. Even sings at night.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (nominate illustrated).

STATUS/HABITAT Generally not uncommon (but localized and scarce in north of range). (In addition to mapped range, formerly bred Ireland.) Habitats vary from parkland, heathland, forest clearings and young plantations to open country with scattered trees and partly open hill and mountain slopes up to limit of tree-line; avoids arid country and intensively cultivated farmland. In winter often in more open cultivation, e.g. stubble fields.

ORIENTAL SKYLARK *Alauda gulgula*

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Small Skylark, Oriental Lark

L 16 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Asian vagrant (breeds C Asia eastwards). Closely resembles Eurasian Skylark in plumage pattern and coloration, but distinctly shorter-tailed and with more rounded wings. Most likely to be first detected in flight, as call distinctly different from that of Eurasian. Clearly smaller than Eurasian if the two seen together, with slightly longer and more pointed bill (hardly noticeable in field), and apparently shorter body (an effect of shorter wings and tail). The shorter primaries allow the tertials to conceal all but the very tip of the wing, whereas in Eurasian the primary tips noticeably project beyond the tertials. Plumage colour and pattern when on ground much as Eurasian, which is rather variable in colour tones over its wide range. Vagrant Orientals compared with Eurasians in Israel have similar sandy greyish-brown ground colour to upperparts, but show more prominent whitish supercilia (although not so extensive as in Wood Lark) and obvious pale rufous fringes to primaries and secondaries, which are visible as a rufous panel both on ground and in good flight views. Rump, uppertail coverts and ear-coverts also strongly washed rufous. In flight clearly different, with relatively shorter, blunter, more rounded wings and shorter tail, recalling Wood



Lark rather than Eurasian Skylark in shape. Upperwing distinctly sandy-rufous, lacking whitish trailing edge of Eurasian (but can become very pale rufous on trailing edge when plumage worn) or black and white carpal patch of Wood Lark; underwing pale. Tail markedly shorter than Eurasian's, but longer than that of Wood Lark, with pale buff, not white, outer feathers, but becomes whiter with wear; lacks white tip of Wood Lark. Confusion possible with Lesser Short-toed Lark, but Oriental larger and fatter, with broader, rufous-toned wings, broader breast streaking, longer bill and different call. Behaviour often much as that of Eurasian Skylark, although sometimes more secretive, keeping to cover of low vegetation, and flushing only short distances.

SEX/AGE Sexes similar. Ageing not possible after juvenile plumage lost in late summer.

VOICE Typical calls when flushed shorter, less rippling,



ORIENTAL SKYLARK
(p. 550)

than Eurasian Skylark's, with a nasal, rasping or buzzing quality, rendered 'baz baz' or 'baz-terr'; also a weak 'twip' and some calls not dissimilar to those of Eurasian, but these perhaps uttered only on breeding grounds.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Israel, Egypt). Recently almost regular in S Israel in winter. Easily overlooked. In natural range, breeds on high, rather dry upland plateau grasslands; in various types of dry cultivated or uncultivated country in winter.

EURASIAN SKYLARK *Alauda arvensis*

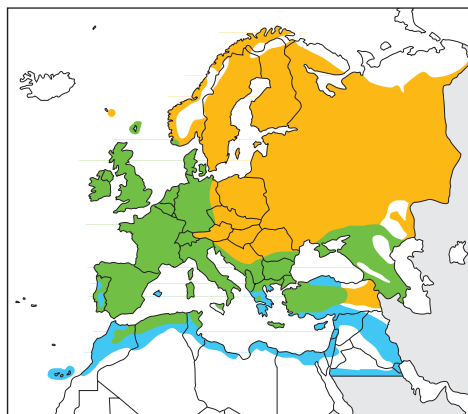
Skylark, Sky Lark

L 17–18 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Most widespread and familiar lark of our region. Medium-large lark with short crest (apparent only when crown feathers raised), relatively short but stout bill, thickset body and relatively long tail. Seasonally and individually (as well as geographically) variable in upperpart coloration, ranging from distinctly warm rusty brown in some fresh autumn individuals in N Europe to cool greyish-buff in some worn summer individuals from southeast of range. Combination of heavily streaked plumage, lack of obvious dark breast patches, comparatively short bill, weak pale supercilium and conspicuous white outer tail feathers prevents confusion with other larks (except vagrant Oriental Skylark, q.v.). Rises suddenly when flushed, flying low before climbing, uttering distinctive calls. Often hovers briefly before alighting. When well underway flight undulating, progressing with several flaps and a 'stall' on relatively broad wings; underwing greyish-white, and upperwing shows little contrast except for narrow white trailing edge to secondaries (lacking in most other larks, including Crested and Wood), which can disappear with wear. On rising or hovering birds the white outer tail feathers are conspicuous, but not in level flight when tail closed. At times can suggest other species, i.e. when hunched the breast streaks often coalesce at neck sides to give impression of a dark patch, and when crown feathers fully raised can look quite crested, but bill shape, underwing colour and tail pattern should clinch the identification. Very sociable, forming large flocks at migration times and in winter, when it mixes with various other larks, pipits, finches and buntings to feed in stubbles. Inconspicuous on ground, feeding in crouched posture, creeping forward as it feeds; runs well if alarmed.

SEX/AGE Juvenile heavily mottled with blackish and yellowish-buff above, and scaled with whitish; much as adult by first autumn.

VOICE Most frequent call when flushed, a liquid, rattled 'chirrip', which may be either abbreviated or slightly prolonged; similar but more scratchy calls often follow. Sings in vertically rising song flight, hov-



ering at great height while pouring out sweet, varied and melodious song consisting of prolonged scratchy warbling and trilling phrases, interspersed with some mimicry and call notes; drops either like a stone or in parachute fashion when song finished. Often sings from ground.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Delineation of races not clear, with complete intergradation between the 7 races of our region (nominata illustrated). Overall colour tones variable, with darkest and brownest birds in north and west, grading to populations with greyish-brown or sandy-buff ground colour in south and east. Size also increases gradually towards the east. Most distinct is *dulcivox* of Volga and Ural steppes, which is rather large and pale sandy-grey, with whitish ground colour to underparts.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. Found in a variety of open grassy habitats, from coastal fields, dune slacks, steppes and open cultivation to moorland and alpine pastures. Avoids arid country, although occurs in semi-arid cultivation in winter, when also resorts to saltmarshes and coastal beaches.

Plate page 558

RASO LARK *Alauda razae*

Plate page 557

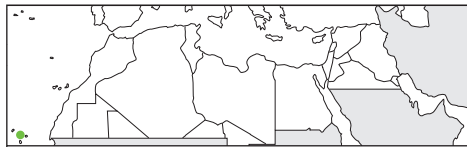
Razo Lark

L 13–14 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Unmistakable: endemic to the small island of Raso (Cape Verde Is), where it is the only lark. A small, plump, greyish-brown lark with short wings and medium-length tail; upperparts heavily streaked darker, underparts with extensive blackish streaking. Recalls Lesser Short-toed Lark, but wings shorter, bill more curved and heavier (markedly so in males) and underparts much more heavily streaked; short crest obvious when erect. Runs well, with head high like larger Crested Lark, which it also recalls in proportions; feeds mostly by digging with strong bill. In flight, wings markedly blunt and rounded, showing narrow white trailing edge; tail shows white in outermost feathers. Sociable, with close scatter of pairs or family groups, forming small flocks after breeding. Very approachable. Only other resident passerine on island is Iago Sparrow.

SEX/AGE Sexes similar in plumage, but male has much larger, stouter and more strongly curved bill than female. Juvenile mottled and spotted like other larks; indistinguishable from adult after first moult.

VOICE Calls resemble those of Eurasian Skylark, per-



haps a little weaker. Song flight vertical, rising to some 30 m; sings while hovering, subsequently descending rapidly while still singing. Readily sings from ground. Song recalls that of Eurasian Skylark but less varied, with shorter phrases, interspersed with pauses; but more continuous when in full song flight.

STATUS/HABITAT Endemic to small (5 km²) volcanic island of Raso in Cape Verde Is. The island is arid and has no fresh water; birds almost confined to flatter area in south-central part of island, which usually has covering of dwarf succulent vegetation; in very dry years disperses to shelter of wadis in surrounding steep, rocky hills. Population estimated at 200–250 birds in 1988.

HORNED LARK *Eremophila alpestris*

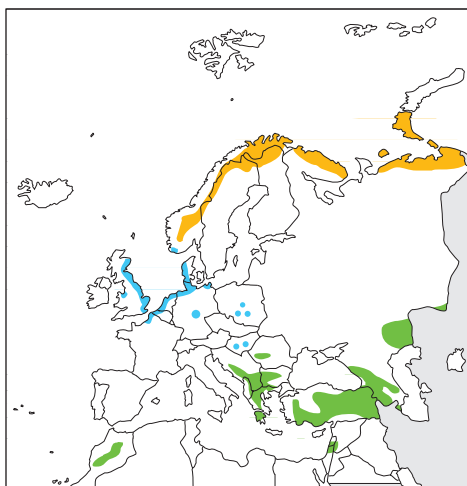
Plate page 554

Shore Lark

L 16–17 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Medium-sized lark, with proportions of Eurasian Skylark, but combination of distinctive black-and-yellow or black-and-white facial and chest pattern, black legs and mainly blackish bill shared only by its desert counterpart, Temminck's Lark. (See latter species, which only shows black-and-white facial patterning, for distinctions.) Head and chest strongly patterned with black and pale sulphur yellow or white, the precise pattern and background colour varying with race; in fresh plumage (autumn/winter) the pattern is partly obscured by pale feather fringes. Southeastern races with black chest and head bands joined appear black-throated in profile as white is confined to throat centre. Underparts below black chest band pale and largely unmarked. Upperparts pale greyish-brown, weakly streaked darker, with pinkish-rufous wash (varying according to race) on nape and rump. In flight, appears less bulky and greyer than Eurasian Skylark, with tail appearing very black from below, but from above tail pattern similar to that of Eurasian Skylark. Usually flies low over ground in gentle undulations, dropping when just out of sight. Despite striking chest and head pattern, the black and pale patterning is quite cryptic, making birds difficult to see in stony habitats; indeed, pinkish nape and yellowish throat often more obvious than the partly obscured black markings in winter. Feeds in squat, crouched posture. Often unobtrusive when breeding, keeping out of sight behind stones and grassy mounds. Sociable outside breeding season, forming close flocks, which often accompany Lapland and Snow Buntings in northern parts of range.

SEX/AGE Female a little smaller and duller than male, with dusky mottling on central crown, and with black head and breast patches narrower, and often duller, particularly so in females of southeastern races (with head and chest bands separated, unlike males); upperparts more strongly streaked in some races. In fresh plumage (i.e. autumn and winter), head and chest pat-



tern obscured by pale feather fringes. Juveniles heavily mottled both above and below, appearing very different from adults, but after first moult much as fresh adult although black patches even narrower than in female and 'horns' lacking.

VOICE Flight calls weak and thin, recalling Meadow Pipit rather than Eurasian Skylark, typically a weak 'tsee-oo' or 'tsee' (the latter often repeated two or three times). When alarmed gives a high, dawn out 'pseeee'. Song rather short, consisting of several sweet, tinkling phrases delivered from a boulder or in flight; much weaker and less varied than that of Eurasian Skylark, being somewhat reminiscent of Snow Bunting. Song flight often at great height, bird rising vertically from boulder, singing while hovering, dropping back to ground like a stone.

♂

♀

**BLACK-CROWNED
SPARROW-LARK**
(p. 539)

LARKS

juv

♀

♂ (fresh, autumn)

**DUNN'S
LARK**
(p. 540)

juv
dunni

arenicolor

eremodites

**BAR-TAILED
LARK**
(p. 541)

cincturus

juv
arenicolorjuv
isabellinus

isabellinus

DESERT LARK
(p. 541)

payni

annae

LARKS

DUPONT'S LARK (p. 542)

juv

margaritae

♂

juv

♀
(fresh, autumn)

♂ *penicillata*

HORNED LARK (SHORE LARK) (p. 552)

♂ *atlas*

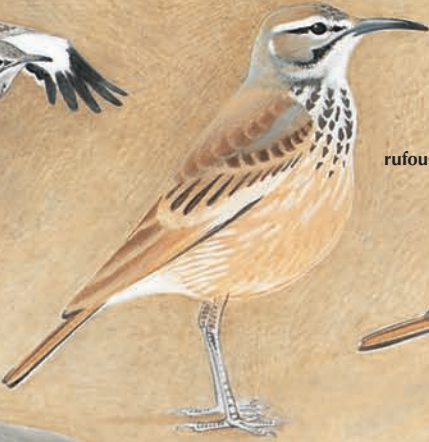
♀

♂

TEMMINCK'S LARK (p. 568)

juv

**GREATER
HOOPOE LARK**
(p. 542)



rufous morph



juv



grey morph



(fresh, autumn)



♂



juv

CALANDRA LARK
(p. 543)



(fresh, autumn)



♂

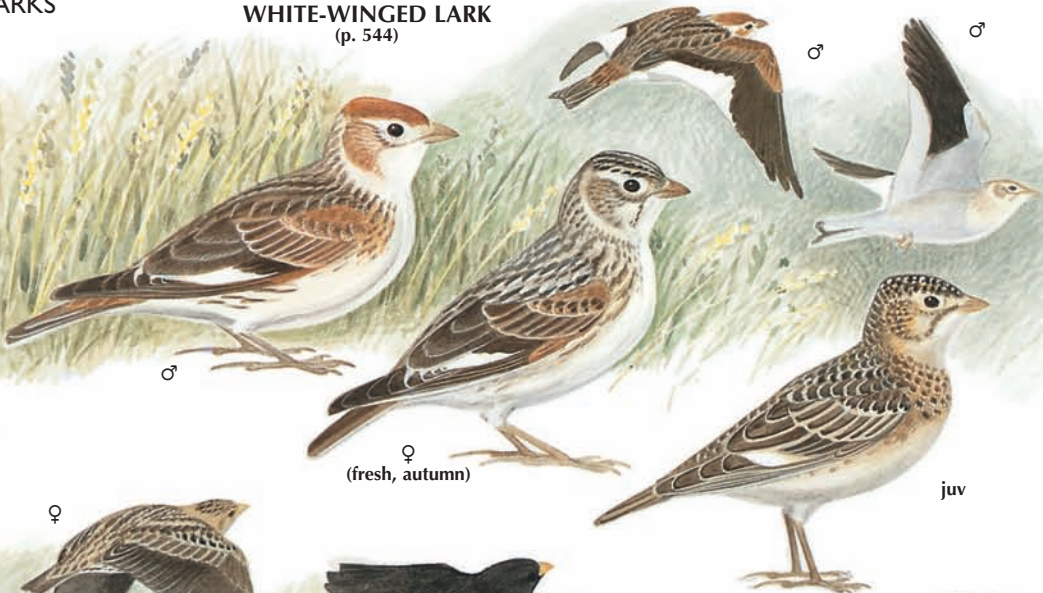


juv

BIMACULATED LARK
(p. 544)

LARKS

WHITE-WINGED LARK
(p. 544)



(fresh, autumn)

juv

BLACK LARK
(p. 545)



♂ (fresh, autumn)

juv ♀

THICK-BILLED LARK
(p. 543)



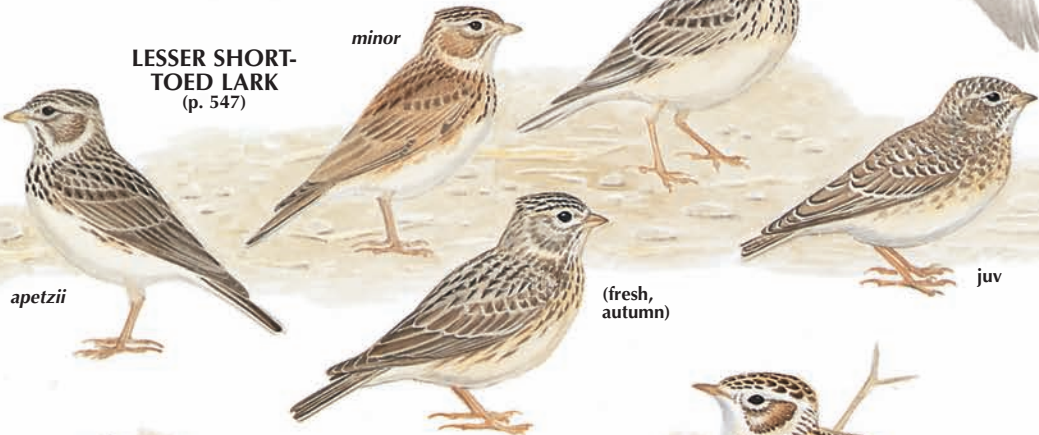
juv

♀ (fresh, autumn)

GREATER SHORT-TOED LARK
(p. 546)



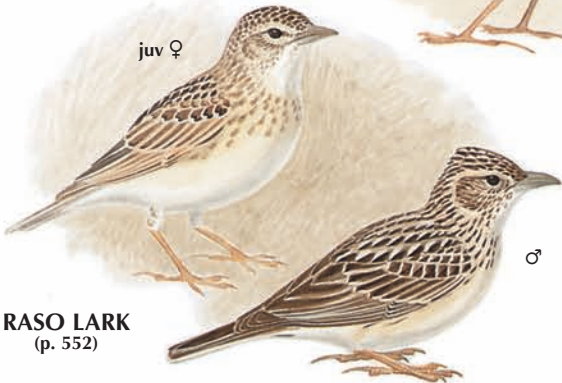
LESSER SHORT-TOED LARK
(p. 547)



WOOD LARK
(p. 550)



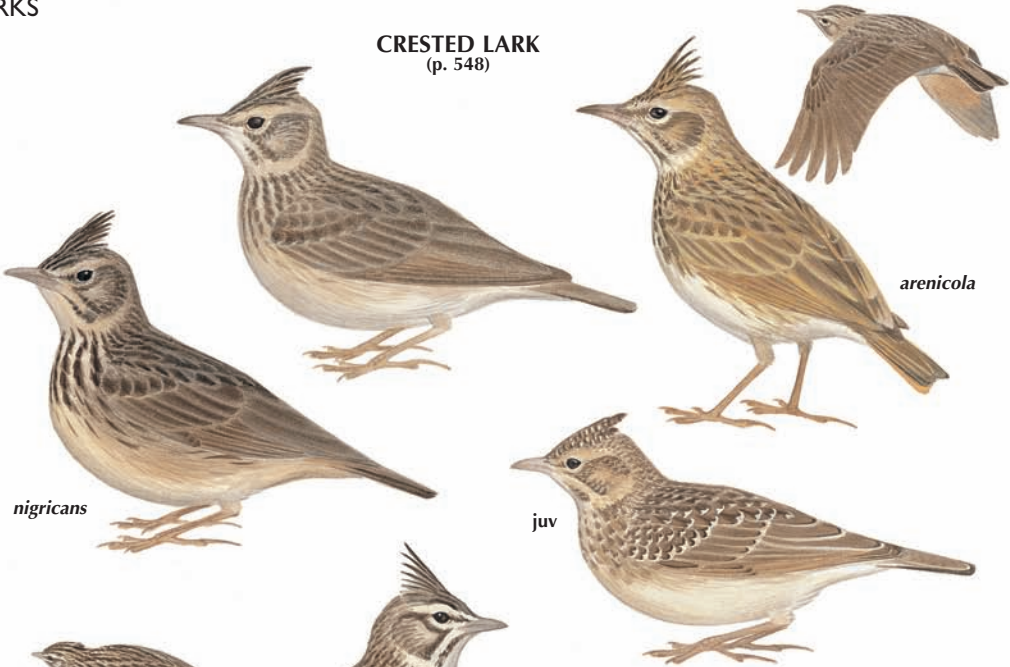
RASO LARK
(p. 552)



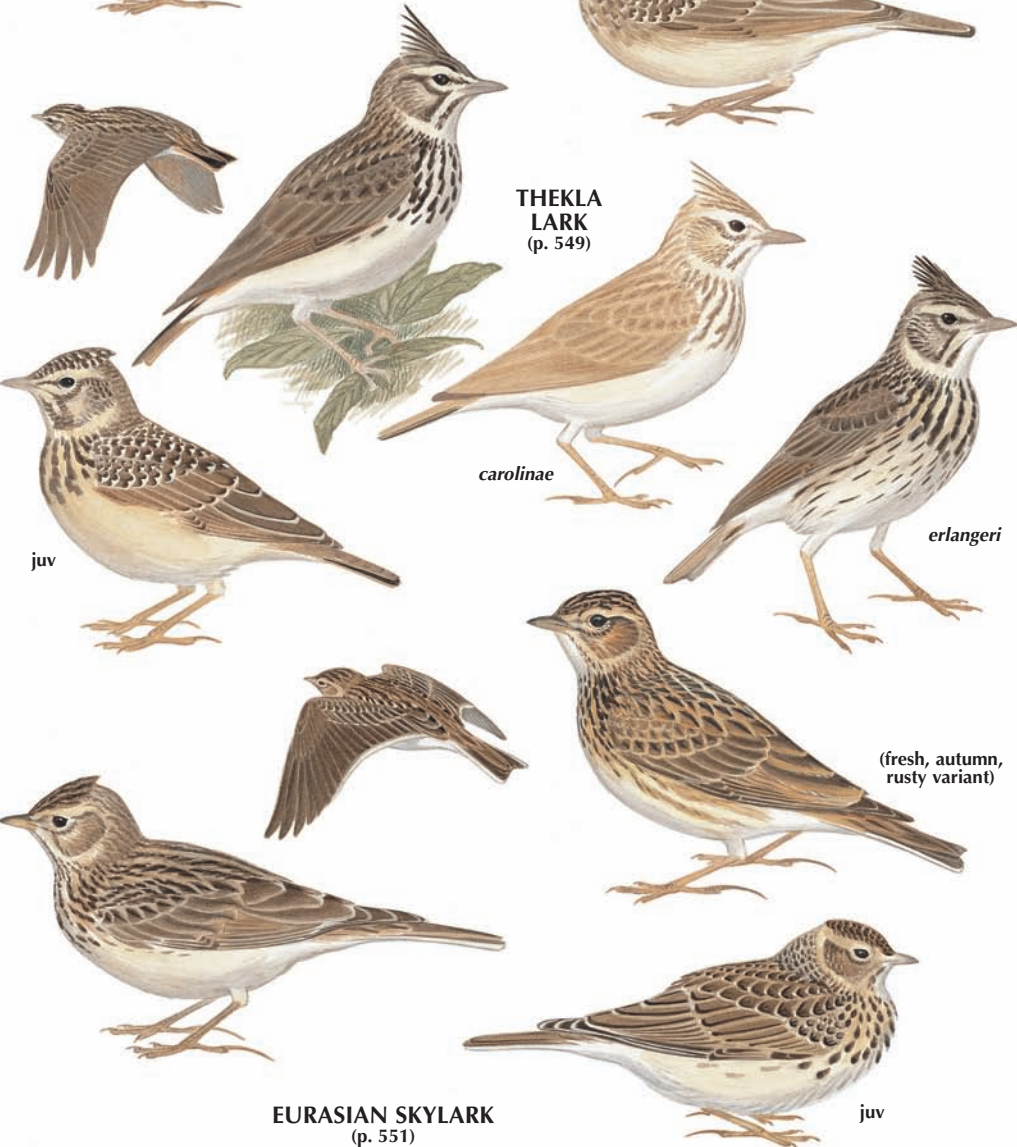
(fresh, autumn)

LARKS

CRESTED LARK
(p. 548)



THEKLA LARK
(p. 549)



EURASIAN SKYLARK
(p. 551)





BARN SWALLOW
(p. 572)

juv

savignii

RED-RUMPED SWALLOW
(p. 573)

juv

juv

COMMON HOUSE MARTIN
(p. 574)

HIRUNDINES

PLAIN MARTIN
(BROWN-THROATED SAND MARTIN)
(p. 569)



SAND MARTIN
(p. 569)



ROCK MARTIN
(p. 571)



presaharica



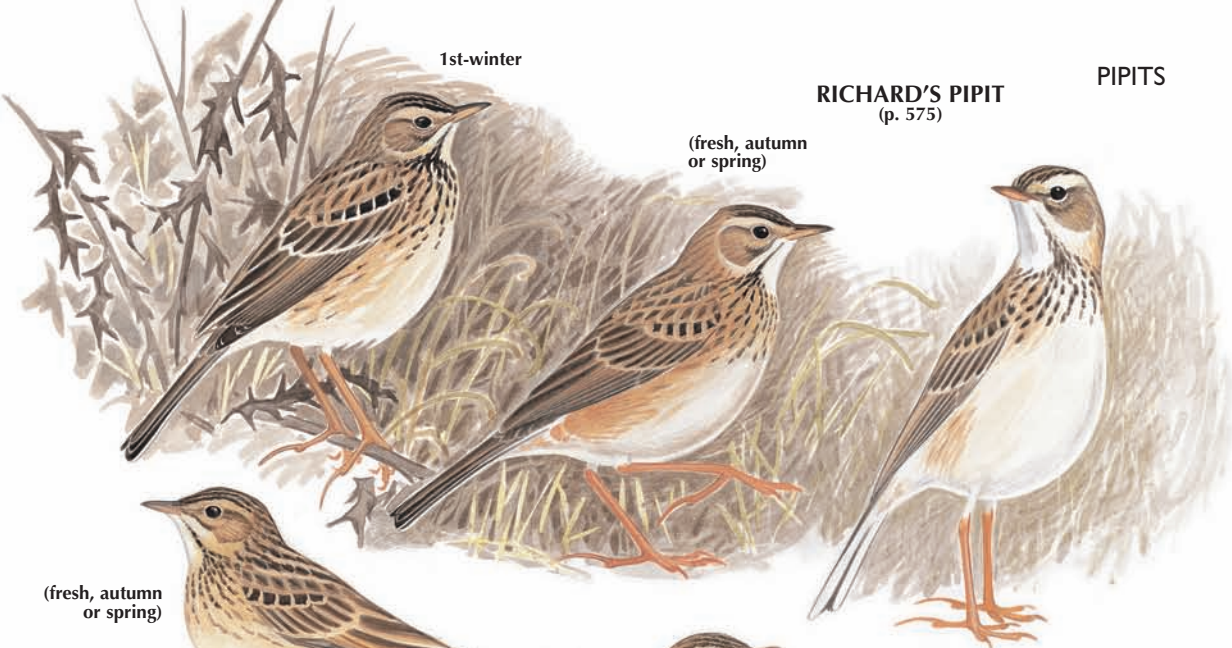
EURASIAN CRAG MARTIN
(p. 571)



RICHARD'S PIPIT
(p. 575)

(fresh, autumn
or spring)

1st-winter



(fresh, autumn
or spring)

BLYTH'S PIPIT
(p. 576)

TAWNY PIPIT
(p. 577)

1st-winter

juv

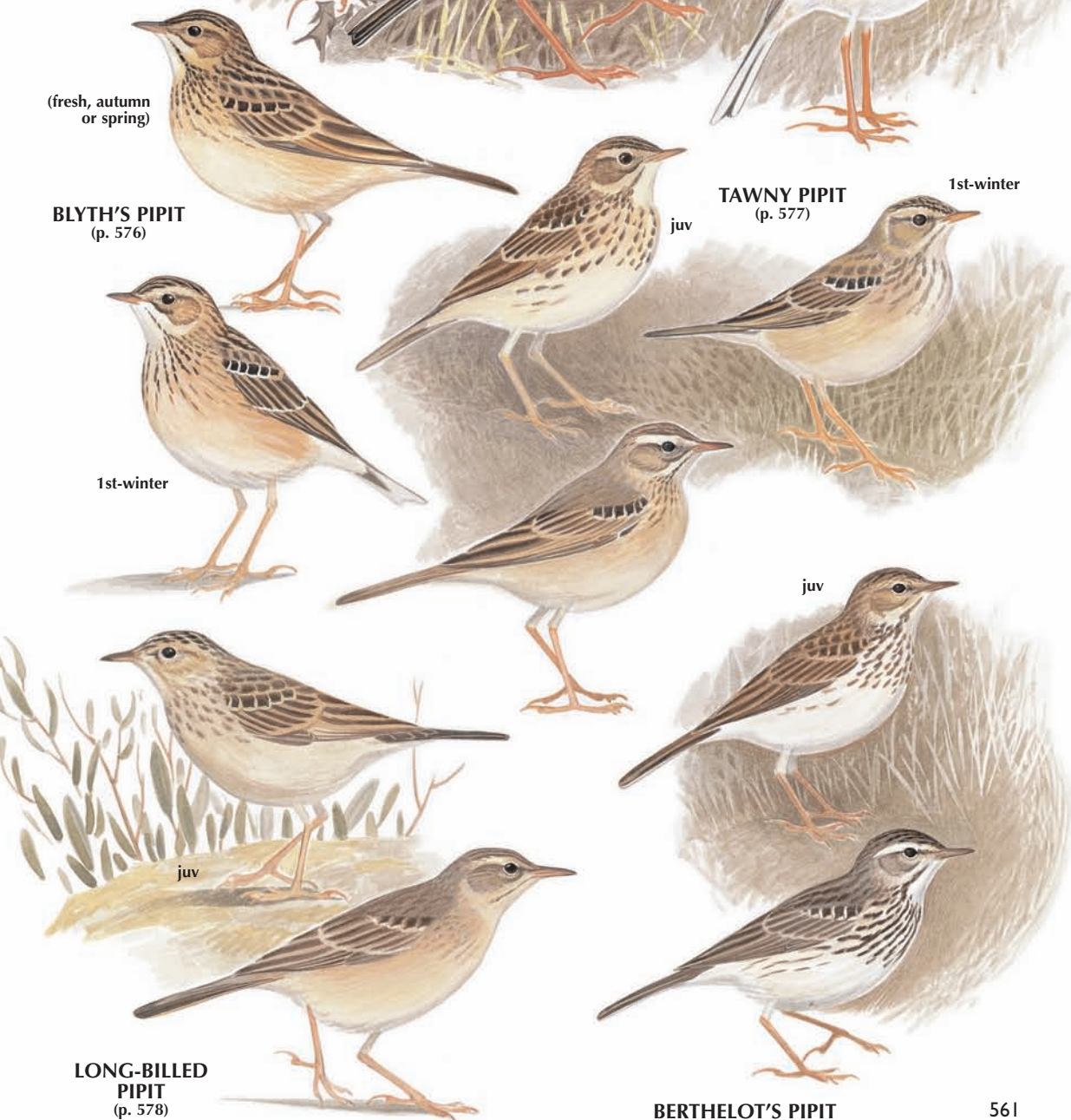
1st-winter

juv

juv

LONG-BILLED PIPIT
(p. 578)

BERTHELOT'S PIPIT
(p. 577)



PIPITS

OLIVE-BACKED PIPIT (p. 578)

juv

summer
(fresh, spring)

summer

summer

TREE PIPIT (p. 579)

juv

summer
(fresh, spring)

juv

winter

winter
(fresh, autumn)

MEADOW PIPIT (p. 581)

summer

summer

PECHORA PIPIT (p. 580)

♂ summer

1st-winter

♂ winter/
♀ summer

RED-THROATED PIPIT (p. 581)

juv

ROCK PIPIT
(p. 582)

winter

summer

summer
littoralis

summer
coutelli

summer

winter

WATER PIPIT
(p. 583)

1st-winter

♂ summer
werae

1st-summer ♀

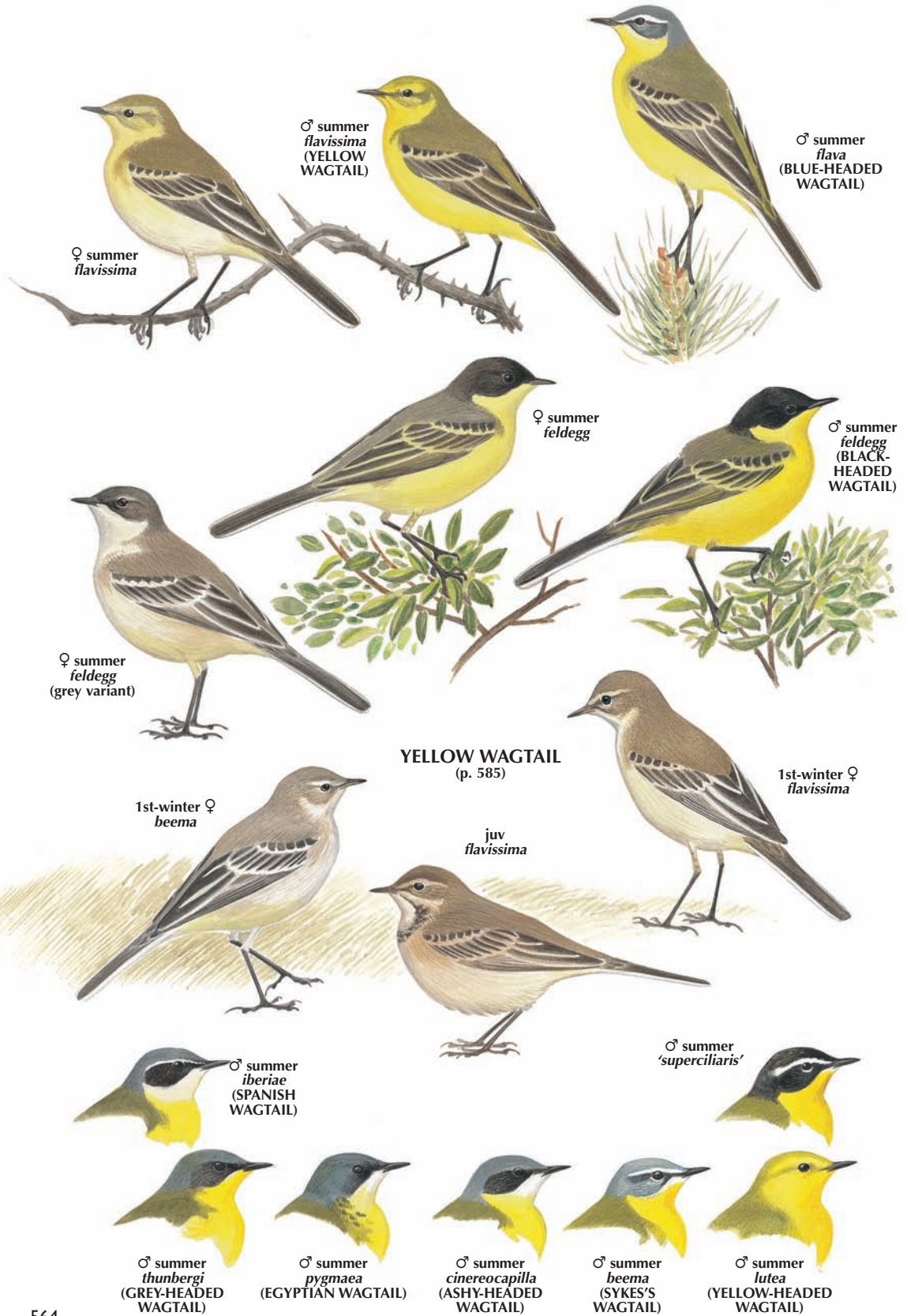
♂ summer

♀ summer

juv

CITRINE WAGTAIL
(p. 587)

WAGTAILS



♂ summer

GREY WAGTAIL
(p. 588)

♀ summer

juv

♂ summer
yarrellii
(PIED
WAGTAIL)

♂ summer
alba
(WHITE
WAGTAIL)

WHITE WAGTAIL
(p. 589)

1st-winter
yarrellii

♀ summer
yarrellii

♂ summer
personata
(MASKED
WAGTAIL)

♂ summer
subpersonata
(MOROCCAN
WAGTAIL)

juv
yarrellii

♀ summer

juv

♂ summer

AFRICAN WAGTAIL
(p. 590)

BULBULS, HYPOCOLIUS, WAXWINGS, DIPPERS

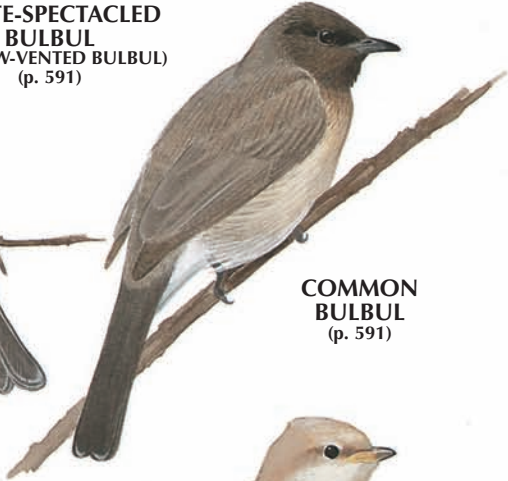
WHITE-EARED
BULBUL
(p. 590)



WHITE-SPECTACLED
BULBUL
(YELLOW-VENTED BULBUL)
(p. 591)



COMMON
BULBUL
(p. 591)



GREY
HYPOCOLIUS
(p. 592)



♀



juv



♂



juv



1st-winter ♂



BOHEMIAN WAXWING
(p. 592)



WHITE-THROATED DIPPER
(p. 593)



juv

WINTER WREN
(p. 593)

zetlandicus

WRENS, ACCENTORS



DUNNOCK
(p. 596)

obscura

SIBERIAN
ACCENTOR
(p. 596)



RADDE'S ACCENTOR
(p. 597)



BLACK-THROATED
ACCENTOR
(p. 597)



ALPINE ACCENTOR
(p. 598)



GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Quite marked. 6 races (*flava*, *penicillata* and *atlas* illustrated), including vagrant nominate. Northern race *flava* has well-developed pinkish tones above, is markedly yellow on face and throat and has face and chest patches separated; isolated *atlas* of Morocco is similar, but paler. Vagrant nominate race from E Canada (has reached W Europe) almost indistinguishable from *flava*, but has lesser wing coverts darker, less pinkish, red. Race *brandti* from steppes of N Caspian eastwards similar to *flava*, but has whitish, not yellowish, face and throat. Remaining races have black head and chest patches joined (at least in males), with *penicillata* from the Caucasus, E Turkey and N Iraq often whitish on throat centre in worn plumage. Race *balcanica* of SE Europe similar, but throat deeper yellow (birds of W Turkey

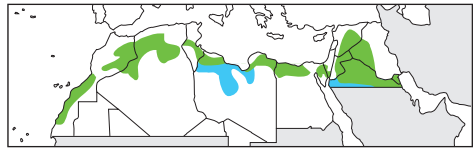
are of uncertain affinities but may be referable to this form). Isolated *bicornis* of the Lebanon and Mt Hermon (Israel/Syria) has throat and face very pale yellow, fading white with wear, and almost unstreaked sandy-buff upperparts; in many respects recalls Temminck's Lark.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common (but rather uncommon in NW Europe). (In addition to mapped range, has bred Scotland.) Southern populations favour barren stony plateaus, dry steppes and grassy, boulder-strewn mountain slopes above tree-line; will descend in winter to plains and valleys, favouring cultivation and especially stubble fields. Northern race *flava* breeds on dry tundra, resorting in winter to stubble fields, heavily grazed coastal meadows, salt-marshes and beaches.

TEMMINCK'S LARK *Eremophila bilopha* Temminck's Horned Lark

L 14–15 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Desert counterpart of Horned Lark, occurring in flat, stony desert. Ecologically separated from Horned in Morocco and Middle East, where latter confined to mountains but may descend to foothill plains in winter. Smaller and slimmer than Horned, with unstreaked warm sandy-rufous upperparts, often with pinkish flush on nape. Black facial and chest patches separated and face and throat always white. Two races of Horned occur close to, or within, range of Temminck's. In Morocco, Horned confined to alpine zone of Atlas Mountains, this form (*atlas*) easily distinguished by being larger and plumper with greyish, streaked upperparts and by having distinctly yellow face and throat. In mountains of Lebanon and Israel/Syria border (Mt Hermon), race *bicornis* of Horned sometimes descends to foothill plains of Syria in winter (thus possibly meeting Temminck's): this race is closer to Temminck's in being virtually unstreaked warm pinkish-buff above and white on face and throat in worn plumage, but is larger and plumper, with yellowish face and throat in fresh plumage, facial and chest patches meet (narrowly) to give smaller whitish throat area, and wing coverts and tertials are distinctly olive-brown, not sandy-rufous. Additionally, if seen in pairs, female Horned shows less extensive black patterning on chest and head than male, whereas sexes virtually identical in Temminck's. Beware hunched Temminck's giving impression of head and chest patches meeting; also, in very worn plumages black areas are more extensive, sometimes almost joining at neck sides as in Horned. Very pale juvenile lacks black head-and-breast pattern and can be confusing, but usually accompanied by adults; slim appearance, small thin dark bill and dark legs coupled with longish



tail with white outer feathers distinctive. In flight, basic pattern much as Horned, but is sandy-rufous above; from below, blackish underside to tail even more striking than in Horned. Flight usually low over ground, but flies higher when moving considerable distances. Often more confiding than Horned. Mixes loosely with other larks in winter, but avoids cultivation. Usually found in pairs, but forms small parties outside breeding season.

SEX/AGE Sexes similar, but adult females have narrower black forecrown band than males. Black on head and breast not noticeably obscured in fresh plumage (unlike Horned). Juvenile lacks black on head and breast and is indistinctly scaly above (owing to pale feather fringes); much as adult after first moult.

VOICE Calls include a quiet metallic 'seeoo' and a soft, nasal 'tzeu' when flushed. Song a series of drawn-out whistles, interspersed with quiet warbling and twittering phrases, uttered both from ground and in low fluttering song flight, bird rising to some 20 m, singing while hovering, but soon plummeting back to ground.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. Disperses southwards in winter. Flat barren, stony desert and semi-desert with scattered sparse vegetation, favouring areas where the substrate consists of small stones, but sometimes on areas of compacted sand or silt.

SWALLOWS & MARTINS Hirundinidae

11 species (4 vagrant)

Hirundines are streamlined, often elegant-looking birds that, like swifts, spend much time on the wing feeding on flying or windblown insects. The Barn Swallow is one of the most familiar and best-loved birds of our region. Bodies narrow and compact, with short necks and short, broad and flattened bills. Legs very short. Tails forked, in some species very deeply. Wings long and pointed. Completely at home in the

air, being fast and highly manoeuvrable. Unlike swifts, perch freely on wires and other suitable locations, but awkward on ground, with slow, shuffling gait. Most nest in or on buildings, in caves or on cliffs; some species use culverts, holes in banks or large holes in trees. Highly sociable when not breeding, often gathering in very large congregations at reedbed roosting places. Songs and calls rather subdued and generally lacking in complexity: typically harsh twitterings or buzzings.

Sexes similar. Little or no seasonal variation. Juveniles closely resemble adults. Adult plumage fully attained by end of first winter.

Hirundines are unlikely to be confused with anything apart from swifts, from which they can be differentiated by slighter build, less sickle-shaped wings, more fluttering, less powerful flight action and, in Barn and Red-rumped Swallows, presence of very long outer tail feathers.

Identification within the family mainly straightforward in our region. Points to concentrate on are:

Overall coloration of upperparts • Presence or absence of elongated outer tail feathers • Presence or absence of white rump patch • Pattern of underparts

PLAIN MARTIN *Riparia paludicola*

Plate page 560

Brown-throated Sand Martin

L 12 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Small hirundine of rivers and wetlands in Morocco. Recalls Sand Martin but dingier overall, without latter's clean-cut looks. Lacks clean-cut breast band and contrasting white throat of Sand; instead has dusky throat, breast and flanks contrasting only weakly with white centre of belly and undertail. Flight weaker and more fluttering than Sand's: at times recalls small bat. Could also be confused with Rock Martin (but ranges do not overlap); latter is only slightly larger but is greyer above, lacks dusky throat and upper breast (being uniform pale buff below), has dark underwing coverts that contrast with paler remainder of underwing (Plain has underwing rather uniform greyish-brown) and has white spots on tail (visible when tail spread in flight). Larger Eurasian Crag Martin has dark speckling on throat, but is noticeably more heavily built overall and has even stronger contrast between blackish underwing coverts and paler remainder of underwing, as well as dusky (instead of white) undertail and



white spots on tail (visible when spread).

SEX/AGE Juvenile closely resembles adult, but initially has buff feather fringes to upperparts (most obvious on forehead, wing coverts, tertials and back to uppertail coverts) and buff tinge to underparts.

VOICE Contact call a low, rasping 'chrrr', similar to that of Sand Martin but less harsh. Also a harsh 'sveeh'. Song a soft twitter.

STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon. Rivers, seasonal watercourses or lakes in open country; also sand pits. Breeds in sandy banks; often roosts in reedbeds.

SAND MARTIN *Riparia riparia*

Plate page 560

Common Sand Martin; Bank Swallow (N America)

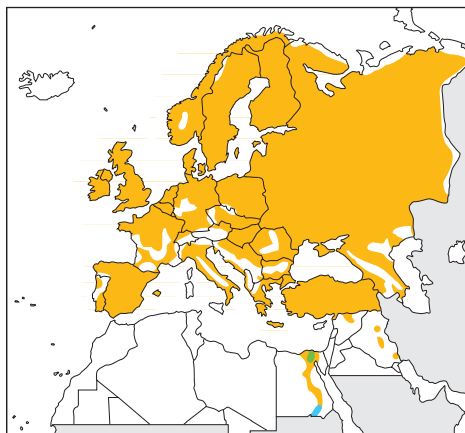
L 12 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Widespread small brown and white martin of rivers and wetlands. The only brown-backed martin in the north of our region. Easily separated from other short-tailed hirundines (except vagrant Banded Martin, q.v.) by clear-cut brown breast band that contrasts with white throat and remainder of underparts; even so, breast band sometimes hard to see on rapidly darting and turning individuals. Beware also juvenile Common House Martin seen only from below (with white rump patch invisible), when dusky sides of breast can create impression of breast band.

SEX/AGE Juvenile closely resembles adult but initially has cinnamon feather fringes to upperparts (most obvious on forehead, wing coverts, tertials and back to uppertail coverts), rich buff wash on lower face and throat, and often rufous tinge to centre of breast band.

VOICE Contact call a harsh, rasping 'tschr' or 'brtt'. Song is a harsh, chattering twitter, sounding rather like a rapid series of contact calls run together.

TAXONOMY The form *diluta* is sometimes treated as a full species under the name **Pale Sand Martin**. It is said to overlap in range with nominate *riparia* in some areas without interbreeding.



GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Fairly slight. 3 races (nominate illustrated). Race *shellei* (Egypt) is slightly

paler on upperparts and breast band, while race *diluta* (Ural River eastwards) is distinctly paler on upperparts and has paler, narrower and less clear-cut breast band.
STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Morocco, Algeria. Almost all winter

south of the Sahara.) Breeds in sandy banks along rivers, by lakes or along coasts; also sand pits. Often roosts in reedbeds. Favours open areas, avoiding densely forested and mountainous regions. On migration regularly feeds away from water.



BANDED MARTIN *Riparia cincta*

Plate above

L 16 cm.

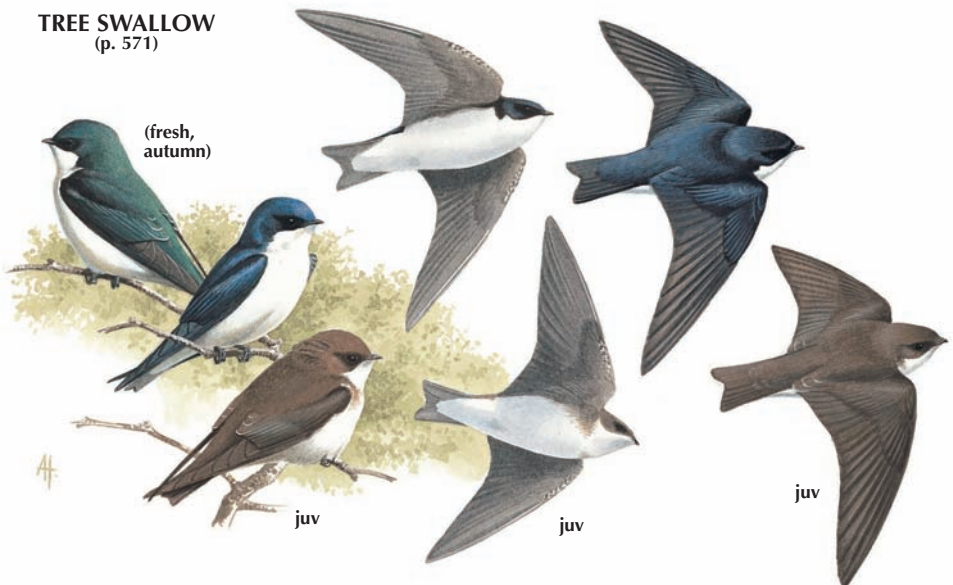
IDENTIFICATION Large vagrant martin from sub-Saharan Africa. Recalls Sand Martin but significantly larger (bigger than Eurasian Crag Martin) with square-ended tail, broader dark breast band, white (not dark) underwing coverts that contrast with darker flight feathers, and short white supercilium in front of eye.

SEX/AGE Juvenile closely resembles adult, but has broad buff fringes to wing coverts and tertials.

VOICE Contact call a dry 'chip' or 'chrip'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Egypt). In natural range, breeds in sandy banks and pits, feeding over grassland, scrubby pastures, marshes, rivers and pools.

TREE SWALLOW
(p. 571)



TREE SWALLOW *Tachycineta bicolor*

Plate page 570

L 14 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. A fairly large martin-like hirundine with dark, glossy bluish-green (adult male spring), greenish (adult male autumn) or brownish-green (adult female) upperparts and gleaming white underparts. Shape and clean white underparts recall Common House Martin, but easily separated by absence of white rump patch. Duller juvenile, with greyish-brown upperparts and diffuse greyish breast band, not unlike Sand Martin, but breast band of latter always darker and clean-cut, contrasting sharply with white throat and remainder of underparts. (Note: breast band sometimes hard to see

on rapidly darting Sand Martin, so beware.)

SEX/AGE Adult female duller (less glossy) and browner above than male. Fresh autumn adults have white tips to tertials. Juvenile resembles adult female but even duller and greyer-brown above, with diffuse greyish breast band and less prominent whitish tips to tertials.

VOICE Contact call a liquid, twittering 'klweet'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, breeds in forested and wooded areas near water (nesting mainly in tree holes); also quite open country on migration.

ROCK MARTIN *Hirundo fuligula*

Plate page 560

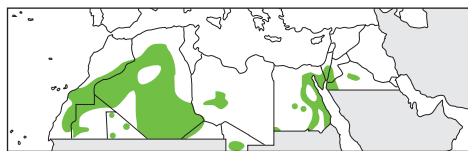
L 13 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Small pale brownish martin of desert ravines and gorges. Most easily confused with very similar Eurasian Crag Martin (especially in southwest of our region: see Geographical Variation), with which it comes into marginal contact (especially in winter). Compared with latter, is smaller, slimmer and (in east of our region) paler. At close range reveals unspotted chin and throat and less dark underwing coverts that contrast less with remainder of underwing. Flight less powerful, more hesitant. See also Plain Martin.

SEX/AGE Juvenile closely resembles adult, but slightly paler and greyer above with buff or whitish feather tips (most noticeable on wing coverts, tertials and from mantle to uppertail coverts). Underparts deeper buff.

VOICE Not very vocal. Contact calls a sharp, Barn Swallow-like 'wit' and a dry, buzzy, more Sand Martin-like 'tchurr'. Song a soft twitter.

TAXONOMY The races found in our region were formerly (together with extralimital races found from Pakistan to Arabia and perhaps Niger) treated as a full species: **Pale Crag Martin** *H. obsoleta*. They differ in being paler than the races of sub-Saharan Africa (sub-



stantially so in the case of those populations found from Egypt to Pakistan).

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 4 races (*obsoleta* and *presaharica* illustrated). Overall coloration varies clinally from palest in northeast to darkest in south. Race *perpallida* of NE Arabia and S Iraq is palest, race *obsoleta* (Egypt to SW Iran) is somewhat darker, race *presaharica* (NW Sahara) is darker still (only slightly paler and greyer than Eurasian Crag Martin) and *spatz* (of Libya and Tibesti to Mali) is darkest of all (and very close to Eurasian Crag Martin in tone).

STATUS/HABITAT Locally fairly common. Cliffs, gorges and ravines in desert country; locally also buildings and ancient monuments.

EURASIAN CRAG MARTIN *Hirundo rupestris*

Plate page 560

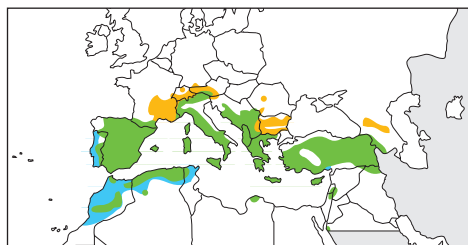
Crag Martin

L 14.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Fairly large, stocky brownish martin of mountainous country. Flight fast and powerful, but also very agile. Compared with Sand Martin is larger, with dusky ventral area and dark-spotted throat, no dark breast band and contrastingly dark underwing coverts. Upper body and inner wing coverts are paler and cooler (grey-brown), contrasting with darker remainder of wing and tail. Has white spots near tip of tail, visible when tail spread in flight. For distinctions from similar Rock Martin, see that species. See also Plain Martin.

SEX/AGE Juvenile resembles adult, but initially has rufous fringes to feathers of upperparts (most noticeable on wing coverts, tertials and mantle to uppertail coverts); these later bleach to buff or whitish. Underparts initially tinged rufous from chin to belly. Throat (but not chin) usually lacks dark spotting.

VOICE Contact calls include quiet but hard 'prrit', 'prrip' and disyllabic 'prtit' notes. Song a quiet, hoarse twitter.



STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. Cliffs, gorges and sometimes buildings in hilly and mountainous country, often along watercourses; generally avoids sunless cliffs and cold summits. Outside breeding season deserts coldest, highest breeding areas, many descending to foothills and locally coastal cliffs or even open lowlands.

BARN SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica*

Plate page 559

Swallow, Common Swallow

L 13–19 cm (incl. tail 6–12 cm).

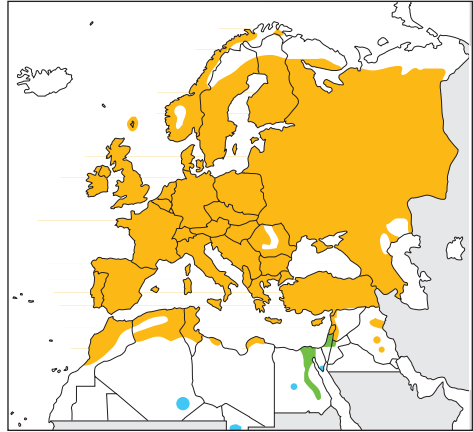
IDENTIFICATION One of the best-loved and most familiar birds of our region. The first swallows sailing overhead, chattering away, are a foretaste of summer to come. Adult, with its long tail streamers, dark throat/breast and lack of pale rump patch, is unmistakable. Duller juvenile, with short tail streamers and paler (warm buff or rufous) throat, is less distinctive but still unlikely to be confused. See also Red-rumped Swallow and vagrant Ethiopian Swallow.

SEX/AGE Adult female differs from male in having shorter tail streamers (although there is a slight overlap) and has slightly less deep blue upperparts and duller, less glossy (dark brown-black, not bluish-black) breast band. Juvenile resembles adult, but has only short, blunt tail streamers and warm buff or rufous (not dark chestnut) forehead, chin and throat; juvenile is also duller overall, with less glossy upperparts and breast band.

VOICE Contact call a clear, sharp 'witt' or 'witt-witt' (sometimes a longer series of notes that run together). Song a scratchy but melodious rapid twittering, often interspersed with a harsh rattle, and sometimes ending with a creaking, 'rusty-hinge' sound.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 3 races (nominate and *savignii* illustrated). Nominate race occurs over most of our region, but *transitiva* (breeds Lebanon to Israel) has lower breast to undertail coverts rufous-buff, while *savignii* (breeds Egypt) has this area deep rufous.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped



range, has bred Iceland, Faeroes. Almost all, apart from resident Egyptian race and partly migratory Levantine race, winter south of the Sahara or in S Asia. Small numbers winter in NW Africa and Iberian Peninsula.) All kinds of open or semi-open country from farmland to grassland, marshes and partly wooded areas, but generally avoids densely forested areas and high mountains. Highly dependent on presence of suitable buildings for nesting.

ETHIOPIAN SWALLOW *Hirundo aethiopica*

Plate below

L 11–13 cm (incl. tail 4–6 cm).

IDENTIFICATION Vagrant from sub-Saharan Africa. A rather small swallow with only fairly short tail streamers. Although sharing Barn Swallow's chestnut forehead and white panel in tail, unlikely to be confused due to markedly smaller size, much shorter tail streamers and whitish throat, bordered below by narrow steel-blue breast band (broken in centre); adult Barn has much longer tail streamers and complete broad black breast band bordering chestnut throat. Short tail streamers shared by juvenile Barn, but latter

has warm buff or rufous (not chestnut) forehead and throat, and complete broad blackish breast band. In flight, shows whitish underwing coverts (more buff-tinged in Barn). Juvenile, with brownish cap and incomplete brownish breast band, unlikely to be confused; as with adults, has Barn Swallow-like white panel in tail, most visible on underside.

SEX/AGE Juvenile has shorter tail streamers and has brownish-buff forehead and crown (forehead chestnut and crown glossy steel-blue in adult), rest of upper-

ETHIOPIAN SWALLOW



parts ashy-brown with some steel-blue gloss (entirely glossy steel-blue in adult) and brown partial breast band (steel-blue in adult).

VOICE Usual call is a sharp 'chip' or 'cheut'. Song is loud and prolonged, consisting of melodious squeak-

ing and twittering phrases.

STATUS Vagrant (Israel). In natural range, occurs in a wide variety of more open habitats, including grassland, savanna, thornbush, open woodland and wetlands; also frequents towns and villages, and coastal cliffs.

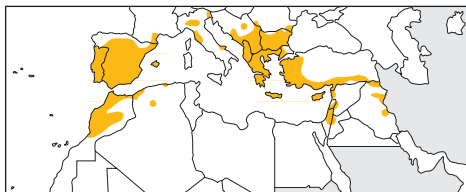
RED-RUMPED SWALLOW *Hirundo daurica*

Plate page 559

L 14–18 cm (incl. tail 7–11 cm).

IDENTIFICATION Long-tailed swallow of the south of our region. Only Barn Swallow shares the long tail streamers. Differs from latter in having pale rufous or (when worn) creamy rump patch, pale throat/breast, black (not white) undertail coverts and entirely black tail feathers (without white panels). Even if seen from below, when pale rump patch invisible, easily separated from Barn by largely pale underparts sharply contrasting with all-black 'tail end'. (Black undertail coverts create impression that tail is even longer than it actually is.) Flight typically more leisurely than that of Barn, with extended 'sailing' glides, soaring climbs and less rapid wing action. Unlike Barn, typically keeps tail closed, with tail streamers often touching and forming a long spike at the rear. Much less social than Barn: usually in pairs, sometimes in small to medium-sized groups but never in large aggregations. See also Common House Martin (regarding hybrid Common House Martin x Barn Swallow).

SEX/AGE Worn adults have rump patch largely cream and may show blackish on hindneck, partly interrupting pale collar. Juvenile closely resembles adult, but duller, less glossy, above (initially showing pale buff feather fringes) and paler, rufous-buff, on collar, supercilium and rump patch; underparts are paler buff (with less pronounced dark shaft streaks, not extending



below breast); tail streamers shorter and blunter.

VOICE Not very vocal. Contact call a sparrow-like chirp: 'tchreet'. Also a nasal 'tzueeee' recalling European Greenfinch. Song like poor version of Barn Swallow's but shorter, quieter and more nasal.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (*rufula* illustrated). Nominate race (breeds C Asia eastwards), a vagrant to N Europe, differs in having central hindneck blue-black (so pale collar is interrupted) and slightly longer and bolder dark streaking on underparts.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Corsica, Sardinia.) Breeds in caves, in buildings, under bridges and in culverts in open or partly wooded country in broken, hilly or mountainous country, avoiding densely forested regions, wide open plains and highest mountain areas.

AMERICAN CLIFF SWALLOW *Hirundo pyrrhonota*

Plate below

Cliff Swallow

L 13 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Small but chunky swallow with short, square-cut tail and rufous-buff rump patch. Like Red-rumped Swallow, glides and soars even more than most hirundines. Rufous-buff rump patch could lead to confusion with Red-rumped in poor view, but short, square-cut tail, whitish undertail, dark throat and, in adult, conspicuously whitish

forehead and deep rufous ear-coverts combine to make separation simple. At a distance, best separated from Common House Martin by rufous-buff rather than white rump patch, dark throat, dingy (not clean-cut) overall appearance and square-cut (not forked) tail.

SEX/AGE Juvenile resembles adult, but is duller and greyer-brown overall, with less contrastingly pale



AMERICAN CLIFF SWALLOW

forehead (grey-buff tinged with rufous instead of whitish-buff) and dusky ear-coverts and throat tinged with rufous (upper throat of adult is deep rufous, becoming blackish on lower throat/upper breast).
VOICE Contact calls a low 'chrr' and a nasal 'nyew'.

Song a series of harsh, squeaking and grating notes.
STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, breeds on cliffs, on buildings and under bridges, feeding over marshes, rivers and open or partly wooded country.

COMMON HOUSE MARTIN *Delichon urbica*

Plate page 559

House Martin, Northern House Martin

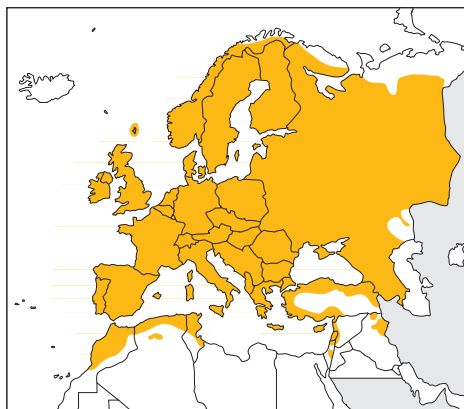
L 12.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Familiar 'black-and-white' martin nesting in colonies on buildings. Makes cup-shaped mud-walled nests. Conspicuous white rump patch separates it instantly from all other hirundines of our region. In juvenile, greyish wash sometimes pronounced on sides of breast and, from some angles, may suggest presence of a breast band (so beware confusion with Sand Martin when white rump patch not seen). Often flies very high when feeding, joining swifts. Flight generally less twisting and darting than that of Barn Swallow, with more soaring and circling.

SEX/AGE Adult female summer not so pure white below and on rump patch as adult male summer. Adult winter mottled with greyish on rump patch, cheeks, chin, throat and flanks, so lacks the striking contrast of summer plumage. Juvenile resembles adult but duller, less glossy, above, and underparts (apart from belly and vent) and sometimes rump patch are washed with greyish to a greater or lesser degree; tertials broadly tipped white and tail fork less deep.

VOICE Contact call a hard, abrupt 'prrr' or slightly longer 'pri-pit' (said to recall two pebbles rubbed together). Song a soft, sweet twittering interspersed with dry rattles.

HYBRIDS Rare Common House Martin x Barn Swallow has intermediate characters, with bluish-black upperparts, pale pinkish rump patch, dark throat patch (but less solid than in Barn Swallow) and deeply forked tail that lacks streamers. Could be confused with Red-rumped Swallow in poor view, but lack of



tail streamers, black undertail coverts and rufous-buff collar, and presence of dark throat patch make separation straightforward.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Iceland, Faeroes.) Breeds on buildings, under bridges and locally on cliffs. Like other hirundines avoids densely forested areas, but often found nesting in towns and high mountain country. Only occasionally roosts in reedbeds, but often feeds over water.

PIPITS & WAGTAILS Motacillidae

18 species (3 vagrant)

Pipits and wagtails share many structural characteristics, but from the identification viewpoint need to be considered separately.

PIPITS

13 species (3 vagrant)

Small brownish, streaky ground birds, usually of open country (although Tree Pipit and Olive-backed Pipit breed in areas with trees and bushes). All species have white or very pale outer tail feathers, readily apparent when flushed. Pipits have long tertials, cloaking primaries on folded wing, a feature also shared by larks and wagtails; their bills are slim and their legs relatively long and slender; their slim tails are typically wagged as the birds walk or run about. Nests are hidden on ground. Songs rich, varied and musical, typically delivered during song flights above territory.

Sexes similar. The majority of plumages are similar from one season to another, although the often rather subtle differences between fresh plumage in autumn and spring and worn plumage in summer and winter can be confusing within a group of such similar-looking birds. Adults have complete post-breeding moult and partial pre-breeding moult. Juveniles usually resemble adults in plumage as soon as they leave

the nest, but some have upperparts scaled or mottled, rather than streaked; their legs are typically brighter and more pinkish and the plumage brighter, buff or even yellowish in tone compared to adults. Much as adults after post-juvenile moult.

Pipits most closely resemble their fellow family members, the wagtails, but latter differ in having even longer tails, no streaking on either upperparts or underparts and, unlike most pipit species, dark legs. Like most wagtails, pipits have pale wing bars formed by tips to median and greater coverts, and conspicuous dark centres to median coverts. Outside the family, confusion most likely with some larks, but larks are fatter, squatter birds, often with some form of ruffled crest; pipits perch on wires or even trees and bushes quite readily, unlike most larks. Flight of both strongly undulating, but pipits look slimmer than larks in flight. Like larks, pipits migrate both by day and by night. They have aerial song displays, although the song phrases are short, unlike those of many larks, and the song flights typically end with an oblique, rapidly parachuting glide. Less sociable than larks, although some species (i.e. Meadow and Red-throated Pipits) migrate in sizeable flocks. (Note: vagrant Northern Waterthrush is also somewhat pipit-like.)

Several tricky identification problems exist within the group. Most species have distinctive flight calls, readily uttered when flushed, and these are basically more important than plumage with some difficult species-pairs (e.g. Meadow and Tree Pipits); however, pipits utter several different calls, especially on breeding grounds, which may be less distinctive. In worn plumage, some species are so similar that identification on plumage features may not be possible with problematic individuals. Useful features to concentrate on are:

Calls (especially flight call when flushed) • **Head pattern** • **Extent of streaking on upperparts** • **Leg colour** • **Length of hind-claw** (often visible with telescope if bird perches on wire, bare twig or stone)

RICHARD'S PIPIT *Anthus richardi*

Plate pages 561 & 576

L 18 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Asian vagrant (breeds C Siberia and C Asia eastwards). Large, bulky, long-tailed, long-legged pipit with long hind-claw. Confusion likely only with Tawny Pipit or very similar vagrant Blyth's Pipit, which see for discussion. Upperparts warm brown, streaked darker, offering some contrast with plainer nape and rump. Some individuals, however, are less prominently streaked and more sandy above; such birds are more suggestive of Tawny Pipit and are perhaps from another population than the nominate race (see Geographical Variation). Fresh-plumaged birds have broad brown (even buff-brown) feather edges which abrade, making dark feather centres more striking. Head pattern shows a fairly pronounced supercilium, broad pale eye-surround, dark eye-stripe behind eye, and (importantly) pale lore (note: shadow can create effect of lore line from certain angles). Bill is slightly stouter (more thrush-like) than in other large pipits. Underparts show a breast band of dark streaks and a prominent blackish malar stripe, ending in a blackish blob at sides of upper breast; a warmer buff wash across breast extends down to cover flanks (latter feature important, but often concealed by folded wing). Stance usually rather upright, recalling Northern Wheatear (which it also resembles in body bulk); runs with horizontal posture, pausing with neck craned and tail down, giving distinctly potbellied appearance. Typically rather wary, flying considerable distance when flushed with strong, long-bounding flight action, uttering sparrow-like call; typically hovers briefly before alighting, in manner of Eurasian Skylark. Favours rough grassland for partial concealment when feeding, unlike Tawny. Rock and Water Pipits both more compact, and with dark, not pinkish, legs and different call. Although plumage not unlike that of Eurasian Skylark, shape and call quite different.

SEX/AGE Fresh plumage buff and warmer than when worn, when underparts whiter, breast streaking stronger and upperparts greyer-brown. Juvenile plumage is very rarely seen in our region: such birds have much darker crown, mantle, scapulars and back than



adults, with black feathers only narrowly edged buffish-white (adults are warm olive-brown above with blackish feather centres), lesser wing coverts (usually hidden in field) black with buff fringes (greyish with weak buff tips in adults), and median coverts, greater coverts and tertials narrowly but cleanly fringed with whitish or pale buff (fringes broad, diffuse and warm buff in fresh adults); underparts whiter, with dark breast markings appearing as spots rather than streaks and some weak streaking on flanks. Autumn immatures moulting into 1st-winter (more frequent than adults in our region) are more like adult, but retain some juvenile wing coverts, tertials and odd blacker juvenile feathers on mantle, scapulars or back well into autumn.

VOICE Most typical call is a loud, harsh, shrieked 'schreep' or longer 'scherrreep' uttered as bird rises from ground and repeated in flight; very similar to one of calls of House Sparrow. Other calls, hardly ever given in our region, are a shorter, more subdued 'chirp' and a 'chup'; these may be uttered by birds taking short flights. Song, unlikely to be heard in our region, a ringing and rather monotonous 'chee-chee-chee-chia-chia-chia' (with last three units falling in pitch). Gives some sparrow-like chirrups while ascending, then monotonous song while in circling flight, before silent parachuting descent; also sings from bushes or ground.

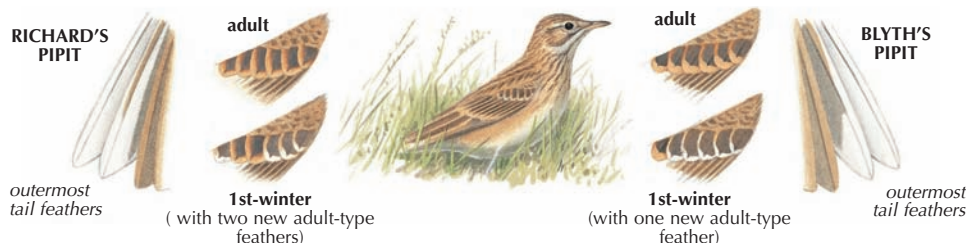
TAXONOMY Formerly lumped in **Australasian Pipit** *A. novaeseelandiae*, with the enlarged species then being referred to as Richard's Pipit.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Only nominate *richardi* definitely recorded as yet in our region, but some strange-looking individuals were possibly of other Palearctic races. Race *centralasiae* (slightly larger, with

sandier ground colour to upperparts when fresh) or race *dauricus* (like *richardi*, but buffier below and more heavily streaked above) are the most likely candidates. **STATUS/HABITAT** Vagrant across our region (but mostly NW Europe), perhaps wintering regularly in very small

numbers in S Israel and S Spain. In natural range, breeds in moist grassland, wet meadows, large grassy clearings in forest regions and at edges of cultivation. In winter quarters, favours cultivation (ranging from stubble fields to growing crops) and tussocky grassland.

MEDIAN COVERT AND TAIL PATTERNS OF RICHARD'S AND BLYTH'S PIPITS



BLYTH'S PIPIT *Anthus godlewskii*

Plate pages 561 & above

L 17 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Asian vagrant (breeds S Siberia to Tibet). A large pipit, close to Tawny in size, structure and stance but very like Richard's in colour and markings. Structure and call are the best clues to its identity, and any 'strange-calling Richard's' should be carefully scrutinized. **Compared with Richard's:** slightly smaller, more elegant and less bulky, with slightly shorter tail, shorter tarsus, and stance usually more horizontal and recalling Tawny; bill is shorter and more pointed than Richard's but stronger than Tawny's, almost narrowly conical in outline, with relatively deep base. Hind-claw often much shorter and more strongly curved, although this only rarely helpful in the field (see below). Often lacks the hulking impression of Richard's, recalling smaller pipit species with its smaller, neater (less 'butch') head/bill. Plumage similar, including pale lores (latter dark in Tawny). In worn plumage underparts are whiter, breast streaking is more obvious and upperparts are greyer; plumage then probably indistinguishable from that of Richard's. In fresh plumage (i.e. in early autumn or spring) underparts, including undertail coverts, more extensively washed warm buff, some birds being whitish only on centre of belly and thus looking very uniform below (Richard's is buff only on breast and flanks), with wear becoming whitish on throat and centre of breast as well as on belly; flanks, however, are richer buff (like Richard's, although contrast less marked in Blyth's). Breast markings rather more triangular in shape when fresh, less spot-streaked; supercilium often whiter, but typically shorter. Upperparts slightly colder (greyer) brown, less warm, with streaking more pronounced than in Richard's; nape and especially crown more heavily marked; supercilium often less prominent, especially in front of eye (but there is much overlap); ear-coverts sometimes tinged with warm rufous (not seen in Richard's). Most important is shape of dark central area of median-covert feathers (often visible during prolonged telescope views, or in good photographs): in adult Richard's these centres are distinctly triangular, with a buffish border, whereas in adult Blyth's the dark centres are wider and more square-ended, and the border is paler, more sharply delineated and narrower along feather edges; the difference, however, holds good only for fresh adults, juveniles of both species having Richard's-like pattern; immature birds in autumn (the plumage most likely to be seen in our region) will probably have a mixture of older juvenile and fresh adult-like 1st-winter

feathers, while birds in worn plumage have the pattern indecipherable. Juvenile very like juvenile Richard's, but tends to be greyer brown above and have warm rufous tinge to ear-coverts. **Compared with Tawny:** less problematic, although immature Tawny in autumn, moulting into 1st-winter, often heavily streaked above like Richard's or Blyth's. Plumage differences between Tawny and Richard's (see discussion under Tawny) are the same, for the respective ages, as those between Tawny and Blyth's, including Blyth's pale lore (although very rarely Tawny may have lore line indistinct). Structurally and behaviourally, however, Blyth's is more like a Tawny, with relatively slight appearance and horizontal carriage, and regular tail-wagging, but bill is stouter and hind-claw longer. In fresh and moderately worn plumage, the flanks and other lower underparts are washed strongly with buff (unlike Tawny). In flight, unlikely to be separable from the other large pipits, although outer tail feathers lack buffish tone of Tawny; does not typically hover briefly before alighting, a feature characteristic of Richard's. **In the hand** the most reliable features are visible, but even here there is some overlap with other races of Richard's. Second-outermost tail feather shows more extensive white on outer web than in Richard's and less extensive white on inner web, where a white wedge projects backwards for some 15–30 mm from tip; Richard's shows longer white wedge extending 37–54 mm from tip. Tail averages shorter than in Richard's (especially sex for sex) but wholly overlaps with Tawny: Blyth's, 59–74 mm; Richard's, 64–87 mm; Tawny 63–73 mm. Hind-claw is longer than Tawny's, but shorter than Richard's (often significantly so): Blyth's, 9.9–13.4 mm; Richard's, 13.9–24.5 mm (nominate race); Tawny, 6.8–10.1 mm. Tarsus is shorter than Richard's, but much as Tawny's: Blyth's, 24.7–28.1 mm; Richard's, 29–33.6 mm (nominate race); Tawny, 23.9–27.6 mm. Bill: Blyth's, 15.7–18.1 mm; Richard's, 16.9–19.4 mm (nominate race), Tawny, 17.6–20.7 mm. Note: difference in hind-claw length compared with Richard's is sometimes visible in the field, especially when bird perched on rock or other unobscured vantage point. Blyth's has comparatively short and more strongly curved hind-claw, only about equal to hind toe in length, while most Richard's have noticeably long, only moderately curved hind-claw that frequently appears much longer than hind toe.

SEX/AGE Fresh plumage buffier and browner than when worn. Full juvenile plumage is unlikely in our region,

but is as Richard's. 1st-winter birds in autumn (most likely plumage to occur) resemble fresh adult, but retain some juvenile wing coverts and odd blacker juvenile feathers on mantle, scapulars or back well into autumn.

VOICE Typical flight call when flushed a short 'tchut' or 'chep', often repeated and recalling Tawny; also gives a metallic, bunting-like 'chink' or a shrill 'psheet', but latter call weaker, shriller and without rasping House Sparrow-like quality of Richard's, drop-

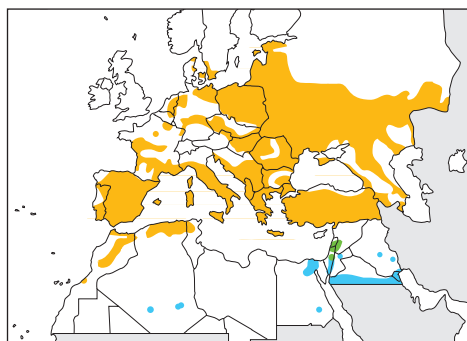
ping slightly in pitch at end. Song, unlikely to be heard in our region, is given in song flight and is quite unlike those of other pipits; a harsh 'zret zret zret zret ...' followed by a rattling 'sri-sri-sererererelee-ueh'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (N and W Europe). Likely to be under-recorded owing to identification problems. In natural range, breeds in dry grassy steppe (often with stony substrate) or on dry, rocky hillsides with sparse grass cover. In winter quarters, habitats much as Richard's.

TAWNY PIPIT *Anthus campestris*

L 17 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Large, long-legged and long-tailed pipit, resembling vagrant Richard's in size, but a little slimmer (less potbellied), with slightly shorter legs and tail, thinner bill (with less decurved tip to upper mandible) and shorter hind-claw. Adults almost unmarked (streaking very indistinct) greyish-sandy above, with contrasting dark median-covert bar; underparts pale sandy-buff with sparse and irregular dark streaking on breast (or none). Confusion unlikely except with similar Long-billed Pipit (q.v.) of parts of Middle East or with worn summer-plumaged Water Pipit (which, however, is less elegant-looking and has dark legs). Dull Yellow Wagtails can look vaguely Tawny Pipit-like but have black legs. Juvenile and many autumn birds moulting into 1st-winter plumage are very different from adults and can easily be confused with vagrant Richard's or Blyth's; by mid-autumn many young birds are similar to adults, but others have vestiges of juvenile plumage such as uneven breast streaking or dark-centred scapulars, whereas others may be still mostly juvenile (heavily streaked or scalloped with dark above and below), thus resembling Richard's. These streaky Tawny Pipits may be distinguished from Richard's by having strongly streaked rump (weakly streaked in Richard's), often broader pale fringes to tertials, almost uniform creamy-sandy or whitish ground colour to underparts (Richard's has warm buff flanks and to a lesser degree breast), often rather irregular streaking on breast (as adult feathers moult through) and, most importantly, different head pattern. Tawny has dark loreal stripe (lacking in Richard's, but note that at some angles Richard's can seem to have dark lore, while very rarely it is faint or lacking in Tawny), narrow pale eye-ring (broader pale area about eye in Richard's), darker ear-coverts (pale-centred in Richard's) and often a less distinct dark malar stripe. Slight structural differences mentioned above are usually apparent if observer familiar with both species. In flight, slightly sandy or pale buff wash on outer tail feathers often visible when plumage fresh, becoming whiter with wear; weaker or more chirping flight calls also helpful; often stalls briefly before alighting, typically lacking short fluttering hover characteristic of Richard's. Tawny more wagtail-like in actions, running about with body horizontal, often tail-wagging, although will stand with more erect posture; often seems more 'relaxed' than Richard's. Tawny has a distinct preference for very short vegetation or bare areas (e.g. sandy tracks, short grass), whereas Richard's pre-



fers longer, coarser grassland. See also discussions under Blyth's and Long-billed Pipits.

SEX/AGE Little difference between fresh and worn plumage in colour, merely in amount of feather wear. Juvenile described under Identification; gradually acquires adult plumage in autumn and early winter.

VOICE Main flight calls House Sparrow-like, although considerably weaker, less emphatic and less harsh than typical calls of Richard's: a weak 'tchilp' or a longer 'shleeup' (latter also recalling some calls of Yellow Wagtail). When flying short distances, often gives a low, weak 'chirp' or 'chup'. Song, usually uttered in short undulating display flight, or from ground, a clear, ringing, high 'z'dee-z'dee ...' similar to one of songs of Desert Lark (compare song of Long-billed Pipit).

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (nominate illustrated). Gradual cline towards smaller and greyer birds in east of our region. Very grey birds from eastern end of cline separated as *griseus*: occur on passage through Middle East. Even smaller and greyer *kastschenkoi* (breeds S Siberia/W Mongolia) suspected to occur as a vagrant.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common (but local and uncommon in north of range). (In addition to mapped range, has bred Switzerland. Most winter south of the Sahara or in Arabia.) Breeds in variety of dry open habitats, including dry grassland, dry cultivation, heathland, wasteland, sand dunes, sandy river banks, semi-arid plateaus and mountain slopes. Outside breeding season may be found in dry open grassland, dry cultivation, sandy tracts and semi-desert.

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BERTHELOT'S PIPIT *Anthus berthelotti*

L 14 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Canary Is, Salvage Is and Madeira only. Small, nondescript, streaked pipit most easily

identified by restricted island range, although both Meadow and Tree Pipits occasionally occur in islands

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on passage. Compared with other small pipits, the most obvious features are its relatively dull greyish, almost unstreaked upperparts (prominently mottled in juveniles), prominent whitish supercilium and narrow, clear breast streaks on off-white underparts. In fresh plumage the underparts are washed with buff, but worn birds are very white below; in worn plumage the darker feather centres become more obvious, making crown streaking and scapular centres more prominent, contrasting with unmarked mantle and rump. Legs are pale, and outer tail feathers washed pale buff when fresh, becoming whiter when worn. Relatively plain upperparts and distinctive calls prevent confusion with other small pipits. Adult Tawny is as unmarked above, but lacks extensive streaking below, and is larger, lankier and longer-legged; Water Pipit has yet to be recorded from the islands, but differs in voice and in having dark legs. Often confiding. Walks and runs actively, rarely perching on trees, but clammers up to feed among plants. Prefers to run rather than fly if approached too closely. Does not form large flocks; invariably met with in pairs or family groups.



SEX/AGE Sexes similar. Variation with plumage wear discussed under Identification. Juvenile has mottled upperparts, quite different from adult, with black-brown feather centres and paler fringes; acquires adult plumage by first autumn.

VOICE Typical calls include a short 'chup', a weak, hoarse 'tiuee', a low, husky 'tsik' and single notes from song phrase. Song, given in fluttering, undulating flight or from ground, a plaintive series of repeated notes, with variations: 'tsilee-tsilee ...'.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (nominate illustrated).

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. Found in a variety of open habitats, with a preference for rocky plains and hillsides with sparse vegetation, also scrubby slopes and clearings in forested areas; occurs from sea level to high in mountains.

LONG-BILLED PIPIT *Anthus similis*

L 18 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Middle East only. Largest and bulkiest pipit of our region, resembling Tawny Pipit in plumage. Restricted range, and habitat and song are best clues to identity. Bulkier than Tawny, with stouter chest and belly, slightly shorter legs, relatively smaller head, slightly longer and stouter bill and longer, fuller tail (especially obvious in flight). Adult plumage resembles adult Tawny, but upperparts greyer and underparts buff, giving more uniform appearance (Tawny having underparts more contrastingly pale); markings much as in Tawny, with loreal line and median-covert bar present but less striking, moustachial line vague (strong in Tawny) and breast markings absent or diffuse (if present in Tawny, defined dark streaks); wings especially plain, with broad pale fringes to flight feathers forming extensive clear buff panel below tertials on folded wing (also shown by Tawny). Juvenile warmer buff than adult, with pale fringes to upperparts, but lacks heavily mottled and scaled dark and buff of juvenile Tawny, although breast markings and median-covert bar clearer than on adults. Richard's is more elegant, with more erect carriage, longer legs and narrower and less blackish tail, and has different call. In flight, heavy build, broader wings and fuller, broader tail are striking (Tawny's tail typically narrow when closed); the tail is very dark, almost blackish from below, and contrasts with otherwise pale plumage, while outer tail feathers are pale buff, fading to whitish (as Tawny); rises heavily when flushed, and often (but not always) hovers briefly before alighting. Usually solitary or in pairs. Walks with horizontal carriage, although more upright when perching on boulders. Less energetic than Tawny, frequently flicks and par-



tially opens tail rather than showing typical wagging action of Tawny. A bird of rocky and grassy mountain slopes in dry but relatively well-vegetated country.

SEX/AGE Underparts buff when fresh, greyer and with slight diffuse streaking on breast when worn. Juvenile discussed under Identification; much as adult by first autumn, but some juvenile (black-centred) wing feathers retained into first winter.

VOICE Typical calls uttered when flushed: a full 'chup' and a rising 'cheree', confusable with calls of Tawny Pipit, but latter call fuller and more ringing. Song distinctive, given from ground or boulder, most usually in flight when bird flies up quite high, circles with undulating flight path and descends in parachuting glide. Song usually consists of two far-carrying phrases interrupted by a pause, the first rising, the second falling: 'sweeii-sweeoo'; in full song flight can be more varied, but the two-note rising and falling song is the most typical.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Vagrants reported Kuwait and Iraq possibly refer to race *decaptus* of Iran, which is larger than Levantine race *captus*, with more streaked breast and richer buff colour overall.

STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon but localized. Favours rocky hillsides and gorges with relatively lush grasses and scrubby vegetation. Descends lower in winter, when some reach adjacent plains.

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OLIVE-BACKED PIPIT *Anthus hodgsoni*

Olive Tree Pipit

L 14.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Smallish pipit of extreme northeast of our region. Resembles Tree Pipit in favouring bushes or trees and plumage fairly similar, although shows distinctive differences if seen well; call likewise

similar. In fresh plumage distinctly brighter than Tree, with prominent supercilium and breast streaking, and (in race *yunnanensis* occurring in our region) usually almost unstreaked upperparts. Supercilium is promi-

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nent and creamy-white, becoming buffish in front of eye (rarely entirely buffish when very fresh), with dark upper border (Tree has an insignificant buffish supercilium, usually lacking dark upper border, but crown is slightly more heavily streaked). A distinct whitish spot on rear ear-coverts, often looking like a detached and sunken piece of the supercilium, together with a distinct dark patch below, are often useful field marks (but note that both marks may be indistinct, the former even lacking altogether in some individuals, while Tree often has these patches weakly indicated, and occasionally prominent). Underparts are thickly striped with blackish across breast on whitish or warm buff background, with striping often (but by no means always) bolder than in Tree and sometimes extending further down, contrasting with very white belly (often less clean white in Tree, thus giving less contrast); dark streaks on flanks often bolder than in Tree, but frequently similar. Upperparts are almost unstreaked olive with obvious greenish wash, finely streaked crown offering some contrast with virtually plain mantle and scapulars (mantle is weakly streaked but this is not normally obvious in field; in contrast Tree has prominently streaked mantle, although scapulars often rather plain); prominent median-covert pattern strongly contrasts with plain upperparts (and tips to median and greater coverts often bolder than in Tree when fresh). In very worn plumage, distinctions between Tree and Olive-backed less obvious, as latter can then show distinct mantle streaking and becomes greyish-brown above (often looking greyer than Tree), although prominent supercilium with dark upper border (crown sides) remains useful feature and worn edges to tertials not usually as pale as in Tree; very worn birds are likely only to be seen on breeding grounds. (Note: colour of supercilium can be whitish above and behind eye in worn Tree, thus further resembling Olive-backed.) Juveniles have darker feather centres to upperparts, thus more simi-



lar to Tree, but head pattern and greenish fringes to flight feathers and tail (buffish in Tree) are useful distinctions. (Young birds have largely attained adult plumage by the time they leave breeding grounds.) Feeds on ground, often under cover of trees or bushes, walking and running about, wagging tail; when disturbed, usually calls and flies up to perch inside canopy, where it sits emphatically 'pumping' rear body and tail up and down (similar action of Tree is sometimes, but by no means always, less pronounced), but will perch conspicuously in open in more open habitats.

SEX/AGE Sexes similar; see Identification for comments on plumage wear and juvenile plumage. Young bird resembles fresh adult by autumn.

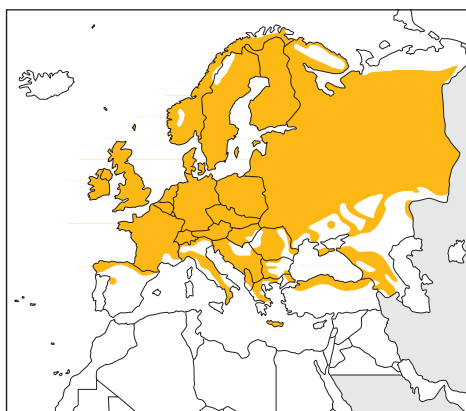
VOICE Flight call similar to that of Tree Pipit, a drawn-out, thin 'tseeez' or 'tseep', but often sounds slightly less buzzing and shriller. Alarm call higher than in Tree; a sharp 'tsit' rather than 'tseut'. Song faster, more varied and sweeter than that of Tree, including drier, more Northern Wren-like trills and lacking descending 'swee-urr' phrases at end; sings in flight and from treetops.

STATUS/HABITAT Local and scarce in our region. (Winters in S Asia.) Breeds in extensive mixed forests with clearings; at other seasons occurs in lowland woodland, forest edges and scrubby or even fairly open cultivation.

TREE PIPIT *Anthus trivialis*

L 15 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Closely resembles Meadow Pipit in plumage, but slightly plumper, with stouter-based bill and shorter, more curved, hind-claw; most easily identified by voice. Legs typically brighter pinkish than Meadow (but juvenile Meadow has brighter legs than adult). In fresh plumage, distinctly brighter and more prominently streaked below than Meadow, with warmer buff throat, breast and flanks contrasting with whiter belly (Meadow is more uniform below, either whitish or more evenly buff-washed); the breast streaks form broad, rather evenly spaced stripes, with only weak, insignificant streaks extending along flanks (breast streaking not so broad in Meadow, but streaking extends equally prominently along flanks). Mantle is less prominently streaked in fresh plumage. In worn plumage (mid-summer) is much drabber, lacking warm plumage tones, with streaking on mantle more prominent, and so becomes even more similar to Meadow. Head pattern differs slightly, Tree often showing a distinct but weak supercilium and small pale spot on rear ear-coverts (recalling Olive-backed Pipit), also has a narrow dark loreal line that cuts pale eye-ring and often a more distinct pale submoustachial stripe, whereas head much plainer in Meadow (although latter has a more pronounced dark moustachial stripe along front of ear-coverts). Meadow is quite variable in overall plumage tones, some birds being distinctly greyish-brown and whitish even in fresh plumage, whereas



others may be quite olive-and-buff-toned at same time of year. Tree habitually perches on trees and bushes (Meadow only occasionally does) and feeds more often within cover of rank vegetation and bushes, furtively flying into canopy of bushes and trees when flushed; migrants may, however, readily feed in the open where cover is limited. Often moves rather cautiously on ground, with slightly crouched posture,

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slowly pumping tail. Flight and flight appearance of the two are similar, although Tree appears plumper-bodied and slightly longer-winged, with more strongly bounding flight when flushed. See also Olive-backed, Pechora and Red-throated Pipits.

SEX/AGE Sexes similar; see Identification for comments on plumage wear. Juvenile resembles fresh adult, but feather centres of upperparts blacker and more rounded, with buffish fringes giving slightly scaly appearance; soon becomes indistinguishable from fresh adult.

VOICE Readily distinguished from Meadow by flight call: a strained, hoarse, thin 'teeez' or 'beeez', usually given singly; confusingly similar to, but frequently

more buzzing than, that of Olive-backed and not dissimilar to that of Red-throated (q.v.). Anxiety call, especially on breeding grounds, a weak 'tsyip' or 'sy't'. Song, given from treetop or in song flight, is similar to that of Meadow, but rather musical in comparison, and finishes with repeated, drawn-out 'swee-ur, swee-ur, swee-ur' (lacking from song of Meadow) as bird descends in parachuting flight.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Sicily.) Breeds in variety of wooded habitats, from heathland to forest clearings and tree-line area in mountains. Outside breeding season occurs in almost any habitat with trees or dense bushy cover, but not dense forest.

PECHORA PIPIT *Anthus gustavi*

L 14 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Extreme northeast of our region only. A small, heavily streaked and unusually skulking pipit. The most striking features of Pechora are its warm brown upperparts, contrasting with white underparts, very heavily streaked appearance with white mantle 'braces' (latter feature often quoted as diagnostic, but shared by Red-throated and often indicated in Meadow), largely pinkish bill, and striking wing bars. Most easily confused with 1st-winter Red-throated (or some adult females lacking pinkish on throat etc.), but potentially so with other small pipits; call important. Compared with Meadow, is slightly plumper and has slightly stouter bill, more thickly striped underparts and upperparts (with prominent whitish mantle stripes), streaked rump and uppertail coverts, brighter whitish lower underparts showing stronger contrast with upperparts, and plainer face with more prominent dark eye; distinguished from Tree by thick striping on flanks, plainer ear-coverts, more prominent dark eye, pale mantle stripes and streaked rump and uppertail coverts. Many of these features are shared by Red-throated Pipit, which is the main pitfall species. 1st-winter (or occasional adult) Red-throated with warm buff or whitish instead of reddish or pinkish on throat, upper breast and supercilium is especially similar; apart from calls, the main distinguishing features to concentrate on are as follows. Pechora is sleeker, with slightly longer and heavier bill, narrower and longer tail and, uniquely among pipits, three or more primary tips visible beyond tertials on folded wing (primary tips cloaked in Red-throated, but slight projection of primaries in Tree and Meadow; beware moulting individuals). General coloration of upperparts is a richer, warmer brown, almost reddish-brown when fresh (upperparts look more greyish-brown or olive-brown in Red-throated), and streaking even blacker. White 'braces' on mantle are longer, whiter and more prominent (but can be striking on Red-throated, too), and the two prominent white wing bars are especially striking (bars narrower and buffer on Red-throated), so upperparts appear even more contrastingly patterned; outer tail feathers duller, less pure white. Crown more heavily streaked, supercilium usually weaker, malar stripe weaker, rear ear-coverts finely streaked (virtually plain in Red-throated) and has dark loreal line that breaks pale eye-ringing (a feature lacking in Red-throated, but beware effects of shadow which can sometimes make it seem as if dark loreal line present); bill is pinkish on lower mandible and cutting edge of upper mandible (these areas usually yellowish in Red-throated, although occasionally pinkish). Underparts are whiter with con-

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trasting buff tones on breast when fresh (underparts more uniformly buff-washed on Red-throated when fresh), although can be rather uniform whitish when worn; central lower underparts are unstreaked white (more extensively clean than in Red-throated); legs pinker, and 'thighs' darker than belly (uniform with belly on Red-throated). Often shows prominent dark patch at base of neck where dark streaking coalesces, but this is equalled by some 1st-winter Red-throated. Much more skulking than most other small pipits, tending to feed among rank vegetation (or crops during migration), so adequate views can be difficult to obtain; walks stealthily and sometimes pumps tail like Tree and Olive-backed Pipits. Although calls are luckily very distinctive, birds often frustratingly silent; flushes with reluctance, almost underfoot, flying off and climbing with hesitant bounds like a small Tree Pipit.

SEX/AGE When worn, plumage duller, less warm, and all streaks more prominent and closer (owing to wear of browner feather edges). Juvenile resembles fresh adult, but underpart streaking less defined and extends onto central belly and throat; soon becomes indistinguishable from fresh adult.

VOICE Calls distinctive, but often flushes silently (unusual for a pipit); may give a low, short, soft 'pit', sometimes repeated 2–3 times, a dry 'pwit', slightly stronger than the previous call, or a hard, emphatic 'tsip-tsip-tsip', each note clearly separated and somewhat recalling flight call of Grey Wagtail. Song is distinctive and includes long trilled, rather scratchy, mechanical, buzzing phrases followed by a guttural warble, given in prolonged lark-like hovering song flight.

STATUS/HABITAT Local and uncommon. (Winters in Philippines, Borneo, Sulawesi and Lesser Sundas.) Breeds in areas of scrub (especially willow) and tall grasses or sedges in drier sections of wet tundra; in winter quarters favours rainforest. Vagrants have occurred in low crops, stubbles and rank grass.

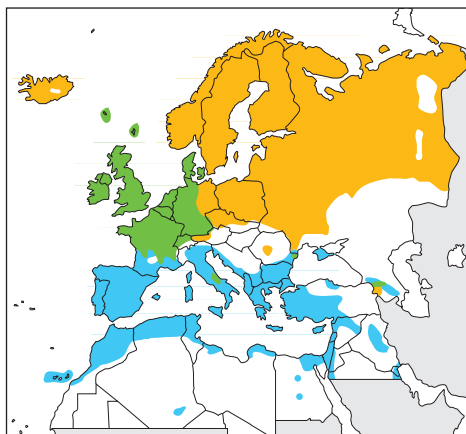
MEADOW PIPIT *Anthus pratensis*

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L 14.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Widespread, small, heavily streaked pipit, lacking supercilium, with pinkish legs and long hind-claw; easily distinguished from all other pipits apart from Rock and Water by call. In Europe, this and Tree Pipit are the pipits to study in all their plumage variations as a basis for separating the less commonly encountered species. Overall coloration varies from greyish-brown above and dull greyish-white below to warm buffish-olive above and yellowish-buff below, often with weak pale 'braces' (these much more prominent in Pechora and Red-throated); both upperparts and underparts strongly, but relatively narrowly, streaked, with prominent streaks extending along flanks; rump usually unstreaked (like Tree, but unlike Red-throated and Pechora), but in worn summer plumage faint streaking may show. The head pattern is rather plain, with an indistinct pale eye-ring and only a hint of a supercilium. Because of individual plumage variation in colour and markings, especially in autumn, Meadow Pipits can be very confusing, but voice and long hind-claw useful in difficult cases. In flight, shows white outer tail feathers like most other pipits. Flight weakly and rather hesitantly bounding when flushed, gently undulating when well underway; invariably calls in flight. Sociable outside breeding season, forming large flocks in winter and on passage. Feeds in open or in rough grassland, running and walking with horizontal carriage and slight tail-wagging. Perches readily on wires, fences and bush tops, less often on trees, and does not enter canopy as Tree often does on passage. See discussions under Tree, Red-throated, Water, Rock and Buff-bellied Pipits for distinctions.

SEX/AGE Sexes similar. In worn plumage duller, greyer and whiter, lacking buff, olive or yellow tones. Juvenile resembles fresh adult, but legs brighter pink, plumage strongly washed dull yellowish overall and streaking cleaner and blacker; ageing difficult owing to individual variation, and not separable from adult by autumn. **VOICE** Typical flight call a repeated, thin, squeaked, plaintive 'seep-seep-seep'; other common calls include a more abbreviated 'sip' or 'sip-sip' and a thin, clear, Dunnock-like 'teeseetsee'. Anxiety note on



breeding grounds a full, metallic 'chip'. Flight calls resemble those of Water and Rock Pipits, but are very different from those of other small pipits. Song, given in short aerial song flight (ending in parachuting descent), also from ground, a series of accelerating, rising, plaintive 'seep-seep-seep' phrases, followed by more drawn-out 'tseut' phrases and finishing with a long trill, but lacking strong terminal 'swee-ur' phrases of Tree Pipit.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (nominate illustrated). Variation is clinal, with much individual variation making racial distinctions unclear. Populations of far west average darker and warmer above, those from far east of our region averaging paler and greyer.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Spain.) Breeds in open grassland, ranging from coastal pastures to upland grassland, alpine meadows, heathland and moorland. Descends from high ground in winter, when occurs in any form of open country from fields to wetlands, coastal beaches and salt marshes.

RED-THROATED PIPIT *Anthus cervinus*

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L 15 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Slightly plumper and shorter-tailed than Meadow Pipit, with very different call; in fresh plumage tertials cloak primaries (unlike Pechora). Legs yellowish-pink, hind-claw long. Rump and uppertail coverts streaked in all plumages (a feature shared only by similar Pechora, but beware very worn Meadow Pipits in mid-summer with weakly streaked rumps). Most summer adults easily identified by extensive brick-red or at least pinkish throat and face, reddish or pinkish extending onto breast and supercilium in brightest birds, the reddish or pinkish coloration also being retained (usually in reduced intensity) by most adults in winter; however, bright Tree Pipits have very warm buff throats and occasional aberrant Meadow Pipits with pinkish or reddish throats have occurred, but in Red-throated the breast streaking is reduced by the reddish coloration. In other plumages resembles Meadow or Tree, but underparts more heavily and broadly striped than in either, with long, wide stripes extending along full length of flanks, and

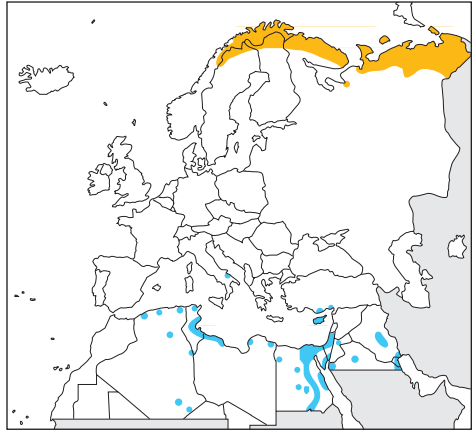
upperparts also darker and more strongly striped, with pale buff 'braces' on mantle (like Pechora, and often weakly present on Meadow); in heavily worn plumage, the 'braces' disappear and the black stripes almost merge to give a very dark appearance. Some heavily marked Meadows and fresh 1st-winter (or occasionally adult) Red-throated with warm buff or even whitish throats can appear very similar; with such birds, presence or absence of obvious rump streaking and calls should clinch identity. In flight, appears slightly plumper and shorter-tailed than Meadow, and rump streaking may be visible on flushing; invariably calls in flight. Less skulking than Tree, feeding in open like Meadow. Sociable, forming small flocks on migration. Often looks very similar to much less widespread Pechora Pipit (q.v.).

SEX/AGE Sexes similar, although males typically have deeper and more extensive reddish or pinkish than females; many females and some males may lack reddish or pinkish altogether. Intensity of reddish or pinkish

reduced in winter plumage. Juvenile resembles adult, but lacks any reddish or pinkish on face and throat, and background colour of upperparts colder, less buffish, brown. 1st-winter similar, background colour wearing whiter below, but not distinguishable from those adults that lack reddish or pinkish on throat.

VOICE Typical flight call an extended, thin, plaintive, penetrating, high-pitched 'seeeeeeee', fading towards end, not unlike call of Tree and Olive-backed but longer, thinner and lacking any hoarse quality; has been likened to short blast on a dog-whistle. Another call, heard more rarely, is a low 'chup'. On breeding grounds, may give a dry 'tsweep' of alarm. Song somewhat intermediate between those of Meadow and Tree Pipits, but lacking terminal 'sweet-ur' phrases of latter; a series of rising notes followed by a bubbling trill, given in song flight or in more subdued form from ground.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common (but less numerous in west of range). (In addition to mapped range, has bred S Norway.) Breeds in swampy meadows and boggy tundra, with low willow and birch scrub. On passage or in winter favours open cultivation, fallow



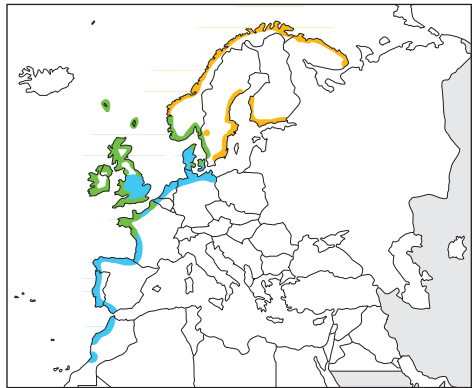
fields, muddy flats and short grass meadows, especially near water.

ROCK PIPIT *Anthus petrosus*

L 16.5–17 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Fairly large, stocky-bodied, streaked, dusky-olive, dark-legged pipit, chiefly of coastal regions. Confusion most likely with Meadow and Water Pipits, with which it often shares habitat, especially in winter. Winter plumages of all races are dusky-olive overall, with upperpart streaking smudged and ill-defined (looking almost plain above); underparts have long, wide, dusky streaking which extends well along flanks on a dingy yellowish-olive background (becoming paler with wear); the head pattern is indistinct apart from a pale eye-ring, and the outer tail feathers are pale buffy-greyish (can be very pale when worn). Bill blackish, often with some yellowish at base of lower mandible, and legs dark reddish-brown. In comparison, Meadow Pipit is usually brighter (in fresh plumage in autumn and early winter) and more yellowish-buff and olive, with clear black streaking on upperparts (not appearing plain-backed), has pure white outer tail feathers and brighter, orange-pink legs, and is distinctly smaller and sleeker, with shorter bill, and more rapid feeding movements. In flight, Rock appears noticeably bulkier, with lower, longer bounds, and has broader wings and body and fuller tail than Meadow, with outer tail pale, but not pure white. Western races in summer plumage are not greatly different from winter, and may be separated by same criteria, but they lose olive tones above and yellowish tones below, becoming rather cold and dark brown above (sometimes showing just a hint of purplish in very worn individuals). Scandinavian race *littoralis* attains pink flush on breast in spring, has underpart streaking very much reduced and often shows a distinct supercilium and greyer tone to crown, nape and mantle; it is a very variable race, provoking confusion with both Water and Buff-bellied Pipits, which see for discussion. Even some spring/summer nominate race Rock show a weak supercilium and buffy-pink tinge to breast suggestive of this race. Rock is typically a bird of coastlines, feeding among rocks at foot of cliffs and along tide line on beaches; in winter small parties loosely gather at favoured feeding areas, usually where seaweed has become piled, and freely share this habitat with Meadow. In winter also sometimes visits inland freshwater sites, where it over-

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laps with Water.

SEX/AGE Some seasonal variation (marked in *littoralis*), discussed under Identification. Juvenile resembles fresh adult, but underpart streaking darker and clearer; not safely distinguishable by autumn.

VOICE Typical flight call similar to that of Meadow Pipit, but flatter and less explosive, a single, rising 'weest'; often repeated several times but less rapidly than in Meadow. Call flatter in tone than that of Water Pipit, but differences subtle. Anxiety note a sharp 'stip' or 'tseut' like that of several other pipits. Song, given from rock or in flight, resembles that of Meadow, but is stronger and includes fuller, more twittering trills.

TAXONOMY Formerly treated as conspecific with Water Pipit *A. spinoletta* (with the name Rock Pipit sometimes confusingly being used for the enlarged species).

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate and somewhat clinal, but 4 races recognized (nominate and *littoralis* illustrated). Nominate race of most of British Is and N France described under Identification. Race *meinertzhageni* of Outer Hebrides is darker overall than the nominate race, with stronger blacker-brown streaking, and is more yellowish below in fresh plum-

age, whereas race *kleinschmidtii* of Faeroes, Shetland and perhaps St Kilda and Orkney is still yellower below, with streaking less black but very wide and intense. Race *littoralis* of Scandinavia/NW Russia, wintering south to Mediterranean, is very similar to nominate race in winter plumage; summer plumage (acquired March onwards) variable, however, but typically greyer on head and upperparts, with indis-

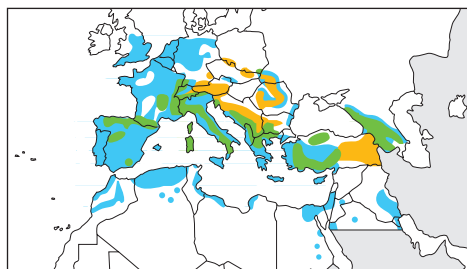
tinct or virtually no streaking, diffuse pale supercilium, pink-washed breast and restricted streaking on underparts (at least breast sides and flanks), but some birds tend towards nominate race in appearance.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. Breeds along rocky coastlines and on islands, but in winter also occurs on estuaries and occasionally inland by freshwater lakes and riversides.

WATER PIPIT *Anthus spinoletta*

L 16.5–17 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A fairly large, stocky-bodied, greyish pipit, with blackish legs, white outer tail feathers and two distinct plumage stages. Adult summer has upperparts dull greyish-brown, virtually unstreaked, purer grey on crown and nape, with conspicuous whitish supercilium; underparts dull whitish, unstreaked or only weakly so on upper flanks and breast sides, with rose-pink flush on throat and breast; when worn (i.e. from early summer), becomes dull whitish below and drab greyish above. The unstreaked appearance of this plumage prevents confusion with most other pipits, except Buff-bellied (q.v. for discussion) and Tawny and Long-billed (which are larger, lankier, buff and sandy-grey and have pale legs). Winter plumage has distinct dusky streaking across breast, extending narrowly along flanks, on an off-white background lacking yellowish tones; the whitish supercilium is usually distinct (but not always), and the grey-brown upperparts have ill-defined darker streaking and two greyish-white wing bars which wear whiter (not buffish). Winter birds distinguished from most other pipits by their weakly streaked upperparts and dark brownish, often almost blackish, legs. Most of these features are shared by Rock, which is slightly stouter than Water, with supercilium indistinct or lacking (merely a pale eye-ring in winter, but often a diffuse dull supercilium in spring), upperparts slightly darker and more olive, wing bars duller, ground colour of underparts dull olive-yellow (when fresh) or just dirty yellowish-grey (when worn) and streaking more diffuse and less contrasting, extending prominently along flanks and sides of belly; the rear underparts and outer tail feathers are white in Water, dingy (weakly washed yellowish) in Rock. Most problematic are birds of variable Scandinavian race *littoralis* of Rock in spring plumage, when many approach spring Water in colour, having greyish head and upperparts, pink-flushed breast, pale supercilium and almost white outer tail feathers; they can be quite pale in ventral region, but show streaking at least on breast sides and flanks (broadly on latter), olive tones at least on rump and wings, greyer mantle and usually some dull yellowish on lower underparts. In flight, Water appears slightly sleeker, less tubby, than Rock, showing pure white (not just whitish) outer tail feathers; at least in winter. Far more wary than Rock, flushing all too easily, towering and flying off for a considerable distance before alighting, whereas Rock typically flies low for a relatively short distance and is more approachable (but there are exceptions with both species). On breeding grounds, found above tree-line in mountains, perching on rocks and boulders, furtively searching between them while feeding; in winter, closely attached to freshwater, far less often encountered in saline watersides favoured by Rock, although Rock also occurs by freshwater inland in winter. Perches on trees and bushes much more readily



than Rock or Meadow. Not particularly sociable, although may form small parties at favoured feeding sites in winter, freely mixing with other pipits. See also Rock and Buff-bellied Pipits.

SEX/AGE Sexes similar, but females less pink-flushed than males in spring, often retaining vestiges of winter breast streaking. Juvenile resembles adult winter but has darker feather centres to upperparts, giving a more streaked appearance above; as adult winter by first autumn.

VOICE Typical flight call somewhat intermediate between calls of Meadow and Rock Pipits, but differences subtle. A repeated monosyllabic 'weest', fuller and less urgent than that of Meadow, with more widely-spaced repetitions; compared with Rock, call is shriller and higher, less 'relaxed'. On breeding grounds, calls more rapidly repeated when alarmed and has a sharp 'chip' of anxiety. Song, given from rock or in flight, very like that of Rock; compared to Meadow is stronger, with sweeter, more melodious and prolonged phrases.

TAXONOMY Formerly, *spinoletta* (Water Pipit), *petrosus* (Rock Pipit) and *rubescens* (Buff-bellied Pipit) were lumped in a single polymorphic species, *A. spinoletta*, with both Water Pipit and Rock Pipit being used as names for the enlarged species.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 2 races (both illustrated). Race *coulellii* (Caucasus to E Turkey, wintering south to Egypt and Arabia) is paler in all plumages than the nominate race. In summer plumage is almost sandy-grey above, with slightly darker feather centres, and is warmer pink-flushed below than nominate race when plumage fresh; in winter, paler brownish upperparts show darker feather centres than nominate race and underpart streaking finer and more restricted to breast.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. Breeds in alpine zone, above tree-line in mountainous regions, favouring boulder-strewn grassy slopes and wet areas near snow-line. In winter descends to plains and disperses widely, favouring freshwater habitats from lakesides to slow-flowing rivers, watercress beds and wet meadows; less often in coastal or estuarine habitats.

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BUFF-BELLIED PIPIT *Anthus rubescens*

Plate below

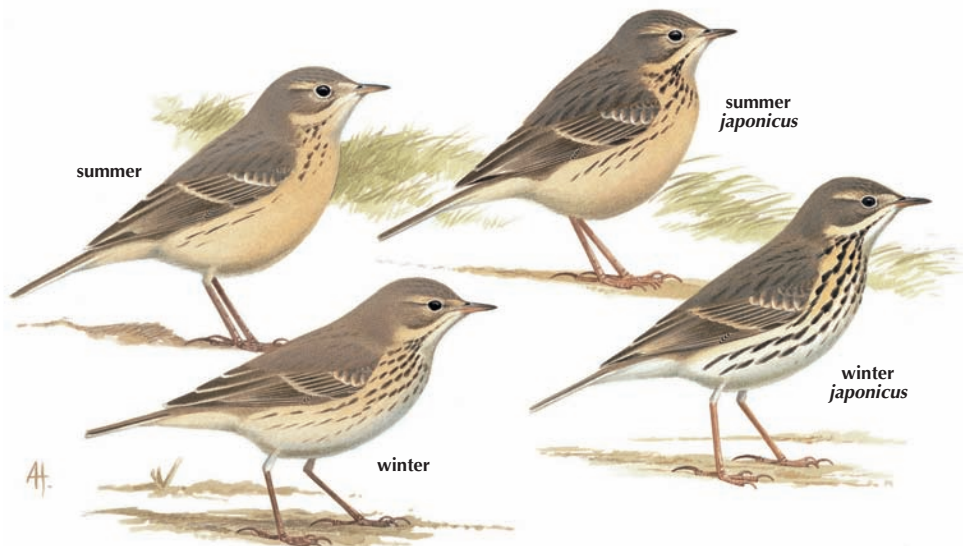
American Pipit

L 16.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Two races have occurred in our region as vagrants (from breeding areas in E Siberia and N America), and their identification involves different criteria. Both are marginally smaller and slimmer than Rock or Water Pipit, with shorter, finer, more Meadow Pipit-like bill; Siberian race usually also has distinctly pale legs (only rarely seen in N American race or Water). **North American race:** Winter birds in fresh plumage in autumn have entire underparts warm buff, quite unlike any other pipit of our region, becoming whiter on throat and breast centre, and with supercilium and wing bars buff, lacking yellowish tones. The underpart streaking is clear and narrow, extending widely across breast and less conspicuously and more finely along flanks (dark streaks are larger but less clean-cut in Water). The entire upperparts are dull olive-brown, virtually unstreaked, although mantle and crown have weak dark feather centres; as in Water Pipit, the legs are very dark brown and the outer tail feathers clean white. With wear, the buff of the underparts becomes paler and the brown of the upperparts duller, less olive. Confusion is perhaps most likely with buff-toned individuals of Meadow, but Buff-bellied lacks obvious streaking on upperparts, and has dark legs and a distinct supercilium; spring *littoralis* Rock can be vaguely similar below, but has broader flank streaking, is stockier, has dull white outer tail, and is washed dull yellow rather than buff on ventral region. In summer plumage, head and upperparts greyish, unstreaked, with buff supercilium, underpart streaking reduced to breast sides and flanks, and breast strongly flushed pinkish; resembles Water, but underparts wholly buffish, not whitish, although similarly pink-flushed on breast, with dark streaking on breast sides and flanks more distinct and supercil-

ium buffish, rather than whitish. In all plumages lacks dark loreal line (breaking pale eye-ring) of Water and Rock, but beware effects of shadow, and moustachial stripe usually more distinct. **Siberian race:** In fresh winter plumage in autumn, upperparts very dark dusky olive-brown, with streaking very faint, merely dark feather centres to mantle and crown, the supercilium is whitish and there is a prominent whitish eye-ring; the underparts are very heavily and broadly streaked with blackish spots and stripes, extending along full length of flanks on a pale buff background, becoming whiter on throat, breast and undertail coverts. Streaking heavier and more distinct than in American race or Water. In summer plumage the underpart streaking is slightly reduced, but is more extensive and distinct than in American race or Water, especially along flanks, and the breast is washed cinnamon-pink (thus warmer toned than American race or Water); the upperparts are darker, less grey, than in American race. As in Water, the outer tail feathers are white, but the legs are pale yellowish- or reddish-brown, much lighter than in most Water, but darker than in Meadow. The almost unstreaked upperparts prevent confusion with Meadow or Red-throated at all times, although the call and paler legs suggest Meadow rather than Water. In all plumages lacks dark loreal line (breaking pale eye-ring) of Water and Rock, but beware effects of shadow, and moustachial stripe usually more distinct.

SEX/AGE Spring males usually have more extensive pinkish flush on breast and more reduced breast streaking than females. Seasonal variation discussed under Identification. Juveniles unlikely to be found in our region, but 1st-autumn birds are brighter and buffer below than adults, with fresher and brighter



BUFF-BELLIED PIPIT

wing feathers forming stronger wing pattern.

VOICE Calls resemble those of Rock, Water and Meadow Pipits. With experienced ear, typical flight call slightly thinner, less shrill than that of Water, more like that of Meadow, although more squeaked, higher in pitch and slightly longer: a short 'tsiip' or 'seet', repeated at more widely-spaced intervals than in Meadow. Song, unlikely to be heard in our region, recalls Rock.

TAXONOMY Formerly treated as conspecific with Water Pipit under *A. spinoletta*.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 2 races (both

illustrated). Differences between vagrant nominate race (breeds N America and NE Siberia) and vagrant *japonicus* (breeds E Siberia) discussed under Identification.

STATUS/HABITAT Nominate race a vagrant to W Europe. E Siberian race *japonicus* perhaps a regular winter visitor to S Israel in extremely small numbers, so presumably occurs elsewhere in Middle East; vagrant to S Europe. Habitats much as those of Water Pipit at similar season. In Israel, wintering birds occur in well-watered grassy fields, with small puddles and muddy edges.

WAGTAILS

5 species

Small, slender, very long-tailed passerines with fine bills and long, slender legs. All species have a close association with waterside habitats, although this is less marked with White and Yellow, which are equally at home well away from water. They readily perch on buildings and wires but are basically ground-feeding birds. Outside breeding season most species are sociable, forming small flocks on passage and at winter roosts, although Grey is far more solitary by nature. Flight action undulating, invariably calling in flight. Wagtails migrate chiefly by day.

Sexes differ (sometimes markedly) and there is marked seasonal variation. Juveniles are confusingly similar in plumage (except Grey) having dull brownish or greyish upperparts and blackish band across upper breast, but latter virtually lost by first autumn (except White), when young birds resemble drabber versions of adult females.

Although closely related to pipits, the wagtails' unstreaked plumage, blackish legs (except Grey) and long tails prevent confusion with pipits or indeed with any other group of birds.

The only major identification problem within the genus revolves around distinguishing Citrine Wagtail from Yellow Wagtail in other than summer plumage.

YELLOW WAGTAIL *Motacilla flava*

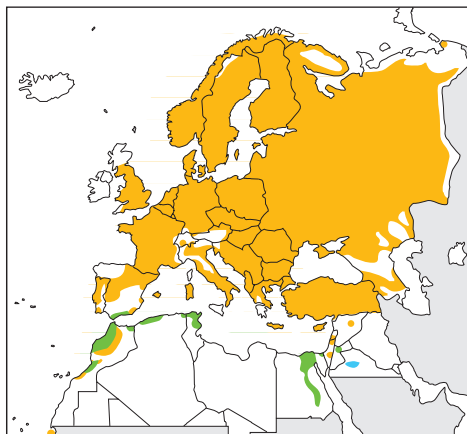
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(See Geographical Variation for English names of different races)

L 17 cm (but race *pygmaea* 15.5 cm).

IDENTIFICATION More compact and shorter-tailed than other wagtails (although close to Citrine), with distinctive calls (again similar in Citrine). Adult males in summer plumage have variable head colour and pattern according to race (see Geographical Variation), but all populations have bright yellow underparts and largely olive upperparts, making confusion with other species unlikely. Winter males, adult females and immatures are duller and very variable, some birds being very washed-out overall, and can be confusing. The major problem area lies with adult female and immature Citrine, which can be very similar: see Citrine for discussion. Grey Wagtail also has extensive yellow on underparts, but is much slimmer, with considerably longer tail and different call, and has grey upperparts, yellowish uppertail coverts and pale (not black) legs. Particularly brown-and-buff juvenile or 1st-winter female individuals of Yellow can recall Tawny Pipit, but latter bulkier, with longer, pale legs, paler wings and different call. Sociable, forming large parties on migration and breeding in loose colonies; less of a waterside bird than Citrine, with a passion for feeding among grazing animals in water meadows and open grassland. In flight, appears distinctly shorter-tailed than other wagtails (except Citrine); flight call distinctive, but similar to that of Citrine.

SEX/AGE Adult female paler and duller both above and below, often with whiter throat and breast than adult male, with racial differences less marked. Winter



males duller, resembling females, but underparts more uniformly yellow, less buff. In autumn, ageing and sexing become more difficult owing to individual and regional variation, although adult males are distinctly yellower below than other autumn birds. Juvenile has dark gorget and malar stripe, is whitish below with yellowish wash and is buffish-brown to greyish-olive above; by first autumn very much as adult female winter, but young females often very pale below, with

only a weak yellow wash on ventral region. 1st-spring/summer birds, especially females, often duller than adults.

VOICE Typical flight call a thin, but far-carrying 'pseet' or longer, more disyllabic 'sweet-eeep', slightly rising towards end; some geographical variation in intensity of call, with calls of southern populations slightly louder and fuller than those of others (e.g. *feldegg* call sounds more like 'shreep' or 'psreet'). Call similar in Citrine Wagtail (q.v.). Song inconspicuous, basically a repetition of the call interspersed with warbling notes, given from perch or in brief fluttering display flight.

TAXONOMY Complexity of races, with intergradation of varying degrees, has led to a number of different speciation theories; some authorities have recognized as many as 7 species within the complex. Because of limited hybridization of green-headed forms with overlapping races, the strongest argument is for these forms to be split as full species. Form *lutea* ('**Yellow-headed Wagtail**') in particular is regularly treated as a full species, with form *flavissima* ('**Yellow Wagtail**') sometimes treated as a race. Other forms seem to interbreed more readily where ranges overlap, but not so extensively as might be expected. Form *feldegg* ('**Black-headed Wagtail**') in particular is sometimes treated as a full species.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Considerable. 10, perhaps 12 races (nominate, *flavissima*, *feldegg*, *iberiae*, *thunbergi*, *pygmaea*, *cinereocapilla*, *beema* and *lutea* illustrated). Variation involves mainly colour and pattern of head, intensity of green of upperparts and yellow of underparts, and presence of olive markings on breast sides in summer-plumaged males; differences less discernible in winter males, adult females and immatures. Individuals sometimes occur among breeding populations that resemble other races, but at least some of these may be genetic mutants rather than vagrants. Several intergradation zones, with birds of mixed parentage often strikingly odd. Many individuals, even bright summer males, do not coincide neatly with characters of described forms. The area to the north of the Caspian Sea in particular is influenced by several forms, producing a bewildering variety of intergrades (likely to be encountered on passage through the Middle East). The 10 recognized breeding races of our region and 2 others suspected to occur as vagrants fall into three groupings:

Green-headed Wagtails: Two widely-separated but strangely similar races, which only marginally interbreed with other forms, regarded by some authorities as worthy of specific status. Males of this group have crown and ear-coverts greenish like the mantle and have yellow supercilia. Females also have yellower supercilia, throat and breast than dark-headed forms.

1. *flavissima* ('Yellow Wagtail'): Breeds British Isles and locally adjacent coasts of English Channel and North Sea from W Norway to N France, passing through W Europe and NW Africa to winter in W Africa. Only marginal interbreeding occurs with *flava* (3) (hybrids which resemble *flava* but with yellow supercilia have been called '*perconfusus*').

2. *lutea* ('Yellow-headed Wagtail'): Like *flavissima* but whole head more strongly washed yellow, sometimes appearing yellow-headed whereas others closer to *flavissima*. Some males of *flavissima* with very extensive yellow on head can recall this form. Breeds Volga steppes eastwards, overlapping with *beema* (4) but mixed pairings relatively infrequent. Passes through Middle East to winter in E Africa.

Dark-headed Wagtails: Most races fall within this group, males have bluish or slate-grey heads, with white supercilia, pronounced, vestigial or absent.

Intergrading is extensive where ranges meet and many birds may not fall into a clearly-defined form. Females tend to be whiter on throat and chest than Green-headed forms, have a whitish supercilium or drab grey-brown hoods, with weak supercilia.

3. *flava* ('Blue-headed Wagtail'): Crown and ear-coverts bluish-grey, supercilia white, throat yellow, some close to *beema*. Europe from western France to the Urals, north to southern Sweden and south to Pyrenees, Alps, N Balkans and lower Volga, interbreeding with *flavissima* (1, rarely), *beema*, *iberiae* (5), *cinereocapilla* (6), *thunbergi* (7) and *feldegg* (11). Winters in Africa, passing throughout Mediterranean region.

4. *beema* ('Sykes's Wagtail'): Resembles *flava*, but grey of head lighter, supercilia wider, white malar stripe curves under ear-coverts, throat often white; some birds very pale-headed indeed, others close to *flava*. Summer female and winter adult slightly paler than female *flava*, especially on lower sides of head. Breeds Volga steppes eastwards, overlapping, but rarely hybridizing, with *lutea* (2), intergrading with *flava*, *thunbergi* (birds recall *flava*), *feldegg* (11) and *melanogrisea* (12); winters in E Africa and India, with passage through Middle East.

5. *iberiae* ('Spanish Wagtail'): Resembles *cinereocapilla*, but head darker with narrow supercilia, throat usually white. Summer female and winter adult resemble those of *cinereocapilla*, but supercilia more distinct, ear-coverts darker and throat whiter. Breeds NW Africa, Iberia and extreme SW France, wintering in W Africa. Intergrades with *flava* (3) and *cinereocapilla* (q.v.).

6. *cinereocapilla* ('Ashy-headed Wagtail'): Resembles *thunbergi*, but ear-coverts less blackish, throat whiter, with dark breast marks few or absent. Summer female and winter adult have dark crown and ear-coverts, sometimes a weak supercilium behind eye resemble those of *thunbergi*, but throat whiter and breast band less defined or absent. Breeds Italy, Sardinia, Sicily and NW Yugoslavia, intergrading with *flava* (3) in Austria and Yugoslavia and with *iberiae* in Corsica and Algeria to Tunisia; winters C Africa.

7. *thunbergi* ('Grey-headed Wagtail'): Forecrown and ear-coverts blackish, crown and nape dark grey, sometimes a slight supercilium behind eye; throat yellow, chin often white; dusky olive breast patches become more obvious with wear. Summer female and adult winter resemble those of *flava* (3), but supercilia weaker or absent, head darker and has dusky partial breast band. Breeds Scandinavia and N Russia, interbreeding with *flava* along southern limits of range and with *beema* (4) in N Volga steppes region; winters Africa and India, passage through Mediterranean region.

8. *pygmaea* ('Egyptian Wagtail'): A very small race, 10% smaller than others. Resembles *thunbergi*, but crown dusky-greenish, weak supercilia often present, throat often white, breast band usually prominent, and smaller than other races. Summer female and adult winter resemble those of *cinereocapilla* (6), but throat centre washed yellow and usually with slight supercilia. Resident in Egypt and N Sinai.

9. *leucocephala* ('White-headed Wagtail'): Hood and chin virtually white, with pale grey wash on sides of head. Breeds C Asia; winter range unknown, possibly Pakistan. Very rare vagrant (although vagrancy possible genetic mutation or very pale birds of *beema* (4) could be responsible).

10. *simillima* ('Eastern Blue-headed Wagtail'): Resembles *flava* (3), but ear-coverts slate (lacks white streaking of 3), lore blackish, supercilia narrower and upperparts darker green. Breeds far-eastern Siberia, wintering SE Asia. Very rare vagrant (although vagrancy

possible, an aberrant type of *flava* x *thunbergi* hybrid could be responsible).

Black-headed Wagtails: Two similar races, males with a glossy black hood, lacking supercilia, but sometimes having a tiny spot behind eye; underparts deeper yellow than other forms, often with olive breast patches. Summer female and adult winter with dusky grey-brown hood and variable underparts, sometimes lacking any yellow (certainly so with *melanogrisea*). Scarce very dark-headed variant of race *thunbergi* (7) similar, but hood less intensely black and not glossy. A striking hybrid type is so-called '*superciliaris*', which has black hood and prominent white supercilia; a similar type with greyer crown has been named '*dombrowskii*'.

11. *feldegg* ('Black-headed Wagtail'): Breeds southern Yugoslavia (sporadically Italy and north to southern Austria), Bulgaria, southern Ukraine, Crimea, Turkey

and Middle East, wintering E Africa, with passage through eastern Mediterranean region. Interbreeds with *flava* (3) and *melanogrisea*.

12. *melanogrisea* ('Eastern Black-headed Wagtail'): Very much as *feldegg*, but more yellowish-green above and has white malar stripe below black hood. Other plumages resemble *feldegg*, but underparts whiter. Breeds southeastwards from Volga delta, wintering E Africa and India. Interbreeds with *beema* (4) and *feldegg*.

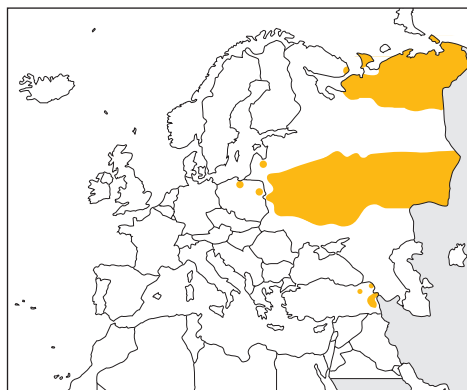
STATUS/HABITAT Widespread and locally common. (In addition to mapped range, formerly bred Ireland. Most winter south of the Sahara or in S Asia; Egyptian race is largely resident.) Breeds in damp grassland, from water meadows to fringes of freshwater marshes and lakes, locally in cornfields and peat-bogs. Outside breeding season, occurs in almost any form of open grassy or waterside habitat.

CITRINE WAGTAIL *Motacilla citreola*

Yellow-hooded Wagtail

L 17 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Similar in structure to Yellow Wagtail, although marginally plumper, with slightly longer tail, longer legs and stouter bill, but differences slight and overlapped by variation within Yellow Wagtail complex. **Adult male summer** unmistakable, with canary-yellow head and underparts, grey upperparts, black lower nape (extending to sides of neck) and prominent white wing bars (latter reduced with wear). Some males of race *lutea* of Yellow Wagtail have all-yellow head, but these have olive (not grey) upperparts and lack diagnostic black half-collar. **Adult male winter and adult female** duller, with greyish ear-coverts, crown, nape and often breast sides and flanks. Distinguished from Yellow (especially summer males of races *flavissima* or *lutea*, which are closest) by dull ashy-grey upperparts and breast sides, and broad yellow supercilium that curves down behind ear-coverts to join yellow throat (so framing ear-coverts) and often yellowish forehead. (Note that rarely the supercilium frames the ear-coverts in Yellow too, but more diffusely.) Lore is pale or diffusely dusky, while Yellow usually (but not always) shows dark lore line. (Note: many *lutea* have pale lore, however.) Does not show prominent, clearly defined yellow stripe across lower ear-coverts like many adult male *flavissima* and some *lutea*. Yellow coloration is often bright only on head and throat, paling from breast downwards, and under-tail coverts are always whitish (Yellow Wagtail is uniform yellow below). Wing bars are usually broad and white (typically narrow and yellowish tinged in Yellow), but may become narrow with wear; beware occasional Yellow with fairly broad, whitish wing bars. Juvenile White Wagtails with yellow wash to face can suggest adult female or winter male Citrine, but these have black breast band (juvenile Citrine also has breast band, but no yellow on head), longer tail and different call. **Juvenile** is virtually as juvenile Yellow, but supercilium is broader, wing bars are broader and whiter, and edges to secondaries are whitish rather than yellowish. **1st-winter** birds in autumn are dull ashy-grey on upperparts, with wash of similar colour on breast sides and flanks, and vestiges of juvenile dusky malar stripe and gorget remaining as a dark mark at sides of neck and a few weak breast spots. Although weak buff tones may be apparent on head and breast, they basically appear grey and white, and completely lack yellow (which first appears on head in late winter). Closely resembles 1st-winter



female Yellow, but most of these show a greenish tinge above and some yellow below, especially on uppertail coverts. However, they may be matched in colour by some very 'grey and white' Yellows, especially those of *beema* and some other eastern races, that show no greenish tinge above or yellow below. While these are slightly lighter and more grey-brown above than Citrine, they are highly problematic, and best distinguished by head pattern. In Citrine, the forehead is usually paler than the crown (being pale brown or buff) and the supercilium is markedly broader, especially above and behind eye (may be brownish and diffuse in front of eye), usually extending round in a curve to frame the ear-coverts (although this extension sometimes weak or lacking, and less apparent when neck hunched). In Yellow, the forehead is not obviously paler than the crown, the supercilium is narrower (and more distinct and less brownish in front of eye) and does not curl down to frame the ear-coverts (which merge with the nape). In addition, Citrine has lore pale or at most diffusely dusky (Yellow shows a distinct dark lore line, but beware effects of shadow on Citrine) and there is a darker shade along the sides of the crown, forming a dark upper border to the supercilium (but note that latter feature occasionally seen in 1st-winter Yellow, and routinely present, even more prominently, in juvenile Yellow); further, the ear-coverts are never uniformly dark (as in some 1st-winter Yellows) but nor do they show a broad pale stripe

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in lower portion (as shown by *beema* Yellow). Some birds, however, show intermediate head patterning; these are perhaps variant Citrines (perhaps only of race *werae*) rather than Yellows, but may be a result of occasional hybridization. In fresh juvenile plumage, the wing bars and tertial edges of young Citrine are broad and very white, but these become less conspicuous with wear and even on Yellow they may be striking when plumage fresh; tips of any newly moulted, 1st-winter, median or greater coverts in autumn are paler, less brownish-tinged, than in any newly moulted coverts worn by young Yellow. Bill of Citrine is largely dark, whereas young Yellow usually has extensive pale base to lower mandible. Although Citrine's call is different from that of Yellow, regional variation in calls of Yellow can cause confusion, especially with late-autumn birds which may be migrants from unfamiliar populations. Citrine is more closely attached to watersides, found less in grassland, than Yellow, but individuals freely associate with migrating Yellows and mixed pairings of vagrant male Citrine and female Yellow have been reported several times in W Europe. Compare also Grey Wagtail.

SEX/AGE Sexes differ. For summer plumage see Identification; a few summer females have yellow forehead and ear-coverts, and trace of black half-collar, recalling 1st-summer male. Winter male resembles female, but wing bars considerably broader and whiter when fresh, and most of underparts, forehead and ear-coverts usually yellow (latter often outlined with dark); may show trace of black half-collar. Yellow is tinged with buff in some females. From late autumn, sexing becomes more difficult owing to feather wear. Juvenile very similar to juvenile Yellow, lacking yellow in plumage and being browner above than adult female; has dark gorget and dark upper border to pale supercilium. Upperparts become greyer and dusky gorget and facial pattern almost lost by autumn as 1st-

winter plumage steadily adopted (see Identification); yellow begins to appear on head by late winter, after which ageing difficult owing to wear and individual variation. 1st-summer birds often duller than adults, males frequently having some greyish feathering on crown, less distinct black half-collar and paler yellow tone to head and underparts; 1st-summer females also often duller, with wings more abraded than adult females.

VOICE Typical call resembles that of Yellow Wagtail, but, compared with NW European races, is a distinctly louder, slightly shorter, more rasping, slurred 'dzreeip' or 'tzreep'; calls of Yellow vary geographically, however, and some southern and eastern races have more rasping calls than NW European populations, with some of the eastern forms sounding very like Citrine. Song, given from perch or in short flight, based on repeated calling with warbling phrases interspersed.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 2 races (both illustrated). Males of slightly smaller southern race *werae* (breeds Poland and Turkey eastwards) are paler yellow on head and underparts than nominate race and purer and lighter grey above, with narrower black nape patch and less grey on flanks. Females also slightly paler, but doubtfully separable.

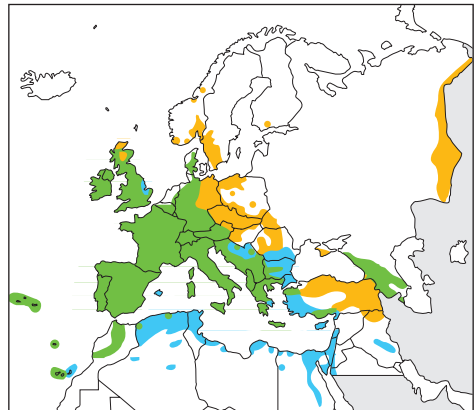
STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (Breeding range is steadily extending to west. In addition to mapped range, has bred Finland and Czech Republic, and also elsewhere when paired with Yellow Wagtail.) Rare passage migrant through Middle East with Yellow Wagtails, sometimes wintering in Israel. Mostly winters in Iran, Arabian Peninsula and S Asia.) Breeds on marshy tundra with willow thickets, montane meadows, peat bogs and scrubby water meadows. Outside breeding season can occur in any sort of moist open habitat, preferably with pools and streams, lakesides, fishponds, ditches etc.

GREY WAGTAIL *Motacilla cinerea*

L 18–19 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Slimmest and longest-tailed of the wagtails, with little plumage variation. Grey upperparts and yellow underparts shared only by Citrine, but confusion unlikely as lower underparts brighter yellow than upper (reverse of Citrine); also differs in shape, behaviour and call. The only wagtail with pinkish legs (black in the others). On ground, lacks obvious white wing bars of other wagtails but has one or two striking white stripes on tertials. Adult male summer, and many females, have inconspicuous black throat which is lost outside breeding season. When worn, flanks are greyish-white rather than yellow. Juvenile not unlike winter adults but has mostly buffish-white underparts that become more strongly tinged with buff on upper breast and foreflanks and are clear pale yellow on ventral area and undertail coverts. Flight very strongly bounding, with exceptionally long tail readily apparent; in addition has striking greenish-yellow rump and uppertail coverts, pale band along full width of spread wing (not visible when wing closed) and distinctive call. Usually solitary or in pairs, closely attached to watersides, with preference for running water, often by habitation and bridges. Partly because of very long tail, tail-wagging is more vigorous and pronounced than with other wagtails.

SEX/AGE Adult male summer brighter yellow than female, with black throat centre (latter mottled, sometimes even black, in many females). Winter adults



become more buffish-white on throat, but breast bright yellow in males, pale yellow in females. Juvenile and 1st-winter buffish-white below, with yellow only on lower underparts. 1st-summer males often have throat merely mottled like some summer females.

VOICE Typical flight call a hard, abrupt 'tzip', usually repeated. When anxious, a shivering 'ziss-sis-sis-sis-sis'. Song a series of thin, tinkling, trilled and quite melodious phrases, interspersed with shivering call

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notes; often given in fluttering flight over streams, but usually from perch or boulder.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 5 races (nominate illustrated).

STATUS/HABITAT Common. Breeds by streams and

ivers, both in wooded and in open country, predominantly in hilly or mountainous areas. Outside breeding season largely descends to (or migrates to) lowlands, including coasts and estuaries, when likely to be met with along almost any kind of waterside.

WHITE WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba*

Plate page 565

Pied Wagtail (See Geographical Variation for English names of different races)

L 18 cm.

IDENTIFICATION The most familiar wagtail of our region. Combination of black crown and throat (or at least breast band) with white sides of head, grey or blackish upperparts and white underparts prevents confusion with all but exceedingly localized African Wagtail (q.v.). Upperpart coloration and facial pattern vary according to race (see Geographical Variation), but most of our region inhabited by birds with white forehead and sides of head. Juveniles are dingier overall and have little black on head, often merely a dark triangle on breast; these may be confused with juvenile Citrine, especially when plumage of head washed pale yellow in fresh plumage, but Citrine has shorter tail and different call (see Citrine). Flight strongly undulating, with tail markedly long, but less so than in Grey. Tail wagged quite readily, especially when nervous. Forms flocks during passage or at winter roosts. Roosts are often in peculiar situations (e.g. trees in centre of busy cities, sprinklers of filter beds at sewage works, and inside buildings). As much a town bird as it is a country bird, with a close association with human habitations; strongly attached to watersides but equally at home well away from water.

SEX/AGE See Geographical Variation.

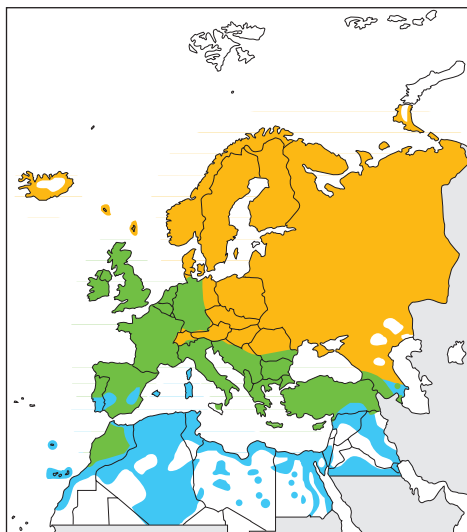
VOICE Typical flight call a loose 'tslee-wee' or 'tslee-vit' (or other variant), often repeated. Also gives a short 'tsit' or 'chick', a harsh 'chizzick' and a more slurred 'tzwerp'. Song consists of twittering phrases, interspersed with call notes.

TAXONOMY Form *personata* (**Masked Wagtail**) is occasionally treated as a full species.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Considerable. 6 races (nominate, *yarrellii*, *subpersonata* and *personata* illustrated). These may be allocated into four arbitrary groups for identification purposes:

White Wagtails: Summer males have black crown, throat and upper breast, white forehead and sides of head, pale grey upperparts, and two white wing bars. Summer females similar but duller, with dingier grey upperparts and black of nape and grey of mantle merging on lower nape (black more extensive and division cleaner on males). Winter males have chin and upper throat white, leaving black as band on lower throat; females lack or have very little black on crown and nape, have sides of head washed dull grey and are closer to juveniles, but chest band blacker and are less brownish-grey. Juveniles have most of head dull greyish, with whiter throat and dark grey-brown breast band, by first winter are much as adult females in winter plumage and ageing tricky, but young birds have grey of crown and upperparts tinged olive and a creamy-yellow wash on head in fresh plumage; young males with more black on crown than young females, which often lack any. 1st-summer birds often duller than full adults, and females may have grey crown.

1. *alba*: Described above. Breeds over most of our region, including Iceland and occasionally Britain (especially Shetland and Orkney), except areas inhabited by other races, grading into *dukhunensis* in extreme east.



2. *dukhunensis*: Lower Volga and E Turkey eastwards. Very similar to *alba*, but paler grey above and with wider wing bars when fresh.

3. *persica*: Rare winter visitor to Iraq from breeding grounds in Iran. Somewhat intermediate between *alba* and *personata* (Masked Wagtail), having variable head pattern; usually resembles *alba*, but has black band down side of upper neck connecting crown and throat and more extensive white in wing.

Pied Wagtail: Head pattern as White Wagtails, but in males upperparts black or blackish, black of breast more extensive, white wing bars often wider but variable and flanks darker grey. Females are dusky-grey above, darker than those of White; especially on rump. Winter adults and immatures variable as in White, some difficult to separate from White, but rump always darker, crown usually has some blackish (often lacking in White) and flanks markedly darker.

4. *yarrellii*: Breeds British Is, and sparingly on adjacent Continental coast from France to Germany. Disperses south as far as Morocco in winter.

Moroccan Wagtail: Very distinctive race. Summer males differ from White in having a more complex head pattern: the mostly black head, throat and upper breast contrast with white forehead, supercilium and ear-coverts, white being broken by a black eye-stripe and with an isolated white patch at sides of neck. Females similar, but black of head duller, more mottled. Winter adults have throat white, but retain black chest and show narrow black moustachial line bordering white-centred ear-coverts. Juvenile and 1st-winter similar in head pattern to adult winter, but black of head and breast replaced by dark grey and white supercilium borders rear ear-coverts to meet white throat.

5. *subpersonata*: Local resident, chiefly in west-central Morocco.

Masked Wagtail: Very distinctive race. Adults have head, neck and breast black, with 'mask' formed by white forehead, lore, eye-ring and supercilium; white fringes to wing coverts very broad, forming extensive whitish area on forewing. Females slightly duller, with more diffuse division of black on nape than males. Winter birds attain white chin and black lore stripe. Juvenile and 1st-winter duller, with black areas

replaced by dark grey and more extensive white on throat than adult winter.

6. *personata*: Vagrant to Middle East from E Iran and C Asia.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Jan Mayen.) Often associated with human habitation or watersides, but may be found in wide variety of open habitats from seashores to farmland, industrial zones, mountainsides and (in breeding season) tundra.

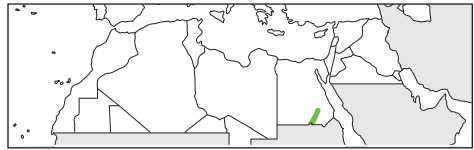
AFRICAN WAGTAIL *Motacilla aguimp*

African Pied Wagtail

L 18.5–19 cm.

IDENTIFICATION S Egypt only. An immaculate, strikingly patterned black and white wagtail. Although slightly larger than White, this may not be apparent in the field. Adult male and female summer easily distinguished by combination of black upperparts, very extensive white in wings, black U-shaped breast band joining black ear-coverts, leaving isolated white patch at sides of neck, and long white supercilium. Although some of these features are shown by some races of White (extensive white is present on wings of *personata* and white neck patch is shown by *subpersonata*) only largely British-breeding race *yarrellii* ('Pied Wagtail') has black upperparts; winter White of Moroccan race *subpersonata* is most similar, but has grey upperparts, lacking extensive white in wing, and has white forehead and centre of ear-coverts. Immatures and adult female winter have black areas replaced by grey, but retain white in wing. In flight, appears distinctly bulkier than White and shows striking wing pattern of black and white, with white inner wing formed by white bases to flight feathers and broad white fringes to coverts. Very much a waterside bird.

SEX/AGE Adult male winter is duller, more greyish-



black, than summer, but no change in basic pattern. Adult female summer resembles winter male, but has white in wing a little less extensive; winter female has upperparts markedly greyer, but head pattern remains mostly dull black and white. Juvenile similar but brownish-grey where adult black, with less white in wing, breast band often partially broken and head pattern less clear. 1st-winter resembles adult female winter, although white in wings a little less extensive; often indistinguishable.

VOICE Flight call sweeter, more monosyllabic than that of White, a slightly slurred 'treep'. Song sweeter, more varied and more melodious than in White.

STATUS/HABITAT Rare in our region. Lakeshores, sand banks and riversides, often by human settlements.

Plate page 565

BULBULS Pycnonotidae

3 species

Slim, almost thrush-sized arboreal birds of the tropics, three species of which reach the limits of their range in our region. Very vocal and conspicuous, their flute-like cries are very much a feature of shrubbery and bushy cover, even in parks and gardens, where they may become quite tame. Wings are relatively short, enhancing their relatively long tails and coloured undertail coverts. Sociable birds, gathering noisily in favoured trees to feed on fruit. The nest is built in the centre of bushes or low trees. Their perky, slightly crested appearance and noisy and often inquisitive behaviour make them quite unlike thrushes.

All plumages are similar.

Confusion with other types of birds unlikely, and identification within the family straightforward.

WHITE-EARED BULBUL *Pycnonotus leucotis*

L 18 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Iraq and Arabian Gulf coast only. A greyish-brown bulbul, easily identified by its conspicuous white cheeks, which contrast with the otherwise entirely black hood. As it flits between bushes,

the tail shows white corners. The bright yellow undertail coverts contrast noticeably with otherwise off-white underparts. Behaviour typical of the family.

SEX/AGE Sexes similar. Juveniles have duller, browner

Plate page 566

heads than adults.

TAXONOMY This form is often treated as conspecific with **Himalayan Bulbul** *P. leucogenys*, the enlarged species being referred to as **White-cheeked Bulbul**.

VOICE Has typical song of the genus, a liquid, bubbly chattering, seemingly a repetition of the phrase 'Oo-toodle-oo'. A little softer than the phrases of the other two species. Alarm call a sharp 'pit'.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. Gardens, palm



groves and cultivation with trees and bushes, even in bushy wadis.

WHITE-SPECTACLED BULBUL *Pycnonotus xanthopygos*

Plate page 566

Yellow-vented Bulbul

L 19 cm.

IDENTIFICATION The only bulbul over most of the Middle East. Easily identified by its combination of yellow undertail coverts, complete sooty hood (cleanly demarcated on upper breast) and whitish eye-ring. The tail shows only a hint of whitish corners. Behaviour typical of the genus. Range only marginally overlaps with that of Common Bulbul, in the region of Suez Canal. Common Bulbul lacks both yellow vent and prominent whitish eye-ring.

SEX/AGE Sexes similar. Juvenile has browner hood and more inconspicuous eye-ring than adults.

TAXONOMY Formerly treated as conspecific with Common Bulbul *P. barbatus*.



VOICE Song similar to those of the other bulbuls, a fluty, bubbling, repeated phrase, 'whee-too-too', with variants. Calls include a harsh, sharp 'weck'.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. Palm groves, gardens, cultivation with bushy or tree cover and even vegetated wadis.

COMMON BULBUL *Pycnonotus barbatus*

Plate page 566

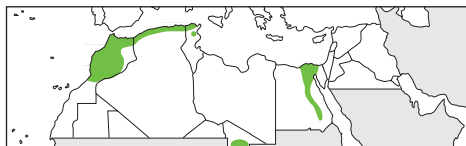
Garden Bulbul

L 19 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Very similar to White-spectacled Bulbul, which it replaces in N Africa. Easily distinguished by its whitish ventral region (not bright yellow) and lack of obvious whitish eye-ring; additionally, the darker hood merges into both the upperparts and the brownish breast, lacking the clear black-hooded look of White-spectacled. (Note: Egyptian race *arsinoe*, however, has blacker and cleaner hood than nominate race.) Behaviour typical of the genus. Only possible confusion is with White-spectacled, but ranges only marginally overlap in region of Suez.

SEX/AGE All plumages similar; juveniles have duller and browner hoods than adults.

VOICE Has typical song of the genus, a liquid, bubbly chattering; has been rendered as 'tu-TWEE-twur-tu-



TWEE' or a seeming a repetition of the phrase 'Oo-toodle-oo'. Alarm call a sharp 'chit-chit', recalling Common Blackbird's alarm call but less metallic.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (nominate illustrated).

STATUS/HABITAT Common. Gardens, palm groves, cultivation with trees and bushes, well-vegetated wadis and gorges.

WAXWINGS & HYPOCOLIUS Bombycillidae

2 species

Rather sluggish, often very sociable birds. The two genera are markedly different in appearance and habitat, but both are avid feeders on berries and subject to irregular wanderings which may take them far from breeding grounds. Both build rather untidy nests in trees, waxwings in conifers and Grey Hypocolius in palms. Grey Hypocolius is sometimes treated as the sole member of a separate family, Hypocoliidae.

BOHEMIAN WAXWING *Bombycilla garrulus*

Plate page 566

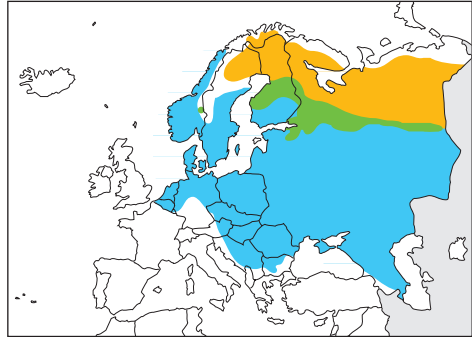
Waxwing

L 18 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Unmistakable. Prominent crest of this starling-shaped, 'soft' looking pale grey-brown bird is apparent in all plumages. The bright yellow terminal tail band and chestnut undertail coverts are also distinctive, but the waxy red secondary tips are easily overlooked. More obvious are small white wing bars and a white and yellow band formed by tips of primaries. In breeding season primarily insectivorous, even flycatching and feeding on ground, but in winter flocks form to feed on berries in bushes and trees, even coming into gardens and town parks, where they are remarkably tame. Subject to periodic fluctuations in numbers, and in some winters large numbers irrupt into areas where normally scarce or absent. Flight shape rather starling-like, with short, pointed, triangular wings and short tail; flight action also recalls starling, although more graceful, but trilling flight call highly distinctive. See also vagrant Cedar Waxwing *B. cedrorum* in Appendix. Cedar Waxwing lacks wing bars and chestnut ventral region of Bohemian Waxwing.

SEX/AGE All plumages similar. Males have black chin patch more sharply defined, less diffuse, at lower border than females. Juveniles lack black chin, are duller, greyer and weakly streaked below. 1st-winters are much as adults, although they lack whitish margins to inner webs of primary tips, and margins of outer webs are white (yellow in adult), so they just have a white line along closed wing rather than a series of V-shaped marks; generally also have fewer waxy red secondary tips (may even be absent in 1st-winter females).

VOICE Usual call, given in flight and when perched,



a weak, trilled, shivering, tinkling 'sirrr'. Flocks also give a low twittering while feeding. Song, a series of quiet trilled phrases.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Estonia, C Sweden. Regularly irrupts beyond boundaries of typical winter range to reach Britain, France, Switzerland, Italy etc.) Breeds in northern coniferous forests. Outside breeding season moves southwards to feed on berry-bearing trees and shrubs, but degree of dispersal varies considerably from year to year as do numbers of individuals; in some years there are remarkable irruptions which scatter flocks far from normal winter quarters. During the winter may be encountered in lowland areas wherever there are berries, even in town parks and gardens.

GREY HYPOCOLIUS *Hypocolius ampelinus*

Plate page 566

L 23 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Iraq (and occasionally on passage in adjacent areas) only. An uncommon long-tailed, pale greyish-buff bird of bushy areas in semi-desert, the black terminal tail band being the most obvious plumage feature, although males also have a conspicuous black mask. The feathers of the rear crown and nape may be raised to form a ruffled crest, exposing the black nape of the male. Although usually shy and retiring, may sometimes be remarkably tame and approachable. Generally located in small parties feeding inside berry-bearing bushes. Their flight between bushes and trees is fast and direct, and they often fly considerable distances at some height between feeding spots. In flight, the wings of adult males show a striking pattern, with black (but white-tipped) primaries and blackish underside of secondaries, although this pattern more obscure or lacking in females and juvenile males (see below). Their persistent calling is often a good clue to their presence. Bush-haunting behaviour recalls babblers or even bulbuls, but the unstreaked, pallid body plumage, black-tipped tail and wing pattern make confusion unlikely. Males,



with black mask, superficially resemble some shrikes, but behaviour quite different and no shrike has similar wing and tail patterns.

SEX/AGE Males have black mask and white-tipped blackish primaries; female lacks mask and has greyish primaries with black and white tips. Juveniles almost uniform sandy, with dusky tail tip.

VOICE Quite noisy in breeding areas, with whistled series of notes, 'wheew, whee-di-du, di-di-du ...' etc. Scolding chirps also recorded.

STATUS/HABITAT Uncommon. Semi-desert with dense scrub and shrubbery, desert-edge irrigation, palm groves and gardens. Subject to little-understood wanderings, being occasionally recorded far from regular areas (e.g. S Israel) but always in semi-desert situations.

DIPPERS Cinclidae

1 species

WHITE-THROATED DIPPER *Cinclus cinclus*

Plate page 566

Dipper

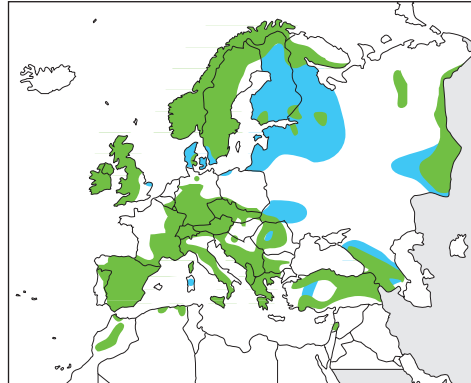
L 18 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Unmistakable, thrush-sized, rotund, short-tailed riverside bird with gleaming white throat and breast which contrast with otherwise over-all dark coloration. Usually found singly or in pairs perched on rocks or waterside of fast-flowing streams and rivers. Flight fast, whirring, direct and low, following path of stream. Swims and dives freely, also walks underwater on stream bottom, in search of mainly insect larvae and small fish prey. After diving, may float downstream a short distance, resting on partly open wings, before emerging. When perched, bobs whole body up and down and also blinks, showing pale eyelid and whitish nictitating membrane. Often surprisingly cryptic, merging with dark recesses amongst rocks, glassy shine from water and waterside foam. May only be first detected as it gives its sharp call while dashing past. Builds domed nest of moss under large boulder or bridge arch.

SEX/AGE Sexes similar. Juvenile greyer than adult, with pale greyish mottling on both upperparts and underparts; by first autumn resembles adult, but may be aged by presence of whitish tips on greater coverts and secondaries.

VOICE Usual call a metallic, rather rasping 'zink' or 'zrets' that is highly penetrating and carries above the sounds of the torrent. Has a sustained warbling song which is sometimes given in flight.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 10 races (*gularis* illustrated) including extinct *olympicus* of



Cyprus. Differ chiefly in extent of rufous band between blackish belly and white breast. The rufous is completely lacking in nominate race of Scandinavia, which is sometimes referred to as 'Black-bellied Dipper'.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. (In addition to mapped range, formerly bred Cyprus.) Favours fast-flowing rivers and streams, locally on lakesides and chiefly in upland districts. Many populations move to lower altitudes in winter, sometimes penetrating low-land districts and even occurring along coasts.

WRENS Troglodytidae

1 species

The sole Old World representative of a large New World family, with a Holarctic distribution.

WINTER WREN *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Plate page 567

Wren, Northern Wren

L 9–10 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Tiny, familiar and unmistakable. The smallest bird of our region after the *Regulus* species (Goldcrest etc.). A minuscule, stump-tailed, almost uniform dull brown bird with very slender bill and inconspicuous supercilium. Closer views reveal fine dark barring on wings and tail and rather paler underparts. More often heard than seen, owing to its remarkably loud song, its relatively retiring habits conceal its true abundance. Often seen working its way through tangled undergrowth, appearing momentarily in full view, especially when working overgrown walls, brush piles etc. Frequently cocks its short tail. Usually fairly solitary, but forms communal winter

roosts in suitable holes. Nest a dome of leaves and moss among roots or cavity in bank. Flight fast and low with rapidly whirring stubby wings, usually only over short distances.

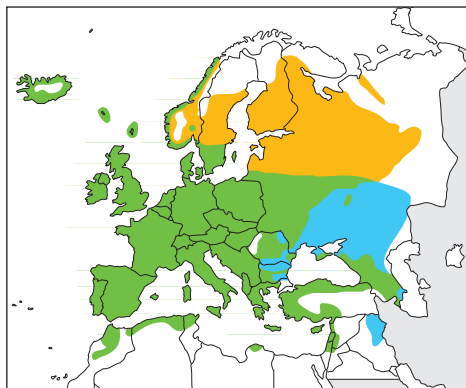
SEX/AGE All plumages similar.

VOICE Song remarkably loud and strong for such a tiny bird; a mixture of trills and rattling warbles that ends in an extended, rather dry, rattling trill; even sings in the depths of winter. Calls include a harsh low 'churr' and a loud 'tek', the latter often repeated.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 13 races (*indigenus* and *zetlandicus* illustrated). Many races endemic to islands (Scottish islands alone contain five

ances). Differences are rather slight and involve intensity of barring and overall colour tones of plumage, as well as measurements.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. Habitats very varied, from woodland undergrowth to heather moors, coastal cliffs and gardens, wherever any form of low cover is found.



MOCKINGBIRDS & THRASHERS Mimidae

3 species (all vagrant)

New World family of rather babbler-like, medium-sized birds with long, broad, rounded tails, rather short, rounded wings, rather long, strong legs and fairly long, often slightly downcurved bills. (This family, also known as mimic thrushes, may in fact be more closely related to the starlings or the true thrushes.) Most skulk in undergrowth, spending much time on ground (although Northern Mockingbird also routinely perches conspicuously in open on wires or bushes).

Sexes similar. No seasonal variation. Juveniles usually closely resemble adults. Adult plumage fully attained by second autumn.

Grey Catbird is distinctive and unlikely to be confused with members of other families. Adult Northern Mockingbird could be confused with grey shrikes, while juvenile Northern Mockingbird and Brown Thrasher might be confused with babblers or large thrushes (see species accounts).

Identification within the family straightforward in our region and no general points on which to concentrate.

NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD *Mimus polyglottos*

Plate below

L 25 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Coloration recalls Great Grey and Lesser Grey Shrikes, but easily distinguished by lack of dark mask, longer, slimmer bill and even longer tail. In addition is slimmer-bodied,

has even larger white patches in wing, and flight action less forceful (with slower wingbeats). Spotting on underparts of juvenile could result in confusion with large thrush, but latter lack double white wing



NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD

bar and have different structure, with much shorter, square-cut tails that do not project nearly as far beyond wingtips, and more pointed wings. Very aggressive, chasing off other birds and mammals. Flicks wings up and down in display, flashing white wing patches.

SEX/AGE Juvenile resembles adult, but is noticeably browner above and has large pale brown spots on underparts from throat to upper belly and flanks.

VOICE Usual call a loud 'tchak'. Song is a highly varied, often melodious string of phrases, many imitative of other birds, barking dogs etc., that are typically repeated three or more times each. Often sings continuously for long periods.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, thickets, woodland edges, parks and gardens, favouring more open areas than other members of the family recorded from our region.

BROWN THRASHER *Toxostoma rufum*

Plate page 73 I

L 28 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Both structure and behaviour, with long, broad, rounded tail, rather short wings and prominent, slightly decurved bill and habit of running and especially hopping on ground, with tail raised or waving from side to side, recall *Turdoides* babblers, but latter much more uniformly coloured and do not have double whitish wing bars or bold dark streaking on underparts. Latter feature can suggest large thrush, but none of our thrushes has combination of rufous upperparts, double whitish wing bars and boldly streaked underparts, while structural differences considerable: thrushes have much shorter, square-cut tails (not projecting nearly as far

beyond wingtips as tail of Brown Thrasher), shorter, uncurved bills and relatively longer, more pointed wings. Behaviour usually skulking, low inside thickets.

SEX/AGE Juvenile has grey or brown (not yellow or yellow-orange) eye, persisting until mid-winter.

VOICE Calls include a harsh, dry 'tschek' and a whistling 'pitcheree'. Song rich and melodious; individual phrases often repeated 2–3 times in Song Thrush style.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, thickets, open woodland with bushy undergrowth, copses and shelterbelts.

GREY CATBIRD *Dumetella carolinensis*

Plate page 73 I

L 21 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Unmistakable. No other bird has its combination of overall slate-grey plumage with black cap and tail and chestnut undertail coverts. Much larger and darker overall than male Blackcap and quite different in shape, with long, rounded tail, strong legs and prominent bill. More reminiscent of a large chat or thrush than a warbler. Typically skulks inside thickets.

SEX/AGE 1st-winter has brownish tinge to flight feathers, primary coverts and sometimes outer greater

coverts; eye greyish-brown or dull reddish-brown (rich reddish-brown in adult).

VOICE Characteristic call a very cat-like, nasal 'mew' (slowing towards end); also a grating 'tcheek-tcheek' and a sharp snapping note. Song a soft melodious warbling, interspersed with nasal mewings, squeaks and imitations.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, thickets (especially near water), woodland edges, parks or open woodland with bushy undergrowth and hedgerows.

ACCENTORS *Prunellidae*

5 species

Accentors are small, compact, rather terrestrial birds that vaguely recall buntings in outline but have thin, pointed, almost warbler-like bills. Hop or shuffle along on ground, keeping legs well bent and body close to surface. Flip over leaves and other vegetation while feeding. Generally keep low in undergrowth or on ground, except when singing. Feed largely on insects, but also eat seeds (especially in winter).

Sexes similar. Seasonal differences slight or absent. Juveniles closely resemble adults. Largely as adults by first autumn.

Accentors could be confused in poor view with sparrows, finches and especially, because of very terrestrial habits, longish tail and stripy facial pattern of some species, with buntings, but narrow, pointed bill gives accentors a very different (almost warbler-like) facial expression and so makes separation straightforward. Lack prominent dark malar stripe of many buntings.

Identification within the family straightforward in case of Dunnock and Alpine Accentor, but a little more difficult for the three eastern species. For these, concentrate on:

Colour of supercilium • Colour of throat

DUNNOCK *Prunella modularis*

Plate page 567

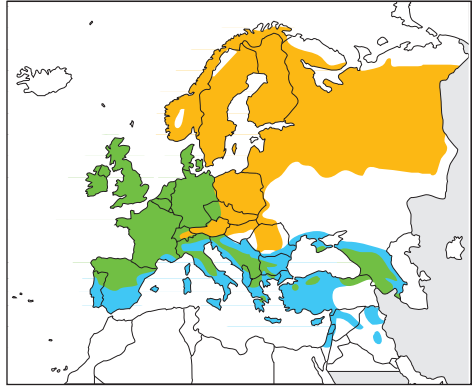
Hedge Accentor

L 14.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Much the most widespread and familiar accentor. A small and unobtrusive bird owing to its habit of generally keeping low in bushes or on ground, but shuffles or hops perkily along, often restlessly flicking wings or tail, and sings out in open from tops of tall bushes or even low trees. Almost mouse-like at times when sneaking along close to ground, with legs hidden. Dark, slate-and-brown, rather featureless appearance is distinctive in its own way: looks smartly but soberly dressed in the manner of a bank-manager. Longish tail, general coloration, shuffling gait and low-slung carriage suggest a bunting or perhaps a sparrow, but narrow, pointed, rather warbler-like bill prevents confusion. Juvenile European Robin and other young chats are covered in pale spots both above and below, lacking dark-streaked upperparts and flanks of Dunnock. Adult unlikely to be confused with other accentors, and lack of pale supercilium prevents confusion of juvenile Dunnock with juvenile Siberian, Radde's or Black-throated Accentors (q.v.).

SEX/AGE Adult female closely resembles adult male but some are less richly coloured, with paler grey areas on head, neck and underparts (with more brown suffusion) and not such dark streaking on mantle and scapulars. Juvenile resembles adults but is duller overall, with browner, less rufous upperparts, buffy rather than grey supercilium, sides of neck, throat and breast, fine, dense, dark striations on breast and flanks, and larger whitish tips to greater coverts that form quite obvious wing bar.

VOICE Usual calls a loud, strong 'seep' or 'seeh' and a quieter, trilling 'ti-ti-ti-ti' (often heard in flight). Song a pleasant but squeaky, high-pitched, rather Winter Wren-like warble (but lacks the characteristic long final rattle of latter and is delivered more slowly).



GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Complex but mostly rather slight. 8 races (nominate and *obscura* illustrated). Race *hebridum* of Hebrides is darkest of all, while race *obscura* (Caucasus and E Turkey to Iran) is the palest. Latter is duller above (with brown instead of blackish feather centres to mantle and scapulars), with sides of head and neck much less grey than in nominate race and washed with brown, and underparts both paler and more extensively washed with brown; whitish tips to feathers of throat and breast create a scaly pattern.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. Forest with bushy undergrowth, scrub, young plantations, hedgerows, parks and gardens. Except in NW Europe, tends to favour coniferous or mixed habitats. Restricted to montane areas in south.

SIBERIAN ACCENTOR *Prunella montanella*

Plate page 567

L 14.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Far northeast of our region. General behaviour Dunnock-like, but appearance quite different owing to striking yellow-buff (fresh) or creamy (worn) supercilium contrasting with dark crown and cheeks. For distinctions from Black-throated Accentor, see that species. Does not normally overlap in range with slightly larger Radde's Accentor, and easily separated in fresh plumage by yellow-buff supercilium, throat and breast, and rufous-chestnut tone to mantle, scapulars and much of wing. Beware heavily worn individuals (especially females) with creamy supercilium, although these still have yellowish-buff tinge to throat and breast, and dull rufous-chestnut on upperparts. Juvenile has more uniform upperparts than juvenile Radde's (dull earth-brown with dark streaks on mantle and scapulars, instead of buff-brown with dark streaks), while underparts are much less extensively dark-marked, dark being restricted to large blackish spots on breast and small spots on sides of throat; shares whitish supercilium partly obscured by dark speckling.

SEX/AGE Fresh adult has supercilium yellow-buff instead of creamy, and centre of breast usually lacks dark spotting. Adult female closely resembles adult male, but on average has less extensive black lateral crown-strips and rufous streaks on mantle and scapu-



lars, and smaller, fewer black spots on breast. Juvenile is much duller, with much less distinct facial pattern: supercilium whitish with brown speckling, and crown and sides of head brownish. Lacks grey patch on sides of neck. Upperparts earth-brown, not rufous-chestnut; underparts dingy isabelline, with large brown triangular spots on breast and small spots on sides of throat.

VOICE Usual call a high 'tsee-ree-see'. Song rather Dunnock-like and more melodious than that of Black-throated Accentor.

STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon. (Winters in N China and Korea.) Open, stunted coniferous and birch woodland and tangled thickets (especially willows near water) in both forest-tundra and open tundra zones. Found from lowlands to mountain tree-line.

RADDE'S ACCENTOR *Prunella ocularis*

Plate page 567

L 15.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Mountains of E Turkey, Caucasus and Transcaucasus only. Shape and actions Dunnock-like, keeping to low scrub or hopping and shuffling about (with frequent wing-flicking) on ground among stones and low shrubs, but easily separated by striking white supercilium contrasting with blackish cheeks and crown. Has a whitish throat and often a hint of a dark malar stripe. When worn (spring/summer), adults often have a band of dark spots across upper breast. See also rather similar Siberian and Black-throated Accentors.

SEX/AGE Fresh adult has creamy-buff instead of white throat and area below cheeks, unmarked cinnamon-buff centre of breast (instead of buff with dark mottling) and brown speckling on rear ear-coverts. Adult female closely resembles adult male and generally indistinguishable in the field, but crown averages less black, breast paler buff, throat and belly whiter. Juvenile has much less distinct facial pattern: supercilium is speckled with brown, and crown and sides of head are brownish. Lacks grey patch on side of neck. Underparts less warm (ground colour whitish rather



than warm buff), with dark streaking extending across breast (and much more obvious than necklace of small dark spots shown by worn adult).

VOICE Usual call a high, slurred 'tseer', quieter and less emphatic than 'seep' call of Dunnock. Song rather like that of Dunnock, but more bubbling.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally not uncommon. Breeds among low, sparse scrub (e.g. junipers, barberries) in dry, rocky, high mountain country; avoids true alpine zone. Winter distribution poorly understood, but seems to abandon snow-covered breeding areas, descending to scrubby areas at lower altitudes (sometimes dispersing south of mapped area).

BLACK-THROATED ACCENTOR *Prunella atrogularis*

Plate page 567

L 15 cm.

IDENTIFICATION N Urals only. General behaviour Dunnock-like, but, as with other similar accentors, easily separated by striking white (worn) or buff (fresh) supercilium contrasting with dark crown and cheeks, and (at least when worn) by black or blackish throat. Dark throat easily separates this species from Siberian and Radde's Accentors, but dark is partly obscured by buff feather fringes in fresh autumn plumage, and when largely obscured (as in some 1st-winter females especially) identification not so straightforward. Compared with Siberian, such individuals have creamy-buff (rather than yellow-buff) supercilium, area below ear-coverts and throat (latter generally showing at least some black mottling) and cinnamon-buff (rather than yellow-buff) breast; mantle and scapulars are brown with broad blackish streaks (instead of heavily streaked with rufous-chestnut), flanks are streaked with greyish-brown (rather than rufous-brown) and (especially in 1st-year females) ear-coverts appear less black owing to buff feather fringes. (Note: some Siberian appear more blackish-streaked above and on flanks, less rufous, and thus closer to Black-throated.) Autumn birds with dark throat patch largely obscured could also be confused with Radde's Accentor, but latter has white (rather than creamy-buff) supercilium and throat is generally unmarked creamy-buff (although sometimes bordered by weak malar stripe of dark speckles) while only very rarer individuals of Black-throated lack any dark mottling on throat and cinnamon-buff of breast extends onto sides of throat. Juvenile Black-throated differs from juvenile Siberian primarily in having much more extensive dark markings below, with dark streaks on breast, flanks and sides of belly, and rather ill-defined greyish-brown patch, speckled with pale buff, on chin and throat; Siberian has markings restricted to large dark spots on breast and smaller spots on sides of throat. Juvenile Radde's is very similar (and field criteria poorly understood), but has whitish rather than buff ground colour to underparts and dark streaking restricted to sides of throat, breast and flanks, so throat in particular appears



much paler. Field separation is not a problem, however, as ranges do not overlap and young Black-throated do not migrate until after post-juvenile moult.

SEX/AGE Fresh adult in autumn has supercilium, area below cheeks and gorget below dark throat patch creamy-buff instead of white, buff speckling partly obscuring black chin and throat, centre of breast uniform cinnamon-buff (instead of pale buff with blackish spotting), and centre of crown brown rather than blackish. Adult female averages browner on crown, with broader buff fringes to chin and throat feathers (so throat patch less black), but much overlap. Juvenile has much less distinct facial pattern than adult: supercilium is speckled with brown, and crown and sides of head are brownish. Lacks grey patch on side of neck. Upperparts duller and less clearly streaked; throat patch grey-brown, speckled with pale buff, and breast and flanks less warm (ground colour buff rather than cinnamon-buff). 1st-year male very close to adult female, but 1st-year female often duller with decidedly brown centre of crown and hindneck, and mottled brownish ear-coverts, chin and throat (or even largely pale chin and throat) owing to broader buff tips to feathers.

VOICE Usual call a high 'tsee-ree-see', like Siberian Accentor's. Song not unlike that of Dunnock, but thinner, more monotonous and in parts drier (more buzzing).

STATUS/HABITAT Uncommon. (Winters in C Asia and NW Himalayas.) Breeds in stunted spruces in subalpine zone of Urals.

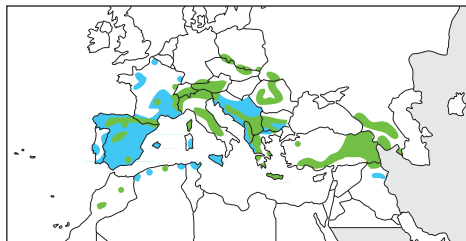
ALPINE ACCENTOR *Prunella collaris*

Plate page 567

L 18 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Large, chunky accentor of mountain country. General impression is of an extra-large, heavier-billed, more colourful Dunnock. Adult best identified by surprisingly obvious blackish greater coverts bordered by double row of white spots (on tips of median and greater coverts) that contrasts with rufous panel to rear (formed by edges to secondaries and tertials), by white tips to tail feathers (visible in flight), by reddish-chestnut streaking on flanks and by quite conspicuous yellow base to lower mandible. Juvenile less distinctive, with duller, brownish-black greater-covert panel, pale buff spots on wing coverts (bleaching to white) and duller, cinnamon-brown streaking on flanks, but still has rufous wing panel and yellow base to lower mandible. Flicks wings and tail while walking or hopping along on ground or stones in Dunnock-like fashion, but often adopts more upright carriage and flies quite strongly (with undulating motion). Chunky build, undulating flight and habit of flocking can suggest a group of finches or larks at a distance, while rising song flight followed by short hover and downward glide rather pipit-like.

SEX/AGE When worn, has whiter throat (without distinct blackish barring and spotting), streaking on flanks duller (less reddish-chestnut), and white spots on median and greater wing coverts less obvious (or even absent). Juvenile resembles adult, but duller overall, with browner tinge to grey areas, dingy buff throat (with darker mottling), cinnamon (instead of reddish-chestnut) streaking on flanks, and dark brown (instead of contrastingly black) greater and median coverts with buff (instead of white) spots at tips (but



these later bleach to whitish).

VOICE Commonest call a fairly loud, rolling 'chirrup' or 'chirriririp'. Often surprisingly ventriloquial in the high mountain terrain and hard to locate. Other calls include a sharp 'pyrrt', often combined with first call and recalling chattering of sparrow, and a more melodious, rather Common Linnet-like 'tjew-tjew-tjew'. Song a rich, melodious warbling, lower-pitched than that of Dunnock, with fluty whistles, scratchy sounds and purrs, recalling both Black Redstart and Northern Wheatear.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 3 races (nominate illustrated).

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. High, rocky mountain slopes with sparse vegetation and rocky crags above the tree-line, from about 1800 to over 4000 m. Also found around mountain huts and stone walls. In winter descends to lower slopes, favouring grassy, rocky patches with low scrub, field edges and even settlements; locally enters lowlands.

THRUSHES & CHATS Turdidae

56 species (15 vagrant)

Large and very varied family of small to fairly small, slim-billed, perching birds, closely related to warblers and flycatchers, and indeed often included together with them in one enormous family. Feed mostly on insects and other small invertebrates, but berries an important food source for many thrushes in particular. Songs of all members quite melodious and varied; in some genera songs important as identification aids, or in locating shy and skulking species (e.g. *Luscinia*), but of limited use in complex field of wheatear identification.

Sexes usually differ, and there is often, but by no means always, marked seasonal variation. In general, chats show marked seasonal variation much more often than do thrushes. Most genera have speckled or mottled juvenile plumage stage, which is lost within a few weeks of fledging. Juvenile plumage usually remains on wings into first winter in most genera and is a useful ageing tool; because juvenile wing feathering is often retained through first winter, first spring birds often have more heavily abraded, faded flight feathers than adults. Adults of several genera (e.g. *Phoenicurus* and *Oenanthe*) have bright summer coloration obscured by pale or brownish feather fringes in fresh (autumn) plumage, brighter colours and patterning being revealed with wear by the following spring.

Thrushes and chats are in the main unlikely to be confused with members of other bird families, although some of the more delicate, less strongly marked chats can recall large warblers or even flycatchers in superficial views.

No universal identification criteria apply throughout the family. Wheatears in particular present one of the most complex challenges for the field observer of any group of birds of our region, and this problem is discussed separately.

RUFIOUS-TAILED SCRUB ROBIN *Cercotrichas galactotes*

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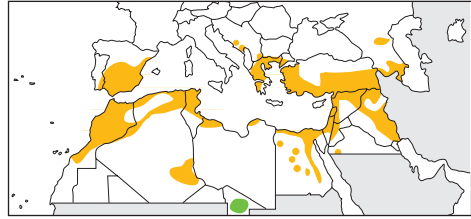
Rufous Bush Robin, Rufous Bush Chat

L 15 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Recalls nightingales in size, shape and skulking nature, but shows prominent whitish supercilium, sandy upperparts and whiter underparts. Rufous rump and tail are conspicuous in flight and during good views on ground, the tail often being rhythmically pumped up and down and regularly fanned to show white tipping and broad, graduated shape, although tail surprisingly inconspicuous if closed. On a brief view in undergrowth, could be confused with adult female or immature Bluethroat or Siberian Rubythroat, but head sleeker, bill thicker and longer, legs pale (not blackish as in most Bluethroats) and tail distinctive. A shy and unobtrusive bird, feeding on ground or within undergrowth, frequently cocking tail high above back and flicking wings, often spreading tail during downward wing flick to expose diagnostic pattern. Hops rapidly when on ground. Sometimes perches in open on bush-tops, walls and wires, and has distinctive song flight.

SEX/AGE Juvenile lacks 'spotty' stage, being similar to adult, but has smaller black and white terminal tail spots.

VOICE Typical calls are a sibilant 'tseet' (or shorter 'tsip') and a harsh 'teck-teck', but a mellow whistling 'piu' (recalling Eurasian Bullfinch) may also be heard on breeding grounds. Rich and melodious song, with trills and mimicry, recalling short, well-spaced bursts of Garden Warbler, usually delivered from exposed



perch, but also given in butterfly-like parachuting display flight with raised wings and fanned tail.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Fairly marked. 4 races (nominate and *syriacus* illustrated). Nominate race (Iberia, N Africa and S Middle East) has upperparts sandy, washed rufous. Race *syriacus* of SE Europe, Turkey and N Middle East is greyer, less rufous-toned, on upperparts. Breeding populations from Iraq and Transcaucasia eastwards, *familiaris*, are even greyer above, with whiter underparts, but these eastern forms intergrade. Race *minor* of southern fringe of Sahara resembles nominate race, but is smaller and slightly longer-tailed.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally not uncommon. Semi-arid country with scrubby cover, scrub-lined watercourses, groves and gardens in open country.



BLACK SCRUB ROBIN *Cercotrichas podobe*

Plate above

Black Bush Robin

L 18 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Regular only in Israel. Unmistakable, but very skulking and easily overlooked. Recalls a slim male Common Blackbird with a long, graduated tail or a blackish babbler if seen briefly in flight between bushes, but rusty inner webs to primaries (in nominate race) produce pattern suggestive of Tristram's Starling. When perched, tail is typically cocked high over back, showing prominent white tips on underside (or, if tail fanned, also on upperside of outer feathers). Spends much time within cover of scrubby bushes, or feeding on ground below. Runs and hops with tail cocked; sometimes perching in open (especially when singing).

SEX/AGE All plumages similar. Juvenile is duller,



sooty-brown rather than greyish-black, lacks white feather fringes to undertail coverts and has narrower white tips to tail; bill brownish rather than black. Much as adult after first moult.

VOICE Call has been described as a hoarse squeak or a liquid chatter. Song consists of a series of melodious, fluty thrush-like phrases interspersed with harsher

notes, often delivered from an exposed perch.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (nominate illustrated). Nominate race of sub-Saharan Africa has extensive pale rufous on inner webs of primaries, lacking or more restricted on Arabian race *melanoptera*.

STATUS/HABITAT Uncommon resident in C Mauritania. Rare, but increasingly frequent summer visitor to S Israel in very small numbers, with breeding confirmed. Also recorded as vagrant in S Algeria. Semi-desert with tall scrub (especially acacias) in both plains and low hills, bushy oases and even gardens.

EUROPEAN ROBIN *Erithacus rubecula*

Robin

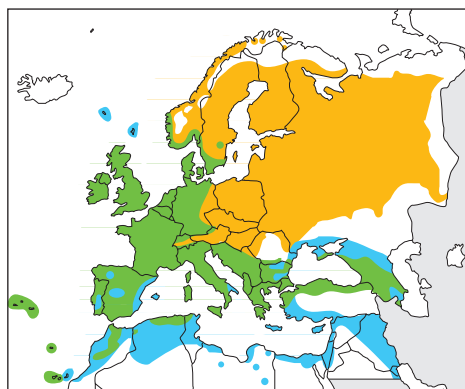
L 14 cm.

IDENTIFICATION The familiar chat of woodlands and bushy cover over most of our region, and a well-loved garden bird in NW Europe. This plump-bodied, often upright-perching bird is readily identified by its reddish-orange face and breast which contrast with the whitish lower underparts and olive-brown upperparts, wings and tail. Only identification problem revolves around confusing 'spotty' juvenile with other juvenile small chats; best distinguished by uniform olive-brown tail offering some slight contrast with warmer brown uppertail coverts. Spends much time feeding on ground, flicking wings and tail. Flight low and flitting, jerking into cover. Notably aggressive towards other individuals.

SEX/AGE Juvenile lacks reddish on head and breast until first moult, and has body plumage heavily mottled with buff.

VOICE Typical call a sharp, clicked 'tic', often repeated and frequently delivered as a short series recalling an old-fashioned mechanical watch being wound up; also gives a plaintive, penetrating squeaked 'seeeh' of anxiety. Nocturnal migrants give a weak 'tseei'. Song, delivered either from within cover or from fairly prominent perch, consists of a rippling series of thin, sweet, clear, warbling phrases and short trills, interrupted by abrupt halts; autumn variant is softer and much more melancholy.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 8 races (*melophilus* illustrated), with variation mostly concerning richness of breast colour and tone of upperparts. Large-



est and greyest birds (*tataricus*) breed from Urals eastwards, darkest race is *superbus* of Gran Canaria and Tenerife. Caucasian birds, *caucasicus*, have very rufous tails; this even more marked in *hyrcanus* (breeds S Caspian lowlands, winters Iraq), which is also very dark above and has richer rufous breast.

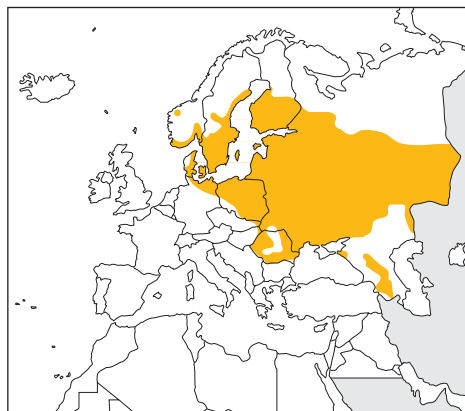
STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Faeroes.) Occurs in a wide variety of forest and woodland, hedgerows, parks and gardens; also various forms of scrubby cover in more open country.

THRUSH NIGHTINGALE *Luscinia luscinia*

Sprosser

L 16.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Northern counterpart of Common Nightingale, which it closely resembles in appearance, behaviour and song. Breeding ranges only marginally overlap. Overall coloration duller, less rufous, than Common, with upperparts colder, more earth-brown in tone. Although tail is duller rufous than in Common, the contrast between the reddish-brown tail and the dull upperparts is often striking in flight. Underparts drabber than in Common, with diffuse brownish mottling on face and throat merging into a dull mottled wash across breast that extends along flanks, but has some indistinct barring on undertail coverts (which are frequently olive-tinged in Thrush, but often washed with warm buff in Common); whitish areas on underparts more restricted than in Common, merely centre of throat and centre of belly. Common normally lacks mottled throat, malar stripe and barring on undertail coverts of Thrush, but in latter these are rather ill-defined and, owing to skulking nature of both species, often difficult to evaluate. The basic coloration and the intensity of the buff or brownish wash on underparts of both species are rather variable, and some Thrush are warmer brown above than others, so some indi-



viduals are very problematic. European populations of Common are rufous-washed above, especially on rump (visible in flight), and present little problem, but

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Plate page 630

eastern races are less rufous, more sandy or grey-brown above; the latter are not so earthy-brown above as Thrush and are whiter below, although breast band can be prominent. Songs, although basically similar, sound distinctly different to observers familiar with both species (see Voice). Wing formula remains the only diagnostic criteria for some difficult individuals (see below). For other confusion species, see Common Nightingale; compare especially vagrant Veery. Juvenile inseparable from juvenile Common until flight feathers grown sufficiently to show differences in wing formula. **In the hand** 1st primary shorter than primary coverts (longer than primary coverts in Common). 2nd primary equals or is longer than 4th (shorter than 4th in Common). 3rd primary (but not 4th) emarginated (3rd and 4th emarginated in Common).

SEX/AGE 1st-year much as adult but buff tips to greater coverts retained, with vestiges visible on some birds until first spring.

COMMON NIGHTINGALE *Luscinia megarhynchos*

Plate page 630

Nightingale, Rufous Nightingale

L 16.5 cm.

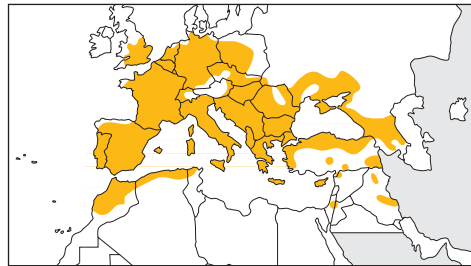
IDENTIFICATION Extremely skulking, sleek, plain brownish bird with warm brown upperparts, latter contrasting with russet rump and tail (especially in flight). Head pattern markedly plain, lacking either a supercilium (but a pale supercilium is weakly indicated in race *hafizi*) or an eye-stripe, but dark eye and pale eye-ring often noticeable. Frequents low cover, feeding mostly on ground, where it hops with tail raised and wings drooped. Flight action similar to that of European Robin, keeping low and soon diving back into cover. Best located by distinctive song, generally delivered from concealed position in bushes or low in tree canopy. See Thrush Nightingale for discussion on separating these two similar species. Female Common Redstart is smaller, more delicately built, shivers tail and often perches in open (does not skulk so much in undergrowth). Combination of plain head pattern and rufous rump and tail prevents confusion with other species, but compare vagrant female Siberian Blue Robin, Hermit Thrush and Veery.

SEX/AGE Adults in fresh plumage in autumn average darker above and have more obvious grey wash on breast. 1st-year much as adult, but show buff tips to greater coverts, with vestiges visible on some birds until first spring.

VOICE Typical calls include a deep, guttural 'grrrrr', a thin, penetrating 'seeeee' of anxiety, a deep, hard 'tacc-tacc' and a harsh 'tucc-tucc'. The famous song consists of a rich, vigorous delivery of a series of melodic phrases, interspersed with extended trills and rattles and including a prolonged crescendo, 'pew-pew-pew-pew-pew...', and a rapid chugging 'choc-choc-choc...' or 'jug-jug-jug...'. There is a degree of

VOICE Calls resemble those of Common Nightingale, including a low, guttural croak, a penetrating 'whit' or 'eeehp' when anxious and a low, deep 'chuk'. Song is more powerful than that of Common but slower and more monotonous, although basically similar; individual phrases are more prolonged, with crescendo 'pew-pew-pew-pew' phrase less commonly given. Lacks prolonged high-pitched trills of Common, and terminal flourish consists of a short series of crude rattles rather than the short series of notes or musical flourish of Common. Includes a very far-carrying, rapid series of deep 'chok' or 'jook' notes, quite similar to 'jug-jug-jug...' of Common, but louder. Song is most intense and prolonged at night.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Austria, Yugoslavia.) Habitat similar to that of Common Nightingale, but has distinct preference for damper thickets and woodland, especially favouring riverine situations.



local variation, eastern birds in particular sounding rather different from those of Europe, but differences from song of Thrush Nightingale (compared under latter species) seem to hold good throughout the range. Song is most intense and prolonged at night.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Rather marked. 3 races (nominate and *hafizi* illustrated). Birds breeding from the Caucasus region and E Turkey eastwards, *africana*, are less rufous, more greyish-brown, above and paler below than nominate race, with greyish breast band. C Asian race *hafizi*, presumed to occur on passage in Middle East, is palest race, being greyish-sandy above, with whiter face and underparts than nominate race, and often shows a weak pale supercilium before and above eye.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. Dense undergrowth of deciduous woodland, riverine thickets, dense scrub and overgrown hedgerows, locally in parks and large gardens. Found in both moist and quite dry environments. On passage may be encountered in any manner of cover, including reedbeds.

SIBERIAN RUBYTHROAT *Luscinia calliope*

Plate page 630

L 14.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Urals only. Recalls Bluethroat in size, shape and overall appearance, sharing whitish supercilium, but lacks rufous in tail (not obvious in Bluethroat unless tail spread). From behind presents a drab greyish-brown appearance, although white ventral region obvious when tail cocked. **Male** has striking ruby-red throat narrowly bordered with black and

contrasting with the prominent white submoustachial stripe, black lore and dull greyish upper breast and sides of neck. **Female** usually lacks red throat, having merely a dull whitish throat separated from white 'moustaches' by a narrow greyish malar stripe. Some females (probably older individuals) have some pink on throat and in a very few it is quite male-like. All

plumages have warmer brown wings that contrast with dull olive-brown of mantle and greyish or brownish of breast. Only likely confusion is with 1st-year female Bluethroat, but Siberian Rubythroat lacks dusky markings on breast, has no rufous in tail, is slightly sleeker, and has shorter supercilium (not extending far beyond eye) and paler legs (legs occasionally pale on Bluethroat also). **Juvenile** is heavily spotted with pale on upperparts and strongly speckled below, so resembles juvenile European Robin or Thrush Nightingale. Compared to former it is less buffy on breast, and warmer on wings with rufous fringes to primaries. Compared to latter, it is smaller with less rufous on tail and uppertail coverts. Extremely skulking except when singing. Feeds on ground or low in dense cover, hopping or running in short bursts with tail cocked and wings drooped. Flies low if flushed, soon diving back into cover.

SEX/AGE Adults in fresh plumage in autumn have breast browner, less grey-tinged. Juvenile 'spotty'. 1st-years in autumn resemble respective adults, but show buff tips to tertials and some greater coverts well into first winter, males having larger paler tips to red throat feathers than adult males and black of face duller; 1st-year female has supercilium and 'moustache' less distinct than adult. By first spring much as adult, but



pale tips to throat feathers persist in 1st-year males.

VOICE Typical calls are a hard, rather Fieldfare-like 'chak-chak' and a whistling 'EElu'. Song vigorous, melodious and varied, often sustained for long periods and including some mimicry; delivery less powerful than in nightingales, and far less scratchy than Bluethroat's. Sings from dense cover, with tail cocked, sometimes using exposed perches.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. Birds from our region winter in S Asia. Breeds in dense thickets in open parts of boreal forest (taiga), including forest edges, and in riverine scrub or bushy areas in damp meadows. In winter quarters and on passage, favours dense water-side thickets or other scrubby undergrowth, and reed-beds.

BLUETHROAT *Luscinia svecica*

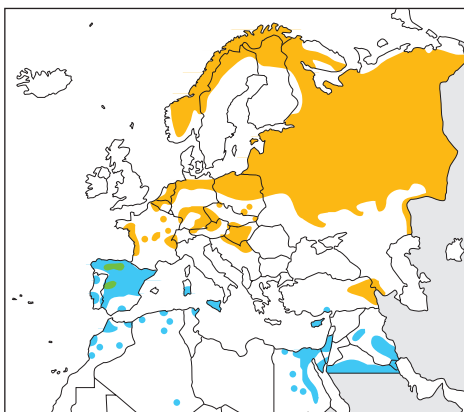
L 14 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Skulking European Robin-like chat, spending much of its time on ground under cover of waterside undergrowth. In all plumages has distinctive broad white supercilium and highly characteristic deep rufous sides to tail base. **Adult male summer** with its brilliant blue throat is unmistakable, but the rufous patches at base of tail (frequently seen when tail spread on alighting, less often when tail cocked on ground) and long, broad whitish supercilium are distinctive features of all post-juvenile plumages. **Winter males** have blue throat partially obscured by whitish feathering. **Females**, especially 1st-years, have whitish throat and breast with diagnostic dusky malar stripe and gorget across lower breast. Runs well with upright carriage on relatively long legs, pausing with head up and tail down, occasionally cocking tail to expose rufous sides to base and whitish ventral region. Flight low, often spreading tail as it dives back into cover, exhibiting diagnostic 'flash' of rufous sides (often the moment that identification is first clinched with this species). Compare Siberian Rubythroat.

SEX/AGE Some adult females show both blue and rufous on lower breast, others lack them. Winter males have whitish feathering invading upper and central part of throat patch. Juvenile 'spotty', but has same distinctive tail pattern as adult. 1st-winters lack blue and rufous and resemble adult female, but have buff tips to greater coverts and tertials (retained juvenile feathering); young males have some blue, especially at sides of throat (blue is always lacking at throat sides in adult females). By first spring much as adults, but many retain some buff tips to greater coverts and 1st-summer males do not attain full throat patch coloration of older birds.

VOICE Usual call a hard 'tuck tuck' or 'tchak tchak', but also gives a plaintive 'hweet'. Song varied and vigorous, and includes much mimicry; resembles that of an *Acrocephalus* warbler (e.g. Sedge), but richer and more sustained and including distinctive bell-like notes: 'ting ting ting ...'. Often sings from cover, but song readily delivered from exposed perches.

Plate page 63 I



GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Marked and complex. 6 races (nominate, *cyanecula* and *magna* illustrated). Only summer males are generally separable, but many populations intergrade. Nominate race ('Red-spotted Bluethroat'), with reddish-chestnut spot in centre of breast, breeds in north of range from Scandinavia eastwards, with relict populations in C Europe within range of *cyanecula*. Race *cyanecula* ('White-spotted Bluethroat') breeds over rest of European range except W France and area east of W Ukraine (although birds of Iberia are closer to *magna* and often lack white spot). Smaller, but otherwise similar white-spotted birds of W France are separated as *namnetum*. Race *volgae* breeding from E Ukraine eastwards has small rufous spot with white surround and a narrow rufous lower breast band. From Volga basin eastwards this form is replaced by *pallidogularis*, which has paler blue throat with U-shaped rufous spot and narrow rufous lower breast band. Isolated *magna* of E Turkey and Transcaucasia is largest race and usually lacks any central throat spot.

STATUS/HABITAT Generally common, but southernmost populations very localized and confined to upland regions. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Italy, Romania.) Breeds in bushy areas on tundra,

riverine thickets, damp forest edges and patches of scrub in hills and mountains. In winter and on passage, in scrubby waterside undergrowth and reedbeds.

SIBERIAN BLUE ROBIN *Luscinia cyane*

Plate page 631

L 13.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Asian vagrant (breeds C Siberia eastwards). Exceedingly skulking chat, typically keeping close to ground in undergrowth (although often climbs high in trees when singing). Stocky, with relatively short tail and long legs. **Adult male** is unmistakable. Has dark cold blue upperparts, with blackish sides of head and neck contrasting with white central underparts. Might be confused with male Red-flanked Bluetail in poor view, but latter less skulking, slimmer and has orange flanks and brighter blue upperparts, lacking black on sides of head and neck. **Adult female and 1st-winter** quite drab, resembling small, stocky Common Nightingale, but overall coloration less warm brown, more dull olive-brown, and sides of head and breast have weak crescentic scaling (difficult to see in field); only apparent relief to plumage is narrow pale eye-ring and whitish throat and belly centre. Rump, uppertail coverts and tail washed bluish in 1st-year male and adult female (although latter often lacks blue on tail), but less frequently in 1st-year female. Drabdest individuals best identified by distinctive, shortest profile. Hops and runs on ground, with tail slightly cocked and frequently quivered. Distinctive shape, plain plumage and relatively small size and

prominent pale legs prevent confusion with other similar birds, but compare female Red-flanked Bluetail.

SEX/AGE Juvenile 'spotty' above and dark-scaled below, with bluish on tail in male. 1st-winter males in autumn mostly resemble adult female, but have bluish on rump, uppertail coverts and tail, and often on some wing coverts and scapulars; occasionally blue more extensive, but head still female-like. Many young males attain extensive bluish on upperparts early in first winter. 1st-year female similar to adult female, but bill paler (black in adult), less bluish on rump, uppertail coverts and tail (often lacking) and outer greater coverts fringed and tipped with rufous. By first spring much as adult, but 1st-summer males retain brownish juvenile flight feathers and some other wing feathers.

VOICE Call a sharp, but fairly soft 'tchak'. Song, unlikely to be heard in our region, begins with a very characteristic series of hesitant 'sit' notes followed by an explosive, melodious, warbling torrent of notes that ends almost as abruptly as it began.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, breeds in mixed or broadleaf forests and woodland. Prefers areas with fallen trees and some undergrowth, but not dense thickets.

RED-FLANKED BLUETAIL *Tarsiger cyanurus*

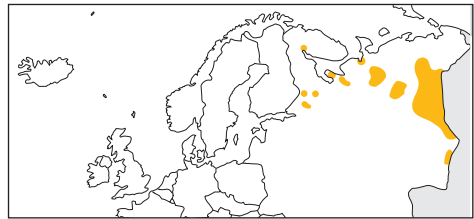
Plate page 631

Orange-flanked Bush Robin

L 14 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A chat of the taiga (i.e. boreal forest). General structure recalls a small-billed redstart. **Adult male** with its dark but bright blue upperparts and breast sides, orange flanks and white throat centre is unmistakable. Often appears dark-throated unless seen from below or head-on, and in deep shade of forest upperparts may appear merely dark. **Female and 1st-year male** (and perhaps some adult males) have greyish-olive head and upperparts, conspicuous white throat centre, distinct pale eye-ring, blue rump, uppertail coverts and tail (most obvious in flight), and characteristic orange flanks. Orange flanks prevent confusion with more skulking Siberian Blue Robin (q.v.). **Juvenile** heavily spotted like other small chats, but has blue tail. (Juvenile male Siberian Blue Robin shares this feature, but tail shorter when full-grown and blue much less intense; in any case latter species does not occur in juvenile plumage in our region.) Often feeds near ground, hopping in European Robin-like fashion and flitting back into cover, or dropping on insects from perch and flying back in manner of Common Redstart, but also forages in mid-storey. More cover-loving than Common Redstart, but less of an intense skulker than genus *Luscinia*. On breeding grounds most easily located by distinctive, far-carrying song, which is usually uttered from top of tall tree. Compare also female and immature White-throated Robin.

SEX/AGE Sexes often differ (see Identification), but many males resemble females. These dull males hard to sex, but flanks slightly brighter orange than in females and upperparts often bluish-tinged, with some



blue in wings. No obvious seasonal variation, but in fresh plumage 'classic' males have olive fringes to blue feathering of head and mantle. Juvenile 'spotted', but with blue tail. 1st-years much as adult female but upperparts warmer olive-brown, less greyish-olive; young males often with some bluish in wing. Does not attain full adult male plumage until second winter, and quite possibly many males never acquire ultimate male plumage.

VOICE Usual call a European Robin-like sharp 'tic-tic', but also utters a low, soft 'hui' and a guttural 'kerr' when alarmed. Song is insignificant but far-carrying, delivered from treetops (often at night): a series of thin, melancholy, rather Common Redstart-like or thrush-like phrases, sometimes ending in a roll or trill. Can be rendered 'teteetee-teeleee-tititit', trailing away at end.

STATUS/HABITAT Common in east but rare at western edge of range, with numbers varying annually. (In addition to mapped range, breeds occasionally in Finland and has also bred Estonia.) Winters in SE Asia.

Breeds in moist coniferous and mixed forests with undergrowth (often favouring areas with spruces).

Outside breeding season in all kinds of woodlands and even orchards or gardens.

WHITE-THROATED ROBIN *Irania gutturalis*

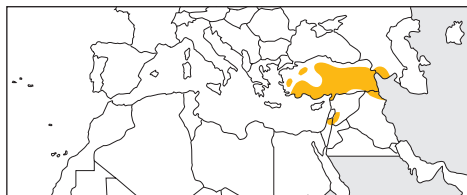
Plate page 632

Persian Robin, Irania

L 16.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Skulking chat of bushy slopes in Middle East. Rather long-bodied, long-tailed chat recalling large, bulky redstart, or even small, long-tailed thrush, in proportions, but in behaviour more akin to nightingales. **Adult male** distinctive, but somewhat variable in intensity of orange on underparts and extent of white in throat centre; typically appears black-throated unless viewed head-on, when white central throat stripe more apparent. When flushed, black tail contrasts with bluish-grey upperparts. **Adult female and 1st-winters** are dull grey-brown with dull orange-buff flanks (sometimes hidden by folded wing), distinct pale eye-ring and throat centre, and long, contrastingly blackish tail. Could perhaps recall female Red-flanked Bluetail, but larger, bulkier, much heavier-billed and longer-tailed, and tail never bluish (while 1st-winter male also shows indistinct version of adult male's head and throat pattern). Blackstart lacks orange-buff flanks, flares striking black tail and does not skulk. **Juvenile** is heavily pale spotted above and underparts are pale buff with fine dark scaling; lacks orange tinge on flanks, but combination of long, contrastingly black tail and large size should separate it easily from other juvenile chats. Usually keeps low in scrubby cover, flying swiftly between bushes if flushed. Flicks tail and droops wings when perched; runs and hops on ground with tail cocked, exposing white ventral region.

SEX/AGE Juvenile resembles adult female, but upper-



parts are spotted with buff and flanks lack orange-buff tinge. 1st-winter closely resembles adult female but has small pale tips to tertials, primary coverts and some greater coverts, and some weak mottling on head and on breast; 1st-winter males tend to be more orange-tinged below than females, especially on breast. By first spring as respective adults, but some pale-tipped wing feathers may remain.

VOICE Usual calls include a soft 'teck' and a loud 'ch-chyt'. Song a series of short, but rich and loud phrases, interspersed with grating notes. Delivery usually from cover, but song also given in flight, when bird glides down slopes with wings and tail fully spread, uttering more prolonged phrases than when perched.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (In addition to mapped range, formerly bred Lebanon.) Bushy areas on dry, rocky hillsides and mountainsides, and scrubby gullies and ravines. On passage, also frequents low-land scrub.

EVERSMANN'S REDSTART *Phoenicurus erythronota*

Plate page 632

Rufous-backed Redstart

L 16 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Asian vagrant (breeds C Asia eastwards). A large redstart, although size may not be apparent in the field. **Male** has diagnostic combination of reddish mantle, white wing patches and blackish sides of head and neck, although these features partially obscured in early winter by pale feather fringes. **Female** recalls bulky, rather long-bodied female Common Redstart, but has more prominent eye-ring, more extensive pale fringes to wing feathers, which form two pale wing bars and a panel in secondaries, a paler rump and some dusky mottling on sides of head. A perky bird, spending much time on the ground with wings drooped and tail cocked and jerked, not shivered as with most other redstarts. Flits down on to ground from boulders or bushtops, returning to perch in a shrike-like manner. Flight is stronger, more bounding and shrike-like than that of other redstarts. Most

likely confusion is with G\u00fcldenst\u00e4dt's Redstart (q.v.).

SEX/AGE Adult male in fresh plumage in autumn has extensive pale feather fringes which obscure bright coloration, becoming brighter as winter progresses and feathers wear. 1st-years much as respective adults, but males have even broader pale feather fringes, with crown and mantle appearing sandy-brown when fresh; abrasion takes longer, with more colourful plumage often not apparent until first spring. Ageing of females not possible in the field.

VOICE Calls include a weak European Goldfinch-like 'sip' and a low, nasal 'chaaar'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Turkey, Iraq, Kuwait). Breeds on dry hillsides with scattered trees and bushes, or in clearings in montane forest, or sparsely wooded areas. In winter, favours bushy gullies, open scrub at the edges of cultivation and gardens.

BLACK REDSTART *Phoenicurus ochruros*

Plate page 633

L 14.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A bird of rocky places or buildings. **Adult male** is a distinctive dark greyish or blackish redstart, with only plumage relief in some populations being the reddish tail (obvious only in flight or when tail 'shivered') and often a whitish wing panel. Eastern

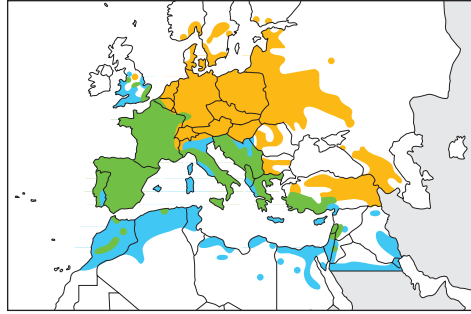
populations show rufous lower underparts and recall Common Redstart, but black of throat extends at least to lower breast, mantle and crown are darker and forehead is less strikingly white (see further discussion under Common). **Adult female and 1st-years** have less

distinct pale eye-ring than Common, and are more uniform smoky greyish-brown, lacking contrastingly paler warm buff or rufous-toned underparts and whitish central belly and (in females) throat of Common; birds of southeastern populations can have rufous wash to lower underparts and thus are more confusing. Habits also help, with Black being less inclined to perch within cover of trees and bushes, perching habitually on rocks and buildings, dropping to feed on ground, where it freely runs in short bursts as well as hopping; Common also drops to feed on ground, but does not usually run. Shivers tail like Common. Compare other female redstarts, especially *Güldenstädt's*.

SEX/AGE Adult male winter has pale feather fringes which partly obscure black coloration; becomes blacker as winter progresses and feathers wear. Juvenile only very weakly mottled (unlike Common), distinguished from adult female by pale gape and browner appearance. 1st-years in autumn are even closer to adult female, but as winter progresses adult characters appear in some males; by first spring some are much as adult male (although they lack pale wing panel), while others are more female-like yet discernibly darker, but many males remain indistinguishable from females until second autumn.

VOICE Typical calls include a rapid 'tic-tic-tic', a short 'tac' and a sharp 'tsip'. Song an insignificant rapid warbling, interrupted by a distinctive nasal crackling (likened to a sneeze or crunching gravel) during delivery; usually uttered from rocks, cliffs or rooftops.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Rather marked. 5 or 6 races (*gibraltariensis*, *aterrimus* and *semirufus* illustrated). Races vary according to presence or absence of white wing panel and rufous on lower underparts of males. Race of most of our region, *gibraltariensis*,



has greyish belly and white wing panel. Population of C Spain and Portugal, *aterrimus*, is similar, but blacker above and below. N nominate race of E Turkey to Caucasus resembles European form but lacks wing panel and often has rufous lower belly, although many lack rufous while other birds in E Turkey can show both white wing panel and rufous belly. Isolated *semirufus* of Lebanon, W Syria, N Israel and NW Jordan has bright rufous lower underparts and white wing panel (in fresh plumage). This population very close to *phoenicuroides* and (mostly larger and darker) rufiventris of C Asia, one or both of which occur in winter in Middle East, and which have rufous extending higher up onto lower breast and lack white wing panel. Females of rufous-bellied races are paler and buffer than western races and more easily confused with female Common, but lack whitish area on central belly and are greyer-brown on breast and flanks.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. Rocky hilly or mountainous regions, towns, villages, industrial areas and, in winter, also coastal cliffs and beaches.

COMMON REDSTART *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

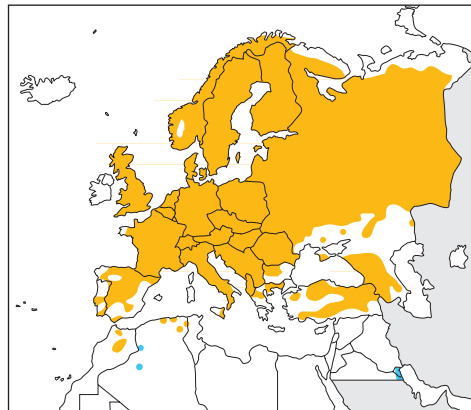
Plate page 633

Redstart

L 14 cm.

IDENTIFICATION The commonest and most widespread redstart of our region, frequenting woodland rather than open country. **Male** in worn plumage (late winter to early summer) easily identified by combination of black face and throat, blue-grey upperparts, white forehead and rufous underparts and tail. Many males in southeast of our region have white wing patch, reduced white on forehead and dusky mottling on mantle, but distinguished from rufous-bellied races of Black Redstart by having black of underparts restricted to throat. Plumage pattern less striking in autumn, when brownish fringes partly obscure black throat and white forehead, but basic plumage pattern still apparent. **Females and 1st-years** have more prominent eye-rings than Black, are more olive-brown, less smoky grey-brown, and have paler underparts with some whitish on throat and central belly (see also Black Redstart). Perches within cover of trees and bushes, with relatively upright stance and rapidly quivering tail. Drops to feed on ground, hopping in European Robin-like fashion. Typically found singly or in pairs. Compare other female redstarts.

SEX/AGE Adult male in fresh plumage in autumn has pale feather fringes which obscure bright coloration; becomes brighter as winter progresses and feathers wear. Some adult females have lower throat mottled dusky. Juvenile 'spotty'. 1st-years in autumn resemble adult female; young males have wider brownish feather fringes than adult males, but adult characters appear with wear as winter progresses. By first spring



much as adults, but many males have extensive brownish on crown and mantle into first summer.

VOICE Usual calls include a Willow Warbler-like 'hooet' and a short 'tek', the two often combined in a 'hooet-tek-tek'. Song rather variable, including some mimicry, mainly consisting of relatively weak and insignificant, rather melancholy, European Robin-like warbling phrases, usually beginning with the 'hooet' call note followed by a rolling 'truee-truee-truee', and trailing away towards end. Song of south-

eastern race *samamisticus* is slower and harsher.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 2 races (both illustrated). Race *samamisticus* breeding from Crimea to S Turkey typically has a distinct white wing patch, obvious on males and usually indicated on females, and males of this form often have extensive blackish mottling on mantle. Some males from the range of *samamisticus*, however, lack white wing

patch, while occasional individuals of nominate race from Balkans show one.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Ireland, Tunisia. Almost all winter south of the Sahara or in S Arabia.) Deciduous and mixed woodland and forests (especially more open tracts), orchards, parks and gardens. On passage, likely to occur anywhere with trees or scrub.

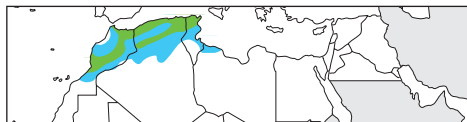
MOUSSIER'S REDSTART *Phoenicurus moussieri*

Plate page 633

L 12 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Endemic to NW Africa. Relatively larger-headed and shorter-tailed than other redstarts, recalling Common Stonechat in shape and bushtopper habits. **Male** unmistakable. Striking broad white supercilium and very prominent white wing patch contrast with otherwise black upperparts and deep orange-rufous underparts. **Female** resembles female Common Redstart in plumage, but is smaller, stockier and shorter-tailed, with shorter wings (reduced primary projection); underparts from breast down more strongly tinged rufous (brighter in some individuals than in others) and central tail feathers darker. Often has an indication of a pale wing panel. Usually solitary or in pairs. Perches in open on tops of bushes, dropping to ground or flycatching to feed. Flight action more fluttering than that of other redstarts.

SEX/AGE Adult male duller when plumage fresh in autumn owing to brownish tips to feathers, but colouring less obscured than in other male redstarts. Juvenile resembles adult female but is weakly spotted above and below; juvenile male shows white wing patch. 1st-years resemble respective adults, but young males



in fresh plumage have wider brownish and whitish feather fringes than adult males, thus appearing duller; both sexes may be aged in autumn by pale tips to greater coverts. By first spring much as respective adults, but wing browner and more abraded (much more obvious in male).

VOICE Typical calls include a thin 'hwee' and a harsh, dry, rolling 'trrrr'. Song a jingling warble, interspersed with metallic notes; has been likened to that of Dunnock.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. Bush-covered rocky hillsides and dry slopes with open forest or scattered shrubs, from sea-level up to 3000 m (but mostly above middle elevations). Spreads into cultivated lowlands, semi-desert and edge of the Sahara in winter, frequenting areas with bushes, oases etc.

GÜLDENSTÄDT'S REDSTART *Phoenicurus erythrogaster*

Plate page 632

White-winged Redstart

L 18 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Caucasus only. Significantly larger than Common or Black Redstarts, approaching size of Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush, but size not always apparent in the field. **Male** unmistakable, with black throat/upper breast and upperparts, deep rufous-chestnut remainder of underparts, whitish crown and large white wing patch (the latter especially striking in flight). **Female** resembles female Black Redstart but is bulkier, with relatively longer wings, more sandy-grey body plumage and paler rufous tail with lighter brown central feathers; often shows a pale panel on secondaries in worn spring plumage. Usually solitary or in pairs high in mountains, but will form parties in late autumn and early winter to feed on berries. Perches on boulders or runs on ground with relatively upright posture. Sometimes flycatches. Compare with vagrant Eversmann's Redstart.

SEX/AGE Adult male only slightly duller in fresh plumage, with crown greyer. Juvenile slightly mottled, although less obviously than other redstarts; juvenile male has large white wing patch. 1st-years resemble respective adults, but young males duller,



with greyer crown and paler orange lower underparts; usually a little duller than older males in first spring/early summer, with browner, more abraded, wings.

VOICE Poorly studied. Calls include a weak 'lik' and a rolling 'trrr'; also a strong 'tsee-ek, tsee-ek, tsee-ek' when alarmed or in territorial dispute. Song a series of short, clear thrush-like notes, interspersed with harsh notes; uttered from prominent boulder, or in aerial display flight.

STATUS/HABITAT Uncommon. Remote boulder-strewn slopes or rocky meadows, often by streams or by thawing snow or glaciers in high Caucasus. Forced lower by severe spring weather, into high valleys or to limits of tree-line. Often about mountain villages and cultivation in winter.

BLACKSTART *Cercomela melanura*

Plate page 632

Black-tailed Rock Chat

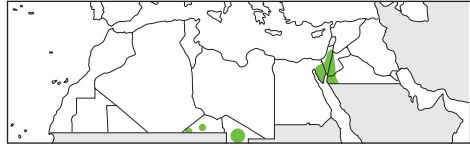
L 14 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Middle East and southern fringe of Sahara only. Perky redstart-shaped chat of semi-desert scrub. Overall dull grey or brownish-grey with slightly paler underparts, and with jet-black tail (both surfaces) which is freely flared and wagged as the bird flits between rocks and bushtops. Feeds on ground, frequently flaring both wings and tail, flitting back to prominent perch. Unlikely to be confused with anything else, but compare more skulking female White-throated Robin, which is also greyish above with strikingly blackish tail.

SEX/AGE All plumages similar; no obvious seasonal variation. Juvenile slightly browner and buffier than adult and with whiter fringes to wing feathers until first spring.

VOICE Typical calls include a piping, loose 'cher-u' and a weak 'chirp'. Song a far-carrying melodious series of four or five fluty notes, based on 'cher-u' call.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races, possi-



bly 3 (nominate illustrated). Race *airensis* of the Air and Tibesti is darker and browner above. Race *lypura* occurring just outside our region in Gebel Elba, extreme SE Egypt, and probably the race occurring just inside our region in extreme S Egypt, are intermediate. **STATUS/HABITAT** Locally common. (In addition to mapped range, may breed extreme S Egypt.) Semi-desert and desert scrub, barren foothills with scattered bushes, and wadis or gullies with scrubby cover; often about isolated buildings and even found in settlements.

WHINCHAT *Saxicola rubetra*

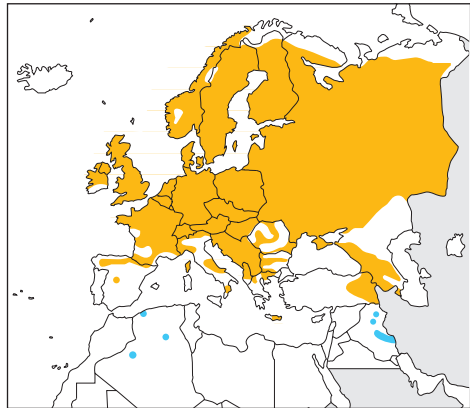
Plate page 634

L 12.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Recalls Common Stonechat in structure and behaviour, but is rounder-headed and shorter-tailed, and in all plumages shows broad pale supercilium, pale throat and white bases to outer tail feathers (but see Geographical Variation under Common Stonechat). **Adult male summer** has striking blackish sides of head, white supercilium and sides to throat, and orange breast and throat centre. Also has white 'scapular' patches (latter actually inner wing coverts and usually concealed when at rest), a feature shared with Common Stonechat, but marked differences in head/throat pattern make confusion unlikely.

Other plumages are duller, browner and more buff than adult male summer and recall female Common Stonechat, but upperparts (including rump and uppertail coverts) are more prominently streaked, and supercilium and throat are unmarked whitish-buff. Males show prominent white bases to outer tail feathers, females show some white at base when tail spread. Caution should be exercised when considering eastern races of Common Stonechat in winter/1st-year plumage, which can be very similar; Whinchat, however, has clearly streaked rump and uppertail coverts (see Common Stonechat for further discussion). Usually solitary or in family parties, but more sociable on passage. Tends to perch with less upright posture than Common Stonechat, with less wing- and tail-flicking, except when alarmed. Hops on ground. Flight stronger, lacking slight fluttering action of Common Stonechat.

SEX/AGE Adult male winter has bright plumage obscured, appearing more like female but with more white in tail and larger white patch on inner greater coverts; some birds very difficult to sex. Juvenile finely



mottled buff above, but shows buffish supercilium and throat. 1st-years in autumn much as respective winter adult but warmer buff overall, although ageing difficult in the field.

VOICE Most frequent call a hard 'tek-tek' or 'whu-tek-tek'. Song a rather abrupt scratchy warbling series of phrases, recalling that of Northern Wheatear and including some mimicry. Often sings at night.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (Almost all winter south of the Sahara.) Open country with scattered bushes, including heathland, rough grassland, meadows, upland pastures, young conifer plantations and hillsides.

CANARY ISLANDS STONECHAT *Saxicola dacotiae*

Plate page 634

Fuerteventura Stonechat, Fuerteventura Chat, Canary Chat

L 12.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Fuerteventura, where it is the only resident chat. Recalls Common Stonechat in structure and behaviour. **Male** easily distinguished by white

throat and supercilium (most obvious behind eye) and (when plumage worn) very pale underparts (only weakly washed orange on breast); the white collar

bands are also very extensive, almost meeting on nape. **Female** is paler and greyer above than that of Common Stonechat, and show whitish throat and supercilium; may be separated from Whinchat by lack of white at base of the tail, paler, greyer and more weakly streaked upperparts, whiter underparts (washed buff when plumage fresh) and paler rump. Both Common Stonechat and Whinchat occasionally occur on the Canary Islands on passage, and the former sometimes winters.

SEX/AGE Adult male when fresh in late summer/autumn has greyish feather fringes above, obscuring black on head, and is warmer-toned on underparts. Fresh adult female is buff below than when plumage worn. Juvenile weakly spotted on head and upperparts. 1st-years resemble respective fresh adults, but are whiter on lower underparts and have very abraded retained juvenile wing feathers by late winter/spring, when these are fresher and hence darker in adults.

VOICE Calls resemble those of Common Stonechat, most frequent being a sharp 'chut', perhaps a little sharper than that of Common Stonechat. Song also



resembles that of Common Stonechat, a scratchy 'biczee-bizee'; sometimes given in flight, when phrasing richer and more varied.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (nominate illustrated). Apparently extinct race *muriale* formerly occurred on islets off Lanzarote; separated by having richer buff underparts, but this colour matched by many of nominate race and separation of this form perhaps unwise.

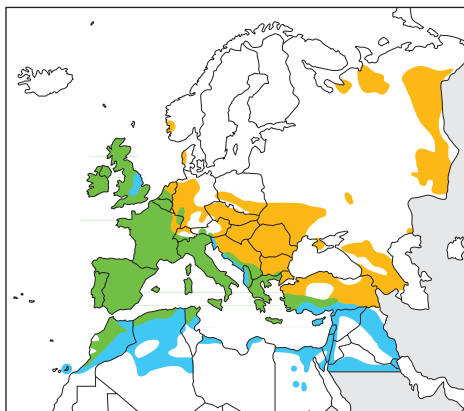
STATUS/HABITAT Endemic to the Canary Is: widespread and fairly common on Fuerteventura (about 750 pairs). Formerly also on Alegranza (last record 1913) and possibly Montana Clara off Lanzarote. Arid rocky ground with scattered scrub, both on hillsides and in valleys or shallow gullies, generally avoiding open plains.

COMMON STONECHAT *Saxicola torquata*

Stonechat; Siberian Stonechat (*S. t. maura* etc.)

L 12.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Conspicuous small chat of open country with scattered bushes. Perches upright on prominent bushtops or wires, flicking wings and tail. Usually solitary or in family parties. Adult males of all races have both throat and head black or blackish, white neck and 'scapular' patches (latter actually inner wing coverts and usually concealed when at rest), orange breast, pale rump/uppertail coverts and (except Caspian/Transcaucasian races) all-dark tail. Brighter colours most obvious in spring, when plumage worn; in fresh plumage, both colour and pattern somewhat obscured by brownish or buffish feather tips. Racial variation confusing, and for field-identification purposes best separated into three groups of races. **Western races** (*rubicola* and *hibernans*): **Males** as above, with orange on underparts usually quite extensive, especially in darker *hibernans* (W Europe), but when worn (i.e. spring) can be very pale below and rump patch appears whitish (buff when fresh), especially so in southern populations, although pale rump patch narrower than in eastern forms. **Females** typically have dusky or mottled throat, and supercilium lacking or very indistinct, although there is some individual variation, with some females almost pale greyish-buff on throat (but more rufous below and darker above than W Siberian race); rump patch similarly variable, but always with some weak streaking. Confusion with other members of genus unlikely. Compare Whinchat and highly localized Canary Islands Stonechat. **West Siberian race** (*maura*) is slightly smaller and slightly longer-winged than western races. **Adult male** has clear whitish rump patch (typically streaked in western forms, even if rump patch looks very pale), blacker underwing (difficult to see in the field) and in general has more contrasting appearance when worn, with darker upperparts and whiter lower underparts, latter contrasting with orange breast patch (smaller but better-defined than in western races); the white 'scapular' and neck patches are more extensive, the latter often so wide that they appear almost to meet on the nape. In fresh plumage in autumn, the upperpart feathers are broadly fringed with sandy-buffish (fringes are narrower and reddish-brown in western races), producing a significantly



paler appearance, and the white rump patch, sides of neck and lower underparts are washed with orange-buff; these features combine to produce a noticeably 'different-looking' bird as compared with western forms. **Females and 1st-years** differ distinctly from western forms in having paler overall coloration with whitish throat and distinctly pale supercilium, thus recalling similarly aged Whinchats, but the supercilium is not so distinct as in the latter, the upperparts are more weakly streaked and spotted, and the sandy fringes to the secondaries and tips to greater coverts form distinct pale wing panel and wing bar which contrast with dark primaries. The most important distinctions from Whinchat, however, are the unstreaked whitish (worn) or pale rufous (fresh) rump patch, which is striking in flight, and the lack of obvious white at tail base (note: in autumn, the white in the tail of Whinchat can be tinged buff and is thus less obvious). In the hand, this race has some white at the very base of the tail, but this is virtually concealed by the tail coverts. The fresh tail has narrow sandy fringes to the outer feathers, which are noticeable in the field under good viewing conditions; these fringes are browner and less obvious in western races. **Juvenile** is

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'spotty' and very similar to that of western races, but rump patch is tinged with orange-buff and unmarked apart from some faint streaks. **Caspian/ Transcaucasian races** (*armenica* and *variegata*): Slightly larger and longer-winged than other races. These two races have visible white at the base of the tail as in Whinchat, most extensive in *variegata*, which has white extending to about halfway down tail in males (in *armenica*, white is typically over basal quarter and sometimes not visible). **Males** of these forms in worn plumage resemble those of *maura*, but have very dark orange breast contrasting with whiteness of underparts, even more extensive white rump patch and (usually) obvious white in the tail. In flight, *variegata* can even suggest a wheatear in tail pattern. When fresh, the body coloration is obscured by very pale sandy-buff feather tips, which adds to the 'wheatear-like' appearance. **Females** are less striking, more like female of Siberian form, but usually show some sandy-buff at base of outer tail.

SEX/AGE Fresh-plumaged male in autumn has brown or sandy (depending on race) feather fringes above obscuring black on head and is warmer-toned on underparts. Fresh female is buff below than when plumage worn. Juvenile spotted on head and upperparts. 1st-years resemble fresh adults of respective sex and females may not be safely aged in the field. 1st-year males of eastern races may be aged by contrast between retained juvenile wing coverts with brown centres and new black-centred feathers (especially on lesser coverts); may also show some male characters on head/throat, but they are not so black as adult on lores or chin. In first spring/early summer male has brownish, heavily worn flight feathers, primary coverts and outer greater coverts that contrast with fresher, blacker remainder of coverts.

VOICE Typical calls include a strident 'chak' and a clear 'wheet', often combined as 'wheet-chak-chak'. Song a thin, scratchy little warble, rather variable in content but reminiscent of Common Whitethroat; richer and more varied when delivered in short, bouncing song flight.

TAXONOMY It has been proposed, on the basis that no intergradation had been observed, that the Siberian and Caspian/Transcaucasian races be split off as **Siberian Stonechat** *S. maura*. More recent observations, however, suggest that there is at least some intergradation in Transcaucasia.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Marked and complex; differences discussed above under Identification. 5 (or 6) races (*hibernans*, *variegata* and *maura* illustrated). Forms two groups of races in our region.

Western Group: Race *rubicola* breeds over most of Europe, NW Africa, Turkey and W Caucasus. Race *hibernans* in British Is, Brittany and NW Iberia is darker and more rufous below, but with some intergrading where range meets that of *rubicola*. **Eastern Group:** Race *maura* breeds from NE European Russia eastwards, occurring on passage in Middle East (and may winter). Some vagrants suspected to belong to poorly differentiated race *stejnegeri* of C Siberia eastwards, which is more rufous below than *maura*. Race *variegata* breeds on Volga steppes and in E Caucasus region, occurring on passage through Middle East (and may winter). Race *armenica* breeds from mountains of E Turkey through Transcaucasia to S Caspian region, occurring on passage or in winter southwards across Middle East.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. Open bushy country of all types, from mountainsides, moorland and steppe to coastal cliffs and islands. Outside breeding season, also about cultivation.

PIED BUSHCHAT *Saxicola caprata*

Pied Stonechat

L 13.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Asian vagrant (breeds from C Asia and E Iran eastwards). Recalls Common Stonechat in shape and behaviour, but plumage totally distinctive.

Male is blackish overall, with whitish belly and undertail coverts; in flight show extensive white patch on inner wing, but this usually concealed by scapulars when perched. **Female** much darker than female Common Stonechat of western races (let alone eastern races), basically almost uniform dark greyish-brown, lacking streaking on mantle but with contrasting rufous rump, becoming brighter rufous on uppertail coverts and contrasting with blackish tail. Unlikely to be confused. Perches on bush-tops and vegetation, flicking wings and tail in manner of Common Stonechat.

SEX/AGE In fresh plumage, males have indistinct

brownish feather tips to body plumage, which only slightly dulls blackish coloration. Fresh females have narrow buff fringes to wing feathers which abrade away. 1st-year males have smaller wing patch than adult males and more extensive grey-brown fringes, which may persist into first spring. Females difficult to age, but wing and tail more abraded in 1st-year.

VOICE Typical calls include a plaintive 'peep' and a Common Stonechat-like 'chek-chek'. Song, unlikely to be heard in our region, is a rapid, whistling 'chip-chepee-chewee chu'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Middle East). In natural range in C Asia, frequents cultivation, low bushes on fringes of semi-desert/desert (often by rivers or canals), scrubby wadis and stony hillsides with scattered scrub.

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NORTHERN ANTEATER CHAT *Myrmecocichla aethiops*

Ant Chat

L 17 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Vagrant from sub-Saharan Africa. A large dumpy, blackish chat of open country, somewhat Common Blackbird-like in appearance when perched. The overall sooty plumage is relieved in flight by conspicuous white primaries, but this feature is concealed when perched. Typically rather confident, feeding mostly on the ground, where it hops and runs, frequently spreading short tail and drooping

wings. Perches readily, with upright stance, on bushes, boulders, wires or buildings. Unlikely to be confused with anything else in our region. Range does not overlap with that of longer-tailed, more rufous-winged Tristram's Grackle.

SEX/AGE All plumages similar, but plumage when worn appears browner through bleaching. In fresh plumage, feathers of head and forebody narrowly

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fringed buffish-brown, giving slightly mottled appearance.

VOICE Has several piping and whistling calls. Song is a whistling warble, based on a piping 'tee-chu'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Tibesti, N Chad). Open country and semi-desert, with scattered bushes and trees; often along roadsides and tracks, or around buildings.

WHEATEARS

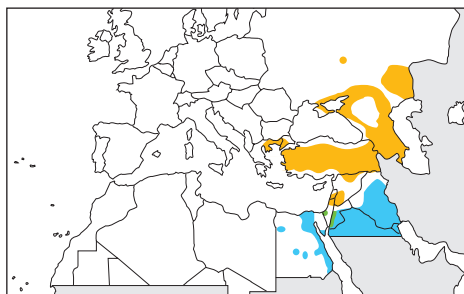
A large and diverse group of chats, belonging to the genus *Oenanthe*, with greatest diversity in the semi-arid or arid regions of N Africa and the Middle East. Wheatears are conspicuous small birds of open or rocky country, perching in prominent positions and often showing conspicuous white or pale 'rump patch' (in reality rump plus uppertail coverts) and, in flight, strongly patterned tail (typically with inverted blackish terminal 'T' and white bases to outer feathers that merge with white rump patch). They sing from exposed perches or in flight, but neither songs nor calls are useful identification aids. Summer-male plumages usually distinctive, but many species have colour and pattern obscured in fresh plumage (i.e. autumn) by brownish or buffish feather fringes which abrade during winter to reveal bright pattern by spring (transition to full summer plumage is often aided by a partial pre-breeding moult). Female and 1st-winter male plumages notoriously difficult, and some birds (e.g. Black-eared and Pied) may not be separable at all in the field in certain plumages. This situation is complicated by geographical variation in a few widespread species and by the variation in the throat patterns of both sexes in some species. Tail pattern helps with certain species, but again there is individual variation and moult needs to be taken into account; in summer, birds with partially grown tails can be problematic. Wheatears often keep their tails tightly closed when perched or on ground, showing merely dark tail centre (thus appearing dark-tailed), the pattern being best glimpsed as bird spreads tail on alighting. Because of the difficulties and complexities involved in the identification of the members of the genus, it is difficult to isolate useful features that apply across the group. Habitats differ slightly on breeding grounds, but a number of species intermingle in same habitat outside breeding season.

ISABELLINE WHEATEAR *Oenanthe isabellina*

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L 16.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Unusual for a wheatear in having sexes almost identical. Resembles females of several other wheatears, being particularly difficult to separate from pale adult female or 1st-year Northern, especially of larger forms, in fresh plumage (i.e. autumn). Generally rather larger, broader-winged, longer-legged, shorter-tailed and stouter-billed than Northern, but structure difficult to assess without direct comparison and differences perhaps apparent only on larger males. Often appears most different in flight, when less white visible at rear end owing to narrower white rump patch and broader, more brownish-black terminal band on slightly shorter tail (with dark central bar of inverted 'T' shorter, even sometimes absent); width of white and black 'bands' at rear end of Isabelline appear just about equal, while Northern has white band obviously more extensive and broken by longer, more obvious dark central bar of inverted 'T' tail pattern. The underwing is silvery-whitish, creamy or pale sandy (mottled dusky-grey in Northern) and the upperwing appears brownish-sandy with slightly darker brown trailing edge, particularly to primaries. On ground, appears distinctly long-legged, moving in short running bursts, pausing with very upright posture; slightly shorter tail does not reach ground when standing upright, whereas tail virtually touches ground in Northern (when tail is drooped). Plumages of the two can be very similar; although Isabelline appears slightly paler and more sandy on average, with paler ear-coverts (not darker than crown), coloration can be matched by many fresh-plumaged Northern. Typically, all wing feathers of female or 1st-year male Northern are black or blackish, and in worn plumage in spring/early summer the rather uniformly dark wings, contrasting with paler mantle, generally prevent confusion. Wing feathers of



Northern have buff fringes and tips in fresh plumage (i.e. autumn/early winter) and these buff fringes are quite wide, obscuring much of the black of the feather centres when the wing is folded and greatly enhancing risk of confusion with Isabelline. Wing feather pattern of Isabelline is similar, but the colour of the feather centres is distinctly grey-brown, with darkest brown being the primaries, and the contrast with the pale sandy feather fringes (in fresh plumage) is thus less pronounced than in Northern. The only really blackish feather on the wing of Isabelline is the longest feather of the alula, or bastard wing, which often stands out conspicuously against the paleness of the rest of the wing as a small detached blackish patch along the leading edge (alula may, however, be concealed, and some fresh 1st-year female Northern can have alula almost as prominent). In autumn, when extensive feather fringes obscure blackness of wing of Northern, a better clue lies in scrutiny of the wing coverts: feather centres of median and greater coverts are black in Northern, showing as row of obvious black spots on median coverts (as black as alula),

whereas centres dull brown in Isabelline (thus offering little contrast, and clearly not as black as alula). Isabelline tends to show a whiter eye-ring than does Northern, most obvious above eye, and the supercilium averages less prominent and is either buff throughout or whitish above/in front of eye and buff behind (in fresh Northern usually buff in front and whitish above/behind eye). Isabelline is a bird of flat country, generally avoiding rocky ground; it freely perches on wires, less so on bushes and trees. On breeding grounds, often sings during hovering display flight. Compare also female Desert Wheatear.

SEX/AGE Sexes extremely similar, but males rather larger than females, many with blacker loreal stripe which extends slightly behind eye; this weaker or merely dull brownish in females. Many females have browner tail band than males, and supercilium averages less whitish. In worn adult plumage, pale edges to flight feathers reduced or virtually lacking, pale tail tip

absent and underparts paler. Juvenile similar to fresh adult, but with faint pale and dark mottling above and sometimes grey scaling on throat, breast and flanks. 1st-years in autumn are much as fresh autumn adults, but with warm buff rather than whitish tips to primaries and tail feathers (hard to discern in field).

VOICE Typical calls include a sharp, nasal 'cheep' (like chick of domestic hen) and a whistled, rather Northern Wheatear-like 'wheet-wit'. Song richer, more varied and much longer than in other wheatears, including clear whistles as well as harsh notes and much mimicry; often delivered in song flight with tail fanned.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Bulgaria, Romania.) Steppe grasslands, stony and grassy desert fringes, arid plains and grassy slopes; reaches high altitudes but generally avoids steep mountainsides. On passage, also about cultivation.

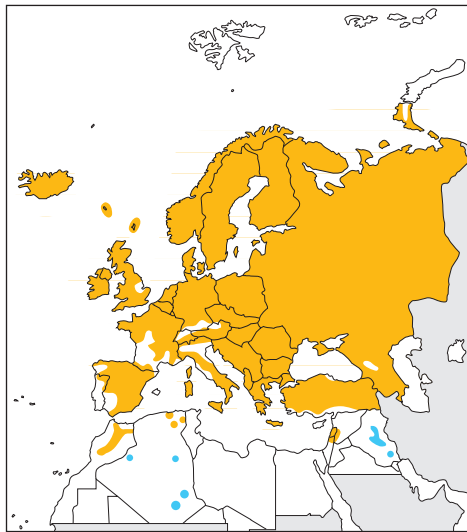
NORTHERN WHEATEAR *Oenanthe oenanthe*

Wheatear; Greenland Wheatear (*O. o. leucorhoa*); **Seeborn's Wheatear** (*O. o. seebohmi*)

L 14.5–15.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION The most widespread wheatear and the only species breeding in northern part of our region. Like the majority of the genus, shows striking white rump patch and tail base in flight, the latter with black terminal band and central extension (forming an inverted dark 'T'). This unique pattern, visible as soon as bird flits away, is the 'classic' field mark of the wheatear (and is shown by most *Oenanthe*). **Male** is the only wheatear with bluish-grey upperparts, contrasting with black wings and 'mask' (also black throat in N African race) and buffish-white underparts (becoming warm yellowish-buff on throat and breast). In fresh autumn plumage, the blackness of the wings is obscured by broad warm buff feather fringes, the underparts are almost orange-buff and the bluish-grey of the upperparts is obscured by brownish feather fringes (so at this season males appear much as females). **Female** is dull brown above, with blackish wings and buffish-white underparts when worn (i.e. spring/early summer), but show same striking rump and tail pattern as male; in fresh autumn plumage appears much brighter, resembling autumn male, and dark of wings obscured by pale feather fringes. Worn male in spring/early summer distinctive, but other plumages confusable with several other wheatears, especially Isabelline and Black-eared (q.v. for discussion). N African race male in brownish autumn plumage, with dusky throat, especially recalls Black-eared or even Desert, but tail pattern differs. Northern populations (especially Greenland race) often distinctly larger and brighter, with relatively longer legs than southern populations, and occasional pale birds in autumn are especially confusable with Isabelline. Perches frequently on rocks and walls, less often on bushes (or small trees), flicking wings and tail. Hops and runs on ground, stopping with erect carriage and wagging tail (runs for shorter distances and wags tail less emphatically than Isabelline). Typically rather wary.

SEX/AGE Sexes differ, but see comment under race *libanotica* in Geographical Variation. In fresh winter plumage in autumn, adults rather similar, but males have blacker lores and ear-coverts. Juvenile spotted above and dark-scaled on underparts. 1st-winters in autumn not separable in field from adults. 1st-summer female as adult female, but 1st-summer male differs from adult male in having grey areas on upperparts



tinged with olive-brown and often has less prominent white forehead, brownish mottling on black ear-coverts and deeper, more ochre (rather than yellowish) tinge to throat and breast.

VOICE Typical calls include a hard 'chak' and a sharp, whistling 'wheet', often combined as 'wheet-chak-chak'. Song a brief outburst of scratchy warbling, interspersed with creaking notes, harsh 'chaks' and fluty calls; more varied and richer when given in flight.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Mostly slight or moderate, but NW African race markedly different. 4 races (nominate, *leucorhoa* and *seebohmi* illustrated). Males of breeding population of Spain and SE Europe to the Middle East, named *libanotica*, are almost white below in spring and adult females resemble a duller version of male, although 1st-summer females resemble a paler version of nominate race female. Race *leucorhoa* (known as 'Greenland Wheatear'), breeding in Iceland, Greenland and adjacent Canada, is distinctly large and bright, with bright orange breast, very white forehead and darker bluish-grey upperparts

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(often tinged brown) in summer males; summer females and fresh-plumaged birds typically more richly coloured, too, with entire underparts deep tawny-orange. Icelandic birds, however, approach nominate race in size and are somewhat intermediate in coloration. Isolated *seebohmi* of Morocco and Algeria (known as 'Seebohm's Wheatear') differs markedly from all other forms of Northern in having throat as well as ear-coverts black and has blacker underwing coverts: even in fresh plumage dusky

throat is evident. Most females also show some dusky on throat, but some are pale-throated.

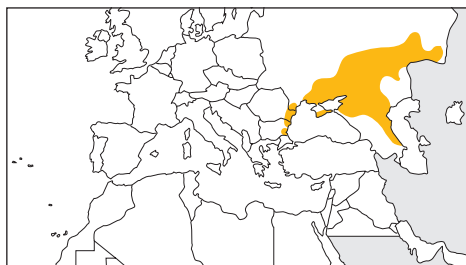
STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Spitsbergen. Almost all winter south of the Sahara.) Tundra, upland grassland with stone walls and rocks, barren hillsides and mountainsides, and locally coastal cliffs, sand dunes and islands. On passage may be found in almost any form of open country, from farmland to desert, and including seashores, golf courses and airfields.

PIED WHEATEAR *Oenanthe pleschanka*

L 14.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A wheatear of rocky areas amongst steppes or partly forested regions. **Male** in worn plumage (i.e. spring/early summer) has black mantle, wings and throat contrasting with white or whitish crown and nape and remainder of underparts; grey mottling on crown and warm buff on upper breast often remain into spring. Very similar to Mourning Wheatear (q.v. for discussion), but latter (particularly Middle Eastern race) shows obvious whitish band along inner webs of flight feathers when in flight. Differs from male of eastern race of Black-throated in having mantle almost entirely black and black of face/throat extending onto upper breast and connected across sides of neck to black of mantle/wings. Rare '*vittata*' morph, probably the result of hybridization with Black-eared, is white-throated, with black 'mask' connected to black of mantle/wings. Fresh autumn birds have extensive brownish or grey-brown fringes and tips to feathers of head and upperparts, including wings, obscuring the pattern, with the mottled blackish face and throat and the whitish supercilium being the most obvious features; the underparts are washed rich buff, warmest on the breast. Birds not in worn plumage are very hard to distinguish from many individuals of the eastern race of Black-eared, indeed some 1st-winter males are probably inseparable. In fresh plumage in autumn, male Pied is generally darker and more brownish-grey above than Black-eared, and has distinct blackish feather bases to mantle (initially hard to see), which become more obvious as feather wear advances, whereas these are lacking in Black-eared, but Black-eared shows stronger black centres to scapulars in fresh plumage than does Pied, and care must be taken not to mistake this feather tract for dark-centred mantle feathers. Greater extent of dark throat patch in Pied, which reaches to upper breast, often apparent, but beware pale fringes making black appear to end higher up on some individuals than it actually does. In the most problematic dark 1st-winter male eastern Black-eared, the crown and forehead feathers lack the pale grey fringes of Pied, but this may not be visible except under exceptional viewing conditions. **Female** in spring/early summer is dull earthy-brown above and whitish below, often with dusky throat; in fresh autumn plumage, whole upperparts fringed greyish, including wing feathers. Females are even more tricky than fresh-plumaged males, indeed some (especially worn birds in spring) are probably inseparable from eastern Black-eared. Many Black-eared are warm brown above and present little difficulty; it is the drabdest and greyest birds (unfortunately of eastern race, which overlaps with range of Pied, especially on passage) which create the problems. In fresh autumn plumage Pied is typically greyer than Black-eared, but many eastern Black-eared are dull earthy grey-brown and approach Pied closely; Pied shows greyish fringes to mantle

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feathers, giving a distinct weakly scaled look under good viewing conditions, but this is much less obvious in Black-eared (although may be faintly indicated). By spring, when plumage worn, all scaling has disappeared, but scrutiny of the breast pattern reveals subtle differences: in female Pied there is a band of pinkish-buff across the upper breast, interspersed with underlying indistinct dusky streaks, giving an irregular, slightly blotched effect; in Black-eared the breast band is typically more distinct, broader and more orange-buff, lacking any weak streaking, but individual variation in both species complicates the issue. Both often have brownish sides to the breast band, but these are typically greyer and darker in Pied. In dark-throated female Pied the dark extends slightly more onto upper breast (as in male), where its border is more rounded than in dark-throated Black-eared (although in fresh autumn plumage the pale feather fringes make this difference often impossible to discern). Some Pied have rather uniform grey throats, with fine dark streaking (a combination not seen in Black-eared), while a few have rather pale throat (and rare '*vittata*' morph has white throat) that contrasts with darker breast as in many Black-eared. Pale supercilium often (but not always) more prominent than in eastern Black-eared, and often a whitish trace remains (mostly behind eye) in worn birds in spring/early summer. Pied tends to be slightly shorter-tailed, a little dumper, slightly smaller and more 'chat-like' than Black-eared, but males of both species are a little larger and 'lankier' than females, making structural differences of marginal assistance. The two species quite readily interbreed in regions of overlap, especially in Transcaucasia, producing totally inseparable females and white-throated males which otherwise resemble Pied. Like Black-eared, habitually perches shrike-like on bushes and small trees and hops rather than runs when on ground. Differs from Northern in much the same way as does Black-eared (q.v.). Tail pattern of Pied varies: many show a narrower terminal band than Northern, with black extending slightly up sides of outer feathers, while others are much as Northern with a thick black ter-

minal band (note: tail pattern is equally variable in Black-eared). See also Cyprus, Finsch's and Mourning Wheatears for further discussion.

SEX/AGE Juvenile spotted. 1st-winters in autumn are much as fresh adults, although pale feather fringes broader and consequently 1st-winter male has less obvious black throat (latter also has less black centres to scapulars and usually dusky rather than black lores and chin). 1st-summer male drabber than adult, with mottled crown, some pale fringes on wing coverts, browner, more heavily worn wings and dusky brown rather than black mantle. 1st-summer female may also be aged by heavily worn wings.

VOICE Most frequently uttered call a clicked 'zack-zack' or 'chep-chep', like that of Black-eared Wheatear and rather different from sharp 'chak' of Northern. Also gives a rather Yellow Wagtail like 'psyiep'. Song variable, often a repetition of two or three harsh or trilling notes but can be rich and varied, including some mimicry; this richer song is usually delivered

during song flight. Recalls that of Black-eared.

TAXONOMY Sometimes considered conspecific with Black-eared Wheatear *O. hispanica* because of frequent hybridization where ranges overlap.

HYBRIDS are frequently recorded from zone of overlap in Caspian area. Males normally show intermediate characters and can resemble 'vittata' morph of Pied (see Identification). Female hybrids little studied but presumably complicate identification issue still further.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common (uncommon on passage in E Mediterranean, commoner further east). (In addition to mapped range, has bred Yugoslavia, Turkey, Armenia.) Breeds on stony hillsides and mountainsides with bushes or small trees, in broken areas in steppe, along low cliffs and tall, eroded riverbanks, about the fringes of cultivation and sometimes around villages or farmsteads. On passage, likely to occur about cultivation or in any open country with bushes, including coastal areas.

CYPRUS WHEATEAR *Oenanthe cyprica*

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Cyprus Pied Wheatear

L 13.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION The smallest wheatear of our region: smaller than Pied (wing 82–88 mm, as against 90–99 mm in Pied) and all plumages (except juvenile) are remarkably similar and male-like. Spring/early summer males are as spring/early summer male Pied, but have dark brown, not greyish, mottling on white crown and have more extensive buff wash below unless heavily worn. Additionally, black of mantle extends to upper rump in Cyprus, thus shows less extensive white than Pied, and black of throat extends onto chest. Spring/early summer female resembles male, but very dark brown replaces black of body plumage and the crown is earthy-brown, with white supercilia often meeting on nape (although extent of white on crown becomes greater by summer through extensive wear). In fresh plumage in autumn, both sexes show less extensive pale fringing than in autumn Pied, so have much darker crown and upperparts than Pied, and have warmer cinnamon-buff underparts. Song also differs from that of Pied (see Voice). Juvenile is darker than that of Pied, with dark greyish-brown or blackish-brown upperparts spotted with pale and buff underparts with heavy dark scalloping.



SEX/AGE Sexes rather similar, and seasonal variation less pronounced than in many wheatears. See Identification for details of plumage differences in adults and immatures.

VOICE Most typical call is a clicked 'zack-zack', similar to that of Pied. Has a more restricted vocabulary than Pied, with song invariably a rapidly repeated 'bizz-bizz-bizz...' recalling a cicada.

TAXONOMY Formerly treated as a race of Pied Wheatear *O. pleschanka*, but marked differences in song, ecology and to a lesser degree morphology all support treatment as a full species.

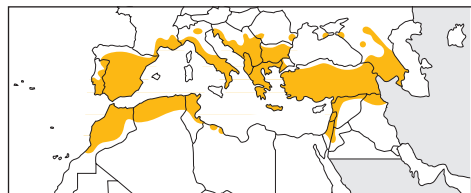
STATUS/HABITAT Common (but seemingly under-recorded on passage through Egypt/Israel). Like Pied, favours stony hillsides and mountainsides with bushes, but is much more arboreal, freely perching in trees and frequently breeding in forest clearings and open pine woodland.

BLACK-EARED WHEATEAR *Oenanthe hispanica*

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L 14.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Slightly slimmer and longer-tailed than Northern, with white rump patch extending a little further up back and thus exaggerating longer-tailed appearance in flight; Black-eared is also slightly smaller, with relatively weaker bill and slightly shorter legs; tends to perch more horizontally. Typically shows narrower black terminal band to tail than Northern, with band often broken on median feathers (which frequently have just black spots near tips, or may occasionally be unmarked white), but some eastern race individuals show similar tail pattern to Northern. Both white-throated and black-throated individuals occur throughout the range, although black-throated morph predominates in the east. **Adult males** in spring/early summer easily identified by combination of buff or orange-buff upperparts (wearing almost



white in many birds) contrasting with black wings (including underwing coverts), scapulars and facial mask (and throat in appropriate morph) and near-typical wheatear rump and tail pattern. Black throat normally clearly separated from black of wing, but when bird is hunched up they can appear to be

connected (thus suggesting Finsch's). Eastern race has rather more black on throat and extreme individuals can give impression of black meeting wing at all times; such birds can easily be misidentified as Finsch's (q.v. for discussion). In fresh autumn plumage appears more brownish-buff overall, with warm brownish-buff upperparts and pale fringes to black wing feathers and scapulars, but these fringes narrower than in Northern. **Females and 1st-year males** are rather variable, both in overall tone of upperparts and in head pattern; some individuals can be particularly difficult. Usually they resemble those of Northern, but they typically have a warm tawny-buff breast band (darker at sides) sharply demarcated from whitish underparts and often a dusky throat; the head is plainer, with paler lore, supercilium weaker (or lacking) and the ear-coverts often appear as a more distinct circular warm brown patch; in flight, the much darker underlying coverts and often more extensive white on rump patch and in tail should be looked for. In fresh autumn plumage, have pale fringes to wing as in adult male and the underparts are washed pale buff, but they still usually show a contrast with richer colour of breast. Eastern race females are duller, greyer- or more earthy-brown, above than western race and can be very difficult, sometimes impossible, to separate from female Pied (q.v. for discussion). Like Pied, spends more time perching on bushes and trees than does Northern and hops, rather than runs, when on ground. In NW Africa beware dark-throated race of Northern, autumn males of which are especially confusing but have 'classic' Northern tail pattern (with thick, unbroken black terminal band) and lack black-centred scapulars of Black-eared (but have similar blackish underwing). See also Finsch's Wheatear.

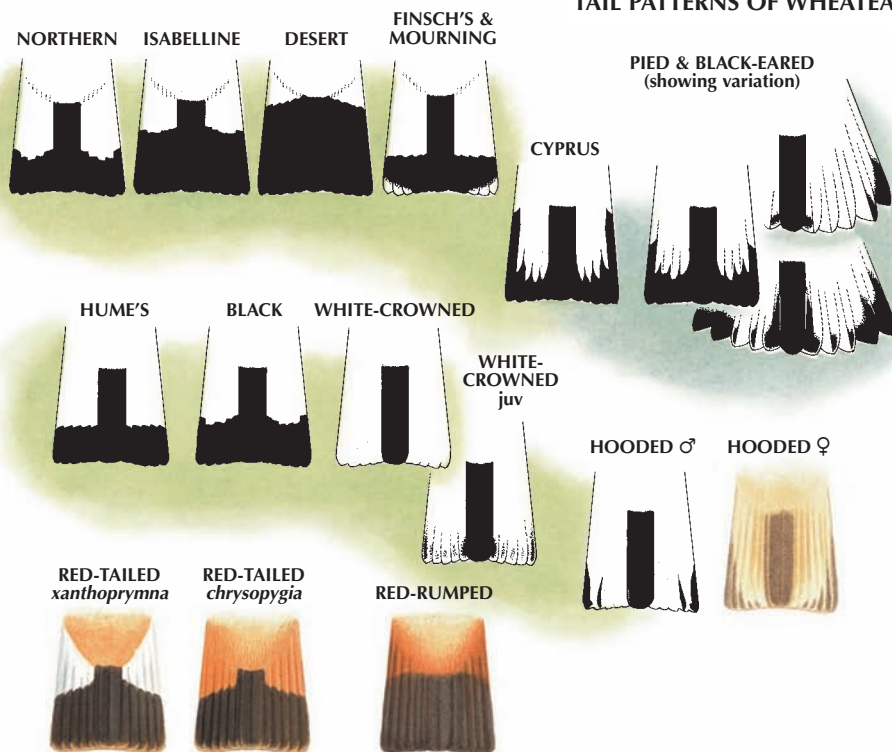
SEX/AGE Juvenile not unlike fresh adult female but has dark and pale mottling on upperparts and faint dark scalloping on throat, breast and upper flanks. 1st-years in autumn are similar to fresh adults; females are not usually separable in the field from adults but 1st-year males have black of face/throat more obscured by broader pale feather tips and upperparts tend to be darker. By spring young males are much as adults, but often retain some pale tips to black of head, are more dingy above and have flight feathers strongly abraded and browner.

VOICE Very much as Pied Wheatear. Most frequently uttered call a clicked 'zack-zack' or 'chep-chep', rather different from sharp 'chak' of Northern. Song consists of a varied delivery of scratchy, warbling phrases, sometimes quite rich and almost thrush-like in tone and including some mimicry; sings from perch or in short display flight.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 2 races (both illustrated). Nominate race of NW Africa and SW Europe east to C Italy and NW Yugoslavia is replaced by *melanoleuca* from S Italy and C Yugoslavia eastwards. Eastern-race males are typically whiter above (less orange-buff) in worn spring plumage and have rather more extensive black on head (including narrow strip on forehead above bill); other plumages tend to be darker, often slightly greyer (less warm), than western race on upperparts (thus more closely approaching Pied Wheatear).

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. Breeds on rocky hillsides and mountainsides with bushes, rocky outcrops in bushy steppe and along river banks; locally on coastal cliffs and by stone walls and buildings at the edges of cultivation. On passage, likely to occur about cultivation or in any open country with bushes.

TAIL PATTERNS OF WHEATEARS

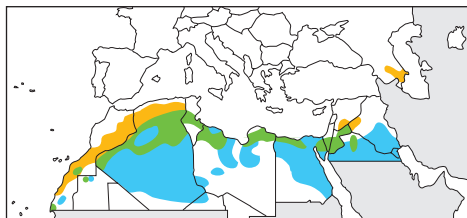


DESERT WHEATEAR *Oenanthe deserti*

Plate page 638

L 14–15 cm.

IDENTIFICATION The virtually all-black tail is shared only by Red-rumped Wheatear, although it should be borne in mind that many wheatears appear black-tailed when tail closed and may not always spread tail to reveal true pattern even in flight. **Male** recalls black-throated form of Black-eared, but apart from tail pattern may be separated by having black of face/throat connected to black of wings, narrower buffish-white rump patch, sandy (rather than all or mostly black) scapulars, white inner wing coverts (forming contrasting white margin to outer wing) and more extensive sandy fringes to wing feathers. Male Finsch's has black scapulars and tail pattern as Northern. In fresh autumn plumage, the black face/throat is partially obscured by sandy mottling and likewise the black sides of neck, giving appearance of a break between throat and wings. **Female** is pale sandy overall and recalls Isabelline in this respect, but Desert is stockier, with more rounded head, weaker bill, shorter legs, slightly longer tail and less upright stance. It shares Isabelline's largely whitish underwing and some Isabelline have very short central bar to the inverted black 'T' on the tail (thus suggesting Desert's rear end pattern), but Desert has tail dark virtually to the base, much larger pale rump patch (tinged with pinkish-buff when fresh) and much darker wings when worn (i.e. in spring/early summer). In fresh plumage in autumn, broad pale fringes largely obscure dark centres to wing feathers, and at this time black alula can stand out, almost as much as it does in Isabelline. Unlike Isabelline, lesser coverts often appear paler than upperparts, and (as in Northern) black centres to median coverts stand out as a row of black spots (centres much browner and less contrasting in Isabelline). Facial pattern may differ subtly; supercilium averages less prominent, ear-coverts are sometimes rusty-brown and darker than crown (a contrast lacking in Isabelline), and anterior lore is never dark (although it may seem to be in some light conditions). Adult females may show some dark on throat when worn and pale inner wing coverts often show up as pale line between outer wing and mantle/scapulars. All-dark tail differentiates Desert from occasional abnormally pale individuals of Northern or other wheatear species. Very much a bird of flat arid country



with scattered bushes, on which it readily perches.

SEX/AGE Wings blacker in worn spring/early summer plumage; pattern obscured by broad sandy fringes and rump washed buff when fresh in autumn. Juvenile resembles adult female but is indistinctly mottled above and on breast. 1st-years in autumn resemble respective adults, but 1st-year males have broader pale fringes to wing feathers and to black of throat, usually totally obscuring throat centre; 1st-year female not safely separable from adult female. By first spring as adults, but wings of male browner, more heavily worn, than in adult.

VOICE Typical calls include a low 'tchuk', a low whistled 'peeeco' and a rolling, almost lark-like 'trrr'. Song consists of low, plaintive, descending whistles (e.g. 'sweet-you' or 'sweeter-you') interspersed with short, harsh trills or rattles and long pauses; usually uttered from bush-top.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 3 races (nominate illustrated). Differences are based on tone of buff of upperparts and size; much local variation and intergradation complicates distinctions. N African *homochroa* smaller and more pinkish-buff, less greyish-buff, than nominate race. C Asian race *atrogularis* (breeds from Transcaucasia eastwards) is browner above and slightly larger than nominate race, with more extensive white on inner webs of flight feathers and more extensive black on throat.

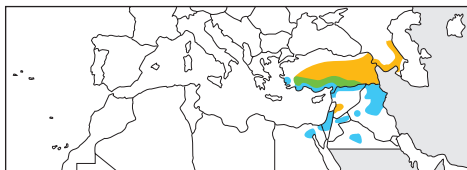
STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. Flat, open desert, semi-desert or very arid steppe, and also wadis, with either stony or sandy substrate and scattered bushes. Breeds on high plateaux as well as in lowlands. On passage and in winter, also about fringes of cultivation.

FINSCH'S WHEATEAR *Oenanthe finschii*

Plate page 637

L 14 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A wheatear of rocky habitats, commonest in Turkey. **Male** recalls black-throated morph of Black-eared, sharing black scapulars and pale mantle/back, but tail pattern recalls that of Northern in having thick and even terminal band (although occasionally Black-eared has similar tail pattern); in spring many retain pale tip to tail, which is usually abraded away in other wheatears by this time, but may also be absent in Finsch's by late spring/early summer, too. The black on throat and face is more extensive than on Black-eared, extending to upper breast, and the sides of the neck are also black and connect black face/throat with black scapulars and wings. Black-eared typically has a gap between black of scapulars/wings and face/throat, although most extreme examples of eastern race can appear to have them connected. Width of black connection is important: Finsch's has entirely black scapulars, making pale 'V' on mantle/back relatively narrower than in Black-



eared (indeed, can appear to be black-mantled like Pied or Mourning if not seen well). Crown, nape and centre of upperparts very pale sandy-buff, wearing almost white (these areas often whitish in worn Black-eared, too), race *barnesi* showing a distinctive pinkish-orange wash (never shown by Black-eared), and both races lack the buff-brown tinge often remaining on crown and mantle of palest Black-eared (although most heavily abraded summer Finsch's can show some grey of feather bases on crown and even

mantle). Underparts white, often tinged creamy-buff or (in *barnesi*) pinkish-orange, especially on breast, but extending to vent on fresh-plumaged birds. In flight, the very pale crown, nape and mantle show as an evenly narrow whitish band down centre of upperparts to contrast with black of rest of head and wings. Flight feathers show greyish inner webs, giving a slightly patterned effect (although not the strong contrast of Middle Eastern race of Mourning), and the underwing shows a strong contrast between black coverts and grey flight feathers. **Female** is distinctly grey (more sandy in race *barnesi*) on head and upperparts, typically paler and cleaner grey than female Pied, with at most a weak brown wash, and lacks the faintly mottled appearance on the mantle of fresh autumn Pied. Ear-coverts are contrastingly brown or even rufous-tinged. Throat pattern varies as in female Pied and Black-eared, some having blackish throat, others whitish, but always lacks the strong orange-buff breast band present in Pied and Black-eared; Finsch's has breast washed pinkish-rufous in fresh plumage, often extending to whole underparts, but usually appears very white below, and worn birds in particular are also very pale grey on head and upperparts; tail pattern as male. Range does not meet that of N African race of Mourning, females of which are similar to those of dark-throated Finsch's of race *barnesi*, but Mourning has more pronounced pale supercilium. Appears relatively shorter-winged, heavier-billed and stouter-legged than Pied and Black-eared; perches chiefly on crags and boulders, perhaps less often on bushes than the other two. Shy and wary, flying off considerable distances when disturbed. Flight notice-

ably more dashing and twisting than that of Pied and Black-eared. Restless, flicking and flaring tail upon alighting. Runs and hops on ground.

SEX/AGE In fresh plumage, males have narrow pale fringes to wing coverts and secondaries and greyish-sandy (nominate race) or pale pinkish-orange (*barnesi*) wash from crown to rump (often including rump) and on white of underparts. Females have wider sandy fringes to wing feathers than males. Juveniles almost unmarked and resemble pale-throated female, but pale fringes to wing feathers (especially tertials and median and greater coverts) much wider. 1st-years in autumn much as fresh adults, but broader fringes to wing feathers still apparent, even persisting into first spring on median and greater coverts.

VOICE Typical call a harsh 'chak-chak'. Song variable; often a subdued warbling interspersed with chattering phrases, but in song flight is sweeter and more varied, with whistling notes.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (nominate illustrated). Distinctly larger *barnesi* breeds from extreme E Turkey and Caucasus eastwards; is washed more pinkish-orange rather than greyish-sandy in fresh adult male plumage, and females are less grey, more sandy, overall than those of nominate race, with ear-coverts more rufous. Females usually entirely pale-throated (lacking blackish markings on lower throat).

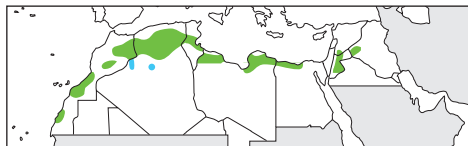
STATUS/HABITAT Rather localized, but fairly common. Rocky steppe, barren ravines, and rocky mountain and foothill slopes; descends to plains and semi-deserts in winter, even reaching coastal areas, but generally avoids cultivation or bushy areas.

RED-RUMPED WHEATEAR *Oenanthe moesta*

Plate page 638

L 16 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Chiefly in N African silty or partly stony semi-desert and desert. Rather large, stout wheatear, a little larger and less compact than Desert, with relatively heavier bill, larger head and broader, blunter wings. Distinguished at all times by rufous-based, but otherwise chiefly black, tail and rufous-buff rump (but note that rump can wear very pale, even almost whitish). **Male** never as cleanly black and white as some other wheatears can be. Even in worn plumage in spring/early summer shows sandy-grey crown and nape and pale edges to wing feathers, but even very pale-rumped individuals easily distinguished from Desert by black mantle (beware birds with mantle partially obscured by pale fringes when plumage fresh) and rufous tail base. **Female** very uniform sandy or greyish-sandy, darkening towards primaries, with pronounced ginger wash on head (less marked in greyer eastern birds); rump patch rufous-cinnamon and tail largely blackish but with rufous at base (more extensive than in male). Overlap with Red-tailed possible in winter in east of range, but latter is smaller, with weaker bill, and has inverted black 'T' in tail similar in extent to that of Northern, with rufous or (in nominate race adult males and some adult females) white at sides of tail base. Although nominate race male Red-tailed has black face and throat, the black does not extend over the sides of the neck and the mantle is dull greyish-brown (rather than largely black), while the tail has less extensive black, with a distinct central dark bar and a narrow rufous or white tip (when fresh). Greyer eastern females of Red-rumped differ from Red-tailed in having some ginger tones on head, in structure and in tail pattern. Typically found in pairs, perching readily on bushtops and wires. Hops on



ground. Has close association with rodent holes, into which it frequently disappears when pursued.

SEX/AGE Fresh adults have extensive pale fringes to wing feathers and more rufous-buff rump than when worn; males also buffer below and with some weak pale scaling on throat. Juvenile has only very weak scaling on underparts and spotting on mantle; basically resembles adult female but less ginger on head. 1st-years in autumn are much as adults, but male more rufous on crown than adult and mantle feathers more widely fringed, obscuring black. By first spring flight feathers very abraded (fresher in adults).

VOICE Typical calls include a dull 'trrrp' and a short 'k-wik'. Song variable, a series of sweet but throaty warbling phrases, interspersed with whistling notes; also gives a series of high-pitched warbled whistles at height of courtship display.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (nominate illustrated). Middle Eastern race *brooksbanksi* slightly larger and has greyish-black mantle and scapulars; females tend to have less ginger on head.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common in N Africa, but local and generally uncommon in Middle East. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Sinai.) Favours flat, stony and silty desert or semi-desert with scattered shrubs and an abundance of rodent burrows (in which it often nests).

RED-TAILED WHEATEAR *Oenanthe xanthopyrma*

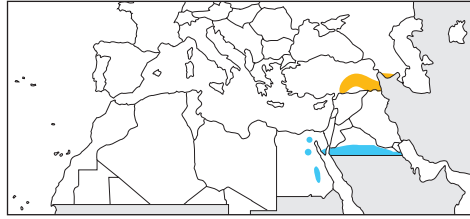
Plate page 635

Kurdish Wheatear (*O. x. xanthopyrma*); **Rufous-tailed Wheatear** (*O. x. chrysopygia*)

L 14.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Chiefly E Turkey in breeding season, southeast fringe of our region in winter. A distinctive wheatear, heavier-billed than Northern, with rufous rump patch and black 'T' on tail (the majority have rufous in sides of tail base, but adult males, and a few adult females, of nominate race have whitish). The two races are usually distinctly different. **Male of nominate race** has black face, throat and underwing coverts, pronounced whitish supercilium, medium grey-brown upperparts (with wings somewhat darker) and buffish-white underparts (washed rufous on lower underparts in fresh plumage); the rump patch is deep rufous, contrasting with whitish bases to outer tail feathers. Unlikely to be confused. **Female of nominate race** often resembles male, but black of face is duller and sides of tail base usually rufous (only rarely white); some lack black on face/throat (being dingy whitish instead, sometimes with rusty tinge to rear ear-coverts) and thus more closely resemble race *chrysopygia*, but are typically darker above and have less marked supercilium. **Race *chrysopygia*** lacks black on head and underwing and has sides of tail base rufous like rump (with black terminal band of the inverted 'T' a little narrower); thus both sexes resemble pale-throated females of nominate race in body plumage, but the supercilium is more distinct and the upperparts slightly paler, more sandy-grey. In both races, feather wear and bleaching can create a pale buff rump and tail-base colour, with extreme individuals thus recalling a small Isabelline, but they are distinctly grey and whitish rather than sandy-buff overall. Confusion likely only with female Red-rumped Wheatear (q.v. for discussion). Perches readily on bushes, freely flicking wings and flaring tail.

SEX/AGE Sexes similar (but see Identification). Juvenile unspotted, recalling pale-throated adults, but buff tips to greater and median coverts form distinct bars,



which are apparent into first winter. 1st-year otherwise resembles adult, but by spring may be aged by more worn wing feathers.

VOICE Calls include a soft, repeated 'thrrr', a grating 'grat grat' and a clicking 'chek'. Song a series of short warbling phrases, including sweet musical notes and fluty whistles, interspersed with rasping notes; often given in flight.

TAXONOMY It has been suggested that the two races may represent separate species, but intermediates are fairly frequent where the ranges meet.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Marked. 2 races (both illustrated). Differences discussed under Identification. Nominat (black-throated) race ('Kurdish Wheatear') breeds from SE Turkey eastwards (scarce in winter in Middle East), with pale-throated *chrysopygia* ('Rufous-tailed Wheatear') breeding from Transcaucasia and occasionally E Turkey eastwards (scarce in winter in extreme southeast of our region).

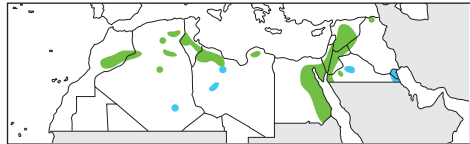
STATUS/HABITAT Local and uncommon in Turkey, rare in Transcaucasia and almost certainly overlooked in NE Iraq. Arid, rocky hillsides and mountainsides, with sparse vegetation and boulders. In winter in arid lowland plains and foothills with scattered bushes, avoiding cultivation.

MOURNING WHEATEAR *Oenanthe lugens*

Plate pages 638 & 639

L 14.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A slim, elegant wheatear of arid, broken country in N Africa and the Middle East. For identification purposes the populations of these two regions need to be considered separately. **Nominat race** (Middle East and Egypt): All plumages similar, although females generally duller on black areas of plumage than males; both recall male Pied Wheatear. Black of face/throat does not extend onto upper breast, and pale of crown/nape does not extend onto upper mantle, unlike Pied. Easily distinguished in flight by broad band of whitish extending full length of flight feathers (producing a vaguely 'white-winged' impression); this wing band is composed of white on inner webs of flight feathers and is invisible on closed wing. Tail pattern resembles that of Northern, with fairly broad black terminal band of even width (in many, but not all, Pied the band is narrower on median feathers and black extends slightly up sides of outer tail). When perched, pale rusty-buff wash on undertail coverts provides a useful clue, but many Cyprus show buff on lower underparts (although typically have much darker crown than Mourning in spring/early summer). 1st-year birds duller than adults and with some greyish feathering on mantle, thus suggesting Finsch's, but latter has more uniformly pale mantle and lacks extensive whitish on flight feathers



visible in flight. See also very different black morph under Unusual Variants. **N African race (*halophila*)**: Sexes differ. **Male** very much as Middle Eastern race but extent of white in wing more restricted, showing as greyish band in flight to contrast with blacker wing coverts; undertail coverts paler, less obviously rusty-buff. **Female** has greyish-sandy upperparts and crown and usually blackish throat and sides of head, although some have pale throat with rufous-brown ear-coverts. Female and fresh-plumaged male Black-eared are warm brown or orange-buff above, have uneven black terminal band to tail and buffer underparts. Dark-throated females of Mourning differ from fresh male N African race of Northern (which has similar tail pattern) chiefly in being paler above and much whiter below, the fringes to the wing feathers are less contrasting, and many also have rufous wash to crown. Range unlikely to meet that of Finsch's, females of which are very similar (see discussion under Finsch's).

Perches readily on rocks, walls and wires, but not habitually on bushes. Very active when flycatching, indulging in spectacular chasing of flying insects. Strongly territorial, being met with singly or in family parties. Compare also Hooded Wheatear.

SEX/AGE Sexes similar in nominate race of Middle East and Egypt, but differ strongly in N African *halophila* (see Identification). In fresh plumage, males and nominate race females have greyish or buffish-brown tips to white crown and nape feathers, undertail coverts deeper buff and wing feathers narrowly tipped and fringed pale buff. Females of *halophila* have white of underparts washed very pale buff, and wing feathers narrowly pale-fringed when fresh (most obvious on tertials). Juveniles of both races resemble pale-throated female *halophila*, but have weak grey scaling on breast, weak streaking on mantle and wider pale fringes to wing feathers, and juvenile males have dusky mask through eye. 1st-years resemble respective adults but retain juvenile wing pattern, and usually some pale feathering retained on mantle in young males and in young females of nominate race.

VOICE Typical call a quiet 'chak chak'. Song a series of sweet piping warbled phrases interspersed with call notes and scratchy sounds, or a series of descending trills; song content variable, perhaps reflecting regional variations.

TAXONOMY The N African race *halophila* may possibly be worthy of full species status in view of the

striking differences in plumage between the sexes.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Marked. 3 races (nominate and *halophila* illustrated). Differences between nominate race and NW African *halophila* (breeds east to NE Libya) discussed under Identification. Iranian race *persica* occurs occasionally in winter south to NE Saudi Arabia (perhaps even further west); resembles nominate race (i.e. sexes similar) but vent richer rufous, less white in wings (same as in *halophila*) and crown browner in fresh plumage.

UNUSUAL VARIANTS A highly distinctive black morph is confined to the black basalt desert of N Jordan and adjacent Syria. At all ages black or blackish overall, with white ventral region, rump and in tail and showing whitish wing band in flight. Latter an important distinction from similar but larger and more heavily built Black and White-crowned Wheatears, although range overlaps only with latter, which is further separated by lack of solid black terminal band on tail. At close range shows short and inconspicuous white wing bar formed by white tips to primary coverts, a feature also absent from Black and White-crowned. Note: this dark population was previously thought to be an isolated population of the Variable (or Eastern Pied) Wheatear *O. picata* (breeding from Iran and Turkmenistan eastwards).

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. Semi-arid and desert country with gorges, rocky wadis and rolling hills, generally favouring areas with very sparse vegetation but sometimes in areas with scattered bushes.

HOODED WHEATEAR *Oenanthe monacha*

Plate page 639

L 17.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Very arid cliffs and hills of Middle East and Egypt. Big, long-bodied, large-winged wheatear, with longest bill of the genus. At all ages tail pattern distinctive; lacks dark terminal band (although shows vestiges at tail corners) but has prominent dark central feathers (a pattern shared only by White-crowned). **Male** most similar to White-crowned, but has white on underparts extending up to lower breast and white crown extending down nape; shape more elegant, with relatively flat head and much longer bill and wings. Both Mourning and Pied have terminal black band to tail and black of underparts almost restricted to throat. **Female** very plain sandy, with tail pattern recalling male's, but tail pale rufous-sandy instead of white and with dark brown rather than black central bar; fresh adult females and 1st-years are very warm buff on rump and tail and may suggest female Red-rumped or Red-tailed, but have only centre and corners of tail dark (Red-tailed has broad terminal band and Red-rumped a chiefly dark tail). Usually solitary, perching readily on bushtops and wires. Flight strongly bounding; indulges in spectacular aerial pursuits of flying insects and impressive display flights. Usually wary, often flying considerable distances when flushed, but sometimes strangely confiding.

SEX/AGE In fresh plumage in autumn, males have weak pale tips to throat/upper breast feathers and



weak pale fringes to upperpart and wing feathers, but plumage pattern still striking. Fresh-plumaged females are warmer buff overall, especially on rump patch, and more obviously rufous-tinged on tail, than when worn. Juvenile as female, but indistinctly pale-spotted above and weakly scaled below. 1st-year male duller than adult, with white of underparts tinged pinkish-cream and crown grey-toned; wings with wider pale fringes. 1st-year female as fresh adult female, but dark on tail corners slightly more extensive.

VOICE Poorly documented. Calls infrequently heard, but include a harsh 'zack' and, when anxious, female may utter a low 'wit-wit'. Song a series of clear piping whistles and short melodic warbling phrases, sometimes given in flight.

STATUS/HABITAT Local and uncommon. Barren cliffs and ravines in hot and very desolate country; sometimes about isolated buildings. Disperses to more open ground in winter, when may occur in slightly more vegetated areas.

HUME'S WHEATEAR *Oenanthe alboniger*

Plate page 639

L 17 cm.

IDENTIFICATION E Iraq only. Very distinctive wheatear, with all plumages similar. Wholly black hood, wings and mantle contrast with white underparts and conventional inverted 'T' tail pattern: a

combination unique in our region. Extensive white reaching high up back recalls Hooded Wheatear, which, however, lacks black terminal band to tail and has white crown. Only possible confusion is with

picata morph of extralimital Variable (or Eastern Pied) Wheatear *O. picata*, which could conceivably occur in Iraq in winter. Plumage patterns are almost identical, but Hume's is bigger, with white reaching higher up back (visible above wing base when wings folded in Hume's, not visible in Variable when wings closed), has jet-black (not dull black) plumage when adult and has longer, heavier bill and larger feet. Usually solitary or in family groups. Can be quite confiding in winter, when sometimes frequents human settlements. Perches quite readily on low bushes, chasing prey with agility when flycatching.

SEX/AGE All plumages similar; little seasonal variation, but in very fresh plumage has narrow whitish edges to wing feathers and tail tip. Adult female averages a little duller than male. Juvenile unspotted, resembles adult, but black of plumage more brown-



ish, faint brownish tips to greater coverts forming weak wing bar and tail narrowly tipped buffish (not white). 1st-year as adult, but flight feathers browner and more heavily worn by late winter.

VOICE Song a series of far-carrying, rather short melodious phrases. Calls include a short, high-pitched, repeated whistle and a harsh 'chak-chak' of alarm.

STATUS/HABITAT Rare and little known in our region, with records from E Iraq (where known to breed). Barren cliffs, ravines and hills, usually with little or no vegetation, and rocky hilly outcrops in desolate plains.

WHITE-CROWNED WHEATEAR *Oenanthe leucopyga*

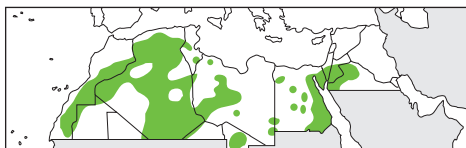
Plate page 639

White-crowned Black Wheatear, White-tailed Wheatear

L 17 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A large black wheatear of desert and semi-desert hills with tail pattern similar to that of male Hooded (white with black central feathers and often blackish spots on tips of outer feathers). **Adult** easily distinguished from Black by white crown and by lack of solid terminal band on tail (Black has inverted 'T' pattern like Northern); plumage glossier overall and has more extensive white on rump patch and ventral area. Easily separated from male Hooded, by almost wholly black underparts (white only on ventral region) and white cap restricted to crown (nape also white in Hooded); Hooded also has longer bill and wings. **Juvenile and 1st-year** lack white crown and resemble Black in body plumage, but tail pattern usually diagnostic (see adult). A few juveniles and 1st-years, however, have ill-defined terminal band on tail recalling Black and can be problematic, but Black is stouter, with longer and stouter bill, is distinctly dark brown rather than black in N African race, and has clear, broad dark tail band. Black morph of Mourning Wheatear (only in N Jordan and adjacent parts of Syria) has black terminal band to tail and shows white band along length of wings in flight (and white tips to primary coverts at close range). Normally solitary or in family parties. Often confiding about habitation, more wary elsewhere. Flight strong, sweeping to land with spread tail (clearly revealing lack of terminal band).

SEX/AGE Sexes similar, but female duller, less glossy, black. Some adults (especially males) have completely



white outer tail feathers, others have small black spots near tips (especially on outermost feathers). Juvenile lacks white cap and dark areas of plumage are sooty grey-black; has blackish spots near tips of outer tail feathers, very rarely forming a terminal band. 1st-years are similar to juvenile but deeper black (glossier in male); some white mottling appears on crown by first spring but white cap not acquired until second autumn.

VOICE Calls include a low 'chik' and a plaintive 'peep'. Song variable; often a sweet, melodious warbling of almost lark-like quality, but sometimes harsher and more discordant. A great mimic, incorporating the sounds of many other birds and mammals in its songs.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (*ernesti* illustrated). Nominate race of N Africa, east to Nile valley, is slightly smaller and less strongly glossed than *ernesti*.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. Desert wadis, gorges, broken areas and hills, often favouring the most desolate regions; also oases and other settlements.

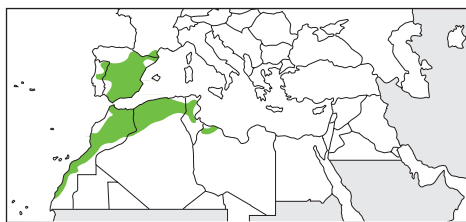
BLACK WHEATEAR *Oenanthe leucura*

Plate page 639

L 18 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Large, rather stout-billed sooty-black (adult males) or sooty-brown (females/immature males) wheatear of SW Europe and NW Africa. Combination of blackish head and body plumage and tail pattern recalling Northern Wheatear (with inverted black 'T') prevents confusion with all but a very few immature White-crowned (see that species for discussion). Range does not overlap with that of black-morph Mourning Wheatear (q.v.). In flight, distinctly bulkier and broader-winged than White-crowned, with heavier, slower wing action; typically drops off crags, rather than sweeping up slopes with spread tail so typical of White-crowned. Usually solitary or in family parties.

SEX/AGE All plumages similar. Females distinctly



browner than males in both races. Juvenile resembles adult female, but a little paler brown, with very faint pale mottling on upperparts. 1st-years as adults, but

with more worn, browner wings by late winter.

VOICE Usual calls include a plaintive 'pee-pee-pee' and a scolding 'chak'. Song a rather weak, melodious, fluty warbling, interspersed with churring and scratchy phrases.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (*syenitica* illustrated). Nominate race of SW Europe blacker

than N African *syenitica*, male lacking brownish tinge altogether.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally fairly common. Steep rocky slopes, cliffs, gorges and rocky plateaus, from sea-level to high mountains, generally in dry, arid country; favours both areas with sparse vegetation and areas with scattered trees and scrub.

RUFIOUS-TAILED ROCK THRUSH *Monticola saxatilis*

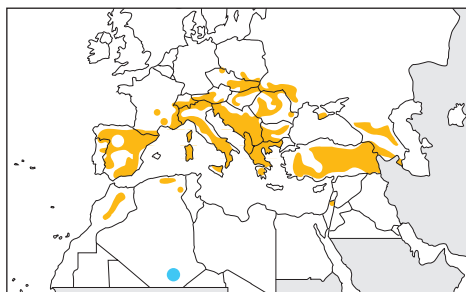
Plate page 640

Rock Thrush

L 20 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Small, dumpy, short-tailed thrush of rocky and often mountainous country. Combination of short tail, slender bill and long wings recalls starling in shape. **Adult male** in summer plumage unmistakable, with blue head and mantle, rusty underparts and tail and white back. In autumn and winter these colours are dulled by dark and pale feather fringes, but are usually still quite obvious. **Female and 1st-winter male** brownish above and buffish below, variably mottled with buff above and scaled with dark below depending on extent of feather wear, becoming rufous on flanks and belly; deep rufous tail and shape aid identification. When perched rufous tail may not be apparent, but normally obvious in flight. Size and shape prevent confusion with redstarts. Perches rather upright on crags and boulders, often flicking tail. Usually solitary and rather wary.

SEX/AGE Juvenile resembles fresh adult female, but is greyer above and less warm buff below, with more intense mottling overall and narrow buff tips to wing coverts forming weak bars. 1st-years in autumn recall fresh adults but feather fringes broader and males less intensely rufous below; wings more abraded than those of adults by mid-winter. Young males appear much as adults after partial moult in late winter, apart from more abraded wings.



VOICE Typical calls are a low 'chak-chak' and a clear 'diu'. Song a series of mellow fluting phrases, including some mimicry and warbling, recalls Blue Rock Thrush but less melancholy and more like Redwing in tone than Common Blackbird; sometimes delivered in parachuting song flight.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (In addition to mapped range, formerly bred Belgium, Germany. Almost all winter south of the Sahara.) Rocky hillsides and mountainsides, mostly from middle altitudes upwards; frequently about buildings or ruins. On passage, also in open lowlands.

BLUE ROCK THRUSH *Monticola solitarius*

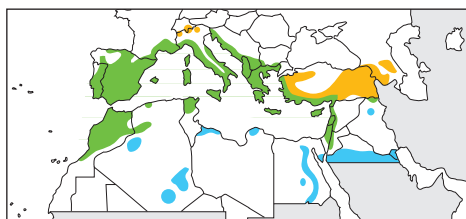
Plate page 640

L 22 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Longer-tailed and longer-billed than Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush, although with similar head shape, recalling rather long-tailed starling. **Male** dark bluish-grey all over, with darker wings and tail, appearing all dark at distance; only possible confusion is with 1st-winter male Common Blackbird, but latter blacker and distinctly bulkier, with broader wings and stouter bill. **Female** also appears very dark, being overall dark grey-brown with intense buff and dark barring on underparts. Some show some blue on upperparts. Compared to Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush is darker overall with longer bill and tail, and dark brown rather than rusty-rufous tail. Perches prominently on crags, boulders and buildings, but is shy and wary. Occupies wider altitudinal range than Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush.

SEX/AGE In fresh plumage, adult male has inconspicuous buff fringes to head and body feathers. Juvenile resembles female but browner, lacking blue-grey tones to upperparts and with more conspicuous pale spotting and barring. 1st-years resemble respective adults, but male has broader pale feather fringes than adult, persisting to at least late winter (and even later on underparts); may be aged in first spring by more heavily worn wings.

VOICE Calls include a deep 'chak-chak', a plaintive 'see' and a staccato, rather nuthatch-like, 'uit-uit'.



Song a loud melodious rather melancholy series of fluting whistles, each note well spaced, not unlike Common Blackbird or Mistle Thrush in tone; often given in song flight. Also has a more subdued creaking subsong.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (nominate illustrated). Nominat race over most of our region, intergrading into paler *longirostris* of E Iraq. Females of latter form are distinctly paler below, with broader buff barring on underparts.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Poland.) Rocky hillsides and mountainsides, ravines, cliffs and buildings from sea-level to high altitudes. Outside breeding season deserts highest levels, dispersing into lowlands, including desert fringes.

WHITE'S THRUSH *Zoothera dauma*

Plate page 641

Scaly Thrush

L 27 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Taiga (i.e. boreal forests) of Urals only. Large, heavily built skulking thrush, bulkier but relatively shorter-tailed than Mistle with large head and long and heavy bill. Striking plumage, with head and body clothed in black crescentic scaling on a tawny-buff background (wings and tail plainer) makes this species unmistakable. In flight, look for banded black and white underwing (difficult to see); flushed birds seen from behind show relatively short, broad tail with white corners and pale brownish central feathers (a distinctive pattern), and strongly scaled mantle and rump. Feeds quietly on ground in dense undergrowth, walking rather than hopping, and slowly wagging rear end. When flushed, either rises silently to perch about 5 metres from ground a few trees further on or slips away through trees like a woodcock. Flight heavily undulating. Sings from tops of tall trees, dropping back to ground when finished or disturbed. Only likely to be confused with juvenile Mistle (in spring and early summer); latter shares white tail corners, but has spotted instead of scaled underparts, plain white rather than banded underwing, and a longer tail. Upperparts of young Mistle also differ; general coloration is paler, sandy-grey rather than rich golden olive-brown, and instead of the heavy black crescentic markings seen in all but juvenile plumage of White's, feathers show prominent pale buff streaks down centres and blackish tips, creating a very different pattern; upwinging is much less patterned. Mistle feeds in open, whereas White's is a frustrating skulker. Juvenile, unlikely to be recorded away from breeding area, has black spotting rather than crescentic markings below and pale brownish-olive ground colour to upperparts, therefore more closely resembles juvenile Mistle, but upperparts are



conspicuously barred with black and pale whitish shaft streaks are narrower and less conspicuous than in Mistle.

SEX/AGE Juvenile is spotted rather than scaled below and upperparts are dark-barred rather than scaled with bold crescentic markings.

VOICE Rather silent except when singing, although calls include a quiet Eurasian Bullfinch-like piping and a thin 'tsee'. Song remarkable and totally unmistakable: a series of well-spaced, penetrating, haunting, melancholy, high-pitched whistles of almost an electronic quality that gradually fade away towards the end; can be rendered 'wheooooooooo'. Delivered from top of tall tree. Sometimes given on two pitches; may be from duetting pair.

TAXONOMY Form *aurea* of our region, together with extralimital *toratugumi*, has fundamentally different song from *S. Asian dauma* ('Scaly Thrush') and may well merit specific status.

STATUS/HABITAT Rare in our region. Winters in S Asia. Breeds in dense mixed or coniferous forests, often preferring areas with tall spruces and dense streamside or riverside undergrowth, with much leaf litter.

SIBERIAN THRUSH *Zoothera sibirica*

Plate page 640

L 22 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Asian vagrant (breeds C Siberia eastwards). Size of Song Thrush, but with relatively longer bill and flatter crown. **Adult male** mainly dark slate-grey (appearing black in dull light) apart from striking white supercilium. Easily distinguished from Common Blackbird by white supercilium, whitish belly centre and tail corners, pale legs (yellowish-pink to yellowish-orange) and banded black and white underwing. **Female** recalls Song Thrush, but has fairly obvious pale ochre supercilium, diffusely scaled grey-brown underparts (becoming more spotted on breast), whitish tail corners and banded dark brown and whitish-buff (not plain buff) underwing. Dark markings often merge, especially on flanks, which can appear to be dark with pale spots. **1st-year male** may show a mixture of male and female plumage features until first summer. Another skulking thrush, typically feeding on ground in dense undergrowth and difficult to observe; some vagrants have, however, occurred in mixed parties of other thrushes and have fed in more open situations.

SEX/AGE In fresh plumage, male has pale fringes to

flank feathers forming faint scaling. Juvenile resembles adult female but has pale shaft streaks on upperparts. 1st-year male shows some female-like plumage features on head, underparts and underwing until at least first summer. 1st-year female is virtually as adult and often not safely aged in the field, but young birds have triangular-shaped buff markings on (retained juvenile) inner greater coverts weakly contrasting with squarer markings on new outer feathers.

VOICE Relatively silent away from breeding grounds; calls include a low, gruff squawk when flushed, a weak 'tsee' and a soft 'zit'. Song, unlikely to be heard in our region, consists of short and rather simple, well-spaced phrases: typically two are given in close succession (sometimes three or four), e.g. 'choeloot...chewee' or 'choeloot...chewee'. At close range a soft twittering 'sirrr' can be heard after each phrase.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Europe, Israel). In natural range, breeds in dense coniferous and mixed forests. On SE Asian wintering grounds favours forest undergrowth.

VARIED THRUSH *Zoothera naevia*

Plate page 641

L 24 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Unmistakable. A large, almost Common Blackbird-sized, striking blue-grey and orange thrush, with orange supercilium, wing bars and underparts and slate-blue upperparts and breast band. Feeds on ground, often among undergrowth, flying up into trees if disturbed; also feeds on berry-bearing bushes. Compare American Robin.

SEX/AGE Adult female duller overall than male, with narrower, browner, more diffuse, breast band which is uniform with upperpart colour (breast band typically darker than upperparts in male). 1st-years resemble respective adults but tend to have less bluish in tail and be duller, more buffish-orange, below, but ageing can be difficult in winter, when adults also duller.

VOICE Calls include a soft 'tuck' and a low 'chur-chur'. Song, unlikely to be heard in our region, similar in style to White's Thrush in that it consists of high, drawn-out, well-spaced nasal notes given at varying pitch: 'eeeeh...iiiih...eeeeh'.

UNUSUAL VARIANTS A very rare colour morph lacks orange pigment, such birds showing whitish underparts, supercilium, wing bars and tail corners, and the slate-blue areas are duller, more slate-grey. Ironically, the sole record for our region was of a bird of the white and grey type, not the typical orange and slate-blue.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, breeds in coniferous forest, often in mountains, wintering in forest undergrowth (but will visit gardens).

WOOD THRUSH *Hylocichla mustelina*

Plate page 645

L 19 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Superficially resembles a small bright Song Thrush. Relatively larger than other small American *Catharus* thrushes; brightness of plumage and prominence of spotting on underparts preventing confusion with other members of genus. Upperparts warm brown, becoming russet on crown and nape and more olive-brown on rump and tail. Underparts quite bright white with conspicuous round black spotting that extends well down flanks. Whitish eye-ring conspicuous, contrasting with dull greyish ear-coverts and bright rufous crown. Compared with Song Thrush is significantly smaller with brighter mantle/scapulars and especially nape and crown, whiter underparts and larger dark spots, especially on breast. In flight, shows relatively shorter

tail than Song Thrush and underwing whitish, not buff. Like other *Catharus* thrushes, spends most of its time on ground in undergrowth, although tends to be a little less skulking by nature.

SEX/AGE 1st-year usually shows rufous-buff tips to greater coverts and tertials; these almost plain in adult.

VOICE Typical calls include a repeated, sharp, liquid 'pit pit pit' and a low 'tuck-tuck'. Song, unlikely to be heard in our region, is a loud, liquid three note whistle, often preceded by a hard but faint double note and followed by a faint trill: 'te-te-EEE-O-LAY-tirr'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, favours deciduous woodland undergrowth, especially near watersides.

HERMIT THRUSH *Catharus guttatus*

Plate page 645

L 17 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Small and rather plain thrush, the most noticeable feature being the decidedly rufous tail and uppertail coverts which contrast with the brown or greyish-brown of the remainder of the upperparts. The underparts are dull buffish-white, whitest on central underparts, with prominent dark breast spotting (averaging larger and more widely spaced than in Swainson's or Grey-cheeked) extending only slightly onto upper flanks. The narrow buff eye-ring is relatively inconspicuous. Rufous tail an easy distinction from all other small thrushes, but size, build and tail colour recall nightingales, as does habit of cocking tail when on ground; stouter bill and prominently spotted breast, however, provide an easy distinction from even the most strongly marked Thrush Nightingale. Veery has warm brown tail, but this uniform with remainder of upperparts, not contrasting as with Hermit Thrush; additionally, breast markings of Veery are diffuse, not clear. Song Thrush is significantly larger, lacks rufous tail and

is more heavily spotted below, with spotting extending to flanks. In flight, underwing of Hermit Thrush (and all the other *Catharus* thrushes) shows pale and dark bands reminiscent of White's and Siberian Thrushes, but this feature is very hard to see clearly in the field. Feeds on ground, close to or within cover. Has characteristic habit of cocking tail and slowly lowering it when anxious.

SEX/AGE 1st-year usually shows buff tips to greater coverts and tertials; these almost plain in adult.

VOICE Typical call a low 'chuck'; also gives a whining 'wee'. Song, unlikely to be heard in our region, consists of a fluty series of phrases, the first more drawn out and lower-pitched, the last fading away, followed after a short pause by another series at higher or lower pitch.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, favours shrubby undergrowth and edges of clearings in moist coniferous or mixed forest, especially near streams and bogs.

SWAINSON'S THRUSH *Catharus ustulatus*

Plate page 645

Olive-backed Thrush

L 18 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. This species and Grey-cheeked Thrush (q.v.) are the most frequent of the small American *Catharus* thrushes to wander to our region. Basically the two are very similar and both recall small, dumpy Song Thrushes, although their size, shape and behaviour may recall European Robin. Swainson's is rather warm olive-brown above and whitish below, with a distinct warm buff wash to the face, throat and breast, and a distinct buffish eye-ring; the underparts show more restricted spotting than in Song Thrush, being only weakly marked on lower breast and flanks. In flight, the underwing shows as pale buffish-brown with an ill-defined whitish band along the bases of the flight feathers (underwing greyish-white in Grey-cheeked), but this may well be difficult to see in such a ground-dwelling species. Rather shy and skulking, spending most of

time on ground under cover of undergrowth. Hops like a European Robin and will run in short bursts. Owing to preference for shady cover it may well be difficult to interpret precise colour tones, and caution should be exercised. Call also useful for identification.

SEX/AGE 1st-year usually shows buff tips to greater coverts and tertials; these almost plain in adult.

VOICE Often silent. Most typical call an emphatic, low, liquid 'whit'; also gives a soft 'whup'. Song, unlikely to be heard in our region, is a short series of clear, fluting notes that fade away into a squeaky twitter: 'wip-poor-wil-wil-eez-zee-zee'

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Europe). In natural range, favours coniferous or mixed forest (sometimes pure deciduous forest) with rather open undergrowth and also woodland thickets, especially near streams.

GREY-CHEEKED THRUSH *Catharus minimus*

Plate page 645

L 18 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Very similar in size, shape and basic plumage pattern to Swainson's Thrush; Grey-cheeked, however, is appreciably duller and colder in plumage tones. The underparts lack any obvious buff coloration, at most showing a weak yellowish tinge to breast (in fresh autumn plumage), and as in Swainson's breast spotting does not extend onto flanks (as it does in larger Song Thrush). The upperparts are cold greyish-brown. The most useful distinctions are in the head pattern; Grey-cheeked normally has only an indistinct whitish eye-ring (most visible behind eye) and very weak pale lore line (both are prominent and buff in Swainson's), although some 1st-year Grey-cheeked have fairly distinct whitish eye-rings; at all times, however, eye-ring, mottling on ear-coverts and lore lack buff

tone of Swainson's. Additionally, the flanks are greyish-brown, not buff-brown as in Swainson's (although difference often rather slight), and the underwing coverts are greyish-white rather than buffish-brown. Behaviour much as Swainson's. Call also useful.

SEX/AGE 1st-year usually shows buff tips to greater coverts and tertials; these almost plain in adult.

VOICE Often silent. Typical calls include a quiet 'zip', recalling that of Song Thrush, and a distinctive, low, slurred 'wee-ah'. Song, unlikely to be heard in our region, is a nasal descending 'wee-ah wee-oh wee-ah chi-chi-wee'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, breeds in undergrowth in boreal coniferous forests, especially near streams, and bushy areas in tundra.

VEERY *Catharus fuscescens*

Plate page 645

L 17 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. This small American thrush can easily be distinguished from the other *Catharus* by its uniform warm brown upperparts and tail and only weakly spotted breast. Underparts are mostly whitish but flanks are washed with greyish-olive and throat, sides of neck and upper breast with warm buff. Breast is only indistinctly and diffusely spotted with dark, and the darker malar stripe may thus stand out as a more obvious feature. The eye-ring is indistinct, and the underwing coverts greyish-white. Hermit Thrush has obvious breast spotting and rufous tail contrasts with duller brown upperparts. Confusion most likely with nightingales, especially Thrush Nightingale, but latter is slimmer (lacking plump European Robin-like shape), has much more diffuse breast markings, tends to cock tail higher when on ground, has guttural calls and has contrast between dull brown

upperparts and reddish-brown tail (all uniform in Veery); 1st-year Veery shows narrow buff wing bar, absent in Thrush Nightingale. Behaviour as that of other *Catharus*, but cocks tail far less than does Hermit Thrush.

SEX/AGE 1st-year usually shows buff tips to greater coverts and tertials; these almost plain in adults (but also in young birds by late winter).

VOICE Typical call a low 'phew', often prolonged and slurred ('veer') and so recalling call of Grey-cheeked, but lower in pitch. Song, unlikely to be heard in our region, is a rolling, descending series of notes: 'da-vee-ur vee-ur veer veer'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, favours undergrowth in deciduous and mixed woodland (less often coniferous forest), especially near streams.

TICKELL'S THRUSH *Turdus unicolor*

Plate page 641

Indian Grey Thrush

L 22 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Asian vagrant (breeds W Himalayas). Recalls Common Blackbird in build and behaviour, but more skulking away from breeding grounds and size closer to that of Song Thrush. Shows yellowish bill and legs and rufous underwing coverts in all plumages. **Male** bluish-grey all over, becoming paler grey on underparts and whitish on central belly; yellow bill, legs and eye-ring only relief from otherwise grey coloration. Unlikely to be confused. **Female** drab dull brown, recalling female Common Blackbird, but bill yellow (can be yellow on some old female Blackbirds also), eye-ring yellow, legs orange-yellow and central belly and undertail coverts whitish; has dusky malar stripe contrasting with whitish throat centre (again can be matched by some Common Blackbirds) and strong rufous wash to brownish flanks. Apart from Common Blackbird, female can be confused with 1st-year female Eyebrowed Thrush, but lacks supercilium and weak tail spots, and has rufous (not greyish-buff) underwing, browner flanks and breast, and duller throat. Compared with fresh 1st-year female of black-throated race of Dark-throated Thrush, overall colour of head and underparts is warm brown, not drab greyish-brown, legs and bill are yellower and streak-

ing on breast and flanks is lacking (although breast may be weakly speckled). Feeds on ground under open cover, scratching at dead leaves like Common Blackbird; flies up into trees when disturbed. Generally wary.

SEX/AGE Some adult females can show bluish-grey tinge to rear upperparts and tail. 1st-years in autumn resemble adult female, but bill duller, more brownish-yellow; young male has grey tones to breast and rump and both sexes show pale buff tips to greater coverts, absent in adults. By first spring much as respective adults, but young male shows more heavily worn, contrastingly browner flight feathers.

VOICE Typical call when flushed a low shivering 'sreeee', rather like that of Common Blackbird; also gives a Common Blackbird-like 'tok-tok' of alarm. Song is also reminiscent of Common Blackbird, but phrases are shorter.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). Occurrence in our region extremely surprising; based on an October specimen from Heligoland, Germany. In natural range, breeds in upland deciduous or mixed forest, groves, orchards and gardens; in winter, favours woodland undergrowth in foothills and plains.

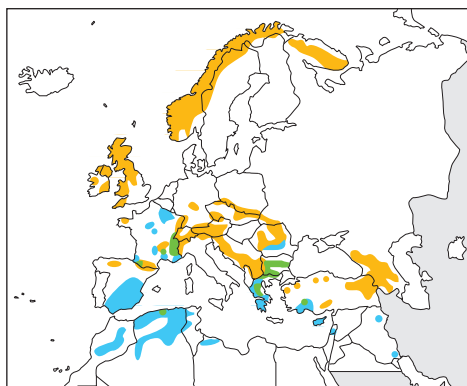
RING OUZEL *Turdus torquatus*

Plate page 643

L 23–24 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Resembles Common Blackbird in size, shape and basic coloration; at all ages, pale edges to wing feathers make wings appear paler than rest of bird in flight. **Male** is distinctive; sooty-black overall with prominent white breast band and greyish or whitish (in race *amicorum*) fringes to wing feathers. Bill is yellow with blackish tip in breeding season (also shows blackish base to upper mandible at other times). In autumn and winter, blackness of plumage obscured by pale feather fringes and breast band less obvious owing to brownish tips to white feathers. 1st-years in fresh autumn plumage have even broader feather fringes and breast band even less distinct. **Female** considerably browner than male, with brownish scaling within breast band and pale scaling on underparts; in autumn and winter is even more prominently scaled. 1st-years in autumn have breast band very obscure, or even absent. Such birds differ from Common Blackbird in having scaling on body plumage and pale edges to wing feathers. Beware partial-albino Common Blackbird with white breast band, but calls, wing pattern and body scaling should prevent confusion. A bird of open country, shy and wary, usually flying considerable distances when flushed uttering harsh 'chakking' call (quite unlike calls of Common Blackbird). Readily perches on stone walls, rocky outcrops and trees; will feed on berry-bearing bushes in autumn. Usually solitary on breeding grounds, but forms small parties on migration and in winter.

SEX/AGE In fresh plumage, colours dulled by pale feather fringing, but male much sootier than female and with more obvious breast band (sullied brown). Juvenile spotted like young Common Blackbird, but less rufous, with underparts scaled whitish and pale edges to wing feathers. 1st-years have broader pale edges to body feathers when fresh (in autumn) than respective adults and breast band almost obscured, especially in females.



GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 3 races (nominate and *alpestris* illustrated). Mountains of C and S Europe are inhabited by *alpestris* which has much broader pale fringes, especially on underparts, and belly appears whitish even in spring. Birds of the Caucasus and E Turkey, *amicorum*, have wing feathers very broadly pale-fringed, appearing almost pale-winged in flight.

VOICE Usual call a hard 'tak-tak-tak', sometimes prolonged into a rattling chatter. Song far-carrying, consisting of several clear, melancholy piping notes (e.g. 'tu-li tu-li tu-li'), often followed by a chuckle.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Faeroes, Belgium, Denmark, Latvia, Estonia.) In breeding season, mountainsides, quarries, rocky outcrops and moorland gullies and ravines, locally even on coastal cliffs. Winters both on dry, scrubby hillsides and in open oak woodland. On passage, also in lowland hedgerows, coastal pastures etc.

COMMON BLACKBIRD *Turdus merula*

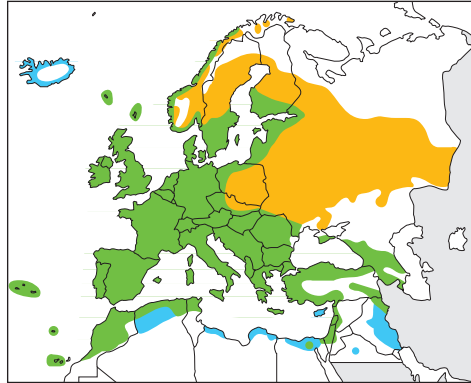
Blackbird, Eurasian Blackbird

L 24–25 cm.

IDENTIFICATION The most widespread and familiar thrush of our region. **Adult male** with its all-black plumage and orange-yellow bill and eye-ring is unmistakable. **1st-year male** is sootier-black with dusky bill. **Female** is dark grey-brown to olive-brown, rather more rufous-brown on head and breast, with paler throat centre and weak dusky mottling on breast; normally the bill is dull brown, but in some it is distinctly yellow. Female Common Blackbird is much darker below than all other brown thrushes. **Juvenile** is rusty-brown overall with buff speckling on body plumage and is very distinctive, but in late summer moulting young males with blackish body and rusty head can appear very strange. Partial or even full albinos are not infrequent, and occasionally birds with white chest patch can suggest male Ring Ouzel, but uniform blackish wings and call distinctive. Spends most of time feeding on ground near cover, hopping and running with less erect posture than other common thrushes. Flight usually low, except on migration. Flocks formed on migration and at winter roosts.

SEX/AGE Juvenile predominantly rusty overall, heavily mottled darker below and with pale shaft streaks on upperparts. 1st-years resemble respective adults, but young males duller, sooty-black, with dusky bills until late winter; may be aged in spring by very worn flight feathers. 1st-year females may be aged by pale tips to retained juvenile greater coverts, at least through first autumn.

VOICE Calls include a low 'chuk-chuk-chuk', accelerated into a prolonged, hysterical, chatter when alarmed. Roosting or mobbing call a repeated sharp 'chik-chik-chik'. Flight call a thin, shivering 'seeee', rather weaker than similar call of Redwing. Song a



beautiful series of melodious warbling and flute-like notes, individually varied with phrases not repeated (unlike Song Thrush); uttered from treetop or other prominent perch.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Rather slight. 7 races (nominate illustrated). Vary chiefly in size and in colour tones of females. Greyest females are found in NW Africa (*mauretanicus*) and the Middle East (*syriacus*). Darkest females in the Azores (*azorensis*) and Madeira and the Canary Is (*cabrerae*).

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Iceland.) All kinds of forest and woodland with undergrowth, forest edges, tall scrub, farmland with tall hedgerows and copses, parks and gardens, locally in more treeless situations such as coastal scrub, moorland or small islands.

EYEBROWED THRUSH *Turdus obscurus*

L 22 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Asian vagrant (breeds C Siberia eastwards). Rather small thrush that resembles Redwing in structure, but is slightly larger. Basically dull olive-brown above with greyer head, nape and breast (clear slate-grey in mature males), whitish supercilium (contrasting with dark lore), whitish chin and upper throat (latter more extensive in female), orange-buff flanks and upper breast, and whitish remainder of underparts. Legs yellowish, brightest in males. In flight, sometimes shows whitish spot at each tail corner (may be absent, or not visible unless tail spread) and greyish or greyish-buff underwing. Females, especially 1st-years, tend to be duller than males, with paler and browner-grey breast, and have more white on throat (with streaking at sides) and brownish tinge to grey of head and nape. Lack of streaking on underparts, greyer head, weaker supercilium and prominent pale area below dark lore (extending from eye to bill base) are easy distinctions from Redwing, but at longer ranges streaking on Redwing less apparent owing to rich buff background colour of breast (and streaking may be diffuse across breast). Compare also vagrant Tickell's Thrush. Feeds on ground close to

cover, flying up into trees when disturbed; less intensely skulking than some other thrushes.

SEX/AGE Sexes differ (see Identification), but many birds difficult to sex. Older males distinctive, but 1st-year males closer to bright females. 1st-years may be aged (sometimes until first summer) by whitish tips to greater coverts. Juvenile recalls adult female but is heavily dark-spotted below and pale-spotted above.

VOICE Typical calls include a low, soft 'chuk', a hard 'tack tack' and a penetrating 'shree' (latter a little harsher than similar call of Redwing) or harder 'dzee' in flight. Song, unlikely to be heard in our region, consists of rather simple, well-spaced phrases that include both fluty whistles and rather Common Blackbird-like strangled twittering; recalls Siberian Thrush but whistles fuller and often trisyllabic rather than disyllabic.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Europe, Middle East). Most records are of birds associating with Redwing flocks in late autumn and winter. In natural range, breeds in a wide variety of forest types. In winter quarters, found both in forests or woodlands and in rather open country with groves or gardens.

Plate page 643

Plate page 641

DUSKY THRUSH *Turdus naumanni*

Plate page 642

Naumann's Thrush (*T. n. naumanni*)

L 23 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Asian vagrant (breeds C Siberia eastwards). Recalls Redwing in structure, but substantially larger with stouter bill and relatively longer tail. The two subspecies appear distinctly different in the field and are best considered separately. **Dusky Thrush** (race *eunomus*): **Adult male** is dull dark brown above with blackish feather centres, giving mottled appearance (with wear upperparts appear blacker), becoming blacker on crown and ear-coverts which contrast with conspicuous white supercilium and throat, latter extending across side of neck to form half-collar as in Redwing. Feathers of rump and uppertail coverts broadly fringed rufous, and wings largely rufous-chestnut. The whitish underparts are heavily mottled and scaled blackish, forming ill-defined breast bands that contrast with cleaner throat. Underwing almost entirely rufous. Unlikely to be confused, but occasional variant individuals lacking rufous-chestnut in wings could perhaps be confused with female Black-throated Thrush (q.v.). **Adult females and 1st-years** are usually duller overall, with duller rufous-buff area in wings, and are less intensely scaled and mottled than adult males; these birds most likely to be confused with smaller Redwing, which also shows paler areas on wing, prominent pale supercilium and collar, and diffuse breast streaking forming chest band, but Redwing has rufous flanks, is browner above, has rich buff ground colour to breast and buff wash to supercilium, and has darker rufous underwing (duller rufous in Dusky). Some Dusky have rufous scaling mixed with black on underparts, especially on flanks, and others are intermediate between Dusky and Naumann's. All kinds of apparent intermediate plumages can be seen. **Naumann's Thrush** (nominate race): Upperparts lack the blackish mottling of Dusky, being greyish-brown overall, while underpart markings are rufous-chestnut instead of black, often being more diffuse and thus producing almost wholly rufous breast and flanks, mixed with whitish scaling in fresh plumage. Some black speckling and scaling usually present at sides of throat and on breast, and rufous scaling present on upperparts. The bright rufous outer tail feathers are obvious in flight, less striking on ground (where partially obscured by browner central feathers). The throat and supercilium are off-white, washed rusty-buff. Upperwing lacks strong rufous tones of Dusky, but the underwing is darker rufous. Adult females and 1st-years average duller, but pattern and colour distinctive and not matched by any other thrush of our region, although red-throated race of Dark-throated

Thrush also has bright rufous tail. Both forms feed more in open than most other Asian thrushes, perching freely on tops of bushes and trees and feeding on ground in manner of Fieldfare.

SEX/AGE Discussed under Identification. Some adult male Dusky are duller than usual and so sexing not always straightforward: adult females generally have less blackish feather centres above and below, often have more distinct malar stripe and primary coverts appear duller, less strongly rufous, with less distinct, brownish (rather than blackish) tips. Adult Naumann's often hard to sex, but females average duller below (especially on throat, which is often paler), tend to show more distinct malar stripe and usually have less rufous on scapulars. Juveniles of both forms are heavily pale-spotted above and dark-spotted below. 1st-years may be aged by more distinct whitish or pale buff tips to greater coverts than in adults. 1st-year male Dusky usually resembles adult male in having blacker feather centres on both upperparts and underparts, but primary coverts are closer to those of adult female (although dark tips are blacker and more distinct). Some 1st-year female Naumann's may be separated by obvious dark spotting on breast (and sometimes flanks), but many inseparable from 1st-year males.

VOICE Calls include a harsh chattering 'chak-chak-chak' of alarm, recalling Fieldfare, a shrill, wheezy 'spirr', recalling Common Starling, a loud, shrill, nasal 'cheeh-cheeh' and several other high-pitched calls. Song, unlikely to be heard in our region, consists of several clear, descending notes followed by a faint twitter and recalls Redwing.

TAXONOMY Intermediates between Dusky and Naumann's Thrushes are not infrequent, but as the area of hybridization appears to be quite limited Dusky Thrush is sometimes accorded full species status as *T. eunomus*.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Very marked. 2 races (both illustrated). Differences discussed under Identification. Race *eunomus* (Dusky Thrush) breeds further north than nominate race (Naumann's Thrush). Both occur as rare vagrants to our region, with most of northern records being of Dusky whereas less frequent Naumann's has predominated among records from south.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Europe, Cyprus, Middle East). In natural range breeds in rather open deciduous or coniferous forests and in willow scrub at southern edge of tundra. In winter quarters, favours groves, orchards and open fields.

DARK-THROATED THRUSH *Turdus ruficollis*

Plate page 642

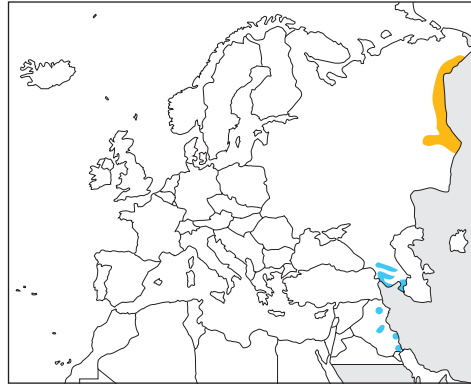
Red-throated Thrush (*T. r. ruficollis*); **Black-throated Thrush** (*T. r. atrogularis*)

L 24 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Breeds in Urals (also rare winter visitor to extreme southeast of our region). Recalls Fieldfare in structure and behaviour, but tail relatively shorter. The two subspecies appear distinctly different in the field and are best considered separately. **Black-throated Thrush** (race *atrogularis*): In all but juvenile plumage may show a yellowish bill base, a hint of a slightly lighter supercilium, a slightly paler greyish-brown rump and some contrast between lighter and darker areas of wing. The dull rufous underwing cov-

erts are hard to see in the field. **Adult male** in worn plumage in spring/early summer distinctive, with dull greyish-brown upperparts, dark tail and black face, throat and chest contrasting with off-white of remainder of underparts. In fresh autumn and winter plumage, black of throat partly obscured by pale feather tips but still evident. **Adult female** duller overall, being a little browner-grey above and drabber below with underparts sullied greyish and throat whitish with dark mottling and dark malar stripe; a gorget of

intense dusky mottles across upper breast is the most obvious feature. **1st-years** are drabber than adult, young females having only indistinct smudgey markings on malar region and breast, often extending well down onto flanks on a dull greyish-brown background; young males have more evenly mottled throat and breast. Only drabber females likely to cause problems, but smudgey streaking, not spotting, on breast and upper flanks on greyish background are distinctive. Confusion could occur with those individuals of Dusky Thrush that lack rufous-chestnut on wing: but 1st-year Black-throated has more uniform, paler upperparts, fine, diffuse dark streaking on flanks (Dusky has large black spots or arrowheads, often tinged with rufous) and paler ear-coverts, while supercilium is usually less prominent and pale half-collar is lacking. **Juvenile** resembles adult female, but has buff shaft streaks to upperparts, a more strongly spotted breast (uppermost spots may almost coalesce and hint at adult female's dark gorget) and a more obvious, buff-tinged, supercilium. Recalls juvenile Song Thrush, but prominent spotting restricted to breast (flanks have only weak crescentic markings). **Red-throated Thrush** (nominate race): As with Black-throated form, has dull rufous underwing coverts and from 1st-year plumage onwards may show yellow base to bill. **Adult male** differs from male Black-throated in having brick-red instead of black on face and throat, somewhat paler grey-brown upperparts and rufous outer tail. In fresh plumage in autumn and early winter, brick-red areas narrowly scaled with whitish. **Adult female** has more rufous, less red tone to supercilium, lower face and throat, and throat is mottled with whitish and dark brown in fresh plumage, largely obscuring rufous (which is often reduced to a diffuse pectoral band); upperparts are browner-toned. **1st-years** resemble adult female, with rufous of breast largely obscured by feather edges and black speckles. Only other thrush with rufous in tail is Naumann's, 1st-years of which could be confused with either 1st-year or adult female Red-throated, but Naumann's also has rufous rump, is more extensively rufous below (with triangular rufous markings, or at least diffuse rufous streaks, extending well down flanks and often onto undertail coverts), and has more contrasting pale wing panel, darker ear-coverts (with pale patch below eye) and more promi-



nent supercilium. Both forms feed more in open than most other Asian thrushes, perching freely on tops of bushes and trees and feeding on ground in manner of Fieldfare. Shy and wary.

SEX/AGE See Identification. 1st-years may be aged by pale tips to greater coverts.

VOICE Calls include a soft 'chuk', a short squawk, a weak 'seep' and a harsh 'chak' (often repeated to form a Fieldfare-like chuckle). Also gives a hysterical Common Blackbird-like chatter of alarm. Song includes repeated phrases as in Song Thrush, interspersed with Common Blackbird-like phrases.

TAXONOMY Intermediates between the two are not infrequent, but as zone of hybridization appears to be quite narrow Black-throated Thrush is sometimes accorded full species status as *T. atrogularis*.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Marked. 2 races (both illustrated). Differences outlined under Identification. Black-throated race *atrogularis* breeds further north and west than red-throated form, just reaching our region. Red-throated nominate race merely a vagrant.

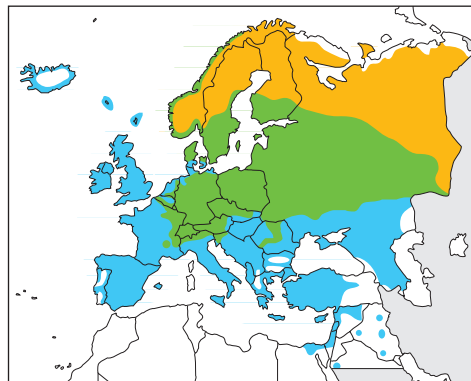
STATUS/HABITAT Common on breeding grounds, but rare in extreme southeast of our region in winter; most winter further east in S and C Asia. Black-throated form breeds west to Urals in mixed and coniferous forests in hilly districts; in winter, favours cultivation and bushy areas. Red-throated race a vagrant (Europe).

FIELDFARE *Turdus pilaris*

L 25.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Slightly smaller and less bulky than Mistle Thrush, but shares latter's white underwing coverts and harsh calls. Readily identified by combination of grey head and rump, very dark tail and dark reddish-brown mantle. Whitish underparts are strongly washed orange-yellow on breast and marked with blackish streaks and arrowheads which often coalesce to form dark patches at breast sides. Unlikely to be confused. Conspicuous forest thrush in breeding season, often nesting in loose 'colonies' and mobbing intruders with harsh cries like Mistle Thrush. Outside breeding season, forms very large gatherings in open country. Flight leisurely and gently undulating. Flocks often fly high. Feeds in open on ground or in bushes and trees. Generally shy and wary.

SEX/AGE Juvenile has pale shaft streaks to upperparts and more rounded spotting below than adult. 1st-years may sometimes be aged by presence of pale tips to greater coverts, but many are not separable from adults in the field.



VOICE Flight call a soft, chuckling chatter, 'chuck-chuck-chuck ... chack-chack-chack', interspersed with

Plate page 644

thin whistles and squeaks; also gives a thin 'seeh'. On breeding grounds, has a harsh grating alarm chatter (very similar to that of Mistle Thrush). Song a rather weak, squeaky, unmusical warbling, interspersed with chuckling and whistling phrases; lacks the clear, fluting notes of Common Blackbird.

STATUS/HABITAT Common (locally abundant in

winter). (In addition to mapped range, has bred Britain, Iceland.) Breeds in more open tracts of coniferous, mixed and deciduous woodland, also in parks and large gardens, and locally in open tundra. Outside breeding season prefers open farmland, with or without trees and hedgerows, visiting gardens only during extremely cold weather conditions.

SONG THRUSH *Turdus philomelos*

L 22 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Almost as widespread and familiar as Common Blackbird. Medium-sized, stocky thrush with brownish head and upperparts, lacking supercilium or strong facial pattern. Underparts whitish, washed buff on breast, with black speckles extending down flanks. Underwing coverts orange-buff. Coverloving thrush, although usually sings from exposed treetop or feeds in open not far from undergrowth, to which it retires when disturbed. Runs and hops with upright carriage. Has habit of smashing snails open on stones. Typically fairly solitary, although scattered groups form at migration times. Flight direct and low, usually between bushes. Confusion possible with several vagrant small American thrushes (especially Swainson's), q.v. Redwing has obvious supercilium and reddish flanks and underwing. Mistle Thrush much larger and longer-tailed, with pale panel on closed upperwing, conspicuous white underwing coverts and harsh calls.

SEX/AGE Juvenile has buff streaking on upperparts and more rounded spots on underparts. 1st-year not safely aged in the field, as adult also has buff tips to greater coverts.

VOICE Calls are rather insignificant, most frequently heard being a low, weak 'sip' or 'zip' given in flight (note: claims that some give a Redwing-like 'seeh' in flight have never been substantiated). Alarm a fairly loud 'chick', often repeated in a short chatter. Song a series of varied, clear, musical phrases (some fluty, others sharp and shrill), each note being repeated three or four times before the next phrase is uttered (after a short pause); this intense repetition is unlike the song of any other thrush of our region.

REDWING *Turdus iliacus*

L 21 cm.

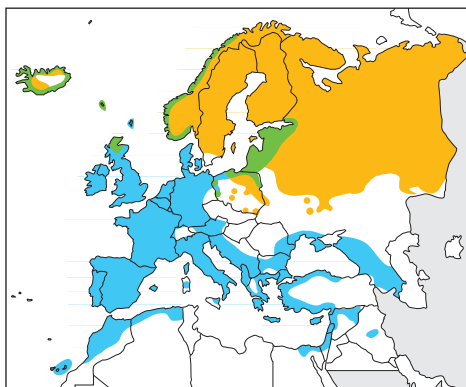
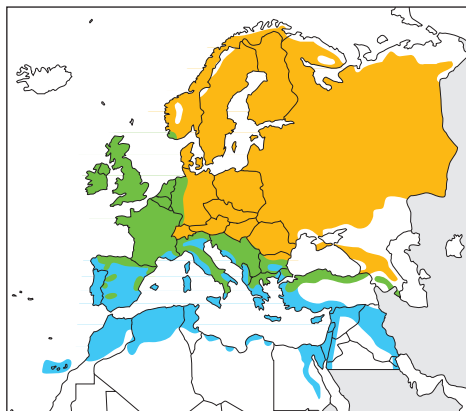
IDENTIFICATION Smallest resident thrush of our region, and easily separated from all of these by prominent pale supercilium and half-collar and the rusty-red flanks. A little smaller and relatively slightly shorter-tailed than Song Thrush, with darker upperparts and conspicuous whitish supercilium and lower border to ear-coverts (forming half-collar) and more heavily streaked underparts. Underparts washed orange-buff on breast, where streaks often merge to form dark patches. Warm reddish flanks often obvious, but may be partially concealed by folded wing. The wing shows paler and darker shades of brown, which can appear quite contrasting at times. In flight, reddish underwing coverts may also be visible. Confusion most likely with vagrant Eyebrowed and Dusky (q.v.). Often a forest thrush in breeding season, but at other seasons forms large gatherings in open country. Flight fast and direct. Flocks often fly high. Feeds in open on ground or in bushes and trees. Generally shy and wary.

SEX/AGE Juvenile has buff streaking on upperparts

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 3 races (*clarkei* illustrated). Darkest birds (race *hebridensis* of Outer Hebrides) are dark reddish-brown, with birds of rest of British Is and adjacent parts of European continent (*clarkei*) being less saturated in colour, but distinctly redder than dull, more greyish-brown nominate race of rest of our region.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped range, formerly bred Shetland.) Found in a wide variety of wooded habitats, especially areas with extensive undergrowth, from forests to parks and gardens; locally in more open, treeless situations, such as bracken and heather cover on islands.

Plate page 644



and more rounded spots on underparts. Many 1st-years have whitish spots at tips of tertials (adults have

narrow pale fringe only) and on tips of greater coverts, as a result of retained juvenile feathering, but others may not be safely aged.

VOICE Most typical call a thin, indrawn, penetrating 'seeeh' or 'seep' uttered in flight, and often heard from migrating flocks at night. Alarm a hard, rattled 'chittick'; also gives a soft muffled 'chup' or 'kuk'. Song typically a series of three or four loud, far-carrying flute-like notes, often descending in pitch, followed by a prolonged but subdued twittering. Examples of introductory notes are 'chirre cherre churre', 'tree triu tru tro' and a faster 'teechee-teechiu'. Occasionally a more varied song may be given, recalling a weak Song Thrush.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (nominate illustrated). Race *coburni* (Iceland and Faeroes) is slightly larger and darker than nominate race, the underparts especially dark, being washed brownish as well as rich buff and with the streaking more extensive and intense.

STATUS/HABITAT Common, locally abundant. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Denmark, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Italy.) Breeds in various types of woodland, in birch or willow scrub and also in banks or rocky areas in open tundra; locally in parks and gardens. Outside breeding season found chiefly in open farmland, but also at woodland edges, moving into gardens only at times of severe cold.

MISTLE THRUSH *Turdus viscivorus*

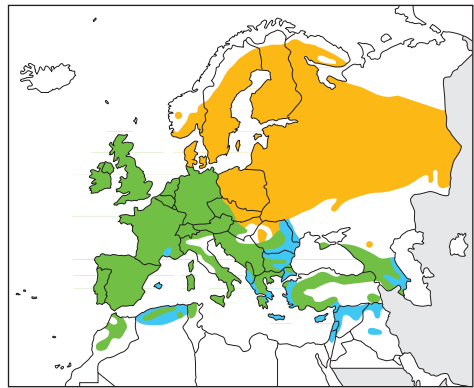
Plate page 644

L 27 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Very large thrush, with upright stance, relatively deep chest and belly, small head and bill and long tail. Easily told from Song Thrush by greyer upperparts, pale panel on closed wing formed by pale feather edges, larger and more rounded spots on underparts, yellower legs and harsh, grating calls. In flight shows conspicuous white, rather than orange-buff, underwing coverts and when alighting reveals white tail corners and (compared with tail and back) somewhat paler rump/uppertail coverts. Confusion with other species unlikely, but juvenile could be mistaken for White's Thrush (q.v.). Feeds in open, never skulking like so many other thrushes, but still shy and wary. Forms small to medium-sized flocks in autumn and winter, but mixes little with other species and does not form very big gatherings like Fieldfare (the only other thrush with similar calls and white underwing). Quite pugnacious when breeding. Flight action slower than that of Fieldfare, with pauses between bouts of beats, and often markedly undulating; often flies quite high.

SEX/AGE Juvenile heavily spotted or streaked with whitish on head and upperparts. 1st-year not safely aged in the field.

VOICE Typical call a harsh, rasping, grating rattle or chatter (can be rendered 'kerrrr'), given in flight and more forcibly in alarm (Fieldfare has similar alarm call, but flight call much sweeter, more chuckling). Also gives a rapid 'tuck-tuck-tuck'. Song consists of several very clear, fluting, far-carrying phrases, interspersed with obvious pauses, recalling those of Common Blackbird, but less mellow or varied, uttered forcibly



from tall perch (frequently even in bad weather).

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (nominate illustrated). Nominant race found over most of our region, but shows clinal variation, with palest and greyest birds towards east and south. Race *deichleri* of N Africa, Corsica and Sardinia is especially pale.

STATUS/HABITAT Generally fairly common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Madeira.) All kinds of forests and woodlands (with adjacent short grassland), copses, parks and gardens; locally even on quite treeless moorlands or islands. In south of range more a bird of mountainous country, with a preference for conifers.

AMERICAN ROBIN *Turdus migratorius*

Plate page 645

L 25 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. American counterpart of Common Blackbird, which it recalls in size, shape and behaviour. The blackish head and dark grey upperparts contrast with the broken white eye-ring, white-streaked throat, brick-red underparts and whitish ventral region; an unmistakable combination. In flight, small whitish tail corners and rufous underwing coverts may also be visible on rising birds. Compare also vagrant Varied Thrush, which (usually) also has orange-red underparts and grey upperparts, but latter also has orange throat, supercilium and wing-bars and dark breast band. Only other thrushes with red or reddish underparts are vagrant red-throated race of Dark-throated and Naumann's (q.v.). Can be shy and wary, but often confiding, and may

turn up in gardens with bushy cover; behaviour as that of Common Blackbird.

SEX/AGE Adult female duller than male, with pale scaling on flanks and brown tinge to upperparts. Juvenile (not likely to be seen in our region) spotty, recalling Common Blackbird: head and upperparts dark brown (latter with pale buff shaft streaks); eye-ring often less conspicuous than in adults and often buff rather than white; throat whitish with dark malar stripe; breast and flanks rich rufous-buff, becoming whitish on centre of belly and vent, the whole heavily marked with large black spots; wings and tail much as adult. 1st-years resemble dull adults, and may be aged by distinct whitish triangular spots at tips of greater coverts (but note that adults may show less distinct whitish tips).

THRUSHES & CHATS

EUROPEAN
ROBIN
(p. 600)

(fresh,
autumn)



RUFOUS-TAILED SCRUB ROBIN
(RUFIOUS BUSH ROBIN)
(p. 599)

syriacus



juv



THRUSH
NIGHTINGALE
(p. 600)

♀



juv



SIBERIAN RUBYTHROAT
(p. 601)

♂



juv



hafizi



juv



COMMON
NIGHTINGALE
(p. 601)

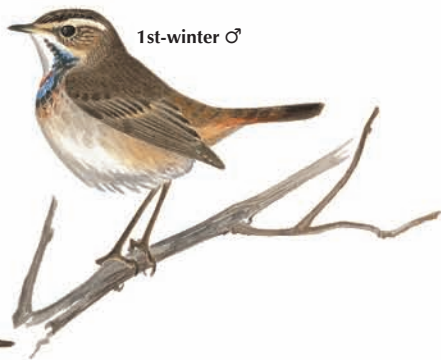




♂ summer



♀ summer



1st-winter ♂

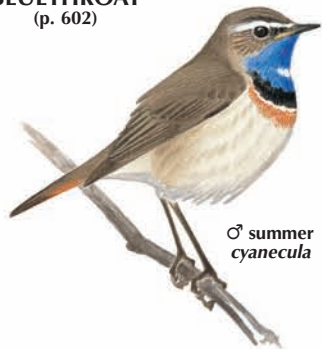
♂ summer



juv

BLUETHROAT
(p. 602)

♂ summer
magna



♂ summer
cyanecula

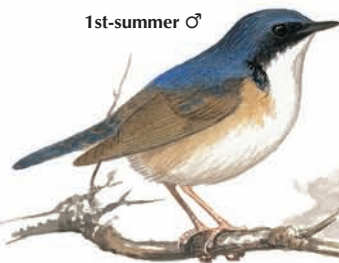


1st-winter ♀

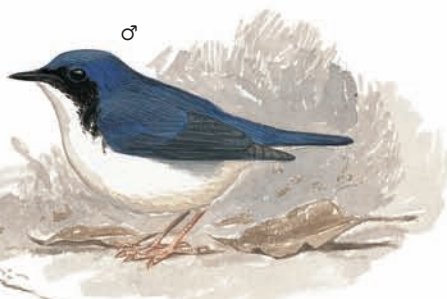


♀

1st-summer ♂



♂



SIBERIAN BLUE ROBIN
(p. 603)



1st-year ♂



♀



♂

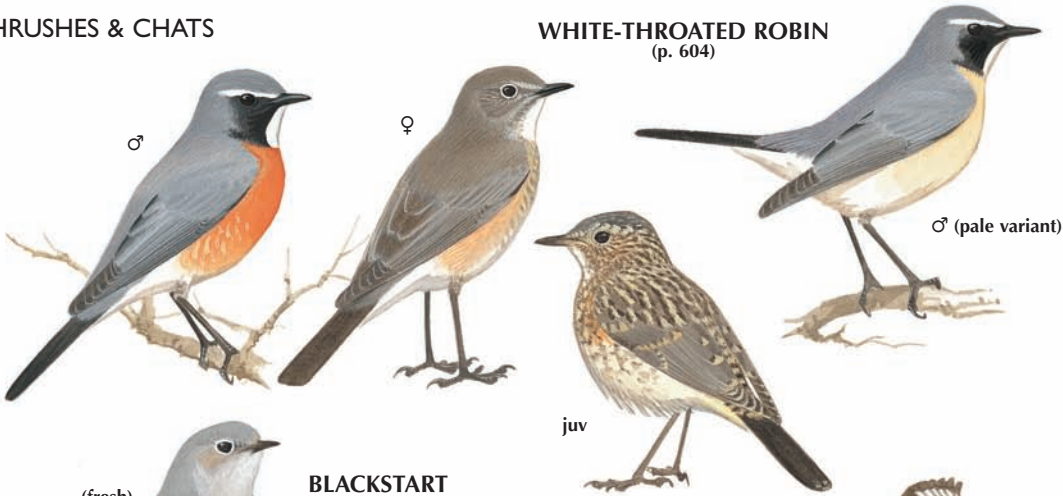


juv

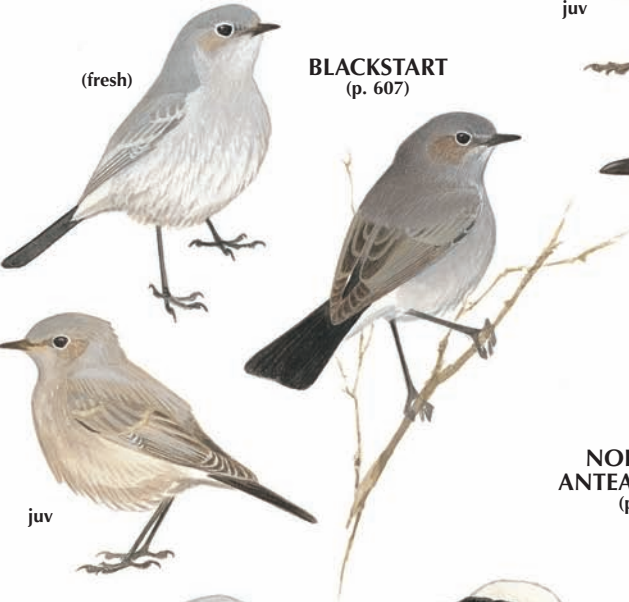
**RED-FLANKED
BLUTAIL**
(p. 603)

THRUSHES & CHATS

WHITE-THROATED ROBIN
(p. 604)



BLACKSTART
(p. 607)



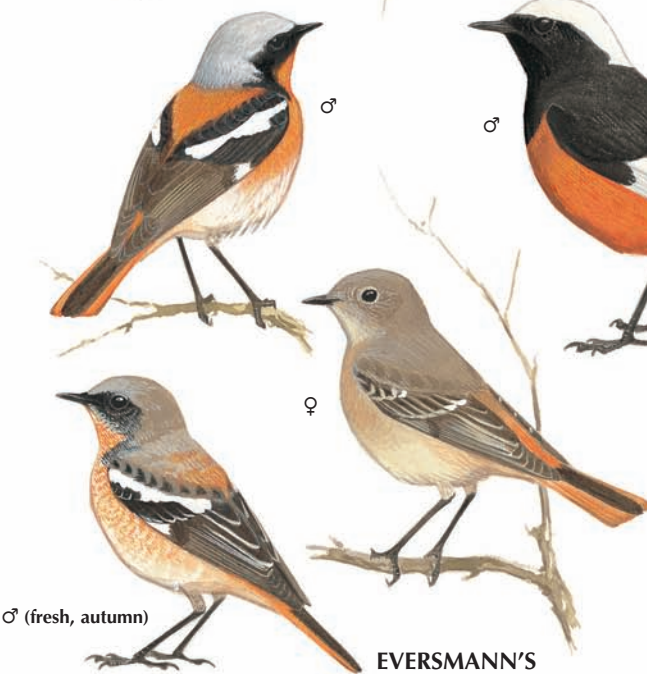
NORTHERN ANTEATER CHAT
(p. 609)

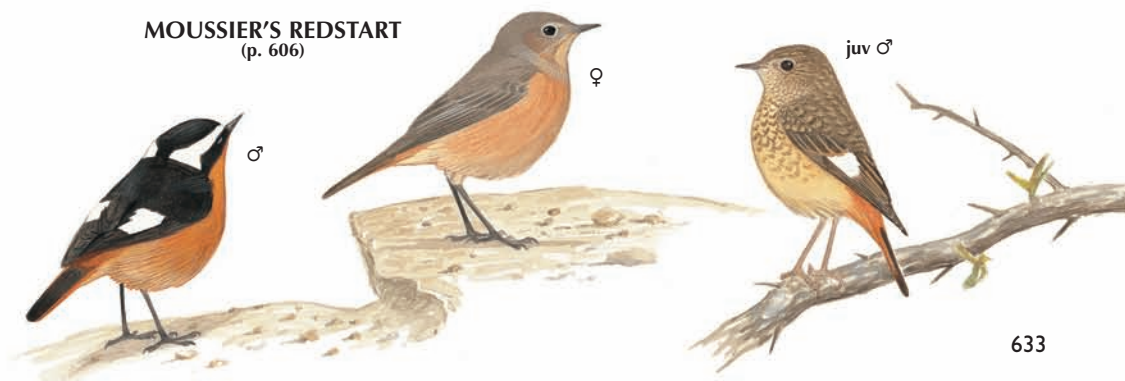
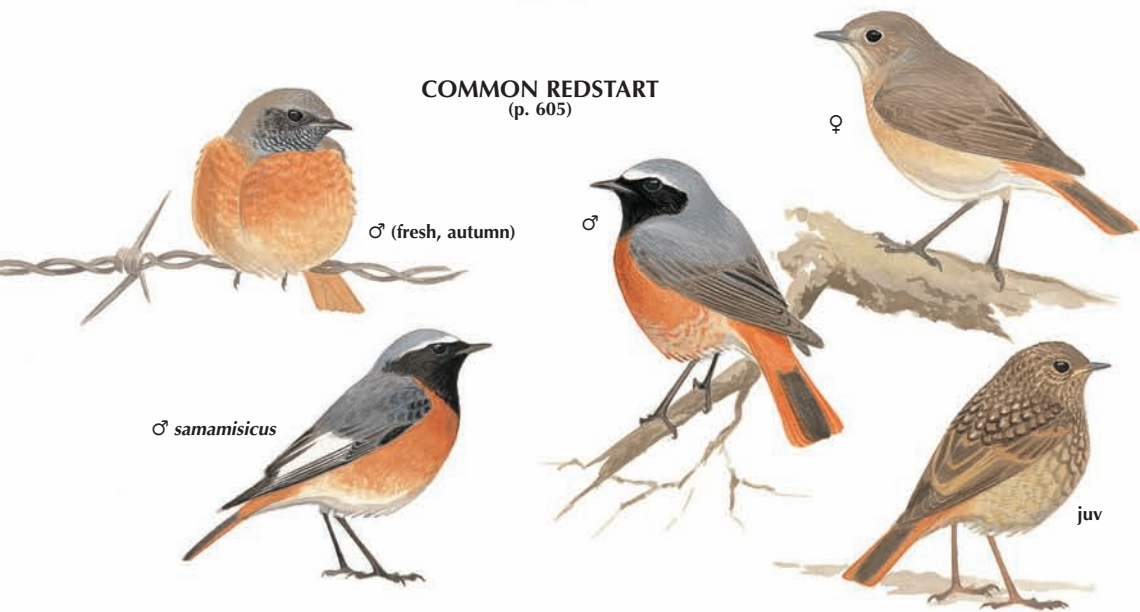
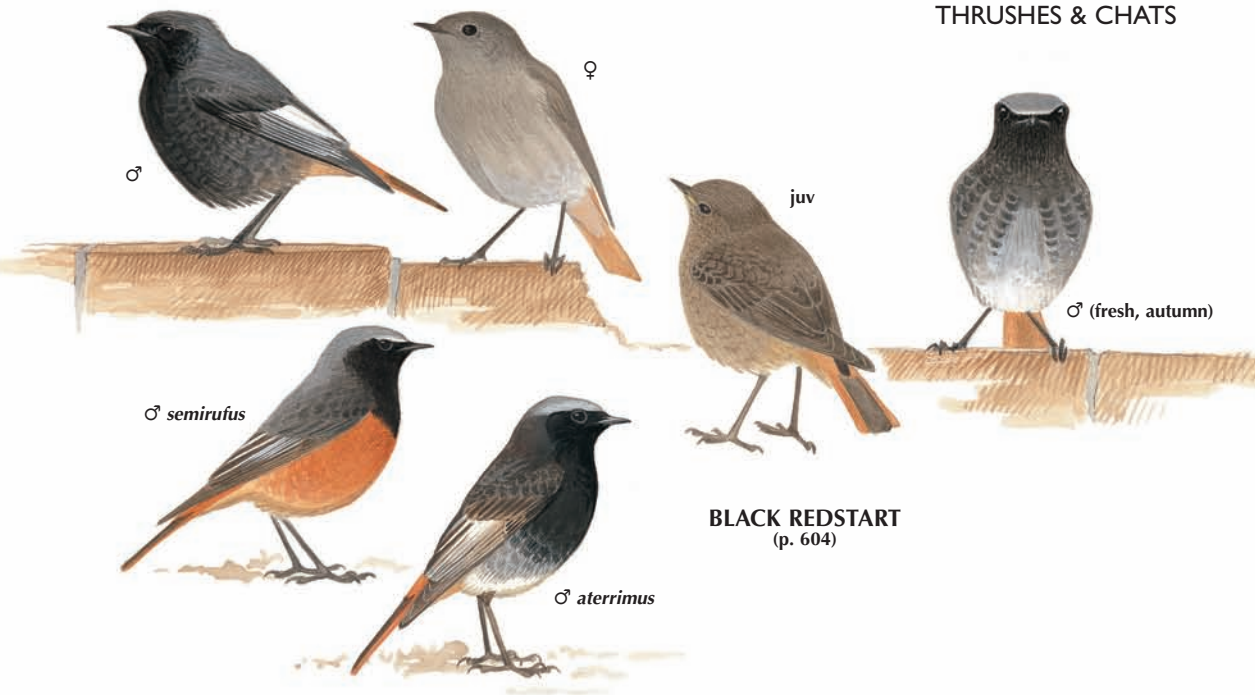


GÜLDENSTÄDT'S REDSTART
(p. 606)



EVERSMANN'S REDSTART
(p. 604)





WHINCHAT
(p. 607)



CANARY ISLANDS
STONECHAT
(p. 607)



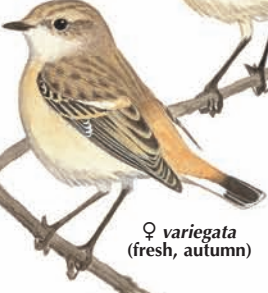
COMMON
STONECHAT
(p. 608)



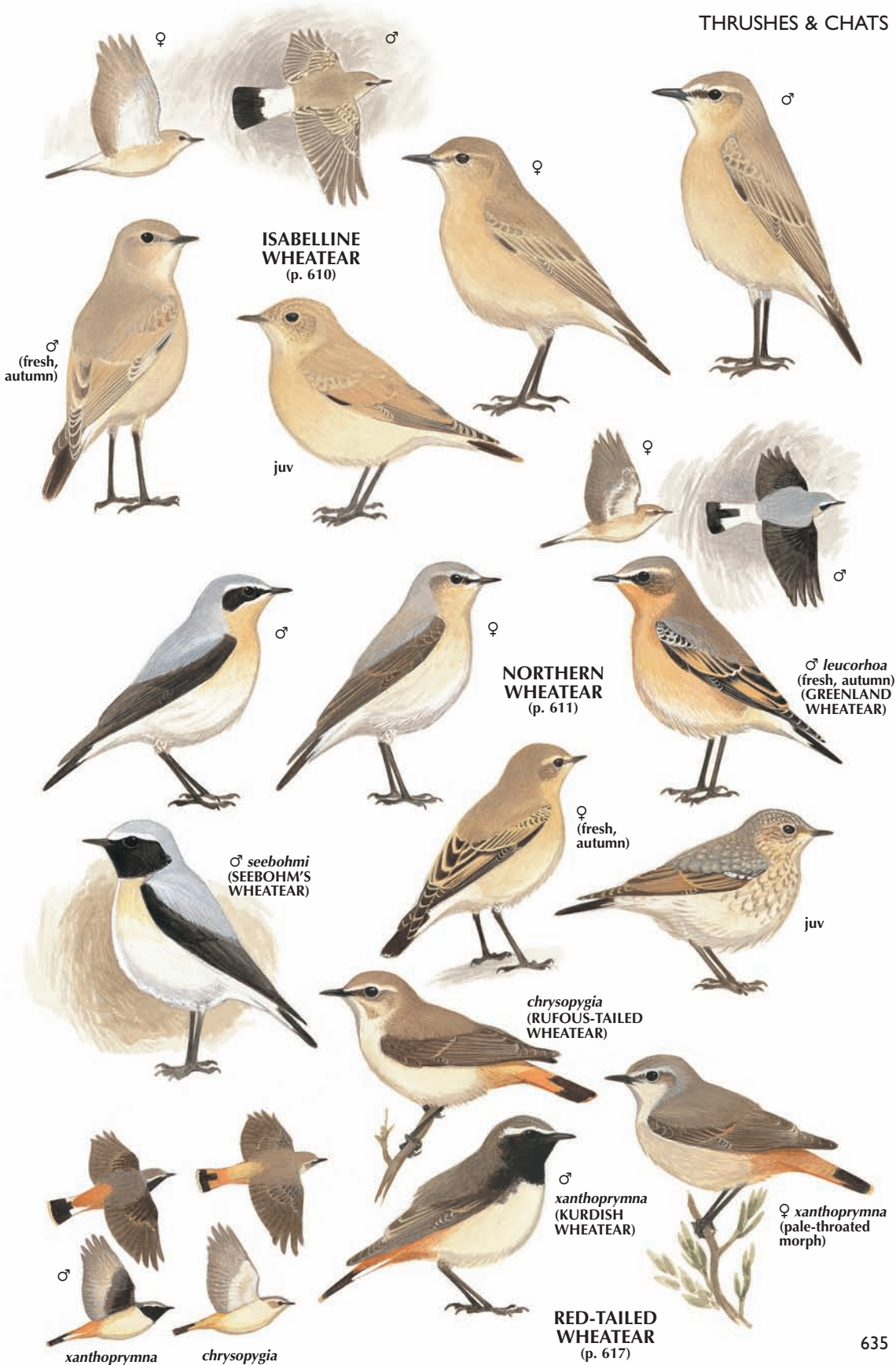
♀ maura
(fresh, autumn)
(SIBERIAN
STONECHAT)



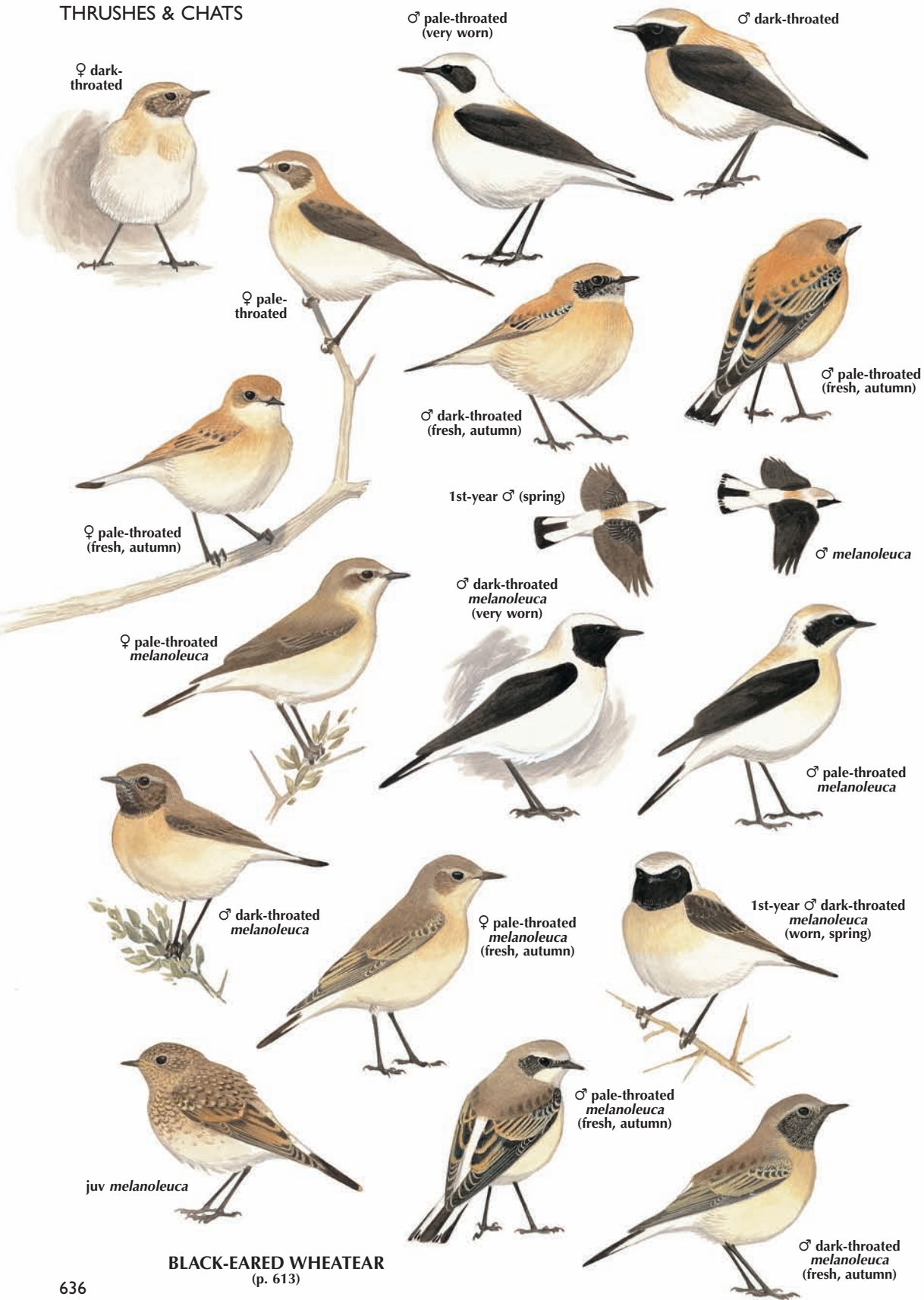
PIED BUSHCHAT
(p. 609)



♀ variegata
(fresh, autumn)

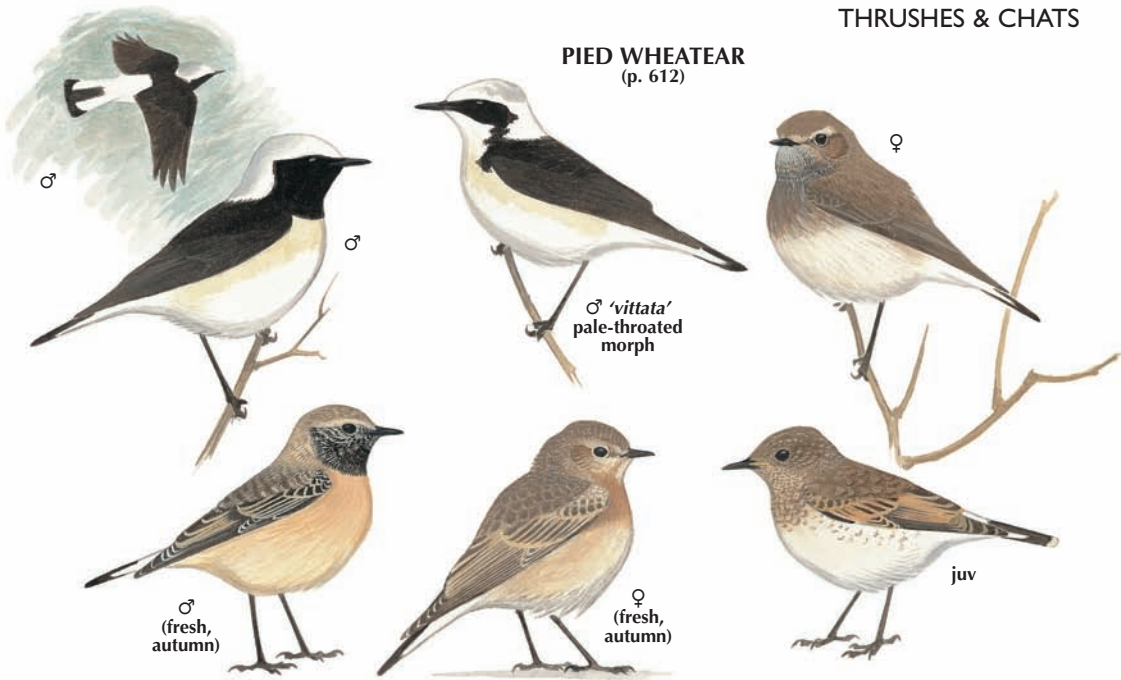


THRUSHES & CHATS

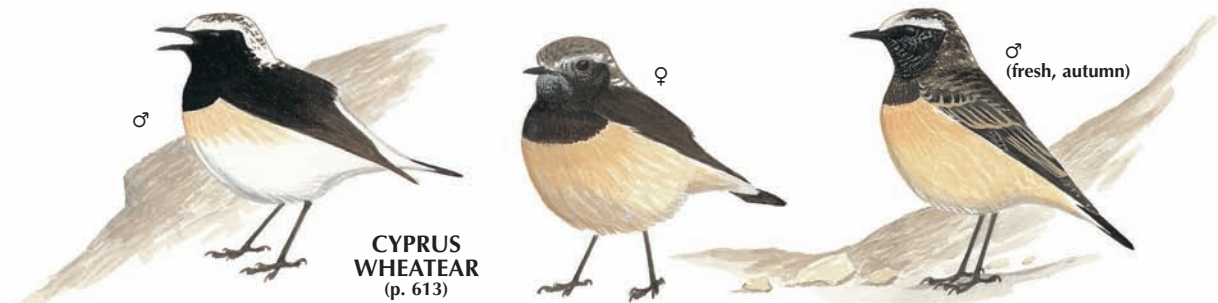


BLACK-EARED WHEATEAR
(p. 613)

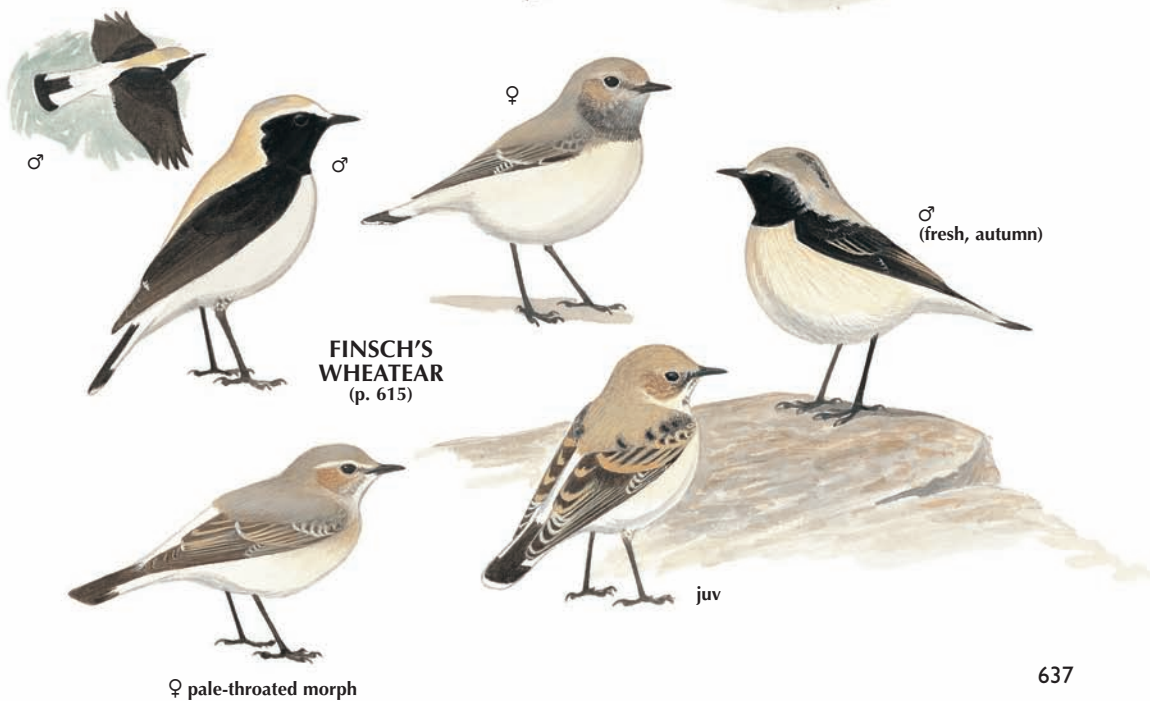
PIED WHEATEAR
(p. 612)



CYPRUS WHEATEAR
(p. 613)



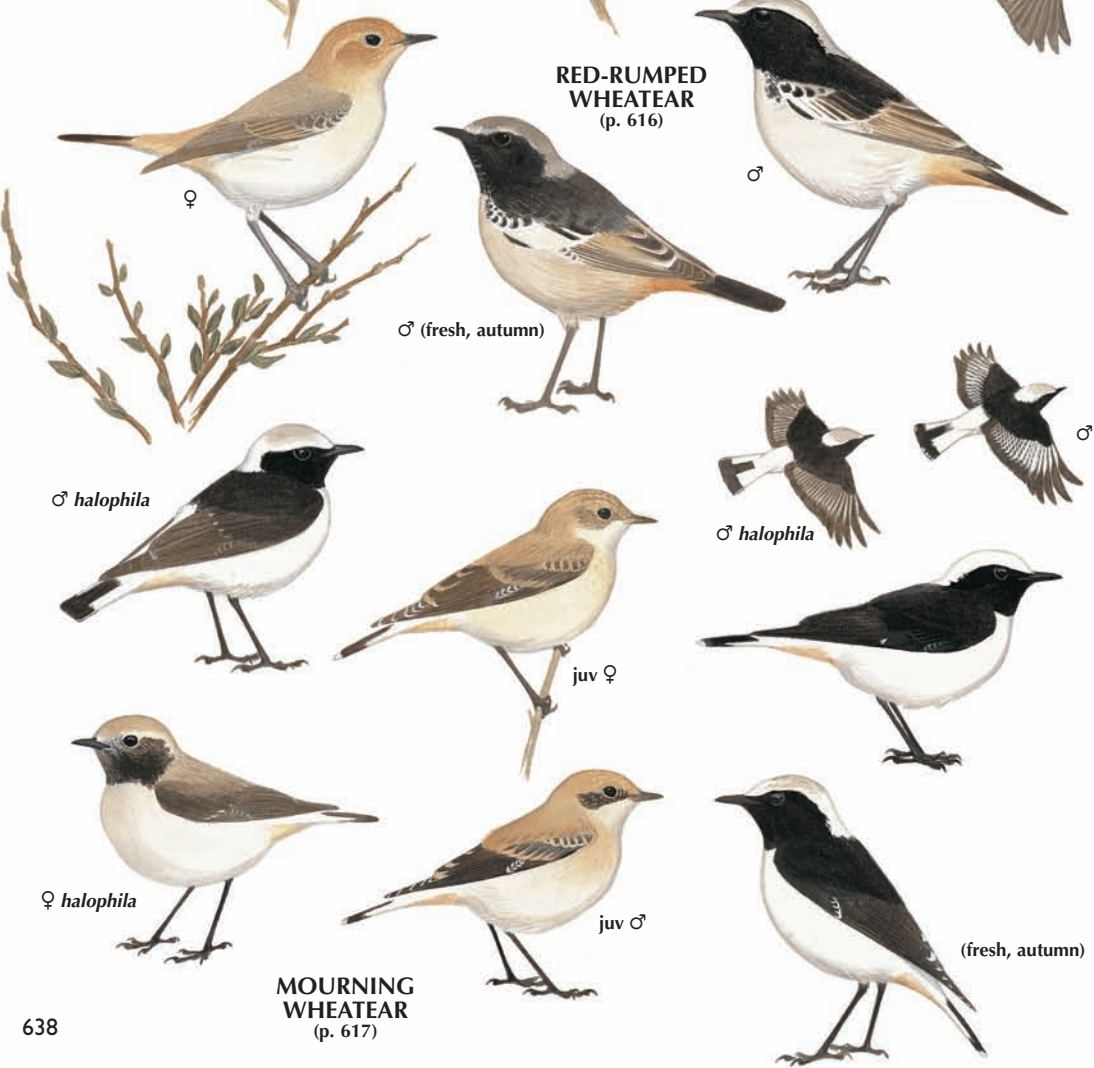
FINSCH'S WHEATEAR
(p. 615)



DESERT WHEATEAR
(p. 615)



RED-RUMPED
WHEATEAR
(p. 616)



MOURNING
WHEATEAR
(p. 617)

MOURNING WHEATEAR
dark morph
(p. 618)



HOODED WHEATEAR
(p. 618)



HUME'S WHEATEAR
(p. 618)

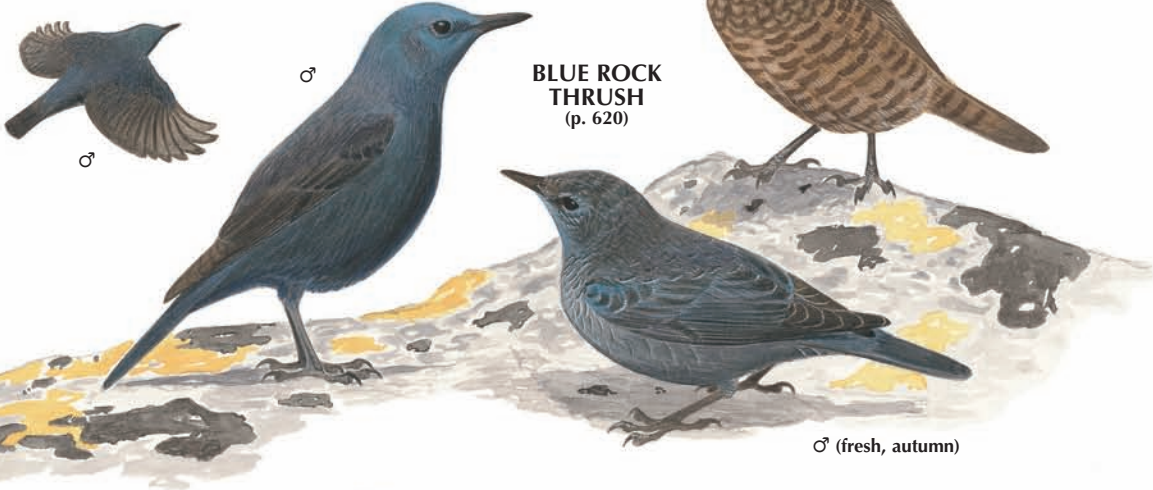
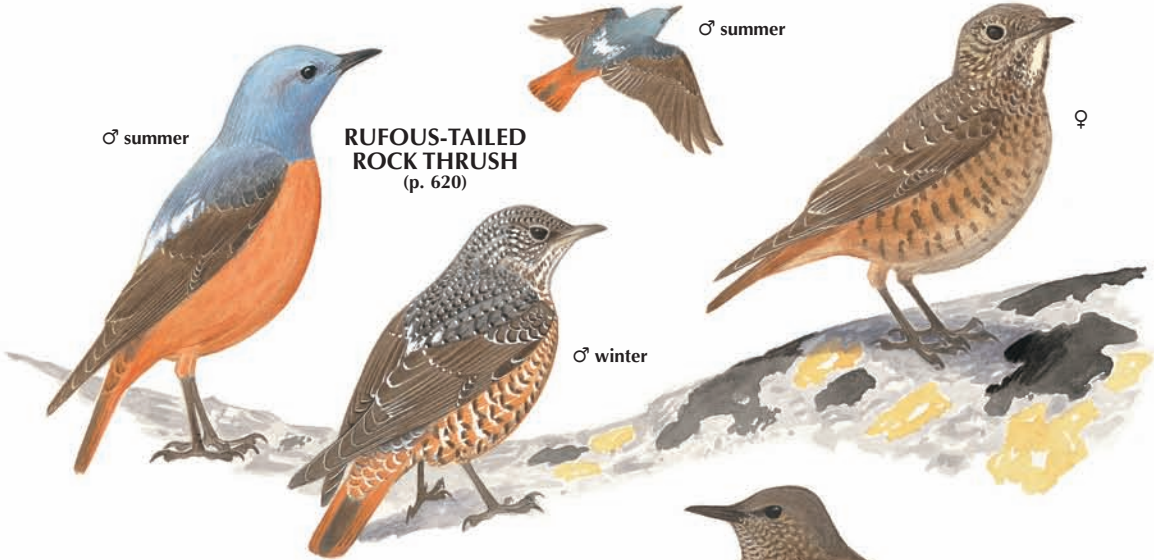


BLACK WHEATEAR
(p. 619)

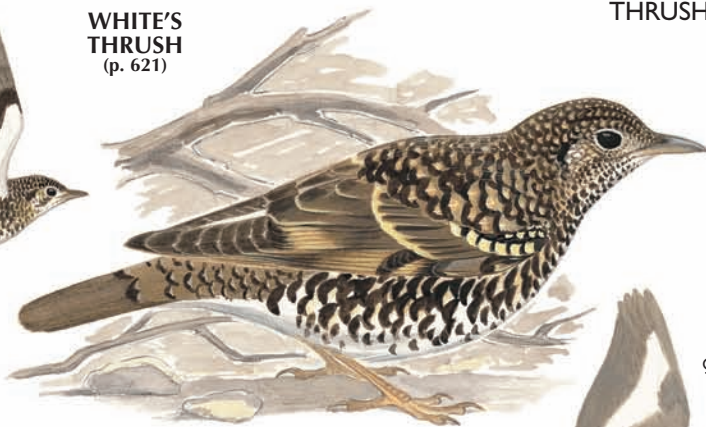


WHITE-CROWNED WHEATEAR
(p. 619)





**WHITE'S
THRUSH**
(p. 621)



♀

VARIED THRUSH
(p. 622)



♀



♂



♂
(pale
variant)



♀



♂



♂

**EYEBROWED
THRUSH**
(p. 625)



♀



♀

**TICKELL'S
THRUSH**
(p. 624)



1st-year ♀

DARK-THROATED THRUSH
(p. 626)

♂ *ruficollis*
(RED-THROATED
THRUSH)

♂ *ruficollis*
(fresh,
autumn)

♂ *atrogularis*
(fresh, autumn)

1st-year ♀
ruficollis
(fresh, autumn)

♂ *atrogularis*
(BLACK-
THROATED
THRUSH)

♀ *atrogularis*

♂ *eunomus*
(fresh,
autumn)

♂ *naumanni*
(fresh, autumn)

1st-year ♀
(fresh, autumn)

♂ *eunomus*
(DUSKY
THRUSH)

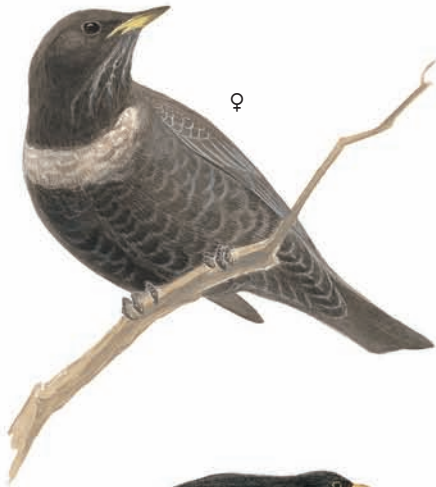
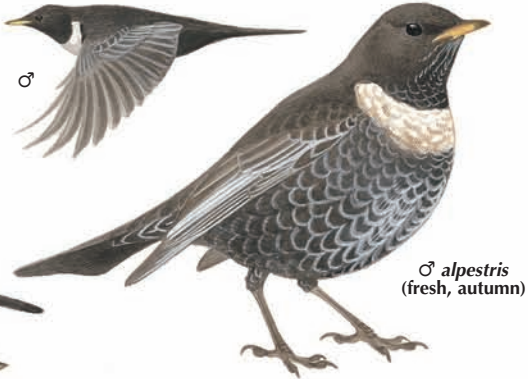
1st-year ♀
eunomus
(fresh, autumn)

♂ *naumanni*
(NAUMANN'S
THRUSH)

1st-year ♀ *naumanni*
(fresh, autumn)

DUSKY THRUSH
(p. 626)

RING OUZEL
(p. 624)

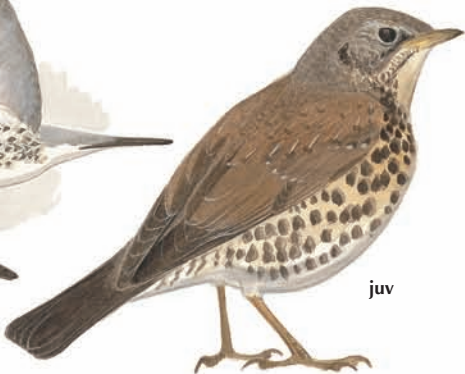
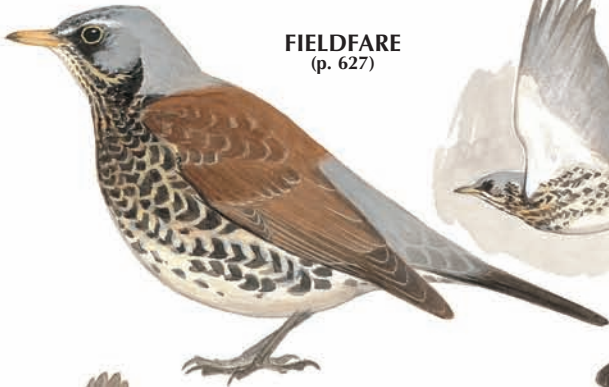


COMMON BLACKBIRD
(p. 625)



THRUSHES & CHATS

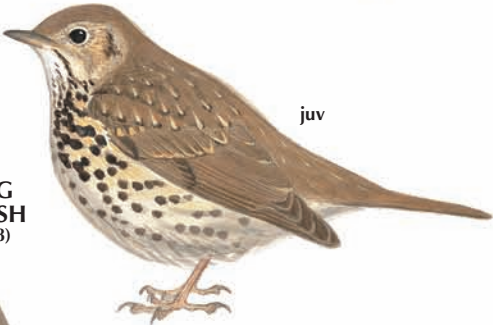
FIELDFARE
(p. 627)



juv



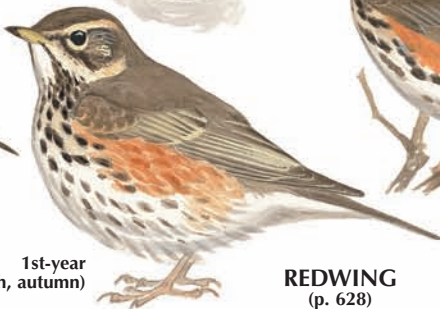
SONG
THRUSH
(p. 628)



juv



juv

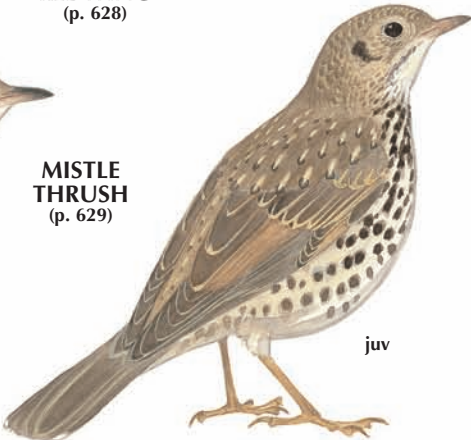


1st-year
(fresh, autumn)

REDWING
(p. 628)



MISTLE
THRUSH
(p. 629)



juv



WOOD THRUSH
(p. 622)



HERMIT THRUSH
(p. 622)



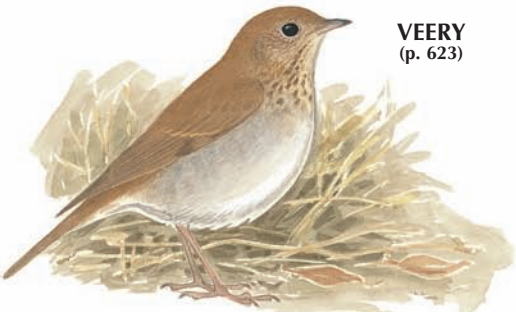
SWAINSON'S THRUSH
(p. 623)



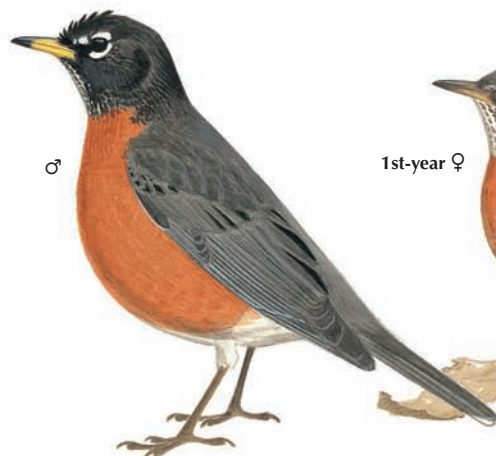
VEERY
(p. 623)



GREY-CHEEKED THRUSH
(p. 623)



VEERY
(p. 623)



♂

1st-year ♀



♀



AMERICAN ROBIN
(p. 629)

VOICE Calls (recalling Common Blackbird) include a nervous ‘tut-tut-tut’ or more metallic ‘chink-chink-chink’, and a ‘tchook-tchook-tchook’ of alarm; also gives a weak, lisping, rather Redwing-like ‘seep’ or disyllabic ‘see-lip’ in flight. Song, unlikely to be heard

in our region, consists of loud, slow, clear notes that alternate in pitch; can be rendered ‘cheerily-cheery-cherily-cheery’.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Europe). In natural range, habitats much as those of Common Blackbird.

WARBLERS Sylviidae

61 species (10 vagrant)

Large family of small or very small songbirds, closely related to thrushes and flycatchers. Warblers are typically small, rather plain, weak-billed and slim-bodied birds, inhabiting a wide range of habitats from reedbeds to scrub and woodland. They tend to feed inside the cover of vegetation, and many (although not the *Phylloscopus* species) are relatively inconspicuous unless in song; indeed, some are very skulking by nature. Being basically insectivorous (but also feeding on other small invertebrates), the majority of species are migratory. Even those which are relatively short-distance migrants have shown a tendency to vagrancy, and several Asiatic species occur regularly as vagrants in W Europe in late autumn. Because of their cover-loving habits many species are most obvious when in song; moreover, some warblers are among our finest songsters.

Sexes similar except among most *Sylvia*. Seasonal variation generally absent or minimal. Juveniles usually closely resemble adults. Adult plumage typically attained by end of first winter, although in some species juvenile primaries, secondaries and tail feathers may be replaced as late as second winter.

Most warblers are unlikely to be confused with members of other families, as fine bill structure, slim, streamlined appearance (often with tapering shape to head and bill) and typically rather horizontal posture give them a different jizz from the plumper, more round-headed, often quite upright-perching chats, robins and flycatchers. American wood warblers or Parulidae (a number of which occur in our region as vagrants) are quite unrelated to the Old World Sylviidae, although some (e.g. Tennessee Warbler) could easily be confused with certain *Phylloscopus*; they mostly have sharp ‘chip’ call notes and more conical (although still slender) bills than the Old World species. See American wood warblers section for a fuller discussion.

Within the warbler family, most species present identification problems, having at least one other similar congener, and some of these problems are so complex that even the most experienced field observer may not be able to identify certain individuals with safety. These very similar species are usually quite easily separated by examining the minute details of the wing formulae in the hand, but this is of little use in the field, although the extent of the wingtip (primary) projection beyond the tertials is helpful given prolonged close views (or if the bird is photographed).

With the exception of *Regulus* and *Sylvia* (which are mostly sexually dimorphic, especially in head pattern), warblers show very little plumage variation between sexes or between ages (juveniles are unspotted, unlike juvenile chats, robins and flycatchers). Birds in abraded plumage, however, often differ subtly in appearance from those in fresh plumage. Wear makes many species greyer and whiter (without the olive and yellow or buff and rufous tones which are present in fresh plumage). The streaked members of the *Locustella* and *Acrocephalus*, for example, not only wear whiter and colder in tone but also have streaking much fainter, or even absent, when in worn plumage.

All of this compounds the identification problems, so, when faced with an unfamiliar warbler, it is important to get the genus right first before attempting to identify the bird as to species. The great majority of the warblers of our region belong to one of the following five genera:

Locustella
Acrocephalus
Hippolais
Sylvia
Phylloscopus

A detailed discussion on the features of these larger and more complex genera is given at the start of each genus.

Five other genera occur in our region, four of which are represented by only one species. Identification of these presents less of a problem. They include:

Cettia (Cetti’s Warbler): small, dark, rather plain warbler of dense thickets near water. Compare with smaller, plain-mantled *Acrocephalus*.

Cisticola (Zitting Cisticola or Fan-tailed Warbler): small, compact, streaky, rather short-tailed warbler of grassland. Confusion unlikely, but compare with smaller *Locustella*.

Prinia (Graceful Prinia or Graceful Warbler): small, slim, long-tailed warbler of scrub and other low vegetation, likely to be confused only with rather similar Scrub Warbler.

Scotocerca (Scrub Warbler): small, long-tailed, mouse-like warbler of low desert scrub, likely to be confused only with rather similar Graceful Prinia.

Regulus (kinglets or 'crests'): small, compact, short-winged and short-tailed, *Phylloscopus*-like warblers with pale wing bars and colourful (but often hidden) crown-stripes. Compare with Yellow-browed Warbler and Pallas's Leaf Warbler.

Voice is an important factor in separating some very similar-looking warblers (e.g. Chiffchaff and Willow Warbler), but often voice-based identification requires practice. For example, *Hippolais* species not only resemble *Acrocephalus* in appearance but are vocally similar, too, while many *Sylvia* warblers have songs which are very similar to other species in the same genus. Songs differ most markedly among the *Phylloscopus* warblers, which also often call quite differently from each other, thus aiding the separation of non-singing birds.

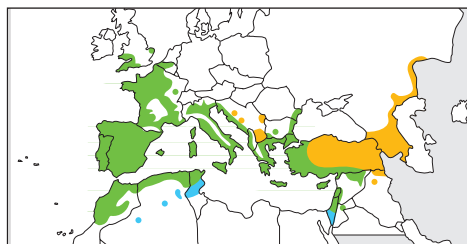
CETTI'S WARBLER *Cettia cetti*

Plate page 693

L 14 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Fairly large but very skulking warbler of dense waterside undergrowth with broad, rounded tail and often slightly 'untidy' appearance. Unstreaked dark reddish-brown above, with pale greyish-washed sides of head and breast contrasting somewhat with more rufous flanks and undertail coverts and fairly weak greyish-white supercilium. The strong legs are reddish-brown. Compared with unstreaked *Acrocephalus* warblers is relatively chunkier, with greyer-toned underparts and strongly rufous-toned, darker brown upperparts, more rounded head and smaller and weaker bill; tail is broader and more rounded, and is frequently cocked. In good view, undertail coverts can be seen to be short and broad, with weak pale scalloping (in *Acrocephalus* they are rather longer, narrower and more uniform). Savi's Warbler has similar skulking behaviour and similar calls (but not song), but has longer, fuller tail with longer, broader undertail coverts, flat or peaked crown shape, stronger bill, buffer-toned underparts and paler legs. Presence almost invariably revealed by loud, distinctive, explosive bursts of song (given virtually throughout year). Hops in wren-like fashion, flicking wings and rounded tail, through tangled undergrowth. Usually sings from inside cover, but often climbs into view when singing near top of thicket. Quite inquisitive but nervous: often goaded into vocal activity by sudden noise.

VOICE Calls include an abrupt, sharp 'chip' or 'chich', a loud, sharp 'tsuk' (recalling mobbing call of Common Blackbird) and a prolonged rattle (recalling



Winter Wren, but higher and more metallic) when intensely alarmed. Song unmistakable: an astonishingly loud, explosive, liquid, staccato series of notes which might be rendered as 'PWIT-piti-chewit-chewit-chewit' or 'CHIP-pip-chetchetchetchet'. Song is given virtually throughout year; appears to double as a contact-alarm call.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (nominate illustrated). Race *orientalis* of C Turkey and Transcaucasia southwards and eastwards is slightly greyer above and whiter on the breast than in nominate race.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. Has spread northwards in recent decades to colonize S Britain and Belgium. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Switzerland, Netherlands, Germany.) Tangled thickets by lakes, marshes, rivers, streams and ditches; also patches of willows or brambles among reedbeds.

ZITTING CISTICOLA *Cisticola juncidis* Fan-tailed Cisticola, Fan-tailed Warbler

Plate page 690

L 10 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Small heavily streaked, short-tailed warbler of open, grassy habitats. The sole representative in our region of a large tropical (and predominantly African) genus. The crown and upperparts are buffish-brown, heavily streaked blackish, the streaking finest on crown and heaviest on mantle and scapulars. This species lacks an obvious supercilium, but the plain

sides of the head contrast with the streaked crown; the underparts are virtually unmarked buffish-white. The tail is relatively short and thin when closed, but when spread (e.g. in song flight or when alighting) appears quite broad and graduated, with diagnostic whitish terminal spots on all but the central feathers. Small size (including small-tailed look) and patterning

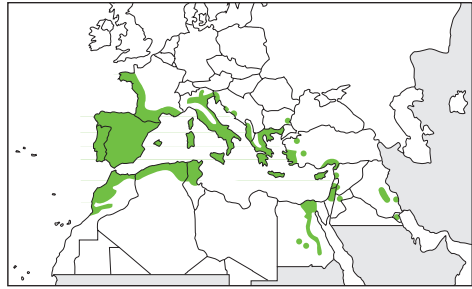
(including tail spots) distinctive, so confusion unlikely. Runs and walks on ground, when pale pinkish legs strangely prominent; perches readily and conspicuously on grass or rush stems. Often first noticed when male undertakes distinctive bounding song flight (see Voice).

SEX/AGE Adult female has more heavily streaked crown. Juvenile may be aged until at least late summer by fresh flight feathers, which are then much abraded in adult.

VOICE Most frequent call, often given when flushed, a single 'chip' or 'plip' note of similar quality to song. Song very distinctive: a single hard, almost rasping 'tsip' or more buzzy 'tzeep' rhythmically repeated at short intervals while bird in bounding song flight over grassland (with a single buzzing note being uttered at apex of each bounce).

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 3 races (nominate illustrated).

STATUS/HABITAT Locally fairly common. Range has spread northwards in W Europe in recent decades, but



now seems to be contracting again. (In addition to mapped range, has bred W & N France, Belgium, Netherlands Switzerland.) Areas of tall grass, sedges or rushes, grassy wastelands and sugar-cane or cereal crops, especially adjacent to marshes and reedbeds; locally *Salicornia* saltmarsh.

GRACEFUL PRINIA *Prinia gracilis*

Graceful Warbler

L 10 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Small, very long-tailed warbler of scrubby cover and gardens in the Middle East. A non-descript, scruffy, greyish-brown little bird with very long, loosely feathered, graduated tail. Closer views reveal fine dark streaks on upperparts and dull greyish-white underparts, but the plain head shows little pattern apart from streaked crown. Shows white tips and blackish subterminal bars on all but central tail feathers, a feature most obvious on underside. Confusion unlikely, although overlaps range of superficially similar Scrub Warbler. Latter, which inhabits only rather barren and often rocky desert country, has distinct supercilium and eye-stripe, however, and the square-ended tail is blackish on the underside (a conspicuous feature during frequent cocking and waving of tail), while in some races belly and flanks are darker. Usually in pairs or small parties. Cover-loving but often climbs on to exposed twigs, cocking and waving long tail from side to side before diving back into cover. Distinctive song readily proclaims presence.

SEX/AGE Male has blackish bill in breeding season (bill largely pale in adult female, non-breeding adult male and juvenile). Juvenile has duller and browner iris (brighter and reddish in adult).

VOICE Usual call a rather drawn-out, rippling, ticking



'breep' or 'prrrrt'. Song distinctive: a nasal, tinny, somewhat buzzing 'zerwit-zerwit-zerwit ...' or 'chiz-zik-chizzik-chizzik ...' usually monotonously repeated and frequently given from a concealed perch.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 6 races (*palaestinae* and *deltae* illustrated). Varies mainly in overall coloration and prominence of streaking. Race *palaestinae* (Israel to Suez Canal zone) is pale, but not so pale as *irakensis* of Iraq. Races *deltae* of Nile delta and parts of Nile valley (intergrading with *palaestinae* in Suez Canal zone) and *akyildizi* of S Turkey are the darkest. Nominate race of Faiyum and *natronensis* of Wadi Natrun (Egypt) are intermediate.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Kuwait.) Scrub, gardens, edges of cultivation, waste ground and bushy cover (especially tamarisks) by marshes, rivers or canals.

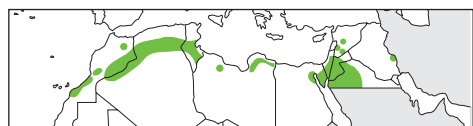
Plate page 690

SCRUB WARBLER *Scotocerca inquieta*

Streaked Scrub Warbler

L 10 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Small, lively, long-tailed warbler of desert regions of N Africa and the Middle East. A neater and more compact bird than the superficially similar Graceful *Prinia*, with very long, square-ended tail that is usually carried high and waved from side to side to show blackish underside (tail scruffily graduated, with dull greyish underside, in Graceful *Prinia*). Upperparts are greyish, finely streaked on crown and nape, and whitish supercilium and blackish eye-stripe are relatively conspicuous (Graceful *Prinia* looks plain-faced). The whitish throat and breast grade into pale rufous flanks, and there is fine dark streaking at sides of breast (underparts uniformly pale in Graceful *Prinia*, but *saharae* race of Scrub is



also very pale below). Bounds and runs up rocky outcrops or runs from base of one bush to another with tail cocked, sometimes suggesting a small rodent. Usually in pairs or family parties; often inquisitive, perching on top of low bushes and uttering distinctive call.

SEX/AGE Juvenile may be aged in summer and early autumn by fresh plumage, which is strongly abraded

Plate page 690

in adult at this time.

VOICE Calls include a rolling 'tliip-tliip' and a scolding, rasping 'prrit'. Song a thin piping whistle: 'di-di-di-di-di', often followed by a piping, descending 'peeeoooo-peeeooo'.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 3 races (nominate and *theresae* illustrated). Race *theresae* of Morocco is darker and more rufous than nominate

race, while *saharae* from extreme SE Morocco to Libya is paler, sandier and only weakly streaked.

STATUS/HABITAT Often distinctly localized, but not uncommon. Open desert with rather sparse cover of low scrubby bushes (especially wadi beds with richer vegetation than surrounding area) and also barren ravines and gorges with boulder scree and scant bushy vegetation.

LOCUSTELLA WARBLERS

Locustella warblers remain the least-known and most difficult to observe of all the warblers in our region. Knowledge of their winter ranges and passage status is very patchy owing to their very skulking behaviour outside the breeding areas. Unless in song, they spend most of their time on or near the ground in dense cover, hopping and running, often with tail raised. Even when climbing on to more exposed perches to sing, they seem to walk or even scamper along branches or stems in rodent-like manner rather than climbing up as do *Acrocephalus* warblers. Most observers rarely see members of this genus except when singing. On passage or in winter quarters they may be flushed from low vegetation when almost underfoot. They fly away low, often for only a few metres, before diving back into cover, giving the impression of having a relatively broader rump-and-tail area than other warblers.

Locustella warblers differ from the superficially similar *Acrocephalus* warblers particularly in having very long and broad undertail coverts that conceal most of the underside of the tail (if tail closed, only terminal third is exposed). In comparison, *Acrocephalus* warblers have shorter (although still quite long), narrower and more pointed undertail coverts. Tails of *Locustella* are broader and more graduated than those of *Acrocephalus*. Their bills are slim and rather insignificant compared with many *Acrocephalus*, and their supercilia are ill-defined (except in some Pallas's Grasshopper Warblers). Their legs and feet are strong and the outer edge of the folded wing is distinctly curved, emphasized by a pale outer web to the longest primary (wing edge much straighter in *Acrocephalus*). These differences in structure, combined with their furtive, semi-terrestrial, rodent-like behaviour and usually very streaky appearance, give them quite a different jizz from that of *Acrocephalus* warblers. The sexes are similar in plumage.

PALLAS'S GRASSHOPPER WARBLER *Locustella certhiola*

Plate page 691

Pallas's Warbler

L 13.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Asian vagrant (breeds from W Siberia eastwards). Relatively bulkier than Common Grasshopper Warbler, with distinctly rufous rump/uppertail coverts, flanks and undertail coverts. Undertail coverts lack dark streaks (unlike Common Grasshopper), but crown is usually more heavily streaked and (in spring at least) usually shows more pronounced whitish supercilium. Overall coloration confusingly variable: in most marked individuals, whitish supercilium, throat and breast contrast with dark crown and ear-coverts, and with rufous-buff flanks and undertail coverts (such strong contrast can suggest Sedge Warbler or even Moustached Warbler, but behaviour typical of *Locustella*), whereas duller individuals have indistinct supercilium and the crown and ear-coverts are merely streaked with brownish. Juveniles have supercilium and underparts sullied with yellow. The greyish-white tips to all but central tail feathers are present in all plumages and are virtually diagnostic but are usually difficult to see in the field, being more apparent on underside (although sometimes visible on upperside when bird swerves in flight and spreads tail immediately before diving into cover). Even if pale tips not visible, 'tail end' pattern differs from that of Common Grasshopper and other *Locustella*. Tail feathers are brownish shading to blackish towards tips, but as most of tail base is covered by rufous uppertail coverts there is a good contrast (often visible in flight, as bird flushes or alights) between rufous 'band' on rump/uppertail coverts and

apparently blackish tail. In Common Grasshopper tail feathers are rather uniformly brownish and contrast little with rump/uppertail coverts. (Note: pale tips to tail feathers have occasionally been found in Common Grasshopper Warbler, but are broader, less white and less clear-cut than in Pallas's Grasshopper.) In addition, the tertials often show a distinct whitish spot on inner web near tip, but these are hard to see in the field. Coloration, especially rufous rump, can suggest Sedge Warbler but Pallas's Grasshopper is distinctly bulkier, with a longer, broader and more graduated tail, shorter primary projection, more heavily streaked mantle/scapulars and, in 1st-years, only an indistinct supercilium. Even if the pale tips to the tail are not apparent, the contrast between the dark tail feathers and the rufous rump and uppertail coverts (which obscure the tail base) and the greyish wash on the nape are useful field features. Juveniles with particularly heavy spotting below could suggest Lanceolated, but latter has plain brown tail, lacks strong rufous tone to rump/uppertail coverts and usually has dark-streaked undertail coverts and more obviously streaky rather than spotty markings on breast and flanks. (Note: it is possible Lanceolated may rarely show pale tips to tail feathers, as with Common Grasshopper.) Like all *Locustella* is difficult to observe in the field, keeping close to ground level in dense vegetation when not singing. Typical views are of a bird flushed almost underfoot from dense waterside vegetation or grass, the almost unstreaked

rufous rump contrasting with the dark, streaked upperparts and apparently all-dark tail.

SEX/AGE Juvenile has underparts and supercilium washed with yellow and a band of fine spots or streaks across upper breast; the wing feathers are fresh. Moulting strategy of young birds uncertain; most (perhaps all) may not moult from juvenile plumage before reaching winter quarters. Autumn adult lacks breast spotting and has whitish throat and supercilium; some show abraded flight feathers, others are already freshly moulted.

VOICE Calls include a low, hard, descending, rattling 'trrrrrr' and a sharp 'pit'. Song, unlikely to be heard in our region, is not at all like the insect-like reelings of the breeding *Locustella* of our region. Somewhat reminiscent of first part of song of Sedge Warbler, consisting of a hesitant beginning followed by a louder, more rapid, variable series of notes, given in flight as well as from perch; may rendered 'tik chuk tet-tet sree-sree chuk-chuk-chuk sree-

sree swee-swee-swee-swee'. The final 'swee-swee-swee-swee' recalls Tree Pipit and carries long distances.

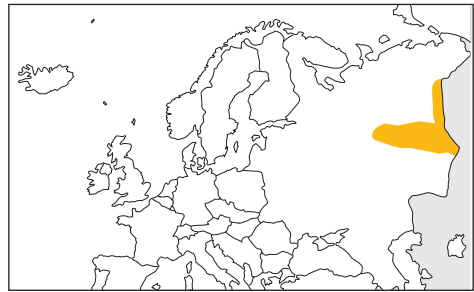
GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Rather slight but complex, with a marked area of intergradation between races. Perhaps only 2 races involved (both illustrated). Racial identity of 1st-years probably cannot be ascertained. Most birds reaching our region resemble dark northern race *rubescens* (breeds northern C Siberia eastwards), but paler and greyer race *sparsistriata* (breeds W Siberia eastwards) also occurs. Even paler and greyer race *centralasica* (breeds northern C Asia) may also occur.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Europe). In natural range, breeds in damp meadows or marshland fringes with tall grass (and often scattered low scrub) and in rank vegetation along streams (often in extensive forest clearings). Outside breeding season, favours damp grassland, ditches, rice fields and marshland edges.

LANCEOLATED WARBLER *Locustella lanceolata*

L 12 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Region to west of Urals only. A small, very heavily streaked *Locustella* most similar to Common Grasshopper Warbler, but smaller and shorter-tailed, with stronger, blacker streaking extending across breast and well down flanks, recalling a small pipit (but note that intensity and extent of flank streaking vary with wear). In fresh plumage (in autumn) is warmer brown (less olive) above than Common Grasshopper and is usually more heavily streaked on crown and mantle (markings often look more 'spotty' in Common Grasshopper), but when worn both look rather greyish. Both adults and young birds may have underparts tinged with yellow, as in Common Grasshopper, but frequency is much less. Typical individuals unlikely to be confused with western races (i.e. nominate and *obscurior*) of Common Grasshopper if seen well (but beware: many Common Grasshopper have a weak necklace of streaks across lower throat/upper breast, and some streaking on flanks, while some Lanceolated, especially juveniles, have only sparse and rather fine streaking on breast and flanks). Common Grasshopper of the eastern race *straminea* can be more problematic: they are smaller and have a paler ground colour to the upperparts than the nominate race, so appear more boldly marked; additionally, birds of this race have more prominent and slightly more extensive streaking on lower throat/upper breast and flanks, thus the potential for confusion with Lanceolated is greater. Lanceolated, however, has broader band of dark streaking centred on upper breast and streaking typically extends prominently down sides of lower breast onto flanks; in Common Grasshopper the streaking typically forms a rather narrow 'necklace' and is centred further up, on border of throat and upper breast, while sides of lower breast and upper flanks are generally unstreaked. Further, Lanceolated often looks cleanly black-striped on breast and flanks rather than merely marked with broken streaks, and always has blacker centres to tertials and greater coverts with neatly defined pale brownish fringes (tertials not so dark-centred in Common Grasshopper and fringes are broader, more diffuse and less contrastingly pale). Uppertail coverts are frequently heavily streaked in Lanceolated and usually unmarked in Common Grasshopper, but there is considerable overlap. Patterning of undertail coverts also differs, although this hard to see in the field: Lan-



ceolated usually (but not always) has unstreaked distal undertail coverts and some or all feathers show contrasting white tips, whereas in Common Grasshopper all undertail coverts are dark-streaked (but less distinctly and feathers lack contrasting white tips). (In the hand, dark markings can be seen to be oval in Lanceolated, arrowhead-shaped in Common Grasshopper.) The small size and relatively shorter tail of Lanceolated can be apparent if bird is flushed underfoot. Skulks mouse-like on or near ground, running and hopping among grasses. Like all members of the genus, is very difficult to observe unless in song, when freely climbs up into bushes or even lower branches of trees.

SEX/AGE Juvenile is usually unstreaked or only weakly streaked on sides of lower breast and upper flanks. Some migrate in largely or even wholly juvenile plumage. 1st-year in autumn has fresh flight and tail feathers (abraded in autumn adult).

VOICE Calls include a sharp 'pit', a quiet 'tak', a low 'ch-chirr' and a repeated harsh, scolding 'cheek'. Song a thin, prolonged, insect-like reeling, slightly higher in pitch and thinner, more metallic, than that of Common Grasshopper Warbler, but not easily distinguishable to some ears. Song delivered with tail held less depressed and stance more horizontal (whole bird not vibrating so much with the effort) compared with Common Grasshopper.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. Migrates southeast to winter in S & SE Asia. In the breeding season, moist grassy meadows and bogs, including forest clearings, with scattered scrub or small trees. Outside breeding season, habitats much as those of Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler.

Plate page 691

COMMON GRASSHOPPER WARBLER *Locustella naevia*

Plate page 691

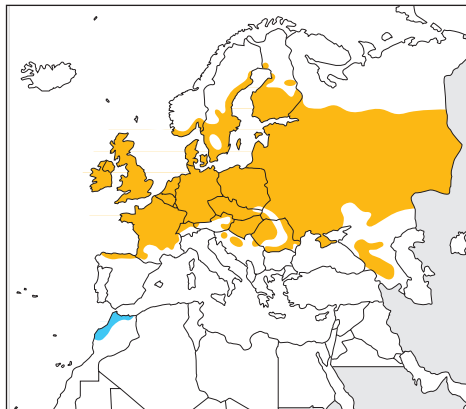
Grasshopper Warbler

L 13 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A skulking, brownish warbler of grassy and low scrubby habitats, both by water and in dry situations. Overall coloration dull olive-brown, lacking strong head pattern (supercilium rather indistinct), and entire upperparts marked with dark, broken streaking. Underparts only slightly paler, with olive wash on breast and flanks; whitest on throat and central belly. Streaking not normally very obvious below, but has dark streaks on rear flanks and undertail coverts and often a narrow 'necklace' of streaks across lower throat/upper breast (note: sparse streaking sometimes extends across whole of upper breast). Frequently both adult and immature individuals have underparts tinged with pale yellow. Almost invariably first located by distinctive reeling song, which is usually uttered from within (or just below top of) low, scrubby cover. Clammers up branches, sometimes into full view when singing, and often cocks tail (a character shared by other *Locustella*), but at other times creeps around low in dense herbage and bases of bushes. When not singing, normally encountered only when it flushes almost underfoot, appearing as a low-flying, dark brownish little bird with a relatively broad rump and full, rounded tail. Streaking may be difficult to see unless close views obtained, and heavily abraded birds in late summer can have streaking virtually lacking, thus suggesting Savi's Warbler (q.v.). Birds of smaller and more prominently streaked eastern race *straminea* could be confused with much rarer Lanceolated Warbler (q.v.). Compare also Pallas's Grasshopper and River Warblers.

SEX/AGE 1st-year in autumn has fresh flight and tail feathers (abraded in adult at this season).

VOICE Calls include a sharp, hard 'thik', which can be repeated when alarmed. Song distinctive (but compare with similar songs of Lanceolated and Savi's Warblers): a prolonged thin, dry, trilled, decidedly insect-like reeling which may continue for several minutes without a break when well underway; begins with 2–4 short bursts, then



launches into prolonged reeling with whole bird vibrating with the effort, turning head from side to side as it sings. Song, while not loud, is far-carrying and seems to go on interminably, with only short breaks; given chiefly around dusk and dawn and often at night.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight, but significant regarding species identification. 3 races (nominate illustrated). Nominate race found over most of our region, but replaced by smaller and more heavily streaked *straminea* in Urals. Population of Caucasus region, *obscurior*, is slightly larger and more olive than the nominate race.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (Most winter south of the Sahara.) Low scrubby thickets and rank vegetation including moist meadows with tall herbage and low scrub, clumps of young trees in woodland clearings, edges or plantations, coastal scrub, water-side thickets and reedbeds with some bushes. On passage, mostly in grassy areas and coastal scrub.

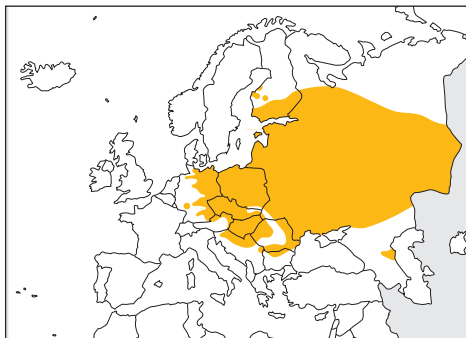
RIVER WARBLER *Locustella fluviatilis*

Plate page 691

European River Warbler, Eurasian River Warbler

L 13.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Damp woodland edges in E Europe. An unstreaked *Locustella*, very rarely observed unless located by distinctive song. A dull olive-brown warbler, with paler throat and central belly; the supercilium is indistinct, but small whitish crescents above and below eye can be conspicuous (latter feature shared also by Savi's Warbler, the only species with which it is likely to be confused, but which breeds in reedbeds). Key features to look for are the contrasting whitish scalloping on the undertail coverts and diffuse brownish-grey streaking and mottling on the throat and upper breast, although the latter can be difficult to see. Usually much less rufous than the nominate race of Savi's Warbler, which it otherwise resembles, but River can sometimes be distinctly rufous above and the duller and more olive eastern race of Savi's, *fusca*, confuses the issue further. Breeding habitats and songs of the two are quite different, but migrants are problematic as both can occur in similar situations. Autumn River Warbler can show a warm brown, at times even reddish-brown, tone to the upperparts, enhancing similarity to Savi's, and in such cases the



undertail-covert pattern is all-important: both species have unusually long undertail coverts (longest extend beyond tips of outermost tail feathers), but River has bold pale scalloping on an olive-brown or reddish-brown background, whereas Savi's has the scalloping narrower and fainter or virtually absent on a more

buff, less dark and contrasting, background. Supercilium tends to be more obvious on River and brownish-grey streaking and mottling extends from lower throat well down breast, whereas Savi's either appears unmarked below or has some greyish spotting restricted to lower throat. On breeding grounds sings from higher up than other *Locustella*, inside canopy of large bushes or smallish trees (up to 5–8 metres above ground), sometimes from exposed perches. Virtually motionless while singing, apart from vibrating throat; therefore very difficult to locate, even when observer right underneath singing bird and looking for movement in the canopy. After singing, drops like a stone to skulk in typical *Locustella* fashion on ground among dense undergrowth.

SEX/AGE In autumn, adults have abraded wings and tail feathers, whereas these are fresh in juveniles. Some autumn adults, and perhaps also juveniles, have a distinct rufous tone to the upperparts. Migrates while

still in juvenile plumage.

VOICE Calls include a sharp 'pink' of alarm. Song very distinctive: a rapid, low, buzzing 'zi-ur, zi-ur, zi-ur ...' or 'ziz-ziz-ziz-ziz ...' continuing for minutes on end, somewhat pulsating and electrical, almost sewing-machine-like, and very easily passed off as an insect (e.g. a cicada or cricket) rather than a bird; often preceded by a short purr or smacking before continuous buzzing commences. Sings by day and by night, but especially at dusk and dawn.

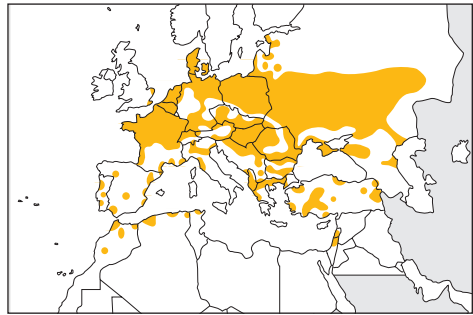
STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. Various damp wooded and bushy habitats with dense undergrowth, including riverine woodland, edges and clearings in damp or marshy broadleaved woodland, tall thickets adjacent to ponds and marshes, and even large parks. On passage, can occur in cultivation (including grain fields), reedbeds and other low cover both in dry and in damp situations.

SAVI'S WARBLER *Locustella luscinioides*

L 14 cm.

IDENTIFICATION An unstreaked *Locustella* of reedbeds. Most closely resembles River Warbler (q.v.); migrants of eastern race of Savi's are especially problematic. Overall coloration and habitat preference recall European Reed Warbler; bill is relatively longer than in other *Locustella* warblers and relatively flat or peaked crown shape also recall European Reed, but song, wing and tail structure and behaviour are typical of the genus. Differs from European Reed in being distinctively larger and bulkier, especially about rear end, and in having longer, broader and rounder or square-tipped undertail coverts (often showing weak pale scalloping), broader and more graduated tail, more broadly triangular wingtip, more curved (rather than straight edged) outer wing margin, stronger, paler (greyish-pink to dull pink) legs and feet, usually a more obvious pale supercilium behind eye (but not in front), fairly prominent pale crescents above and below eye, and darker, more olive-brown flanks and undertail coverts (with olive-brown tinge extending across breast). In fresh plumage whole underparts brownish, apart from whitish throat, but when worn throat, breast and belly are noticeably whiter. Nominate race distinctly darker brown than European Reed, especially on tail, but eastern race *fusca* is lighter and more olive-toned above. Gait differs: when not singing, walks through reeds at or near ground level with tail cocked, seeming to haul itself along furtively with strong feet rather than clambering and hopping at mid-level in reeds. Unlike an *Acrocephalus*, cocks tail frequently and tumbles rather clumsily down into base of reeds at end of song bout. Beware Common Grasshopper Warbler, which often appears unstreaked unless seen well and also sings in reedbeds. Skulking behaviour and calls recall Cetti's Warbler (q.v. for comparison). Migrants are often found away from reedbeds, occurring on ground in bushy cover (rarely even on edge of open ground) and walking with broad tail well cocked and head held low; occasionally they feed in low trees, running rapidly along branches and dropping to lower levels in a manner quite different from an *Acrocephalus*, always keeping well hidden.

SEX/AGE In autumn, adults have abraded wings and tail feathers, whereas these are fresh in juveniles. Juveniles have darker and redder brown upperparts, with distinctly darker centres to wing feathers, in com-



parison with duller rufous-brown upperparts and more uniformly coloured wings of adults. Migrates in juvenile plumage. (Young birds often retain some worn and bleached juvenile inner primaries until autumn of second calendar year.)

VOICE Usual call an explosive 'chick' or 'tchink', recalling single note of mobbing call of Common Blackbird (and similar to call of Cetti's Warbler); calls repeated to form a chattering rattle when alarmed. Song distinctive: a continuous deep, buzzing reel for minutes on end; compared with song of Common Grasshopper Warbler, it is distinctly lower in pitch and more of a rasping buzz in tone, starting with a series of well-separated, sharp, 'chick' notes which accelerate into a continuous buzzing reel (Common Grasshopper starts song with short bursts of reeling). Sings in upright posture from near top of reeds, especially at dusk and dawn, but often continuing through the night or day.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 3 races (nominate and *fusca* illustrated). Eastern race *fusca* (breeds Turkey eastwards) is distinctly more olive-brown, less reddish-brown, above, especially in worn plumage, when buff of underparts also lighter than in nominate race or *sarmatica*.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Finland, Jordan.) Breeds in reedbeds (sometimes with scattered bushes) by lakes and rivers; locally also sedge marshes and areas of rushes. Migrants occur in a variety of bushy habitats, including parks and gardens, where marshy habitats not available.

Plate page 691

GRAY'S GRASSHOPPER WARBLER *Locustella fasciolata*

Plate page 691

Gray's Warbler

L 17 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Asian vagrant (breeds from C Siberia eastwards). Large, very skulking, unstreaked warbler of luxuriant low undergrowth. Large size, relatively strong bill (for a *Locustella*) and comparatively short (for the genus) undertail coverts suggest one of the larger *Acrocephalus* warblers such as Great Reed or Thick-billed, but structure, particularly curved wing margin and very rounded tail, clearly that of a *Locustella*. Upperparts dull olive-brown, warmer, almost rufous-brown, in fresh plumage, with fairly distinct narrow, whitish supercilium and dark brownish eye-stripe. Underparts mainly pale greyish in adult, being especially grey on sides of head and on breast, with whitish throat, brownish-buff flanks and cinnamon-buff undertail coverts (latter can have weak pale scaling). Juvenile has supercilium, throat and underparts (including underwing coverts) strongly washed with yellowish-buff (gradually bleaching paler during autumn), although breast often tinged with greyish-olive and undertail coverts frequently tinged with cinnamon. The undertail coverts are relatively shorter than in any other *Locustella*, reaching to about halfway along tail, but are distinctly broader and blunter than in *Acrocephalus*. (Note: contrary to some reports, undertail coverts do not reach well beyond tips of shortest, outermost tail feathers; instead they usually fall well short.) The curved outer wing margin, with whitish fringe to outermost primary, is typical of the genus. Skulks in dense, damp, herbage, walking or running through vegetation like a rodent. Large size may not be evident in the field, as it is a notoriously difficult bird to see in the open (even when singing); even flushing one from underfoot would be a remarkable achievement (interestingly, all the records from our region have been of birds picked up dead at lighthouses).

Greyer (adult) or yellower (juvenile) underparts and shorter undertail coverts, more clearly defined supercilium and larger size are useful distinctions from migrant Savi's or River Warblers; also lacks prominent pale scalloping on undertail coverts shown by River. Skulking migrant Great Reed has longer tail, longer and narrower primaries, heavier bill and broader supercilium, narrower and more pointed undertail coverts, more buff underparts (lacking greyish or yellowish tones) and greyer legs (bright pinkish in Gray's Grasshopper). Thick-billed Warbler has plain head with contrasting dark eye (recalling *Hippolais*), longer tail, shorter undertail coverts, grey legs, stouter bill, and is more buff overall and more arboreal in behaviour.

SEX/AGE In autumn, adult has distinctly olive-brown upperparts, lacking yellow wash below of juvenile, and worn flight and tail feathers. Juvenile is more rufous-brown above, has yellow wash on underparts, and has fresh wing and tail feathers. Thought that all young birds migrate in juvenile plumage, but moult strategy still not fully established.

VOICE Calls include a a trilling 'cherr' and a harsh 'tchrrrok' when alarmed. Song, unlikely to be heard in our region, is highly distinctive and quite unlike that of any other *Locustella*: a very loud, short, explosive series of liquid notes (strongly recalling a bulbul initially, but with last series of notes very rapidly delivered); 'plip plop-plip plut-chee plo-chiddu-diddu-du'. Given especially from dusk to dawn, but not infrequently during day; often sings from perch quite high in tall bush or tree.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, breeds in undergrowth in damp deciduous or mixed forest, or in bushy, grassy thickets (especially along streams).

ACROCEPHALUS WARBLERS

Most members of this genus inhabit waterside vegetation, but there are exceptions and all may be expected to occur in drier habitats on passage. They are relatively plain brownish warblers with relatively slim and prominent bills (less apparent in the streaked species), relatively long, slim tails that are round-tipped or slightly graduated and which lack white in the outer feathers, and long but pointed undertail coverts which extend up to two-thirds of the way along tail underside; most have prominent pale supercilia. The sexes are similar in plumage.

Acrocephalus hop through the vegetation with crouched posture, sidling or sliding through reeds, and tend not to skulk near ground level (although migrants may) or to run on ground as *Locustella* do. Most species have chattering songs, which are often rather similar to the unpracticed ear.

Some *Acrocephalus* (chiefly the smaller unstreaked species) can be very difficult to identify in the field. Luckily, the songs are distinctive, but silent birds, especially lone migrants, may not always be safely identified unless prolonged views are obtained and careful analysis of the bird's structure is made.

The 12 species can be divided into three groups:

Streaked: Moustached, Aquatic and Sedge.

Small and unstreaked: Paddyfield, Blyth's Reed, Cape Verde, Marsh and European Reed.

Large and unstreaked: Clamorous Reed, Great Reed, Basra Reed and Thick-billed.

Of these three groupings, only members of the second, small and unstreaked, group provide intergeneric problems on a significant scale. Differences from other similar genera may be outlined as follows:

Cetti's Warbler: Recalls *Acrocephalus* in coloration and waterside habitats, but skulks wren-like in undergrowth, revealing presence by distinctive song. It is chunkier, with greyer-toned underparts, and has more

rounded crown and smaller bill than most *Acrocephalus*; good views of the undertail coverts would show these to be quite short and broad compared with the longer, narrower and paler coverts of an *Acrocephalus*.

Locustella warblers: Members of this genus breeding in our region have monotonous, reeling songs. *Locustella* warblers are very skulking and keep close to the ground unless singing. Their rear end appears markedly different from that of an *Acrocephalus*, with very rounded tail and broad and long undertail coverts, the latter almost reaching the tail tip in several species. Wings are also relatively broader, with a narrow whitish outer web to the outermost primary visible under optimum viewing conditions which exaggerates the slightly curved outer wing margin (appears straight in *Acrocephalus*). They tend to walk or even run along branches, and drop to ground to hide rodent-like in vegetation.

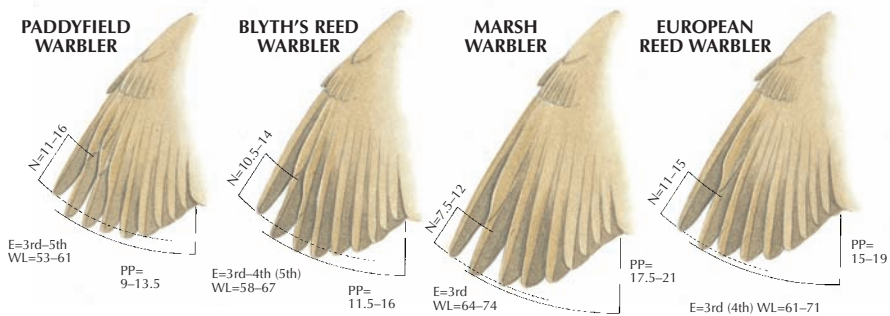
Hippolais warblers: This genus causes the most problems, as songs are similar to those of some *Acrocephalus*. Migrant *Acrocephalus* freely use trees and bushes in the manner of *Hippolais*. In general, *Hippolais* warblers have a square-ended, slightly notched, tail tip (narrowly rounded and not appearing notched in *Acrocephalus*); relatively shorter and broader undertail coverts, thus showing more exposed tail underside; and broader-based and extensively pale bills and a 'plain-faced' appearance (but see Marsh and Booted Warblers). In behaviour, *Hippolais* tends to move more heavily through the foliage, with less crouched posture than an *Acrocephalus*. Some *Hippolais* may be distinctly washed with greenish or yellowish (never seen in an *Acrocephalus*), and they are never warm brown in coloration like some *Acrocephalus*. The main problem areas are Olivaceous Warbler versus Marsh Warbler, Blyth's Reed Warbler and the *fuscus* race of European Reed Warbler, and Booted Warbler versus Paddyfield Warbler.

Garden Warbler: Only this member of the *Sylvia* could be confused with an *Acrocephalus*, but it has a much plainer head pattern and a considerably shorter bill. Additionally, the tail is square-ended with a distinct notch and the stout legs are bluish-grey.

Isolating useful criteria for interspecific identification is difficult; plumage and leg coloration varies with age and feather wear and raises severe problems when comparing similar species. Once a bird has been identified as an *Acrocephalus*, the following key features should assist:

Song and calls • Habitat (when breeding) • Bill length, pattern and colour • Head shape, extent of supercilium and shade above supercilium • Length of exposed primary tips compared with length of exposed tertials, and whether tertials are dark-centred or plain (best discerned from photographs) • Leg (and claw) colour

WING FORMULAE OF FOUR ACROCEPHALUS WARBLERS



E=emarginated primaries, WL=wing length, PP=primary projection, N=depth of notch on 2nd primary. All measurements in millimetres. Primaries are numbered from the outside inwards (i.e. 'ascendantly')

MOUSTACHED WARBLER *Acrocephalus melanopogon*

Plate page 690

L 12.5 cm.

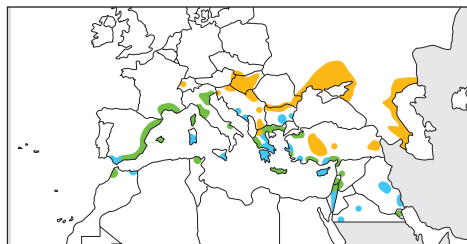
IDENTIFICATION A skulking waterside warbler and the only small *Acrocephalus* to winter north of the Sahara. Superficially resembles Sedge Warbler, but relatively shorter-winged (with shorter primary projection), which makes the slightly more round-tipped tail appear a little longer than in Sedge. Length of primary projection about half that of exposed part of tertials; more equal in Sedge. Basic plumage pattern similar to Sedge, but nominate race of Moustached has rich

rufous upperparts extending to form a 'shawl' across the sides of the neck (although in worn plumage this may be less evident), with bolder and blacker mantle streaking than in Sedge. In Sedge, the upperparts are more olive-brown, becoming contrastingly more rufous on the rump. The head pattern of Moustached is far more striking, with an almost blackish crown contrasting with a clear, broad, chalky-white supercilium, which does not reach base of bill, broadens immedi-

ately above the eye and ends rather squarely. Although the crown of Sedge often appears completely dark, especially in worn spring birds, it usually shows brown streaking in the centre (often pale brown and prominent in young birds), and the supercilium starts at the bill base and tapers and fades towards the rear. The underparts of Moustached are also less uniform; the throat is very white and contrasts with a rufous wash on flanks and sides of breast (often extending as a narrow band across centre of breast) and with the relatively dark ear-coverts (darker than in Sedge). The eastern race *mimica* of Moustached is more difficult to separate from Sedge, as it has the upperparts more greyish-olive, less rufous, than in nominate race and has a hint of crown streaking; it can, however, be distinguished by the supercilium colour and shape (again not reaching bill base), broad dusky eye-stripe, darker ear-coverts and by having the flanks and undertail coverts pinkish-brown, not olive-brown. Behaviour resembles that of Sedge, but often hops about on rafts of aquatic vegetation and habitually cocks tail strongly when alert, or flicks tail up and down, a habit associated with Sedge seemingly under only extreme conditions of alarm. Some calls also appear to be diagnostic. **In the hand** a comparison of wing formulae shows that Moustached has 1st primary 5–8 mm longer than primary coverts (1–7 mm shorter than primary coverts in Sedge), the wingpoint is 4=5, sometimes =3 (3, sometimes =2, in Sedge), and wing length is 52–63 mm (59–72 mm in Sedge).

SEX/AGE Juveniles in late summer may be aged by having fresh wing and tail feathers (abraded in adult at that time).

VOICE Calls include a hard, Common Stonechat-like, 'tak-tak', a low 'tik', a churring 'trrrp' given in flight



and an explosive rattling 'trrrrrrr'. Song recalls that of European Reed Warbler and is thinner and sweeter than that of Sedge Warbler, lacking a number of the latter's harsh, rattling phrases; the most characteristic feature is the inclusion of a prolonged series of repeated almost Common Nightingale-like, or Wood Lark-like, notes, 'lu-lu-lu-lu ...', given to best effect at the start of the song, gradually increasing in speed and pitch before the rest of the song is uttered. Some mimicry may be incorporated.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 3 races (nominate and *mimica* illustrated). The duller race *mimica*, described above, breeds from Volga Delta eastwards and southwards to Middle East. Rather similar *albiventris* breeds in Sea of Azov region.

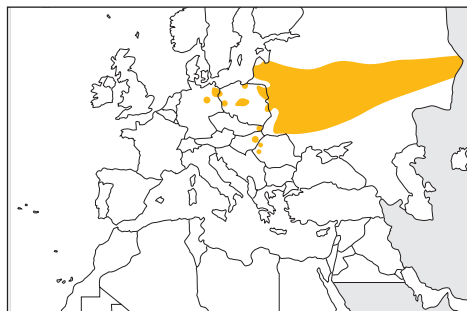
STATUS/HABITAT Localized but fairly common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Britain, Germany, Sicily, Jordan.) Favours borders of reedbeds, stands of reedmace (*Typha*) and low inundated tamarisks, willows or other dense bushy tangles at the edge of rivers, streams, lakes and marshes; generally in deeper water habitats than those favoured by Sedge Warbler.

AQUATIC WARBLER *Acrocephalus paludicola*

Plate page 690

L 12.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Skulking waterside warbler. Recalls Sedge Warbler in size and in having streaked upperparts and very obvious pale supercilium, but at all ages Aquatic has much stronger black streaking on mantle (bordered by obvious pale 'tramlines'), clear pale central crown-stripe contrasting with black crown sides, pale lores, streaked back, rump and uppertail coverts, finely streaked breast and flanks, paler pinkish legs and more rounded tail (with pointed feather tips). The pale central crown-stripe can be overlooked if feathers are sleeked, especially when bird seen in profile, being most apparent if feathers are slightly raised, but at all times the black crown sides contrast with the relatively paler sides of head and unmarked lores in comparison with adult Sedge. The upperparts, especially mantle, have much broader and blacker striping than in Sedge, and in worn birds the mantle becomes almost blackish. Although the back, rump and uppertail coverts are streaked (unlike all but a very few Sedge), the streaking is narrower and less distinct than on mantle and the subsequent contrast can make them appear unstreaked in a brief view. The dullest, most worn adults are sandy grey-brown above with whitish supercilia and crown-stripe, while in fresh plumage the pale areas have a distinctly yellowish-buff tinge both above and below. On dull adults, the streaked flanks and breast sides and much paler sides of head and lores are the most useful distinctions from Sedge, although some worn adults may show mottled, dusky loreal area. If flushed from underfoot, the rump of Aquatic appears less rufous than in Sedge, but a contrast is shown between the weakly streaked rump and strongly striped mantle. Adults are



distinctly duller than juveniles in both species. Juvenile Aquatic is a very striking bird, being bright yellowish-buff overall with very strong black striping on upperparts, the heavily striped mantle showing contrasting pale 'tramlines' at the sides as in adult, and most have completely unmarked underparts (although a minority have weak dark mottling on breast). Juvenile Sedge, however, is even more strikingly different from adult and recalls Aquatic (especially adult) in several features: it is much buffier and yellower than adult, has very pale central crown-stripe (which in some is seemingly unstreaked), shows dark mottling on breast, and some individuals can show weak streaking on the rump and uppertail coverts. However, young Sedge lacks conspicuous broad, black striping on mantle, paler lores and clearly streaked rump and uppertail coverts of Aquatic and has indistinct dark mottling within the pale crown-stripe, which is never

so prominent, narrow and clean-cut as in the latter. In addition, does not show the rather prominent streaking on flanks typical of worn adult Aquatic. Notoriously more skulking than Sedge, even on breeding grounds, and especially so on passage. Outside breeding season, may be encountered feeding low in dense aquatic vegetation fringing reedbeds (less often in reeds themselves), particularly in areas inhabited by Sedge Warblers, when direct comparison often possible.

SEX/AGE Autumn adult much drabber and more worn than fresh, brightly coloured juvenile (see Identification). Migrates in juvenile plumage.

VOICE Most frequently heard call, quite freely given on passage, a low 'tuk' or 'chuk', distinctly deeper than related call of Sedge; also gives a dry 'churr'. Song less complex and much more monotonous than

that of Sedge Warbler, with shorter and less varied phrases. Dry trills and short series of whistles are interspersed with marked pauses; can be rendered 'trrrr ... dew-dew-dew ... churr ... di-di-di ...'. Lacks extensive mimicry and sweet notes so typical of Sedge. Song usually given from among sedges, occasionally in short song flight.

STATUS/HABITAT Uncommon, localized and declining. Little recorded on passage (but regular in autumn west to S Britain). Appears to winter to south of our region in parts of W Africa, but records sparse. In breeding season, favours marshes and fens with extensive covering of sedges (*Carex*) and wet tussocky grassland. On passage occurs in variety of freshwater wetlands, favouring stands of iris and other dense vegetation within or beside extensive reedbeds.

SEDGE WARBLER *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

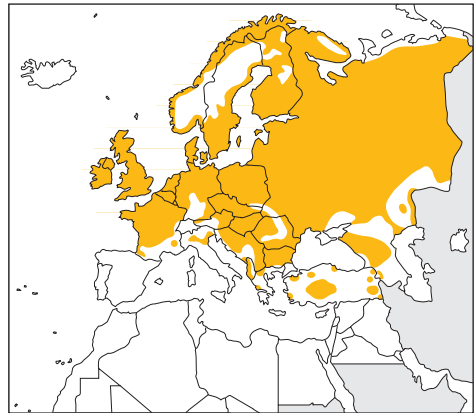
Plate page 690

L 12.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION One of the most widespread *Acrocephalus* in our region, and regularly found breeding far from water. The most striking feature is the long, clear whitish supercilium, contrasting with dark sides to crown, dusky eye-stripe and dull brown, weakly streaked, upperparts. Underparts whitish, becoming dull warm buffish on breast sides and flanks. Legs dull, varying from greyish-brown to pinkish-grey. In flight, the unstreaked rump appears warmer, almost rufous-brown, and contrasts with drabber brown mantle and darker tail. Adults are distinctly drabber than juveniles and in worn spring plumage the crown appears dusky, becoming browner and more streaked, with darker sides, in fresh plumage. Juveniles are much brighter and warmer buff overall, with strikingly pale central crown-stripe, and show weak breast mottling. Actively feeds low or in mid-cover of waterside vegetation, ascending to prominent perches to deliver vigorous, loud song; at height of song activity, bird takes to the air in a short flapping song flight, subsequently dropping back into cover. When not singing, keeps well hidden in vegetation, slipping furtively along stems, climbing up to peer at observer. If flushed, usually flies low for short distances before dropping back into cover. Confusion possible with much scarcer and more localized Moustached and Aquatic Warblers, and heavily abraded birds sometimes have mantle streaking so indistinct as to suggest Paddyfield Warbler; see these species for discussion of differences. Compare also vagrant Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler.

SEX/AGE In autumn, adult much drabber and more worn than fresh, brightly coloured juvenile (see Identification). Migrates in juvenile plumage.

VOICE Typical calls include a scolding 'tuk', which can be repeated into 'tuk-tuk-tuk-tutututtuk' when agitated, and a harsh, grating 'chirr' or 'trrr'. Compare calls of Moustached and Aquatic Warblers. Song varied and vigorous, a mixture of rapid, agitated, harsh



chattering, trilling and musical phrases, interspersed with hurried snatches of mimicry, and grating and winding sounds; given both from perch and in flight. Much faster and more varied than ponderous, 'relaxed' song of European Reed Warbler (but compare songs of Marsh, Olivaceous, Moustached, Aquatic and Paddyfield Warblers, and also Bluethroat). Sings by night as well as by day.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Switzerland.) Occurs in great variety of damp habitats, from drier sections of reedbeds to sedge marshes, stands of tall, moist herbage and tangled thickets; often but by no means exclusively in waterside situations. Locally breeds in drier habitats well away from water such as tall crops, overgrown hedges and even bushy coastal hollows. On passage, favours reedbeds and crops but also likely in any form of low, bushy vegetation.

PADDYFIELD WARBLER *Acrocephalus agricola*

Plate pages 654 & 692

L 12.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Reedbeds in Black Sea region. A small, slim, unstreaked *Acrocephalus* with distinctly short bill (unlike the long, spike-like bill of other small unstreaked *Acrocephalus*) and a relatively small and rounded head, short wings (with short primary projection) and long tail, rendering it quite distinctive within the complex. Paler overall than other members of the

genus (except perhaps Marsh), with whitish underparts which extend in a diffuse half-collar around sides of neck, becoming more buff on sides of breast and flanks. Fresh adults are cinnamon-brown, washed with rufous, on upperparts (being especially rufous-tinged on rump and uppertail coverts) and typically appear more rufous above than Marsh, but when heavily worn

(i.e. late summer) adults may even lack rufous tone altogether. Juveniles and many 1st-winters in autumn are similar to fresh adults above, but some 1st-winters are quite sandy-brown, with rufous tinge restricted to rump and uppertail coverts. Head pattern is distinctive: the clear, short, whitish supercilium is strikingly prominent behind the eye (recalling Sedge Warbler) and is usually bordered above by a dark shade along the sides of the crown and below by a narrow, dusky eye-stripe that contrasts with paler ear-coverts (European Reed and Marsh show much less prominent supercilia behind eye, lack dark shade on sides of crown and have darker, less contrasting ear-coverts). The sides of the neck are often contrastingly pale, with a greyish tinge (not seen in European Reed or Marsh). The small, short, slim bill has very dark upper mandible and tip to lower mandible (lower mandible is wholly pale in European Reed and Marsh, only very rarely so in Paddyfield). (Note: in fact extreme tip of lower mandible is pale in Paddyfield, but this only visible in the hand.) Legs are pale brownish or yellowish-pink (usually dark, but not always, in European Reed and Blyth's Reed). Feeds quite actively in reeds or other waterside vegetation, usually at mid or low levels, flicking tail upwards, which exaggerates its length. Given reasonable views, unlikely to be confused with other small *Acrocephalus*, but with suspected vagrants beware possibility of heavily abraded Sedge Warbler, which also has distinct supercilia and a small bill and may have mantle streaking weak or absent, distinctly pale overall appearance and a rufous-tinged rump (Sedge, however, has relatively shorter tail, is bulkier and larger-headed and has longer primary projection than Paddyfield). Overall pale coloration and head pattern suggest Booted Warbler, especially of longer-tailed race *rama*, but Booted is dumpier, with shorter and distinctively square-ended tail (Paddyfield has rounded tail), whitish outer webs and tips to outer tail feathers (unless abraded), shorter and more rounded



undertail coverts and no rufous tone to upperparts.

SEX/AGE In autumn, adults have worn flight and tail feathers, when whole plumage fresh in 1st-year birds.

VOICE Typical calls include a low 'chik' and a harsh, nasal 'cheer'. Song recalls that of Sedge or Marsh Warblers rather than European Reed or Blyth's Reed, being distinctly chattering, mixed with high-pitched squeaking notes and sweet warbling phrases; perhaps closest to Sedge, but far less varied and more sustained. Less varied than in Marsh, more monotonously chattering, without as many harsh notes and lacking the characteristic nasal 'zi-cheeh' 'zi-cheeh'.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (*septima* illustrated). The breeding race of western Black Sea region is *septima*, which is more greyish-brown, less olive-brown above in worn adult plumage and more sandy, less rufous above in fresh 1st-year plumage than *capistrata* (which apparently breeds from Volga and E Turkey eastwards). Racial identity of vagrants complicated by variation in colour, with fresh spring birds being distinctly rufous on entire upperparts, wearing to pale greyish-sandy during the summer.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common, but westernmost populations small and only recently discovered. Winters in S Asia. Breeds in reedbeds or stands of reed-mace, often in drier areas with scattered bushes at wetland margins, in low-lying country. On passage, likely in any wetland habitat and also in bushes, tall grass and other low growth in drier regions.

BLYTH'S REED WARBLER *Acrocephalus dumetorum*

Plate pages 654 & 692

L 12.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Damp woodland in NE Europe. Very similar to both Marsh and European Reed Warblers. Blyth's Reed is a tree bird by nature, but Marsh and migrant European Reed may also readily be found in trees when habitat availability is limited. Avoids reedbeds, but occurs side by side with Marsh over much of its breeding range in our region. In structure generally appears stouter-bodied than European Reed, and crown often more peaked, making bill appear 'spiky' and carried slightly upwards, and this, coupled with often raised tail, sometimes gives a curved overall impression to the bird as it hops through the canopy. In flight, the relatively short wings can create a long-tailed impression, which is not usually the case when at rest. The Lesser Whitethroat-like call, which is freely given outside the breeding season, is also a useful clue to its identity. The relatively short wings and arboreal habitats also recall Olivaceous Warbler. Because of the extent of variation through wear and age in Blyth's Reed and these potential confusion species, structure and calls are important features on which to concentrate when identifying non-singing birds, and some may not be safely separable in the field. **Compared with European Reed:** The primary projection is shorter than in European Reed (much shorter than in Marsh); a comparison of primary projection (beyond secondaries) with exposed tertial length shows that Blyth's Reed has primary projection



equal to 55–80% of exposed tertial length, whereas in European Reed it is 70–95%. The legs are usually quite dark grey, but are sometimes as pale as brownish-pink (especially in juveniles and 1st-winters); legs of European Reed rarely as dark as many Blyth's Reed, being pinkish-brown or greyish-pink, but brighter and paler in juveniles. Claws dark, but yellowish on inside of curve as in European Reed (compare Marsh). Bill typically appears very dark, with pale basal area and dark smudge towards tip on lower mandible, but some have lower mandible wholly pale like European Reed. (Note: bill pattern suggests Paddyfield Warbler, but tip of lower mandible only rarely as solidly dark.) Typically a colder, duller, more olive or drab greyish-

brown bird above than fresh European Reed (but worn adult of latter can look very similar); in fresh plumage in autumn, however, some 1st-winters are distinctly warm brown above and can recall European Reed in colour (especially dull eastern race *fuscus* of European Reed), but they lack the distinctly contrasting reddish tone to the rump and uppertail coverts of European Reed (although these areas are slightly more rufous toned in some individual Blyth's Reed). Wing feathers (notably tertials) are less strongly dark-centred and pale-fringed than in European Reed in fresh plumage, making wing appear very uniform, but this character varies with wear and lighting in both species; importantly, alula is dark and quite contrasting in European Reed, indistinct in Blyth's Reed. 1st-winters often show a slight contrast on wing between rufous fringes to remiges and rest of wing, a feature lacking in European Reed. Throat and breast usually strikingly whitish, becoming buffish on breast and flanks, in fresh plumage (when paler below than European Reed); wears whiter below than typical European Reed when plumage abraded and has a greyish tinge to breast sides and flanks (but some worn Reed can look very similar). Head shows a short, clear white or creamy-white (when fresh) supercilium above lore to just above eye, usually diffusing immediately after eye, this often being less obvious and generally more buff in European Reed. In some individuals supercilium is more prominent behind eye than in European Reed (hinting at Paddyfield Warbler, q.v.). There is a clear whitish eye-ring in Blyth's Reed which is most apparent under eye; in European Reed eye-ring sometimes less obvious, especially under eye, but may be prominent enough to predominate over the short supercilium (the reverse of the situation in Blyth's Reed). Typical call of Blyth's Reed is a Lesser Whitethroat-like dry 'tak'; European Reed gives a harsh 'tcharr'. **Compared with Marsh:** The relatively long, tapering primary projection of Marsh shows reasonably clear pale scaling formed by each primary tip when fresh; this hardly visible in Blyth's Reed, which also has a significantly shorter, blunter primary projection. A comparison of primary projection with the length of the exposed tertials shows that Blyth's Reed has a primary projection equal to 55–80% of the exposed tertial length; in Marsh the figure is 75–100%. (In Blyth's Reed 6 primary tips are visible in photographs, compared with 8 in Marsh.) Bill is longer in Blyth's Reed and forehead often looks flatter (i.e. more shallowly sloping), accentuating the 'long-billed' impression; facial appearance less 'gentle'. The legs of Marsh are usually paler than those of Blyth's Reed (or European Reed), especially on 1st-winter birds which have them typically straw-yellow, compared with blue-grey or brownish-pink in Blyth's Reed, but some (especially adult) Marsh have pale greyish legs. Claws dark, but yellowish on inside of curve; in Marsh, claws are pale pinkish or greyish-brown on both sides. Bill of Marsh is strikingly pale in first autumn, with horn-coloured culmen and pinkish-yellow lower mandible and sides of upper mandible, but in adults the upper mandible is much darker; Blyth's usually has a very dark bill with lower mandible pale on basal two-thirds, becoming darker towards tip (but some have wholly pale lower mandible). In fresh plumage both species are distinctly olive-brown above, but Marsh usually paler, becoming almost sandy on sides of head and neck, although both can have warmer brown tones, especially on wing and tail, but lack the contrasting reddish-brown tone to rump and uppertail coverts of European Reed. When worn, both can look very similar. Wing feathers (notably tertials) of Blyth's Reed less strongly dark-centred and pale-fringed than in Marsh

in fresh plumage, but this feature varies with wear and light; alula usually dark and fairly obvious in Marsh, indistinct in Blyth's. Throat and breast usually whiter than in Marsh when plumage fresh; latter often has pale yellowish-buff wash on face and throat but wears whitish, especially on throat, and when worn both species can look very similar below. Head shows a short, clear whitish supercilium above lore to just above eye, usually diffusing immediately after eye; supercilium less obvious and generally buffer in Marsh, often less prominent than pale eye-ring (the reverse of Blyth's Reed), and indeed many Marsh are virtually plain-headed. Typical call of Blyth's Reed a dry 'tak'; Marsh gives a softer 'tuk', but may 'tak' when agitated. **Compared with Olivaceous Warbler:** Olivaceous shares Blyth's Reed's arboreal habits. Upperparts are usually distinctly paler, being dull mouse-brown (lacking any warm tinge), but beware worn and faded Blyth's Reed; underparts are a more uniform pale buffish (and there is less contrast between upperparts and underparts than in Blyth's Reed). Pale fringes to secondaries often show as a pale panel on closed wing, lacking in Blyth's Reed. Bill is much paler and pinker, with merely a horn-coloured culmen, and when viewed from below can be seen to have a much wider base. The tail is fuller, held less tightly closed than in Blyth's and usually shows whitish on edges and tips of outermost feathers; it is more square, less rounded, at tip and shows a distinct notch; undertail coverts are distinctly shorter. The looser tail is slowly wagged, not held stiffly, as it hops in the canopy. Olivaceous has the rather 'plain-faced' appearance with prominent dark eye typical of *Hippolais*; although it often shows a narrow pale supercilium above and especially in front of eye, the lore is pale (contrastingly dusky in Blyth's Reed). Lower mandible is usually wholly pale (very rarely there is a small dark tip). The call is much softer, 'chuk', recalling that of Marsh. **In the hand** Wing 58–67 mm (64–74 mm in Marsh, 61–71 mm in European Reed). 2nd primary =6 and notch very long, reaching secondaries, although may only reach 10th primary in juvenile/1st-winter (2nd primary =4/5 in European Reed and Marsh, and notch shorter, reaching 7th or 8th primary in Marsh and 9th primary in European Reed).

SEX/AGE In autumn, adults have worn flight and tail feathers, when whole plumage fresh in 1st-winters.

VOICE Most usual call a frequently repeated, hard, short 'chek' or 'tak' resembling that of Lesser Whitethroat, although a short, harsh 'tchirr' (recalling Sedge Warbler) may also be given when agitated. Song typically acrocephaline and includes much mimicry, although distinctly slower, more ponderous, and less vigorous in delivery than in Marsh Warbler, with more whistles (including a characteristic rising 'chu-ee-loo'); most phrases repeated 5–8 times in succession, with distinct pauses (and often one or two hard tongue-clicking sounds) between each phrase, quite different from the hurried and increasingly frantic delivery of Marsh Warbler. Song delivered from within canopy of small tree or large bush, or from exposed perch at mid-level, mostly between dusk and dawn.

HYBRIDS Interbreeding with Marsh Warbler appears to be fairly frequent and offspring show intermediate characters, complicating the identification issue further.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. Migrates southeast to winter in S Asia. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Sweden, Lithuania.) In breeding season, favours damp broadleaved woodland, including edges and glades, wooded gullies, parks and large gardens; also thickets in both wet and dry terrain, including in coniferous forest. Outside breeding season, in trees and shrubs, both in wet and dry situations.

CAPE VERDE WARBLER *Acrocephalus brevipennis*

Plate page 692

Cape Verde Cane Warbler, Cape Verde Swamp Warbler

L 13 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Endemic to Cape Verde Is. A medium-sized dull brown *Acrocephalus* with dark grey legs and indistinct head pattern, although a diffuse pale loreal line and eye-ring are more obvious in fresh plumage. The only other resident warblers on the islands are Blackcap and Spectacled Warbler, which are unlikely to cause confusion. European Reed Warbler is a potential vagrant to the islands, but has relatively longer primaries (primary projection short and very blunt in Cape Verde), a relatively shorter tail and less brownish on breast and flanks; usually has paler legs. Keeps well hidden within cover of trees and bushes, a habitat it shares only with Blackcaps on the islands, revealing presence by distinctive song.

SEX/AGE In fresh plumage, especially in 1st-years, is warmer, more rufous-brown, on upperparts and has underparts washed with pale yellow.

VOICE Calls include a throaty 'pitchow', a high, sharp



'chuk' and a harsh croaking 'churr'. Song quite unlike others of genus, a strong, rich, vibrant rattle of 3–5 notes in manner of Lesser Whitethroat, but with tonal quality of a Common Nightingale.

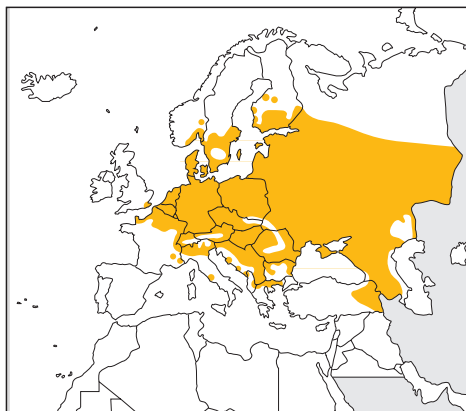
STATUS/HABITAT Endemic to Cape Verde Is (where now restricted to São Tiago, but formerly occurred Brava and São Nicolau). Locally quite numerous in well-vegetated parts of the island. Trees, bushes and giant cane (*Arundo donax*) in valleys and also areas of sugar cane, bananas, coffee etc.

MARSH WARBLER *Acrocephalus palustris*

Plate pages 654 & 692

L 12.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Very difficult to distinguish from Blyth's Reed Warbler (q.v. for discussion) or from more widespread European Reed Warbler if not in song. Calls of passage birds may also be helpful. Marsh Warbler prefers tangled undergrowth and bushes in damp habitats, avoiding the extensive reedbeds favoured by European Reed Warbler, but European Reed freely feeds in trees and bushes on passage if other cover not available. Marsh is usually a more olive-brown bird, lacking warm brown tone of European Reed Warbler, and is typically paler overall than European Reed, with distinct sandy tones to sides of head and neck. It has slightly brighter, whiter underparts, washed buff or even pale yellowish, lacking rufous tones on flanks often exhibited by European Reed; the eye-ring is narrow, but is usually more distinct than in European Reed. Shorter bill, more rounded forehead and crown, darker iris and often rather distinct pale eye-ring give Marsh a more 'gentle' facial expression. The legs of Marsh are usually paler than those of European Reed, especially on 1st-winter birds, which have them typically straw-yellow, compared with greyish-pink or brownish-pink in European Reed, but some 1st-year European Reed in autumn have straw-coloured legs. European Reed has claws dark, but yellowish on inside of curve; in Marsh, claws are pale pinkish or greyish-brown on both sides. Bill of Marsh is strikingly pale in first autumn, with horn-coloured culmen and pinkish-yellow lower mandible and sides of upper mandible, but in adults the upper mandible is much darker; European Reed has a very dark upper mandible at all times. Marsh Warblers are distinctly plumper-bodied than European Reed, and the slightly longer primary projection of Marsh shows reasonably clear pale scaling formed by each primary tip when fresh (this hardly visible in European Reed). Although many Marsh appear distinctly different from European Reed, especially in fresh plumage, others are problematic: some 1st-year Marsh in autumn do have warmer brown tones to the upperparts, especially to uppertail coverts (but not so marked as in European Reed), some European Reed have distinctly pale legs, and European Reed of eastern race *fuscus* are duller and more grey-



brown above than nominate race (often with a slight olive cast), average slightly longer in the wing and can be very close to Marsh in basic coloration; even in the hand some 1st-year European Reed in autumn show wing formula indicative of Marsh, which adds to the confusion. Many 1st-year Marsh in autumn are distinctly pale, and this, coupled with pale bill and pale yellowish and olive tones to plumage, is suggestive of *Hippolais*, especially Icterine, but members of this genus have darker legs, broader-based bill (when seen from below), square-ended or slightly notched tail and shorter undertail coverts. **In the hand** Claw colour is important (see above). By carefully examining closed wing: notch on inner web of 2nd primary reaches to tips of 7th–8th primaries (6th–8th in 1st-year birds in autumn); in European Reed, notch reaches to tip of 9th primary (or more), but in a few 1st-year European Reed in autumn the notch reaches only to tips of 7th–8th primaries and these are very problematic. In such cases, a different formula seems helpful: add width of lower part of tarsus and width of bill base at rear of nostrils, and subtract from length of bill to skull (if result between 4.5 and 8 then bird is a Marsh, if between 8.5 and 12.5 it is a European Reed).

SEX/AGE In autumn, adults have worn flight and tail feathers, when whole plumage fresh in 1st-year birds.

VOICE Calls include a hard 'tik' or 'chek' and a lower, softer 'tuk' (the latter perhaps the most often heard call from passage migrants); less often heard is a grating 'cherrr' of alarm and a European Reed Warbler-like 'churruk'. Song distinctive. Very varied, including incredibly talented mimicry: bird sings vigorously from semi-exposed perch, pouring out a rich and prolonged medley of mimicry of other bird songs and calls, with stuttering trills, chattering, twittering, grating and churring phrases; quite different from either European Reed or Blyth's Reed (but beware mimicry, which may

include phrases of both these species!) and includes a diagnostic nasal 'zi-cheeh zi-cheeh'. Song not unlike that of Icterine (which sings much higher up, in trees).

HYBRIDS See Blyth's Reed Warbler.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally fairly common. (Formerly bred SW England, W France.) Areas of rank herbage with bushes (especially at wetland edges or along ditches), damp thickets, alder carrs and damp woodland edges; locally in reedbeds with scattered bushes, cereal or other crops and even thickets and shrubby patches in dry areas. On passage, in trees and shrubbery, or tall herbage and crops, but rather infrequently observed in most areas.

EUROPEAN REED WARBLER *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

Plate pages 654 & 692

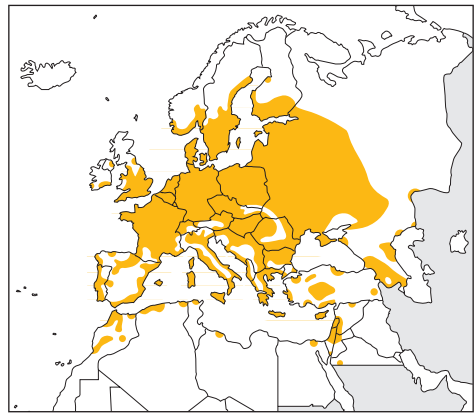
Reed Warbler, Eurasian Reed Warbler; Caspian Reed Warbler (*A. s. fuscus*)

L 12.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Most widespread and numerous *Acrocephalus* warbler of our region, with a close affinity to reedbeds. Unstreaked warm brown upperparts and buffish underparts, weak supercilium and sleek head and bill shape are reasonably distinctive, but shared by very similar Marsh and Blyth's Reed Warblers (q.v. for discussion). Eastern race *fuscus* duller brown, less rufous-brown, above and even closer in appearance to the other two species, but distinctly russet wash to rump and uppertail coverts are a good indicator of European Reed. Spends most of time within cover of reeds, hopping and slipping furtively among stems. Easily overlooked unless singing, when it climbs to tops of reeds, but even then can be quite difficult to see. Migrants may occur in bushes and trees away from water, which can be puzzling; such birds can suggest *Hippolais* warblers, but generic identity confirmed by slightly graduated or round-tipped tail and longer, more pointed, undertail coverts. See also Savi's Warbler. **In the hand** See Marsh Warbler.

SEX/AGE In autumn, adults have worn flight and tail feathers, when whole plumage fresh in 1st-year birds.

VOICE Usual call a low, quiet 'churr' or harsher 'tscherr', which may be prolonged into a grating rattle of alarm. Song distinctive: a slow, somewhat mechanical and relaxed delivery of churring and grating notes, much less hurried and varied than in either Sedge or Marsh Warbler, may be rendered as 'kerr-kerr-kerr, kek-kek-kek, chirruk-chirruk-chirruk' etc. which may continue for considerable periods; some mimicry may be incorporated, but to a lesser degree than in either Blyth's Reed, Marsh or Sedge. Song of *fuscus* similar



but includes a distinctive repetitive (saw-like) scraping 'dzee-dzee-dzee-dzee-dzee-der-dzee-der-dzee-der...'.
TAXONOMY/GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 2 races (both illustrated). Race *fuscus* ('Caspian Reed Warbler') breeds Turkey eastwards and is duller, more greyish-brown above (sometimes with a slight olive cast) and whiter below than nominate. May merit specific status.

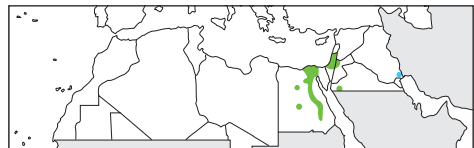
STATUS/HABITAT Common. Waterside vegetation, predominantly reedbeds, but locally also including tall rank herbage, bushes, reedmace and crops. On passage, often occurs in trees and bushes in drier areas.

CLAMOROUS REED WARBLER *Acrocephalus stentoreus*

Plate page 693

L 18 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Egypt and Middle East. A very large reed warbler, very similar to closely related Great Reed, but the two species overlap as breeding birds only in northern Israel. Clamorous has relatively shorter wings (with shorter primary projection), longer and more rounded tail, longer bill and less conspicuous supercilium than Great Reed. Overall colour rather variable, the darkest birds having brownish-washed underparts, almost uniform with upperparts, and virtually no supercilium; such birds are very distinctive, but few are as dark as this in our region, although most are browner below than Great Reed and the supercilium usually does not extend obviously behind the eye. Eastern race *brunnescens* (possibly occurs rarely on passage or in winter in extreme



east of our region) is much paler, more greyish-olive brown above and whiter below, with buffish flanks; best distinguished from Great Reed by structure, particularly longer bill, shorter primaries, and less extensive supercilium. Assessing primary length is difficult, but the shorter and more bunched primaries of Clamorous give the effect of a longer-tailed bird, even in flight. Favours papyrus swamps in our region, a habitat

that seems to be shunned by Great Reed, but both occur in other waterside vegetation.

SEX/AGE In autumn, 1st-years are in fresh plumage, and are darker and more rufous above than the duller, greyer and distinctly worn adults.

VOICE Calls include a loud 'chak' and a guttural 'garr'. Song basically resembles that of Great Reed in strength and volume, but is less stridently raucous, has more even and slightly faster tempo and is less varied in content; observers familiar with song of Great Reed should recognize it as being slightly different.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Nominata is perhaps the sole race of our region, but Egyptian birds tend to be lighter, especially on underparts, than those from Israel; latter are variable, with both dark and lighter birds occurring at same sites. Eastern race *brunneescens* possibly occurs on passage or in winter in extreme east of our region (see Identification).

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. Lowland reedbeds and papyrus beds by fishponds, lakes and rivers, locally in sugar-cane fields and other waterside crops where favoured habitats not available.

GREAT REED WARBLER *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*

Plate page 693

L 19 cm.

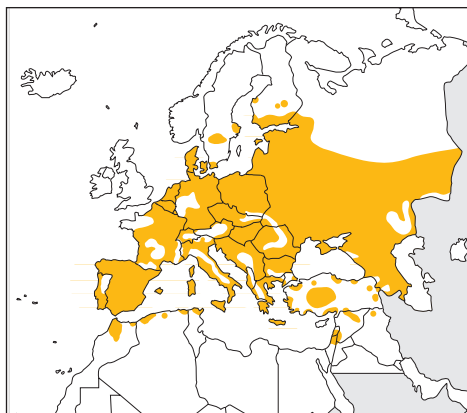
IDENTIFICATION A massive waterside warbler, approaching Song Thrush in length but slimmer. Resembles European Reed Warbler in overall coloration and in reedbed habitat, but much larger, with more prominent supercilium extending well beyond eye, stouter bill and stronger brownish-grey or pinkish-grey legs. At close range shows greyish cast to face and faint dusky streaks on lower throat/upper breast. Ladders heavily through cover and clambers up reed stems to sing loud song from near or at top of reeds. If flushed from bank, flies heavily with tail slightly fanned, when slightly rufous-buff rump contrasts somewhat with uniform remainder of upperparts; either flutters low into nearby cover or flies rapidly over tops of reeds before disappearing from view. Only risk of confusion is with very similar Clamorous and Basra Reed Warblers, which have restricted ranges, and vagrant Thick-billed Warbler (q.v. for discussion).

SEX/AGE In autumn, 1st-years are in fresh plumage, and are more rufous above and buff below than the duller, greyer and distinctly worn adults.

VOICE Calls include a harsh, croaking 'krek', a guttural 'gurg', a low 'chak'. Song a far-carrying series of very harsh grating, creaking and croaking notes interspersed with high-pitched notes, in general recalling that of European Reed Warbler but much louder and more powerful; may be rendered 'karra-karra-karra, geek-geek, gurr-gurr, seep-seep, karra-karra ...' etc.

TAXONOMY Race *orientalis* is sometimes treated as a full species under the name **Oriental Reed Warbler**.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races, possibly 3 (nominata illustrated). Paler race *zarudnyi* (breeds N Iraq eastwards) is less rufous above and whiter below than nominate race. Eastern race *orientalis*, breeding from E Mongolia eastwards, has been reported from Israel, but confirmation that these not *arundinaceus* or *zarudnyi* with aberrant wing formula desirable. Averages smaller than nominate race and tends to be more olive-brown, less warm above, with



more clear-cut streaking on lower throat/upper breast (but beware effects of wear on nominate and especially *zarudnyi*). In the hand, wing formula differs: tip of 2nd primary falls between tips of 3rd and 4th primaries in nominate race and *zarudnyi*, between 4th and 5th primaries in *orientalis*, and notch on inner web of 2nd primary falls between tips of 7th and 8th primaries in nominate race and *zarudnyi* and between tips of 9th primary and secondary tips in *orientalis*; further, 3rd primary is often notched in *orientalis*, but western races lack this feature. Beware possibility of moulting or aberrant western individuals.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Cyprus, Jordan.) Reedbeds and other tall waterside vegetation such as reedmace in most kinds of wetland situations; like European Reed Warbler, favours beds of *Phragmites*, but will feed in fringing bushes etc. On passage, sometimes occurs in bushy cover away from water.

BASRA REED WARBLER *Acrocephalus griseldis*

Plate page 693

L 15 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Iraq. Intermediate in size between Great Reed and European Reed Warblers, with a strikingly longer bill and slightly darker tail than either. Upperparts mouse-brown, lacking obvious rufous tones of nominate race Great Reed or greyish tones of latter's eastern race *zarudnyi*, but supercilium long as in Great Reed; underparts very pale, with only a weak buff wash on flanks. Clearly larger than European Reed or Marsh, with relatively longer and slightly thicker bill, more prominent supercilium and dark eye-stripe, relatively longer primary projection and darker tail. The legs are



grey, lacking brownish tinge of Great Reed and eastern race *fuscus* of European Reed. Long bill may suggest Clamorous Reed, but ranges not known to overlap in our region and Clamorous is much larger and heavier, with shorter primary projection, less distinct

supercilium and more rufous-brown overall coloration. Long bill and mouse-brown plumage could recall one of the *Hippolais* warblers, but lacks their 'plain-faced' appearance and broad bill base and has dark-tipped lower mandible and distinctly rounded tail tip.

SEX/AGE Autumn juveniles are in fresh plumage, and compared with the duller, greyer and distinctly worn adults (which moult in late autumn/early winter) are weakly washed pale yellow below, with pale greyish tips to primaries and a darker tail.

VOICE Typical call a harsh 'chaarr', louder than similar call of European Reed. Song is typically acro-

cephaline, but somewhat subdued, a rhythmic 'chuk-chuk-churruk-churruk-chuk ...', markedly quieter and lacking guttural, grating quality of Great Reed or Clamorous Reed; compared with song of European Reed, is less squeaky, with less forceful rhythm.

TAXONOMY Often treated as conspecific with Great Reed Warbler, but marked morphological differences and geographical isolation of breeding grounds favour treatment as full species.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common, but now threatened by drainage of the Iraq marshes. Breeds in reedbeds, but winters in waterside bushes and rank undergrowth.

THICK-BILLED WARBLER *Acrocephalus aedon*

Plate page 693

L 18 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Asian vagrant (breeds C Siberia eastwards) inhabiting drier habitats than typical *Acrocephalus*. A very large, plain brownish warbler, with a relatively short, thick bill and unmarked face which makes the dark eye appear strikingly prominent. The wings have a short primary projection, making them appear relatively short and rounded in flight and enhancing length of the already relatively long tail. The head and upperparts are warm olive-brown, becoming more rufous on the rump (some populations are more rufous overall on upperparts); sides of head are lighter and the underparts are pale buffish, becoming whiter on throat and lores. Lacks a pale supercilium but in worn plumage (in summer) pale eye-ring can be fairly obvious. The strong legs are bluish-grey and the lower mandible pinkish, without a dark tip. Thick-billed skulks low in bushy cover, occasionally hopping up into middle levels or even canopy of tall bushes and low trees. Adopts a horizontal posture, with tail slightly cocked and crown feathers raised to produce a steep forehead and a distinctly rounded head shape. It flies low between bushes and can be frustratingly difficult to see, as it prefers to keep well hidden in foliage (although will sit out on exposed perches when singing). Apart from the overall size, there is little chance of confusion with Great Reed if seen well, as latter has distinctly long primary projection, marked facial pattern, relatively longer bill

(usually with dark tip to lower mandible), faint dark streaking on lower throat/upper breast and shorter, less graduated tail. The plain face, prominent dark eye, pale lower mandible and posture recall a large and strange *Hippolais* rather than an *Acrocephalus*, but overall size and coloration coupled with short, thick bill prevent confusion with any other warbler.

AGE/SEX In autumn, juveniles/1st-winters have fresh, relatively unworn plumage, whereas adults have wings and tail abraded, at least in early autumn.

VOICE Typical calls include a loud, harsh 'chok', a more extended, chattering 'chok-chok-cherrerrek-chok' and a clicking 'tak'. Song, unlikely to be heard in our region, is a rapid chattering warble, consisting of both harsh and musical notes, and including clear whistles and mimicry. Recalls Olivaceous Warbler, or Marsh Warbler (but deeper and less hurried), rather than a large *Acrocephalus*.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Nominate race presumed to be form which has wandered to our region; more eastern *stegmanni* is much more reddish-brown on entire upperparts.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, breeds in thickets, open woodland with dense shrubbery, and clumps of trees and bushes amidst damp meadows. In winter quarters favours small trees with dense canopy and thick scrubby cover at edges of cultivation.

HIPPOLAIS WARBLERS

Resemble *Acrocephalus* in size, shape and song type; a difficult genus to identify, with numerous pitfalls (and indeed recent studies suggest that Booted and Olivaceous Warblers would be better placed in *Acrocephalus*). It is important to rule out members of other genera before attempting specific identification. Migrant European Reed and Marsh Warblers readily feed in tree canopy. Marsh, with its dull olive upperparts and distinctly pinkish bill, is especially like a *Hippolais*. *Hippolais* warblers in general (with the partial exception of Booted) show the following features which are not typical of *Acrocephalus* as a whole (although some are shared with individual members of that genus):

Square-ended, rather than rounded or graduated, tail: most species have whitish outer webs to outermost feathers, which can be very difficult to see in the field.

Relatively shorter and more rounded undertail coverts.

Dagger-like bill, with distinctly broad base and conspicuous pinkish-orange lower mandible (without dark tip).

Plain facial pattern, with pale loreal area and short supercilium (to above eye). Lack dark eye-stripe and have eye prominent.

No rufous tones in plumage.

Hippolais feed by hopping and clambering through the foliage, occasionally stretching to pick insects from under leaves. *Acrocephalus* tend to sidle along twigs and branches more rapidly, but Marsh and Blyth's Reed both behave in a more *Hippolais*-like way. Other pitfalls are Garden Warbler and 1st-year Barred Warbler. A tentative list of potential pitfalls is given below:

Olivaceous: Upcher's (worn), Melodious (drab), Booted, Marsh, Blyth's Reed

Upcher's: Olivaceous (fresh), Olive-tree (worn)

Booted: Olivaceous (small races), Bonelli's (eastern race), Paddyfield, Desert

Olive-tree: Upcher's (fresh), Icterine (drab), Barred (1st-year)

Icterine: Melodious (fresh), Wood, Olive-tree (fresh), Marsh (fresh)

Melodious: Olivaceous (fresh), Marsh (fresh), Icterine (short-winged)

Specific features on which to concentrate when identifying a *Hippolais*:

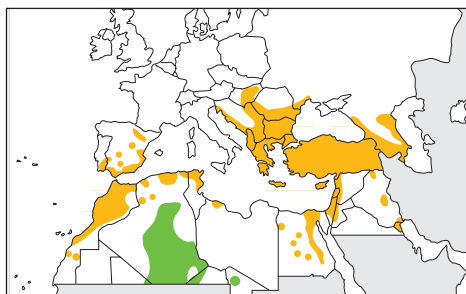
Primary projection in relation to length of exposed tertials • Detail of tail movements • Position of highest point of crown in relation to eye • Presence or absence of whitish in outer tail feathers • Any yellow or olive tones in plumage (which may be faint in autumn) • Call

OLIVACEOUS WARBLER *Hippolais pallida*

Plate page 694

L 12–13.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Confusingly variable in size and shape, with smaller, shorter-billed birds resembling Booted and larger, strong-billed birds suggesting Upcher's. Typically a medium-sized, rather long-bodied, somewhat 'washed-out' mouse-brown warbler with paler, almost whitish, underparts, no wing panel and little or no contrast between the upperside of tail and the rest of upperparts. Often a little warmer toned above in fresh autumn plumage, with buff tinge on flanks. The rather plain head pattern shows only a weak and narrow (but nonetheless clearly discernible) pale supercilium and sometimes a narrow darker shade through the eye (both features are more prominent in front of the eye); the dark eye set in a paler loreal area can be striking and is sometimes the only readily apparent facial feature. Head shape usually sleek, with relatively flat crown and long pale bill (especially from below), but smaller races have relatively smaller bills. Legs are usually light brown or pinkish-brown, sometimes greyer. The tail is rather 'loose' and full, often appearing relatively long when wings drooped; although virtually square-ended, it shows a small central notch and, under good viewing conditions, shows whitish outer webs to the outermost feathers, most noticeable towards the tip. Hops slowly about in tree canopy and bushes with horizontal stance, moving rather 'full' tail slowly with downward flicking and waving, often pausing with tail held slightly upwards. Call distinctive. Small races of Olivaceous easily confused with Booted, but latter has a shorter body, more rounded head shape, finer and insignificant bill (with a darker culmen and smudge at tip of lower mandible) and a darker shade along the crown sides which highlights the stronger supercilium; Booted often flicks tail upwards and has a slightly different call. Booted of the race *rama* (Sykes's Warbler) are relatively longer-tailed and longer- and broader-billed than the nominate race and create an impression more suggestive of Olivaceous, but exhibit same differences in the head and bill patterns. Larger races of Olivaceous, especially in fresh plumage when pale edges to flight feathers obvious, suggest Upcher's, but latter is greyer overall, has a stronger wing panel (in fresh plumage) and longer primary projection and has a broader and darker tail which contrasts with the rump and uppertail coverts. Tail of Upcher's is usually moved up and down and sideways with deliberate effort; the call is also stronger. Confusion also possible with Blyth's Reed Warbler, but latter is darker, less greyish or mouse-brown, above and more buff below, with darker bill and legs, more pronounced head pat-



tern and more rounded tail. Blyth's Reed also lacks whitish in outer tail feathers, lacks 'loose' tail movements and has quite a different call. Compare also Melodious, Marsh and eastern race of Bonelli's Warblers.

SEX/AGE Juveniles may be aged in autumn by fresh plumage, especially flight feathers, which are abraded in adults. Probably migrates in juvenile plumage, although this not established for certain. In fresh plumage, a buff tone may be present on underparts and a hint of olive may be discernible on the upperparts of northern populations.

VOICE Typical call a weak, soft 'chuk' or 'tak', uttered intermittently as bird moves about in trees and bushes; also gives a sharp series of ticking notes and a harsh, churring 'trrrrr' of alarm. Song a rapid *Acrocephalus*-like chattering not unlike that of European Reed Warbler, but faster, more chattering and more monotonous, with series of phrases regularly repeated; notes seemingly less distinct and 'sliding' into each other.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Marked variation in overall size and bill length for a warbler. 4, possibly 5 races (*opaca*, *elaieca* and *reiseri* illustrated). Western race *opaca* of Iberia and NW Africa largest and with longest and broadest bill. Smallest and most sandy populations occur in Saharan oases of southern Algeria (*reiseri*), Tibesti (?*laeneni*) and in Egypt (nominate race), with birds of SE Europe and eastwards (*elaieca*) somewhat intermediate in size and rather darker and greyer than small races.

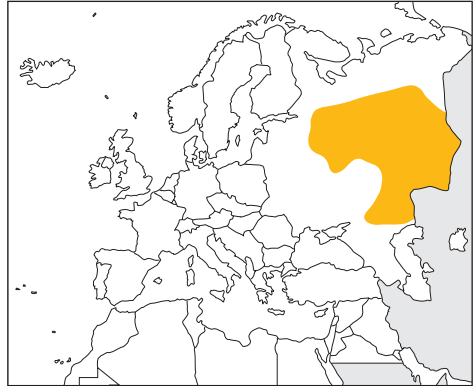
STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common over most of range, but uncommon in Iberian Peninsula. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Austria. Most winter south of the Sahara.) All kinds of fairly open bushy habitats in dry country, often with scattered trees; also olive groves, orchards, oases, parks and gardens.

BOOTED WARBLER *Hippolais caligata*

Plate page 695 & below

Sykes's Warbler (*H. c. rama*)L 11.5 cm (but *H. c. rama* 12 cm).

IDENTIFICATION A small, weak-billed, rather round-headed *Hippolais*, recalling a Chiffchaff in overall proportions and size, but is light warm brown, greyish-brown or pale sandy-brown above with a pale bill, pale legs and short primary projection. Has a fairly marked head pattern for a *Hippolais*, with a whitish supercilium extending to just behind eye, where it ends rather squarely, this being highlighted by slightly darker crown sides and often a weak darker shade through the eye, but head pattern less clear in worn plumage. As with other *Hippolais*, lores are wholly or largely pale. The small bill is pale, but has a dark culmen and subterminal smudge on lower mandible. Upperparts vary from pale sandy-brown to light warm brown, with paler underparts; in fresh plumage, paler birds show little contrast between upperparts and underparts, but underparts wear whiter and upperparts become very pale when worn in late summer. The wings lack a pale panel on secondaries, and the primary extension, although short, is relatively longer than that of Olivaceous. The tail is relatively short and square-ended, but shows a small central notch, and (when fresh) a weak rufous wash overall and whitish outer webs to outermost tail feathers; owing to overall paleness of plumage the latter may not be conspicuous, but may be apparent towards tail corners when tail slightly spread. Legs relatively strong for a small warbler, pale pinkish-brown, with slightly darker feet. A skulking bird of low scrubby cover, ascending readily into lower canopy of larger bushes and trees when these available; flicks wings and tail slightly, but lacks loose downward tail movements of Olivaceous. Southern race *rama* ('Sykes's Warbler') is greyer above and whiter below, and has slightly longer and broader-based bill and a relatively longer tail. Confusion potential between Booted and smaller races of Olivaceous (in North Africa and Middle East) is higher than for western *opaca*, but Olivaceous normally lacks darker shade along crown sides (although a hint may be shown by some Olivaceous at certain angles and it can be inconspicuous on Booted at some angles, or when plumage worn), has a less obvious dark shade through eye and has a supercilium that usually ends above eye, or extends only indistinctly beyond it (supercilium often prominent, if rather diffuse, behind eye in Booted). Olivaceous also has longer, broader-based bill that lacks dark subterminal smudge on lower mandible, lacks warm brown plumage tones



above (but so do many nominate Booted, as well as *rama*), and has slightly longer tail (than nominate race Booted, but not *rama*), less rounded crown shape, loose tail-wagging movements (including downward flicking, not shown by Booted), darker and often greyer legs, and a different call. Paddyfield Warbler also resembles Booted of southern race *rama*, especially in head pattern and bill size, but Paddyfield has longer tail with rounded or graduated tip, is usually more sandy-rufous (at least on rump and uppertail coverts) and lacks whitish tips and edges to outer tail feathers. Confusion of greyer individuals of nominate race with eastern race of Bonelli's Warbler also likely in autumn, but latter has darker legs, lacks whitish in outer tail, has deeper and sharper tail notch, darker tertial centres, some greenish in the plumage (especially on wings, rump and tail) and is more actively arboreal. Beware occasional exceptionally small Garden Warblers, which are plain-headed, darker overall, lack whitish in tail and have blue-grey legs. Compare also eastern race of Desert Warbler.

SEX/AGE Ageing difficult in autumn, but birds with very worn primaries and tail are probably adult, while 1st-years are moderately worn.

VOICE Typical call a short, soft, but rather grating 'tsik', 'tik' or 'tshak', which may be repeated three or four times. Song a fast, nasal, chattering warble; faster and more prolonged than that of Olivaceous, lacking repetition of phrases.

**BOOTED WARBLER**

TAXONOMY Form *rama* sometimes treated as a full species under the name **Sykes's Warbler**.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Fairly marked. 2 distinct races, with intergrading populations. Nominata race is breeding form of our region. Southern race *rama* ('Sykes's Warbler') of Iran and southern C Asia occurs as a vagrant in Middle East. This race is longer-tailed and has a slightly longer and more broadly-based bill, is greyer (less sandy-brown) above and whiter (less buff-tinged) on supercilium and on underparts, especially sides of breast and flanks, than in nominate race. Vocalizations may differ somewhat, but information conflicting; perhaps slightly slower,

louder and more melodious, less nasal and stuttering. In the hand, *rama* has 2nd primary usually shorter than 7th primary (usually longer, but rarely equal or shorter in nominate race).

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common, but decidedly uncommon in northern and western portion of breeding range in our region. Winters in S Asia. Favours a variety of bushy and scrubby habitats, from woodland clearings, plantations, gardens, orchards, thickets and scrubby meadows to rank grassland, bushy steppe and semi-desert scrub. (Nominata race frequently found near water, but *rama* routinely found in very dry areas.)

UPCHER'S WARBLER *Hippolais languida*

Plate page 695

L 14 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Middle East. Larger and greyer than Olivaceous, especially in comparison with smaller eastern race *elaieca*, with which it overlaps in range. Upcher's also has distinctly darker flight feathers and especially tail, which is waved, cocked and partially fanned as it moves through the foliage or hops on the ground, but it should be borne in mind that wings and tail are darkest when plumage fresh (wearing lighter with abrasion) and that away from breeding grounds tail-cocking and -waving are more subdued. Upcher's has slightly longer primaries than Olivaceous, and in fresh plumage shows whitish edges to secondaries which form a fairly clear wing panel (in fresh plumage Olivaceous shows a weak pale buff wing panel, but fresh Olivaceous is altogether buffier than Upcher's). Olivaceous also shows distinct tail movements, although these are confined to downward flicking and slight opening, rather than upward cocking and fanning with circular movements shown by Upcher's. In abraded plumage, the wing panel of Upcher's disappears and the tail is less obviously darker, making identification less easy. The bill of Upcher's is stouter than in eastern Olivaceous and the crown a little less flat, with the peak a little further forward, more or less above eye when feathers not sleeked down (more to rear of eye in Olivaceous). Upcher's movements are more lumbering and slower than those of Olivaceous, which enhances its heavier appearance, and it keeps to scrubby bushes, where it frequently descends to ground level (a habit not shared by Olivaceous, which



favours taller bushes and trees). When flying low between bushes, has distinctive habit of gliding for last few metres with tail slightly raised, a habit seemingly not shown by Olivaceous but exhibited to some extent by even larger Olive-tree Warbler (q.v.).

SEX/AGE Juveniles have pinker legs than adults, latter having greyish or greyish-pink legs. In autumn, 1st-years are in fresh plumage, whereas adults are heavily worn.

VOICE Typical call a soft, deep 'tak' or 'chuk', often repeated; seemingly very similar to call of Olivaceous Warbler. Song more ponderous in delivery and softer than that of Olivaceous, with mellow fluty notes, pauses and stuttering phrases interspersed; phrases repeated three or four times as in Blyth's Reed Warbler.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally not uncommon (but distinctly scarce on passage). Breeds on arid scrubby hillsides and mountainsides, in bushy gullies and semi-desert scrub, and in thickets, groves and orchards in dry country.

OLIVE-TREE WARBLER *Hippolais olivetorum*

Plate page 695

L 15 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Eastern Mediterranean. A large grey and whitish *Hippolais*, the largest of the genus, with long primary projection, obvious pale wing panel and long, heavy bill. Despite large size, relatively stout bill and overall very grey appearance, which together suggest Barred Warbler, Olive-tree has the flatter crown and long, pinkish-yellow bill and whitish loreal area that are typical of its genus; it also lacks the scaling on the undertail coverts of immature Barred Warbler, and the iris is dark, not yellow as in adult Barred. (Note: when crown feathers raised when agitated, can have much steeper forehead and thus more angular look to head.) The tail often appears darker than the upperparts, as in Upcher's, but the primary projection is longer (as long as exposed portion of tertials; much shorter than exposed tertials in Upcher's) and the wing panel is more extensive (unless heavily abraded), forming a clear whitish area



when in fresh plumage (as in Icterine). The tail is actually longer than in Upcher's or Olivaceous, but can appear relatively shorter owing to the effect of the long wings. Olive-tree tends to show a peaked crown more often than Upcher's, recalling Icterine, and in fresh plumage there can be a hint of a pale yellow wash on the underparts; may be distinguished from washed-out Icterine by its much larger size, longer

body, darker grey-brown upperparts and, if plumage fresh, the narrow whitish edges and corners to tail (latter are lost through abrasion in Olivaceous, Upcher's and Olive-tree). Movements in foliage distinctly heavy, and like Upcher's glides to land when flying from bush to bush.

SEX/AGE In autumn, 1st-years have fresh plumage, with clear wing panel, whereas adults are worn and have wing panel indistinct or even absent. Moults strategy uncertain: may migrate in juvenile plumage.

ICTERINE WARBLER *Hippolais icterina*

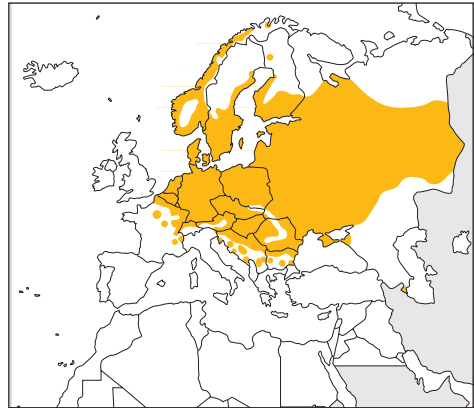
L 13 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Most widespread European *Hippolais*. Very similar to Melodious (which replaces Icterine in SW Europe), with marginal overlap in breeding ranges. In fresh plumage in spring, has yellow wash on underparts, rather weak supercilium and lore, and olive tone to upperparts as well as clear whitish wing panel, and these features combined with dagger-like pinkish-orange bill, plain facial expression and long primary projection make for a very distinctive warbler over most of its range, although distinctions from Melodious not always clear, especially in autumn (see Melodious for discussion). Many of these features also suggested by only slightly smaller Wood Warbler, which, however, has a full-length and well-defined yellow supercilium, dark eye-stripe and more contrast between clean white lower underparts and lemon-yellow throat and breast; Icterine also differs in having more prominent, broader-based bill, peaked rather than rounded crown and more upright posture. Icterine in worn plumage can virtually lose both olive and yellow plumage tones and be almost grey-brown above and creamy-whitish below, but long primary projection and relatively shorter tail prevent confusion with Olivaceous or Upcher's Warblers and there is usually a hint of yellow on throat and breast. Juveniles in autumn are almost as pale, but show a weak yellow wash over most of underparts; the pale wing panel is not as prominent as in spring adults, but is frequently more obvious than in worn autumn adults. Although keeps well hidden within foliage, it moves actively through the branches and flies strongly from tree to tree, the long wings and somewhat bounding flight action recalling Spotted Flycatcher in some respects. The only other *Hippolais* with a strong wing panel and long primary projection is much larger Olive-tree (q.v. for discussion). Confusion possible with Marsh Warbler, which also has quite a long primary projection, very pinkish bill and similar song, but Icterine sings from higher in tree canopy and shows shorter undertail coverts and square, not rounded, tail tip; Marsh also lacks pale wing panel. Beware also bright fresh Willow Warblers (which are smaller and more delicate) in autumn, which can be confusingly yellow below (at a time when Icterines are not): same struc-

VOICE Typical call a deep, soft or hard 'tuk'. Song rather *Acrocephalus*-like; relatively louder and harsher, but slower in delivery, than that of Olivaceous, at times even recalling Great Reed Warbler when it repeats loud 'chroik' and 'kuchuk' phrases.

STATUS/HABITAT Localized but not uncommon (although scarce on passage). Oak woodland, orchards, olive groves and other types of semi-open to open woodland with bushy undergrowth; on passage, also in bushy wadis and *Acacia* trees.

Plate page 694



tural and facial pattern differences apply as for Wood Warbler (see above).

SEX/AGE In autumn, juveniles are in fresh plumage and show clear pale wing panel; adults are heavily worn and often entirely lack panel. All ages are much less yellow and olive in autumn, only spring adults showing full coloration. Migrates in juvenile plumage.

VOICE Usual call a sharp 'tek-tek', but other calls given on breeding grounds include a distinctive chattering 'chi chi-vooi' (alternatively rendered 'dideroid') which is often incorporated into the song and a hoarse, tongue-clicking 'tettettettett ...' when alarmed. Song rich and very varied, somewhat *Acrocephalus*-like, but includes so much skilful mimicry that basis of song may not even be apparent with some birds; song can be confusingly similar to that of Marsh Warbler, but in general is fuller and richer in quality. Repeats phrases several times; these include a highly characteristic nasal, creaking 'GEEa'.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Turkey.) Almost any kind of more open broad-leaved woodland with large trees and bushy undergrowth, parkland, gardens, forest edges and open mixed forest. On passage, also in scrub where trees not available.

MELODIOUS WARBLER *Hippolais polyglotta*

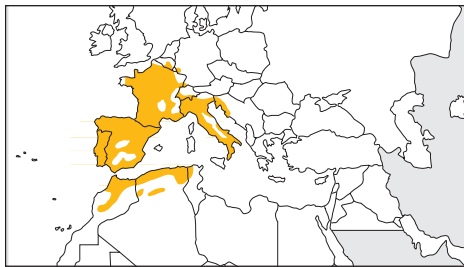
L 13 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A typical *Hippolais* with its staring dark eye, pale unmarked facial expression and prominent, sharp-pointed but broad-based, pinkish-orange bill. Very similar to Icterine Warbler, which it replaces in SW Europe and NW Africa, sharing overall yellow and olive coloration in spring, although yellow of

underparts rather deeper and upperparts a little browner toned; colours become duller with wear and are washed-out in autumn. A relatively plumper bird than Icterine, with (usually) a short and insignificant primary projection and slightly more rounded crown and often browner legs (although these can be grey-

Plate page 694

ish). Normally lacks any form of pale wing panel, which is usually clearly present, in the form of a distinct pale horizontal band on secondaries, in all but heavily abraded Icterine. In fresh plumage Melodious can show a weak panel formed by bright edging to secondaries, although these do not form a clear pale panel like that of fresh Icterine. With such birds, the extent of the primary projection is then the most important factor: in Icterine the projection is equal to some two-thirds of the exposed length of the tertials, whereas in Melodious it is usually much less than half the length of the exposed tertials. The occasional longer-winged Melodious creates problems, but close examination of the primary spacing may reveal the identity (best done from a photograph): the primary tips are equally spaced in Melodious, whereas in Icterine the spacing becomes wider towards the wingtip. In autumn Icterine is much paler than in spring, but some olive tones should be visible on the brownish upperparts and a weak pale yellow wash is present, at least on throat and breast and often over entire underparts. Melodious is a relatively sluggish bird in comparison with Icterine; when it flies the shorter wings give a more fluttering flight action, compared with the latter's strong, long-winged, bounding progression. The existence of Melodious which lack any yellow or olive has yet to be proven but has been suspected. Pale individuals are easily confused with Olivaceous, which has a very similar wing structure, but the race of Olivaceous (*opaca*) which overlaps with Melodious has a much longer and wider-based bill and a longer and more sloping forecrown. Vagrants of the smallish-bodied and small-billed eastern race *elaiea* of Olivaceous occasionally reach W Europe in autumn and may be virtually inseparable, but are whiter or buff below, show inconspicuous whitish in outermost tail feathers and frequently dip their tails downwards as they progress through the canopy. See also discussion on Marsh Warbler under



Icterine. Much smaller and daintier Willow Warbler in late summer and autumn is very yellow and olive and can easily confuse the unwary.

SEX/AGE In autumn, juveniles are in fresh plumage and can show pale edges to secondaries, whereas adults are heavily worn. All ages are much less yellow and olive in autumn, only spring adults showing full coloration. Migrates in juvenile plumage.

VOICE Calls include a harsh rattled 'trrrrr' (recalling House Sparrow), a soft 'tuk', and a chattered 'chretchet'. Song recalls an *Acrocephalus* such as Sedge, but less harsh and churring; compared with that of Icterine is faster, more rattling and more sustained but far less rich and varied, and usually does not include mimicry to the same extent. Lacks the characteristic creaking, nasal 'GEEa' of Icterine.

HYBRIDS Where breeding ranges of Melodious and Icterine overlap, occasional mixed pairs have been reported.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Netherlands, Luxembourg, Sicily.) Favours more bushy habitats than Icterine, including open broadleaved woodland, woodland edges, orchards, large gardens, dense thickets and especially tall riverside scrub. On passage likely in similar situations to Icterine.

SYLVIA WARBLERS

Small to medium-sized brownish or greyish warblers of scrub and shrubby cover. Unlike other warbler genera, *Sylvia* warblers often show marked sexual differences and they also lack supercilia; in addition, most species have clearly whitish outer tail feathers (the exceptions being Blackcap and Garden Warbler, which lack white in tail and are also more arboreal). *Sylvia* are skulking by nature, revealing presence by chattering songs and harsh churring or 'chakking' calls; although some songs are clearly distinct, the songs and calls of many are confusingly similar and of limited importance in identification, except in revealing presence of the bird itself. At the height of singing activity, males of most species indulge in a short aerial display and song flight, at which times the songs are richest and loudest in quality. Movements are rather heavy, the birds hopping through cover, often cocking tail and raising crown feathers into a ruffled peak when excited.

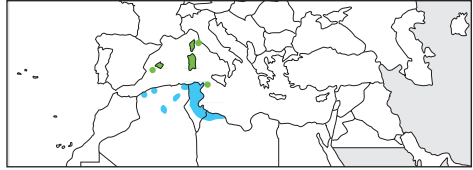
Juvenile plumage is drab, resembling dull version of adult female; those with white in tail have white sullied grey or brown when juvenile, but by first autumn adult features, including some adult tail feathers, are attained. 1st-year males in autumn often show a mixture of male and 'female' features as adult feathering appears, while many immature feathers remain. Moulting in most *Sylvia* is rather slow and progressive through the winter. In many species with a distinctive male plumage, the colours are dulled in fresh plumage by greyish or brownish feather tipping, which wears away by the spring to reveal brighter colours. In many southern *Sylvia* the bill base, iris, orbital ring and leg colours are very bright (especially so in males) during the breeding season, these colours being duller during the non-breeding season and in females and immatures. Although racial variation is not particularly striking, it is enough to complicate the subtle differences between a number of the more similar southern species in female and immature plumages.

MARMORA'S WARBLER *Sylvia sarda*

Plate page 698

L 13 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Small, long-tailed warbler of W Mediterranean. Easily confused with Dartford Warbler unless seen well, as overall dark coloration, size, shape and behaviour are much the same, but adults are distinctly grey overall (without red-brown or warm brown on underparts), and call and song differ. **Adult male** of 'classic' type is slaty bluish-grey overall, with a darker face and indistinct whitish on centre of belly; the pinkish-straw or pinkish-red bill base and gape, bright orange legs, red iris and red orbital ring contrast with the otherwise uniform slate-grey plumage. Unlikely to be confused. **Adult female and 1st-year** are distinctly duller, lighter and more brownish-grey, both above and below, and are potentially confusable with young Dartford. Also, many males are less striking than described above, being a duller grey and having a pinkish flush on breast, thus recalling female; this is particularly true of those inhabiting the Balearic Is. Adult female, 1st-year and particularly juvenile Dartford are markedly drabber than adult males, and are distinctly dull (but warm) brown on breast and flanks; adult female and 1st-year Marmora's by comparison are distinctly greyer, less dull brown, on head and breast (but brownish tones may be apparent on mantle and flanks, particularly in 1st-year female) and lack the more clearly defined whitish belly shown by all but juvenile Dartford. Fine but fairly obvious white throat spotting is a feature of all but well worn adult and 1st-year Dartfords; this is lacking in adult and 1st-year Marmora's, although some very fine pale mottling may be visible. **Juvenile** Marmora's is even browner both above and below than 1st-year, with very little grey tinge (most obvious on belly, which is greyish-white) and often shows obvious pale mottling on throat: they very closely resemble juvenile Dartford and brownest-toned individuals may not be separable. At all ages Dartford may show a small pale patch on edge of alula, a feature missing in Marmora's, but this often indistinct in juveniles. The long, loosely graduated tail of adults (with diffusely whitish outer feathers) is shared within range only by Dartford; recently fledged birds with incompletely grown tails could be confused with young Sardinian, but they are smaller and lack



the clear white throat and fuller, distinctly white-edged and white-cornered tail of that species.

SEX/AGE Sexes usually differ (see Identification), but sexing of many dull males may be difficult. In breeding condition, bill and legs become a deep orange; duller at other times (especially bill, which is typically a pale pinkish-straw colour with dark culmen and tip). 1st-years resemble duller adult females and ageing difficult, but orbital ring much narrower and browner, and bill and leg colour much drabber in first autumn. Juvenile separable (see Identification).

VOICE Contact call is an abrupt, sharp, dry 'chirg' or more disyllabic 'tschrek' (vaguely reminiscent of rising call of Common Snipe). Also gives a soft 'trrr' when alarmed or a long dry, hard, rattling 'ch-ch-ch-ch ...'. (Typical calls of Dartford Warbler are a short, buzzing 'churr' and a hard 'tuk'.) Song a fairly short, hurried burst of relatively high-pitched, dry warbling; higher-pitched and much less scratchy and varied than song of Dartford, frequently terminating in a short trill and usually repeated after a short pause; often given in short song flight.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Rather slight. 2 races (nominate illustrated). Race *balearica* of the Balearic Is is markedly smaller and its males tending to be duller, with weak pinkish flush to grey of breast; bill of male pinkish-red (yellowish-pink in nominate race).

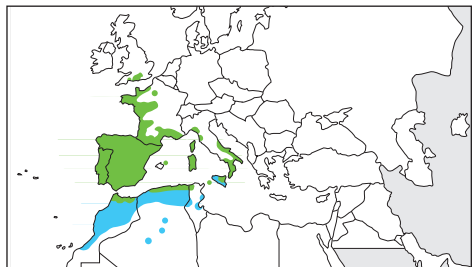
STATUS/HABITAT Endemic to our region. Locally fairly common. (In addition to mapped range, has occurred in winter in S Algeria. Formerly bred Menorca.) Rocky, bushy cover with scattered trees, from islets and coastal lowlands to mountain slopes (up to nearly 1000 m on Corsica). In winter, even in low sparse scrub in semi-desert terrain in NW Africa.

DARTFORD WARBLER *Sylvia undata*

Plate page 698

L 13 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A small-bodied, dark, short-winged but very long-tailed warbler of dry scrub. **Adult male** is dark slaty-brown above, rather browner on wings and tail and greyer on head and mantle, with dull, dark vinous-red (i.e. wine-coloured) underparts becoming whiter on belly, bright yellow-orange legs, red orbital ring and yellowish bill base. Except when heavily worn, has fine but fairly obvious white spotting on throat. Unlikely to be confused. **Adult female and 1st-year** are duller, more brownish, above and below, and white spotting on throat less prominent; 1st-year females are particularly dull and often have only a weak vinous tinge to brown of underparts. **Juvenile** is even duller and may appear drab brown overall, with whitish belly and whitish mottling on throat. A very skulking little bird, preferring to feed within cover of low scrub, but in sunny weather readily flits about on tops of bushes, uttering harsh calls or perky song, with crown raised to peak and long, slightly graduated tail cocked high and switched from side to side. If flushed, flits low with weak, slightly



undulating flight action, long tail slightly cocked and jerkily waved as it dives back into cover, recalling an all-dark Long-tailed Tit in size and shape. In fresh plumage, the outer tail feathers are distinctly whitish. Confusion most likely with Marmora's Warbler (q.v.), but ranges only marginally overlap; only occasionally comes into contact with Tristram's Warbler (q.v.) in winter quarters. Subalpine Warbler often cocks tail

like Dartford and adult males similarly grey above and rufous below, but colours lighter and purer than in Dartford, with reddish-ochre (brick-coloured) throat and breast, a conspicuous white moustache, whiter lower underparts and relatively shorter tail.

SEX/AGE Sexes usually differ (see Identification), but sexing of dull males may be difficult. In breeding condition, bill yellower and legs bright orange-yellow, duller at other times; orbital ring red, most conspicuous in breeding males. Juvenile duller, almost buffish-brown, below compared with adult female, orbital ring much narrower and browner, and bill and leg colour drabber, but by first autumn more vinous below and closer to adult female (but tail more abraded).

VOICE Typical calls include a nasal, buzzing 'chirr' (slightly shorter and more plaintive, less soft, than similar call of Common Whitethroat) or more drawn-out 'chahrr-er' and a short, hard 'tuk' that may be repeated as a rattle. Song a brief, hurried, scratchy,

deep, chattering phrase, soon repeated, resembling song of Common Whitethroat but a little faster, slightly richer and shorter; often given in song flight.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Rather slight and distinctly clinal. 3 races (nominate and *dartfordiensis* illustrated). Northern *dartfordiensis* of Britain and N France is browner on upperparts than nominate race of S Europe, but many Iberian birds resemble *dartfordiensis* in colour. N African *toni* is slightly paler, less slaty, above, and lighter below with whiter belly; southern Spanish birds somewhat approach this race.

STATUS/HABITAT Endemic to our region. Locally fairly common. In northern part of range almost wholly on heathland and sheltered coastal slopes with gorse scrub and scattered trees, but further south in variety of open bushy habitats (often with scattered trees), from maquis-covered rocky hillsides to open pinewoods with bushy undergrowth; perhaps most numerous in coastal areas. In winter, even in low sparse scrub in semi-desert terrain in NW Africa.

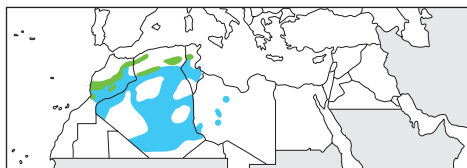
TRISTRAM'S WARBLER *Sylvia deserticola*

Plate page 698

L 12.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION NW Africa. Resembles Dartford Warbler in overall size, shape and behaviour, but slightly shorter-tailed and smaller-billed, with a broken white eye-ring and mainly rufous wings in all plumages. **Adult male and 1st-summer male** are bluish-grey above and rufous-chestnut below, recalling bright male Dartford, but white eye-ring and mainly rufous wings are easy distinctions; there is an ill-defined whitish moustache and usually some brownish on mantle, but the latter varies with feather wear, being most extensive in fresh plumage. **Adult female, 1st-winter and juvenile** are distinctly duller, but share white eye-ring and mainly rufous wings of adult male; adult females are pinkish-brown below and have more sandy-buff (tinged with cinnamon) on mantle and rump, especially in fresh plumage, but head clearly bluish-grey and pale moustache present; juvenile is especially buffy on upperparts, and underparts are creamy-buff with a pinkish tinge (lacking vinous tinge and pale moustache of older birds). Behaviour much as that of Dartford, flitting about tops of shrubby bushes and small trees on mountainsides with tail well cocked; also feeds inside cover of bushes in manner recalling Subalpine Warbler and on ground under bushes. In winter descends to semi-desert plains, where it skulks in shrubby wadis, but readily perches on tops of scrub with tail raised. White eye-ring and rufous in wings can suggest Spectacled Warbler, but Tristram's is more compact, with relatively larger head and plumper body, and has a finer bill and longer tail which it often holds more cocked. Spectacled is paler below, with a clear white throat; although Tristram's has paler throat in fresh plumage, it does not contrast with breast, and the underparts, especially the flanks, are more brick-red or pinkish-brown (except in juvenile).

SEX/AGE Sexes differ (see Identification). Juvenile resembles adult female but is even duller, with more extensive sandy-buff (tinged cinnamon) on upperparts, extending onto rump, and creamy-buff underparts with a weak pinkish tinge, but ageing difficult as some adult females are extensively sandy-buff (tinged



with cinnamon) above in fresh plumage (autumn/early winter), and more buff-tinged, less vinous, below which dulls and lightens overall appearance. In adults, the iris is reddish-brown, the orbital ring narrow and red (but inconspicuous owing to big white eye-ring), bill pinkish with dark culmen and very tip, and the legs yellowish-orange, but variation in bare-part colours owing to age and sex not well documented.

VOICE Typical call a soft, harsh, abrupt 'chit' or 'chit-it' (quite unlike Dartford Warbler's deep 'chirr'), sometimes repeated as a rattle. Song a hurried, scratchy phrase based on repetition of call notes, interspersed with high-pitched notes and thin twittering.

TAXONOMY Sandy-rufous birds collected in the Moroccan and Algerian Sahara in winter were originally described as a distinct species: Meinertzhagen's Warbler *S. ticehursti*. These are, in fact, Tristram's in very fresh plumage, although perhaps could be referred to an undescribed race.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (*marroccana* illustrated). Effects of abrasion and freshness of plumage alter overall coloration to such an extent that distinctions between races may not be valid. Population of Morocco, *marroccana*, is darker above and below than the nominate race of Algeria, Tunisia and perhaps SE Morocco.

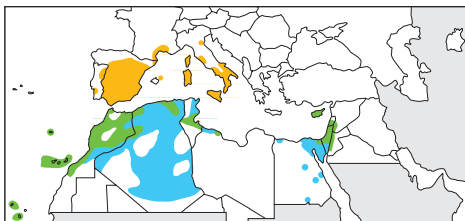
STATUS/HABITAT Endemic to NW Africa. Fairly common but localized. When breeding favours bushy (especially juniper-covered) mountainsides above 1000 m; in winter descends to semi-desert scrub and desert wadis, although some remain in mountain foothills.

SPECTACLED WARBLER *Sylvia conspicillata*

Plate page 698

L 12.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Resembles a small, compact (shorter-tailed) Common Whitethroat in all plumages, an impression created by distinctly rufous wings which contrast with mouse-brown of remainder of upperparts, clean white outer tail feathers, pale (pinkish or orange-yellow) legs, pale-based bill and bright white throat which contrasts with dull pinkish of breast. Spring males usually have a bluish-grey head, shading to blackish on loreal area, a conspicuous broken white eye-ring and greyish-pink underparts that may appear almost uniform in tone with the upperparts, but others (especially 1st-summers) are duller and resemble females in having a narrower eye-ring and a duller grey head. Juveniles, 1st-winters and fresh adult females in autumn have virtually no grey on head and can appear almost uniform dull mousey or buffish-brown with sandy-rufous wings. A perky little warbler of low bushy habitats, briefly perching on bush tops with tail half cocked before diving into dense cover, hopping about on ground or flying low between bushes; all movements more frantic than in Common Whitethroat. Distinctions from Common Whitethroat not always clear-cut, although Spectacled is significantly smaller (body size recalling that of Chiffchaff) and has a relatively shorter tail and primary projection. The tertial centres are blacker in Spectacled and the greater coverts virtually uniform rusty (dark-centred in Common Whitethroat), indeed, in fresh plumage, virtually the whole wing appears sandy-rufous with dark centres only on tertials and bend of wing, an impression never attained by Common Whitethroat. The throat centre is pinkish-grey in spring male Spectacled, but entire throat is white in spring male Common Whitethroat. In autumn, the primary problem is distinguishing Spectacled from 1st-year Subalpine, which has warm, almost rusty, fringes to wing feathers and also strongly suggests Spectacled in size and overall dull appearance; Subalpine, however, is greyer-brown above and has less



extensive sandy-rufous wing than Spectacled, with centres to greater coverts and tertials dark grey-brown, less blackish, and in addition the outer tail feathers are less pure white. Some Tristram's Warblers with extensive sandy-rufous feather fringes in fresh plumage in autumn can be similar, but have longer tail, less pure white on throat, finer-tipped bill and relatively larger head.

SEX/AGE Sexes differ (see Identification). Juveniles and 1st-winters in autumn resemble adult females, but have narrower white eye-ring, browner irides and are buffer-brown overall.

VOICE A distinctive dry, rasping, rattled 'tcharrrr' is frequently heard (and recalls rattlesnake); also gives a short 'tak-tak'. Song a chattering series of phrases, recalling Common Whitethroat, but more hurried and somewhat higher in pitch; often given in song flight.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (nominate illustrated). Populations from Madeira and the Cape Verde Is (*orbitalis*) are darker and greyer than nominate race; birds from the Canary Is seemingly somewhat intermediate.

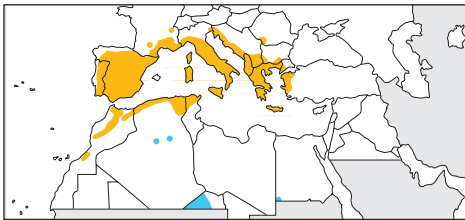
STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common in west of range but rather uncommon and localized in east. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Switzerland.) Favours a variety of open bushy and scrubby habitats, including Mediterranean garrique, bushy wadis, shrubby semi-desert and low *Salicornia* scrub on saltflats; only locally in mountainside scrub.

SUBALPINE WARBLER *Sylvia cantillans*

Plate page 697

L 12.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A small *Sylvia* with white outer tail feathers, yellowish or brownish-yellow legs and pale yellowish base to lower mandible; adults have reddish eye and narrow orbital ring (latter often yellower in females). **Adult male and 1st summer male** distinctive in having bluish-grey upperparts and pinkish to strongly rusty-orange (brick-red) throat and breast with conspicuous white submoustachial stripe. Palest birds (1st-summer males) might, however, suggest Ménéties's Warbler (but latter has darker hood and darker upperside to tail) and in brief view older individuals could be confused with Dartford, but latter darker above, has longer tail and lacks white malar stripe. **Adult female and 1st summer female** are rather variable: older birds are grey-brown above and dull pinky-buff below (some with rusty tinge on throat), with a narrow white eye-ring, a fairly well differentiated white submoustachial stripe and strikingly white undertail coverts; 1st-summer birds are sometimes similar but others are very dull, being and pale brownish-grey above and off-white below (showing no pale moustache); drabdest individuals recall Lesser Whitethroat in some respects, but Subalpine lacks faintly masked appearance and has cooler grey rump, pale (not blackish) legs and a pale base to bill. **Juve-**



niles and 1st-winters in autumn have narrow whitish eye-ring, dull brown eye, almost rusty-brown fringes to wing feathers and greyish-white outer tail feathers, but latter may be white by late autumn. Young males in autumn often show some grey on upperparts and thus are closer to autumn adult females, but young females are a very drab mousey brown. In overall coloration and shape, young autumn females can strongly suggest 1st-winter Spectacled or Tristram's Warblers (q.v. for discussion). Palest birds are very similar to Ménéties's Warbler (q.v.). May be separated from Lesser Whitethroat by same criteria as for older females. Skulks like so many of the genus when not in song, keeping very much to cover of bushes and small

trees, feeding both low down and up into canopy of small trees; often hops into view on bush tops, with tail cocked like a Dartford.

SEX/AGE Sexes differ (see Identification); older females are warmer and pinker below and develop a weak malar stripe. In autumn, adults are in fresh plumage with fresh wing and tail and white outer tail feathers; 1st-winters in autumn have wing and tail abraded, dull off-white outer tail feathers, narrow white eye-ring and fringes to wing feathers distinctly rufous. Juveniles and 1st-winter females in autumn are browner above and more buff below than adults.

VOICE Calls include a soft, Lesser Whitethroat-like 'tek' or 'chat', the notes often repeated rapidly and run together to create a brief chatter of alarm, and a low rattling 'trrrr'. Song a scratchy warbling, typical of the genus, often quite prolonged, recalling a hurried Common Whitethroat but slightly thinner and more musical; often given in song flight. Lacks the harsh

notes so typical of Sardinian Warbler and is more varied and chattering.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Rather slight. 3 races (nominate illustrated). Following differences valid only for males in summer plumage. Nominate race of SW Europe has underparts varying from pinkish to dark brick-red, extending well onto flanks, with white only on central belly and ventral region. N African race *inornata* is more orange-brown below, lacking pinkish tone, and females also are distinctly orange-brown rather than pinkish-buff below. E European race *albirostrata* is dark chestnut-brown below, with the colour confined to throat and breast, paling onto upper flanks, and thus has more extensive white on lower underparts.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (Almost all winter south of the Sahara.) Breeds on scrubby and bushy hills and mountainsides with scattered trees; more locally in open woodland with bushy undergrowth. Migrants likely in bushy or scrubby cover almost anywhere.

MÉNÉTRIÉS'S WARBLER *Sylvia mystacea*

Plate page 697

L 12.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Middle East. A small *Sylvia*, somewhat in between Sardinian and Subalpine Warblers in shape and appearance, and can be confused with either. Most similar to eastern race *momus* of slightly larger, bulkier and longer-tailed Sardinian Warbler, especially in immature and adult female plumages. Ménétériés's has a distinctive habit of cocking its tail and waving it from side to side like a Scrub Warbler, even in flight, exaggerating the blackish tail upperside, which contrasts more strongly with the upperparts than in Sardinian or Subalpine. **Adult male summer and 1st-summer male** have grey upperparts, shading on nape into greyish-black hood, and pinkish-white underparts, latter varying from quite a deep salmon-pink on throat, breast and foreflanks to almost white, or even pale buffish-white (but all of these extremes are uncommon); the iris is reddish, and the orbital ring conspicuous and also red. Individuals with brighter pink on throat and breast show a fairly obvious white submoustachial stripe. Adult males of eastern Sardinian have more clear-cut and blacker hood that extends to rear of ear-coverts (black fades away into grey of rear ear-coverts and upperparts in Ménétériés's), darker, greyish flanks, at the most only a hint of pinkish below, and darker tertials with more contrasting grey fringes (latter feature less marked in nominate race Sardinian). Very bright individuals could suggest dull male or bright female Subalpine Warbler, but hood and tail are darker and the colour of throat, breast and flanks is a purer pink, without strong rufous tinge. **Adult male winter** is browner above and has little or no blackish on head, making it clearly different from winter male Sardinian, which has obvious black hood. **Adult female and 1st-winter** have sandy-grey or grey-brown upperparts, becoming more rufous-brown on forehead, and buffish-white or whitish underparts; compared with eastern Sardinian they are distinctly paler, especially below (*momus* Sardinian has buff-brown flanks and breast sides, Ménétériés's at most has sandy-buff flanks), and have darker upperside to tail, paler and less contrastingly edged tertials (tertial edges in *momus* are very pale, unlike nominate race of Sardinian), paler lore, more distinct pale eye-ring and pale yellow or orange (less red) orbital ring. Palest female/1st-winter male Subalpine Warblers can be confusingly similar, but lack contrast between tail and uppertail coverts of Ménétériés's and usually have warmer buff flanks and more patterned tertials. Subalpine has more



white in outer tail feathers than either Ménétériés's or Sardinian (which are both very similar in this respect), but juveniles of all three have white sullied with brownish and so this difference does not apply to 1st-year birds in autumn unless some adult-type tail feathering has appeared. Contrast with uppertail coverts is also reduced if tail feathers wholly unmoulted (see juvenile). **Juvenile** is rather similar to 1st-winter female, and most of same identification criteria apply, but tail is paler, more grey-brown overall, reducing contrast with uppertail coverts (and thus making separation from pale female/1st-winter male Subalpine even more difficult, although contrast still less in that species). In the hand, the 1st primary is usually longer than the primary coverts in Ménétériés's and Sardinian, equal to or shorter than primary coverts in Subalpine. See also extinct *norrisae* race of Sardinian.

SEX/AGE Sexes differ (see Identification). Juvenile has white parts of outer tail sullied brown. 1st-winters in autumn are sexually similar, but males usually show some blackish feathering on hood and pinkish on throat. In autumn, many young birds may be aged by their tail feathers, with darker adult feathers contrasting with retained paler juvenile; the irides of young birds are olive-brown (usually reddish-brown in adults).

VOICE Calls include a low 'tak' and a chattering rattled 'tzerrr' reminiscent of Spectacled Warbler. Song a typical *Sylvia* chattering; shorter, less varied but more musical than that of Sardinian Warbler.

TAXONOMY/GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (both illustrated). Adult male of race *rubescens* (breeds SE Turkey eastwards) is less pink below than nominate. Sometimes considered conspecific with Sardinian Warbler *S. melanocephala*.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common (but rather scarce on passage through extreme east of our region). Scrubby and bushy areas on hill and mountain slopes, bushy gardens and riverside scrub.

SARDINIAN WARBLER *Sylvia melanocephala*

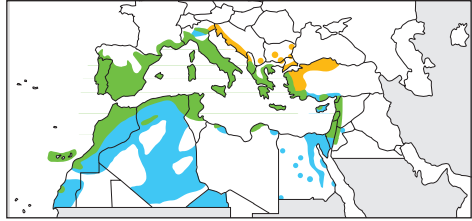
Plate page 697

L 13 cm.

IDENTIFICATION The most widespread of the southern *Sylvia* warblers, being found throughout the Mediterranean basin. A relatively robust, short-winged, full-tailed *Sylvia*, often first noticed flying over low scrub with jerky flight action, showing narrow white outermost web and more obvious white corners to spread tail as it dives back into cover. **Adult male and 1st-summer male** with black hood and pure white throat, lighter greyish underparts, red orbital ring and reddish iris, are distinctive and unlikely to be confused. **1st-winter male** sometimes virtually identical to adult male, although often a little browner on upperparts, but some are very like female through first autumn and winter, although blacker on lore and ear-coverts, and with reddish orbital ring. **Adult female and 1st-year female** recall a drab, stocky Common Whitethroat, especially of greyer eastern race *icterops*, but lack rufous in wing and have red orbital ring (lacking in 1st-years in autumn), brownish-buff underparts and very short primary projection. **Juvenile**, however, has the white areas in the tail sullied brown and may show no white in tail in field. Has indistinct white eye-ring outside inconspicuous brownish orbital ring. See also similar Cyprus, Rüppell's and Ménétries's Warblers for discussion, all three being easily confused with Sardinian in certain plumages. Keeps very much to cover of dense scrub, feeding near ground, clambering up towards tops of bushes, but normally staying well inside foliage. Usually frustratingly difficult to see, but can be surprisingly confiding and inquisitive at times. The call, once known, is very distinctive and often the first clue to the bird's presence.

SEX/AGE Sexes differ (see Identification). 1st-year has dull olive-brown iris (reddish in adults), browner and narrower orbital ring and partly juvenile tail (with white areas sullied brown) into first winter, tail feathers being abraded, as are some flight feathers (fresh in adults). Young males vary: most are obvious, with distinct black hood, others are closer to female but with darker lores and ear-coverts, and some black feathering appearing elsewhere on hood by late autumn. 1st-year female in autumn is browner (less grey) on head than adult, more or less uniform with mantle.

VOICE Most obvious call a sudden, machine-gun-like loud, stuttering, rattled chattering 'chret-tret-tret-tret', or when highly alarmed a more nasal 'djj-djj-djj-



djj-djj ...'; also utters a short, harsh 'tchur' and a double 'cherk-cherk'. Song a sustained musical chattering with Common Whitethroat-like quality, but 'tighter', with bursts of rattling call included.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Rather slight and clinal. 4 races, one of which seemingly extinct (nominate and *momus* illustrated). Canary Is race *leucogastra* somewhat variable, but males tend to be purer grey above, paler grey below, and with hood more sooty, less pure black, than nominate race. Middle Eastern *momus* (Syria, Israel and Jordan, but birds showing features approaching this race occur on some Mediterranean islands west to Balearics) slightly smaller and sleeker than nominate race; males with purer grey upperparts, cleaner demarcation of hood from nape, paler fringes to tertials (as in Rüppell's and Cyprus Warblers) and paler grey underparts (even showing a hint of pinkish-buff on breast); female similarly paler grey-brown (less earthy-brown), with paler buff-brown or even pinkish-brown flanks; both sexes, therefore, closer to Ménétries's (q.v.). Race *norrisae* of the Fayoum oasis in Egypt is now presumed extinct (last record 1939) through salination of the lake and habitat destruction, recent sightings here seemingly having involved wintering birds of more northern races; it was even paler than *momus*, with males pale sandy grey-brown above and whitish, washed pinkish-buff, below and females sandy-brown above and heavily washed sandy-buff below.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. Formerly bred N Egypt (Faiyum). Found in a wide variety of bushy habitats, including maquis (with or without scattered trees), garrigue, plantations, olive groves, tamarisk thickets and open woodland with bushy undergrowth. On passage and in winter, in almost any kind of scrubby habitats, including semi-desert and desert oases.

CYPRUS WARBLER *Sylvia melanothorax*

Plate page 696

L 13 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Resident on Cyprus, but some winter in Israel (and perhaps in adjacent regions). **Adult male and 1st-summer male** are distinctive and unlikely to be confused. The heavily black-mottled underparts of males in spring and summer are diagnostic, often showing the white submoustachial stripe to good effect; at a distance they look dusky below. Fresh autumn and winter birds have the black mottling largely obscured by broad whitish feather fringes, so that throat and breast appear basically whitish, with mottling most apparent on flanks and undertail coverts, gradually becoming more obvious with wear as winter progresses. Red orbital ring is surrounded by narrow white eye-ring. **1st-winter male** sometimes virtually identical to adult male, although often a little less clean black on hood and with some brownish on upperparts, but some are very like female through first



autumn and winter, although showing more dark mottling on throat and breast. **Adult female and 1st-year female** are similar to female Sardinian, but have darker grey head, especially the ear-coverts, which are distinctly sooty, a narrow whitish eye-ring surrounding red orbital ring, greyer upperparts and greyer (less brownish-buff) breast sides and flanks. Adult females show a dark-mottled throat and often breast, at least from mid-winter to summer, but 1st-winter females often show very little or no dark mottling on throat and breast and even a few 1st-summer females are

virtually unmarked; greater care is required with such individuals. Additionally, the tail in Cyprus is more square-ended, less graduated at sides, with white hardly extending around tail corners, and this may be noticed as bird dives into cover with tail spread. Many female Rüppell's also have a diffusely mottled throat; they share the tail shape of Cyprus, but have more white at tail corners even than in Sardinian and are cleaner-looking birds, purer grey above, lacking sooty ear-coverts of Cyprus, and are purer white on throat and ventral region (undertail coverts often dark-marked in female Cyprus); additionally, the primary projection is relatively longer (equal to almost half length of exposed tertials on Rüppell's, only about one third on Cyprus). In winter, Cyprus occurs in more arid situations than either, favouring desert scrub, especially *Acacia*, in which it skulks very closely. Compare also much larger Barred Warbler. **Juvenile** is similar to adult female, but has browner (not so pale) fringes to wing feathers (notably tertials) and entire underparts are suffused with buff.

SEX/AGE Sexes differ (see Identification). Juvenile plum-

age is short-lived, and by first autumn much as adult female, although young males have some blackish on head; adults are then in fresh plumage, while 1st-years have abraded wings and tail. Iris also duller and browner in immatures, redder in adults. In spring, 1st-years often have abraded wings, while adults are fresh.

VOICE Calls include a sharp, grating 'tchek', a ticking rattle and a sudden, stuttering, churring rattle ('tcharr-tcharr-tcharr-tcharr ...') that recalls equivalent call of Sardinian but is more prolonged and softer. Song rather similar to Sardinian but more variable in pitch and perhaps not so many harsh notes.

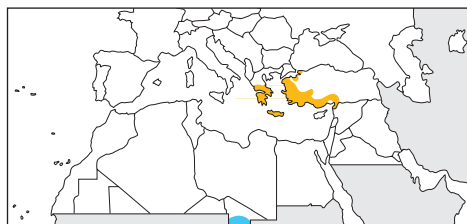
TAXONOMY Occasionally considered conspecific with Sardinian Warbler *S. melanocephala*, but many features suggest that it is closer to Rüppell's *S. rueppelli*.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped range, may winter regularly in Sinai and along Red Sea coast of Egypt.) Scrubby and bushy hillsides, coastal scrub and open oak or pine forest with bushy undergrowth. In Israel in winter, also found in scrub, especially *Acacia*, in desert wadis and plains.

RÜPPEL'S WARBLER *Sylvia rueppelli*

L 13.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION E Mediterranean and Middle East only. Sleeker-looking than marginally smaller Sardinian, with relatively longer primary projection and more square-cornered, less round-cornered, tail, showing more white at corners when spread. **Adult male** has stunning black throat and white submoustachial stripe, rendering it unmistakable. **1st-summer male** almost as striking but crown not so black, upperparts brownish-tinged, less clean grey, and tertials and greater coverts not so pale-edged. **Adult female** rather variable. May show much black on forehead and forecrown (occasionally almost complete hood) when worn in spring, but black frequently entirely hidden in fresh plumage in autumn. Throat equally variable: usually pale in fresh plumage, but in spring/summer ranges from heavily mottled with black to virtually pale-throated. Darker-throated individuals show an obvious pale moustachial stripe, as in adult male but less sharply defined. Mottled-throated females can be confused with basically similar Cyprus Warbler (q.v.). Pale-throated females are purer grey (less brown) above than female Sardinian Warbler and have grey (not buff-brown) wash on underparts; in overall coloration and extent of white in tail they resemble much smaller female Subalpine Warbler and much larger female Orphean Warbler, but have clearer pale fringes to tertials (more diffuse in both Subalpine and Orphean) and dull reddish legs and orbital ring (Orphean has blackish legs and lacks orbital ring). Female Ménétries's is sandier, smaller, and has plainer tertials and paler lores. **1st-winter male** rather similar to dark-throated type of adult female, and same identification criteria mostly apply, but lacks conspicuous pale fringes to tertials and other wing feathers; dark hood starts to appear with wear. **1st-year female** similar to pale-throated type of adult female, and same identification criteria



apply apart from fringes to tertials etc. (which are duller and browner than in adult). 1st-winter females normally show little or no dark mottling on throat, and 1st-summers tend to be more often pale-throated than adults. Skulks in low scrub like Sardinian and Cyprus, being less arboreal than Orphean or Subalpine.

SEX/AGE Adults have red orbital ring (weaker and duller in females). 1st-years in autumn much as adults, but males have black on head and throat partially obscured with pale feather fringes; adults are then in fresh plumage, 1st-year birds having abraded wings and tail. Iris also duller and browner in immatures, redder in adults. In spring, 1st-years often have abraded wings, while adults are fresh.

VOICE Calls include a short 'churr' and an abrupt 'pit' or 'plit' (reminiscent of dripping water), both of which may be rapidly repeated in alarm. Song a stuttering chatter, less scratchy and more musical than that of either Sardinian Warbler or Common Whitethroat; compared to former is softer and more pulsating (as phrases shorter).

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (Almost all winter south of the Sahara.) Well-vegetated bushy slopes, including open woodland with undergrowth; on passage, also in desert scrub.

DESERT WARBLER *Sylvia nana*

L 11.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION N Africa and Middle East. A small, dumpy, almost featureless greyish-sandy or sandy-buff

(depending on race) warbler of desert scrub; if flushed, the bird reveals dull rufous rump, uppertail

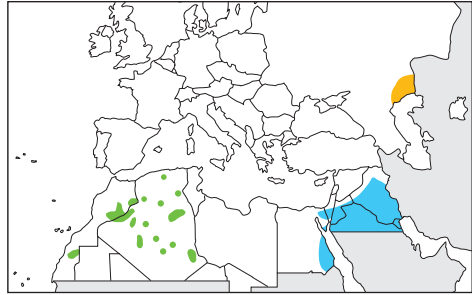
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coverts and tail, the latter with dusky penultimate feathers and whiter outers. The whitish eye-ring, pale yellow iris, dull yellowish legs and lower mandible add little relief to its overall pallid appearance. The very pale yellowish-buff N African race (*deserti*) can appear to have tiny black eyes (in reality just the dark pupils) set in its otherwise uniformly pale head. Even Asian (nominate race) birds in worn plumage are often remarkably drab in the field. Usually seen scuttling mouse-like between clumps of desert scrub, but also flies fast and low between bushes. Frequently associates with Desert Wheatears. Unlikely to be confused if seen well; the overall small size and pale appearance recall Booted Warbler, but latter lacks rufous in rump, uppertail coverts and tail, does not have dusky penultimate tail feathers, and has a weak supercilium (Desert has none), a feature that belies its identity as a *Sylvia*. Habitat also shared by Scrub Warbler, which also has trilling calls, and by Desert race (*minula*) of Lesser Whitethroat, which is slimmer, has dark bill and legs, lacks rufous in rump, uppertail coverts and tail, and is less terrestrial in its behaviour.

SEX/AGE All plumages similar, but in autumn 1st-years tend to have wings and tail more abraded than fresher-plumaged adults.

VOICE Contact call a weak, nasal, purred trill, fading towards end; 'djerr-r-r-r'. Also gives a rippled 'chrrrr' and a rapid, high 'chee-chee-chee'. Song a rich



series of trilled and clear whistling phrases, preceded by a harsh purring trill (similar to contact call).

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Marked. 2 races (both illustrated). Nominate C Asian race is a winter visitor to the Middle East and Egypt. Resident Saharan race *deserti* is more yellowish-sandy overall, lacking grey tones to plumage, is whiter below and has pale brownish (not dark brown) culmen and tip to bill.

STATUS/HABITAT Although locally fairly common, skulking behaviour makes it easy to overlook. Favours sandy desert with scattered bushy vegetation (including dune slacks), both on breeding grounds and in winter, a habitat shared by Greater Hoopoe Lark; also locally in winter in gravel plains with scattered bushes.

ARABIAN WARBLER *Sylvia leucomelaena* Red Sea Warbler

L 14.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Southern Israel and Jordan only. A large, but distinctive warbler of mature desert *Acacia*. Recalls a large male Sardinian Warbler in basic plumage colour, bill proportions and domed head shape, but the relatively long tail is strikingly black, contrasting markedly with grey uppertail coverts, and showing no white in the field (exceptional views may reveal white spots near tail corners on underside). Large size, arboreal habits and black hood (darkest in males) recall Orphean Warbler, but latter shows clear whitish outer tail, with square corners (rounded in Arabian), and has flatter crown, longer, heavier bill and longer primary projection. Hood is uniformly dark (without the darker ear-coverts shown by Orphean), eye always looks dark (iris often pale in Orphean) and it sometimes shows an indistinct whitish eye-ring (absent in spring Orphean). Even if whole bird not in view, the striking black tail is normally evident, and freely wagged downwards and slightly opened (recalling Blackstart) as bird moves through foliage (Orphean does not wag tail). Well-marked birds show a narrow white eye-ring (possibly suggesting White-spectacled Bulbul if seen poorly). Usually keeps well within canopy of large *Acacia* trees and bushes (as will migrant Orphean), but sometimes descends to feed in low scrub.

SEX/AGE Adult females have a duller and browner hood than adult males, are browner-grey on upperparts and have less prominent whitish eye-ring. Juve-



niles have crown and nape greyish-brown, contrasting with sooty-brown ear-coverts, and lighter lores; by first winter they resemble respective adults, but young males are duller, with some abraded wing and tail feathers, latter fresh in adults.

VOICE Relatively silent, but a quiet 'chak-chak' may be heard. Song a relatively loud burst of slow, rich warbling, recalling song of Upcher's Warbler and lacking repetitive nature of Orphean Warbler.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION The isolated Arava valley population of our region has recently been separated and named *negevensis*. (Race *blanfordi* occurs just outside our region in extreme SE Egypt; it is close to *negevensis*, but averages smaller and has sandier upperparts.)

STATUS/HABITAT Very local, but not uncommon in its favoured habitat: areas of mature *Acacia* in both wide and narrow desert wadis between the Dead Sea and the head of the Gulf of Eilat, in Israel/Jordan border region. Disperses a little outside breeding season, with occasional records from Sinai.

ORPHEAN WARBLER *Sylvia hortensis*

L 15 cm.

IDENTIFICATION One of the two largest *Sylvia*. Adult males have a dusky or blackish-grey (black in eastern populations) hood and older birds show a distinc-

tive pale iris, but note that many have brownish iris. Adult females and immatures resemble Lesser Whitethroat in colour and basic pattern, but Orphean is much

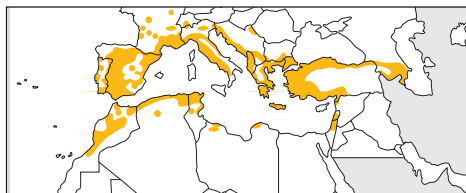
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larger, has a longer and heavier bill, flatter crown and an overall sleek, long-bodied appearance; many adult females also have pale iris. In flight, may show conspicuous white tail sides and corners when alighting with tail spread, a pattern not shown by Arabian Warbler but similar in Barred Warbler, the only other really large *Sylvia* warblers (q.v. for further discussion). Keeps well hidden in foliage of shrubby and tall undergrowth, but feeds higher in bushes and even trees than most smaller *Sylvia*, except Lesser Whitethroat. Compare female Rüppell's Warbler.

SEX/AGE Sexes differ (see Identification). 1st-years in autumn resemble adult female, but are browner-grey above and have dark irides; pale iris not attained until second summer or even later. Ageing difficult, as all birds in reasonably fresh plumage in autumn and males do not attain blackish hood until first summer (i.e. second calendar year).

VOICE Both races have similar calls, a hard Blackcap-like 'tak' and a coarse 'churrr'. Song seems to vary between the races: nominate has a slow, full thrush-like warble, repeated with slight variations and brief pauses, recalling introductory phrase of Common Blackbird



song but richer; song of race *crassirostris* much more varied and prolonged, but similarly rich, at times recalling more sustained part of Common Nightingale song.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight and somewhat clinal. 2 races (both illustrated). Race *crassirostris* (breeds from SE Europe eastwards) is, on average, whiter (less buff-washed) below, has purer grey upperparts, a slightly longer bill and, in males, a blacker hood; song also seems to differ (see Voice).

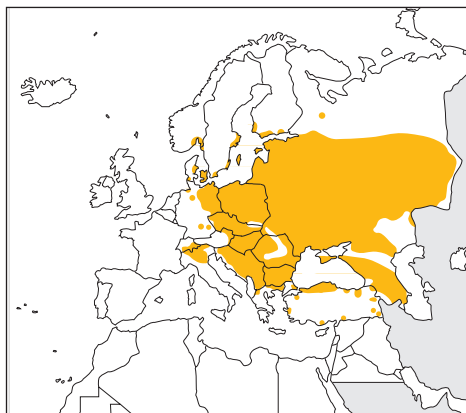
STATUS/HABITAT Locally fairly common. Woodland with bushy undergrowth, gardens, olive groves, tall hedgerows, maquis etc. On passage, also in low coastal scrub and more arid situations such as desert acacias.

BARRED WARBLER *Sylvia nisoria*

L 15 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A large, rather heavily built, greyish warbler. **Adult and 1st-summer** have diagnostic barred underparts and pale iris, but extent of barring very variable, being most extensive on older males, whereas 1st-summer females can appear almost unmarked below. Adult males have distinctive orange-yellow iris, yellowish in adult females and most 1st-summers (but some 1st-summer females have dark iris). **Juvenile and 1st-winter** in autumn lack barring except for weak scalloping on undertail coverts and have dark iris, recalling a large, grey Garden Warbler, but as well as being larger they are longer-tailed and significantly heavier-billed and have whitish outer tail feathers and edges to wing feathers, especially the secondaries and tertials; pale fringes to median and greater coverts can hint at presence of wing bars. Bulky, long-tailed and overall grey-brown impression given by bird flying between bushes often recalls a juvenile shrike or even a Eurasian Wren on a brief view, but white corners to tail often conspicuous. Large size shared by Orphean Warbler, which has darker sides of head (like Lesser Whitethroat), pale feather edges confined to tertials, relatively longer, less stout, bill, and lacks scalloping on undertail coverts. Compare 1st-year also with Olive-tree Warbler. All movements rather heavy and sluggish, typically hopping through undergrowth with tail partially raised; often raises crown feathers into a peak like Common Whitethroat. Tends to be rather shy. Often breeds in close proximity to Red-backed Shrikes.

SEX/AGE Sexes generally differ (see Identification), but variation makes sexing of many birds difficult. In autumn, adults usually show some barring below and



have yellowish iris, whereas iris dark and underparts unbarred (except undertail coverts) on 1st-years.

VOICE Calls include a sharp 'tak' and a short 'churr' or 'trrrr', the latter often extended into a rattling 'trrrr-t-t-t-t' when agitated (slowing towards end). Song resembles that of Garden Warbler, but outbursts are shorter, stronger and richer in quality and drawn-out rattling call is often interspersed; often delivered in butterfly-like song flight.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. Shrubby riverine thickets, patches of bushes in meadows, bushy woodland edges and clearings, hedges, parkland and large gardens. Migrants can occur in lower scrub.

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LESSER WHITETHROAT *Sylvia curruca*

Siberian Lesser Whitethroat (*S. c. blythi*); **Hume's (Lesser) Whitethroat** (*S. c. althaea*); **Desert (Lesser) Whitethroat, Small Whitethroat** (*S. c. minula*)

L 13.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION In all plumages and races, combination of dull greyish-brown upperparts (greyer on

head), diffusely darker ear-coverts, blackish legs, small bill, arboreal habits and relatively small size is

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distinctive. Individually fairly variable, some having slate-grey ear-coverts and quite brown upperparts, others are more washed out on upperparts and have ear-coverts only slightly darker than crown. Racial variation complex (see Geographical Variation). Confusion with other species unlikely if seen well, but compare female Sardinian Warbler and much larger and lankier female Orphean Warbler, both of which can recall Lesser Whitethroat in coloration. Easily separated from longer-tailed Common Whitethroat by lack of rufous in wings and pale legs; also has darker iris (adults only) and usually no white eye-ring, or only an indistinct one (mainly below eye). (Note: can show a more distinct, but broken, white eye-ring in fresh autumn plumage, when a pale supercilium may also be present.) Much less skulking than others of genus, feeding in canopy of shrubs and small trees rather than skulking in ground-level scrub like most other small *Sylvia* warblers.

SEX/AGE Sexes similar. Ageing difficult, but 1st-years in autumn have grey iris (brown in adults), and outer tail feathers less pure white, more sullied with greyish-brown, than in adults, a difference that can also be applied in following spring if tail not too abraded.

VOICE Calls of all forms are similar, chiefly a dry, sharp, tongue-clicking 'tek' or 'tuk', freely repeated; also a short 'churr' of alarm, and a harsh chatter, less staccato and higher in pitch than chatter of other small *Sylvia*. A scolding, Blue Tit-like 'chay-ch-ch-ch' is regularly heard from migrants in the east of our region. Song varies both between races and individually; racial distinctions given therefore not always valid. Northern races: song a dry rapid, almost metallic rattle, preceded by a weak short warble (latter audible at close range); some birds have the warbling phrase more strongly developed and may exclude the rattle from their song, this seeming to be the case especially with *blythi*. 'Hume's (Lesser) Whitethroat': song lacks rattle, being quite a melodious, relatively loud warbling, recalling certain phrases of Blackcap. 'Desert (Lesser) Whitethroat': a sweet, warbling phrase, apparently without rattle of nominate race.

TAXONOMY The three groupings (see Geographical Variation) may represent separate species, but quite widespread intergrading and variability of song types suggests that full speciation has not yet been achieved.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Complex. At least 5 intergrading races that fall into three groups (all illustrated). Northern group (nominate race and *blythi*): Nominat race breeds across most of our region, intergrading into more eastern *blythi*, 'Siberian Lesser Whitethroat', in W Siberia. Race *blythi* (a vagrant to



Europe and Middle East) differs from nominate race in wing formula (2nd primary usually falls between tips of 5th and 6th or equals 6th in nominate, usually falls between 6th and 8th in *blythi*) and in often having warmer brown mantle and wings in fresh plumage, with sandy-tinge wash to tertials (hinting at Common Whitethroat) and whiter underparts with less contrast between throat and breast, but many are indeterminate. 'Hume's (Lesser) Whitethroat' (*althea* and perhaps *caucasica*): Slightly larger, stouter-billed and more uniformly dark grey above than northern forms, with ear-coverts contrasting less with crown and with more white in outer tail. True *althea* breeds from Iran eastwards and has been recorded in extreme SE of our region in winter. Slightly smaller *caucasica* of Caucasus, S Balkans and Turkey south to N Israel is of uncertain status: often considered an intergrade with northern group, but vocally it is close to *althea*. 'Desert (Lesser) Whitethroat' (*minula*): Breeds in C Asia, wintering in dry scrub from Iran and E Arabia eastwards. Has been recorded as a vagrant in our region (Israel). A small, slim, very greyish-sandy race, with strongly contrasting darker ear-coverts in fresh plumage. Other extralimital forms link *minula* with *blythi* and *curruca*.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred N Finland and Faeroes. Mostly winters south of the Sahara and Arabian Desert.) Found in a wide variety of bushy areas, including large gardens, parks, heathland, woodland edges and clearings, young plantations, hedges and cultivation mixed with bushy patches.

COMMON WHITETHROAT *Sylvia communis* Whitethroat, Greater Whitethroat

L 14 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A perky, rather long-tailed warbler of scrubby habitats, easily identified by combination of rufous wings (that contrast with dull brown or greyish-brown upperparts) and gleaming white throat that contrasts with buffish-white or dingy underparts. This combination shared only by much smaller and more localized Spectacled Warbler (q.v.). Eastern populations are drabber grey-brown overall, with less extensive rufous in wings, but pale (not dark) legs readily separate this species from smaller, chunkier and slightly shorter-tailed Lesser Whitethroat in extreme cases. Compare also female Sardinian Warbler. A lively warbler of bushy scrub, readily perching

in open, often with crown feathers raised into a peak and with white throat especially conspicuous when in song. Migrants are more skulking, but clear whitish outer tail feathers visible in flight, white not extending around tail corners as in Sardinian.

SEX/AGE Adult males have bluer-grey hood, more pink-tinged breast and paler iris compared with 1st-summer males and females; sexing of many birds is not possible. 1st-years in autumn have dark iris and less pure white in outer tail, and have outer tail feathers fresher than rest, whereas all tail feathers of uniform age in autumn adults.

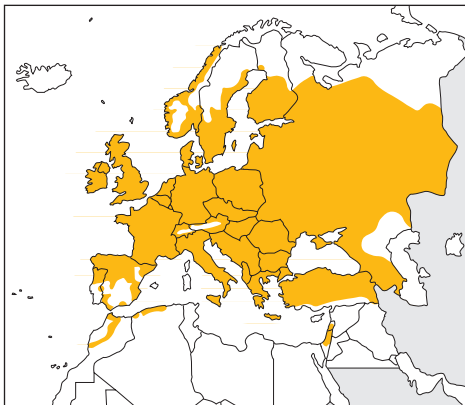
VOICE Calls include a short, harsh 'churr', often pro-

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longed into a 'churrrrr-rrr-rrr' when alarmed, a sharp, often repeated 'tak' (softer than 'tak' of Lesser Whitethroat) and a lively 'whit-whit-whit' (which often precedes an outburst of song). Song a lively scratchy warble, interspersed with call notes; sometimes delivered in song flight. A more subdued, but more sustained and musical, subsong that recalls Garden Warbler is often heard early in breeding season.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate and clinal. 3 races (nominate and *icterops* illustrated). Nominate race occurs over most of our region, intergrading with paler *volgensis* (Volga eastwards) and with *icterops* (E Mediterranean eastwards). Latter is distinctly drabber and darker greyish-brown above and has paler, more sandy-rufous, wing feathers.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. Scrubby habitats of a very wide variety of types, from coastal lowlands to mountains, including hedges, thickets, woodland glades and edges, and heathland.



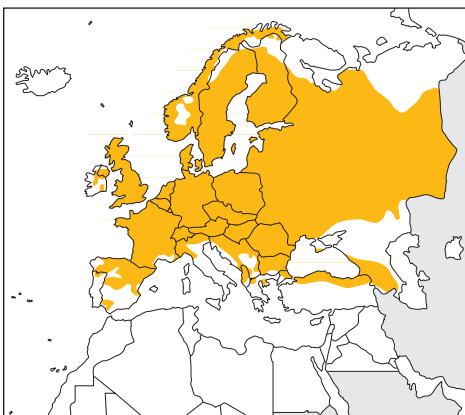
GARDEN WARBLER *Sylvia borin*

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L 14 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Relatively plump, stout-billed and stout-legged, almost featureless mouse-brown warbler, with prominent dark eye and rather 'gentle' facial expression; unlike most *Sylvia*, lacks white in outer tail feathers. There is little to look out for in plumage other than the pale tips to the tertials (and primaries) and a greyish tinge on sides of neck, so this is often a puzzlingly nondescript bird for the less experienced. Overall greyish-buff coloration (but not shape) more suggestive of an *Acrocephalus* or *Hippolais* warbler than a *Sylvia*, but relatively short and stout grey bill (shading pinker-grey towards base of lower mandible), lack of distinct supercilium and eye-stripe, square-cornered tail and short undertail coverts are easy distinctions from former, whereas *Hippolais* of similar size have even more prominent dark eye, longer, more pointed, broadly-based and extensively pinkish-orange bill and flat or peaked (not rounded) crown shape (and Olivaceous may also have pale in outer tail feathers). Confusion of smallest individuals with Booted Warbler possible, but latter has whitish in outer tail feathers, paler and thinner legs and bill (quite stout and greyish in Garden); Booted often shows dark at sides of crown and is more sandy-brown above. 1st-year Barred Warbler in autumn recalls Garden, but is larger and lankier, usually shows some whitish in outer tail and has scalloped undertail coverts and whitish edges to wing feathers. Most frequent confusion is with poorly seen female Blackcap, which is very similar in overall coloration, size, shape and vocalizations but has bright rusty-brown crown (latter not obvious when bird viewed from below). Compare also vagrant vireos. A shy warbler of trees and shrubs, preferring to keep well hidden in foliage, usually revealing presence by song, which can be remarkably similar to that of Blackcap.

SEX/AGE All plumages similar; plumage greyer when worn. In autumn, 1st-years are in wholly fresh plumage and are tinged slightly more olive and buff overall, whereas adults have tail and flight feathers slightly



worn and are more greyish-olive, especially on flanks.

VOICE Usual call a sharp, rich, often-repeated 'chek', not quite so strident as that of Blackcap (but more frequently repeated). Song rich, sweet and sustained, remarkably similar to and often impossible to differentiate from some song types of Blackcap. Full song is much longer, quicker, 'tighter' and less varied than that of Blackcap, lacking sudden changes in pitch towards the end which are so typical of that species.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (nominate illustrated). Eastern *woodwardi* (breeds White Sea eastwards) is paler and greyer than nominate race of most of region. The two forms intergrade across much of E Europe.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Faeroes.) Broadleaved and mixed woodland with shrubbery, bushy heathland, riverine woodland, parks and large gardens; typically a bird of more shrubby habitats than Blackcap, but much overlap.

BLACKCAP *Sylvia atricapilla*

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L 14 cm.

IDENTIFICATION One of the commonest and most widespread warblers and one of the easiest to identify.

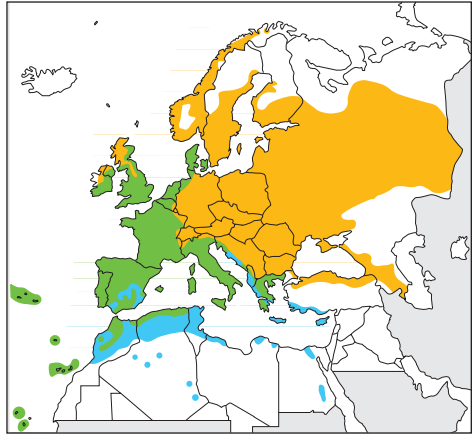
Striking black crown of adult male and bright rusty-brown crown of adult female and immatures is the

only relief from its otherwise uniform greyish-brown or dull olive grey-brown plumage; like the Garden Warbler, it lacks any white in tail. Confusion likely only when crown not visible, when it could easily be misidentified as a Garden Warbler. Rather a shy bird in breeding season, keeping hidden in foliage of trees and shrubs, revealing presence by song. Wintering birds, however, are more conspicuous and readily feed in the open (in some areas visiting garden bird-tables even in the centre of towns).

SEX/AGE Sexes differ (see Identification). Juveniles resemble adult females, but by first autumn most 1st-year males have black feathering appearing amidst rusty-brown crown; some rufous feathering often remains in black crown of males until first spring.

VOICE Calls include a sharp, loud 'tak', often repeated and sounding like two pebbles being struck together, and a 'churr' of alarm. Song variable, with some more subdued and chattering versions almost impossible to separate from some songs of Garden Warbler. Typically a beautiful rich, clear, mellow, melodious, rather slow warble, rising and falling in pitch towards the end as it becomes sweeter (and often including some characteristic loud, clear and melancholy fluting notes); sometimes incorporates mimicry of other birds.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 5 races (nominate and melanistic form of *heineken* illustrated). Darkest races occur on the Atlantic islands, with *heineken* populations of Madeira and the Canary Is



being the darkest. Melanistic birds have been recorded from the Azores, Madeira and the Canary Is, males of which have the entire head and breast blackish.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Faeroes. Very scarce in winter in NW Europe.) Broadleaved and mixed woodland with undergrowth, shrubby thickets, large gardens, parkland and riverine woodland.

PHYLLOSCOPUS WARBLERS

'Leaf-warblers' are the most abundant and conspicuous of all warblers over many parts of our region, both as breeding birds and as migrants. They are small, active, primarily arboreal warblers, with relatively short, fine bills, notched tails and thin legs. With the exception of vagrant Radde's and Dusky Warblers, they move through the upper and outer canopy of trees and bushes with agility, flitting and fluttering, often briefly hovering to pick insects from leaves or even flycatching. Their movements are usually accompanied by both wing- and tail-flicking. Both songs and calls are very important to specific identification, the former lacking the harsh chattering character of the songs of *Acrocephalus*, *Hippolais* and *Sylvia*. Sexes are alike in plumage, although females average smaller in measurements in several species.

Feather wear can make a bird which is green and yellowish in fresh plumage become drab greyish-brown and whitish when heavily abraded, and those with prominent white wing bars and tertial edges can lose these entirely and appear plain-winged when worn. The majority of *Phylloscopus* have a complete moult after the breeding season and prior to the onset of autumn migration, and both adults and birds of the year are, therefore, in fresh plumage in autumn; 1st-year individuals of some species are distinctly yellower than adults, but many may not be safely aged in the field. Adults of some species (Greenish, Arctic, Wood, Bonelli's), however, have only a partial post-breeding moult and are more abraded (especially flight and tail feathers) and washed-out in colour in autumn compared with 1st-years, not completing their moult until after arrival in their winter quarters; ageing of these birds is usually possible in autumn. Luckily, most vagrant *Phylloscopus* species turn up in autumn and the most usual individuals are 1st-years in fresh plumage.

There are several superficially similar species within the genus, and separating them in worn plumage (i.e. late spring and summer) is particularly difficult (see moult discussion above). Subtle structural differences are difficult to interpret accurately in the field, as in most species females average smaller than males and have relatively shorter primary projections. Thus, female Chiffchaff and male Willow Warbler can look distinctly different structurally, but male Chiffchaff and female Willow Warbler overlap in field appearance. Likewise caution needs to be applied with other similar species-pairs such as Arctic and Greenish. Hybridization between members of the genus has been proven on occasions, but is probably more frequent than realized and may account for birds singing aberrant songs; it is therefore not always possible to identify all individuals specifically, even in the hand.

Among other genera within the family, only Booted Warbler and perhaps Desert Warbler could be mistaken for a *Phylloscopus*, although several species of vagrant American wood warblers in 1st-winter

plumage, especially Tennessee Warbler (q.v.), could on very rare occasions cause problems.

Main possibilities for confusion are as follows:

Eastern Crowned Warbler with Arctic Warbler

Greenish Warbler with Arctic, Yellow-browed and Hume's Leaf Warblers, and with Chiffchaff showing wing bar

Arctic Warbler with Greenish and Eastern Crowned Warblers

Pallas's Leaf Warbler with Yellow-browed and Hume's Leaf Warblers

Yellow-browed Warbler with Greenish and Pallas's Leaf Warblers

Hume's Leaf Warbler with Greenish and Pallas's Leaf Warbler

Radde's Warbler with Dusky Warbler

Dusky Warbler with Radde's Warbler and Chiffchaff

Bonelli's Warbler with Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler (pale northern type) and Booted Warbler

Wood Warbler with Icterine Warbler

Plain Leaf Warbler with Chiffchaff

Chiffchaff with Willow, Plain Leaf, Greenish, Bonelli's, Dusky and Booted Warblers

Willow Warbler with Chiffchaff and Bonelli's Warbler

Specific features on which to concentrate when identifying a *Phylloscopus* include:

Call and song • Extent of primary projection • Colour of legs and bill (especially amount of dark on lower mandible) • **Extent of yellow, buff or olive tones in plumage • Pattern of lore and forehead • Tail movements**

Additional features for wing-barred birds:

Is greater-covert bar straight and of even width throughout? • Presence or absence of upper (median-covert) **bar • Presence or absence of whitish tertial tips • Presence or absence of dark shadow at base of primaries • Presence or absence of pale rump patch • Presence or absence of pale median crown-stripe**

EASTERN CROWNED WARBLER *Phylloscopus coronatus*

Plate below

L 11.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Asian vagrant (breeds from E Siberia southwards). Recalls Arctic Warbler in overall appearance, but is sleeker and less bulky. Upperparts are generally more yellowish-green than in Arctic, especially fringes to flight feathers, and there are two wing bars: a broad pale bar on greater coverts and a shorter one on median coverts. The off-white underparts are more contrastingly pale than in Arctic and in fresh plumage the undertail coverts are distinctly and contrastingly washed with yellow (a very good field mark), but yellow is much paler and may not be at all noticeable when plumage worn. (Note: some Arctic have pale yellowish on underparts, including undertail coverts, but these lack the contrast between whitish belly and yellow undertail coverts shown by Eastern Crowned.) The crown is darker, more dusky-

olive, than in Arctic and the very long and conspicuous yellowish-white supercilium reaches base of bill (as in Greenish Warbler, but unlike Arctic), as does dusky eye-stripe (often distinctly darker than in Arctic). There is a dull, but distinctly pale, median crown-stripe, indistinct on forecrown but obvious towards rear (Arctic lacks median crown-stripe). From behind, gives impression that crown-stripe and supercilia almost, but not quite, meet on upper nape. The bill is prominently pinkish-yellow from below, lacking the dark tip to lower mandible shown by most Arctic, and the legs are darker, more brownish, than on most Arctic.

SEX/AGE Adults reported to have complete post-breeding moult, so all birds should be in fresh plumage in autumn, but this not definitely confirmed. May



perhaps have similar moult strategy to Greenish Warbler (q.v.).

VOICE Most often heard call seems to be final part of song, 'swe-zueee', but rather silent in winter quarters and on passage. Song distinctive, but unlikely to be heard in our region: a series of three or four sweet

notes, recalling a tit, rising and falling in pitch, each note well separated, with a squeaky, drawn-out ending: 'sweetoo, sweetoo, sweetoo, swe-swe-zueee'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, breeds in deciduous woodland, often quite open.

GREENISH WARBLER *Phylloscopus trochiloides*

Plate pages 681 & 700

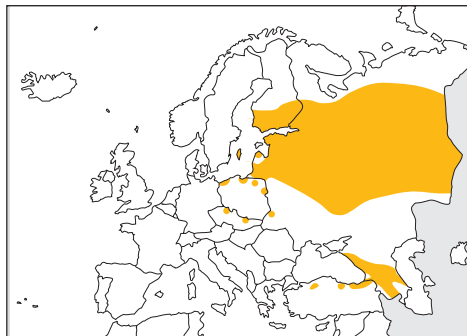
Western Greenish Warbler (*P. t. viridanus*); **Two-barred Greenish Warbler**, **Two-barred Warbler** (*P. t. plumbeitarsus*); **Green Warbler**, **Bright-green Warbler**, **Yellowish-breasted Warbler** (*P. t. nitidus*)

L 11 cm.

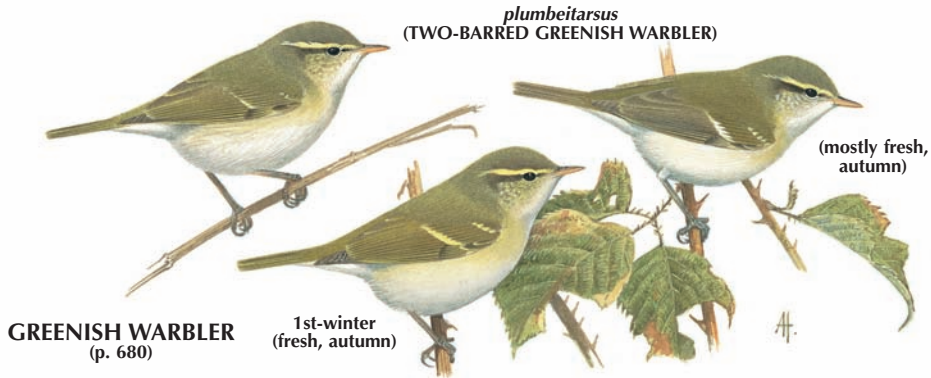
IDENTIFICATION Three fairly distinctive forms of this wing-barred species occur in our region, and are sometimes treated as separate species. Greenish Warblers are distinctly arboreal and very active in the canopy, preferring trees to bushes where available; they typically carry the bill angled slightly upwards, which makes the pinkish-orange lower mandible especially prominent. Actions rather nervous, with much wing- and tail-flicking; often raises crown feathers slightly to create peaked crown effect (more frequently than in other *Phylloscopus*). **WESTERN**

GREENISH WARBLER (*P. t. viridanus*): breeds N and E Europe. Recalls Chiffchaff in overall proportions and darkish legs (greyish-brown or pinkish-brown), but at all ages lower mandible pinkish-orange, making bill appear stouter (especially when viewed from below), and whitish supercilium clearer and longer, highlighted by a more prominent and clean-cut dark eye-stripe. Unless plumage strongly abraded shows a clear wing bar formed by whitish tips to greater coverts, but when plumage abraded (e.g. summer and autumn adults) this bar may be reduced to a series of spots, or a fine line, or even be absent. Abraded summer birds are drab greyish-brown in overall colour, but in fresh plumage the upperparts are olive-brown, tinged greyish on mantle, contrasting with creamy-white underparts, supercilium and wing bar. When fresh, the shape of the bar is a useful clue to separation from the very similar Green and Two-barred Greenish Warblers. Some fresh-plumaged birds have a weak yellowish wash to supercilium and underparts, suggesting Green, but lack the median-covert bar (or show just a trace). Arctic Warbler is very similar to Greenish (see Arctic for discussion), but the song and call are very different. Hume's Leaf Warbler has a very similar call to Greenish and is potentially confusable, but the bill is finer and the lower mandible dark over distal half, there is a dark shade behind the greater-covert bar, and it shows prominent whitish tips to the tertials. Some autumn and winter Chiffchaffs, especially of eastern races, show a distinct but narrow whitish bar at tips of greater coverts which does not form a broad bar as on Greenish (and is usually more curved and less clean-cut) but can be quite striking; these birds, however, have virtually wholly black bill and legs, more greyish-brown upperparts, and lack the sparrow-like call of Greenish. **TWO-BARRED GREENISH**

WARBLER (*P. t. plumbeitarsus*): breeds from C Siberia eastwards and occurs as a vagrant in our region. Often has darker pinkish-grey legs than in Western Greenish and in fresh plumage shows two prominent wing bars (rarely, a few pale tips to median coverts are shown by fresh Western Greenish and a trace of a median-covert bar may still be present in spring), the greater-covert bar being broader, straighter and more even than on Western Greenish (which typically shows narrowing on inner coverts) and more as in Green. Plumage more contrasting overall than in Western Greenish,



with darker olive upperparts (brownier in first autumn), darker crown, darker eye-stripe (especially behind eye) and whiter underparts. 1st-year birds in autumn show yellowish-buff in supercilium and wing bars, thus suggesting duller individuals of Green, but latter usually has clearly yellow-washed underparts (if wing bars and supercilium are yellowish) and green-washed upperparts, whereas at this time 1st-year Two-barred Greenish distinctly brownish-olive above. 1st-year Western Greenish in autumn is often tinged creamy-yellow below, whereas Two-barred Greenish is typically more greyish-white at this time. In worn adult plumage (summer/autumn), wing bars narrower and median-covert bar may be faint or lacking; at this time often indistinguishable from Western Greenish. Presence of second wing bar invites confusion with Yellow-browed and Arctic Warblers (q.v. for discussion), but both species have very different calls; both calls and song of Two-barred Greenish are close to those of Western Greenish and Green. **GREEN WARBLER** (*P. t. nitidus*): breeds Caucasus and N Turkey. Averages slightly larger and longer-bodied than Western Greenish and Two-barred Greenish, with stronger bill, but marked overlap. Bright green plumage tones above and yellow tones below coupled with prominent yellow wing bars and supercilium are diagnostic, but apparent only in fresh plumage (most obviously in first autumn). In spring and in worn plumage closely resembles Western Greenish and Two-barred Greenish, sharing latter's pinkish-orange lower mandible and darkish legs, and has very similar call and song. In spring, some birds show a pale yellow wash to supercilium, ear-coverts, throat and breast and lime-green tone to upperparts, but others may have these tones virtually absent; the latter are a little more contrasting than Western Greenish, with cleaner whitish underparts and longer supercilium. More important, however, is the shape of the greater-covert bar, which is typically wider and straighter than on Western Greenish, more evenly broad across tips of feathers (bar narrows on inner coverts in Western Greenish); a second bar, formed by tips of median coverts, is usu-



ally evident in fresh plumage, but may be hidden by fluffed-up body feathers at bend of wing and is typically faint or absent when worn. Western Greenish only exceptionally shows a weak bar on the median coverts in fresh plumage, although this is marked in fresh Two-barred Greenish. A small percentage of fresh autumn birds lack olive or yellow tones to plumage but show prominent whitish supercilium and double whitish wing bars; these recall Two-barred Greenish, but latter usually has buff tones to supercilium and wing bars in fresh 1st-year plumage in autumn (more abraded birds would be inseparable in the field). Green and Western Greenish are very closely related and some may not be safely separable, especially in worn plumage. Birds lacking green or yellow when fresh, plus those in worn plumage, share distinctions shown by Western Greenish from other *Phylloscopus*.

SEX/AGE Males average larger and longer-winged than females. Easily aged in autumn, as 1st-years are in fresh plumage, whereas adults have abraded tail and wings and may lack wing bars. (Young Green in particular are usually noticeably green and yellow overall compared with adults.) Adults do not attain fresh plumage until after arrival in winter quarters.

VOICE Call of Western Greenish a loose, sweet, sparrow-like, rising 'ch'wee' or 'tseelee', which may be likened to one of the calls of White Wagtail. Song of Western Greenish is distinctive; a rather short, hurried, cheery delivery of 5–8 liquid, high-pitched, rather jerky phrases which accelerate into a descending trill that ends abruptly; 'si-ti-twee, si-ti-twe, si-ti-twe, si-twe, sitwesitististi'. Song type somewhat

variable; latter version recalls White Wagtail, but another ('tswee-tiu tswee-tiu tswee-tiu ...') is reminiscent of Coal Tit. Call of Two-barred Greenish very similar to that of Western Greenish but slightly trisyllabic. Song, unlikely to be heard in our region, is recognizably similar to that of Western Greenish but perhaps a little richer. Call of Green much as Western Greenish, but slightly stronger and sweeter, often more trisyllabic. Song a hurried, cheery delivery of notes, similar to that of Western Greenish, but slightly stronger and richer, the basic phrasing recalling introduction to song of Cetti's Warbler.

TAXONOMY Form *plumbeitarsus* is sometimes accorded full species status under the name Two-barred Greenish Warbler. Likewise form *nitidus*, which was formerly treated as a full species under the name Green Warbler.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 3 races (all illustrated). See Identification for details. Eastern race *plumbeitarsus* (breeding C Siberia eastwards, wintering in SE Asia) has occurred as a vagrant to W Europe.

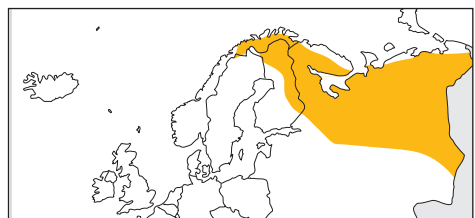
STATUS/HABITAT Common. (Has markedly expanded its breeding range westwards in N Europe this century. Migrates southeast to winter in S Asia.) Western Greenish (and Two-barred Greenish) breeds in deciduous, mixed and coniferous (especially spruce) woodlands with rich undergrowth, copses, parks and large gardens; quite frequently found on sloping terrain near streams and rivers, or in forested gullies, but not by any means restricted to such habitats. Green Warbler breeds in montane deciduous (especially beech) and mixed forests. Migrants also frequent bushy areas.

ARCTIC WARBLER *Phylloscopus borealis*

L 12 cm.

IDENTIFICATION N Europe. Very similar to Greenish Warbler, but averages larger, stouter and more attenuated, with relatively larger head, flatter crown and proportionally longer wings (with slightly longer primary projection) and shorter tail, but as the two species are very unlikely to be seen together in most of our region these differences are difficult to compare. Differences in calls and songs are diagnostic. Specific identity of non-calling birds problematic, but concentration on a combination of features should resolve the issue. Arctic typically has conspicuously pale pinkish or straw-coloured legs, while Greenish typically has darker, greyer legs, although many Greenish, especially 1st-year birds in autumn, have greyish-pink

Plate page 700



legs that appear very pale in some lights. The large pale bill of Arctic has often been quoted as a useful field feature, but individual variation makes this

invalid; Greenish typically has a stronger bill than the more familiar Chiffchaff and Willow Warbler, and in fact often has more extensive pale on bill than Arctic. The latter usually has dark tip to lower mandible, while many Greenish lack dark tip or show only a dusky smudge, but there is much overlap. Nonetheless, bill base is deeper in many Arctic and this creates a distinctly large- and heavy-billed impression in such individuals. The supercilium of Arctic is brighter and clearer and is exceptionally long, extending further behind the eye than on Greenish, tapering towards the nape; typically, supercilium of Greenish broadens markedly and ends quite squarely midway between the eye and the nape, but some birds have a longer, tapering supercilium recalling Arctic. More important is the front of the head: the supercilia meet the base of the bill in Greenish, narrowly joining on lower forehead in some individuals, but in Arctic the supercilia begin abruptly just before the base of the bill so that the forehead and anterior lores are wholly dark; this dark olive area then extends widely through the eye and borders the lower part of the supercilium and is distinctly darker than the crown, whereas in Greenish the dark eye-stripe is not obviously darker than the crown and is diffuse on the anterior lore, starting clearly as a dusky spot in front of the eye. The ear-coverts of Arctic tend to be more strongly mottled with olive than in Greenish, which shows cleaner 'cheeks' in fresh plumage. The wing pattern is similar in the two species, although Arctic in fresh plumage has a strong tendency to show a second wing bar, on the median coverts (rare in *viridanus* race of Greenish but frequent also in southern *nitidus* and vagrant *plumbeitarsus*). The tertials are unusually lacking in contrast, but Greenish is often very similar with the centres only a shade darker than the fringes. The underparts of Arctic are more sullied with grey than on fresh Greenish (of races *viridanus* and *plumbeitarsus*), especially on breast and flanks, but both can

show a pale yellowish suffusion (but never as strong as in *nitidus* race of Greenish). Vagrant eastern race *plumbeitarsus* of Greenish ('Two-barred Greenish') also tends to have darker grey legs than the other races of Greenish, and broader wing bars than in Arctic, so is less likely to be confused. Arctic is very active when feeding, moving quickly through the foliage, darting between perches with less wing- and tail-flicking than Greenish. Flight action between trees and bushes stronger, less fluttery, than Greenish. In the hand, the 1st primary is no more than 3 mm longer than primary coverts (5–10 mm longer in Greenish) and Arctic lacks emargination on 5th primary shown by Greenish. See also Eastern Crowned Warbler.

SEX/AGE Males average larger and longer-winged than females. 1st-year birds in autumn are in fresh plumage, whereas adults have wings and tail abraded (although less markedly so than in adult Greenish); 1st-year birds also tend to be brighter and may show a weak yellowish suffusion to underparts, which are typically drabber in adults.

VOICE Call quite distinctive and readily and repeatedly uttered, a sharp, almost metallic 'dzik' or 'dzrt', recalling sharper version of call of White-throated Dipper. Song a characteristic, far-carrying, monotonous but fairly melodious rattle, recalling main song phrase of Wood Lark with a touch of Lesser Whitethroat in tonal quality; can be rendered 'dyrryrryrryrryrry ...'. Recalls Bonelli's Warbler to some extent but rattle is longer (about three seconds) and often changes abruptly in pitch. Periods between 'rattles' are usually interspersed with distinctive call notes.

STATUS/HABITAT Scarce in N Scandinavia, but fairly common further east. Winters in SE Asia. Breeds in birch or fairly open coniferous woodland, often on slopes, and in willow scrub in the northern 'taiga' zone and at the edge of the tundra; frequently near water. Migrants frequent both wooded and bushy areas.

PALLAS'S LEAF WARBLER *Phylloscopus proregulus*

Pallas's Warbler, Lemon-rumped Warbler

L 9.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Asian vagrant (breeds from C Siberia eastwards and southwards). The most attractive and smallest of the *Phylloscopus*, little larger than a Goldcrest. If seen well, the combination of prominent pale supercilium and median crown-stripe, pale yellowish rump patch, double wing bars and whitish tertial edges makes identification easy. When fresh the entire supercilium, the median crown-stripe and both wing bars are yellow, but when worn these areas turn pale yellowish or even whitish, with strongest shade of yellow remaining on supercilium in area above and in front of eye. In poorer views, especially with bird overhead in shade of tree canopy when rump or crown-stripe not visible, invites confusion with Yellow-browed or Hume's Leaf Warblers. Pallas's Leaf normally flits actively through the foliage, freely hovering briefly like a kinglet on outside of canopy and showing clear pale rump, or hanging upside down in tit-like fashion, habits not usually employed by Yellow-browed or Hume's Leaf, which also lack pale rump patch. The median crown-stripe can be hard to see even in close views if plumage 'sleeked down', but when feathers are raised it can be very striking; Yellow-browed often shows (and Hume's Leaf sometimes shows) a lighter olive crown centre, but this

median crown-stripe is rather faint and is not yellow or whitish, and the sides of the crown are not so contrastingly dark. In spite of its name, fresh Yellow-browed usually has a weaker yellow coloration to the supercilium (lacking the deep, almost orange-yellow, tone shown by fresh Pallas's Leaf above and in front of eye) and the wing bars, and the dark eye-stripe is less prominent. Most Pallas's Leaf are much brighter than Yellow-browed (and particularly Hume's Leaf), with more obvious yellow and bright green in their plumage, but others are distinctly duller and less striking in appearance. Compare also Firecrest, which is also a strikingly patterned bird of similar size.

VOICE Call (often rather infrequently given) is a weak, soft, slightly nasal 'sooe' or 'djuee', lower in pitch and lacking piercing quality of call of Yellow-browed (being slightly reminiscent of European Greenfinch), or a more monosyllabic 'deeh'. Song, unlikely to be heard in our region, is a remarkably loud, sweet and prolonged, varied medley of trills and twitters, incorporating mimicry, uttered from top of tall tree.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Europe). In natural range, breeds in mixed and coniferous forests of taiga zone. On migration found in a wider variety of woodland types and in bushy areas.

Plate page 700

YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER *Phylloscopus inornatus*

Plate page 700

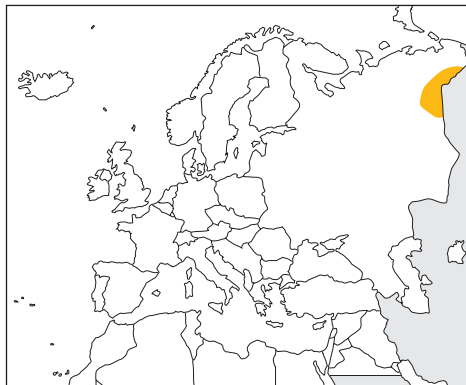
Inornate Warbler

L 10 cm.

IDENTIFICATION

N Urals only. One of our smallest *Phylloscopus* and very similar to Hume's Leaf Warbler (q.v.) which is often treated as conspecific. The dull olive upperparts and creamy-whitish underparts coupled with prominent supercilium and greater-covert bar suggest Greenish Warbler, and although Yellow-browed is smaller the size difference may not be apparent in the field. Yellow-browed has a finer bill than Greenish, although as in Greenish the lower mandible is often distinctly pale, except for the dark tip. In fresh plumage, Yellow-browed usually shows a short bar on the median coverts like *plumbeitarsus* Greenish (or a few *viridanus*) and some Arctic Warblers, but may be distinguished by having broad whitish edges and tips to the contrastingly dark-centred tertials, a much longer greater-covert bar which reaches scapulars, and a contrasting dusky patch at the base of the secondaries behind this bar (a feature shared with somewhat similar Pallas's Leaf Warbler, q.v. for discussion). Yellow-browed has been found overwintering in our region, usually in the company of Chiffchaffs, and by late winter the wing bars are reduced and the tertial fringes and tips may be lost through abrasion, but the small size compared with Chiffchaff, small bill, as well as dusky primary patch and distinctive call, are useful features on which to concentrate. Yellow-browed is a canopy bird, very active in the foliage, and often joins foraging parties of other small birds.

VOICE Call, frequently given, is distinctive, being very similar to that of Coal Tit, a plaintive, high-pitched, rising 'tswe-eet' or 'tsuee-eep'. Short, thin, almost



Goldcrest-like song is basically an excited repetition of the call note; may be rendered 'tsee-oo tsee-oo-eep tsee-eep'. Bursts of song may sometimes be uttered by wintering individuals towards spring.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly scarce on breeding grounds in our region. Winters in S Asia. Also a regular vagrant throughout Europe and to Madeira, Canary Is, N Africa and Middle East: sometimes found wintering (typically in willows near water). Breeds in deciduous, mixed and coniferous forest, favouring more open or stunted tracts, often near water. In winter quarters favours all kinds of wooded habitats, including gardens, groves and tall scrub.

HUME'S LEAF WARBLER *Phylloscopus humei*

Plate page 700

Hume's Yellow-browed Warbler, Buff-browed Warbler

L 10 cm

IDENTIFICATION Asian vagrant (breeds C Asia eastwards). Compared with very similar Yellow-browed Warbler (with which it is often considered conspecific) is drabber, more 'washed-out' overall, with median-covert bar shorter and less obvious or completely absent, and pale buff (rather than creamy-yellow) wash to supercilium and wing bars when fresh. The upperparts are more greyish-olive (less green), contrasting with brighter wings in fresh plumage, the crown is more brownish-grey with virtually no greenish tinge, and the underparts are duller and greyer, offering less of a contrast with the upperparts. The dark centres to the flight feathers, tertials and greater coverts are not so contrastingly dark, this being especially noticeable on the tertials, which are also less strikingly pale-edged: in consequence wing looks more uniform than in Yellow-browed, usually showing just one broad wing bar. The legs are darker grey-brown, with pinkish soles to the feet (in Yellow-browed rear tarsus at least is also pinkish-brown), and the lower mandible has more extensive blackish, only the base being pinkish (Yellow-browed has dark restricted to tip). The head pattern is also often more subdued, with the supercilium diffusing in front of the eye (supercilia virtually meet on forehead in Yellow-browed), but some apparent Hume's Leaf have a supercilium that is well defined to bill base as in Yellow-browed. In worn plumage in late winter some of these features may be lost; although Hume's Leaf then

becomes even drabber, the lack of sharp contrast between upperparts and underparts, the largely dark lower mandible and darker legs, as well as call, remain useful identification clues. In both species, supercilium wears whitish and wing bars wear narrower and whiter (however, in Hume's Leaf the median-covert bar often becomes more visible in worn plumage). In the hand, the nasal hairs of Yellow-browed are numerous and reasonably prominent, but few and only just visible through the feathers in *humei* (nasal hairs should not be confused with rictal bristles, which are similar in both forms); the wing formula shows some overlap. One of the calls of Hume's Leaf is very similar to that of Greenish Warbler and confusion is possible, but Hume's Leaf has conspicuous whitish fringes and tips to contrastingly dark-centred tertials, a longer greater-covert bar and a contrasting dark shade at base of secondaries as in Yellow-browed, all lacking in Greenish, and additionally the bill is considerably finer and darker, lacking the extensively pinkish lower mandible of Greenish. Has been found overwintering in our region, usually in the company of Chiffchaffs, and by late winter the wing bars are reduced and the tertial fringes and tips may be lost through abrasion, but the small size compared with Chiffchaff, small bill, as well as dusky secondary patch and distinctive call, are useful features on which to concentrate. As with Yellow-browed, an active, canopy-living bird that

often joins foraging parties of other small birds. See also Pallas's Leaf Warbler.

VOICE Very different from Yellow-browed Warbler. Typical call, frequently uttered, is a short, sweet, loose 'wesoo'. Also gives a sparrow-like 'ch'wee' or 'ch'leep' (similar to, but slightly weaker and slower than, call of Greenish Warbler); another call often given in winter is a weak, rather off-key 'sweeoo', similar to call of eastern Chiffchaff. Song an excited repetition of the 'wesoo' call, often followed by a thin, rising, nasal

rasping 'zweeeeeeeeeeeee' of finch-like quality (recalling a drawn-out version of Redwing's call).

TAXONOMY Often treated as conspecific with Yellow-browed Warbler *P. inornatus*.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Europe, Middle East). In natural range, breeds in montane deciduous, mixed or coniferous forest, frequently in more open tracts or around clearings. In winter quarters occurs in a variety of woodland habitats and also gardens, groves and tall scrub.

RADDE'S WARBLER *Phylloscopus schwarzi*

Plate page 702

L 12.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Asian vagrant (breeds C Siberia eastwards). A large, very skulking *Phylloscopus*, usually attracting attention by its nervous, weak 'chrep' call uttered as it moves through vegetation almost at ground level. Can be either dingy olive, shading yellowish below, or brown and buff, and has a conspicuous supercilium and pinkish legs; unlike other *Phylloscopus* (except Dusky), has an almost rounded tail tip (slightly notched when closed). Likely to be confused only with Dusky, but Radde's is slightly larger and relatively larger-headed, longer-bodied and longer-tailed and has a fairly short and relatively deep-based, blunt-tipped, pale bill; Dusky more recalls Chiffchaff in build, with fine, more sharply-pointed, mainly dark bill (although lower mandible pinkish with dark tip), whereas Radde's has a pale bill with brownish-horn culmen and (mostly in autumn/winter) a dark subterminal shading on lower mandible. (Note: some Radde's have finer bills, but they are still shorter and deeper-based than in Dusky and show a more strongly decurved tip to upper mandible.) The pale, strong and prominent legs are obvious as the bird clammers and hops through low cover; legs of Dusky are thinner and darker (usually reddish-brown, with paler rear tarsus). Majority of autumn birds have olive-green plumage tones above and sulphur-yellow tones below (at most only faintly indicated in Dusky), the yellowish belly and duller flanks contrasting with the warm buff undertail coverts. Brown-and-buff individuals are most easily confused with Dusky, but Radde's often shows a greenish panel on flight feathers and a greenish tone to rump/upptail coverts. Head pattern usually differs significantly: Radde's has a broad (often yellowish) and very long supercilium that tapers towards rear and is

typically (but not always) broadest above and in front of eye, becoming more diffuse in front of eye and more strongly tinged with buff; dark eye-stripe also becomes more diffuse between eye and bill, often appearing to terminate before bill base; darker shade along sides of crown above supercilium often more apparent than in Dusky. By contrast, Dusky has a narrower and slightly shorter supercilium that is sharply-defined and whitish in front of eye, but usually distinctly buffish from above eye rearwards (the reverse of Radde's); dark eye-stripe is also better-defined between eye and bill than in Radde's. Behaviour as that of Dusky, although not known to forage in tree canopy, instead typically keeps close to ground (except when singing), and is often frustratingly difficult to see well.

SEX/AGE All birds in fresh plumage in autumn, but adults probably never so strongly washed yellowish below as are some (but not all) 1st-years.

VOICE Contact call softer, lower, less emphatic and looser (slightly slurred) compared to Dusky Warbler, a low, quiet, nasal, often irregularly repeated 'chrep', 'chep' or 'tek'. A double call, 'tek-tch', is lacking in repertoire of Dusky. Also gives a nervous soft whistling 'pwit'. Song, unlikely to be heard in our region, a prolonged series of rich, liquid, staccato, rattled phrases, with substantial pauses between each phrase (so that they seem like individual short song bursts), uttered with strength and vigour of Common Nightingale.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Europe). In natural range, breeds in open woodland with dense undergrowth, bushy forest edges, bushy clearings and thickets. On passage and in winter favours bushy areas, often mixed with tall grass, and also damp thickets (a wetter habitat than is characteristic in breeding season).

DUSKY WARBLER *Phylloscopus fuscatus*

Plate page 702

L 11.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Asian vagrant (breeds C Siberia eastwards and southwards). A skulking brown and buff warbler, recalling Chiffchaff in proportions, but has relatively shorter wings, giving 'longer rear-end' impression; the tail appears round-tipped when slightly opened, but when closed shows a distinct notch. Most likely to be confused with Radde's (q.v. for fuller discussion), sharing latter's skulking behaviour and sharp, tongue-clicking calls. Dusky is dark brownish above, buffish-white below, and has a whitish supercilium that is buffish above and behind eye when fresh; both the supercilium and buff undertail coverts are less contrasting than in Radde's, but supercilium is more defined between eye and bill. Dusky lacks the strong olive and yellow plumage tones shown by many Radde's (especially 1st-years), but plumage tones can change with viewing conditions: a bird that appears

dull and dark in shady undergrowth could appear pinkish-buff below when well lit, with bright sunlight even bringing out slight grey or olive tones above. The bill is fine and weak, although slightly thicker than that of Chiffchaff, appearing dark in the field, with dark brown upper mandible and terminal third of lower mandible. The legs are slim, in coloration and thickness not unlike those of Willow Warbler, varying from dull yellowish to dark brownish, typically medium brown or reddish-brown with paler and yellower hind tarsus and soles of feet. Progresses through undergrowth in manner recalling Winter Wren with hunched and neckless posture, nervously calling and flicking both wings, and with slightly elevated tail. Although favours feeding in undergrowth, may quite readily take to the trees and feed in canopy, a habit not shared by Radde's. Many Chiffchaffs appear distinctly brown and

buff and readily forage on or close to the ground; such birds in late autumn, especially Siberian race *tristis*, are a trap for the unwary. Chiffchaffs, however, have both bill and legs virtually all blackish, a more deeply cleft tail with sharper tail corners, paler underparts, and often a hint of yellow at the bend of the wing and olive on the secondaries, tail edges and back to uppertail coverts (although this greenish tinge is often not apparent in the field). In addition the supercilium is usually shorter and less distinct, the eye-stripe is usually less distinct, the lower mandible is darker, the legs are usually darker and the flanks and undertail coverts are usually paler, less brownish. Dusky has underwing coverts and axillaries tinged with warm buff, while these areas are pale yellowish in Chiffchaff, but this distinction is hard to see in the field. Brown-and-white *acredula* Willow Warblers could be similarly confused, especially as their bare-part coloration recalls that of Dusky, but are typically longer-winged, with deeper tail cleft, whiter supercilia and whiter underparts, and are unlikely to forage hidden in the undergrowth (they are often active in the canopy). Calls of

Dusky are, of course, quite different to both Chiffchaff and Willow Warbler.

SEX/AGE 1st-year birds in autumn often have slight olive tone to upperparts and slight yellowish wash to breast, lacking in adults.

VOICE Call sharper and more emphatic than Radde's, a sudden, often nervously repeated, low, clipped 'chip' or 'tip' or 'tak'. Song, unlikely to be heard in our region, a repeated single four- or five-note phrase, 'chewee, chewee, chewee, chewee' with some slight variation; some have phrases more varied and recall Radde's, but change in pitch and tone between each phrase less sudden and song lacks the strength, richness and rattling trills of Radde's.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Europe, Morocco, Madeira, Cyprus). In natural range, breeds in birch and willow thickets, bushy areas in open forest and dwarf willows, birch scrub and low conifers in sub-alpine zone or on fringes of tundra, quite often by water. In winter quarters and on passage in all kinds of scrubby areas, especially near water, and also tall grass, fringes of reedbeds and damp crops.

BONELLI'S WARBLER *Phylloscopus bonelli*

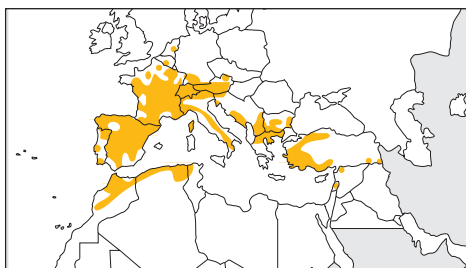
Plate page 702

**Bonelli's Warbler, Western Bonelli's Warbler (*P. b. bonelli*);
Balkan Warbler, Eastern Bonelli's Warbler (*P. b. orientalis*)**

L 11 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Resembles Chiffchaff and Willow Warbler in size and proportions, but underparts uniform off-white and upperparts brown or greyish-brown with bright yellowish-green rump and fringes to tail and flight feathers; facial patterning unusually weak for a *Phylloscopus*. The panel on the closed primaries and secondaries appears almost golden in most lights, and contrasts strongly with the dark, whitish-fringed, tertials, dark alula and dark bar formed by tips to primary coverts. The yellowish rump and uppertail coverts are usually hard to see unless bird hovers briefly while feeding, or wing-flicks, and birds of the eastern race *orientalis* and 1st-years of both races have the yellowish in the rump weakly indicated. Chiffchaff of Siberian race *tristis* similarly dull brown and whitish with weak olive in wings, rump and tail, but has blackish bill and legs, shorter primaries, stronger supercilium and less strongly patterned wings (lacking the golden-green fringes to the flight feathers and primary coverts shown by Bonelli's). Bonelli's has a plainer, more 'washed-out' head pattern than most other *Phylloscopus*; although at certain angles the supercilium may be reasonably apparent (especially behind eye), the eye-stripe is very weakly developed and often indiscernible in front of eye. Most obvious feature of the head is the very dark eye with whitish orbital ring, which could suggest a small Olivaceous or a Booted Warbler (q.v. for comparison), a similarity also enhanced by the extensive pinkish lower mandible; Bonelli's, however, has strongly cleft tail tip, brownish or greyish-pink legs, longer primary projection than either, lacks whitish in outer tail feathers, sometimes shows yellow at bend of wing (like Chiffchaff) and, unless very worn, shows yellowish-green panel on more 'patterned' wings and is also typically 'phylloscopine' in behaviour. An arboreal warbler, very active, readily hovering and flycatching in short bursts as it works its way through the canopy. On passage, freely feeds in bushes and shrubs as well as trees.

SEX/AGE In autumn, 1st-year birds are in wholly fresh plumage, whereas adults have worn wings and tail (although some have fresh tertials).



VOICE Typical call of nominate race is a rising sweet 'pr'eee' or European Greenfinch-like 'dyoo-eee', although young birds may give a shorter call; typical call of *orientalis* is a characteristic shorter and harder 'tsiup' or 'chip'. Song of nominate race is a dry stuttering trill, lower and less prolonged than that of Wood Warbler and even in pitch, not descending the scale; can be rendered 'twee-wee-wee-wee ...'. Song of *orientalis* is a little shorter, weaker and less resonant, recalling Cirl Bunting in tone.

TAXONOMY Recent studies suggest eastern form *orientalis* (**Balkan Warbler**) merits full species status.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION 2 races (both illustrated). Nominat race of W Europe and NW Africa is replaced by *orientalis* ('Balkan Warbler' or 'Eastern Bonelli's Warbler') in SE Europe, Turkey and the Levant. The latter differs in call (see Voice), is paler and dingier, greyer-brown, above and slightly larger and longer than the nominate race (recalling Willow Warbler rather than Chiffchaff in proportions), with less prominent golden-green fringes to flight feathers.

HYBRIDS Occasional hybridization with Wood Warbler has been reported.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Poland, Romania.) Breeds in deciduous, mixed and coniferous forests (frequently of oak or pine), favouring more open tracts with some undergrowth, often in hills or mountains (especially in south). On passage, also frequents bushy habitats.

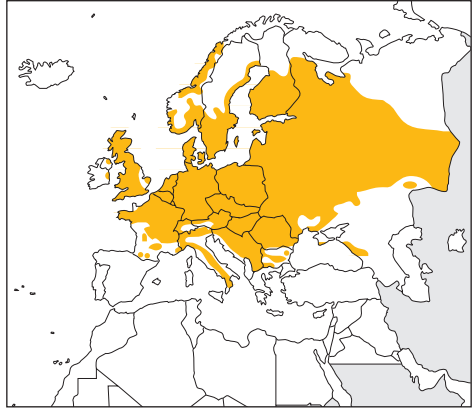
WOOD WARBLER *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

Plate page 702

L 12.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A large, plump *Phylloscopus* of mature woodland, with relatively long wings and short tail. From below, the broad 'shoulders' and long undertail coverts contribute to the rather triangular, short-tailed appearance, an impression enhanced by the long primary projection. In all plumages, the clear yellow supercilium, throat and upper breast contrast with the clean white of remainder of underparts, although in shade of tree canopy colours may appear subdued. The upperparts are bright olive-green, with yellower fringes to wing feathers and contrastingly dark centres to tertials (latter fringed with yellowish-white). Both bill and legs are very pinkish. These features vary little and add up to a very distinctive bird compared with many members of the genus, so much so that the unwary might be misled into thinking it a *Hippolais*, but the clear supercilium and relatively short, notched tail are typical *Phylloscopus* features. Beware bright yellowish Willow Warblers in fresh autumn plumage, which look so different from spring and summer birds. Rare individuals of Wood are distinctly duller, with grey-green upperparts and only a yellowish tinge to face and upper breast; these can be problematic, but size, shape, strikingly clean white lower breast to vent, dark-centred tertials with whitish fringes and pinkish bill and legs should assist identification. Wood Warblers are true forest birds, feeding and singing within the upper layers of the woodland canopy, actively flying from tree to tree and dropping to lower perches, before zooming upwards once more. Tend to hop about in foliage with rather crouched (Garden Warbler-like) posture.

SEX/AGE All plumages similar, although in autumn adults have worn primaries, secondaries and tail,



which are fresh on 1st-year birds.

VOICE Call a single mellow, somewhat plaintive 'pew'. Song distinctive, but compare Bonelli's Warbler. Two types of song are freely uttered and interchanged: a prolonged stuttering trill, starting slowly, then accelerating before ending in a metallic shivering ('zip zip zip-zip-zipzip-zizizizwrrrrr'); and a descending clear, mellow 'pew-pew-pew-pew-pew' (a repetition of the call note).

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. Mature deciduous and mixed woodlands with closed canopy and little or no undergrowth, often in hilly terrain. On passage (uncommon on southbound leg) will also resort to bushy areas, but less so than other *Phylloscopus*.

PLAIN LEAF WARBLER *Phylloscopus neglectus*

Plate page 701

Plain Willow Warbler

L 9 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Asian vagrant (breeds Iran eastwards). A very small, dumpy, drab warbler recalling eastern races of Chiffchaff in coloration (including bill and leg colours), but much smaller (Goldcrest-sized), relatively shorter-tailed and with a tiny, thin bill, and often shows a more pronounced pale eye-ring. In fresh plumage, dark tertials and tail offer more contrast with rest of upperparts than in Chiffchaff and 1st-year birds in autumn may show a weak yellowish wash to underparts. In worn plumage, distinctly greyer and whiter, less brown and buff, overall. Very active, moving rapidly through bushes and *Acacia* trees, gleaning insects from among leaves, often hovering briefly on outside of bushes. Calls and song are distinctive, and this species seems to be quite vocal away from breeding grounds. Unlikely to be mistaken

if seen well, but beware occasional small eastern Chiffchaffs, and it should be borne in mind that the small size of Plain Leaf Warbler may not be apparent in the field with lone birds.

SEX/AGE All birds in fresh plumage in autumn, but 1st-year birds have a weak yellow wash to supercilium and flanks, lacking in adults.

VOICE Call remarkable for a *Phylloscopus*, a short, harsh, fairly low-pitched 'djik' or longer 'djurrk' with an almost sparrow-like quality. Song a very short warbled phrase rising at end, preceded by two short notes, the whole phrase only about a second in duration.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Middle East). In natural range, breeds in open stands of juniper, pistachio or oak in mountains. In winter found in *Acacia* woodland and scrub in plains and especially in foothills.

CHIFFCHAFF *Phylloscopus collybita*

Plate page 701

Common Chiffchaff, Eurasian Chiffchaff; Iberian Chiffchaff (*P. c. brehmi*); **Canary Islands Chiffchaff** (*P. c. canariensis/exsul*); **Siberian Chiffchaff** (*P. c. tristis*); **Caucasian Chiffchaff** (*P. c. lorenzii*)

L 11 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Together with extremely similar Willow Warbler, the most widespread member of the genus in our region. A medium-sized 'leaf-warbler'

with a fine dark bill, slender dark legs, only moderate primary projection, fairly apparent supercilium, plain wings and very distinctive song. It is important to

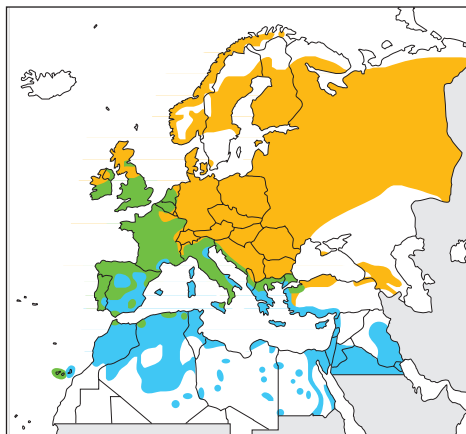
become familiar with the plumage patterning and variation in colour of Chiffchaff as a prelude to identifying many other small, plain warblers. See accounts of Booted, Greenish, Bonelli's, Plain Leaf and Dusky Warblers and, most importantly, Willow Warbler for discussions on separating these easily confused species. Chiffchaff varies considerably over its wide range (see Geographical Variation), but differences between races are compounded by intergradation and plumage wear. Chiffchaffs move through the foliage quite nervously and quickly, flicking wings and prominently dipping and wagging tail. The latter mannerism is most noticeable outside the breeding season, but seems not to be a habit shared by Willow Warbler; otherwise the two are similar in basic behaviour. Winter range much more northerly than other *Phylloscopus*; this is the only species likely to be encountered wintering in our region.

SEX/AGE Juveniles are more sullied brown on underparts and browner on upperparts than late summer adults, but both are similar by autumn.

VOICE All races have songs based on the familiar 'chiff-chaff' rhythm, but there is individual and regional variation; strength of delivery intensifies and notes may become slurred together when one individual is faced by rivalry from another songster. There is also a peculiar subsong, not often heard, that includes weak phrasing resembling that of Willow Warbler. **Nominate race and *abietinus*:** Most frequent call is a sudden 'hweet' (less disyllabic and 'questioning' than similar call of Willow Warbler and flatter in tone); from late summer onwards through the winter, another call freely given is a plaintive, rather flat or off-key 'peep' (although this call, suggesting a distressed domestic chick, is usually attributed to *abietinus*, it is given by both forms). Songs of both are the same, a monotonously repeated series of 'chif' and 'chaf' notes; 'chif-chaf-chif-chif-chaff ...'. Sequence of notes varies, often between one song burst and the next, and sounds also vary slightly (sometimes more like 'chip' and 'chap' or 'silp' and 'salp'). **Iberian/NW**

African race (*brehmii*): Calls are as nominate race/*abietinus*, but song distinctly different, a series of sharper notes, accelerating towards the end, when final notes may even recall terminal flourish of Willow Warbler but are drier in tone; has been rendered 'tit-tit-tit-tit-tit-tweet-tweet-chit-it-it-it-it'. **Canarian races (*canariensis* and *exsul*):** Calls include the typical 'hweet' and a very short, metallic 'chek' or 'chk'. Song is harsher, lower in pitch and briefer than that of nominate race/*abietinus*, with less rising and falling of notes. **Siberian race (*tristis*):** Typical call a plaintive, rising 'sweee' or 'peeppep', rather longer and more disyllabic than 'peep' of European forms. Song distinct from those of European forms, higher in pitch and more hurried; rather variable, but 'ch-ch-chewy-chewy-chewy-ch' followed by a pause is typical. **Caucasian race (*lorenzii*):** Call recalls Siberian race, a rather thin, rising 'peeeee', resembling call of Dunnock but weaker; calls of *abietinus* are less shrill in tone, typically a short, flatter 'peep' or fuller 'hweet'. Song very similar to that of nominate race/*abietinus*, but phrases are slightly shorter, slightly higher in pitch and more hesitant in delivery; song much less distinct from that of nominate race/*abietinus* than is that of Siberian race.

TAXONOMY Caucasian form *lorenzii* (breeding at higher elevations than, but locally slightly overlapping with, *abietinus*, reportedly without interbreeding) is sometimes treated as a full species or as a race of **Mountain Chiffchaff** *P. sindianus* when the latter (breeding C Asia to NW Himalayas) is treated as specifically distinct. Taxonomic position of chiffchaffs in mountains of NW Turkey still uncertain: they have



been described as a further race, *brevirostris*, showing mixed features between *abietinus* and *lorenzii*. Iberian/NW African form *brehmii* and other distinctive forms such as *canariensis* (with *exsul*) of Canary Is and Siberian *tristis* may also be worthy of specific status.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Considerable. 5 often intergrading mainland races in our region plus 2 isolated Canarian forms (nominate, *abietinus*, *brehmii*, *canariensis*, *tristis* and *lorenzii* illustrated). See also Voice section for differences in calls and songs. **European races** (nominate and *abietinus*, plus *brehmii*) have some olive in upperparts and yellowish in underparts, although yellow may be evident only at sides of breast and on bend of wing; in fresh plumage they can be almost uniform buff below, but *brehmii* (**Iberian Chiffchaff**) of Iberia/NW Africa may have underparts wholly yellowish, upperparts more yellowish-olive and lighter brown legs than other races. Song of *brehmii* also differs. More eastern *abietinus* is greyer and paler than nominate race, often with better-marked supercilium, and suggests Siberian *tristis*, but in fresh plumage shows some olive on crown and mantle and is brighter yellow at bend of wing. This is the longest-winged race, closely followed by *tristis*. **Canarian races** (*canariensis* of western Canary Is and *exsul* of Lanzarote: **Canary Islands Chiffchaff**) are isolated resident populations (European races occur on the islands on passage). Both are rather small, have very short wings and relatively longer, and more round-tipped, tails than European forms, they are dark brownish and buff races, washed yellow on lower underparts, and *canariensis* has distinctly pale legs; the song also differs somewhat. **Siberian race (*tristis*: 'Siberian Chiffchaff')**, breeding from just west of the Urals eastwards, occurs regularly, although uncommonly, as a migrant through the east of our region and some overwinter. (However, most records probably relate to the western population of *tristis* that shows some intermediate characters with *abietinus* and which is sometimes treated as a distinct race under the name '*fulvescens*'; the 'classic' eastern *tristis* is probably only a vagrant.) This race basically lacks yellow in underparts (except at very bend of wing, but underwing coverts, and hence bend of wing, paler yellow than in other races and often whitish in 'classic' *tristis*) and is light mouse-brown above (darker toned in 'classic' *tristis*); in fresh plumage, greenish feather fringes on wings and tail and greenish tone to rump contrast weakly with remainder of upperparts ('classic' *tristis* has green even more reduced) and the greater coverts are tipped pale greyish or dull whitish, creating a weak, but distinct palish wing bar (although

as both bill and legs of this race are very black confusion with Greenish Warbler is unlikely). It is whitish below, lacking yellow, but has buff wash (darkest in eastern *tristis*) on sides of breast, supercilium and flanks; ear-coverts often darker (dusky brown) than in other races. Calls and song of *tristis* also differ somewhat from those of European forms. **Caucasian race** (*lorenzii*: 'Caucasian Chiffchaff'), breeding in Caucasus and NE Turkey (winter quarters largely unknown, but certainly including lowland Iraq), is a drab brownish and whitish race, unlikely to be safely identified in the field away from its restricted breeding range. Very close to Siberian race *tristis*, but is more sullied brown on underparts and lacks greenish edges to rump, wing and tail feathers of fresh-plumaged *tristis* (these fringes may, however, be hard to see in the field in *tristis*); the undervying coverts are whitish or at most washed pale yellow (distinctly yellow in most other races, but often whitish in *tristis*), thus no yellow visible at bend of wing. The legs and bill are very dark, but the base of the lower mandible is distinctly paler than in many Siberian Chiffchaffs. The supercilia are quite prominent, clear whitish, narrowly meeting above base of bill (less obviously meeting or not meeting in other races), whitest from bill to above eye, sullied light buffy-brown behind eye (supercilium more uniform in other races). The tail appears relatively slightly longer

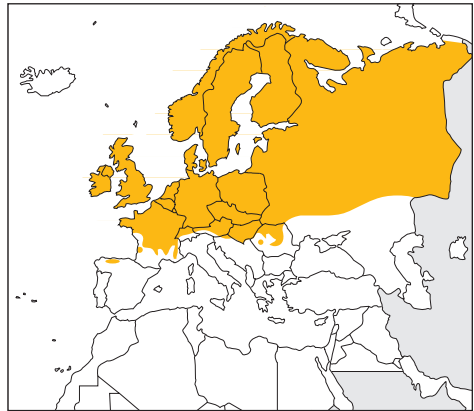
than that of other races, an impression exaggerated by the relatively short wings. In fresh plumage, *abietinus* (with which range marginally overlaps) has a green tinge to upperparts and dull yellowish wash to underparts, but when worn (i.e. in late spring and summer) becomes drab greyish and whitish, although yellow bend of wing sometimes visible (lacking in *lorenzii*, which is also rather browner, both above and below). Calls of *lorenzii* differ slightly from those of *abietinus*, being closer to *tristis*, but song is fairly similar to that of *abietinus*. In the hand, the wing is more rounded than in either *abietinus* or *tristis*, the 2nd primary falling between the 10th primary and the secondaries (falls between 7th and 8th primaries, rarely between 8th and 9th, in *abietinus* and *tristis*), and the distance between tips of 1st and 2nd primary is 18.5–21.5 mm (22–29 mm in *abietinus* and *tristis*).

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Faeroes. Very scarce in winter in NW Europe.) Deciduous and mixed woodland (also pure coniferous woodland in north and east of range), copses, parks and large gardens; locally in hedgerows with tall trees, tall scrub or even quite low bushy thickets. Caucasian race (*lorenzii*) breeds at upper limits of montane forest and in subalpine scrub above tree-line. In winter, frequents wooded areas and bushes, especially near water, and even reedbeds.

WILLOW WARBLER *Phylloscopus trochilus*

L 11.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Together with very similar Chiffchaff, the most widespread 'leaf-warbler' of our region. Most easily separated from Chiffchaff by very different song and slightly different call; when silent may still be separated with care, although some field marks are by no means infallible because of variation in both species. Compared with marginally smaller Chiffchaff, tends to be more elongated and sleeker, with relatively flatter (less rounded) crown and with a relatively longer primary projection (primary projection equals length of exposed tertials in Willow, typically about half exposed tertial length or less in Chiffchaff); some Willow, however, are surprisingly small and dumpy (probably small females) and resemble Chiffchaff, but greater primary projection useful in such cases. Legs usually paler than those of Chiffchaff, being pinkish or reddish-brown, but some have dusky-brown legs, and some Chiffchaffs (especially of Iberian/NW African race *brehmii*) have distinctly light brown rather than blackish legs; juvenile Willow, however, has very bright pinkish-orange legs which are not matched by Chiffchaff of any age. Bill usually has brighter pinkish base to lower mandible than in Chiffchaff, but bill blackest in eastern races of Chiffchaff and juvenile Chiffchaff of European races has quite brightly patterned bill; conversely, many Willow are dull-billed in spring. Supercilium usually cleaner and more contrasting than in Chiffchaff, often washed clear lemon-yellow (dull yellow or buffish in Chiffchaff). Many Willow have paler, diffusely mottled, ear-coverts (ear-coverts typically darker and often virtually uniformly coloured in Chiffchaff), the dark eye-stripe is clearer in Willow, but the whitish crescent below the eye is more striking in Chiffchaff. Overall coloration variable, but typically has a cleaner contrast between upperparts and underparts than Chiffchaff, paler upperparts overall, and lacks obvious buff tones in underparts (having cleaner yellow coloration on throat and breast in western races). Siberian Willow of race *yakutensis* is the drabdest, having (in



extreme cases) greyish-brown upperparts and greyish-white underparts, although in fresh plumage a hint of olive may be discerned above, and both bill and leg colours are dull and dingy; these birds resemble *abietinus* Chiffchaffs, but the flanks are distinctly cleaner and whiter and the primary projection is longer. In fresh plumage from late summer onwards, nominate-race Willow Warblers (particularly 1st-years) are basically very yellow below and very olive above, lacking obvious buffish tones present in yellowish areas of Chiffchaff, but beware *brehmii* race of Chiffchaff, which is also very yellowish-olive above and yellowish below and has paler legs than other races, but has the short primary projection typical of the species. Adults of eastern race *acredula* are mainly whitish below in fresh plumage, with some yellow on throat and breast (much as in spring), but juveniles range from rather yellow below (much as in nominate race) to rather whitish, with buffy-yellow tinge to throat, breast and flanks. A colour type, known as 'ever-

Plate page 701

smanni’, which predominates in the most northerly populations of *acredula*, lacks green and yellow in plumage and can be very confusing; such birds may also show a very weak bar at tips of greater coverts, but compared with Siberian Chiffchaffs of race *tristis* they lack strong buff elements in plumage, the flanks especially being whiter, and have a longer primary projection. Little difference in behaviour between the two, but Willow dips tail only erratically, when changing perches, lacking the repeated downward action and wagging often employed by Chiffchaff while feeding. Flight stronger and slightly more bounding than that of Chiffchaff when moving between bushes. Some adult Willow may even suggest Wood Warbler in colour of underparts, but latter is bulkier (‘broad-shouldered’), with relatively shorter tail, and has more strongly patterned wings (with whitish edges to dark-centred tertials). Winters further south in Africa than most other members of the genus, thus highly unlikely to overwinter anywhere in our region. In the hand, wing formulae differ: Willow has 2nd primary longer than 7th, 6th primary not emarginated; Chiffchaff has 2nd primary shorter than 7th, 6th primary emarginated.

SEX/AGE Males average larger and longer-winged than females. In autumn all birds are in fresh plumage, but nominate race may be aged as 1st-years have almost wholly yellow underparts, whereas adults have a paler yellow wash below, showing whitish on belly at least. Willow Warbler is unique among European passerines in having two complete moults per year, one after end of breeding season, the other in the winter quarters.

VOICE Typical call a soft ‘hooet’ with rising inflection, similar to call of western races of Chiffchaff but

more disyllabic and rising, a useful analogy being that ‘hooet’ of Willow is a question, whereas ‘hweet’ of Chiffchaff is a statement! Song distinctive: a series of delicate, sweet or liquid, rather melancholy ‘sweet’ notes gradually increasing in volume, before descending scale in a long terminal flourish; beginning of song can sound quite Common Chaffinch-like. (Note: subsong of Chiffchaff and terminal phrasing of *brehmii* race of latter can suggest Willow Warbler.)

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION 3 races (nominate and *acredula* illustrated). Nominate race found over most of Europe is greenest and yellowest, intergrading with *acredula* of Scandinavia and Ukraine eastwards, which is lighter olive above and paler yellow below (a colour type, ‘*eversmanni*’, lacking green and yellow in plumage is most frequent within this latter race). Drabdest birds, *yakutensis*, breed much further east in Siberia but pass through Middle East and Egypt on migration; they are greyish-olive above and dingy greyish-white below.

HYBRIDS Hybridization with Chiffchaff has been very rarely proven, but is possibly more frequent and may account for the occasional appearance of birds with mixed songs.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Portugal, Faeroes.) Woodland and scrub of a wide variety of types, ranging from mature woodland to hedgerows and scrub in open country, clearings, plantations, heathland, parks, gardens and bushy areas in the tundra. Prefers more open tracts of woodland or secondary growth to dense mature forests, and largely avoids tall, pure stands of spruce and other conifers.

RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET *Regulus calendula*

Plate below

L 10 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Differs from Goldcrest in being darker greyish-olive on head and upperparts and rather warmer buff on lower underparts; there are clean whitish areas before and after eye, more striking than the vaguely paler eye-surround of Goldcrest, and Ruby-crowned lacks the black line at sides of chin shown by Goldcrest. Wing pattern also differs from Goldcrest’s; has straighter bar on greater coverts (Goldcrest’s bar appears angled, as bases of primaries are also whitish) and narrower (less square or oval) black patch at base of secondaries. Males have a very inconspicuous red or orange crown patch (lacking in females) and often appear plain-headed like juvenile Goldcrest, but, given good views, crown patch should be visible as a spot towards rear of crown centre; the patch lacks a dark border (crown-stripe of Goldcrest is yellow or orange with obvious black sides in both sexes).

Beware juvenile Goldcrest, which has plain crown and could easily suggest this species, but by early autumn young Goldcrest has crown pattern of adult.

SEX/AGE Adult and 1st-year males have red or orange crown patch, absent in females. Juvenile male lacks crown patch, but by first autumn is inseparable from adults.

VOICE Call a thin ‘ze-zeet’, harsher than call of Goldcrest. Song, unlikely to be heard in our region, is loud and ringing and very different from songs of other *Regulus*; begins with several thin ‘tsee’ notes followed by descending ‘tew’ notes and ending with a rich warbling ‘teedadee-teedadee-teedadee ...’.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Iceland). In natural range, breeds in coniferous forest. In winter found in a variety of woodland types, including broadleaved, and also alder or willow thickets.

RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET



WARBLERS

GRACEFUL
PRINIA
(p. 648)

palaestinae

deltae

(fresh, autumn/
spring)

mimica

MOUSTACHED
WARBLER
(p. 654)

(fresh,
spring)

juv

ZITTING CISTICOLA
(FAN-TAILED WARBLER)
(p. 647)

SCRUB
WARBLER
(p. 648)

theresae

juv

AQUATIC
WARBLER
(p. 655)

(fresh, spring)

SEDGE WARBLER
(p. 656)

**PALLAS'S
GRASSHOPPER
WARBLER**
(p. 649)



(yellowish variant)



**LANCEOLATED
WARBLER**
(p. 650)



WARBLERS

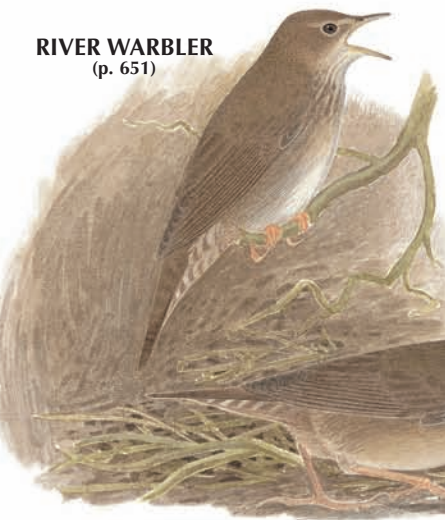
1st-winter

1st-winter



sparsimstriata

RIVER WARBLER
(p. 651)



1st-winter

1st-winter



**COMMON
GRASSHOPPER
WARBLER**
(p. 651)



(yellowish variant)



1st-winter

**SAVI'S
WARBLER**
(p. 652)



fusca



**GRAY'S
GRASSHOPPER
WARBLER**
(p. 653)

WARBLERS

BLYTH'S REED WARBLER
(p. 657)

(fresh, spring)

juv

(fresh, spring)

juv

PADDYFIELD
WARBLER
(p. 656)

CAPE VERDE
WARBLER
(p. 659)

juv

juv

fuscus
(fresh, spring)
(CASPIAN REED
WARBLER)

MARSH
WARBLER
(p. 659)

(fresh,
spring)

(fresh,
spring)

EUROPEAN
REED WARBLER
(p. 660)

juv

**CLAMOROUS
REED WARBLER**
(p. 660)

(fresh,
autumn)

juv

**BASRA REED
WARBLER**
(p. 661)

GREAT REED WARBLER
(p. 661)

**THICK-BILLED
WARBLER**
(p. 662)

(fresh,
autumn)

juv

CETTI'S WARBLER
(p. 647)

WARBLERS

OLIVACEOUS WARBLER
(p. 663)

elaiea
(fresh, spring)

opaca

reiseri
(fresh, spring)

opaca
(fresh, spring)

elaiea

juv

juv

(fresh, spring)

(fresh, spring)

juv (autumn)

juv (autumn)

MELODIOUS WARBLER
(p. 666)

ICTERINE WARBLER
(p. 666)

BOOTED WARBLER
(p. 664)

WARBLERS



juv

(fresh, spring)

(fresh, spring)

(fresh, spring)

**UPCHER'S
WARBLER**
(p. 665)

**OLIVE-TREE
WARBLER**
(p. 665)

♀

juv

♂

(fresh, spring)

**GARDEN
WARBLER**
(p. 677)

BARRED WARBLER
(p. 675)

WARBLERS



1st-winter ♂

juv

♀

♀

CYPRUS
WARBLER
(p. 672)

♂

RÜPPEL'S
WARBLER
(p. 673)

♂

juv

juv

1st-winter ♂

♂

♀

ARABIAN
WARBLER
(p. 674)

♂

1st-year ♂
crassirostris

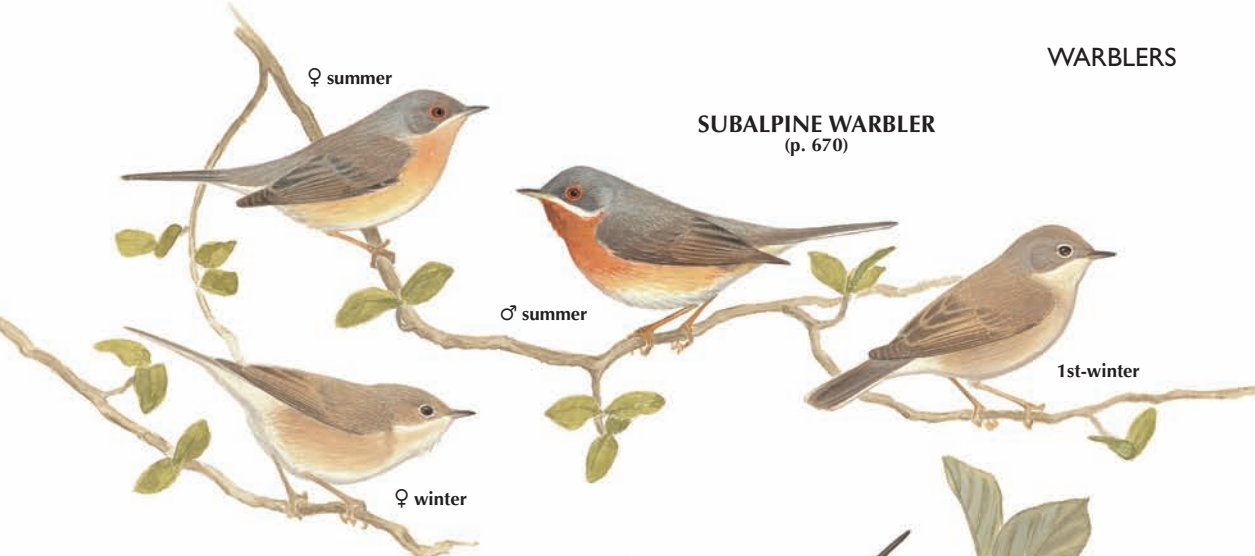
juv

♀

ORPHEAN WARBLER
(p. 674)

♂ *crassirostris*
(dark-eyed variant)

SUBALPINE WARBLER
(p. 670)



♂ *rubescens*

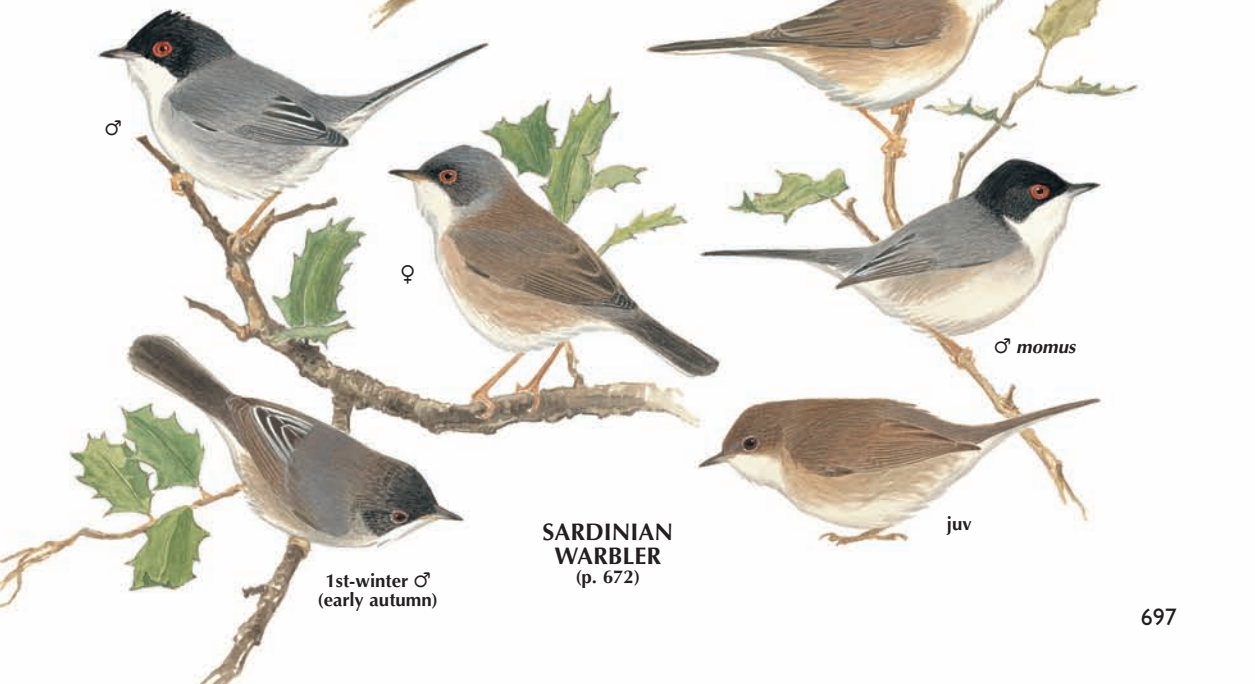
MÉNÉTRIES'S
WARBLER
(p. 671)



♀ *momus*

♂ *momus*

SARDINIAN
WARBLER
(p. 672)



1st-winter ♂
(early autumn)

juv

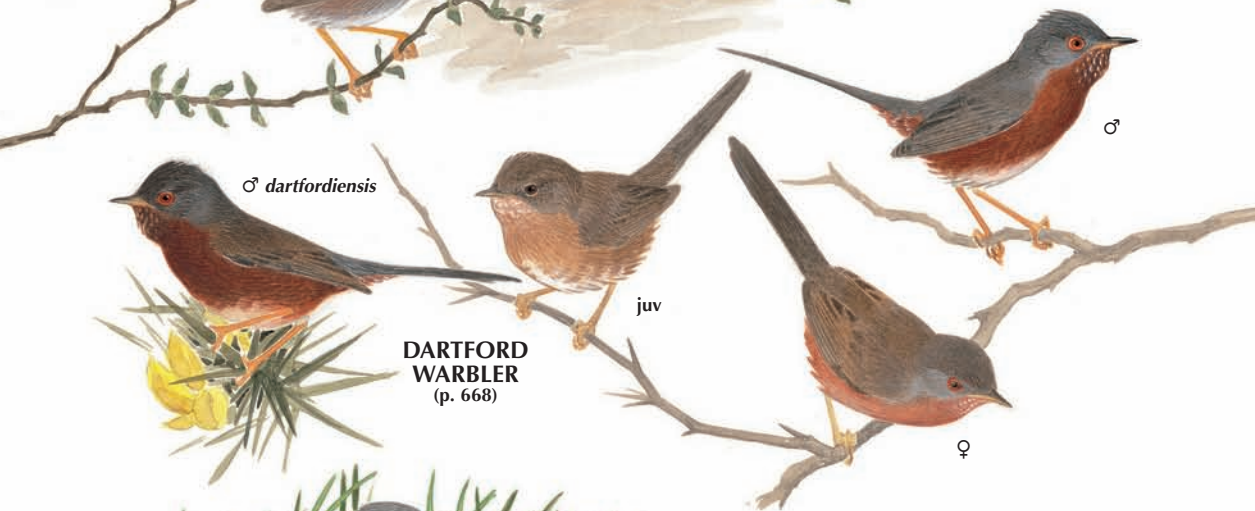
WARBLERS

MARMORA'S WARBLER
(p. 668)

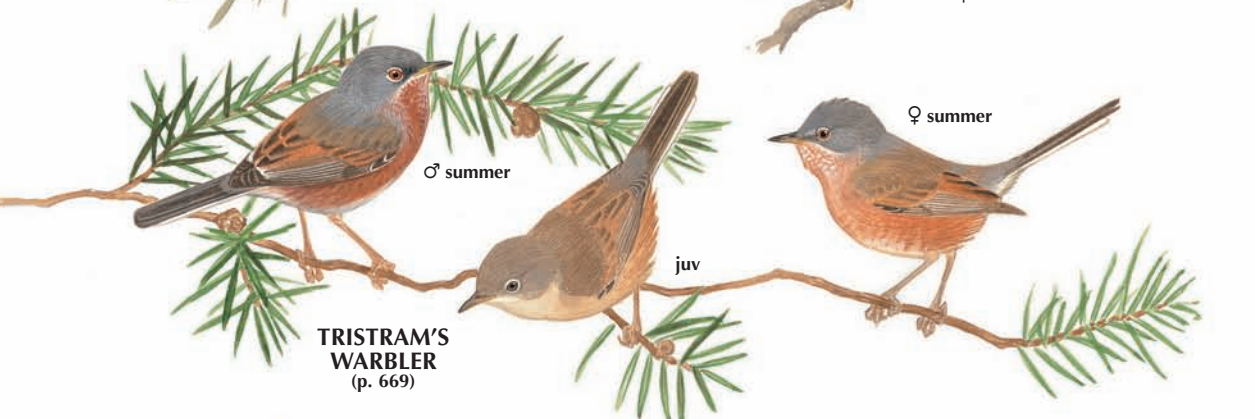


♂ *dartfordiensis*

DARTFORD
WARBLER
(p. 668)



TRISTRAM'S
WARBLER
(p. 669)



♀ summer

♂ summer

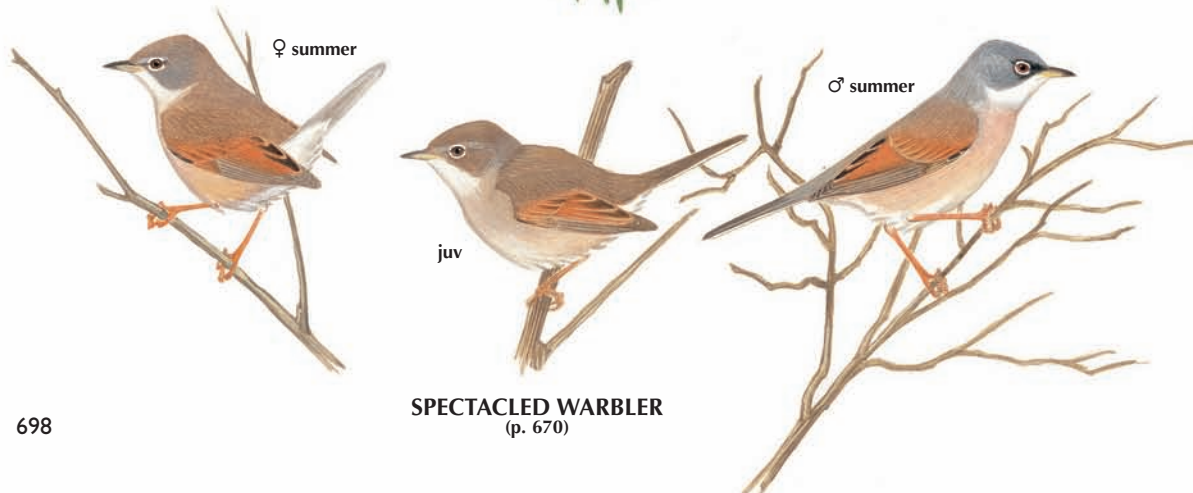
juv

♀ summer

♂ summer

juv

SPECTACLED WARBLER
(p. 670)



**DESERT
WARBLER**
(p. 673)

deserti

**LESSER
WHITETHROAT**
(p. 675)

(fresh, autumn
or early spring)

juv

althaea
(HUME'S
WHITETHROAT)

blythi
(fresh, autumn
or early spring)

**COMMON
WHITETHROAT**
(p. 676)

minula
(DESERT
WHITETHROAT)

♂ summer
icterops

heineken
(melanistic
variant)

BLACKCAP
(p. 677)

WARBLERS

(fresh, spring)

**GREENISH
WARBLER**
(p. 680)

nitidus
1st-winter
(fresh, autumn)

nitidus
(fresh, spring)

nitidus
(GREEN WARBLER)

1st-winter
(fresh, autumn)

**ARCTIC
WARBLER**
(p. 681)

**PALLAS'S LEAF
WARBLER**
(p. 682)

(fresh, spring)

(fresh, autumn)

1st-winter
(fresh, autumn)

(fresh,
autumn)

(fresh, autumn)

YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER
(p. 683)

HUME'S LEAF WARBLER
(p. 683)

PLAIN LEAF WARBLER
(p. 686)

WARBLERS



(fresh, autumn)



lorenzii
(fresh, autumn)



1st-winter
(fresh, autumn)



abietinus
(fresh, autumn)



lorenzii
(CAUCASIAN
CHIFFCHAFF)



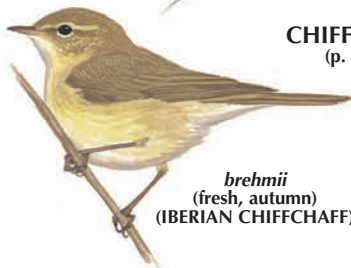
collybita
(COMMON
CHIFFCHAFF)



collybita
(fresh, autumn)



juv
collybita



brehmii
(fresh, autumn)
(IBERIAN CHIFFCHAFF)



tristis
(fresh, autumn)
(SIBERIAN
CHIFFCHAFF)



canariensis
(fresh, autumn)
(CANARY ISLANDS
CHIFFCHAFF)



(fresh, autumn
or spring)



yakutensis
(fresh, autumn
or spring)



1st-winter
(fresh, autumn)



juv

WILLOW WARBLER
(p. 688)

WARBLERS

DUSKY WARBLER (p. 684)



(fresh,
autumn)

(fresh, spring)

WOOD WARBLER (p. 686)



1st-winter

♂ (displaying)

RADDE'S WARBLER (p. 684)

(fresh,
autumn)

1st-winter

orientalis
(BALKAN
WARBLER)

bonelli

orientalis
(fresh, spring)

bonelli
(fresh, spring)

BONELLI'S WARBLER (p. 685)

♂ *teneriffae*
(CANARY
ISLANDS
KINGLET)

GOLDCREST (p. 703)

FIRECREST (p. 703)

GOLDCREST *Regulus regulus*

Plate page 702

Common Goldcrest; Canary Islands Kinglet, Canary Islands Goldcrest, Tenerife Goldcrest (*R. r. teneriffae*)

L 9 cm.

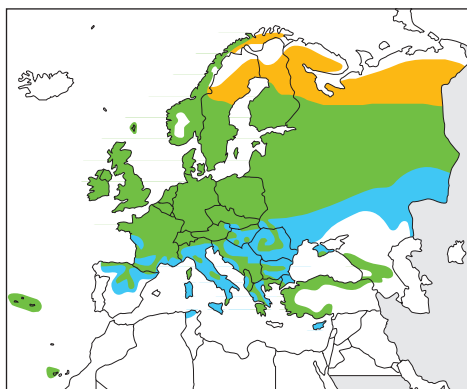
IDENTIFICATION This species and Firecrest are the smallest birds of our region. Tiny, hyperactive, dumpy little warbler with almost uniform light brownish head and body, contrasting with strongly patterned wings. Crown pattern not obvious unless top of head visible, but rather 'woeful' facial expression created by large black eye with paler surround and 'sad' dark line at sides of chin distinctive. Likely to be confused only with Firecrest, which is similar vocally and in behaviour but is strikingly different if seen reasonably well. For further discussion, see other members of the genus. Flutters and flits with agility through outer canopy, constantly on the move, dropping to lower perches or changing trees and bushes, with much wing- and tail-flicking; often in small parties, freely associating with roving flocks of other small birds. Often unobtrusive when hidden in dark conifers, giving away its presence with its thin, high-pitched call.

SEX/AGE Both sexes appear to have yellow crown-stripe, but males have brilliant orange crown centre, concealed by yellow outer feathers except in display or when fighting, when feathers raised. Juveniles lack crown pattern, but by first autumn are inseparable in the field from adults.

VOICE Song and calls very high-pitched, virtually inaudible to some ears. Calls include a repeated 'zee-zee-zee', and slightly stronger 'zit-zit-zit' when on the move, often given singly in flight; roosting call a little fuller and slower, suggesting Firecrest. Song a jingling, high-pitched, thin but penetrating 'ze-zeezeze ze-zeezeze ze-zeezeze ze-zeezeze ...' or similar, ending with a terminal flourish (e.g. 'zi-zi-zip', 'zi-zi-zueet').

TAXONOMY The status and affinities of the form *teneriffae* of the Canary Is are uncertain. It has sometimes been treated as a race of Firecrest, because of its intermediate characters, but is probably better treated as a full species under the name **Canary Islands Kinglet** (or Canary Islands Goldcrest).

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Mainly slight (but



more marked in case of *teneriffae*). 6 races (nominate and *teneriffae* illustrated), 3 of which are confined to various islands of the Azores. Race *teneriffae* of Canary Is (where it is the only kinglet) is intermediate between Firecrest and Goldcrest in features, but appears closer to Goldcrest: lacks whitish supercilium and blackish eye-stripe, but has black frontal band to 'crest' on forehead as in Firecrest; behaviour as that of other Goldcrests. Very rare hybridization between Firecrest and Goldcrest has been recorded in Europe and the resulting offspring could resemble *teneriffae*. Age/sex differences as for typical Goldcrests, but crown redder in males; voice much as that of Goldcrest.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Faeroes.) Coniferous and mixed woodland of various types, from forests to large gardens and parks; has marked preference for conifers (especially spruce in N Europe). Outside breeding season, also in scrub. In Canary Is and Azores, favours tall bushy scrub with tree-heaths or junipers.

FIRECREST *Regulus ignicapillus*

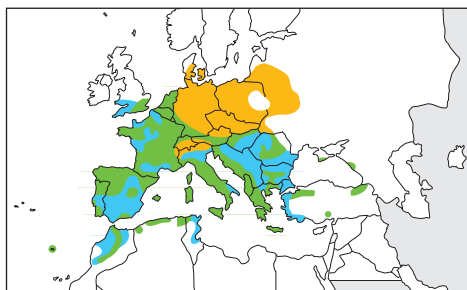
Plate page 702

L 9 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Call and behaviour recall Goldcrest, but easily distinguished by bold white supercilium, black stripe through eye and conspicuous white 'cheek pouches' below eye. Underparts are whiter than in Goldcrest, giving stronger contrast with the darker and greener upperparts. Like Goldcrest, may associate with roving parties of other small birds in winter, usually revealing presence by slightly different call. Tends to feed lower down, mostly keeping to bushy undergrowth and lower parts of trees.

SEX/AGE Male has crown bright orange, yellower in female. Juveniles lack crown pattern, but by first autumn are inseparable from adults.

VOICE Call differs from that of Goldcrest, typical being a slower and fuller, less penetrating 'ze-ze-zeeep' and a single or repeated, quite tit-like 'zeep'; roosting call of Goldcrest, however, is remarkably similar. Song distinctly lower in pitch and shorter than that of Goldcrest, with notes more rasping and less rapid, accelerating towards end; may be rendered 'zi-zi-zi-zizizit'.



GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 3 races (nominate illustrated). Races *madeirensis* of Madeira and *balearicus* of Balearic Is are both similar to nominate, but former has a shorter supercilium, diffusing behind eye, and a shorter bill while latter is greyer below.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common, although less abundant in north of range than Goldcrest. Breeding

range has spread north to British Is and Denmark in recent decades. Less addicted to conifers than Goldcrest, occurring in deciduous, mixed and coniferous

woodlands with rich undergrowth (especially more open tracts), parks with bushy undergrowth and tall maquis, tree heath, scrubby evergreen oaks etc.

FLYCATCHERS Muscicapidae

6 species (1 vagrant)

Small, rather delicately built insectivorous birds, generally feeding at mid-level height in and around trees, sallying forth with rapid twistings and turnings in pursuit of flying insects (often returning to the same perch afterwards). Between feeding flights they tend to sit in one place with an upright posture, frequently flicking their wings and tail. *Ficedula* species habitually perch with wings dropped. Generally solitary. Their songs are sweet, but rather lacking in prominence owing to short phrasing and often weak delivery. Sharp bill-snapping sounds may be heard as they snatch at insects. Members of genus *Ficedula* nest in holes in trees, and often use nestboxes, whereas *Muscicapa* build an open nest in tree forks or in shallow cavities in trees or walls.

Sexes similar and only slight seasonal variation in *Muscicapa* (Asian Brown and Spotted Flycatchers), but sexes differ and often marked seasonal variation (in males) among *Ficedula*. Adult plumage fully attained by first spring or at latest by the autumn of second calendar year.

Unlike warblers, which they basically resemble in size, shape and overall coloration, their legs are relatively short, their posture when perched is more upright and they feed almost entirely by aerial flycatching sorties from perches (see above). Note that many other small passerines, ranging from warblers to sparrows, can indulge in similar flycatching behaviour. The tyrant flycatchers of the New World are superficially similar to the Old World flycatchers but quite unrelated, and are exceedingly rare vagrants in our region. Some small chats (e.g. redstarts, robins) might be confused with flycatchers in a poor view, but they have much longer legs and typically (but by no means always) have less upright postures when perched.

Identification of flycatchers can be tricky, especially outside the breeding season; separation of other than adult male summer individuals of the pied flycatcher complex is a particularly difficult exercise. No identification marks apply throughout the family.

The pied flycatcher complex of three closely related species, European Pied, Semi-collared and Col-lared Flycatchers, present considerable identification problems. Adult females, 1st-winters and juveniles are very tricky and not all birds may be specifically identifiable in the field, even with excellent views. Features on which to concentrate for 'female-type' plumages are:

Precise detail of extent of white in wing (especially presence/absence of white at base of primaries and presence/absence of small median-covert bar) • **Presence of any pale feathering on rump or hindneck**

ASIAN BROWN FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa dauurica*

Plate page 729

Brown Flycatcher

L 12.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Asian vagrant (breeds C Siberia and Himalayas eastwards). Small, dull flycatcher with greyish-brown upperparts and wash on sides of breast and flanks, whitish remainder of underparts, very broad-based, almost triangular, bill (noticeable when viewed from below) and large and conspicuous eyes. Facial pattern, with pale eye-ring, lore and submou-thachial stripe, and narrow dark malar stripe, is diag-nostic. Recalls Spotted Flycatcher, but distinguished by smaller size, rounder head, lack of any obvious streaking on head and breast (although wash on sides of breast and flanks may sometimes appear slightly streaked), obvious yellowish-pink basal half to lower mandible and prominent pale eye-ring and lore. Bill pattern, lack of white in tail and absence of obvious white in wings rule out confusion with pied flycatcher complex. Red-breasted, although basically similar in overall body-plumage coloration, lacks the distinctive facial pattern, has narrower eye-ring, blacker (and

much less broadly-based) bill and white in tail base (not apparent when closed), and freely cocks tail up over back. Generally feeds from within cover in mid to upper levels of trees, sometimes choosing perches close to main trunk but at other times favouring pro-truding branches. Problem of separation from other eastern Asian flycatchers which might turn up as vagrants has thrown doubt on some claims of this species in the past.

SEX/AGE Fresh autumn adults show fairly conspicu-ous rufous edges and tips to tertials and greater cov-erts, which abrade through winter and are absent by spring. Juvenile, unlikely to be seen in our area, has conspicuous buff spots on entire upperparts, more obvious buffy wing bar on greater coverts, buffy edg-ings to the tertials. 1st-winter birds in autumn show more obvious pale bar on greater coverts and paler edgings to tertials (retained juvenile feathers, but buff edges and tips bleach to whitish) and may retain a few

spotty juvenile feathers on upperparts.

VOICE Chiefly silent away from breeding grounds, but gives a short, thin but piercing 'tzi', a soft rattling 'tze-te-te-te' of alarm and a soft churr. Song, unlikely to be heard in our region, is a rather faint squeaky but melodious warbling.

TAXONOMY Formerly given the specific name *latirostris*.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, breeds mainly in deciduous and mixed woodlands, favouring more open tracts or glades. Also parks, gardens and locally open coniferous woodland.

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa striata*

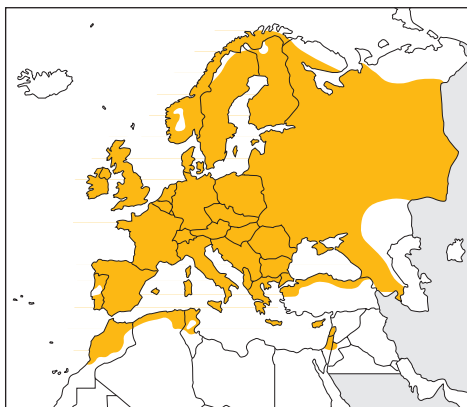
Plate page 729

L 14 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A drab grey-brown little bird, but upright stance, relatively large head with flat (or slightly peaked) crown, relatively long wings and flycatching habits betray its identity. The English name is confusing: adult is not at all spotted (while all flycatcher juveniles are conspicuously spotted)! 'Striated Flycatcher' would be more appropriate. Drab coloration plus the fine dark streaking on crown, throat and breast are diagnostic, although the streaks on the crown are visible only given good views. The blackish bill shows only a very small amount of pale at base of lower mandible. In fresh plumage, narrow pale fringes to wing feathers often prominent, suggesting pied flycatcher complex, but Spotted lacks white in tail and shows streaking on foreparts. Often flycatches from, and returns to, same perch, flying out in a broad sweeping arc, turning with spread wings and tail to return to perch. Usually feeds from perches at mid-tree level, towards outside of tree, rather than inside canopy. Calls from perch, flicking wings and tail as it does so. Flight strong and quite bounding when moving over longer distances.

SEX/AGE Juvenile has prominent buff spotting above and dark mottling below. 1st-winter birds in late summer and autumn may be aged by more conspicuous pale fringes to wing feathers and fairly prominent buffish wing bar on greater coverts.

VOICE Usual calls include a thin, squeaky 'zeeee', a sharp 'chick' and a 'zee-zucc' of alarm. Bill-snaps when flycatching. Song is a weak and inconspicuous series of squeaky notes, often with quite long intervals between phrases, e.g. 'tsee, chup chup, tsee, tsee, chup-tsee-chup, tsee'.



GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 5 races (nominate, *neumanni* and *tyrrhenica* illustrated). Variation mainly clinal: *neumanni* of Crete, Turkey and W Siberia eastwards is paler and greyer above and whiter below than nominate race; *inexpecta* of the Crimea is darker and browner above and more prominently streaked; *balearica* of the Balearic Is is very pale and rather sandy above; and *tyrrhenica* of Corsica and Sardinia is warmer brown with indistinct streaking.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. Woodland edges, glades and clearings, open woodland (both deciduous and coniferous), parks, orchards and large gardens.

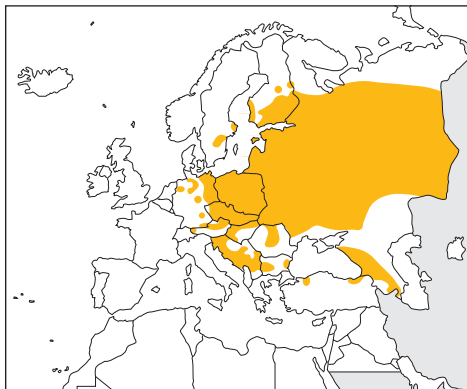
RED-BREASTED FLYCATCHER *Ficedula parva*

Plate page 729

Red-throated Flycatcher (*F. p. albicilla*)

L 11.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Smallest flycatcher of our region and the only one with extensive white bases to outer tail feathers, although this feature visible only when tail spread. (Note: most plumages in pied flycatcher complex show white edges to tail, but extent far more limited.) Small and dumpy with relatively short tail, which is invariably cocked high during frequent contact calls. Older adult male distinctive with its reddish-orange throat and upper breast and greyish sides to head, but, as full adult plumage is not attained until second spring, most individuals resemble females. Adult females and young birds are drab dull brown on head and upperparts, with buffish-white underparts, relieved only by distinctive tail pattern and narrow buff eye-ring. From below, prominent eyes and broad yellowish base to bill are instant clues that this is a flycatcher. Normally a fairly inconspicuous cover-loving bird, actively feeding inside canopy of bushes or trees from low to middle level. Usually draws attention to itself by its distinctive call. Feeds as much by



picking insects from leaves as by flycatching, feeding

flights being short and mostly within canopy; often descends to ground from low perch to pick up an insect, swiftly returning to perch. Tail pattern difficult to see, but may be glimpsed in flight as a flash of white at base of tail. Confusion only likely with vagrant Asian Brown Flycatcher when tail pattern not obvious, but latter has much more extensive pale on lower mandible, broader bill and pale eye-ring and often conspicuous pale fringes to tertials. See also vagrant Mugimaki Flycatcher *F. mugimaki* in Appendix.

SEX/AGE Adult male winter is duller on throat than summer. Juvenile plumage is spotted. 1st-winter birds in late summer and autumn resemble adult female may be aged by narrow rusty-buff wing bar and tips to tertials. 1st-summer birds resemble adults, but show vestiges of buff tips to tertials or greater coverts in spring; many young males lack, or have more restricted, reddish-orange on throat and breast (full colour not obtained until third or even fourth calendar year).

VOICE Usual call an almost Winter Wren-like, low, thin rattle, being a series of short 'chick' notes slurred rapidly together; often shortened to single or double sharp 'chick'. Also has a plaintive 'weeit'. Song is an easily overlooked series of sweet notes, descending somewhat in tone and very similar to first part of song of Willow Warbler.

TAXONOMY Form *albicilla* may well merit specific status under the name **Red-throated Flycatcher**.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 2 races (nominate illustrated). Race *albicilla* (breeds Urals eastwards) is very similar to nominate and probably not safely identifiable except for adult males. Adult male has orange or orange-red restricted to chin and upper throat and grey of head more extensive, covering whole breast, so that orange does not meet white of lower breast; indeed, orange, being restricted to throat centre, may be difficult to see unless bird is head-on. Adult females and 1st-winters much as nominate, but upperparts warmer brown, underparts less buff, with whiter throat and greyer wash across breast, and purer black (not blackish-brown) uppertail coverts. Ageing and sexing as in nominate, but males often look fully adult by first spring. Calls much as in nominate, but song (often delivered from top of tall tree) different. Song markedly variable, but is basically a series of notes delivered with more rising and falling rhythm than in nominate, often preceded by a series of sweet 'sweet-de-de' phrases and recalling parts of song of Tree Pipit or some buntings. Not known if breeding range overlaps with that of nominate race.

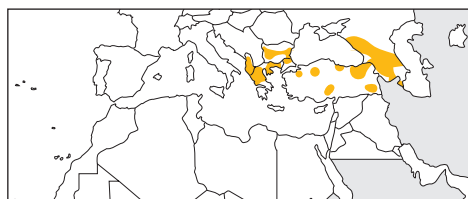
STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Denmark, Norway, Greece. Winters in S and SE Asia.) Breeds in both mixed and deciduous woodlands (especially mature forest), favouring glades, clearings and watersides; also orchards and locally spruce forests.

SEMI-COLLARED FLYCATCHER *Ficedula semitorquata*

Plate page 730

L 13 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Very similar to both European Pied and Collared Flycatchers. Diagnostic feature of summer-plumaged birds is white tips to inner median coverts which form an isolated small white wing bar on 'shoulder'; this is absent in adults of the other two species, but in juveniles is present in form of pale buff bar, which is often retained into 1st-winter plumage, but only very exceptionally present in first spring in European Pied or Collared. In summer males, this median-covert bar may merge with white on greater coverts, producing a single large white patch, but in greyish winter plumage it stands out (although tips are then pale grey rather than white). In summer females, which are otherwise very close to female Collared, this bar is usually but not always present. In all plumages shows a small but prominent white patch at base of primaries, which is not quite so extensive as in Collared but which is normally either lacking in European Pied (being hidden by primary coverts) or present as a small white spot that is somewhat isolated and does not reach edge of wing; in Semi-collared and Collared this white patch appears almost to reach edge of wing. In addition, there is more extensive white in wing in general than in European Pied, but not quite so much as in Collared. Adult males in summer plumage are fine black and white birds, but are somewhat variable; some have a broad white collar that is broken by a narrow dusky patch at centre of nape, so that in profile they appear much as Collared, the dark nape being visible only from the rear, whereas others have only a slight indentation of white at sides of neck and look more like European Pied. The whitish rump patch of Collared is lacking, but is indicated by a greyish patch. However, some Collared have a very narrow white rump patch and some European Pied show a greyish patch on rump. Males show more extensive white at sides of tail than Collared or European Pied, a useful feature when comparing male Semi-collared with rather similar N African race of European Pied, *specu-*



ligera, which often has no white in tail; additionally, ranges do not overlap. Females are more problematic, although they are warmer, less greyish-brown than many female Collared and never show a hint of pale collar or rump patch; presence of median-covert bar useful in spring (but not in autumn). Compared with female European Pied, female Semi-collared is best distinguished in spring by presence of median-covert bar and usually an obvious white patch at base of primaries (this patch is wider and often more club-shaped in Collared, usually being merely a narrow bar in Semi-collared); European Pied shows no more than a tiny spot at base of primaries. Female Semi-collared is rather greyer above and shows less extensive white along tertial fringes and often a wider greater-covert bar than European Pied. Semi-collared seems to be relatively longer-winged than European Pied, with primaries reaching at least halfway down tail, whereas in European Pied they reach only about a third of the way; more field work needs to be undertaken on this feature. Behaviour and habits much as those of other two pied species. In the hand, 2nd primary is equal to or longer than 5th, as in Collared; nearly always shorter than 5th in European Pied.

SEX/AGE Much as in European Pied Flycatcher, except for plumage features discussed above.

VOICE Similar to that of other two pied species.

TAXONOMY Formerly considered conspecific with Collared Flycatcher *F. albicollis*; also sometimes with

European Pied Flycatcher *F. hypoleuca*.

STATUS/HABITAT Localized and generally rather uncommon. Overlaps marginally with Collared in the

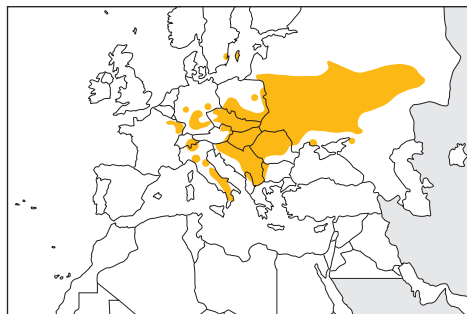
Balkans. Deciduous and mixed woodland in both lowlands and mountains, with preference for mixed oak and hornbeam forest; locally also in orchards.

COLLARED FLYCATCHER *Ficedula albicollis*

Plate page 730

L 13 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Adult males in summer plumage are striking black and white small birds (much more contrasting than European Pied), with very broad white collar completely encircling nape to isolate black cap; additionally, the wings show an enormous extent of white, and this deflects attention from the small whitish rump, which is seldom conspicuous. Such birds are approached only by some Semi-collared males in summer plumage which show a wide white collar, but these always have a blackish nape, even if only a narrow stripe (which may not be obvious until views are obtained of rear of neck). Collared shows very little white at sides of tail, unlike Semi-collared, and lacks median-covert bar. Adult male winter closely resembles winter male European Pied, but has black wings and large white patch at base of primaries. Adult females are close to those of Semi-collared, but may be distinguished in spring by absence of median-covert bar (which may, however, be shown in autumn); additionally, many Collared, at least in spring, show a pale greyish collar which offers some contrast with crown and mantle, and often a paler and greyer rump, although these features are hidden by brownish feather tipping in fresh autumn plumage (but may be visible if nape examined in the hand). The upperparts of female Collared are often greyer, less olive-brown, than in European Pied and, most importantly, the bases of the primaries show a distinct white patch that is either rectangular in shape or which thickens towards edge of wing (forming a club-shaped patch). This patch, which appears to virtually reach edge of wing, is lacking or merely indicated by a tiny spot in European Pied, while Semi-collared shows a narrower bar (most of the white primary bases being hidden by the primary coverts). In addition, the greater-covert bar and the edges of tertials tend to be wider and whiter than in female European Pied. 1st-winter Collared extremely similar to both 1st-winter Semi-collared and European Pied, but like former has more obvious white tips to inner median coverts, forming more prominent second wing bar. Behaviour much as that of European



Pied, but migrants more inclined to hunt from lower perches. Occasionally hybridizes with European Pied. In the hand, 2nd primary normally equal to or longer than 5th (as in Semi-collared); usually shorter than 5th in European Pied.

SEX/AGE Much as in European Pied Flycatcher, but adult male winter may be distinguished in autumn by blacker tail and flight feathers compared with adult female or 1st-winters. 1st-summer male may be aged in spring by dull, worn, greyish primaries and less extensive white at base of primaries than in adult male summer.

VOICE Many calls similar to those of European Pied, but typical alarm call, a full 'seeb', seems to be diagnostic (replacing European Pied's 'bit-bit' of alarm). Song, less frequently uttered than in European Pied, is slower and more drawled, the phrases interspersed with thin, high sibilant notes.

HYBRIDS Known to interbreed occasionally with European Pied in zone of overlap; male progeny (when in adult plumage) show incomplete collar or some greyish tinge on nape, and less white on primary bases.

STATUS/HABITAT Common, although somewhat local. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Denmark, Finland.) Breeds in deciduous woodlands (particularly oak), favouring glades, clearings, ravines with streams etc; also locally in mixed woodland, parks, orchards and large gardens.

EUROPEAN PIED FLYCATCHER *Ficedula hypoleuca*

Plate page 730

Pied Flycatcher

L 13 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Smaller and rather plumper than Spotted Flycatcher, with more rounded head, smaller bill, clean underparts and white in wings and sides of tail. Adult males in summer plumage have variably black to greyish-black or brownish hood and upperparts which contrast well with white underparts, wing and tail markings and spot on forehead. (Brownest individuals very like females, but show more white in wing and white spot on forehead.) Adult female in summer plumage and autumn birds have dull brown hood and upperparts and less extensive white in wing than summer males. 1st-winter sometimes, but not always, has a few pale tips on inner median coverts, but this second wing bar is less conspicuous than in Collared and Semi-collared; often lack any visible

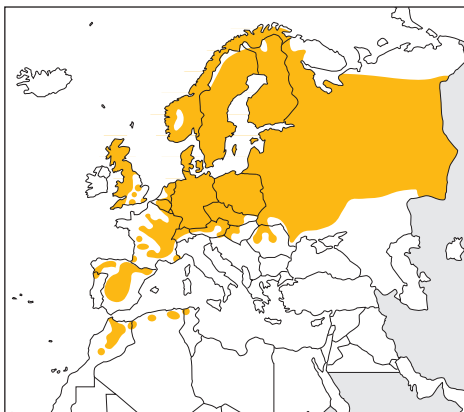
white at base of primaries. Chooses less conspicuous perches than Spotted Flycatcher, generally at mid-level in trees and somewhat within canopy; often reveals presence by calling, when simultaneously flicks wings and tail very prominently. Generally does not return to same perch when flycatching. See Collared and Semi-collared for full discussion on identification criteria; confusion most likely with Semi-collared, especially where European Pied of Spanish and N African forms involved, but breeding ranges and migration routes do not overlap.

SEX/AGE Adult male summer and adult female summer described under Identification. Adult male winter as adult female, but sometimes shows whitish forehead spot and blacker tail and uppertail coverts.

Juvenile spotted with buff. 1st-winter birds in autumn resemble adult female but often show pale buff tips to median coverts (retained juvenile feathers), thus suggesting Semi-collared. Some summer-plumaged males very dull, recalling adult female, but with blacker wings and tail.

VOICE Usual calls include a short 'bit' and a brief 'wheet', often uttered together. Song a short series of sweet, warbled phrases, 'chee-chee-chee-tsri-tsri-chee', not unlike part of Common Redstart song, but delivery and phrasing are individually variable.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 3 races (nominate and *speculigera* illustrated). Variation somewhat clinal, with summer-plumaged males becoming progressively duller and greyer above towards the east and blacker above towards the west of the range. Males of *sibirica*, breeding from Urals eastwards, are particularly dull and grey above. N African *speculigera* has considerably more white in wing and larger white forehead patch than nominate race, but shows little white in tail. These features coupled with its very black upperparts make this form very striking and suggestive of Semi-collared; Spanish birds (allocated to nominate race) also approach this form in appearance.



STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Ireland.) Deciduous and mixed woodland (especially oak and beech), often favouring glades and watersides; locally in parks, large gardens and coniferous forest.

BABBLERS Timaliidae

5 species

Primarily tropical family of small to medium-sized birds. Four of the five representatives in our region belong to the genus *Turdoides* and are rather thrush-like birds with fairly long, slightly decurved bills, long, strong legs and long, heavy, graduated tails. Inhabit scrubby thickets and small groves. Rather terrestrial in habits, they hop and bound along in thrush-like manner, often waving their long, prominent tails from side to side as they move. Gregarious, often travelling together in noisy related groups. Flight rather weak, stiff and laboured, but glide well; groups often fly in 'follow-my-leader' fashion. The other representative, Bearded Reedling *Panurus biarmicus*, is of rather uncertain affinities but may well be closely related to the parrotbills (Paradoxornithinae). A reedbed specialist, this small, long-tailed species recalls the tits in movements and general shape. Flight rather laboured, typically just over tops of reeds. Also gregarious: often found feeding in small flocks. Our babblers feed mainly on invertebrates, but larger *Turdoides* will take small vertebrates and Bearded Reedling depends largely on seeds from late autumn to early spring.

Sexes are similar in *Turdoides* and there is only slight seasonal variation; juveniles closely resemble adults. Bearded Reedling is sexually dimorphic (but with little seasonal variation) and has distinct juvenile plumage; adult plumage usually attained by end of first autumn or at latest by first spring.

Appearance and reedbed habitat of Bearded Reedling are distinctive. Gregarious, often terrestrial habits, bounding motion and longish, slightly decurved bill shape and large, graduated tails make *Turdoides* babblers unlikely to be confused with other birds (e.g. thrushes).

Ranges of babblers in our region only marginally overlap, but among *Turdoides* points on which to concentrate are:

General coloration • Presence or absence of dark streaking on underparts • Prominence of dark streaking on upperparts

BEARDED REEDLING *Panurus biarmicus*

Bearded Tit, Bearded Parrotbill, Reedling

L 12.5 cm (including tail 7 cm).

IDENTIFICATION Very long-tailed, short-winged, small-billed, rather tit-like bird of reedbeds. Flight whirring and rather weak, typically low over reeds

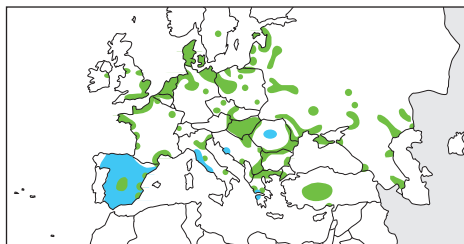
(but in autumn often flying high prior to dispersal); long tail is often fanned and twisted from side to side in flight. Frequently unobtrusive (aided by dead reed-

Plate page 73 I

coloured plumage) and often detected by twanging voice long before being seen. Clammers about in reeds, often feeding high up on seed heads in autumn/winter, and hops about, babbler-like, on or near ground. Distinctive shape, warm cinnamon and buff coloration (and droopy black moustache in adult male) and invariable reedbed habitat make it unmistakable.

SEX/AGE Adult female sometimes has black spots and streaks and occasionally has heavy black streaking on crown and nape and again on lower mantle, back and inner scapulars (markings sometimes coalescing into black patch on lower mantle/back). Juvenile resembles adult female, but is more buffy overall and differs especially in having conspicuous black patch on lower mantle, back and inner scapulars, largely black outer tail feathers and black 'shoulders' (formed by black primary coverts, and largely black lesser, median and greater coverts). Juvenile male has yellow or orange bill and contrasting black lores; in juvenile female, bill is grey-brown or blackish and lores are an inconspicuous dull grey.

VOICE Contact call, freely given, a twanging, characteristic, quite far-carrying 'ping' or 'tying'; also gives a harsh, buzzing 'tjipp' and a soft 'pitt'. Song a rather soft, trisyllabic 'tchin-tchik-tchraay'.



TAXONOMY Not a tit at all but closely related to the parrotbills, and currently included with them in the babbler family.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate and mainly clinal. 3 races (nominate illustrated). Race *russicus* (Austria eastwards, apart from SE Turkey) is paler overall than nominate race. Race *kosswigi* (Amik Golu, SE Turkey: now drained) is darker, more rufous-brown, above than nominate race, but may be extinct.

STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon, but localized. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Finland and formerly bred Sicily.) Restricted to (usually extensive) *Phragmites* reedbeds.

IRAQ BABBLER *Turdoides altirostris*

L 22 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Restricted to riverine lowlands of Iraq. Quite similar to Common Babbler, which it overlaps in range, but is smaller, with darker and browner (less grey-tinged) upperparts, deeper-based but less strongly decurved bill and weaker, horn-brown (rather than yellow) legs. Has distinctly narrower dark streaking on upperparts (especially crown) and is virtually unstreaked on sides of breast and flanks. Might be confused in poor view with a large *Acrocephalus* such as Great Reed, Basra Reed or Clamorous Reed Warblers, but these have a shorter and narrower tail, straight (not curved) bill, richer and warmer coloration above and no dark streaking on upperparts, breast and flanks.

SEX/AGE Juvenile closely resembles adult, but has paler ground colour overall and streaking on upperparts is weaker and restricted to forehead, crown and scapulars.



VOICE Most frequent contact calls are a long, drawn-out, whistling 'pherrrrreee' and a more chattering 'pherr pherr pherr ...'. Alarm call a loud, squeaking 'phioe'; when threatened, or during aggression, gives a series of 'phist' notes and more closely spaced 'phic' notes, e.g. 'phist phist phist phic-phic-phic phist phist'. Song said to be rather similar to latter call.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. Margins of rivers, canals and marshes frequenting a mixture of trees (especially poplars), scrub and reeds, spreading out into adjacent thickets, palm groves and edges of cultivation.

COMMON BABBLER *Turdoides caudatus*

L 23 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Restricted to Iraq in our region. Only babbler with which it overlaps in range is rather similar Iraq Babbler (q.v.). Can be told from Arabian Babbler by smaller size, paler and isabelline (rather than brown) coloration and heavier streaking on upperparts, from Fulvous Babbler by smaller size, isabelline (rather than rich cinnamon) coloration and much heavier streaking on upperparts. Adult also differs in having obvious dark streaking on sides of breast and flanks. Iris usually brown, probably never pale yellow as in many adult male Arabian.

SEX/AGE Juvenile closely resembles adult, but streaks on upperparts and upper breast shorter and sometimes less distinct (and often missing on sides of breast and flanks), and has broader pale pinkish-buff fringes



to tail feathers and pale pinkish-buff fringes to flight feathers and tertials.

VOICE Contact calls include a loud, slow, descending, whistling 'pi-pee-pee-pee-pee-peeerrrrrr' (ending in a rippling trill) and a drawn-out, rather mournful 'piooooo-pioor-poor'. Alarm call a high, rapid, Eurasian Nuthatch-like 'qui-qui-qui ...'.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. Thickets (including tamarisk), citrus orchards, palm groves, sparse scrub and edges of cultivation in both lowlands and hills.

Plate page 731

Plate page 731

ARABIAN BABBLER *Turdoides squamiceps*

Plate page 73 I

Brown Babbler

L 26-29 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Large babbler of NW Arabia, Sinai and adjacent areas. Does not overlap in range with other *Turdoides*. For distinctions from Common Babbler, see that species. Differs from Fulvous Babbler in larger size, grey-brown (instead of warm cinnamon) overall coloration, heavier dark streaking on upperparts, dark spotting on breast and pale base to bill (Fulvous has all-dark bill, apart from yellow base to lower mandible in adult male).

SEX/AGE Juvenile closely resembles adult, but underparts uniformly isabelline (in adult, whitish chin and throat contrast with grey-brown breast and flanks) and has less distinct dark streaks on head, neck, upper breast and mantle. Iris initially pale grey instead of yellowish (adult male) or brown (adult female), and bill initially blackish instead of grey with blackish tip (adult male) or horn or yellow with blackish tip (adult



female and some old males).

VOICE Contact call is a series of loud, piercing whistles: 'pee pee pee pee pee ...' (often with descending pitch at end of each note: 'piu piu piu piu ...'). Other calls include a hoarse trill, a soft, horse-like whinnying (when roosting together) and a loud 'pew'. Song a quiet, high-pitched warbling.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. Open acacia woodland or scrub, thickets (including tamarisk), gardens, palm groves with undergrowth and edges of reedbeds.

FULVOUS BABBLER *Turdoides fulvus*

Plate page 73 I

Fulvous Chatterer

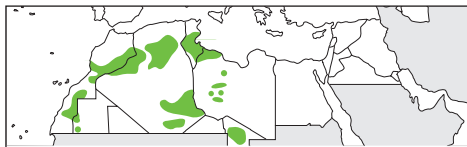
L 25 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Fairly large babbler of N Africa. Does not overlap in range with other *Turdoides*. For distinctions from Common and Arabian Babblers, see those species.

SEX/AGE Adult male has yellow base to lower mandible. Juvenile closely resembles adult female, but is yellower above (on mantle and scapulars) and paler, less cinnamon, below.

VOICE Contact call a series of descending whistles: 'peeoo peeoo peeoo peeoo ...'. In flight, gives a clear 'peep'. Alarm calls are a hollow rattle and a sharp 'pwit'. Song a subdued squeaking and chirruping.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 4 races (*maroc-*



canus illustrated).

STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon, but rather localized. (In addition to mapped range formerly bred N of the Atlas in Morocco and in Nile Valley in S Egypt.) Open acacia woodland or scrub, thickets, open areas with bushes and palm groves with undergrowth.

LONG-TAILED TITS Aegithalidae

1 species

LONG-TAILED TIT *Aegithalos caudatus*

Plate page 733

L 14 cm.

IDENTIFICATION The only tit with a very long tail (more than half the total length of the bird). Combination of very long, narrow tail, very small, fluffy body and blackish and whitish plumage is unmistakable. Often picked up by their high, slurred trills as they work their way through bushes and trees. Unlike true tits (Paridae), builds an elaborate ovoid nest decorated with lichens and with a side entrance.

SEX/AGE Juvenile lacks pink in the plumage and is generally browner and duller than adult, with dull, dark chocolate-coloured facial mask, accentuating pale eye-ring, and a shorter tail when newly fledged.

VOICE Noisy. The most frequent calls are a high-pitched, slurred, trilling 'tsrrrrp', a soft, clicking 'pit' or 'tet' and, especially before and during flight, a



weak, high-pitched 'tsi-tsi-tsi ...'. The infrequently heard song is a trilling combination of call notes with variants.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Marked. 15 races (nominate, *rosaceus* and *tephronotus* illustrated). Compared with middle latitude European forms (e.g. *rosaceus*, British Is), those of northern Europe (e.g. *caudatus*, Norway and E Germany to the Urals) lack black or blackish-brown facial markings and are purer white on the head and underparts. On the other hand,

the forms in southern Iberia, southern Italy, Asia Minor and the Caucasus region (e.g. *tephronotus*, Asia Minor) have a grey back, with little or no pink or black mixed in, while most also have a black or blackish spot on the throat; the race *tephronotus* is unusual in having a substantially shorter tail than other races.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. Deciduous or mixed woodland with undergrowth, thickets, scrub, overgrown hedgerows; locally in gardens (especially outside breeding season).

TITS Paridae

9 species

Small, restless, perky, often quite brightly-coloured perching birds with short but fairly strong bills, relatively large heads and strong feet. Tits are exceptionally agile, acrobatic birds, feeding in the canopy, along tree limbs, in bushes and on the ground with equal ease. They frequently hang upside down, grappling with their powerful feet, while feeding, using their strong, sharp bills to prise out food from even the tightest crevice. Wings rather short and rounded, reflecting largely sedentary habits, and flight rather weak and jerkily undulating. Bold and sometimes fairly tame, several species being very familiar visitors at bird tables. Frequently mob predators, including birds of prey and owls. Fairly sociable, often found in small family groups and frequently in small flocks outside breeding season (sometimes together with a few nuthatches and treecreepers). Feed mainly on insects and other invertebrates from spring to autumn, but depend more on seeds, nuts and berries in winter. Nest in holes in trees and freely in nest-boxes (or sometimes in holes in ground, e.g. Coat Tit), but only a few species excavate their own holes. Songs are often surprisingly loud and far-carrying, but quite simple in structure, with loud ringing, whistling or rattling notes.

Sexes similar (but minor differences in some species). No seasonal variation. Juveniles mostly closely resemble adults, and in those species where juveniles differ more markedly, young birds become much as adults by first autumn. Adult plumage is fully attained by autumn of second calendar year.

True tits are so familiar that they are unlikely to be confused with other birds. (The same applies to long-tailed tits, Aegithalidae, and adult penduline tits, Remizidae, in our region, but juvenile Eurasian Penduline Tits are vaguely *Phylloscopus* warbler-like and more problematic: see species text.)

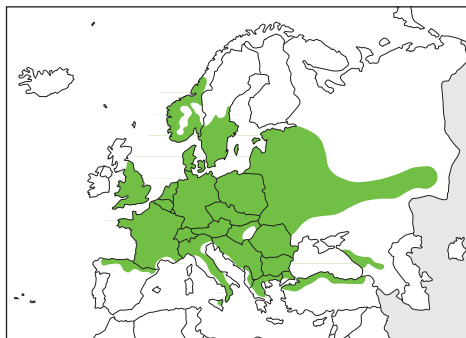
Identification within the family mostly straightforward, but the 'brown-black-and-white' species (especially Marsh and Willow Tits) present more difficulties. There are no field features to look out for that are generally applicable throughout the family.

MARSH TIT *Parus palustris*

L 11.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Of the group of dark-capped tits, Marsh Tit and Willow Tit present the most difficulties for observers. This problem is most extreme in W Europe, where the local forms are particularly similar. Habitat is of little help: Marsh Tit is not more closely associated with marshy areas in most of the zone of overlap. The rather misleading English name dates from the period before Willow Tit was recognized to be a separate species! In N and E Europe, the local form of Willow Tit (*P. m. borealis*) is grey on the mantle and has bright white cheeks, making separation from Marsh comparatively simple. Elsewhere, the species are best differentiated by a combination of characters. In Marsh, crown is glossy black (as opposed to dull blackish in Willow), the black bib is shorter and clearer cut, there is generally no pale patch on the closed wing (formed by the whitish edgings to the secondaries in Willow), the flanks are not obviously richer buff than the rest of the underparts (as they are in Willow in fresh plumage), the dark cap

Plate page 732



does not extend so far down the nape and over the 'shoulders', and Marsh looks longer and narrower-necked, less 'bull-necked', owing to absence of the powerful neck muscles possessed by Willow (which

is one of the few tits to habitually excavate its own nest hole). Both have characteristic calls (see Voice). Of these features, the calls and the presence or absence of a glossy crown and pale wing patch are the most generally useful, but, with experience, the 'bull-necked' jizz of Willow is helpful. Tail shape can also be used for some individuals: Marsh tends to have a more square-cut tail since the outer tail feathers often reach almost to the tail tip (while in some Willow they are 7–8 mm shorter), but this feature should be used only where the difference in outer-tail feather length is minimal (= Marsh) or substantial (= Willow) as there are many intermediate individuals. Beware of wear or regrowing feathers during moult. Further pitfalls are the presence of a faint pale wing patch in some Marsh in fresh plumage, the elimination of the pale wing patch of Willow after wear (especially by summer), and the appearance of a faint gloss on the crown of Willow in strong light or apparent lack of gloss on the crown of Marsh Tit in dim woodland light. Where crown gloss is suspect, the looser texture of the crown feathering of Willow imparts a lack of sleekness to that species. **Juvenile** extremely like juvenile Willow and difficult to separate except in excellent view. Both have dull, sooty-black crown with rather loose feathering, and both also have pale patch on closed wing formed by pale

edges to secondaries (but this is less conspicuous in Marsh); other differences outlined above can be used with caution. Tail-feather length is not useful, owing to the possibility of incompletely grown feathers. See also Sombre Tit and Siberian Tit.

SEX/AGE Juvenile has dull sooty-black crown without gloss and often a fairly obvious patch on closed wing formed by pale edges to secondaries.

VOICE Highly characteristic call note is a loud, ringing 'pitchuu' (sometimes 'pitchuuwee'); also gives a harsh, churring 'tchair-tchair-tchair ...' (or 'tchair-er-er ...') and a scolding 'chicka-dee-dee-dee' (not given by Willow). Song is a monotonous liquid series of 'tchip-tchip-tchip ...' or 'tew-tew-tew ...' notes with variants.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Fairly slight. 5 races (nominate and *dresseri* illustrated). Racial variation in Marsh is not great, but races of Britain and NW France (*dresseri*) and Italy (*italicus*) are darker and browner above and somewhat darker and duller below than races found over most of the range (*palustris* and *stagnatilis*) and even paler and greyer race of Caucasus region (*kabardensis*).

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common in many areas but uncommon and local in others. Deciduous or mixed woodland (especially oak or beech) with or without undergrowth, frequenting both dry and moist situations.

SOMBRE TIT *Parus lugubris*

L 14 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Resembles southeastern races of Marsh Tit, but is substantially larger (almost Great Tit-sized), with a pale panel on the closed wing (formed by the pale edgings to the secondaries), a much more extensive dark bib, a very stout beak and a longer tail. Differs from southeastern forms of Willow Tit in the same way (but both species have pale wing panel). Has more extensive dark cap than either species and this, combined with more extensive dark bib, has effect of greatly narrowing the white 'cheeks' (which broaden only gradually behind bill). Does not overlap in range with Siberian Tit, from which it differs in stouter bill, greyer mantle and darker (dark brown or blackish as opposed to dusty-brown) crown, and, compared to Siberian Tit in fresh plumage, lack of rufous on flanks.

SEX/AGE Juvenile is duller and dingier, with less contrast between crown and mantle and between bib and breast.

VOICE Call is a distinctive, harsh churring 'zi-zi-zi-zichrrrr', the churr sometimes ending 'chrrrr-r-r-r'. The songs are a piping, buzzy, loud 'be-zoo-be-zoo-be-zoo ...' and a rising and falling 'doodle-lu-doodle-lu-doodle-lu ...'. Race *hyrcanus* of Caspian coast has distinctly different song; a clear 'tiu' given 3–5 times that recalls Willow Tit.

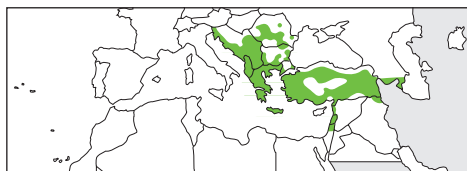
WILLOW TIT *Parus montanus*

L 11.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Of the group of dark-capped tits, only likely to be confused with Marsh (q.v. for discussion). See also Sombre Tit and Siberian Tit.

VOICE Typical call is a harsh, nasal 'tchar-tchar-tchar' (or 'tsi-tsi-CHAY-CHAY') and a buzzing 'zi-zi-zeerrr' (not given by Marsh). Song is typically a Wood Warbler-like 'tiu-tiu-tiu-tiu ...', but a rich, almost churring warble is heard occasionally.

Plate page 732



TAXONOMY The form *hyrcanus* of eastern Azerbaijan (and N Iran) is sometimes treated as a full species under the name **Caspian Tit** or **Hyrcanian Tit**.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 3 races (*anatoliae* illustrated). Nominate race of Balkans has dark sooty brown crown and bib, while race *anatoliae* of Asia Minor and Levant has these areas dull black and the mantle somewhat greyer-brown. Race *hyrcanus* of Caspian fringe of eastern Azerbaijan is darker both above and below than other races, with dark brown crown and bib (less sooty than in nominate race) and strongly rusty-buff tinge to underparts. Excavates own nest hole (not usually seen in other races) and has different song (see Voice).

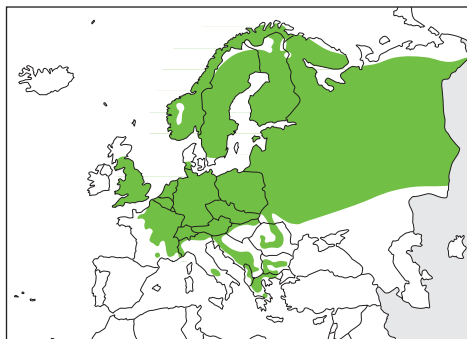
STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. Open deciduous or mixed woodland, and taller scrub, mainly in hilly, rocky country.

Plate page 732

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Rather slight. 6 races (*borealis* and *kleinschmidti* illustrated). Racial variation is clinal, with the smallest and darkest forms in the west and south (e.g. *kleinschmidti*, Britain) and the palest and largest forms in the north and east (e.g. *borealis*, Norway to the Urals). Southwestern forms have brownest upperparts and darkest cheeks and underparts, while northeastern forms have greyest

upperparts and palest cheeks and underparts.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. Deciduous and mixed woodland (especially willow, alder or birch) with undergrowth, thickets; also coniferous woodland in the north and in montane areas further south. Particularly fond of damp or marshy woodland, lines of low trees and thickets over much of its range.



SIBERIAN TIT *Parus cinctus*

L 13.5 cm.

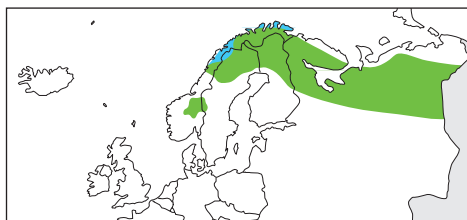
IDENTIFICATION Somewhat resembles Willow Tit, but is substantially larger (although smaller than Great Tit), with a longer bill, a longer tail, a dusty-brown (not black) crown and a more extensive blackish bib (in fresh plumage flecked with white, so that it merges gradually with the breast). Typically has a rather untidy, fluffy look. Northern forms of Willow Tit, with which Siberian is most likely to be encountered, have much whiter cheeks and a distinctly greyish mantle. Siberian (but also northern Willow) has flanks strongly tinged with rufous in fresh plumage. See also Sombre Tit.

SEX/AGE Juvenile similar to adult, but duller and tinged with rufous on the underparts.

VOICE Calls include a harsh, ringing 'cheer-cheer-cheer', a scolding, nasal 'chierrr' and soft, high-pitched 'tsi', 'tsitsi' and 'tsit' notes. The song is a loud, hoarse 'cheeop-cheeop-cheeop ...' or, alternatively, 'cheeo-cheeo-cheeo ...'.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Very slight. 2 races

Plate page 732



(*lapponicus* illustrated). Western race *lapponicus* (Norway to the Pechora river) is darker above and below, showing more contrast between crown and mantle, than nominate race (Urals eastwards).

STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon. Coniferous or mixed coniferous/birch woodland; very locally in deciduous woodland and thickets (e.g. aspen, willow, birch). Tends to favour mature coniferous forests.

CRESTED TIT *Parus cristatus*

L 11.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Similar in size and coloration to Marsh Tit, but easily distinguished from all other tits by its prominent, pointed, dull whitish crest (speckled with black) and associated black facial markings. Less sociable than most tits. Often first detected by its purring call.

SEX/AGE Juvenile similar to adult, but crest reduced.

VOICE Typical calls are a low-pitched, purring 'choo-rrrrr' and thin, high-pitched 'see', 'si' or 'sit' notes, often combined (e.g. 'see-si-sit-choo-rrrr-see-sit'). Song is a rising and falling, purring 'sih-hu-choo-rrr-sih-hu-choo-rrr-sih-hu-choo-rrr ...'.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 7 races (nominate and *scoticus* illustrated). Variation is clinal, with the palest forms with the greyest upperparts in the north and east (e.g. *cristatus*, Norway east to W Russia and south to the Balkans), and the darkest forms with the brownest upperparts in the west (e.g. *scoticus*, Scotland). The population of S Iberia (*weigoldi*) is exceptional in being greyer on the mantle than would be expected, although still dark above and below.

Plate page 732



STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. Coniferous (especially pine or spruce) and, more locally, mixed woodland. Occurs in broadleaf woodland (especially cork oak and beech) in Pyrenees and Iberian Peninsula.

COAL TIT *Parus ater*

Plate page 732

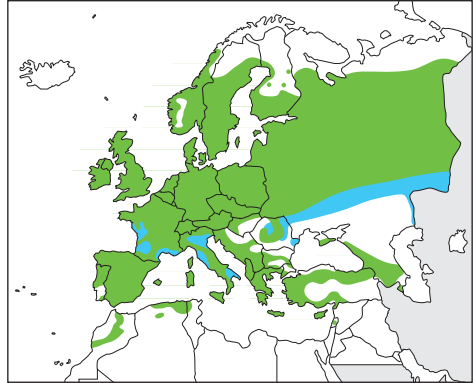
L 11.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Similar in size to Marsh and Willow Tits, but this is the only tit with a conspicuous pale patch on the nape. In adults of most forms the patch is white, but in some races and in juveniles it is yellow or yellowish. Also unique among tits in possessing a double white wing bar. Rather short-tailed and large-headed in appearance compared with other dark-capped tits. Unlikely to be confused except on poor view. Forages restlessly high in trees, but also quite at home on the ground.

SEX/AGE Juvenile similar to adult, but has nape spot, cheeks and underparts suffused with yellow.

VOICE Calls include a clear, rather plaintive 'tsuu' or 'hseeoo', a thin high-pitched 'psit' or 'psitisit' and a very Goldcrest-like rapid, buzzing 'tsee-tsee-tsee-tsee ...'. Song resembles some of Great Tit's songs, but is faster, clearer and sweeter, thus 'teechu-teechu-teechu ...' or 'chickwee-chickwee-chickwee ...'; these songs sometimes end abruptly with a 'dit'.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Fairly marked. 11 races (*britannicus*, *ledouci* and *cypristes* illustrated). Most races have mantle olive-grey (e.g. *britannicus*, Britain) or grey, but the Cyprus race (*cypristes*) has mantle strongly tinged with brown. Races in Ireland (*hibernicus*) and Algeria/Tunisia (*ledouci*) differ from more typical forms in having underparts, cheeks and nape



patch yellowish in adults as well as in juveniles.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. Coniferous or mixed woodland, parks and large gardens; locally also deciduous woodland in south of range (favouring oak and beech). Regularly visits small gardens, orchards and other less usual habitats outside the breeding season.

BLUETIT *Parus caeruleus*

Plate page 733

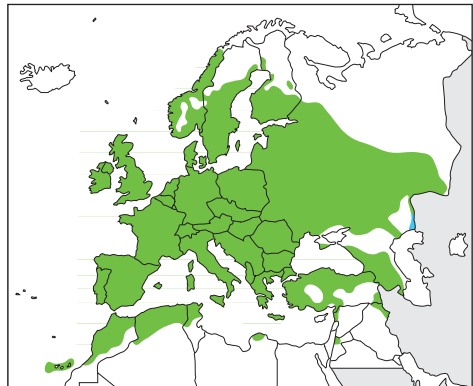
L 12 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A very familiar bird, easily distinguished by the combination of blue crown surrounded by white, blue wings and tail, deep indigo-blue upper nape and sides of neck, and pale, lemon-yellow, underparts (with only a rather obscure dark stripe down centre of lower breast and belly). Juvenile not so distinctive, with white and indigo-blue areas on head replaced with pale yellow and blackish respectively, but still unlikely to be confused. The best distinguishing features from juvenile (or yellow-tinged races) of Coal Tit are the lack of a pale patch on the nape, the single pale wing bar and the greenish (as opposed to black) crown. See also Azure Tit and Great Tit.

SEX/AGE Juvenile much duller than adult, with pale yellow underparts, yellowish cheeks and border to greenish crown, and blackish neck 'scarf'. 1st-winter separable on good view by contrast between dull bluish-green primary coverts, bastard wing and (often) outer greater coverts and the bright blue greater coverts.

VOICE Calls are variable but include combination of 'tsee', 'tsi' and 'tsit' notes, thus 'tsee-tsee-tsi-tsi-tsit', and a harsh, angry 'chrrrrrrr', often combined with other notes, thus 'tsee-tsee-tsi-chrrrrrrr'. Song a clear, liquid, trilling 'tsi-tsi-sirrrrrrr-r-r-r'.

TAXONOMY/GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Marked. 12 races (*obscurus* and *ultramarinus* illustrated). There is little racial variation in Europe or the Middle East (where the British Is race *obscurus* is representative), but in N Africa (where *ultramarinus* is the form found from Morocco to Tunisia) and the Canaries the



local forms have a dark blue crown (appearing almost blackish at times) and dark, slaty-blue, mantle. In the form *teneriffae* (Gomera, Tenerife and Gran Canaria) there is no white wing bar. It has recently been proposed that these forms merit specific status.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. Broadleaf and mixed woodland, thickets, areas with scattered trees, overgrown hedgerows, gardens, parks, orchards; also more locally in coniferous woodland and palm groves. Outside the breeding season, also reedbeds and sometimes low bushy areas.

AZURE TIT *Parus cyanus*

Plate page 733

L 13 cm.

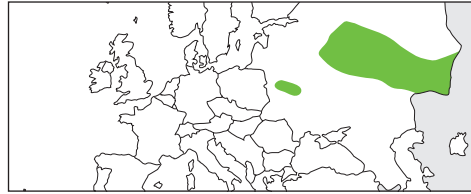
IDENTIFICATION The only true tit with a white (or whitish) head, broken by a black eye-stripe, whitish

underparts and a rather long tail (distinctly longer than in Blue Tit). Has conspicuous broad, white 'V' on

wings and conspicuous white outer tail feathers. Azure Tit is distinctly 'fluffy', but less untidy than Long-tailed Tit, from which it may be separated by the much shorter tail, the narrower black eye-stripe, the broad white inverted 'V' on the wings, and the blue-grey colour of the mantle. Unlikely to be confused with Blue Tit, which has very different coloration. An aberrant individual of the latter might be problematic, but Azure has a longer tail, has much more extensive white in wing, some white in tail and completely white underparts with no black bib.

SEX/AGE Juvenile is washed with greyish on the head and underparts, is greyer (less blue) on the mantle and has grey lesser and median coverts and grey edges to greater coverts (all these feathers edged blue in adult). 1st-winter cannot be aged except occasionally when some juvenile coverts retained.

VOICE Fairly similar to Blue Tit. Most common calls are a thin, high-pitched 'tsirrr' and a loud 'tcherrink'. Has a variety of different song types, including a brief but distinctive, somewhat trilling 'tsee tsee dze dze dze' (recalling Blue Tit, but with terminal part of trill



shorter) and a buzzy 'cheweez zee, cheweez zee ...' or more complex 'tsee tsee chi-chi-chi-cheweez chi-chi-chi-cheweez'.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (nominate illustrated).

HYBRIDS Occasionally hybridizes with Blue Tit, producing offspring with intermediate characters.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common but localized. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Finland.) Damp broadleaf woodland with dense undergrowth and bushy thickets, especially willow, near streams, rivers, lakes or marshes. Also visits reedbeds outside breeding season.

GREAT TIT *Parus major*

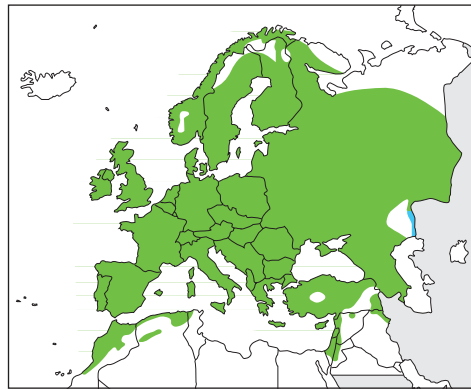
L 14 cm.

IDENTIFICATION The largest tit in our region and another very familiar bird. Distinguished by a combination of black crown, white cheeks and yellow underparts with central black stripe from bib to belly (very bold in males). Duller juvenile best separated from juvenile (or yellow-tinged races) of Coal Tit by much larger size, dark ventral stripe, lack of pale patch on nape and single pale wing bar; from juvenile Blue Tit by much larger size, much more prominent dark ventral streak (meeting dark bib) and darker and solid dark cap.

SEX/AGE Males have a distinctly broader black ventral stripe than females. Juvenile much duller than adult, with dark brownish cap, yellowish cheeks and dark brownish ventral stripe.

VOICE Has many calls, some rather confusing. Almost all calls are loud and ringing, including 'chick-pee-chick-pee ...', 'tsi-teooo-tsi-teooo ...', a very Chaffinch-like 'tink-tink-tink', a 'zik-zik-doo-doo' and a 'pitipoo-pitipoo-pitipoo ...'; also a harsh, scolding 'tchairrr', often repeated. The best-known songs are a loud and ringing 'teechu-teechu-teechu-teechu ...' and the so-called 'saw-sharpening' 'zeechoo-zeechoo-zeechoo ...'. Mimicry adds further variation to a wide repertoire.

Plate page 733



GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Rather slight. 11 races (*newtoni* illustrated).

STATUS/HABITAT Common. Deciduous and mixed woodland, thickets, areas with scattered trees, overgrown hedgerows, gardens, parks, orchards; locally also coniferous woodland.

NUTHATCHES Sittidae

7 species (1 vagrant)

Small, restless, tree-climbing (or, in a few species, rock-climbing) birds with strong, straight and often large bills, large heads, short tails and strong feet. Highly agile and able to move down tree limbs (or rock faces) head first, unlike treecreepers and woodpeckers. Not very gregarious, but often in small family groups and frequently found among tit flocks. Feed on insects and other invertebrates, often prised out of crevices in wood (or rock) by means of their rather long, strong bills. Most nest in holes in trees, but rock nuthatches make elaborate, flask-like mud nests, usually with tunnel-like entrance holes, in crevices or depressions in rock faces. Songs are often surprisingly loud, far-carrying whistles or pipings (frequently

Sexes similar (but minor differences in some species). No seasonal variation. Juveniles fairly closely resemble adults. Adult plumage often fully attained by first autumn, although some juvenile feathering may be retained until second autumn.

Nuthatches could be confused with small woodpeckers when seen very poorly (e.g. in distant silhouette), but have very distinctive plumage pattern, with uniform blue-grey upperparts combined with dark eye-stripe that contrasts with whitish cheeks (and sometimes supercilium). Structure in fact rather different, with even sharper bill shape and more sloping forehead that combine to produce distinctly wedge-shaped outline to head/bill. Nuthatches also have unique ability to climb downwards head first and, unlike woodpeckers, do not use tail as a prop (which enables woodpeckers to hold head and bill well out from tree limb).

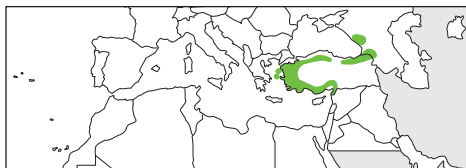
Identification within the family mostly straightforward (helped by the fact that most species do not overlap in range), but the two rock nuthatches (q.v.) present difficulties.

Plate page 734

1. 12.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Small nuthatch of Turkey, Caucasus and Aegean island of Lesbos. Rufous-chestnut breast patch of adult is unique to this species. Eurasian and Western Rock Nuthatches, the only species with which Krüper's overlaps in range, are substantially larger, with much more massive bills and noticeably broader black eye-stripes; both lack black forecrown and conspicuous white supercilium of Krüper's. Juvenile Krüper's has only a faint rufous breast patch but small size, small bill, obvious whitish supercilium, narrow dark eye-stripe and preference for conifers make confusion unlikely. Frequently visits cones to extract seeds, especially in winter, but will forage for insects even in low bushes or on ground. Agile, and often visits outermost branches of trees.

SEX/AGE Adult female usually duller than adult male, especially as regards rufous-chestnut of chest patch and undertail coverts. Juvenile is duller overall and shows only rather faint rufous-cinnamon chest patch and undertail coverts; forecrown and eye-stripe are dusky (not black or blackish), and has less obvious



pale supercilium.

VOICE Calls include a rapid, nasal, rather toy-trumpet-like 'dueue-dueue-dueue' (recalling European Greenfinch), a woodpecker-like but soft 'pwik' and a harsh, grating, rather Eurasian Jay-like 'scheer' or 'schay'. Song a rapid series of rather Eurasian Nuthatch-like pipings lasting several seconds: 'weet weet weet weet weet ...'

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. Pine, spruce or fir forest. Disperses into mixed or even purely broad-leaved woodland in autumn/winter, when sometimes wanders to Black Sea coastal lowlands adjacent to breeding range.

Plate page 734

L 12 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Small endemic nuthatch of Corsica. The only nuthatch found on the island and so, effectively, unmistakable. Lacks rufous-chestnut breast patch and undertail coverts of adult Krüper's Nuthatch (but juvenile Krüper's has these areas only faintly tinged with rufous-cinnamon) and, unlike other small nuthatches (apart from vagrant Red-breasted Nuthatch, q.v.), male has all-dark crown (not just fore-crown). Female has blue-grey crown, rather like juvenile and some adult female Algerian Nuthatch, but has shorter, slimmer bill, darker legs and lacks warm, pinkish-buff tinge to underparts. Behaviour much as that of Krüper's, including habit of feeding on seeds in pine cones.

SEX/AGE Adult female has blue-grey (not black) crown and eye-stripe, similar to rest of upperparts (but may show some blackish on forecrown); supercilium and underparts greyer, less white, than in most males. Juveniles similar to adults of same sex but duller



below, and male has less clean black crown and eye-stripe; have faint grey-buff or brownish-grey tips to greater coverts and (initially) show faint blackish fringes to feathers of side of head and underparts.

VOICE Calls a whistled 'pewhd' (sometimes rapidly repeated) and a harsh Eurasian Jay-like 'scheersht'. Songs a fast piping trill, 'pupupupupupupu ...' (often rising in volume and then falling away), and a slower, more nasal but similar, somewhat ascending 'dewhdewhdewhdewhdewhdewhdewh ...'.

STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon. Corsican pine (*Pinus nigra laricio*) forest in mountains above about 800 m (but disperses lower in hard winters).

ALGERIAN NUTHATCH *Sitta ledanti*

Plate page 734

Kabylie Nuthatch

L 12 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Endemic to N Algeria, where restricted to Djebel Babor and some other nearby areas. Not discovered until 1975. The only nuthatch found in Algeria, so misidentification unlikely. Smaller and finer-billed than Eurasian Nuthatch, with black forecrown (adult male and some adult females), much less prominent dark eye-stripe and no chestnut on lower flanks and undertail coverts. See also Corsican Nuthatch.

SEX/AGE Adult female has smaller area of black on forecrown and less obvious dusky eye-stripe than adult male; some females, perhaps sub-adults, have wholly grey crown. Juvenile as adult female, but has all-grey crown, less clean-cut supercilium, paler upperparts, paler bill (mostly grey instead of black,



with pale greenish or yellowish instead of grey base to lower mandible) and paler grey legs.

VOICE When excited, gives a harsh, rather Eurasian Jay-like 'tschae' (often rapidly repeated). Song a rapid, fluty, rather Eurasian Wrenneck-like 'klieu-klieu-klieu-klieu ...'.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common, but extremely localized. Mixed forest of cedar, fir and oak in mountains from 350 to 2000 m.

RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH *Sitta canadensis*

Plate page 734

L 11.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. The smallest nuthatch recorded from our region. Substantially smaller than Eurasian Nuthatch with much smaller, shorter and finer bill, and very different head pattern with all dark crown and bold white supercilium above dark eye-stripe. Lacks contrasting chestnut on lower flanks and undertail coverts shown by Eurasian; instead underparts are uniformly warm-coloured. Rather similar to male Corsican Nuthatch but is slightly smaller and has warmer, or much warmer, underparts with ochre to rufous tinge and dark tips, with whitish subterminal bar, to outer tail feathers (Corsican shows pale grey tips to black outer tail feathers). Differs from Krüper's and Algerian Nuthatches in having all-dark crown, much warmer underparts and, compared with adult Krüper's, no contrasting rufous-chestnut patch on breast.

SEX/AGE Adult female has blue-grey or blackish-grey

(not black) crown and eye-stripe, similar to rest of upperparts or not much darker. Eye-stripe often less distinct, although generally darker than crown. Underparts often paler, lacking rufous tinge of many males. Juveniles similar to adults of same sex but duller overall. Juvenile male has crown and eye-stripe dull black, not glossy black. Juvenile female has crown and eye-stripe duller grey and eye-stripe even less sharply defined. In both, greater coverts sometimes narrowly fringed with rufous.

VOICE Usual call a slow, high, nasal, far-carrying 'nyahk nyahk nyahk' recalling toy tin horn. Gives more rapid series when agitated. This call also serves as a territorial 'song'. Contact call is a soft 'pit'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe, Iceland). In natural range found in coniferous (especially spruce or pine) or mixed forest.

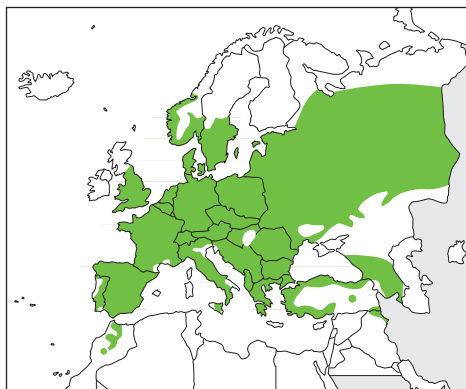
EURASIAN NUTHATCH *Sitta europaea*
Nuthatch, Wood Nuthatch

Plate page 734

L 14 cm.

IDENTIFICATION By far the most widespread nuthatch of our region. The only species in most areas, so identification often straightforward. Larger size (and strong bill), chestnut on lower flanks and undertail coverts, lack of black on crown and absence of bold white supercilium (in most races) prevent confusion with the small arboreal nuthatches. Urals race *asiatica* and vagrant Siberian race *arctica* are more problematic, being unusually small with a distinctly finer bill, very white underparts and often a distinct white supercilium, but both lack a dark crown and show chestnut with white spotting on undertail coverts. Both rock nuthatches sometimes occur in trees, but most races are larger and have even more massive bills, while all lack chestnut (with white spotting) on lower flanks and undertail coverts and the orange-buff tinge to rest of underparts and deeper blue-grey upperparts shown by most southern races of Eurasian (but see Geographical Variation).

SEX/AGE Adult female has paler, less contrasting (rufous rather than chestnut-red) lower flanks and side of undertail coverts; black eye-stripe sometimes brown-tinged and less distinct. Juveniles closely



resemble adults of same sex, but often duller on crown and mantle, less richly coloured below, and with less distinct eye-stripe; in male lower flanks and side of undertail coverts typically rufous-chestnut, in

female buffish-cinnamon or rufous-cinnamon (so little or no contrast with rest of underparts in *caesia* group of races: see Geographical Variation).

VOICE Most common call, when excited, a short, emphatic 'chweett', usually repeated several times; contact call a high, tit-like 'seet' or shorter 'sit'. Song ranges from a loud, rather slow series of whistles ('pwee pwee pwee pwee' with about two whistles per second) when not aroused to a rapid, excited trilling 'pipipipipipipipi ...'.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Marked: mainly involves size, bill length and colour of underparts. 10 races (nominate, *caesia* and *levantina* illustrated). Fall into two groups: nominate *europaea* group (3 races, including vagrant *arctica* from N Siberia) occurring from Norway eastwards, and *caesia* group (7 races) occurring in Britain, continental Europe south of *europaea* group, SW Asia and Morocco. Differences between groups quite marked, but within groups mainly slight and clinal. In the northern *europaea*, breast to belly is white in male and pale creamy-buff in female; race *asiatica* (Urals eastwards) is distinctive, being rather small with very slender, sharply pointed

bill, very white underparts from throat to belly and often a rather obvious white forehead and supercilium (vagrant *arctica* is similar, but paler on upperparts and has longer bill). The *caesia* group differs mainly in having underparts buffish-cinnamon, orange-cinnamon or pinkish-cinnamon from breast to belly: race *levantina* (S Turkey to N Iraq) and especially *persica* (N Iraq eastwards) have paler grey upperparts, rather slender, sharply pointed bills and unusually pale underparts (creamy pinkish-buff); subdued coloration could perhaps lead to confusion with rock nuthatches, which do visit trees, but latter have longer and more massive bills (especially Eastern Rock) and lack contrasting rich chestnut on rear flanks and undertail coverts, white spotting on undertail coverts and black and white in outer tail feathers (tail is all grey in rock nuthatches). Legs are longer in rock nuthatches, giving them characteristically more upright posture as they hop from rock to rock.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Finland, following irruptions.) Deciduous and mixed woodland (locally in pure coniferous forest), parkland and large gardens.

EASTERN ROCK NUTHATCH *Sitta tephronota*

Plate page 734

Great Rock Nuthatch

L 15.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Large, rock-haunting nuthatch of E Turkey, Iraq and Transcaucasus. Very similar to populations of Western Rock Nuthatch in our region and can be difficult to separate. Larger overall and larger-headed than race *rupicola* of Western Rock, with even longer and more massive bill and even bolder eye-stripe (broader behind eye and on side of nape). (Note: eye-stripe is bolder and bill heavier in Western Rock of both nominate race and *syriaca*, but there is no geographical overlap with these forms.) Upperpart coloration shows so much geographical variation that it is of little help. Visits trees more often than Western Rock, so beware pale races of Eurasian Nuthatch (see Geographical Variation under that species).

SEX/AGE Juvenile closely resembles adult, but is slightly duller overall and has duller, less distinct and shorter black eye-stripe, buff tinge to breast, side of neck and cheek, and pale rufous tips to greater coverts.

VOICE Calls and song very similar to those of Western Rock (q.v.), but typically slightly lower-pitched and a little slower in tempo. Beware, however, variations in terrain, which often have marked influence on apparent sound of rock nuthatches.

TAXONOMY Sometimes treated as conspecific with Western Rock Nuthatch *S. neumayer* (the enlarged



species being known as Rock Nuthatch) in the past, but ranges overlap without extensive interbreeding.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION: Slight. 2 races (*dresseri* illustrated). Race *dresseri* of N Iraq and SE Turkey is largest of all, with massive bill and palest upperparts. Race *obscura* of Transcaucasia and probably NE Turkey is slightly smaller and darker. (Variation more marked to east of our region, however, where smallest race *iranica* of SW Turkmenia and probably NE Iran approaches Western Rock, having bill significantly smaller and more slender, and eye-stripe shorter.)

STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon but localized. Dry, sunny, rocky hillsides, gorges, ravines and rocky outcrops; often barren, but sometimes with scrub or small trees. Outside breeding season, regularly found in open woodland, groves and orchards, especially in nearby valley bottoms.

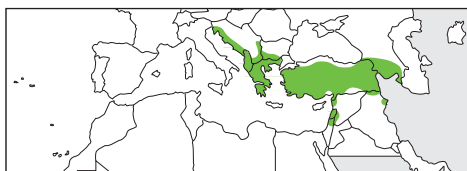
WESTERN ROCK NUTHATCH *Sitta neumayer*

Plate page 734

Rock Nuthatch

L 13.5–14.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Fairly large nuthatch of southeast of our region. One of only two predominantly rock-haunting nuthatches. Hops with agility from rock to rock, or up crags, often deliberately slipping out of sight of observer behind boulder or over lip of rock face. For differences from closely similar Eastern Rock Nuthatch, see that species. Can be confused with Eurasian Nuthatch if seen poorly, especially when visiting trees (which it does from time to time). In particular, beware pale local races of Eurasian from S



Turkey eastwards (see Geographical Variation under that species). See Geographical Variation for discus-

sion of small race *tschitscherini* with its much reduced eye-stripe and pale upperparts.

SEX/AGE Juvenile closely resembles adult, but is slightly duller overall and has duller, less distinct and shorter black eye-stripe, buff tinge to breast, side of neck and cheek, and pale rufous tips to greater coverts.

VOICE Calls include a loud, sharp 'chik' and a clicking 'peet peet peet' or 'pit pit pit', a harsh, rather Eurasian Jay-like 'schrah', and a loud, descending trill similar to introduction to song. Song rather variable, but basically consists of loud, clear whistles and trills; typically starts off with a rapid, descending, Wood Warbler-like trill or a short 'ititit', followed by a series of ascending whistles ('toowee toowee toowee ...', recalling Tree Pipit) or descending whistles ('chew chew chew ...', recalling Marsh Tit).

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Mainly slight. 4 races (nominate and *tschitscherini* illustrated). Nominate

race occurs in SE Europe and is fairly dark above, with bold dark eye-stripe and obvious pinkish-cinnamon tinge on flanks and undertail coverts. Race *zarudnyi* of W Turkey is paler below, but otherwise similar. Race *syriaca* of Levant is similar to *zarudnyi*, but paler grey above. Race *rupicola* of E Turkey, Transcaucasia and N Iraq similar to *zarudnyi*, but has finer bill and narrower black eye-stripe (and, in NE Turkey and Transcaucasia, darker, bluer-grey, upperparts). The marginally extralimital race *tschitscherini* from SW Iran is particularly small-bodied and small-billed, with very pale upperparts and much reduced eye-stripe (narrowing sharply and ending not far behind eye), making separation from Eastern Rock straightforward.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. Dry, sunny, rocky hillsides, gorges, ravines and rocky outcrops; often barren, but sometimes with scrub or small trees. Also found in ruins. Outside breeding season, often visits groves of trees, especially in nearby valley bottoms.

WALLCREEPERS Tichodromadidae

1 species (the sole representative of the family)

WALLCREEPER *Tichodroma muraria*

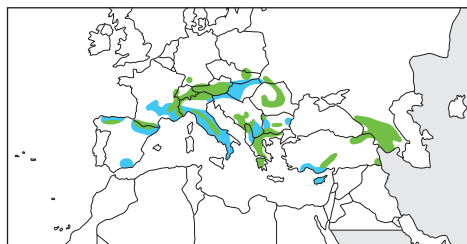
Plate page 735

L 16.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A wonderful little mountain bird that flies with undulating but rather erratic, butterfly-like motion on remarkably broad, colourful wings (with large crimson patches and bold white spots) from one precipitous feeding place to another. Flight outline and action reminiscent of a tiny hoopoe. Creeps up cliff faces and crags in jerky, treecreeper-like fashion, prising insects and spiders from crevices with long, fine, decurved bill, or hops up on to tops of rocks and pinnacles in rock nuthatch-fashion. All the while constantly flicks wings partly open, producing brief crimson flashes. Completely unmistakable. By no means always in inaccessible terrain: will even feed on low earth banks and on rocky outcrops and boulders alongside mountain rivers and roads. Nests in crevices in rock faces.

SEX/AGE Adult female summer has lower face greyish-white and chin to upper breast white (instead of dull black); often has dusky patch on lower throat/upper breast. Adult winter closely resembles adult female summer, but crown is tinged brown and no dusky patch on lower throat/upper breast. Juvenile resembles adult winter, differing mainly in having pale grey (instead of white) lower face and chin to upper breast, offering little contrast with grey remainder of underparts; adult plumage attained by first autumn.

VOICE Calls include a short, piping 'tui', a Tree Spar-



row-like 'chup', a buzzing lark-like 'zree' and a rapid twitter. Song (given by both sexes) a slow, rather drawn-out and variable series of thin, but often far-carrying, ascending, piping (but often throaty or buzzy) whistles: e.g. 'tu tuee tuee zreeeeeu' and 'chewee cheweeooo'.

STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon, but localized and habitat often accessible only with great difficulty. In breeding season, mountain regions (typically at high altitudes, up to 3000 m or more), on precipitous cliff faces and steep crags; often favours moister locations, especially cliffs above rivers and streams. After breeding season, often visits crags along summit ridges. In winter, descends to similar terrain at lower levels, sometimes occurring on castle walls and even sea cliffs.

TREECREEPERS Certhiidae

2 species

Treecreepers are uniquely shaped small, tree-climbing birds with rather long, fine and strongly curved bills and stiffened tail feathers that aid their movement up tree trunks and branches. Move with jerky,

creeping, almost mouse-like motion up and along tree trunks and limbs, often spiralling around trunks and branches in the process, hanging upside down with ease. After finishing with one tree, often high up, glide down to the base of the next and start creeping upwards once more. Remarkably cryptic plumage renders them hard to see against trunks and branches until they move. Often found with roving flocks of tits and nuthatches. Feed on insects, spiders and other invertebrates. Nest in crevices in trees.

Sexes similar. No seasonal variation. Juveniles closely resemble adults. Adult plumage largely attained by first autumn (fully by early in second autumn).

Treecreepers, with their unique way of moving and distinctive cryptic plumage pattern and bill shape, are most unlikely to be confused with other birds.

Separation of the two species in our region is difficult: see species texts.

EURASIAN TREETREEPER *Certhia familiaris*

Plate page 735

Treecreeper

L 12.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Distinctive shape, cryptic coloration (like complex 'camouflage' paint) and 'tree-creeping' habit make confusion with anything other than very similar Short-toed Treecreeper most unlikely. See the latter for detailed discussion.

SEX/AGE Juvenile closely resembles adult, but has more white-spotted (rather than streaked) upperparts and has breast and flanks often speckled with grey or buff (appearing as a uniform tinge at any distance).

VOICE Contact call a very high, very thin, rather tremulous 'tsree', often repeated; also a more excited, very high, thin, sharp 'tsee' or 'teeh', often given in rapid series or more slowly repeated. In flight, gives a short, sharp, Goldcrest-like 'si'. Song, noticeably dissimilar to that of Short-toed (but beware frequent mimicry by that species), a high thin warble, starting with several 'tsree' units followed by a number of thin, tremulous, Goldcrest-like descending units, and then a number of rippling, Willow Warbler-like descending units and often ending with a sibilant falling then rising 'suih'.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 5 races (nominate and *britannica* illustrated). Mainly involves cline of increasing darkness of upperparts and increasing intensity of buffy or rufous wash on flanks, belly and undertail coverts from east and north towards west.



Race *britannica* (British Is) is darkest above, with most obvious buff or rufous wash below; nominate race (Scandinavia and E Europe eastwards) is palest above, with whitest rear underparts.

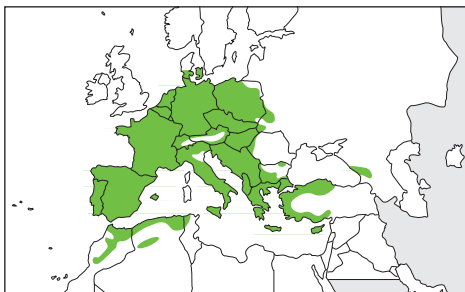
STATUS/HABITAT Common. Deciduous and mixed woodland, parkland, large gardens and locally pure coniferous forest. In areas of overlap with Short-toed Treecreeper in S and C Europe and Turkey, tends to occur at higher altitudes and to be confined to conifers or mixed forest.

SHORT-TOED TREETREEPER *Certhia brachydactyla*

Plate page 735

L 12.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Distinctive shape, cryptic coloration (like complex 'camouflage' paint) and 'tree-creeping' habit make confusion with anything other than very similar Eurasian Treecreeper most unlikely. Difficult to separate from latter except by voice (and even then song mimicry a problem). While upperpart coloration of Short-toed darker than in nominate race of Eurasian, in many areas of overlap upperpart coloration very similar. Supercilium is usually indistinct (and brownish-tinged) or absent in front of eye in Short-toed, but usually clean white in Eurasian and extending in front of eye as far as forehead. Underparts tend to be dingier in Short-toed, which is often buffy on flanks, but there is much overlap in adults and juvenile Common routinely rather dingy below. With exceptional view, small differences in wing pattern can be seen: the conspicuous creamy-buff wing bar towards rear of wing (across centre of outer primaries and secondaries) is more jagged in Short-toed, as it appears to consist of a series of rearward-pointing pale spikes, while in Eurasian it appears to consist of a series of blunt-edged steps; 'spiky' rear edge to wing



bar of Short-toed can be quite obvious on a motionless bird seen well. Wingtip also subtly different, with two conspicuous, rather evenly spaced white spots (on tips of middle primaries) between wingtip and the white arc formed by tips of inner primaries and secondaries in Short-toed; in Eurasian, these middle primaries are shorter and their more extensive white tips virtually merge with the white arc. Tertiaries also differ:

SHORT-TOED TREECREEPER

EURASIAN TREECREEPER


WING PATTERNING AND PRIMARY POSITION IN TREECREEPERS
(see text for explanation of characters indicated)

in Short-toed, white tips to outer webs are smaller and inner webs are dingy brown (clean pale brown in Eurasian). Largest feather of bastard wing usually has unbroken pale margin, connected to pale tip, in Short-toed, while in Eurasian pale margin usually broken or lacking, but this difference very hard to see in the field. Bill of Short-toed averages longer and more curved and hind-claw averages shorter and more curved, but these differences only of marginal use in the field. In the hand, hind-claw is more than 0.14 x bill + 5.6 in Eurasian, less than this in Short-toed.

SEX/AGE Juvenile closely resembles adult, but has more white-spotted (rather than streaked) upperparts and has breast, flanks and belly often speckled with grey or buff (appearing as a uniform tinge at any distance).

VOICE When excited or alarmed, gives a diagnostic explosive, high, shrill, piping 'zeet', recalling Dunnock and often given in slow or rapid series. Contact call a high, thin, tremulous 'tsree', very like similar call of Eurasian but slightly lower and 'looser'. In flight, often gives a short, sharp 'si' similar to that of Eurasian. Song distinctly different from that of Eur-

sian (but beware frequent mimicry): consists of several loud, penetrating but rather plaintive whistles, rapidly delivered with a somewhat jolting rhythm and rising at the end, 'seet seet seet-e-roi delTT'. Song given by populations of NW Africa and most Mediterranean islands rather different and lower-pitched.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 5 races (nominate and *megarhyncha* illustrated). Mainly clinal. Race *megarhyncha* (NW Spain to N France and western Germany) and race *harterti* (Turkey to W Caucasus) are paler and more rufous above than nominate race (remainder of continental Europe, Sicily and Crete) and *mauritanica* (NW Africa), so are closer to Eurasian in general appearance. Isolated race *dorothaeae* of Cyprus is similar to nominate race, but greyer above, with whiter underparts and grey rather than buff wash on flanks.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. Deciduous, mixed and coniferous woodland, parkland and large gardens; especially favours oak or pine woods in many areas. Occurs up to considerable altitudes, but generally not at highest levels in areas of overlap with Eurasian Treecreeper.

PENDULINE TITS Remizidae

1 species

EURASIAN PENDULINE TIT *Remiz pendulinus*

Plate pages 722 & 733

Penduline Tit

L 11 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A very small tit-like bird of marshy or waterside habitats, easily identified by its black face mask and pale greyish-white crown and nape. Unobtrusive and typically first located by its characteristic thin, plaintive call. Feeds in both trees (especially willows) and reedbeds, gleaning for insects or stripping seed heads in typical restless, acrobatic tit-like fashion, often hanging upside down under twigs or reed stems. Builds intricate and beautiful 'hanging basket' nest, compacted with plant down and animal hair, attached to twigs of waterside trees (typically willow) or sometimes reeds. Flight action recalls Blue Tit, being rather weak, but is even lighter, hinting at a *Phyllosco-*

pus at times. Juvenile startlingly different from adult, so much so that it may at first seem like another species. Lacks the black face mask and the chestnut on the mantle, being greyish-brown on the upperparts and pale buffish-white below. Might conceivably be confused with small warblers or flycatchers (especially female/immature Red-breasted Flycatcher), but from all these differs in having a fundamentally tit-like structure and jizz (see family introduction to the Paridae).

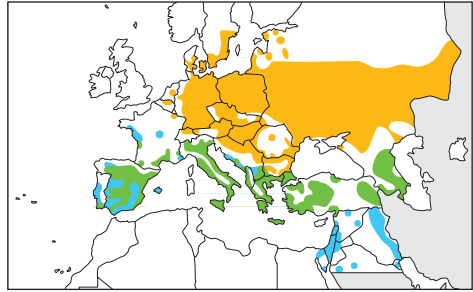
SEX/AGE In female, black mask is smaller (not extending up onto forehead), crown and nape are greyer, and mantle is duller than in male, while chestnut markings

on breast are reduced. Juvenile distinct (see Identification).

VOICE This species is often detected only by its thin, plaintive, but quite far-carrying 'tssssseoo'; other calls are similar in pitch and include 'tsseooliu', 'tssuli', 'tssrree', 'sss-lu-lu-lu' and 'sss-tew-tew'. There are also some soft buzzing 'tzzz' calls. The song is a slow, subdued combination of calls with variants.

TAXONOMY Vagrant form *coronatus* is sometimes treated as a full species under the name **White-crowned Penduline Tit**; appears not to interbreed with either western races (*pendulinus* group, **European Penduline Tit**) or *macronyx* group. Distinctive form *macronyx* (SW Caspian only in our region) is sometimes treated (together with other extralimital races) as a full species under the name **Black-headed Penduline Tit**, although at least some interbreeding with *pendulinus* group occurs.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Mostly rather slight, but marked in Caspian region. 5 races (nominate, *macronyx*, *coronatus* and *caspicus* illustrated). The three western races form the *pendulinus* group; most of range in our region occupied by nominate race or very similar *menzbieri* (S Turkey to Azerbaijan), but in the N Caspian region some individuals of *caspicus* have the entire crown and nape chestnut rather than greyish-white. In N and SW Caspian the distinctive form *macronyx* (the westernmost representative of the *macronyx* group of races) hybridizes with *caspicus* and *menzbieri* respectively; *macronyx* has entire head (including throat) black and heavy bill and feet (the



latter probably an adaptation to primarily reedbed rather than willow habitat). Race *coronatus* from C Asia (the westernmost representative of the *coronatus* group of races) has occurred as a vagrant in Austria; differs from western races in having no chestnut on crown in male and a broad band of black extending from face mask across hindcrown and dividing white forecrown from white hindneck.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common but localized. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Syria, Iraq.) Trees and bushes, especially willows, alders and poplars, by streams, rivers, lakes and marshes; also frequents extensive reedbeds (especially some eastern populations) and occasionally found in quite arid areas away from water. Outside the breeding season, even western populations may be found also in extensive reedbeds far from bushes and trees.



SUNBIRDS Nectariniidae

3 species

Only a few species of this family of very small but brightly coloured, sparkingly iridescent tropical birds occur in our region. Their slender, decurved bills enable them to reach into flowers to feed on nectar. Very active and usually found alone or in pairs about flowering trees and shrubs. Nest, bottle-shaped, suspended in bush.

Sexes dissimilar, and males have distinct summer plumage. Juveniles resemble adult female, with males attaining adult plumage by first spring.

Decurved bill precludes confusion with any other small birds. Adult female/juvenile Nile Valley or Pygmy Sunbirds in particular could be confused with some *Phylloscopus* warblers, but bill is larger and more decurved.

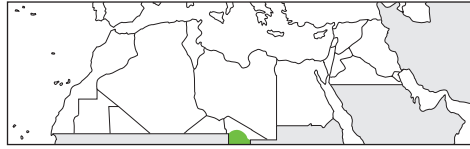
PYGMY SUNBIRD *Anthreptes platurus*

Plate below

L 16.5 cm (including tail streamers up to 8 cm).

IDENTIFICATION Restricted to Tibesti (N Chad). Very similar to Nile Valley Sunbird. Adult male lacks narrow violet-purple band across upper breast, bordering green throat, and often shows copper or gold gloss to green areas. Adult female and 1st-winter almost identical to Nile Valley; only difference seems to be rather more distinct pale supercilium and dark eye-stripe. Juvenile perhaps inseparable.

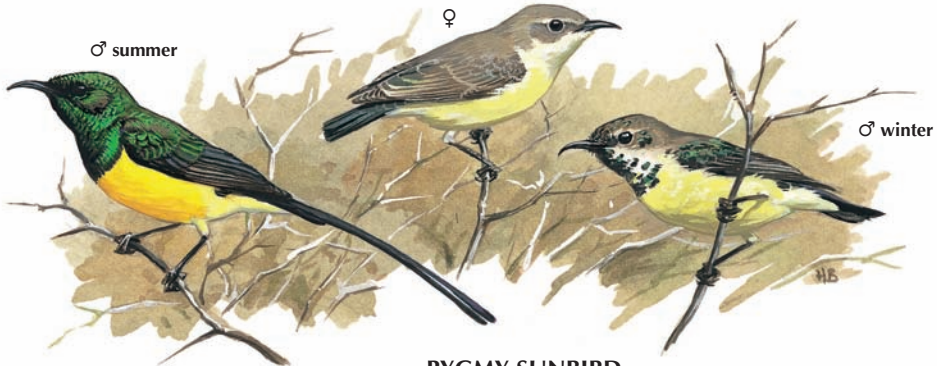
SEX/AGE Adult male winter resembles adult female, but wing and tail darker, greater coverts glossed metallic green, and dusky patch on throat (sometimes with greenish gloss). 1st-year males differ from females



in having dusky on chin and throat.

VOICE Similar to that of Nile Valley. Call is a thin, squeaky 'cheek'. Has a soft, twittering song.

STATUS/HABITAT Uncommon. Acacia and sodom apple (*Calotropis*) scrub in the Tibesti.



PYGMY SUNBIRD

NILE VALLEY SUNBIRD *Anthreptes metallicus*

Plate page 735

L 16 cm (including tail streamers up to 7 cm).

IDENTIFICATION At all ages, comparatively short bill prevents confusion with Palestine Sunbird. Summer male (December to April) unmistakable. Very similar to Pygmy Sunbird (q.v. for discussion), but ranges barely overlap.

SEX/AGE Adult male winter resembles adult female, but wing and tail darker, greater coverts glossed metallic green, and dusky patch on throat (sometimes with greenish gloss). 1st-year males differ from females in having dusky on chin and tail.

VOICE Call is a thin, squeaky 'ch'week'. Has a soft, twittering song.



TAXONOMY Sometimes treated as conspecific with Pygmy Sunbird.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common, but localized. Scrubby areas, especially acacia, and gardens.

PALESTINE SUNBIRD *Nectarinia osea*

Plate page 735

Orange-tufted Sunbird

L 10–11.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION At all ages, long bill prevents confusion with Nile Valley Sunbird. Summer male (November to June) distinctive, but brightly coloured tufts at side of breast usually hidden by closed wing.

SEX/AGE Winter male resembles female, but has metallic black wings and tail. 1st-year male differs from female in having dusky throat.

VOICE Calls include a thin, Eurasian Siskin-like 'cheew', a soft 'tsik' (and harsher 'tzik' when alarmed, often rapidly repeated) and a short 'churr'. Song a series of three or four high phrases descending in



pitch, 'swee-swee-swee-swee'.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Lebanon.) Bushy wadis, acacia scrub, riverside bushes, gardens.

ORIOLES Oriolidae

1 species

EURASIAN GOLDEN ORIOLE *Oriolus oriolus*

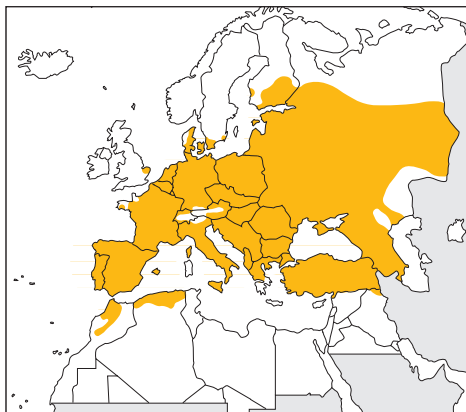
Plate page 738

Golden Oriole

L 24 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Rather slender, arboreal, thrush-like species. Combination of bright yellow head and body and chiefly black wings and tail, latter with yellow corners, renders male unmistakable. Females and immatures have much of upperparts and head greenish-yellow, duller wings and tail and contrasting yellow rump. Despite gaudy coloration, however, is far more often heard than seen. They are shy birds of the treetops, generally located by distinctive song, but even then may be difficult actually to see unless glimpses obtained of bird moving from canopy to canopy. Flight is fast but gently undulating (hinting at a woodpecker, but more fluid) and migrants may be seen flying by day in small parties. Builds open nest near end of bough in outer canopy of tree. Generally solitary or in pairs, but forms loose colonies in favoured breeding areas. Most likely confusion is of female with poorly seen woodpeckers of genus *Picus*, but these are bulkier, with a pointed tail (lacking yellow corners), usually show some red on crown and fly with deeper undulations.

SEX/AGE Some older females become very blackish on wings and tail and indeed some become almost as wholly yellow as adult males on head and body. Juvenile resembles typical adult female, but underparts strongly washed yellow and bill dark brown, not pink. 1st-summer male as adult female, but dark part of tail and wings blacker, and breast and belly yellower.



VOICE Song a very distinctive mellow, flute-like whistle, 'weela-weeoo'. Several harsh calls may also be heard.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Norway, Cyprus, Israel, N Saudi Arabia, Kuwait.) Deciduous woodland (especially oak, poplar or ash), groves, parks and sometimes large gardens. Favours mature woodland with tall, well-spaced trees.

SHRIKES Laniidae

9 species (2 vagrant)

Solitary, fairly small to medium-sized passerines of open, shrubby country. They are relatively large-headed, long-tailed birds with whitish underparts (including throat); whiteness of underparts is often eye-catching at long range. Shrikes perch in exposed situations such as bush tops and treetops, fences and wires, from which they drop on to their prey: small birds, reptiles and large insects. They have a habit of impaling surplus prey items on thorns or barbed wire ('shrike larders'). Flight action low and bounding with an upward sweep to perch, exposing wing and tail patterns.

Sexes similar in some species, but distinct in others. Little or no seasonal variation. Juveniles and 1st-winters often distinct. Adult plumage is attained by first spring.

Adult plumages are reasonably distinctive, but 1st-winter birds can be problematic, especially those in the Isabelline, Brown and Red-backed group of species. Useful features on which to concentrate when dealing with 1st-winter birds are:

Tail pattern and colour • Extent of barring on upperparts • Head pattern • Bill shape and colour

BLACK-CROWNED TCHAGRA *Tchagra senegala*

Plate page 737

Black-headed Bush Shrike

L 22 cm.

IDENTIFICATION NW Africa. Unlikely to be confused, but difficult to see; proclaims presence with

distinctive calls. Combination of black crown, white supercilium, rufous wings and dull brown upperparts

quite distinctive when bird visible. An exceptionally skulking shrike with babbler-like behaviour. Hops on ground with tail held high at bases of bushes. Clambers through bushes with horizontal carriage, flying low between them on rounded, rusty wings, showing long, graduated, white-tipped tail.

SEX/AGE Juvenile has brownish crown and eye-stripe and horn, rather than blackish, bill.

VOICE Proclaims presence with a distinctive series of descending, mellow whistles, 'wheee-woooo-wuuu ...', often repeated more slowly in a lower key. Sings from within cover or in spectacular fluttering and gliding



display flight. Alarm calls a rapid 'ter-rac-rac' and a harsh 'grrrr'.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally fairly common, but easily overlooked if not calling. Dense bushy cover, including riverside scrub, groves and large gardens with thickets.

BROWN SHRIKE *Lanius cristatus*

Plate page 738

L 18 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Asian vagrant (breeds C and E Siberia southwards). Very similar to darker populations of Isabelline Shrike, but upperparts dark warm brown, lacking strong contrast either with crown or with tail (although both more reddish than upperparts), normally lacks white wing patch (but some adults have small white patch), is slightly bulkier about head and breast (with somewhat heavier bill), has flanks and belly washed warm buff, and tail is narrower with tip more graduated. Only *phoenicuroides* race of Isabelline is as dark as Brown, but adults of former have striking white patch at base of primaries, more earthy-brown mantle, whiter and more uniform underparts and distinctly rufous uppertail coverts and tail (uppertail coverts and lower rump usually dull rufous in Brown, with little contrast, although more contrastingly rufous in some individuals); there is also a contrast between crown/nape and mantle/scapulars in *phoenicuroides* Isabelline (only rarely seen in Brown). Adult male Brown additionally shows a diffuse whitish band across forehead; this is absent or indistinct in Isabelline. 1st-winter Isabelline, however, usually has white wing patch indistinct or absent and darker birds are difficult to separate from 1st-winter Brown, although latter's bulkier forebody may be fairly obvious (Isabelline is slighter, more like Red-backed in shape) and its tail appears thinner than in Isabelline. If tail partially opened, the appreciably shorter outermost feathers can be visible on Brown (outer feather 19–24 mm shorter than tip in Brown, only 10–16 mm shorter in both Isabelline and Red-backed, but beware birds with partially grown outer tail feathers which can suggest Brown). In first autumn, vestiges of dark juvenile scaling (darker than in Isabelline) remain on underparts, but upperparts are unmarked as in Isabelline (although latter tends to show some weak scaling on sides of crown, above supercilium, which 1st-winter Brown lacks); the upperparts are warmer brown and the lower underparts washed with warm buff (upperparts dull sandy or pale brownish and underparts almost uniform-

toned in Isabelline). 1st-winter Red-backed in autumn has structure and build as Isabelline but approaches Brown in colour of upperparts and extent of underpart scaling, but Red-backed typically has weaker head pattern, greyer crown, whiter lower underparts, strong scaling on upperparts, more prominent whitish fringe to outer tail feather (usually lacking in Brown) and yellower (less pink-tinged) bill base. Juvenile Brown, unlikely to be seen in our region, is very similar to juvenile Isabelline but is darker buff on underparts and has only narrow and rather indistinct pale tips to flight feathers and primary coverts. In the hand, check outer-tail feather length and wing formula (2nd primary shorter than 5th, and 5th primary emarginated, as in Isabelline). Perches upright on wires and bushes, although bulkier head and body give a more top-heavy appearance, as though bird leaning forwards. On Asian winter grounds, often more confiding than Isabelline.

SEX/AGE Sexes similar, but adult female duller with usually a less distinct dark mask and often some dark scaling on underparts. 1st-winter birds in autumn aged by presence of retained juvenile scaling on body plumage, dark subterminal bands on retained juvenile greater coverts and tertials, and pale edges to wing feathers; lack full black mask of adults (although have dark brown patch on ear-coverts).

VOICE Generally silent away from breeding grounds. Calls and song similar to those of Red-backed Shrike.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Race which occurs as a vagrant to our region unknown, but probably nominate. Marked variations in colour exist between nominate race (and rather similar race *confusus*) and the two southeastern populations *lucionensis* and *superciliosus* (which are outside the scope of this guide).

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, breeds at edge of deciduous, mixed or coniferous woodland and in bushy areas, thickets and groves in open country. In winter quarters, found at edges of cultivation, in bushy areas and in gardens.

ISABELLINE SHRIKE *Lanius isabellinus*

Plate page 737

Rufous-tailed Shrike; Red-tailed Shrike (*L. i. phoenicuroides*)

L 18 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Migrates through Middle East (breeds C Asia). Resembles a washed-out female Red-backed Shrike, but at all ages the rufous uppertail coverts and tail contrast with the sandy-grey to ashy-brown upperparts; tail appears most rufous in flight, brownish of central tail feathers tending to conceal full extent of rufous when perched (although tail

underside appears rufous when closed). Two rather different races occur. Nominate *isabellinus*: typically strikingly pale sandy-grey overall, only a little paler below, with a weak mask (not extending over lores in adults). Darker *phoenicuroides* ('Red-tailed Shrike'): adults are ashy-brown above, and have full black mask, whitish supercilium, white patch at base of

primaries and rufous crown (although females are duller and often do not have complete mask). On face value they have little in common apart from tail and rump colour, size and shape, but intermediates occur and 1st-winter birds in autumn of both forms are variable and are not racially identifiable with any degree of certainty. Adult female *phoenicuroides* are normally distinctly paler and greyer-brown above than adult female Red-backed Shrike, with a contrastingly rufous rump, uppertail coverts and tail, and obviously less heavily marked underparts. Red-backed is typically much more rufous above with contrastingly grey hindcrown/nape and back to uppertail coverts, and dark brown tail with whitish bases to outer feathers. Upperparts are unbarred in Isabelline, but often show barring in Red-backed. Young birds in autumn more closely resemble 1st-winter Red-backed Shrike, and both species can vary in overall colour tones of body plumage; many Isabelline are distinctly pale and grey but others (chiefly *phoenicuroides*) are browner and more closely recall Red-backed, although at all times the contrasting rufous rump, uppertail coverts and tail is a good Isabelline feature, as is a pale patch at base of primaries (but this is weak or absent in many individuals). Some 1st-winter Red-backed are very rufous-brown above, including rump and tail, but these birds lack contrast between mantle and rump/uppertail of Isabelline. By first autumn Isabelline has weak scaling only remaining on sides of body and crown (and this visible only under optimum viewing conditions), with mantle and rump unmarked; young Red-backed has coarser scaling on underparts and over most of upperparts, although mantle becomes plainer during the autumn moult. Attention should be paid to age in autumn individuals, as adult female Red-backed is less scaled than immature birds: 1st-winter birds in autumn of both species have at least some retained juvenile wing feathers, with dark subterminal line to whitish edge of tertials and both median and greater coverts; in fresh adults, these feathers are merely fringed whitish, lacking the dark subterminal line. Good views are required not only to see this feature but also to discern degree of scaling (which can be very weak on Isabelline). The edge of the outermost tail feather is whitish in Red-backed, ginger-buff (therefore less visible) in Isabelline, although in both the feather tip may be whitish. The underside of the tail is distinctly pale rufous in Isabelline, duller greyish-brown in Red-backed (even in very rufous birds). Juvenile Isabelline and some 1st-winter *phoenicuroides* in autumn closely resemble juvenile Red-backed, but they lack grey nape usually shown by Red-backed, ear-coverts not so deep rufous as in some Red-backed and mantle/scapulars, tertials and coverts normally lack rufous centres shown by most Red-backed. In the hand, a confirmatory factor is the 2nd



(longest) primary which is shorter than 5th in Isabelline, but longer than 5th in Red-backed; 5th primary emarginated in Isabelline, not in Red-backed. See also discussion under vagrant Brown Shrike and compare juvenile Woodchat and Masked Shrikes. Usually solitary, perching on bush tops, tending to wave tail about to greater degree than Red-backed.

SEX/AGE Sexes similar, although adult female duller. In nominate race, female usually has paler ear-coverts and some dark scaling on sides of breast and flanks, and white patch at base of primaries is indistinct or even lacking. In race *phoenicuroides* differences are similar, and in addition facial mask is incomplete (unlike male of this race) and crown/nape shows little or no contrast with mantle. 1st-winter birds in autumn resemble adult female of respective race, but are usually more heavily scaled below and often show some distinct barring on upperparts and usually dark subterminal bands on greater coverts and tertials (owing to retained juvenile feathering); usually lack whitish patch at base of on primaries.

VOICE Generally silent away from breeding grounds. Calls and song similar to those of Red-backed Shrike.

TAXONOMY Formerly lumped (together with Red-backed Shrike) in Brown Shrike *L. cristatus*, or in Red-backed Shrike *L. collurio*.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Marked. 2 races (both illustrated). For details, see Identification. Race *phoenicuroides*, known as 'Red-tailed Shrike', breeds across western part of range in C Asia; nominate race breeds in Sinjiang. A third race *speculigerus* (breeding from Altai to Inner Mongolia) possibly occurs: adults resemble dull *phoenicuroides*, but are much greyer above, creamy-buff below, with full black mask and white wing patch. It seems that only adults may be safely assigned to a race, the situation being complicated by extensive intergradation.

HYBRIDS Hybridizes quite frequently with Red-backed Shrike, producing perplexing offspring.

STATUS/HABITAT Uncommon on passage in Middle East (chiefly eastern parts), where occasional individuals also winter. Most winter from E Africa to S Asia. Breeds in bushy areas in lowlands and hills, in semi-desert or desert with occasional bushes or trees and at edges of cultivation. In similar habitats on passage and in winter.

RED-BACKED SHRIKE *Lanius collurio*

L 17 cm.

IDENTIFICATION One of the most widespread and conspicuous shrikes of our region. Combination of pale grey crown, nape and rump, black mask, chestnut mantle and black and white tail renders adult male unmistakable. A very few show a tiny white patch at base of primaries. Adult female, 1st-winter and juvenile are dull brown above, often greyer on head and reddish-brown on upperparts, rump and tail, with varying amounts of fine scalloped barring on body plumage, most extensive on juvenile. Overall tone of brown rather variable, duller birds recalling

juvenile Woodchat and most rufous birds confusable with Isabelline or vagrant Brown Shrikes (q.v. for discussion).

SEX/AGE Sexes differ (see Identification). Some females (probably old birds) show male characters, but have scalloping below and dull tail pattern. Juvenile resembles female, but has entire upperparts scalloped and dark subterminal line to wing feathers; scalloping of upperparts extensive until well into first winter. By first spring as adults, but some 1st-summer females have extensive scalloping on upperparts,

Plate page 737

which are almost unmarked in older birds.

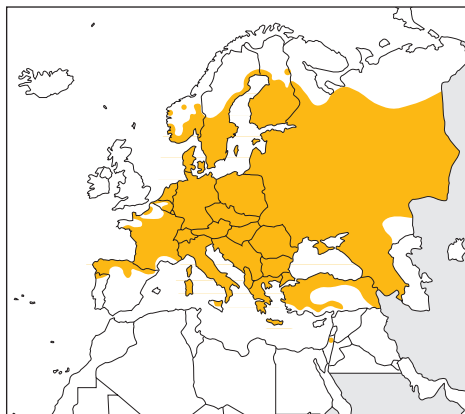
VOICE Calls include a hard, slurred, wheatear-like 'shack' or 'shak-shak' and harsh 'churruk churruk'. Has a rich but subdued, rather jerky, warbling song which includes mimicry of other small birds' songs and calls.

TAXONOMY Formerly lumped (together with Isabelline Shrike *L. isabellinus*) in Brown Shrike *L. cristatus*.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 3 or possibly 4 races (nominate illustrated). Race *kobylini* (Crimea to Transcaucasia) has chestnut area on upperparts duller and often reduced in area; this form also has a stronger tendency to show white patch at primary bases. Race *pallidifrons* of W Siberia may occur in our region in Middle East on passage and has pale, almost whitish, forehead and superciliary area.

HYBRIDS Hybridizes quite frequently with Isabelline Shrike (producing perplexing offspring).

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common, but western populations declining (virtually extinct as a breeding species in Britain, where formerly widespread). Wood-land edges and clearings, open country with scattered



trees and bushes, bushy areas (especially thorny scrub), hedgerows, orchards and olive groves.

LONG-TAILED SHRIKE *Lanius schach* Rufous-backed Shrike

L 24 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Asian vagrant (breeds C Asia southwards and eastwards). Recalls a rather drab Great Grey Shrike at a glance, but easily distinguished by relatively longer, narrower and more pointed tail and rufous rump and upperpart coverts, with off-white underparts shading to warm buffish-orange on flanks; crown and mantle are dull grey, scapulars are washed with rufous and wings are blackish-brown with rufous feather fringes. In flight, a very distinctive shrike, with relatively short, blunt wings which exaggerate long, graduated and pointed tail. Blackish-brown tail, shading to dull rufous-brown on outermost feathers, contrasts with rufous rump and lower back. The only large shrike lacking white in tail; indeed, wings also seem to lack any white, although, given a good view, a very small whitish patch at base of primaries may be noted (easily overlooked and generally invisible when perched). Perches in open on bush tops in typical

shrike fashion, and usually quite approachable.

SEX/AGE Sexes similar, but male has all-black bill and female is duller, with browner mask, paler base to lower mandible, and may lack any white in wing. Juvenile shows fine vermiculations on flanks and upperparts, has clear pale buff fringes to wing feathers, has duller mask and lacks any white in wing; by first autumn much as adult female (but retained juvenile flight feathers and primary coverts are worn and brown, contrasting with new blackish coverts and tertials).

VOICE Typical call a sharp, harsh 'chakerek'. Song, unlikely to be heard in our region, is remarkably rich and varied and contains some mimicry.

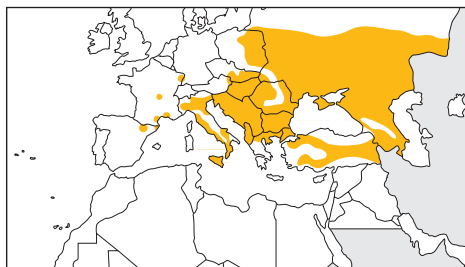
STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (C Europe, Turkey, Israel; race *erythronotus*). In natural range, thickets, tall scrub, edges of cultivation, plantations, open woodland, orchards, tall hedgerows and gardens.

Plate page 738

LESSER GREY SHRIKE *Lanius minor*

L 20 cm.

IDENTIFICATION More compact and relatively stouter-billed, shorter-tailed and longer-winged than Great Grey Shrike, with a more upright posture. Adult male easily distinguished by black of mask broadly extending across forecrown, a feature not shown by any race of Great Grey (although *aucheri* of Middle East has narrow black band on forehead). Adult female tends to have black more diffuse on forecrown, but extent usually apparent. Compared with northern nominate race Great Grey, adult Lesser Grey lacks white line above mask, has pinkish wash on underparts (contrasting with white throat) and shows a much broader (but shorter in extent) white wing patch. Racial variation is complex in Great Grey, however, and these latter differences are not always valid when southern races are involved. Juvenile has wings and tail similar to adult, although blacks are browner and whites less pure; rest of upperparts sandy-grey, finely barred darker. Forehead is grey, as in Great Grey, and dark mask contrasts with pale



creamy underparts (undertail coverts usually finely barred). By comparison, juvenile Great Grey has brownish wash on breast and flanks (with faint barring), less prominently scaled upperparts and unmarked undertail coverts, but again differences in structure are important, as in adult. 1st-winter Lesser Grey comes closest to Great Grey in coloration as the

Plate page 736

forehead lacks any dark whatsoever, but close attention reveals the long primary extension beyond the secondaries (extension short and blunt in Great Grey), the stouter bill, different wing pattern, and generally more upright stance and more direct, less undulating, flight. Compare also juvenile with juvenile Masked Shrike.

SEX/AGE Sexes similar, but adult female has grey feathering mixed in forecrown and in some autumn individuals whole forecrown appears grey as in Great Grey. Juvenile described above. 1st-winter in autumn has lost almost all barring, but grey is less pure, more brown-tinged than in adult, mask browner-black and forehead wholly grey.

VOICE Has several harsh calls, typical of the genus.

Song a rich warbling interspersed with chattering and squeaking notes.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Very slight. No races currently recognized, but there is a paler cline in the populations towards the east, with extreme eastern European Russian birds sometimes differentiated as '*turanicus*'.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Belgium, Luxembourg, Switzerland and formerly widespread in France, Germany and W Poland.) Open, flat or undulating country such as grassland and cultivation with scattered trees and bushes, including parks, orchards, vineyards, groves, and woodland edges.

GREAT GREY SHRIKE *Lanius excubitor*

Northern Shrike (N America); **Southern Grey Shrike** (*L. e. meridionalis* etc.)

L 24 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Largest and most widespread shrike of our region. All races show grey upperparts, lacking any brown or rufous tones in plumage, and have a prominent black mask (not extending over forehead, or, in some races, very narrowly) and black and white wings and tail. These features shared only by Lesser Grey, but Great Grey has more rotund body, longer tail, slimmer bill and much shorter primary projection than Lesser Grey (q.v. for further discussion). A number of races inhabit our region, varying in intensity of colour of both upperparts and underparts and in extent of white patches in wings (see Geographical Variation), some of which suggest Lesser Grey in wing pattern and body coloration. Sits on very exposed perches, usually in more hunched, less vertical, posture than Lesser Grey, and is often mobbed by smaller birds. Preys on small birds more than any other shrike.

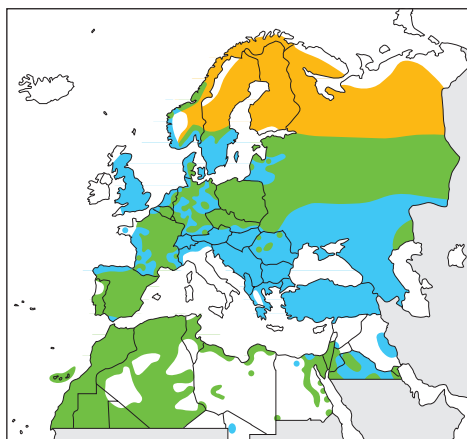
SEX/AGE Sexes similar, although males generally more contrastingly marked than females, latter having weak barring on breast. Juvenile has browner upperparts and weak vermiculations on upperparts and underparts (but this racially variable); 1st-winter birds in autumn are much as adult female, although they retain some weak barring on breast/flanks and pale edges to greater coverts of juvenile plumage.

VOICE Calls include a ringing 'shree' and a nasal 'shack', the latter often repeated in a Common Magpie-like chatter. Song a varied collection of squeaks, trills and chattering phrases.

TAXONOMY Recent studies suggest southern (*meridionalis*) group of races merit specific status under the name **Southern Grey Shrike**.

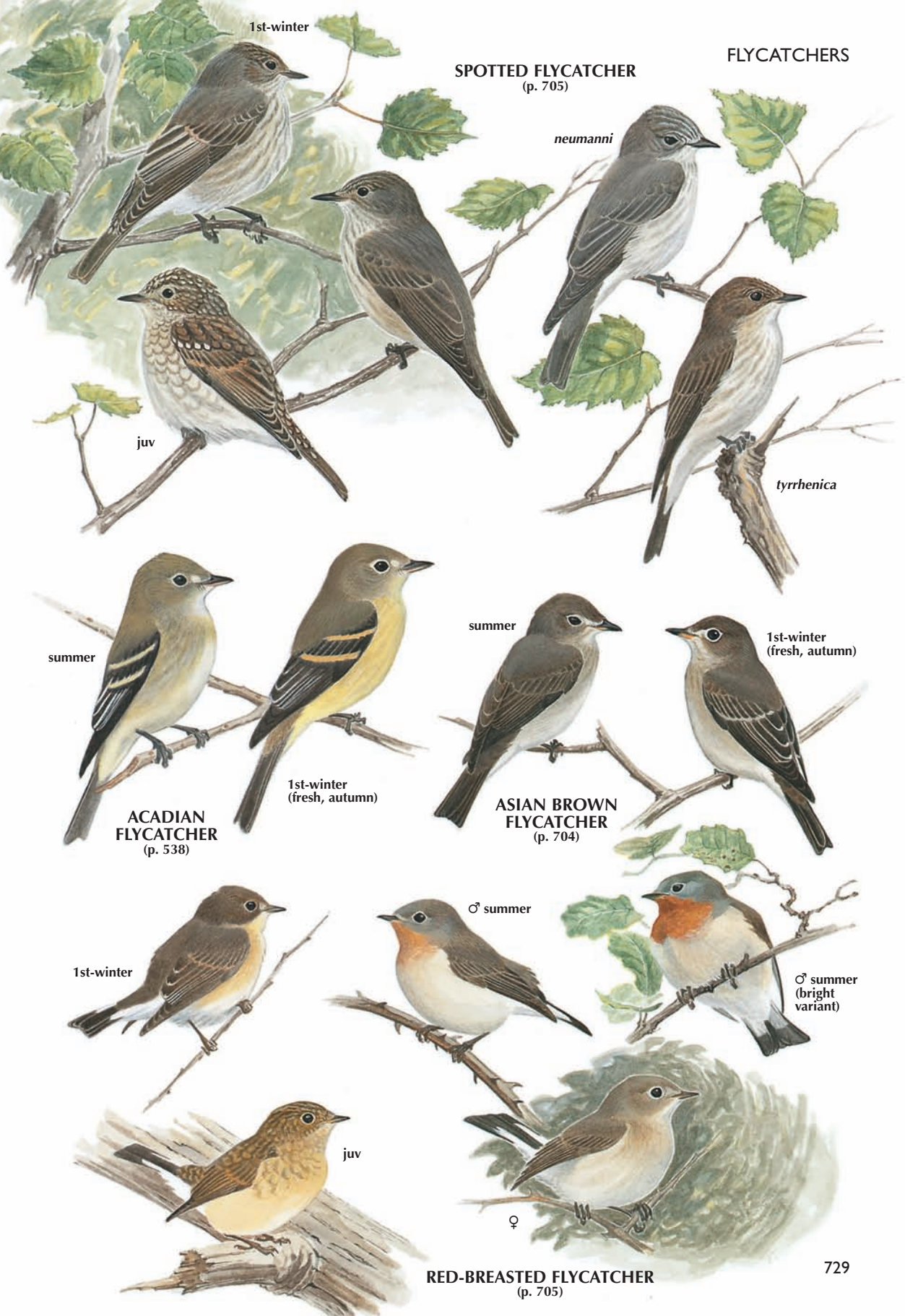
GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Rather marked. 8 races (nominate, *meridionalis*, *algeriensis* and *elegans* illustrated). Fall into 2 groups. **Excubitor group (Great Grey Shrike)**: Light to medium grey upperparts, very pale grey to whitish underparts, white in wing at bases of primaries less extensive than in Lesser Grey. These races intergrade. Nominate race (N and C Europe, wintering south to northern shores of Mediterranean and Black Sea): medium grey upperparts, almost white below, small white patch at base of primaries (some also on secondaries). Race *homeyeri* (steppes from Bulgaria and Romania eastwards, wintering south to Caucasus): paler grey above and whiter below than nominate race, with whiter forehead and supercilium and with small white bands at bases of both primaries and secondaries. **Meridionalis group (Southern Grey Shrike, western races)**: Dark grey upperparts, underparts distinctly grey, white in wing less extensive than in Lesser Grey. Race *meridionalis* (Iberia and S France): slate-grey above, paler grey (washed pinkish

Plate page 736



below, with narrow, short whitish supercilium above lore. Race *algeriensis* (NW Africa north of the desert): slightly paler above and below than *meridionalis*, clearer grey below, virtually no white above mask or on forehead, bill slightly stouter. Race *koenigi* (Canary Is): resembles *algeriensis*, but has short whitish supercilium above lore. **Meridionalis group (Southern Grey Shrike, eastern races)**: Light grey above, almost white below, and with extensive white in wings (more so than in Lesser Grey). Race *elegans* (northern edge of Sahara, from Mauritania east to Sinai): paler grey above than *algeriensis* and almost white below, with extensive white on scapulars, wings and sides of tail, and sometimes a very narrow black band across forehead; intergrades with *algeriensis* in Tunisia and with *aucherii* in Sinai. Race *aucherii* (Middle East, intergrading with *elegans* in Sinai): rather darker above and more greyish-white below than *elegans*, with narrow black band on forehead at base of bill, and white in wings and tail more restricted. Race *pallidirostris* (breeding in C Asian deserts, wintering in Middle East) is sometimes given specific status under the name **Steppe Grey Shrike**: differs from *aucherii* in having dusky (not black) lores, pale brownish (not black) bill and buffish-pink wash on underparts.

STATUS/HABITAT Common in south, but rather uncommon in north. (In addition to mapped range, formerly bred Switzerland.) Open country of various kinds, from semi-desert to farmland and from heaths and bogs to partly forested tundra, with scattered trees, bushes or scrub.



1st-winter

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER
(p. 705)

FLYCATCHERS

neumanni

juv

tyrrhenica

summer

ACADIAN FLYCATCHER
(p. 538)

1st-winter
(fresh, autumn)

summer

ASIAN BROWN FLYCATCHER
(p. 704)

1st-winter
(fresh, autumn)

1st-winter

♂ summer

♂ summer
(bright variant)

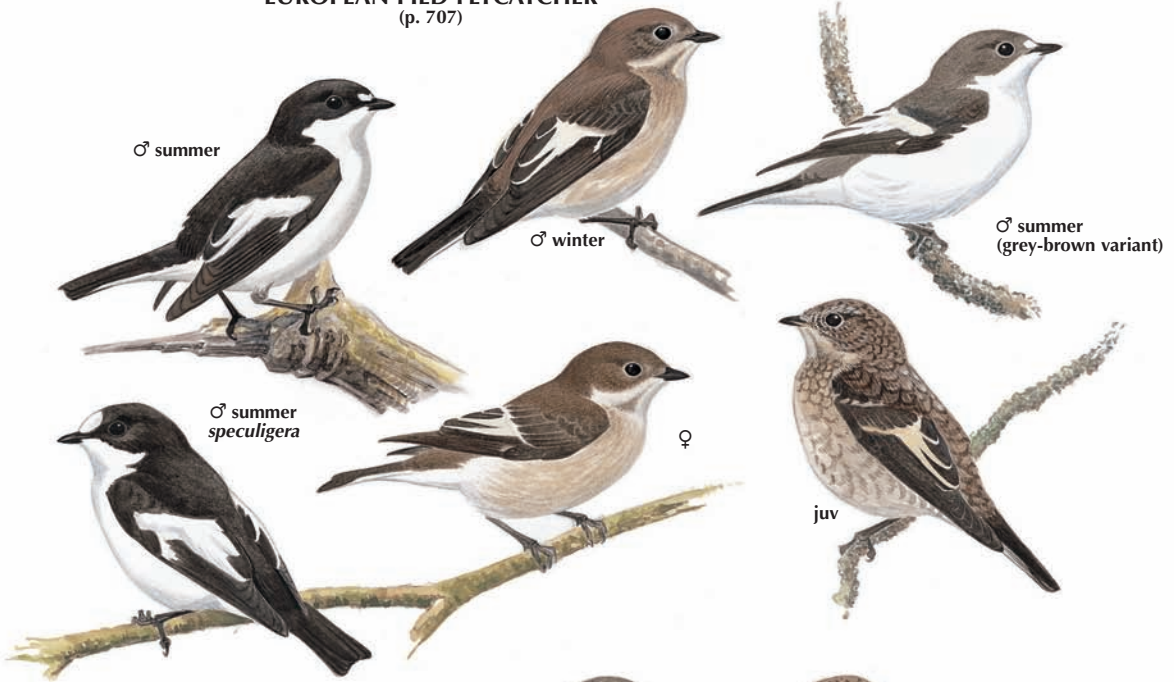
juv

♀

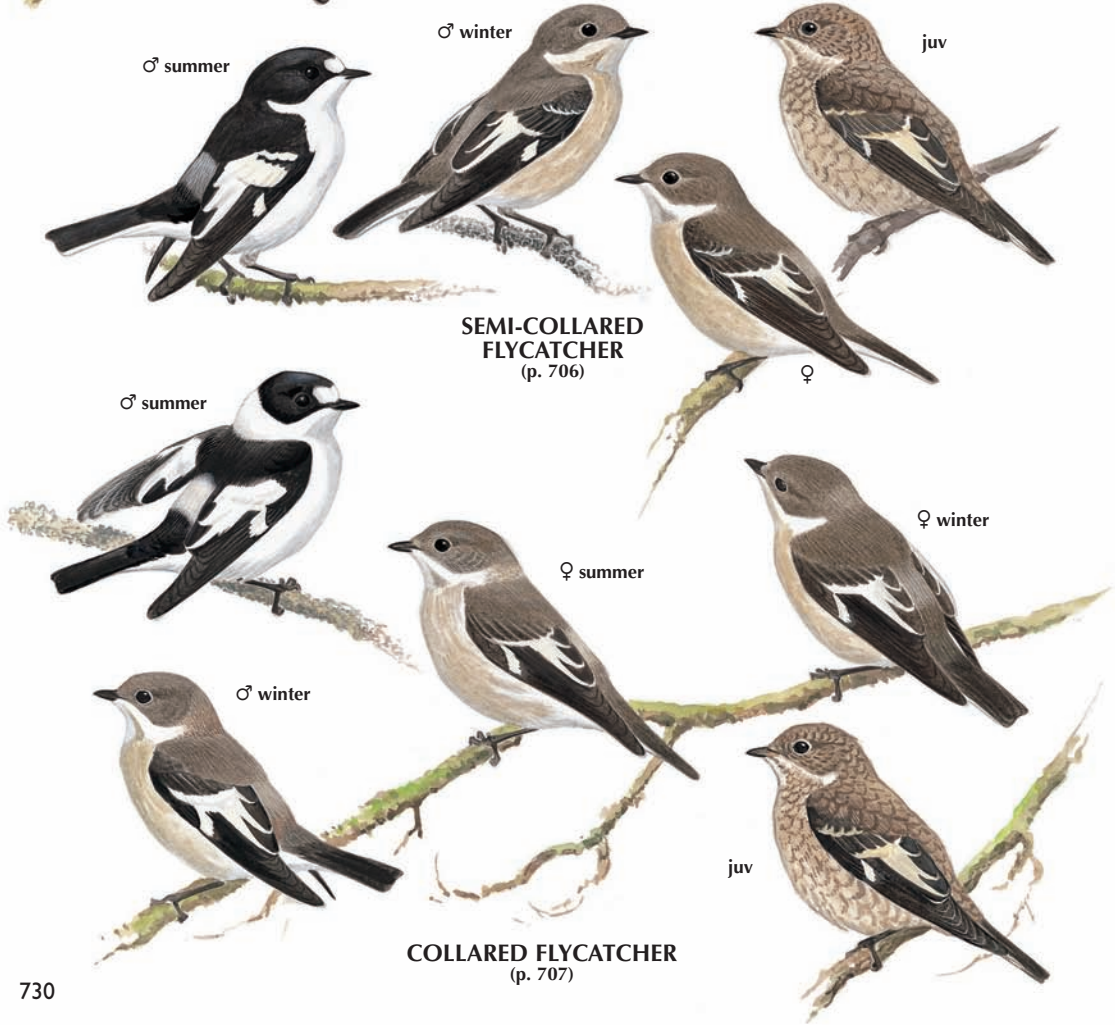
RED-BREASTED FLYCATCHER
(p. 705)

FLYCATCHERS

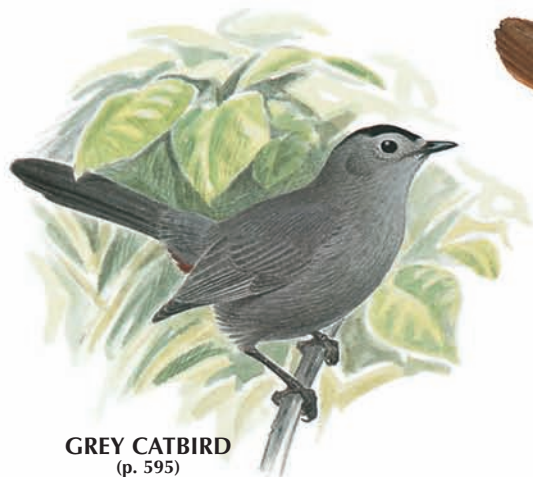
EUROPEAN PIED FLYCATCHER
(p. 707)



SEMI-COLLARED
FLYCATCHER
(p. 706)



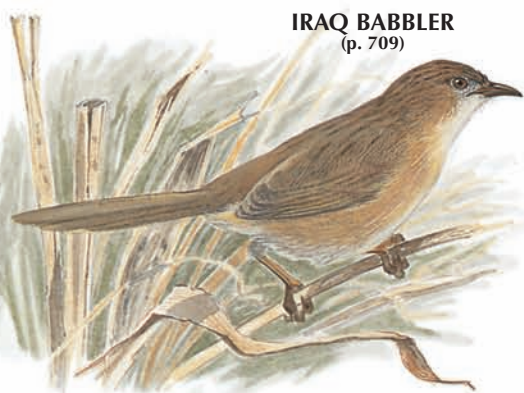
COLLARED FLYCATCHER
(p. 707)



GREY CATBIRD
(p. 595)

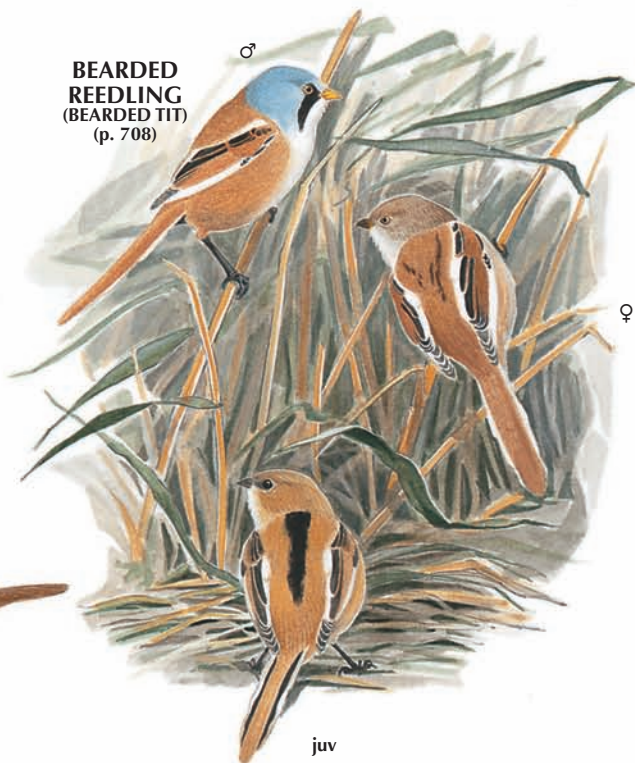


BROWN THRASHER
(p. 595)



IRAQ BABBLER
(p. 709)

BEARDED REEDLING
(BEARDED TIT)
(p. 708)



FULVOUS BABBLER
(p. 710)



ARABIAN BABBLER
(p. 710)



COMMON BABBLER
(p. 709)

TITS

WILLOW TIT
(p. 712)



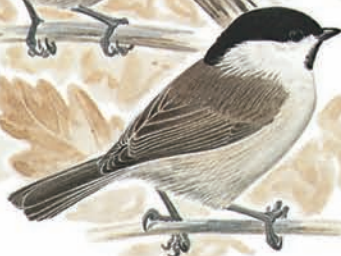
palustris



MARSH
TIT
(p. 711)



juv



borealis



juv



SOMBRE
TIT
(p. 712)



juv



(fresh,
autumn)



SIBERIAN
TIT
(p. 713)



cypriotes



scoticus



ledouci



juv



COAL TIT
(p. 714)

CRESTED
TIT
(p. 713)



LONG-TAILED TIT
(p. 710)



tephronotus

caudatus

juv



ultramarinus

juv

BLUE TIT
(p. 714)



AZURE TIT
(p. 714)

juv



juv



♀



♂

GREAT TIT
(p. 715)



♂ *caspicus*

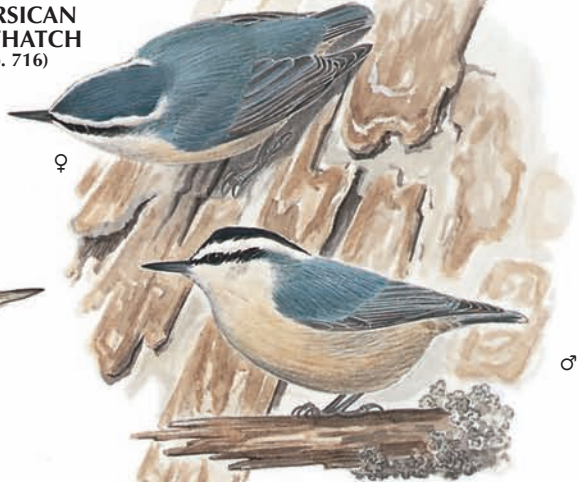
♂

juv

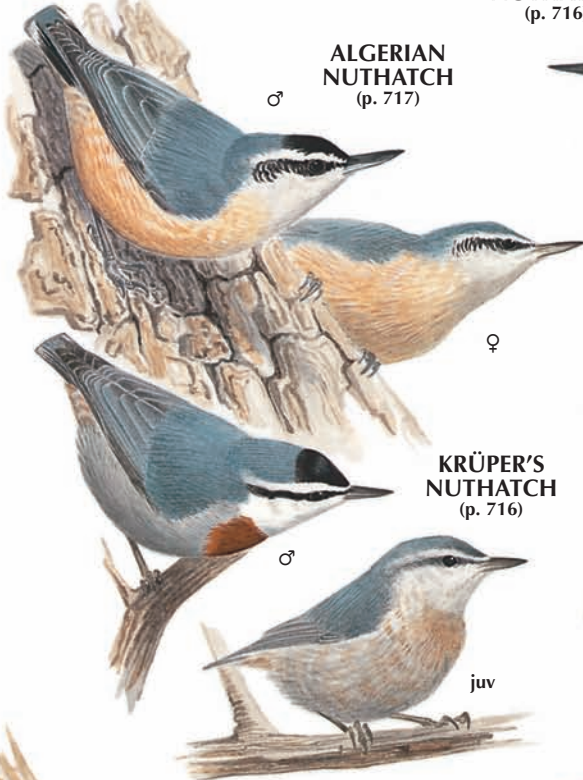
EURASIAN
PENDULINE
TIT
(p. 721)

NUTHATCHES

**CORSICAN
NUTHATCH**
(p. 716)



**ALGERIAN
NUTHATCH**
(p. 717)



**KRÜPER'S
NUTHATCH**
(p. 716)



RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH
(p. 717)



**EURASIAN
NUTHATCH**
(p. 717)



**EASTERN ROCK NUT-
HATCH**
(GREAT ROCK NUTHATCH)
(p. 718)



tschitscherini



WESTERN ROCK NUTHATCH
(p. 718)



WALLCREEPER
(p. 719)

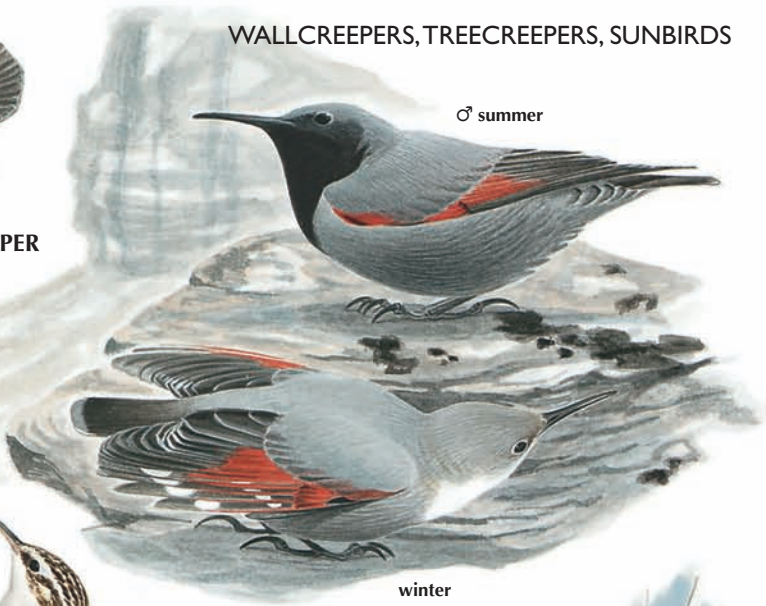
**EURASIAN
TREECREEPER**
(p. 720)



**SHORT-TOED
TREECREEPER**
(p. 720)

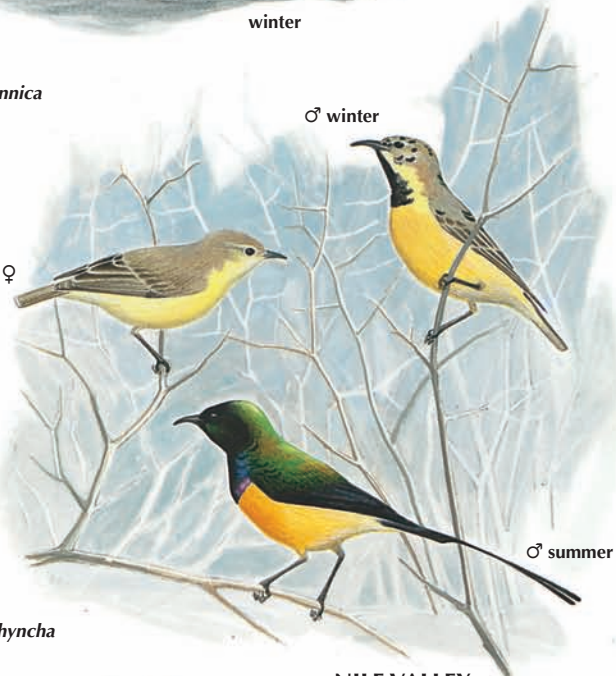
britannica

megarhyncha



♂ summer

winter

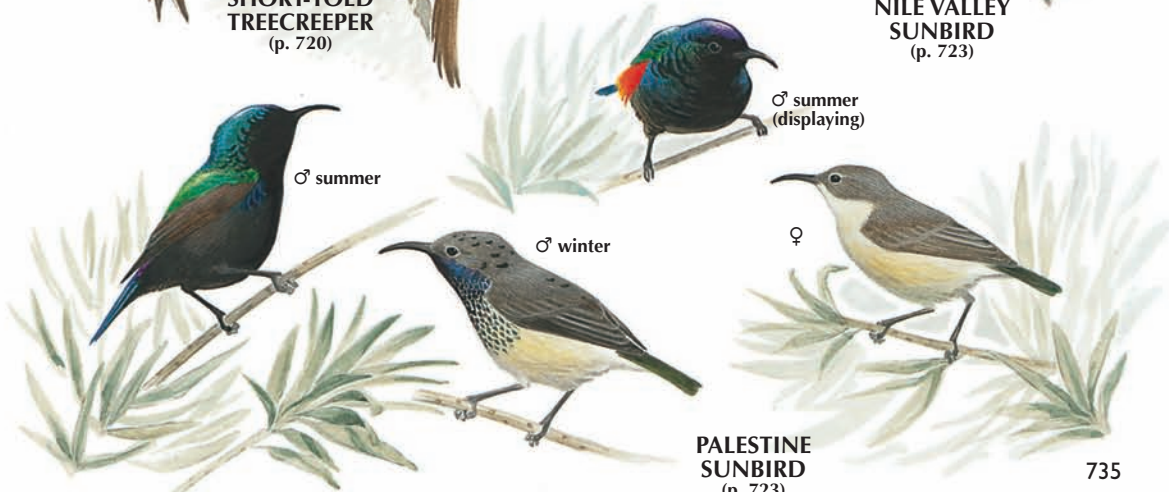


♂ winter

♀

♂ summer

**NILE VALLEY
SUNBIRD**
(p. 723)



♂ summer

♂ winter

♀

♂ summer
(displaying)

**PALESTINE
SUNBIRD**
(p. 723)

SHRIKES

1st-winter

LESSER GREY
SHRIKE
(p. 727)

juv

♂ summer

GREAT GREY
SHRIKE
(p. 728)

juv

elegans

meridionalis
(SOUTHERN
GREY SHRIKE)

algeriensis

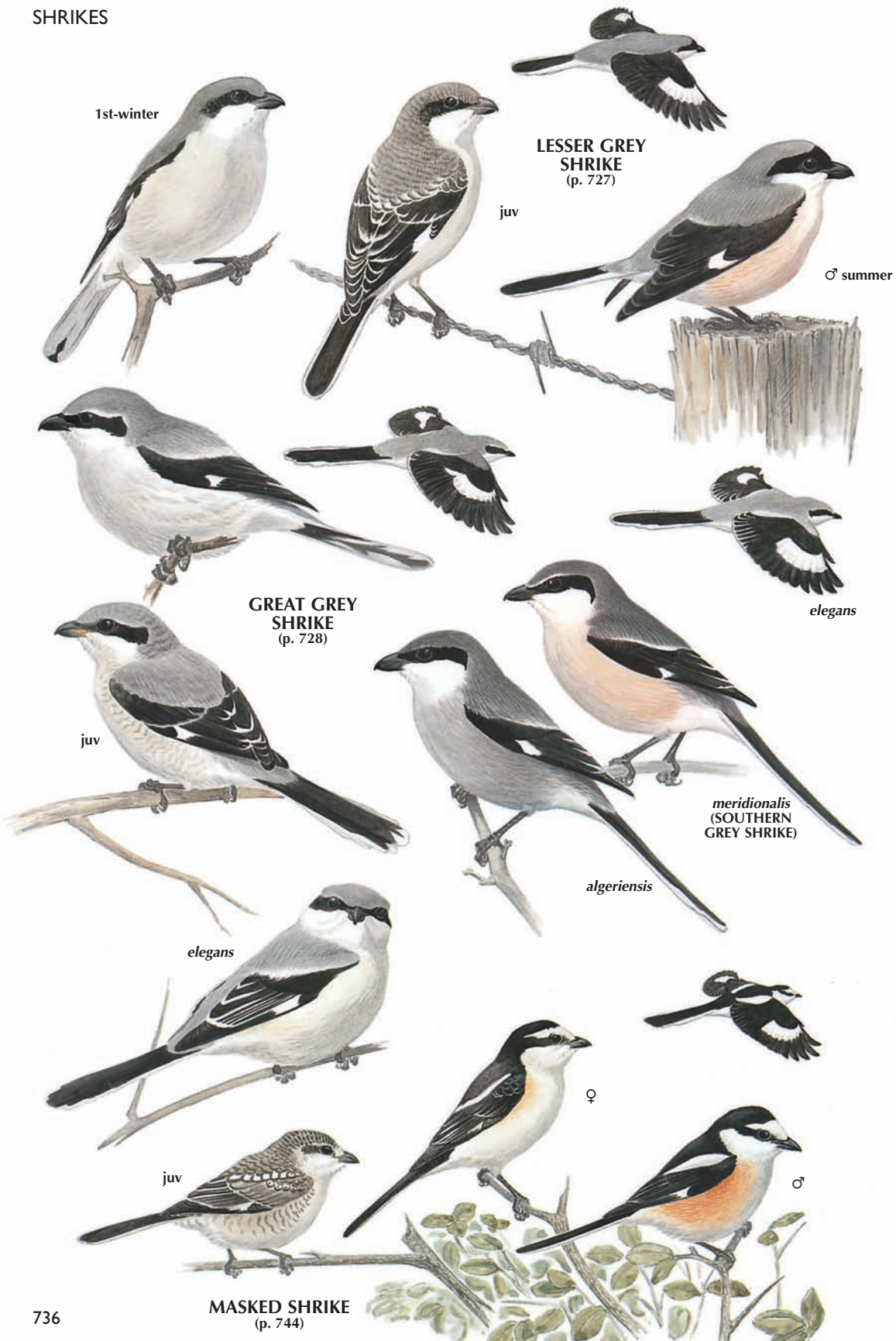
elegans

juv

♀

♂

MASKED SHRIKE
(p. 744)



ISABELLINE SHRIKE
(p. 725)♂ *phoenicuroides**phoenicuroides*1st-winter
phoenicuroides

1st-winter

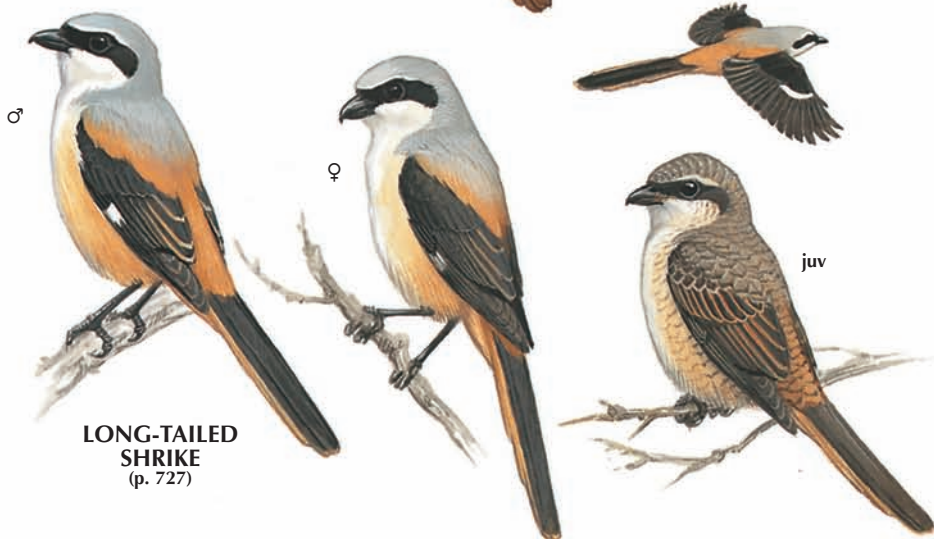
RED-BACKED
SHRIKE
(p. 726)1st-winter
(rufous variant)1st-winter
(grey-brown
variant)WOODCHAT
SHRIKE
(p. 744)

juv

BLACK-CROWNED TCHAGRA
(BLACK-HEADED BUSH SHRIKE)
(p. 724)

SHRIKES

BROWN SHRIKE
(p. 725)



LONG-TAILED
SHRIKE
(p. 727)



EURASIAN GOLDEN
ORIOLE
(p. 724)



atricapillus

EURASIAN JAY
(p. 745)



rufitergum



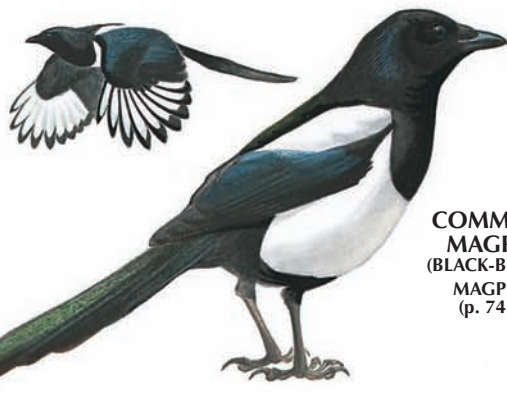
brandtii



cervicalis



SIBERIAN JAY
(p. 745)



COMMON MAGPIE
(BLACK-BILLED MAGPIE)
(p. 746)



AZURE-WINGED MAGPIE
(p. 746)



SPOTTED NUTCRACKER
(p. 747)

CROWS

WESTERN JACKDAW
(p. 748)



1st-winter

DAURIAN
JACKDAW
(p. 749)



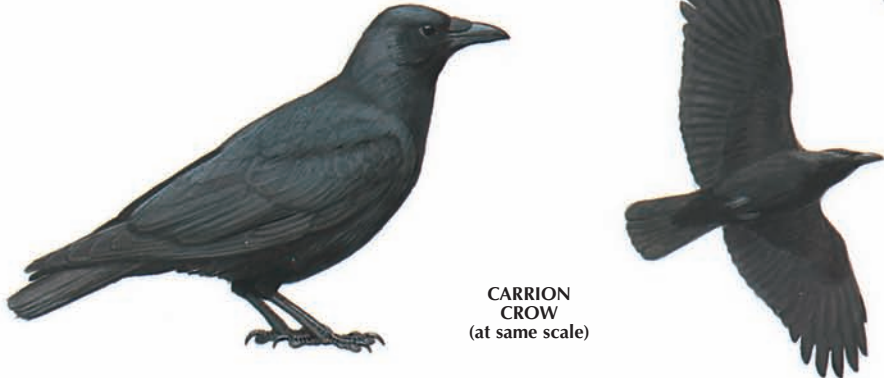
RED-BILLED
CHOUGH
(p. 748)



ALPINE
CHOUGH
(YELLOW-BILLED
CHOUGH)
(p. 747)



CARRION
CROW
(at same scale)



juv

ROOK
(p. 749)

CARRION
CROW
(p. 750)

cornix
(HOODED
CROW)

cornix

hybrid
corone x *cornix*

juv

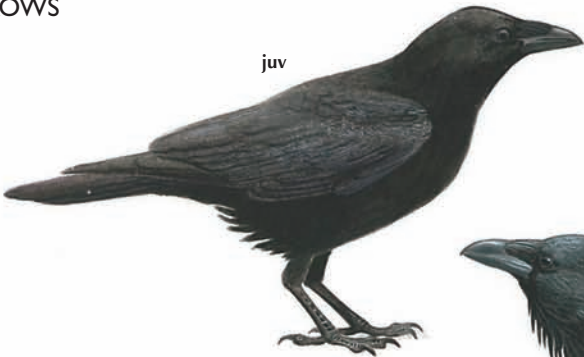
juv

HOUSE CROW
(p. 749)

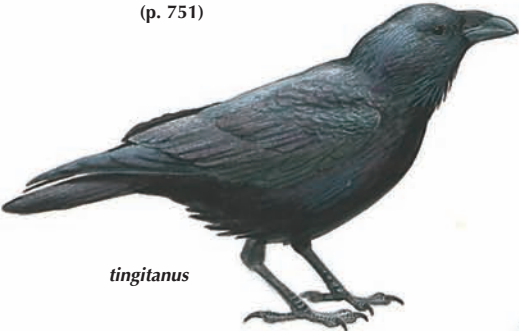
PIED CROW
(p. 751)

CROWS

juv



COMMON RAVEN
(p. 751)



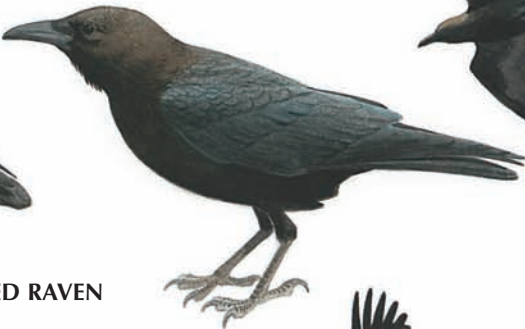
tingitanus



laurencei
(worn, spring)



juv



BROWN-NECKED RAVEN
(p. 751)

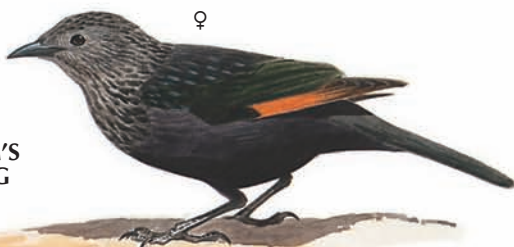


FAN-TAILED RAVEN
(p. 752)





♂



♀

TRISTRAM'S STARLING
(p. 753)

1st-winter

(fresh,
autumn)

COMMON STARLING
(p. 753)

♂



juv



(fresh,
autumn)



ROSY STARLING
(p. 754)

♂



♂



juv



SPOTLESS STARLING
(p. 754)

(fresh, autumn)



COMMON STARLING

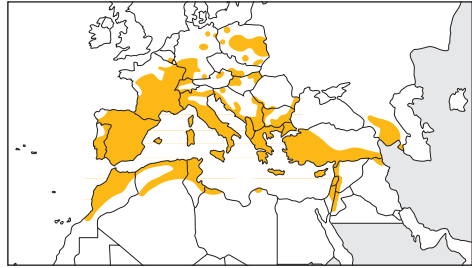
WOODCHAT SHRIKE *Lanius senator*

Plate page 737

L 17 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Adult distinctive, the rufous-chestnut crown and nape, black (not white) forehead and white (not black) rump providing easy distinctions from the almost equally variegated Masked Shrike. Juvenile and 1st-winter birds in autumn resemble similarly aged Red-backed Shrike, but have reasonably conspicuous whitish scapulars, paler rump, more prominent scaling on upperparts and buffish-white patch at base of primaries. Latter feature, however, is lacking in race *badius*, which has rump/uppertail coverts less pale and heavier bill and so is more like juvenile Red-backed, but whitish scapulars and more prominent scaling on upperparts should clinch identification. By comparison, juvenile Lesser Grey Shrike is larger, with stouter bill, and has blacker mask, wings and tail. Juvenile Masked is slimmer and colder, more grey-toned, overall, with slimmer bill and longer and blacker tail which has whitish outer feathers (tail of immature Woodchat is brownish, with narrow whitish outer web to outermost feathers) and smaller white patch at base of primaries. Scapulars of young Masked are sometimes not so pale as in young Woodchat.

SEX/AGE Sexes similar; adult female duller than adult male, being browner-black above, and with more extensive pale area on lower forehead and lores. Juvenile and 1st-winter birds in autumn (see Identification) scaled overall, becoming much as adult female by



mid-winter.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Rather slight. 3 races (nominate illustrated). Nominate race over most of our region, but *badius* of W Mediterranean islands lacks white at base of primaries and *niloticus* of Middle East north to SE Turkey has white extending over basal third of central tail feathers.

VOICE Call a short, Common Nightingale-like 'greeek'. Song a weak sustained warbling, interspersed with harsh notes and snatches of mimicry.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (In addition to mapped range, formerly bred Netherlands, Luxembourg.) Scrubby hillsides, open woodland, woodland edges, orchards, groves and farmland with tall hedges.

MASKED SHRIKE *Lanius nubicus*

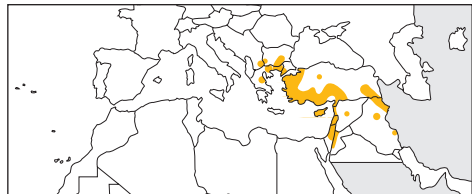
Plate page 736

Nubian Shrike

L 17 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A relatively small-headed and slender shrike which, compared with other shrikes, tends to perch unobtrusively on sides of bushes and trees, although it will sometimes sit out in open on treetops and wires. Black upperparts and white underparts, with rusty flanks, make adults very distinctive (but compare even more strongly variegated Woodchat Shrike). Juvenile resembles juvenile Woodchat (q.v. for discussion) and Lesser Grey Shrikes; distinguished from latter by small bill, more elongated appearance, heavier scaling, whitish forehead and scapulars, and brownish, pale-edged, wing coverts and tertials (latter blackish in Lesser Grey). By autumn, many adult features may become apparent.

SEX/AGE Sexes similar; adult female more greyish- or brownish-black than male, with paler rufous flanks. Juvenile (described above) at first has scaled forehead, but white shows by first autumn and by early winter



becomes much as adult female (although not so dark on crown and mantle, and without rufous on flanks). As adults by end of first winter.

VOICE Has a variety of harsh calls, including a harsh 'keer, keer, keer'. Song a sustained chattering, reminiscent of an *Acrocephalus* warbler.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally fairly common. Bushy hillsides, open woodland, woodland edges, orchards and olive groves.

CROWS Corvidae

16 species (2 introduced, 2 vagrant)

Varied family of medium-sized to very large perching birds (Common Raven is the largest passerine of all). Intelligent and resourceful, the corvids are one of the most adaptable and successful bird families. The species in our region fall into two distinct groups: the multicoloured jays, magpies and nutcrackers and the all-black 'true crows' of the genera *Corvus* and *Pyrrhonorax*. Structure varies markedly, some being short-winged and long-tailed, others being short-tailed and long-winged, but all have heavy or very

heavy, fairly long or long bills and relatively large heads; in *Corvus* species the bill is slightly hooked. Flight strong and direct in most, with deliberate wingbeats, but more laboured in the shorter-winged species. True crows often soar effortlessly and some, especially ravens, 'play' enthusiastically, rolling, tumbling, diving and somersaulting (sometimes dropping objects and catching them again). Some corvids are predominantly arboreal and others largely terrestrial, while yet others are adapted to both environments. Most corvids are omnivorous, taking a wide variety of animal and plant prey, and frequently scavenging at carcasses (often including road kills), but some species depend heavily on stored nuts (e.g. Spotted Nutcracker, Eurasian Jay). Most are gregarious outside breeding season, flocking to feed and roost. Most are rather solitary when breeding, however, but Rooks and to a lesser extent jackdaws are colonial breeders. Corvids pair strongly, often for life. Vocally they are not very inspiring, typically making a variety of loud, harsh sounds, although calls are a very useful aid to identification, especially with the true crows (*Corvus* and *Pyrrhocorax*).

Generally all plumages are similar, so that ageing and sexing are difficult. Little or no seasonal variation. Juveniles are usually much as adults (although juvenile Rook is a problematic exception), but full adult plumage typically not adopted until autumn of second calendar year.

Corvids are unlikely to be confused with other birds, although at a distance the larger all-black species can sometimes look very raptor-like when soaring, at least until their crow-shaped silhouette or the uniform black coloration can be discerned.

Within the family, some species are very easy to identify, but the all-black 'true crows' are more tricky. No field features are generally applicable throughout the family.

EURASIAN JAY *Garrulus glandarius*

Plate page 739

Jay

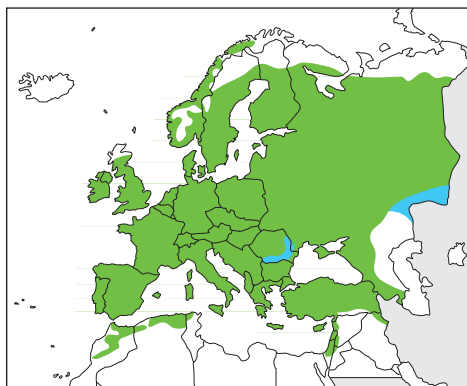
L 33–34 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Relatively large, mainly pinkish-brown woodland bird. Usually seen in flight, which is slow and direct with a peculiar jerky flapping action, on relatively broad wings. Flight more undulating or swooping over short distances. The wings show fairly obvious white patches and blue shoulders, but the most striking feature is the all-black tail contrasting with gleaming white rump. On ground, the pinkish-brown body, the black moustache and ruffled crown, and bold stance make it unlike any other bird, but both head and wing patterns vary somewhat with the race concerned (see Geographical Variation). Generally shy and wary, proclaiming presence by harsh calls. Mostly solitary, but outside breeding season sometimes gathers into small flocks. Flights to oak trees to gather acorns in autumn and stores them in different hiding places for winter use. Rarely seen away from woodland or its vicinity.

VOICE Has a variety of harsh calls, the most frequently heard being a harsh, screeched 'skaaaak-skaaak'. Also a weak mewling note and various chuckling noises may be heard.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Considerable. No fewer than 23 races (*rufitergum*, *brandtii*, *atricapillus* and *cervicalis* illustrated), which form four groupings.

Glandarius group: 12 races in Europe and adjoining islands (including *rufitergum* of Britain, which is close to nominate *glandarius* in appearance); crown speckled, greyish to pinkish-brown body plumage. **Brandtii group:** 1 race in NE European Russia (plus other extralimital races); very rich rufous-brown overall, with streaked crown. **atricapillus group:** 7 races in NW Africa and from the Levant and Turkey to the Crimea; nape and mantle uniform in most (but nape



and sides of neck obviously chestnut in *cervicalis*, crown black, extensive white forehead (and white face in some). Includes *atricapillus* of Levant and *cervicalis* of N Algeria and Tunisia. **Minor group:** 3 races in interior NW Africa, Cyprus and SW Caspian; the least differentiated group; smaller than other races, with crown heavily streaked with black and greyer mantle in some (especially *minor* of interior NW Africa).

STATUS/HABITAT Common. Subject to occasional irruptive movements, although dispersing less widely than other irruptive species. Woodlands and forests, especially deciduous, with preference for oak, but also coniferous; also parkland, large gardens and orchards.

SIBERIAN JAY *Perisoreus infaustus*

Plate page 739

L 28–30 cm.

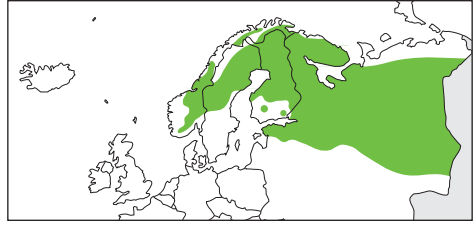
IDENTIFICATION Rather small, long-tailed jay of dense northern forests, the dull and rather loose

greyish-brown plumage being relieved only by darker head and rusty wing patch, rump and outer tail

feathers. Unmistakable. Generally an inconspicuous inhabitant of dense forest, gliding and swooping through trees, usually singly or in pairs in breeding season but typically in small parties at other times. Open stick nest usually close to tree trunk. Although sometimes shy and wary, is often inquisitive and tame, successive individuals gliding in with deep undulations to investigate the human intruder, sometimes landing on ground before disappearing silently into the dark forest.

SEX/AGE Juvenile lacks darker head, but autumn birds as adult.

VOICE Generally rather silent when close to humans, seldom proclaiming presence by calling, but more vocal when undisturbed. Calls include a strange, buzzard-like, mewling cry, a harsh, high 'hear-hear' and Eurasian Jay-like squawks. It has an inconspicuous song of various whistling, creaking and trilling notes, interspersed with some mimicry, but this is audible only at close range.



GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 3 races (nominate illustrated). Southern populations from central Scandinavia eastwards (*ruthenus*) are a little brighter and more rufous above; paler and greyer *ostjakorum* occurs in N Urals.

STATUS/HABITAT Local resident of northern forests, fairly common in some areas, absent from others. Generally found in dense coniferous forest, especially spruce, but sometimes in birches in the very far north.

AZURE-WINGED MAGPIE *Cyanopica cyana*

Plate page 739

L 34–35 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Distinctive magpie of Spain and Portugal, where now thought to have been introduced from native E Asia. Striking and unmistakable bird with its combination of black hood, pale blue wings and long, graduated pale blue tail. Gregarious and typically found in small parties, the component individuals following each other from tree to tree, sweeping up into canopy after low flight. Mostly shy and wary. Nests in loose colonies, the open stick nest being well hidden in canopy; sometimes parasitized by Great Spotted Cuckoo.

SEX/AGE Juvenile a little duller.

VOICE Usual call a dry shivering, almost trilled



'screeep', often given by roving parties. Other calls include a harsh chatter, a sharp whistled 'wee-wee-wee-u' and a harsh 'krarrah' of alarm.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. Woodlands (both deciduous and coniferous), groves and semi-open country with scattered groups of trees, chiefly in low-land areas.

COMMON MAGPIE *Pica pica*

Magpie, Black-billed Magpie

Plate page 739

L 44–48 cm.

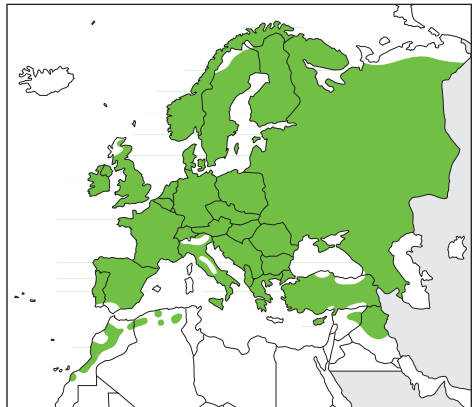
IDENTIFICATION The black and white plumage, very long graduated tail and rounded black and white wings render the Common Magpie unmistakable. A very familiar bird throughout most of our region. Often gathers into small parties outside breeding season. Builds solitary domed stick nest, often conspicuously in top of tree or on power pylon; frequently parasitized by Great Spotted Cuckoo. Shy and wary, but becomes tame about parks where unmolested. Perches conspicuously on walls and trees and feeds on ground in open country. Flight slow and direct, with rapid flapping beats.

SEX/AGE Male averages larger and longer-tailed than female. Juvenile duller and with shorter tail when recently fledged.

VOICE Usual calls include a staccato chattering 'chack-chack-chack-chack-chack' and an enquiring 'ch'chack'.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Mostly slight, with much intergradation. 5 races (nominate illustrated). The most distinctive forms are *mauretanica* of N Africa, which is smaller, lacks white rump patch and has small area of blue skin around eye, and *bactriana* of most of southern and central Russia to the Caucasus, which has the most extensive amount of white in wings and rump.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. Open or lightly wooded



country, from farmland to mountainsides; also open woodland or even clearings and glades in denser areas. Often in parks and large gardens, even in some city centres. Locally in areas devoid of trees (e.g. on some islands or semi-arid plains), but generally avoids large tracts of open country lacking in trees unless power pylons provide alternative nest sites.

SPOTTED NUTCRACKER *Nucifraga caryocatactes*

Plate page 739

Nutcracker, Eurasian Nutcracker

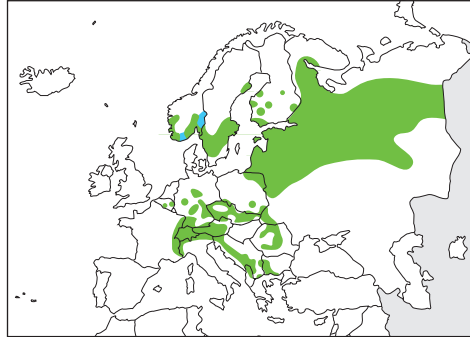
L 32 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Distinctive Eurasian Jay-sized corvid of coniferous forests. At long ranges appears all dark with white ventral region and tail corners, but closer views reveal profuse white spotting over almost entire body on a chocolate-brown background; sides of head, neck and breast often so intensely marked as to appear pale greyish at long ranges, contrasting with unmarked dark crown and wings. Relatively short tail and long bill give a distinctive silhouette when perched on treetop or in flight. Flight action, size and shape recall a short-tailed Eurasian Jay with a heavy front-end, but white ventral region and most of tail underside give, from below, the impression of a dark stocky bird with completely white rear end. On breeding grounds harsh call attracts attention, bird usually calling from top of tall tree. Although normally shy and wary, wanderers during irruptions are often remarkably tame and may be found in gardens as well as in forested areas.

SEX/AGE Juvenile browner and less intensely spotted with white; by first autumn are as adult, but many may be aged at close range by prominent white fringes to inner primaries and white spots on median covert, which are absent in adult.

VOICE Usual call a dry, harsh, rather prolonged 'kraaaak'. Other calls include a prolonged purring churr of alarm.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Rather slight. 2 races (nominate illustrated). Race *macrorhynchos*, occurring from Urals eastwards, although very similar, has



relatively longer and narrower bill and is subject to very occasional irruptions, taking it southwards and westwards almost right across Europe.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally fairly common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Denmark.) Coniferous forests, particularly in hilly or mountainous regions (especially spruce, or arolla pine in east). Access to hazel nuts important where arolla pine absent. Siberian race occasionally exhibits irruptions when main food supply (arolla pine cones) fails; sometimes numbers invade regions far from normal range, and may turn up anywhere with trees, including gardens.

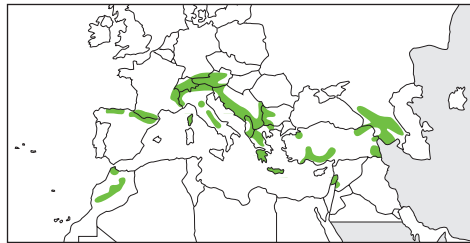
ALPINE CHOUGH *Pyrrhocorax graculus*

Plate page 740

Yellow-billed Chough

L 38 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Gregarious small black corvid of mountainous regions. At other than long range, the small clear-yellow bill (often appearing whitish at a distance) is diagnostic. When bill not visible, most likely confusion is with Red-billed Chough, which shares same habitat and red leg colour, but in silhouette Alpine further separated by shorter bill, relatively smaller head and longer tail, the latter projecting well beyond wingtips when at rest (equalling wingtips in Red-billed). In flight, the shape is also somewhat different, but may be difficult to judge accurately when birds wheeling about overhead: Alpine, however, has less 'square' wing shape with less strongly fingered primaries than Red-billed, owing to greater gradation of primary lengths and more curving trailing edge to wing, giving more pinched appearance to wing base; the longer tail and smaller head may also be evident, the tail projection of Alpine being longer than width of base of wing (projection about equal to wing width on Red-billed). Some calls are also quite diagnostic (see Voice). Usually found in flocks about boulder-strewn slopes and alpine pastures, soaring effortlessly about cliff faces and indulging in aerobatics; often becomes quite tame about mountain resorts. Beware recently fledged Red-billed, which has shorter and more yellowish bill, but bill is dull, dingy orange or pinkish-yellow, not clear bright pale yellow of Alpine, and such birds are invariably accompanied by adults. If poorly seen may be confused with other black corvids, most likely with sociable Western Jackdaw,



which is smaller with relatively larger head and stouter black bill, less buoyant flight, shorter wings and squarer tail, and different calls.

SEX/AGE Recently fledged juvenile is dull, not glossy, black, with horn-coloured bill, soon turning yellow, and dull brownish or blackish legs, become red by first spring.

VOICE Usual calls quite uncorvid-like: a sweet, rippling 'preep' and a descending thin whistled 'sweeeeo'. Other calls include a rolling 'churr'.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (nominate illustrated).

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (In addition to mapped range, formerly bred S Poland.) About high mountain pastures with rocky ravines and cliff faces; above tree-line in summer (reaching 4000 m or more), but in winter descends a little lower into high valleys. Locally about alpine villages and ski resorts.

RED-BILLED CHOUGH *Pyrhcorax pyrrhcorax*

Plate page 740

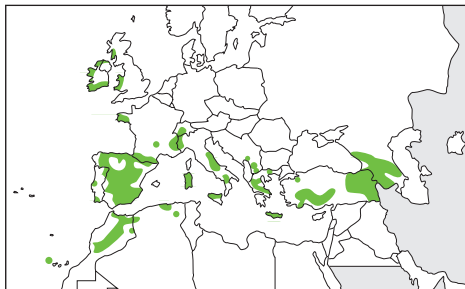
Chough

L 39–40 cm.

IDENTIFICATION If seen well, the slender, curved red bill and red legs are diagnostic of this Western Jackdaw-sized corvid. Confusion is likely only with Alpine Chough in high mountainous regions, and the two species often occur together, but the flight silhouette of the Red-billed, with broad, markedly rectangular wings and strongly fingered primaries, is distinct from that of all other crows; see Alpine Chough for fuller discussion. Even if the bill colour is not discernible, the slender curved shape is readily visible in flight at all but long range. When bill and leg colour not obvious at long range, distinctive feeding method of Red-billed Choughs may give a clue as they dig strongly with their curved bills to displace surface vegetation and turn over small stones. Gregarious by nature and generally noisy, most calls being diagnostic (see Voice). Flight is very buoyant, with deep-bounding progression, and they often indulge in aerobatics over cliff faces. Does not freely mix with other crows, although associates loosely with Alpine Chough and Western Jackdaw in places. Distinctive silhouette with strongly fingered wingtip prevents confusion with Western Jackdaw, which shares its habitat, and Rook is larger, with longer, more wedge-shaped tail and heavier head and bill.

SEX/AGE Recently fledged juvenile is dull, not glossy, black, with shorter bill that is darker and browner at very first but soon becomes orange-buff, and finally red by first autumn, and legs that are pinkish-brown or blackish at first, soon becoming red; invariably accompanied by adults at this stage, which prevents confusion with Alpine Chough.

VOICE Usual call a high-pitched, almost hoarse 'chee-



aw', uttered both in flight and on ground (when wings and tail flicked with call); although this is distinctive when known, Western Jackdaw's vocabulary includes a similar call, but that of Red-billed Chough is clearer, more explosive and higher in pitch. Other calls may be heard, but most are basically variants of the usual call.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 4 races (nominate illustrated).

STATUS/HABITAT Generally uncommon but locally common. Decreasing in some parts of our region. (In addition to mapped range, probably breeds Albania and formerly bred Tunisia and more widely in Britain, France.) Rocky mountainsides and hillsides with adjacent short grass pastures; also high grassy or cultivated plateaus with rocky crags. Mostly found below levels inhabited by Alpine Chough. In W Europe and Canary Is (Palma only) locally also along rugged, rocky coastlines with well-grazed grassy areas.

WESTERN JACKDAW *Corvus monedula*

Plate page 740

Jackdaw, Eurasian Jackdaw

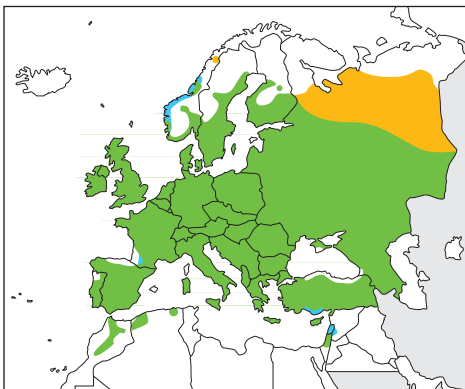
L 33 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Sociable small black crow, its small size and short, small bill readily distinguishing it from all other crows except vagrant Daurian Jackdaw (q.v.), while pale iris of adult is unique. The grey nape and sides to head contrast well with the blacker crown and throat and the pale iris may often be visible at close range, although these features lacking in recently fledged juveniles, which are more uniformly dark. Noisy and very gregarious, often forming mixed flocks with Rooks when feeding in fields or roosting. Often in closely packed small flocks, wheeling acrobatically about cliff faces or church towers. Breeds in holes, in trees, cliffs or buildings, often in loose colonies. In flight, small neat head and bill distinctive, wing action quicker and more direct than that of other crows. See also Alpine and Red-billed Choughs.

SEX/AGE Juvenile has dark, not pale, iris and has nape and neck sides darker, less contrasting than in adults.

VOICE Typical call an abrupt, high 'chak', often repeated seven or eight times in excitement; other calls include a low, drawn 'chaairr', which is usually accompanied by a 'chak' (preventing confusion with choughs), and a slurred, high 'kyow'.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 4 races (*spermologus* illustrated). The nominate race is more or less confined to Scandinavia but intergrades into *soemmeringii* of E Europe and Middle East, which has a distinct, almost whitish narrow collar around base of nape (only weakly indicated in western forms); W European and N



African *spermologus* is somewhat darker than nominate race, with whitish collar mark usually lacking altogether; isolated *cirtensis* of N Algeria is duller and greyer than other forms, with less contrasting head pattern.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped range, formerly bred Tunisia.) Favoured habitats include any form of open country with scattered trees, from agricultural land to parkland and wooded steppe; also towns and villages, coastal and inland cliff faces, quarries and woodland edges.

DAURIAN JACKDAW *Corvus dauuricus*

Plate page 740

L 33 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Asian vagrant (breeds from Mongolia and S Siberia eastwards and southwards). Closely resembles Western Jackdaw in structure, behaviour and calls. Daurian has two distinct plumage morphs, one black and the other pied. The black morph seems to be an immature plumage stage. Black-morph birds are very similar to Western, differing in being blacker, less blackish-grey, overall, with nape only a little paler (although offering some contrast with blackness of rest of body, and sometimes showing hint of pale collar at base of nape). At close range the iris can be seen to be dark, not pale; thus, there is a risk of confusion with juvenile Western, which has dark greyish iris and darker nape than adult, but Daurian has silvery-streaked ear-coverts visible and often a hint of a darker bib under close viewing conditions. Pied morph is strikingly patterned, recalling 'Hooded Crow' form of Carrion Crow in basic pattern, with its whitish underparts and collar contrasting with black-

ish head, breast, wings, upperparts, tail and ventral region; like dark morph, it shows an area of silver streaks on ear-coverts. Confusion possible, however, with partial-albino Western, but in such cases dark iris and silvery ear-covert streaking of Daurian should clinch identification. See also Pied Crow.

SEX/AGE Sexes similar, although adult female has black areas of plumage less glossy than adult male. Juvenile similar, but white areas tinged pale grey and black areas dull greyish-black, not glossy black; apparently moults into black morph soon after fledging, but later reverts to pied plumage stage.

VOICE Usual calls identical to those of Western Jackdaw *C. monedula*.

TAXONOMY Sometimes considered conspecific with Western Jackdaw.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (N Europe). In natural range, occurs in similar habitats to Western Jackdaw, and vagrants likely to join flocks of Westerns.

HOUSE CROW *Corvus splendens*

Plate page 741

Indian House Crow

L 43 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Red Sea and Persian Gulf ports: a ship-borne invader from S Asia. A medium-sized, long-billed, slim blackish crow, with contrastingly greyish nape and head and breast sides. Very much a bird of habitation, scavenging about streets and gardens and perching on rooftops, pylons and the like. Highly sociable and very noisy where established. Although basic plumage pattern recalls Western Jackdaw, House Crow is larger and slimmer, with longer, deeper bill, dark iris and different call. Some hybrid Carrion x Hooded Crows resemble House in pattern, although such birds very unlikely to occur within range of House; House is slimmer and longer-billed, with more extensive grey on sides of head, than such hybrids. At a distance often appears all black; only apparently all-black corvid that overlaps in range is larger Brown-necked Raven, which has more wedge-shaped tail and relatively larger head and shorter bill.

SEX/AGE Juvenile a little darker, with grey areas less



pale than those of adult and black of plumage dull, not glossy.

VOICE Very vocal, often calling in flight, typically a flat, toneless, dry 'kaa-kaa'.

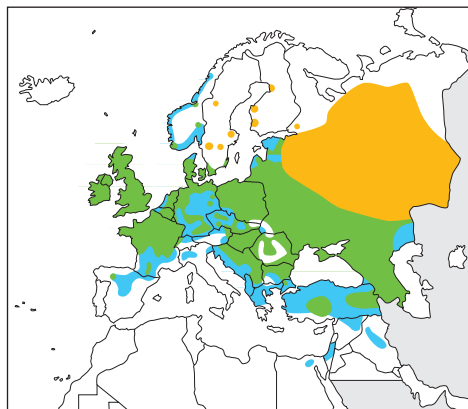
STATUS/HABITAT Very local resident within our region, established in Suez Canal zone, along Egyptian Red Sea coast and in Gulf of Aqaba. Regularly reported from Kuwait, but may not be established there. These birds probably arrived accidentally on ships from S Asia, which is known to have happened elsewhere. Likely to be encountered only about immediate vicinity of towns and villages, especially about ports.

ROOK *Corvus frugilegus*

Plate page 741

L 46–47 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Very sociable crow, adults being readily distinguished from other black species by their bare greyish-white chin and lores, making the bill appear relatively long and pale-based and giving the forehead a distinctly peaked appearance when crown feathers raised. Juvenile and immature have fully feathered face (including bristly feathers on base of upper mandible) and can be very difficult to separate from Carrion Crow, but on the ground may show more peaked crown, more slender and sharply pointed bill and rather looser plumage, especially about base of legs ('baggy trousers') and wing coverts (alula and primary coverts tend to droop slightly); gait is typically more waddling than that of Carrion Crow and calls are also different, but juveniles tend to be more silent than adults. At close range, bristly feathers at base of upper mandible usually slightly interrupt the smooth outline of the culmen in Rook, but not in Carrion, and feathering often has obviously



curved lower edge, exposing more of bill base (edge of feathering more parallel to gape in Carrion Crow); bill base in Rook is also often slightly paler by first winter (always uniform in Carrion Crow). In flight, overall silhouette similar to that of Carrion, but Rook has more wedge-shaped tail, more prominently fingered wingtip, rather narrower primaries and slightly longer wings; primaries are held more swept-back during beats and the bill and head project further; the wing action is rather quicker, less laboured, and the pale face of adults may also be visible. Rooks are very gregarious, gathering in large flocks and nesting in tree-top colonies. Freely mixes with Western Jackdaws when feeding or roosting. Carrion Crow is typically a solitary nester, although may congregate into small flocks outside breeding season. See also Common Raven.

CARRION CROW *Corvus corone*

Hooded Crow (*C. c. cornix* etc.)

L 47 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Two distinct forms, sometimes treated as specifically distinct. **Carrion Crow** is widespread all-black crow of W Europe, likely to be confused only with Rook or Common Raven. Sleeker and less intensely glossy black than Rook, lacking latter's bare-faced appearance of adult, with relatively slightly shorter, less sharply pointed bill. For discussion on distinctions from juvenile and immature Rook, see that species. In flight, wings slightly shorter and less strongly fingered than Rook's and tail more evenly rounded (when spread) or square (when closed). Common Raven is considerably larger, with longer, more fingered wingtip, longer neck, stouter bill, longer, wedge-shaped tail and different call. See also Western Jackdaw. Less gregarious by nature than Rook, although flocks form on suitable feeding grounds (e.g. estuaries or rubbish dumps) after breeding; therefore degree of sociability should not be taken too literally. It is, however, a solitary nester, building large stick nest near top of tall tree, also on cliffs and even electricity pylons. Where range overlaps with that of Hooded Crow, the two forms freely interbreed, hybrids showing intermediate plumage features. **Hooded Crow** is basically a grey and black Carrion Crow, which it resembles in everything apart from plumage. Head, upper breast, wings, tail and tibia black, rest of plumage grey. In poor light, the difference in coloration may not always be apparent, especially with rather darker European form *cornix*; Iraqi form *capellanus*, however, so pale a grey that it can appear black and white in field. Hybridizes freely with Carrion Crow over narrow overlap zones of the two forms, the hybrids variably showing features of both parent forms. See also House Crow and Daurian Jackdaw.

SEX/AGE Juvenile has black of plumage dull, not glossy.

VOICE Calls more rolling and resonant than those of Rook, slightly higher in pitch and a little less 'dry'. Usual call a vibrant 'kraaa', often repeated in a rather harsher, but similar, form. Has several other calls; sometimes gives an almost Common Raven-like hollow 'konk-konk', but normally more typical calls uttered soon afterwards.

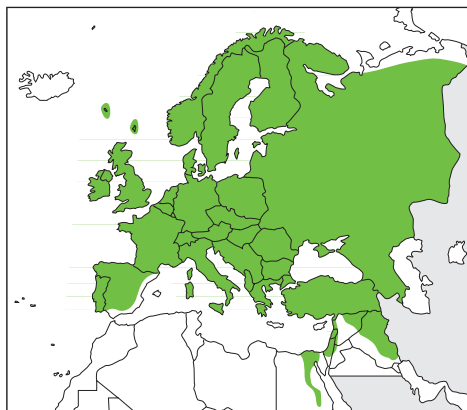
TAXONOMY The grey-and-black forms are sometimes treated as a full species: **Hooded Crow** *C. cornix*.

SEX/AGE Juvenile lacks bare whitish face and has dull, not glossy, plumage. The bare face may not be acquired until first summer.

VOICE Calls distinctly different in pitch from those of Carrion Crow, including a relatively harsher and flatter 'kaah'; also has a high-pitched, almost plaintive 'kraa-a', usually uttered in alarm. Various other shorter calls may be given. 'Sings' from exposed perch, giving various cawing sounds, accompanied by backward and forward head movements.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. Prefers agricultural land with small clumps of woodland, also about fringes of towns and villages with large trees and in winter often along the seashore. Shows preference for lowland districts but found locally even in high plateau country.

Plate page 741



GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Marked. 5 or 6 races (nominate and *cornix* illustrated). Fall into two groups.

Corone group: all black (see Identification). Nominate race occurs in Europe from Iberia north and east to Scotland, Denmark, E Germany, Austria, N Yugoslavia and N Italy where it intergrades with *cornix*. Race *orientalis* (E Iran eastwards and northwards) is identical apart from larger average size; this is probably the 'Carrion Crow' recorded as a vagrant in Turkey. **Cornix group:** black and grey (see Identification). Race *cornix* is found in N and E Europe north and east of contact zone with nominate race; race *sardoniensis*, found from Corsica and Sardinia through Italy to the Balkans, Turkey and Middle East, is similar but a little smaller, and with grey plumage a little paler (especially in east); *sharpii* of W Siberia south to the Caucasus is noticeably paler grey. Somewhat isolated *capellanus* of Iraq is markedly pale grey, appearing almost black and white in field, and has a rather stouter bill and more wedge-shaped tail; some of the calls of this form may be distinct, so its taxonomic position needs investigation.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. Occupies a great variety of habitats ranging from woodland edges and clearings to farmland with scattered trees, groves, coastal cliffs, urban parks and upland moorland; freely feeds on estuarine mudflats and the seashore.

PIED CROW *Corvus albus*

Plate page 741

L 46 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Vagrant from sub-Saharan Africa. Conspicuous white upper mantle and breast contrast with otherwise black plumage, giving pattern resembling pied form of Daurian Jackdaw. Pied Crow is larger and in shape and structure a typical crow, rather than a jackdaw. Differs from palest Hooded Crow in having black belly and most of upperparts, and in having white, not merely pale grey, breast and collar. Beware partial-albino corvids, which could suggest

this species. Likely to be encountered about villages and other forms of habitation.

SEX/AGE Juvenile has black dull, not glossy, and white areas of plumage slightly mottled with narrow black feather tips.

VOICE Typical call a harsh 'karh-karh'.

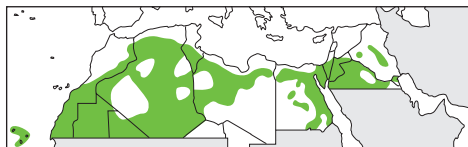
STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Libya). In natural range, open country with cultivation, villages, towns, rubbish dumps etc.

BROWN-NECKED RAVEN *Corvus ruficollis*

Plate page 742

L 50–52 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Desert counterpart of Common Raven, and indeed specific identification can be difficult where the two species overlap, unless heard calling. Intermediate between Common Raven and Carrion Crow in size, but structure closer to that of Common Raven, although bill less stout and wing rather narrower, more pointed and less strongly fingered. In flight, head and neck can appear slimmer than those of nominate race Common, and wedge-shaped tail often appears more irregular (owing to slightly projecting central feathers), but identification may be more safely assumed from habitat and range. As its name implies, Brown-necked often distinctly brown on head and neck, which is especially obvious on worn birds, when brown appearance may be given by whole body; some populations of Common, however, may also appear distinctly brownish on head and neck in worn plumage, and unfortunately these features may be shown by *laurencei* race of Common in the Middle East, at the borders of the areas where one is likely to encounter Brown-necked. In these regions of overlap, however, Common is typically the raven of the mountains, whereas Brown-necked is the raven of open, flat true desert country: a rule that generally works, but by no means always! The N African race of Common Raven, *tingitanus*, is smaller and has a shorter bill than the nominate race, but the bill is still stumper than that of Brown-necked and the call is still typical of Common, although noticeably less deep, more of a gruff croak than a deep honk. Confusion with



other black corvids unlikely within range, as Fan-tailed Raven has very short tail. See also House Crow.

SEX/AGE Fresh-plumaged birds are glossy black with brownish-black head and neck, but with wear these areas become quite a dull dark brown, which can include almost whole body plumage. Juvenile shows similar effects of wear, but fresh birds are a dull black, not glossy. It is not true that very brown birds are necessarily juveniles, as this feature is aggravated by plumage wear at all ages.

VOICE Typically crow-like, with all calls less deep and harsh compared with those of Common. Typical call a harsh 'karr-karr-karr', much more akin to Carrion Crow than to Common Raven.

TAXONOMY Formerly considered to be conspecific with Common Raven *C. corax*.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. Favours flat, open desert and semi-desert, locally in arid mountains and even along arid coastlines. Freely attends human settlements, where it scavenges about rubbish dumps, and locally about edges of cultivation, where there is little competition from other large corvids.

COMMON RAVEN *Corvus corax*

Plate page 742

Raven, Northern Raven

L 55–65 cm.

IDENTIFICATION The largest passerine of our region. Most races are considerably larger than other crows, as large as a Common Buzzard, but size may not always be apparent with lone birds and beware small races *tingitanus* of N Africa and *canariensis* of Canary Is (see Geographical Variation). Flight silhouette shows relatively long, wedge-shaped tail, long prominently fingered wings with noticeably narrower tips and more prominently projecting head and neck than other black crows. More massive, strongly arched bill and shaggy throat feathers give markedly bulky appearance to head and neck both in flight and when perched. Soars on straight or slightly depressed wings, often looking very raptor-like, and performs rolling display flight at onset of breeding season. Generally solitary or in pairs and family parties, but may form small flocks outside breeding season in areas where population particularly high or at time of winter

roosts. Plays even more often on the wing than Carrion Crow, often dropping objects and diving and tumbling in pursuit before soaring aloft once more. See Brown-necked Raven for discussion on separation. Carrion Crow occasionally utters deep call notes, but has square or round-tipped tail, relatively shorter wings, tail and neck and smaller bill. Rook approaches Common Raven in having fairly obviously fingered primaries and slightly wedge-shaped tail, but Rook has more slender bill, bare facial patch when adult, a less evenly wedge-shaped tail (with projecting tail tip) and very different call. See also Fan-tailed Raven.

SEX/AGE Worn birds of some populations may show slight brown cast to head and neck, a potential cause of confusion with Brown-necked Raven; juvenile dull, not glossy, black.

VOICE Usual call a distinctive, deep, hollow, honking 'pruuk-pruuk' or similar, quite unlike any other corvid

STARLINGS

call when known. Has fairly wide vocabulary, which includes a high, knocking 'tok-tok-tok' and some calls almost of a musical nature.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight in colour but more marked in size. 5 races (nominative, *laurencei* and *tingitanus* illustrated). Race *laurencei* of extreme SE Europe, Turkey and the Middle East is a little larger than the nominate race, and in worn plumage may become quite brown on head, neck and mantle; races *tingitanus* of N Africa and *canariensis* of the Canary Is are rather smaller, with shorter, stumpier bills.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common, but decreasing through persecution in parts of W Europe. (In addition to mapped range, formerly bred Belgium.) Various 'wild' habitats from coastal cliffs to high mountains, but also in open woodland and forest, even in some lowland areas.



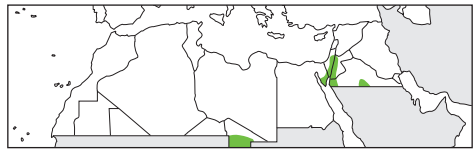
FAN-TAILED RAVEN *Corvus rhipidurus*

Plate page 742

L 47 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Distinctive black crow of the Middle East and Tibesti. Smaller than Common Raven, but close to Brown-necked. Remarkably short, rounded tail gives distinctive shape in flight, when it appears to be tailless, an appearance enhanced by its very broad wings. On ground, the primaries project well beyond end of tail. Soars and sails effortlessly over barren cliff faces. Often relatively tame, it freely scavenges about habitation. Sociable, being generally found in small flocks. Distinctive shape makes confusion unlikely, but beware other corvids which may have accidentally lost their tails; Fan-tailed Raven, however, has much broader wings than other species and the call is also diagnostic. Range overlaps with that of Brown-necked Raven.

SEX/AGE Juvenile lacks slight gloss of adult, and



worn-plumaged birds of all ages may become slightly brownish.

VOICE Typical call a high-pitched, croaked 'craa-craa', much less harsh than calls of other black crows; other calls include an almost trumpet-like 'parp-parp'.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. Cliff faces and adjacent terrain in desert regions. Will scavenge about human habitation where unmolested.

STARLINGS Sturnidae

6 species (1 introduced, 1 vagrant)

Rather small, sociable, vaguely thrush-like birds. Quite large compared with most other passerines. Common Starling is one of our best-known birds. Most species have upright stance, striding gait, rather short tail and usually rather short and quite pointed wings. Flight swift and direct. Feed largely on invertebrates by continually probing ground, often turf, with bill. Highly gregarious, Common Starling in particular often found in huge roosting flocks that swirl across the sky like distant columns of smoke. Calls and songs mostly unmusical and scratchy, but some species make loud, clear whistles and some are good mimics.

Sexes usually similar. Some species show marked seasonal variation, others none. Juveniles usually distinct. 1st-winter plumage (often resembling adult) attained by beginning of first autumn in most, and fully adult plumage typically attained by beginning of second autumn.

Most are unmistakable, but in some plumages could be confused with thrushes (e.g. Common Blackbird). All but highly distinctive and localized Tristram's Starling have distinctly different jizz from latter, differing mainly in more upright stance, walking gait, shorter tail, and (in most) more pointed bills and more pointed wings. Continuous feeding motion, with birds probing regularly as they walk steadily across ground, is quite different from hop, pause and probe technique typical of thrushes. Flight silhouette is similar to that of Bohemian Waxwing, but confusion unlikely.

Identification within the family is mostly straightforward, and there are no general points on which to concentrate.

TRISTRAM'S STARLING *Onychognathus tristramii*

Plate page 743

Tristram's Grackle

L 25 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Large, distinctive starling of Middle East. More thrush-like than other starlings owing to longer tail, but combination of mainly glossy black (adult male) or at least all-dark plumage with conspicuous bright orange wing patches (striking in flight) makes it unmistakable. Often in flocks soaring past rock faces or over ravines.

SEX/AGE Adult female has head, neck and upper breast greyish-brown with diffuse blackish streaking, remainder of plumage duller black with brown tinge, wing patches duller orange; eye dark brown, without red tinge of adult male. Juvenile as adult female.

VOICE Loud, melodious but strange whistling calls



recalling wolf-whistles or, when run together, a short-wave radio being tuned in: 'wu-ee-oo' or 'wee-oooo-eee'. Also a harsh, rising hiss.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common but localized. (Also breeds in Gebel Elba in extreme SE Egypt, just outside our region.) Desert hillsides, cliffs and ravines, deep vegetated wadis and nearby cultivation and gardens.

PURPLE-BACKED STARLING *Sturnus sturninus*

Plate below

Daurian Starling

L 18 cm.

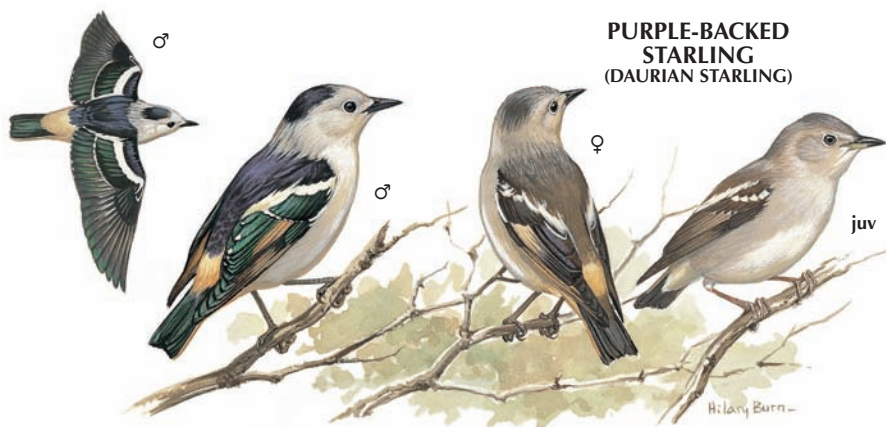
IDENTIFICATION Asian vagrant (breeds E Siberia southwards). Noticeably smaller and neater than other starlings. Adult's combination of grey head (with dark patch on nape) and underparts and dark wings (with two white wing bars) and tail is unique in our region. In flight, pale rump patch (buff or rufous in male, whitish in female) contrasts with dark mantle/back and tail. All-brown juvenile plumage unlikely to be seen in our region, but combination of small size, brownish-white underparts (with unstreaked belly) and lack of pale rufous fringes to wing feathers distinguishes it from juvenile Common and Spotless Starlings. Compared with juvenile Rosy Starling is distinctly smaller, with long, sharp-pointed blackish bill (instead of stubby and yellowish). Noticeably arboreal, spending less time on ground than other starlings of our

region.

SEX/AGE Adult female differs from adult male in having mantle/back and spot on nape brown, instead of black glossed with purple, and no purplish or greenish gloss on wings and tail. Juvenile quite distinct: brown above, with dark brown wings and tail, pale brown underparts with indistinct darker streaking on throat, breast and flanks. 1st-winter is virtually as adult but has retained juvenile inner secondaries and outer tertial, which are contrastingly browner.

VOICE On taking flight, gives a soft 'squerrhh'. Song quite rich and varied; more melodious, less scratchy than that of Common Starling.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, breeds in open deciduous woodland, willow thickets, groves amid cultivation and villages.



**PURPLE-BACKED
STARLING
(DAURIAN STARLING)**

COMMON STARLING *Sturnus vulgaris*

Plate page 743

Starling, European Starling

L 21 cm.

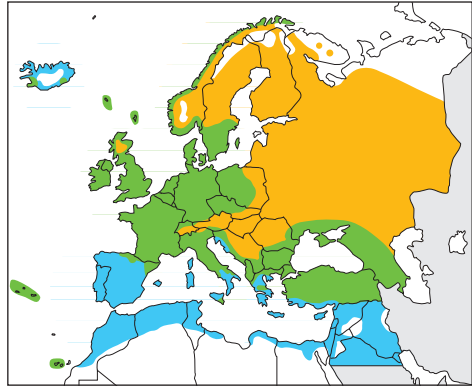
IDENTIFICATION One of the best-known birds of our region, commonly nesting in house roofs. Largely black coloration of adult in summer and rather uniform brown plumage of juvenile could suggest male

and female Common Blackbird respectively, but upright stance, waddling gait, rather short tail and sharply pointed ('spiky') bill give this species a characteristic jizz that readily separates it from thrushes.

Iridescent purplish and greenish lustre also differentiates adults from any thrush. Birds moulting from brown juvenile plumage into 1st-winter can look very patchy and strange. Wanders steadily across grassland and lawns, continually probing turf with bill, a search procedure quite unlike hop, pause and probe technique of thrushes. Flight swift and direct; rather short tail and pointed but broad-based wings create distinctive flight silhouette (shared only by other *Sturnus* starlings and waxwings). Highly gregarious. Roosts in huge aggregations in reedbeds, thickets and often on buildings in towns and cities; large flocks leaving or arriving look like swirling pillars of black smoke or distant clouds of gnats. See also very similar Spotless Starling and juvenile Rosy Starling.

SEX/AGE Worn adult in spring/summer has pale tips to feathers largely worn* away, especially on crown and underparts (where often completely missing). Adult female differs from male in having larger pale tips, thus appearing more heavily spotted at any given season, has paler iris and lacks bluish bill base of breeding male. 1st-winter has even larger, rounder pale spots than fresh adult in autumn/winter, coalescing into solid buff on forehead and white on chin.

VOICE Calls include a harsh, buzzing, descending 'tcheerr' (especially on taking flight) and, when alarmed, a hard 'kyik' and a harsh, grating 'schaarh' (both usually repeated). Song a rich, highly varied medley of chirrups, clicks, creaks, warbles and gurgles interspersed with clear, drawn-out whistles (often descending and resembling sound of a falling bomb:



'wheeeeeeeeeoooooooooooooo'). A superb mimic, weaving the sounds of many other birds (including Common Cuckoo, Eurasian Curlew and chicken), or even mechanical objects, into its song.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 6 races (nominate illustrated).

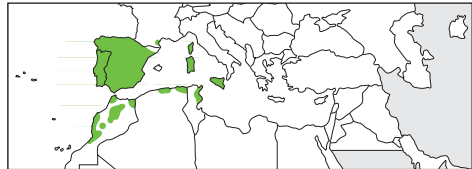
STATUS/HABITAT Common, locally abundant in winter, but declining in W Europe. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Balearic Is.) Habitat very varied, ranging from open woodland and woodland edges (mainly deciduous) to groves, gardens, towns and villages, farmland, coastal cliffs and semi-desert.

SPOTLESS STARLING *Sturnus unicolor*

L 21 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Replaces similar Common Starling as breeding species in SW Europe and NW Africa. Worn adult in spring/summer differs from Common in having no pale spotting (not even on upperparts) and in having duller ('oilier'), purely purplish gloss (Common has green gloss on mantle/back and wing coverts); legs tend to be pinker. Fresh adult in autumn/winter has much smaller pale tips to body feathers and narrower pale fringes to wing feathers, so looks much darker (only faintly greyish-tinged at a distance) than fresh Common; also shows difference in gloss described above (although difference partly obscured by pale feather tips). If seen well, black underwing coverts contrast with greyish flight feathers (underwing uniform greyish in Common). Juvenile very similar to juvenile Common, but is darker, almost blackish-brown. Behaviour much as that of Common, but rarely found in very large flocks.

SEX/AGE By spring or summer small pale tips to feathers (characteristic of fresh adult) have completely



worn away, so plumage uniformly dark. Breeding male has bluish bill base. Juvenile not so contrastingly brown as in Common Starling, more blackish-brown, but without clean, glossy (purplish-hued) black appearance of summer adult.

VOICE Much as that of Common Starling, but song simpler and more melodious with less mimicry.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. Habitat range similar to that of Common Starling.

ROSY STARLING *Sturnus roseus*

Rose-coloured Starling

L 21 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Restricted to southeast of our region. Adult summer unmistakable. (Note: beware poorly seen partially albinistic or leucistic Common Starlings, but these have pale areas white or whitish, not pink, and lack crest and stubby bill shape.) Adult winter/1st-winter still show subdued two-tone, dark and pale pattern and are unlikely to be confused. Juvenile resembles juvenile Common Starling, but is distinctly paler overall (milky-tea colour), with contrastingly pale

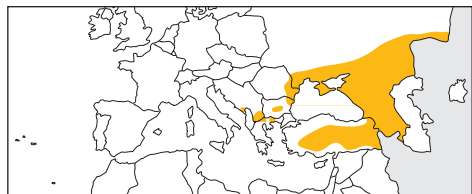


Plate page 743

Plate page 743

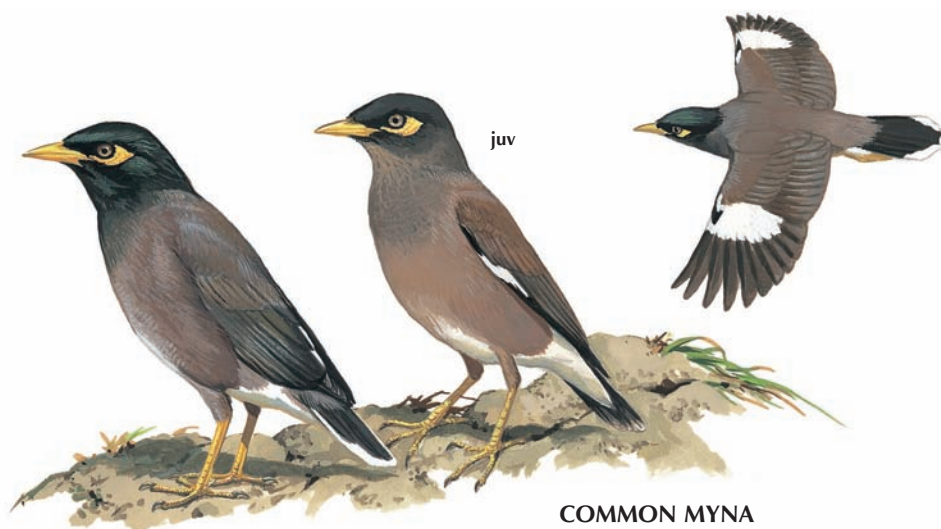
rump, and lacks dark lores; bill is shorter, stubbier and more decurved than in Common and is pale yellowish, with dusky-horn tip and culmen (bill all dark in Common). Dark lores and longer, more pointed, all-dark bill give young Common Starlings a very different facial expression (sharper and 'streetwise' compared with softer and more thrush-like in Rosy). Young Rosy also shows fine spotting on sides of foreneck and upper breast. Highly gregarious, often found in large flocks. Nests colonially, often in very large numbers, mostly in rock piles, in crevices in low cliffs or in holes in buildings etc. Feeding behaviour much as that of Common.

SEX/AGE Worn adult female in spring/summer differs from adult male in having shorter nape feathers, black areas of plumage brownish and less glossy, and less black at base of lower mandible. Fresh adult in autumn/winter is duller and less contrasting, with brownish feather fringes partly obscuring pink and with pale feather fringes to black feathers (especially noticeable on head and undertail coverts); culmen and tip of bill dusky, remainder of bill yellowish (in breeding season, clean pinkish-yellow, apart from black

base to lower mandible). Fresh female even duller than male, with shorter crest. 1st-winter male much as adult female, but 1st-winter female even duller and browner, with little or no pink visible beneath brownish feather fringes; crest shorter than in respective adult. Juvenile plumage is retained until winter, unlike in other starlings; often retains juvenile bill coloration and some juvenile flight feathers until first summer.

VOICE Calls are varied and include a repeated harsh, rattling 'chik-ik-ik-ik ...' (or softer 'qwik-ik-ik-ik ...'), a throaty 'chrtr chrtr' and (especially on taking flight) a Common Starling-like 'tchirr'. Song a prolonged mixture of harsh chatterings and more melodious warblings.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Italy, Czechoslovakia.) Nomadic and often erratic in its movements, flocks moving northwestwards in some years into W Turkey and SE Europe. Breeds only when and where grasshoppers numerous; departs unusually early (typically by late July). Open grassland or farmland, grassy slopes with scattered rocks and broken, arid ground.



COMMON MYNA

COMMON MYNA *Acridotheres tristis*

L 24 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Introduced from S Asia. Unmistakable. Has characteristic bold, upright, short-tailed, starling-type jizz. Prominent teardrop-shaped area of bare waxy-yellow skin behind and below eye, bright waxy-yellow bill and legs, bold white tips to outer tail feathers and, most of all, the white wing panel (largely hidden at rest, but extremely conspicuous in flight) make identification easy. Tame and cheeky, often snatching scraps close to people or domestic animals. Quarrelsome towards each other, but typically found in small, loose groups.

SEX/AGE Juvenile duller overall, with head, throat and upper breast brown (rather than a contrasting greyish-black).

VOICE Noisy and varied, ranging from harsh gurglings and subdued chattering to liquid whistles. On taking flight, gives a weak, rather querulous 'kverrh'. Alarm call a harsh, grating, rather drawn-out 'traaahh', recalling Spotted Nutcracker. Song is disjointed and tuneless, with a variety of different gurgling and whistling phrases

Plate above



(usually rapidly repeated), e.g. 'teeuh tee-uh tee-uh krok krok krok cheetoo cheetoo cheetoo' or 'keek keek keek chowrr chowrr kok kok kok' (the 'krok krok krok', or 'kok kok kok', accompanied by head-bobbing). Sometimes imitates other birds, but not a great mimic.

STATUS/HABITAT Uncommon. In our region, where introduced, restricted to urban areas (favouring parks, roadside verges, gardens etc.), but in natural range also found in all kinds of open or partly wooded country, villages etc.

SPARROWS Passeridae

// species

Highly sociable seed-eating birds of cultivation, scrub, rocky areas and human habitation. Chunky build with large head, short, stout bill, short tail and short, thick legs is epitomized by the ubiquitous House Sparrow. Feed mainly on the ground, moving freely with hopping gait. Flight strong (but rather whirring in *Passer* species). Most species breed close together in loose colonies (*Passer* species building loose, rather untidy nests). Outside breeding season, most sparrow species mix freely with other seed-eaters. Vocalizations typically crude and unmusical chirpings: sparrows are not great songsters.

Sexes differ in most species of *Passer*, but differences minimal or absent in other species. Seasonal variation usually minimal. Juveniles typically closely resemble adult females. Immatures indistinguishable in the field by first autumn.

Sparrows are quite like finches in structure and confusion can arise, especially where more 'finch-like' species such as Pale Rockfinch, Chestnut-shouldered Sparrow and White-winged Snowfinch are concerned.

Within the family identification mostly straightforward, but females and juveniles of House and Spanish Sparrows are difficult to separate, especially where lone individuals or mixed flocks are involved.

HOUSE SPARROW *Passer domesticus*

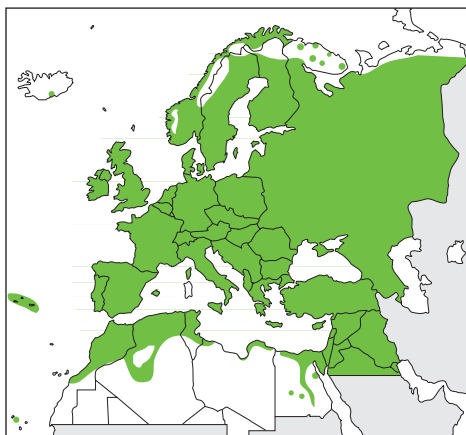
Plate page 783

Italian Sparrow (*P. d. italiae*)

L 14.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Familiar bird of human habitation almost throughout our region. Two distinct populations. **House Sparrow: Adult male** easily identified by combination of pale, dingy grey-white, underparts, whitish sides of head, warm brown upperparts with dark streaking, greyish rump, black bib (extending to upper breast) and grey forehead/crown bordered with maroon-chestnut. Winter male in fresh plumage in autumn has black bib restricted to chin and upper throat and yellowish (not black) bill; forehead and crown can look dull greyish-brown when very fresh, and maroon-chestnut nape and stripe through eye are tinged with buff, so head pattern much less clean-cut.

Adult female and juvenile are nondescript dull brown birds, with pale underparts, lacking prominent markings, but distinguished from other brown finch-like birds by combination of lack of white in outer tail, unstreaked dull underparts, weak but distinct supercilium and relatively bulky appearance to head and bill; confusion is, however, possible with other members of the genus (q.v.), many of which show similar features. Sociable, forming large flocks after breeding to feed in fields and around farms. Often breeds in loose colonies, usually in buildings but also large untidy nests in trees. Feeds on ground, hopping around and flicking tail, flying to perch in bushes or on buildings when disturbed. Quite pugnacious, even chasing other birds, especially Collared Doves. Displaying birds noisy, with much chasing of potential partners. Flight fast and direct, with almost whirring wings, although very gently undulating when flying high over longer distances. See other members of genus *Passer*, Rock Sparrow and also female Common Rosefinch. Often hybridizes locally with Spanish Sparrow. '**Italian Sparrow**' replaces typical House Sparrow in mainland Italy and elsewhere about Mediterranean (see Geographical Variation). Members of this stabilized hybrid population between House and Spanish Sparrows are intermediate in character (indeed, hybrids between the two species elsewhere are very much like Italian Sparrow). **Adult male** differs from typical House Sparrow in having crown and nape wholly chestnut, lacking grey crown centre (but note that in fresh autumn plumage dull buffish feather fringes make crown appear duller and even paler-centred);



additionally, it is a brighter bird overall than summer male House, having whiter sides of head like Spanish but restricted black bib as in House. **Adult female and juvenile** are intermediate between adult female/juvenile House and Spanish, and consequently unlikely to be distinguishable from either in the field. Behaviour is much as House, but although a town and city bird it is also at home in the countryside away from habitation (and thus more like Spanish in this respect).

SEX/AGE Winter male duller, with restricted black on throat. Juvenile resembles adult female, but when recently fledged shows yellowish gape. By first autumn and winter, young males show blackish chin and are indistinguishable from adult male winter.

VOICE Various chirping calls. Typical are a strong 'chee-ep', a looser 'chissick' and a monotonous 'chip'. Gives a deep rattling 'churr-r-r-it-it-it' when excited. In flight also gives a short 'chveet' or 'churrip' (quite unlike Eurasian Tree Sparrow's flight call). Song merely a repeated, excited series of chirps and 'chis-sicks'.

TAXONOMY House, Italian and Spanish Sparrows are very closely related; they could be considered as three separate species, but Italian is normally included

within House, although many authorities now consider it to be closer to Spanish. Italian seems not to have reached specific level to the same degree as Spanish, which overlaps widely in range with House with only limited hybridization.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Marked. 6 races (nominate and *italiae* illustrated). Only *italiae* ('Italian Sparrow', described above) is distinctly different from nominate race. This form, which is now often referred to as 'hybrid form x *italiae*' rather than as *P. d. italiae*, is resident in the Italian peninsula, S Switzerland, Corsica and Crete (with similar-looking populations in NW Africa), and has presumably arisen as a hybrid population between House and Spanish Sparrows. Birds resembling Italian Sparrows may occur elsewhere as a result of hybridization between these two closely related species. There is a narrow zone of

hybridization with nominate race of House Sparrow along southern foothills of Alps and on Rhodes, and in Sicily and extreme southern Italy it hybridizes with the Spanish Sparrow. Elsewhere on certain Mediterranean islands such as Malta, the sparrow populations are probably entirely of hybrid origin, the true characters of the parent species having been bred out.

HYBRIDIZATION Often hybridizes locally with Spanish Sparrow, occasionally with Eurasian Tree Sparrow, producing offspring with intermediate or mixed characters.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. Around any form of habitation, from city centres to desert oases, including farms and isolated buildings. Sometimes strays well away from buildings when feeding. Introduced in Cape Verde Is.

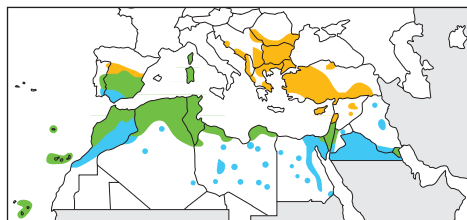
SPANISH SPARROW *Passer hispaniolensis*

Plate page 783

L 15 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Closely related to House Sparrow.

Adult male summer strikingly different from House, having black bib extending over breast and long, broad black streaks extending well down flanks, crown rich chestnut (bordered by narrow white supercilium), sides of head much whiter and upperparts heavily streaked with black and off-white. **Adult male winter** in fresh plumage in autumn has pale buffish fringes to head and body feathers that dull colour of crown and cheeks, and largely obscure black on both underparts and upperparts. They show dull, rather pale underparts and mantle, with extensive dusky streaking on sides of breast, flanks and mantle; the buff fringes to the crown feathers can create a pale-centred appearance to crown (suggesting House, but grey coloration lacking). **Adult female and juvenile** are very similar to adult female/juvenile House, but bill slightly larger and stouter, being a little longer and deeper-based. Gape typically longer, ending just below leading edge of eye (typically slightly in front of eye in House), and forehead often appears steeper, but neither of these features is consistently reliable. Supercilium tends to be longer, broader and paler (more creamy, less brownish) behind eye than in House, and more often extends narrowly in front of eye also (in House, supercilium generally absent or less conspicuous in front of eye). Ear-coverts typically, but not always, darker than in House, contrasting less with dusky eye-stripe. Pale 'braces' running across upper scapulars usually appear more prominent and paler in Spanish, and pale tips to median coverts are often whiter. The tertial fringes and pale wing panel on the closed wing formed by the secondary fringes tend to appear paler and sandier (more rufescent in House). Belly of Spanish is whiter, and most have weak diffuse dark streaking or mottling on breast and flanks, but this varies in intensity and even adult female House Sparrow may show a hint of streaking below (especially when heavily worn in summer). None of the above differences is diagnostic, however, and so careful assessment of a combination of features needs to be made: even so some individuals will be indistinguishable. Extensive hybridization in some areas (see Geographical Variation) further complicates the picture. Sociable, breeding colonially in avenues of trees and in riverside bushes, often in very large numbers;



also small colonies found in bases of nests of large birds such as White Storks. On passage and in winter, forms very tightly packed flocks. A bird of the countryside, rarely directly about habitation except where House Sparrow absent, i.e. Malta, parts of Tunisia, Canary Is and Cape Verde Is.

SEX/AGE Much the same as for House Sparrow.

VOICE Calls similar to those of House Sparrow, but 'chirp' and 'chirrup' a little fuller and more abrupt (perhaps more metallic) and flight call distinctly harsher, 'churp' rather than 'churrip'. Excitement rattle is slightly shorter and deeper than that of House. Males give a loud 'chee-chee-chee-chee' at colonies. Song similar to that of House, but slightly higher and more metallic.

TAXONOMY See comments under House Sparrow.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (nominate illustrated). Rather paler race (at least in winter plumage) *transcaucasian* occupies Asian part of range. Some of the Mediterranean island populations, e.g. Malta, somewhat intermediate between Italian and Spanish Sparrows, but are usually included within Spanish: this form is now often referred to as 'hybrid form x *maltae*'.

HYBRIDIZATION Locally hybridizes with House Sparrow, the hybrids often resembling 'Italian Sparrow' (q.v.); hybridization with Eurasian Tree Sparrow also very rarely recorded.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common in most areas, but rather uncommon and localized in Iberian peninsula. Eastern population highly migratory, migrating south as far as Egypt and Arabia. Farmland with bushes and trees, groves and thickets in open or hilly country. Often found by water (including reedbeds), but only locally about habitation.

DEAD SEA SPARROW *Passer moabiticus*

Plate page 783

L 12 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Small, very localized sparrow of the Middle East. Markedly smaller and daintier than House or Spanish Sparrows, with smaller bill and shorter wings. Primary projection reduced, with just three primary tips visible beyond tertials (4–5 in House and Spanish). **Adult male summer** has grey crown, ear-coverts and nape, contrasting with fairly small and well-defined black bib, black lore and bill, whitish submoustachial stripe that merges with a yellowish-buff patch on side of neck and whitish supercilium (which becomes yellowish-buff behind the eye). Median and greater coverts are chestnut, contrasting with black lesser coverts with narrow white tips that form a narrow wing bar (often concealed). Unlikely to be confused. **Adult male winter** in fresh plumage in autumn has horn-coloured lower mandible and pale feather fringes partly obscure grey on head and black bib, while yellow patch on neck is less conspicuous, so more care required. **Adult female and juvenile** resemble adult female/juvenile House Sparrow, but are markedly smaller and neater with a 'sweeter' appearance owing to relatively slightly larger head and smaller bill. They look paler overall, with sandy-grey upperparts and paler underparts (often showing a buffish suffusion on flanks). The supercilium is more clearly defined both above and behind eye than in House and is tinged with cinnamon-buff behind eye in fresh plumage in autumn. Often show more contrast between whiter throat and greyish-brown breast and more contrasting, well-defined markings on mantle. A sociable species, non-breeders forming dense flocks in waterside bushes. Shy and wary, flocks flying



off considerable distances when disturbed. Often mixes with migrant Spanish Sparrows. Loosely colonial, building individual nests in waterside bushes. **In the hand**, birds in female-type plumage have wing length up to 68 mm; both Spanish and House Sparrows normally have wing length of over 70 mm.

SEX/AGE See Identification. Juvenile resembles adult female; as respective adults by first winter but young males often a little duller and less distinctly patterned. **VOICE** Usual call a short, high pitched two- or three-syllable chirp (higher-pitched than equivalent call of House Sparrow); 'chip-chew' or 'chip-chip-chew'. Song distinctive, uttered from close proximity to nest, a repeated, high, rhythmic, rather shrill 'chilling-chilling-chilling ...' or 'dli-dli-dli ...', quite unlike chirping of commoner sparrow species.

STATUS/HABITAT Very localized, but quite numerous at some sites. Resident at some sites in Israel and Iraq but other breeding populations are summer visitors. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Cyprus.) Winter distribution imperfectly known. Waterside trees, thickets or scrub (sometimes amidst reedbeds) in arid country, with a special liking for tamarisks.

IAGO SPARROW *Passer iagoensis*

Plate page 783

Cape Verde Sparrow, Rufous-backed Sparrow

L 13 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Endemic to Cape Verde Is, where it is the most widespread sparrow. **Adult male** easily distinguished from larger House and Spanish Sparrows by very small black throat patch, rufous sides to head contrasting with grey crown and nape, and rufous rump. **Adult female and juvenile** recall small female House Sparrow, but have distinctly rufous supercilium and rufous-washed rump. Sociable. Breeds in loose colonies, nesting in holes in cliffs, buildings and stone walls. On some islands, attends colonies of breeding seabirds. Often very tame, especially on more remote islands, where small flocks closely approach visiting humans. Confusion likely only with introduced House Sparrow (found only about town of Mindelo on São Vicente) and introduced Spanish Sparrow (about towns on all inhabited islands except Santo Antão, Brava and São Vicente).

SEX/AGE Juvenile closely resembles adult female.

VOICE Basic 'chirp' rather similar to that of House Sparrow but lower-pitched; also gives a slightly nasal 'cheesp'.



Song a loose series of chirping calls, which has been rendered 'cheep chirri chip cheep chirri chip chip'.

TAXONOMY The rufous-backed sparrows of mainland Africa (*P. motitensis* and *P. rufocinctus*) have sometimes been lumped in *iagoensis*, with the name **Rufous-backed Sparrow** then being used for the enlarged species.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. Usually in very barren, arid country. Dry, stony plains and rocky cliffs with very sparse vegetation, also locally about cultivation, villages and towns (where now often replaced by Spanish or House Sparrows).

DESERT SPARROW *Passer simplex*

Plate page 784

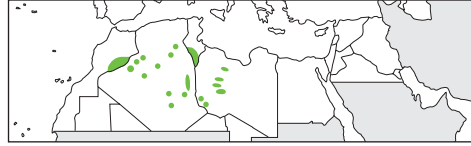
L 13.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Distinctive, pale, rather small sparrow of the Sahara. **Adult male** a distinctive sandy-grey with contrasting black lore and area below and behind eye, black bib, white cheeks and black and white markings on wing coverts and bastard wing. In

flight, shows double dark bands across width of wing, with whitish central band across flight feathers. Wing pattern (in flight) is reminiscent of that of both Crimson-winged and Desert Finches, neither of which, however, occurs in range or habitat of Desert Sparrow.

Adult female and juvenile if anything even more distinctive: very pale uniform sandy with whiter throat, lacking any obvious markings except for darker tips to flight feathers and primary coverts, and dark centres to feathers of bastard wing; bill base pale. Unlikely to be confused, but beware superficially similar female Sinai Rosefinch (buffer, with two indistinct wing bars) and Pale Rockfinch (darker above, with double wing bars and pale-tipped tail); however, ranges of latter do not overlap with that of Desert Sparrow. Most likely confusion is with leucistic female House Sparrow, which has occasionally caused confusion within our region, but note wing markings and whiter face and throat, longer legs and smaller size of Desert Sparrow. Found in pairs or family parties feeding on ground by sparse desert vegetation or in bare sandy desert. Has markedly bounding hops, enhanced by relatively long legs. Nests in walls, trees, bushes, or bases of large nests of other birds, such as Brown-necked Raven.

SEX/AGE Winter male and female have a yellowish bill, summer male and some females have black bill. Juvenile resembles adult female, but young males start to show adult male characteristics after first moult (in late summer/autumn).



VOICE Typical calls are a House Sparrow-like 'chirp' and a quiet, muted 'chu'. Song a delicate, sibilant twittering. Also gives a drawn out trill recalling European Greenfinch.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (*saharae* illustrated). Nominate race of southern Sahara just extends into our region in Tibesti; compared with *saharae*, males are darker grey above and creamier below, and females a little browner above and buffer below.

STATUS/HABITAT Very localized but not uncommon. Sandy desert, preferring broad sandy wadis with shrubs and low scrub, but locally in dunes with scattered vegetation and sometimes about oases or isolated desert villages. Probably nomadic to a certain extent.

EURASIAN TREE SPARROW *Passer montanus*

Plate page 783

Tree Sparrow

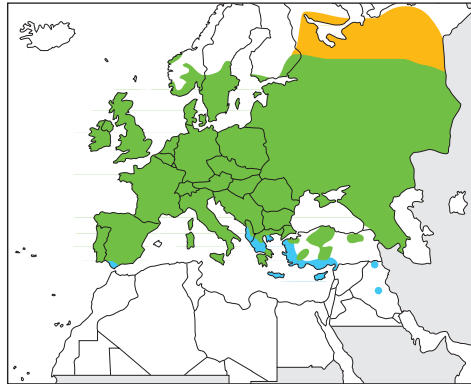
L 14 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Unique among the *Passer* of our region in having all plumages similar. Smaller and neater than House Sparrow, with relatively smaller head and slimmer body. Distinguished from other sparrows by combination of black chin (as opposed to more extensive black 'bib'), completely chestnut crown, blackish patch on rear ear-coverts and whitish sides to head that meet on nape (thus almost forming a complete collar). Juvenile not quite so distinctive, as dark cheek spot lacking or indistinct, sides to head off-white and crown centre greyish. Sociable, forming large flocks in favoured areas. A hole-nester, in trees and occasionally cliffs and buildings, readily utilizing nestboxes. Freely mixes with House Sparrows, finches and buntings outside breeding season. In some areas where House Sparrow absent, replaces it about towns and villages.

SEX/AGE Juvenile a little duller than adult, with buff-white (not clean white) wing bars, greyish-black chin, indistinct dusky patch on rear ear-coverts and greyish centre to crown, but appears as adult from first autumn.

VOICE Calls and 'song' resemble those of House Sparrow, but notes a little higher in pitch. Distinctive flight call a hard 'chek' or 'tek'.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (nominate illustrated). Slightly duller and greyer *transcaucasus*, with whiter underparts, occurs in Georgia and



Azerbaijan.

HYBRIDIZATION Very rarely hybridizes with House Sparrow and even more rarely with Spanish Sparrow.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped range, formerly bred Faeroes, N Sweden.) Cultivation with trees and tall hedges, parkland and open woodland. Locally about gardens, and in some regions even about towns and cities, but usually only in absence of House Sparrow.

SUDAN GOLDEN SPARROW *Passer luteus*

Plate page 784

Golden Sparrow

L 13 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Sub-Saharan sparrow, barely reaching extreme south of our region. **Adult male** distinctive, having head, neck and entire underparts canary-yellow, contrasting with chestnut mantle. Generally unmistakable, but beware escaped cagebirds, especially some weavers, which are very yellow below. **Adult female and juvenile** resemble small



female House Sparrows, but are almost unstreaked above and have a faint pale yellow wash to face and breast. Sociable. Forms large roving flocks outside breeding season. Nests in colonies in small trees. Flocks perch in tops of bushes, feeding on ground below.

SEX/AGE Male has bill black in breeding season, horn-coloured at other times. Juvenile resembles adult female, but is whiter, less washed buffy-yellow, below.

VOICE Little recorded. Call a sparrow-like chirp, which becomes more twittering in flight.

STATUS/HABITAT Recorded from Tibesti (N Chad) and extreme NW Mauritania (Nouadhibou area), where presumed to be a local resident. Possibly nomadic throughout sub-Saharan range, making precise status within our region unclear. Prefers semi-arid, dry grassy areas with scattered low trees and scrub, edges of cultivation and oases.

PALE ROCKFINCH *Carpospiza brachydactyla*

Pale Rock Sparrow, Pale Petronia

L 14 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Nondescript bird of open hillsides with scattered scrub in the Middle East. Recalls pale female House Sparrow, but is slightly smaller with unstreaked upperparts, the sandy grey-brown plumage being relieved only by the double buffish-white wing bars, a whitish panel on secondaries, an indistinct whitish supercilium and moustachial stripe, the somewhat paler underparts (including whitish throat) and a darker tail with whitish tips to all but central feathers. Latter are evident when tail viewed from below or when tail spread when alighting, appearing as whitish tail corners. Dull plumage renders it easily overlooked, but luckily song very distinctive. Sociable, forming flocks outside breeding season. Breeds in scattered colonies, nesting in crevices in gullies. Perches freely on bushes and low crags. Feeds on ground. Confusion most likely with poorly seen Rock Sparrow, which also has pale tips to tail feathers, but latter, if seen reasonably well, shows prominent streaking above and below, and is more thickset, with relatively shorter wings, and has a more wedge-shaped bill (culmen is much more rounded on Pale Rockfinch). Female Sinai Rosefinch lacks pale supercilium and white tail corners and is a relatively smaller-headed, stubbier-billed, buffer bird. Chestnut-shouldered Sparrow has plainer head, often a black bill, rufous 'shoulders' (frequently hard to see), more prominent whitish wing bars and no white at tip of tail.

SEX/AGE Juvenile browner above and rather buffer



below, but by first winter is as adult. In fresh plumage pale fringes to tertials may be quite prominent, but these are less obvious in worn birds.

VOICE Calls include a sharp 'twee-ou' and, in flight, a soft purring trill somewhat reminiscent of European Bee-eater. Song, uttered from bush-top or crag, sometimes in flight, is a wheezy trilled 'tzz-tzz-tzz-tzz-tzzeeeeeee', not unlike terminal portion of song of Yellowhammer, having an almost cicada-like quality.

TAXONOMY No longer thought to be closely related to Rock Sparrow *Petronia petronia* (and may possibly be more closely related to the Fringillidae than the Passeridae), so now usually placed in the monotypic genus *Carpospiza*.

STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon but local visitor to arid stony hillsides, with gullies and sparse bushy cover, and upland grassy plains with rocky outcrops. Migrant and winter flocks occur in cultivation and flat stony desert (but winter records for our region are relatively few).

CHESTNUT-SHOULDERED SPARROW *Gymnoris xanthocolis*

Yellow-throated Sparrow, Chestnut-shouldered Petronia

L 13 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Drab, light greyish-brown sparrow-like bird of the Euphrates and Tigris valleys. Relatively long bill and tail (compared with other family members) create a vaguely finch-like impression. Best distinguished by completely unstreaked plumage and prominent whitish wing bars, the upper (median-covert) bar being broader and more conspicuous than the lower; underparts a little paler, and under very good viewing conditions chestnut patch on lesser coverts ('shoulders') may be visible, although often hidden by overlapping breast feathers. Summer males have noticeable black bill and lores and well-marked individuals may show yellow throat spot, most obvious when singing, but spot often lacking or invisible. Easily overlooked owing to generally drab plumage. Sociable tree- and bush-perching bird, freely mixing with other sparrows, including Dead Sea Sparrows (which share same habitat in SE Turkey). Nests in holes in trees and buildings. Greyness of plumage, lack of supercilium



and tail spots and habitat prevent confusion with Pale Rockfinch. Unlikely to be confused with anything else.

SEX/AGE Adult male less dingy grey than female, with deeper chestnut 'shoulders' and more prominent yellow throat spot; male has bill black in breeding season, dull brown at other times (like female). Juvenile duller than adult female and has pinker bill, lacking throat spot completely (but latter usually difficult to see in adults).

VOICE Calls similar to those of House Sparrow, but

Plate page 784

Plate page 784

a little looser. Song a monotonous but melodic repeated chirping, 'chilp-chalp'.

TAXONOMY Not now thought to be closely related to Rock Sparrow *Petronia petronia* and so placed (alongside three Afrotropical relatives) in the genus

Gymnoris.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally not uncommon in Iraq and also a highly localized visitor to SE Turkey. Favours dry *Acacia* woodland, groves of *Eucalyptus* or other trees, thickets and oases in semi-arid country.

ROCK SPARROW *Petronia petronia*

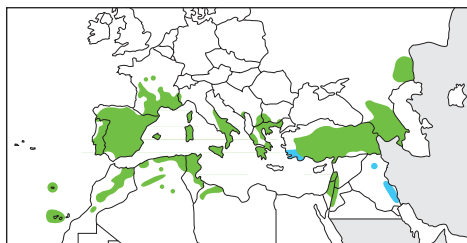
Rock Petronia

L 14 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Streaky sparrow-like bird of hilly country. Rather plumper and shorter-tailed than female House Sparrow, with more prominently streaked upperparts and prominent crown pattern with dark sides and paler centre, highlighted by broad pale supercilium and dark band running back behind eye. The underparts are smudgily streaked brownish across breast and down flanks, but often appear merely dull and pale in the field. At longer ranges, when streaking not evident, the overall appearance is of a fatter, paler and more uniform bird than House Sparrow. The diagnostic white-tipped tail is most obvious in flight, especially when bird alighting with tail partly spread, but note that Pale Rockfinch also shows pale-tipped tail, as does Alpine Accentor (which could be confused given a poor flight view). The small yellow throat spot, like that of Chestnut-shouldered Sparrow, is usually very difficult to see except when male singing. Flight fast and slightly undulating, with shape distinctly thickset; looks large-headed and fairly short-tailed compared with other sparrows. Scuttles among rocks, flying short distances between boulders; very active. Sociable, especially after breeding, when flocks formed; also mixes freely with House Sparrows and other finches in winter. Call distinctive. Nests in holes among boulders, in buildings and even in trees.

SEX/AGE Adults of both sexes show yellow throat spot, but this difficult to see except in singing males. Juvenile lacks yellow spot.

VOICE Most distinctive call is a characteristic wheezy, almost hissing, sibilant, rising then falling 'pee-yip' or



'pee-yuee' (especially notable when emanating from flocks). Other calls include various sparrow-like chirps and chatters, but these are sweeter and more musical than those of House Sparrow. In flight gives a soft nasal 'dlui'. Song a repetition of calls, sometimes given in short pipit-like parachuting song flight.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 6 races (nominate illustrated). N African and Middle Eastern forms are palest and least heavily streaked below.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Germany, Poland.) Open scrubby and rocky hillsides, semi-desert slopes, rocky ravines and gullies in more vegetated country, ruins and, at higher altitudes, orchards and groves; locally found in villages and towns and even about tops of tall buildings in some cities in Asian part of range. Outside breeding season, flocks form to feed in cultivation and stubbles, some descending to low-altitude stony desert and cultivation.

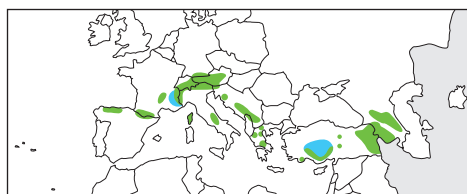
WHITE-WINGED SNOWFINCH *Montifringilla nivalis*

Snowfinch, Eurasian Snowfinch

L 17 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Distinctive small finch-like bird of high mountains of southern Europe and Asia. Shows very extensive areas of white in wing and sides of tail in all plumages, rendering confusion likely only with Snow Bunting, but distributions and habitats do not normally overlap. On ground, combination of grey head, brownish mantle, off-white underparts and black and white wings distinctive. Male Snow Bunting has extensive white on face, stubbier bill and lacks grey head or black chin. Often tame about ski resorts and roadsides. Sociable, feeding among boulders, hopping and scuttling on ground, briefly perching upright on prominent stone, then continuing to feed. Large flocks fly bunched together, the white wing patches twinkling as the birds twist and turn or rise and fall, often high in the air. Nests in holes in crevices and buildings, sometimes using those of mammals such as marmots. A member of the sparrow family: not a true finch.

SEX/AGE Adult male summer has black bill and darker, purer grey head, cleaner black throat and blacker wing markings than adult female; female has yellowish bill with black tip and duller head and



throat patch than summer male, but winter male also has yellowish bill and duller grey head, although throat usually appears blacker (and throat patch sometimes absent in females). Juvenile resembles adult female, but head browner and white in tail buffer when very young; resembles adults after first moult.

VOICE Usual call a penetrating hoarse 'sweek' or 'psheeh', but several other short calls may be uttered, including a purring 'pchrrrr' when alarmed. Song, often given in spectacular circling and parachuting song flight, is a repeated 'seetetcher-seetetcher'.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (nominate and *alpicola* illustrated). Asian *alpicola* is rather

Plate page 784

Plate page 784

paler on head and mantle, has browner crown (uniform with mantle) compared with European nominate race. **STATUS/HABITAT** Common but sometimes rather localized. High mountain country, occurring well above tree-line on rocky high plateaus and craggy

slopes, edges of snowfields and glaciers. Typically found above 2000 m, reaching the highest peaks; descends a little lower in winter, but rarely below tree-line. Often found about roadsides at passes or around ski resorts and mountain huts.

WEAVERS Ploceidae

1 species (introduced)

Large and complex family of gregarious, sparrow-like birds of forest, scrub, grassland, cultivation and reedbeds. Most species are Afrotropical, although there are also several representatives in tropical Asia. Only one species has become established in our region, as a result of accidental introduction, but it is possible that others may do so in the future. Many weavers are imported into Europe as cagebirds and some escape, escaped males often building nests while at large. Often feed on ground, moving freely with sparrow-like hopping gait. Flight rapid but rather whirring. Often form large flocks outside breeding season. Songs generally crude and unmusical.

Sexes differ, at least in summer plumage; adult males of the majority of species have a winter plumage which resembles that of the female. Juveniles typically resemble winter adults. Adult males in winter plumage and adult females/immatures can be difficult or perhaps impossible to identify correctly.

Summer male weavers in brightly coloured (often yellow or orange and black) plumage are unlikely to be confused with other birds, but adult females, winter adult males and immatures often closely resemble adult female/immature sparrows in both structure and appearance.

Weaver identification is often difficult, especially where birds in female-type plumage are involved. In the event of finding an escaped weaver, take full details and consult specialist references.



STREAKED WEAVER *Ploceus manyar*

Plate above

L 15 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Tropical Asian species now established in Nile delta. **Adult male summer** easily identified by combination of clear, golden-yellow crown, blackish face, throat and nape and whitish underparts, latter boldly streaked black across breast and down flanks. **Adult male winter, adult female and juvenile**



are heavily streaked sparrow-like birds, with dark ear-coverts, and with pale yellow supercilium and yellow patch at side of neck almost connected by pale surround to rear ear-coverts and forming distinct yellowish half-collar; often heavily streaked below as well as above. Sociable waterside bird, building clusters of almost globular nests near tips of reeds. Flight fast and direct, low over tops of waterside vegetation.

SEX/AGE Adult male winter is similar to adult female;

Juvenile resembles adult female, but is almost unstreaked below.

VOICE Usual call a loud 'chirt-chirt'. Song a jingling trilled series of phrases ending in a drawn-out wheeze.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common and well-established in Nile delta, and also recorded from El Faiyum; origins of this population unknown, but presumably accidentally introduced. Reedbeds, papyrus beds and adjacent cultivation.

WAXBILLS Estrildidae

5 species (3 introduced, 1 vagrant)

Large tropical family of very small finch-like birds inhabiting forest edges and clearings, scrub, grassland, cultivation and reedbeds. Primarily Afrotropical in origin, but with many tropical Asian and Australasian representatives. A number of species are regularly imported as cagebirds and some frequently escape. With their short, stout, conical bills, estrildids recall tiny finches, but they have shorter, more rounded wings that give rise to a rapidly whirring flight; they recall newly fledged young birds as they speed off low over the vegetation. Often gregarious outside breeding season, flying flocks looking quite cute as these tiny mites sweep along in tight formation. Like the sparrows and weavers, estrildids are not great songsters.

Sexes sometimes similar, sometimes differ. Juveniles rather similar to adults (or adult females where sexes differ).

Waxbills and other estrildids are mostly so small that they are unlikely to be confused with weavers, sparrows or any but the smallest finches.

As with the weavers, identification within the family where potential escapes are involved can be tricky and reference to specialist literature is recommended.

RED-BILLED FIREFINCH *Lagonosticta senegala*

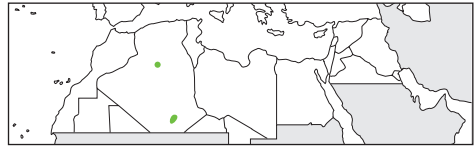
Plate page 785

Senegal Firefinch

L 9 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Tiny ground-loving finch of the extreme south of our region. **Adult male** is deep red overall, including bill, but at close quarters crown centre, nape, mantle and wings appear browner and most of tail blackish; a few tiny white spots on sides of breast and grey culmen may also be visible. **Adult female and juvenile** are dull brownish, paler below, with contrasting red rump and tail base (while adult female also has red bill and lores, and sometimes a red wash on sides of head). Often tame and confiding, mixing freely with other ground-feeding finches about villages. Flight action fast and whirring, as with other waxbills. Outside breeding season, forms small flocks. Nests under eaves of buildings, within wall crevices or in bushes. Range does not overlap with that of Red Avadavat (q.v.), the only species with which it is likely to be confused. See also Common Waxbill.

SEX/AGE Juvenile similar to adult female, but bill and



lores dusky, not red. 1st-year male duller than adult, especially on upperparts.

VOICE Usual call a low 'tweet-tweet'. Song simple, consisting of short twittering phrases.

STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon. In our region known only from the Hoggar of S Algeria, where possibly introduced, and an introduced population at the oasis of El Golea in C Algeria, but widespread just to south of our region right across southern fringes of Sahara. Dry grassland with scattered bushes and trees (often about villages), gardens, oases.

COMMON WAXBILL *Estrilda astrild*

Plate page 785

L 9 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Sociable tiny greyish introduced finch from sub-Saharan Africa now established in Iberian Peninsula and Cape Verde Is. The grey plumage is relieved by bright waxy-red bill and eye-stripe, dull pinkish-red belly patch and blackish ventral

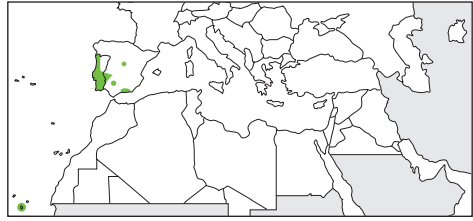
region and tail; juveniles are a little duller, with blackish bill. Flocks feed in dry grassy fields with scrubby bushes, especially near water, flying to perch on bush-tops when disturbed. Generally quite tame, but active and restless. Unlikely to be confused if seen well: is

longer-tailed than Red-billed Firefinch and Red Avadavat and lacks red rump of adult females/juveniles of those species, and is duller and greyer (not buffy) compared with juvenile Red Avadavat; also, range does not overlap with that of Red-billed Firefinch. Several other similar-looking *Estrilda* waxbills may be found as casual escapes from time to time, so reference to specialist literature is essential with any 'out-of-range' waxbill.

SEX/AGE Adult female is duller, lacking pinkish-red belly and rosy flush below, and has greyer ventral region. Juvenile resembles adult female, but bill blackish and eye-stripe duller.

VOICE Flocks keep up a constant reedy twittering.

STATUS/HABITAT Localized introduction, common in some locations. Well established on some of Cape



Verde Is (São Tiago, Brava and Fogo) and in S and C Iberian Peninsula. In our region generally not far from water, inhabiting reedbeds, stands of giant reeds (*Arundo donax*), tamarisks and willows, but also edges of cultivation and dry grassy areas with scrub.

RED AVADAVAT *Amandava amandava*

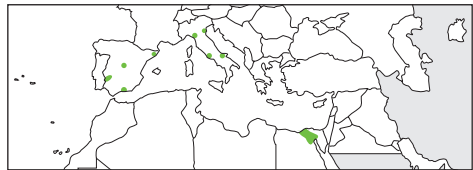
Plate page 785

Avadavat

L 9 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Locally established introduction from tropical Asia in Iberian Peninsula, N Italy and Egypt. Tiny sociable finch-like bird of reedbeds and grassland. **Adult male summer** bright crimson, with blackish ventral region, wings and tail; closer views reveal the body and wings to be flecked with tiny white spots, most obvious on blacker wings and on flanks, and a narrow white fringe to tail. Most likely confusion is with Red-billed Firefinch, but range does not overlap, habitat quite different and latter is longer-tailed, has brown wings, a pale eye-ring and lacks white spots (apart from some tiny spots on breast).

Adult male winter and adult female are considerably duller, being dull brown above and greyish-buff below, washed with yellow on the belly but with obvious bright crimson rump and bright red bill; closer views reveal lines of small white spots across dark wings. Compared with adult female Red-billed Firefinch they are shorter-tailed, lack pale eye-ring and have small white spots on wings (female Red-billed Firefinch has tiny white spots restricted to breast). Red rump easily prevents confusion with Common Waxbill. **Juvenile** still duller, with dull brown rump and dusky bill. Appears browner and buffer and shorter-tailed than Common Waxbill and is nearly always in company of more distinctive adults. Usually in tight small flocks, often seen whirring quickly along over tops of water-



side vegetation, dropping to feed just inside tops of swaying reeds, but also sometimes on ground at base of reeds. Generally quite shy and often seen only in flight, when red rump is eye-catching. Comparatively large round nests usually well hidden in bases of reeds.

SEX/AGE Adult male winter is greyer on head and throat than adult female. Juvenile initially has blackish bill (becoming reddish-brown) and is buff below, less yellowish than adult female, with brown rather than red rump and buff, not white, spots on wings.

VOICE Calls include a series of high-pitched chirps and a short husky squeak. Song a high-pitched continuous twittering.

STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon but highly localized. Now an established introduction in N Egypt (Suez, El Faiyum, Nile delta), Iberian Peninsula and probably N Italy. Reedbeds and papyrus beds, rushes, sedges and adjacent grassland and cultivation.

INDIAN SILVERBILL *Lonchura malabarica*

Plate page 765

White-throated Silverbill

L 10 cm.

IDENTIFICATION South Asian species becoming established in S Israel. Very similar to African Silverbill, but easily distinguished in flight by whitish lower rump and uppertail coverts, contrasting with blackish tail. At close range, lacks fine barring on wings and has wholly whitish throat and chin in comparison with adult African. Behaviour similar. Ranges not known to overlap in our region.

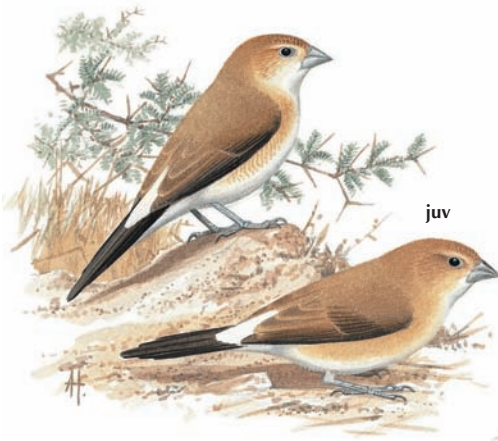
SEX/AGE Juvenile has pale fringes to wing feathers, which are plain in adults; whitish rump slightly obscured by mottling and central tail feathers blunter, less pointed.

VOICE Calls include a weak 'chee-chee-chee' when flushed, a sharper 'zip-zip' and a harsh 'chwit'. Song



a high-pitched short trill.

STATUS/HABITAT Establishing itself in S Israel, between the Dead Sea and head of Gulf of Aqaba. Origin of this population unknown: probably introduced, but could conceivably have colonized naturally from E Arabia. Scrubby grassland and cultivation, palm groves, dry *Acacia* woodland etc.



INDIAN SILVERBILL
(p. 764)



AFRICAN SILVERBILL

AFRICAN SILVERBILL *Lonchura cantans*

Plate above

L 10 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Extreme south of our region, at fringes of Sahara. Very small, dull brown, attenuated finch-like bird with diffusely whiter underparts; the very black undertail coverts, the relatively long, sharply pointed tail and the deep-based steel-grey bill providing the only points of interest. Found in small parties, feeding on ground, flying up to perch on bushtops when disturbed. Lacks whitish rump of otherwise similar Indian Silverbill, and at close range adults show fine barring on wings and brownish chin, both lacking in Indian; ranges not known to overlap in

our region.

SEX/AGE Juvenile lacks fine barring on wings and has blunter tail tip than adult.

VOICE Calls much as in Indian Silverbill (q.v.). Song a high-pitched rising and falling trill.

STATUS/HABITAT Recorded only from extreme S Algeria, where probably either a rare vagrant or an escape. (Occurs just outside our region, in Gebel Elba area of extreme SE Egypt.) In natural range found in scrubby grassland, cultivation, palm groves, dry *Acacia* woodland etc.

VIREOS Vireonidae

3 species (all vagrant)

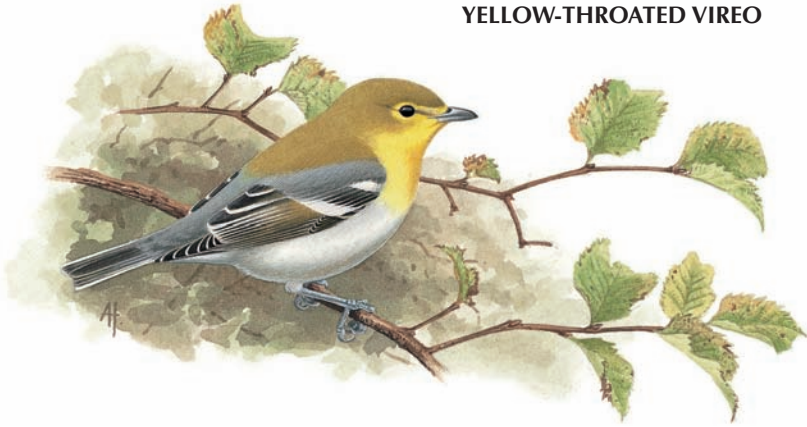
American family of small, warbler-like birds, but with rather short, stout, blunt-tipped bills (with a slight hook at tip, visible only at very close range). Primarily insectivorous (but also fruit-eating), inhabiting forest, woodland and scrub.

Sexes similar (or with only minor differences), and little or no seasonal variation. Juveniles rather similar to adults. In most species, young birds indistinguishable in the field from adults by first autumn.

Vireos differ from both smaller Old World warblers and American wood warblers chiefly in bill shape (see above). Some species (e.g. Yellow-throated) have distinctive combination of obvious wing bars together with obvious eye-ring joined to loreal stripe (producing spectacled appearance) and are less likely to be confused. Vireos without wing bars and with conspicuous pale supercilia rather than eye-rings and

loral stripes (e.g. Red-eyed and Philadelphia) are rather like *Phylloscopus* (or Tennessee Warbler): see individual species accounts.

Separation of the three species recorded from our region is relatively straightforward, but, as additional species may occur in the future, reference to North American field guides is recommended.



YELLOW-THROATED VIREO

YELLOW-THROATED VIREO *Vireo flavifrons*

Plate above

L 13 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. A strikingly beautiful bird with bright yellow eye-ring, lore, throat and breast which contrast with bright white lower underparts. The dark wings and tail, former with conspicuous double white bars, contrast with the bright olive mantle and crown and grey rump. This plumage combination suggests an American wood warbler, but the stout bill and legs indicate a vireo and make the species virtually unmistakable. (Colour pattern is approached by male Pine Warbler *Dendroica pinus*,

which has not yet wandered to our region; Pine Warbler, however, has thin bill, less conspicuous eye-ring, some streaking on breast and an olive-yellow rump.)

VOICE Call a low 'heh-heh-heh'. Song, unlikely to be heard in our region, a slow series of rather slurred notes (often of two syllables), including a descending 'three-eight'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, breeds in broadleaf or mixed forest, especially where more open.



PHILADELPHIA VIREO

PHILADELPHIA VIREO *Vireo philadelphicus*

Plate above

L 12 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Similar to Red-eyed Vireo, but smaller and distinctly yellowish below, especially in autumn when almost entire

underparts are yellowish (whitish only on belly); at most, Red-eyed has yellow wash on flanks and ventral region. Lacks dusky sides to crown of Red-eyed, but

has similarly conspicuous (if rather diffuse) off-white supercilium, highlighted by dark eye-stripe through relatively large eye. Often shows a diffuse whitish crescent below eye. Stout bill and strong dark legs, as well as relatively larger eye, distinguish it from any yellowish Old World warblers such as juvenile Willow or Radde's Warblers (latter is very much a skulking undergrowth species anyway). Strong facial pattern and stout bill prevent confusion with Icterine or Melodious Warblers, but autumn Tennessee Warbler not dissimilar in overall coloration, including contrast between olive-green upperparts and greyish crown and nape, although has much finer bill. (Warbling Vireo, *V. gilvus*, which could occur as a future vagrant to our region, is similar, especially autumn juveniles

which are distinctly yellowish below, but Warbling has whitish throat and breast centre at least, lacks dark eye-stripe, and has crown and mantle uniform, not contrasting.)

SEX/AGE Worn-plumaged birds have whitish underparts, but there is always some yellow on breast and flanks. Fresh autumn birds wholly yellow below, brightest on throat and undertail coverts; cannot be safely aged in autumn.

VOICE Migrants are generally silent. Song, unlikely to be heard in our region, recalls Red-eyed Vireo but is a slower, higher and thinner.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, breeds in broadleaf forest, thickets and parkland.

RED-EYED VIREO *Vireo olivaceus*

Plate page 794

L 14 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Resembles a bulky greenish-coloured warbler with pale underparts and a distinctive head pattern. Has a rather prominent whitish supercilium and distinctly grey crown; the supercilium is highlighted by both a dark eye-stripe below and a dusky lateral crown-stripe above. Despite its name, the red iris is difficult to see in the field, and in any case young birds in autumn have dull brown iris. The dull olive upperparts are unmarked, and the off-white underparts may be washed with yellow on flanks and ventral region. Compared with warblers, this is a bulky, relatively short-tailed bird with relatively large eye and distinctly stout legs and bill (latter slightly hooked). An arboreal bird of the canopy, where it is very active although rather heavy in its

movements, maintaining a horizontal posture. Unlikely to be confused, except perhaps with Philadelphia Vireo (q.v.).

SEX/AGE Adult has ruby-red iris; juvenile/1st-winter has dull brown iris. In fresh plumage in autumn, 1st-winter and some adults have distinct pale yellow wash on flanks and ventral region.

VOICE Most likely call to be heard is a nasal, querulous 'tshay' or 'chway', although migrants usually silent. Song, unlikely to be heard in our region, a husky, rambling warble of short, clear notes, often ending abruptly: 'teeduee tueedee tuee teeudeeu ...'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, breeds in broadleaf and mixed forest, parks and large gardens.

FINCHES Fringillidae

31 species (2 vagrant)

Finches are small or fairly small (rarely medium-sized) seed-eating birds with short, heavy, often conical bills and often (in males) brightly coloured plumage. Have rather compact build, with fairly plump body, prominent, rounded head and (in most) rather short, strong legs. Often feed on ground, moving freely with hopping gait. Flight swift and undulating. Most are found in woodland or scrub, but some species occur among cultivation or in steppe, moorland, tundra and even rocky desert terrain. Most species sociable outside breeding period, often gathering in large flocks. Ease of feeding, bright plumage and attractive songs have made some finches popular as cagebirds, especially in the past.

Sexes usually differ markedly, but in many species little or no seasonal variation. Juveniles typically resemble adult females, but some are quite distinct. Immatures are mostly indistinguishable in the field from adults by first autumn.

Because of their rather sparrow-like shape, including short, heavy, often conical bill, finches are most often confused with sparrows and buntings. Compared with buntings, finches are shorter-tailed (sometimes markedly so, making them look much more compact), most lack the white on outer tail feathers so characteristic of most buntings, and lack distinctive bunting facial patterning (including pale eye-ring, pale submoustachial stripe and dark malar stripe). Many finches have prominent wing bars, a feature lacking in buntings. Some of the more chunky, duller-coloured finches are quite akin to female/immature House or Spanish Sparrows (or Rock Sparrow or other members of the family Passeridae) in general shape and appearance, but differ in plumage detail.

Identification within the family often straightforward and, apart from the clues given by overall coloration, there are no particular field features on which to concentrate. A few small groups (e.g. redpolls, crossbills, female/immature rosefinches) pose serious identification problems: see individual species accounts.

COMMON CHAFFINCH *Fringilla coelebs*

Plate page 786

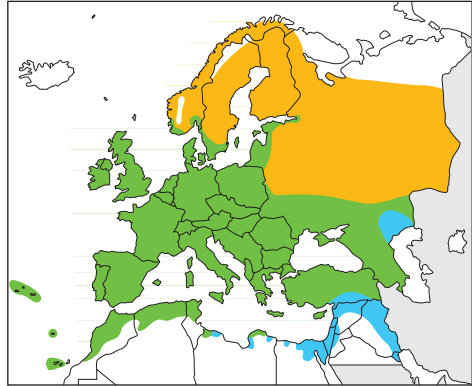
Chaffinch

L 14.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION The most common and widespread finch of our region. The conspicuous white 'shoulder patch', whitish greater-covert bar and white outer tail feathers are distinctive in all plumages. **Adult male** of European and Asian forms show a characteristic combination of pinkish underparts, greyish crown, brown mantle and greenish rump. Males of N African and Atlantic Islands forms are very different (see Geographical Variation). **Female and juvenile male** are dull greyish-brown, rather paler below, but retain the prominent wing and tail patterns and greenish rump of the adult male, although white 'shoulder patch' less extensive. Unlikely to be confused with other species, but see Blue Chaffinch and Brambling. Spends much time feeding on ground. Flight undulating, and white wing markings and outer tail feathers conspicuous. Readily mixes with other finches and sparrows in winter, forming large flocks; flocks are often sexually segregated.

SEX/AGE Winter males in fresh plumage in autumn appear duller owing to brownish feather fringes, but become brighter towards spring through abrasion. Juvenile resembles adult female but is still drabber, with duller and less extensive greenish rump. Juvenile males have buffish, less yellowish-tinged underparts and more reddish-brown mantle in comparison with females. After first autumn moult, 1st-year plumage closely resembles that of respective adults and ageing very difficult (although some 1st-year males retain brownish bands on nape well into spring).

VOICE Usual call a sharp 'pink-pink'; also gives an enquiring 'hweet', a thin 'see' of alarm and a low 'choop choop', the latter being the typical flight note. Song a characteristic, short, vigorous, almost rattling series of notes on a descending scale and ending in a flourish, 'chip-chip-chip-chip-chett-chett-chett-chett-diddid-diddidoo', with many variations. Sometimes adds a Great Spotted Woodpecker-like 'kik' at the end.



GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION In European and Asian forms variation rather slight, but males of N African and Atlantic Islands races very different. 17 races (*gengleri*, *spodiogenys* and *canariensis* illustrated). N African races, *africana* and *spodiogenys*, have the head grey and mantle green, lacking chestnut above, and the underparts are very pale. Canary Is races *ombriosa* and *canariensis* are bluish above, again lacking chestnut mantle, and rather washed-out below; *palmae* is similar, but also lacks the greenish rump of the other two. Madeiran race *maderensis* and Azores race *moreletti* resemble N African races, but have sides of head pinkish, not grey.

STATUS/HABITAT Very common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Iceland, Faeroes.) Breeds in many forms of woodland, both broadleaved and coniferous; also in parks, orchards, large gardens, tall hedgerows and copses. Outside breeding season, commonly also found in open farmland.

BLUE CHAFFINCH *Fringilla teydea*

Plate page 786

Canary Islands Chaffinch, Teydean Finch, Teydefinch

L 16 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A rather remarkable chaffinch restricted to two of the Canary Is. **Adult male** is overall slaty-blue, rather paler below with whitish belly and throat, and inconspicuous wing bars. **Female and juvenile male** are duller and browner, with greenish tinge, especially on mantle. Likely to be confused only with local race, *canariensis*, of somewhat smaller Common Chaffinch. Males, however, easily told by lack of contrast in plumage, lack of obvious white 'shoulders' and greater-covert bar (Blue merely has two inconspicuous pale bluish-grey wing bars on median and greater coverts) and virtual absence of white in outer tail; the latter features also very helpful when separating females. Additionally, Blue is found at higher altitudes than Common, with little overlap. Usually very tame and travels to drink at streams, which is perhaps the easiest place to find them. Forms small flocks outside breeding season, occasionally mixing with Common Chaffinches.

SEX/AGE See Identification. Juvenile resembles adult female, with 1st-year males remaining duller, less blue, in comparison with adult male well into second



calendar year.

VOICE Usual call a loud double chirp ('p-lup p-lip'), quite different from that of Common Chaffinch; also gives a thin 'see' of alarm. Song resembles that of Common Chaffinch, consisting of a trill followed by a terminal flourish, but trill rather drier and terminal flourish, which typically rises and falls, often repeated (only occasionally so in Common).

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Rather slight. 2 races (both illustrated). Nominate occurs on Tenerife, *polatzeki* on Gran Canaria. Males of latter are duller, more olive-grey, with whiter wing bars and more pronounced black band above base of bill.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. Montane pine forest and tall scrub high on Tenerife and Gran Canaria in Canary Is.

BRAMBLING *Fringilla montifringilla*

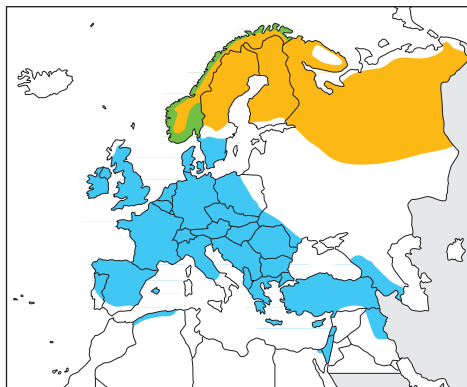
Plate page 786

L 14 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Similar to Common Chaffinch in size and structure. In all plumages, distinguished from Common Chaffinch by gleaming white belly, especially noticeable when mixed flock perched in trees, contrasting with rusty or orangey breast and 'shoulder patch' (and, in some plumages, rusty wing bar). In flight, shows characteristic clean white rump and has all-dark tail, which is more deeply cleft than in Common Chaffinch. Male in late spring and summer very distinctive, with black head and mantle and orange breast and 'shoulders', but in fresh plumage (autumn/winter) black mantle and head coloration is obscured by greyish and brownish feather fringes. Sociable, often forming mixed flocks with Common Chaffinches and other seed-eaters outside breeding season. Flight a little more strongly undulating than that of Common Chaffinch. White rump best seen on birds rising from ground, but can be difficult to pick out.

SEX/AGE Female resembles winter male, but is duller, with rustier (less orange) 'shoulder patch', greyer head (without blackish mottling) and slightly paler breast; bill dull horn at base, darker towards tip (mostly yellow-orange in adult/1st-winter male, with small, distinct, dark tip). Juvenile resembles adult/1st-winter female, but belly and rump less pure white; becomes very much as respective adult after first autumn moult.

VOICE Usual calls include a harsh, nasal 'tsweek' or 'wayeek' and a 'chuk-chuk' given in flight that is harder, more nasal and lower than similar call of Common Chaffinch (and often accompanied by 'tsweek' call). Alarm call a hard, penetrating 'slitt'. Song consists



mainly of a monotonous, wheezing, European Greenfinch-like, 'zweeeur', rather harsh and penetrating (almost saw-like), interspersed with a few weak notes; variations also include a rattling trill.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Iceland, Faeroes, Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania.) Breeds in mixed forests, birch woods, edges or open parts of coniferous forests and riverside willow scrub. Outside breeding season, resorts to fields, hedgerows and woodland (particularly beech).

RED-FRONTED SERIN *Serinus pusillus*

Plate page 789

Fire-fronted Serin

L 12 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A distinctive, diminutive, dark little finch of the mountains of Asia Minor and the Caucasus. Unlikely to be confused. **Adult** has front half of body blackish, extending into streaks down flanks and rump, with a blaze of fiery red on the forehead. **Juvenile** is very different but almost equally distinctive, with blackish being replaced by warm tawny-brown on head, throat and breast, and no red patch on forehead. Might possibly be confused with local race *brevirostris* of Twite, which has blackish breast sides, but young Red-fronted Serin is more heavily streaked with blackish both above and below, the warm tawny-brown on head and breast is quite clearly demarcated, the pale wing bars are tinged cinnamon and both the pale panel on the closed wing formed by the primary edges and the edges of the tail feathers are yellow-green instead of white. Sociable, twittering flocks feeding on weedy ground on mountain slopes and in adjoining conifers, seemingly constantly on the move.

SEX/AGE Adult female has less red on forehead than male and blackness of plumage is duller. Both sexes have narrow pale fringes to black feathering in fresh plumage in autumn. Juvenile distinctive (see Identification) and also has pale chestnut rather than pale



orange or greenish-yellow wing bars; gradually acquires adult plumage during latter half of first winter, but some retain tawny-brown on head and show little red into first summer. Often retain pale chestnut-tipped juvenile outer greater coverts.

VOICE Soft tinkling trills ('firrrrrrrr') are constantly uttered as birds move about hillsides. Also gives a soft 'dueet'. Song is a subdued, rather squeaky, bubbling twitter interspersed with sustained rippling trills and hoarse 'kveeh' notes, usually delivered from elevated perch.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. Breeds on scrubby, grassy and rocky mountain slopes with scattered junipers, stands of conifers or low rhododendrons in alpine zone, descending lower in winter (sometimes reaching foothills or extending out onto high plains).

EUROPEAN SERIN *Serinus serinus*

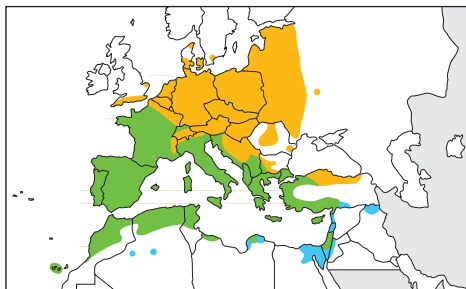
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Serin

L 11.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Smallest finch of our region. In most of its range, tiny size, small, squat bill and contrasting yellow rump (except in juvenile), combined with a lack of conspicuous yellow in wings and tail base, are good clues to its identity. **Adult male** has bright greenish-yellow face and breast, contrasting with whitish belly and streaked flanks. **Adult female** is duller on face and breast and streakier overall, especially on breast. **Juvenile** is a very drab, streaky little finch, even lacking the yellow rump. Confusion possible with other small greenish-yellow finches of the genus *Serinus*, but European Serin is much more heavily streaked, with brightest rump (however, see Atlantic Canary). Juvenile and female Eurasian Siskin are equally well streaked, but have yellow bases to outer tail feathers, prominent yellow wing bars with blackish borders, longer bill and very different calls. European Serin could also be confused with certain escaped *Serinus* species that are commonly kept as cagebirds, but none of latter has the full combination of double pale wing bars, deeply cleft tail, squat bill, streaked flanks and whitish belly, or the distinctive calls and song of European Serin. Often unobtrusive, pairs or small groups frequently perching in cover. Very much a bird of cultivated areas, gardens and villages, readily mixing in with other species, especially European Goldfinches, outside breeding season. Flight very strongly undulating.

SEX/AGE See Identification. Winter adults a little duller than spring birds as feathers tipped greyish in



fresh plumage, wearing to expose brighter yellow as winter progresses. 1st-years resemble adults.

VOICE Usual call a hard, trilled twitter, 'trirrlilit', mostly given in flight; other calls include a 'tsooooet' of alarm. Song a prolonged, wheezy, jingling chirping reminiscent of mixture of songs of Corn Bunting (in delivery) and Goldcrest (in pitch), and suggestive of glass splinters being ground together; often delivered in slow, circling, European Greenfinch-like song flight.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (Breeding in Britain and Denmark is only sporadic. In addition to mapped range, has bred Finland. Range is spreading slowly northwestwards.) Usual haunts are woodland edges, clearings, copses, large gardens, parks, orchards and cultivation with trees and shrubs; rarely found far from cultivated areas.

SYRIAN SERIN *Serinus syriacus*

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Tristram's Serin

L 12.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Restricted-range species of Middle East. Relatively longer-tailed than European Serin and overall duller, less streaked, with less obviously contrasting yellow rump. **Adult male** is yellowish overall, with pronounced greyish wash over upperparts, head and breast, the brightest features being the golden-yellow forehead, throat, lore and eye-ring, the yellowish edges to the flight and tail feathers and the yellowish rump (the latter rather weakly defined); at close range, the mantle and rear flanks appear weakly streaked. **Adult female** is similar, but still duller, lacking the bright golden-yellow throat, lore and eye-ring of the male and having a duller yellow forehead and more streaking on the flanks. **Juvenile** is duller and decidedly greyish; young birds lacking yellow rump until after first autumn moult; distinguished from European Serin by range (although some overlap in winter) and overall paler appearance, with longer tail. Most likely to be confused with Citril Finch, but ranges do not overlap and Citril has relatively longer bill and more prominent wing markings. Sociable little finch,



spending much time feeding on ground on bushy slopes. Flight strongly undulating.

SEX/AGE See Identification. 1st-years resemble adults.

VOICE Usual call a low, husky twittering 'ter-let' (not so hard and ringing as call of European Serin). Song is twittering and rather Common Linnet-like, but faster and briefer.

STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon, but localized. Breeds on rocky mountain slopes with broadleaf bushes, junipers or relict cedars; sometimes in orchards. Descends lower in winter, when usually found about cultivation, or in well-vegetated wadis, extending into desert mountain regions as well as less arid habitats.

ATLANTIC CANARY *Serinus canaria*

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Canary, Island Canary

L 13 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Small finch of the Atlantic Islands. Rather larger and relatively longer-tailed than European Serin, with larger, less squat-looking bill. In

overall plumage adults and 1st-years are rather similar to European Serin, but rump duller and more olive (less yellow), upperparts greyer and underparts duller

yellow, this colour extending further onto belly. Domesticated varieties are many and varied, and frequently escape: most should give no problem, but birds with plumage resembling the 'wild type' could easily be mistaken for European Serin; the songs and calls, particularly the former, are, however, quite diagnostic. Sociable and familiar finch about groves of trees on many of the Atlantic islands, where it is the only greenish-yellow finch.

SEX/AGE Males are considerably yellower than females, especially on face and breast. Juvenile is even drabber than adult female, with plumage overall grey-brown above, lacking yellowish or greenish tones, creamy-white or faintly yellowish below with somewhat more extensive dark streaking (extending from sides of breast to flanks). 1st-years resemble adults.



VOICE Usual call a 'tsooeeet'. Song (familiar to those who know the cagebird), a beautiful and powerful series of warbling trills and fluty rolls, quite unlike song of European Serin; often given in display flight.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. Frequents orchards, groves, woodland edges and almost anywhere with trees and bushes.

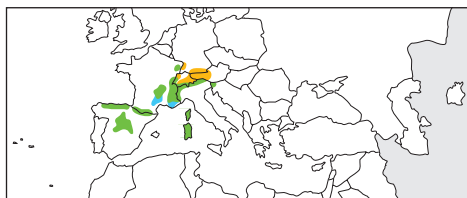
CITRIL FINCH *Serinus citrinella*

Corsican Finch (*S. c. corsicana*)

L 12 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Small, greenish-yellow, primarily alpine finch of SW and south-central Europe. A little larger than European Serin, with relatively longer tail and bill and generally unstreaked appearance. For details of the distinctive race *corsicana*, see Geographical Variation. **Adult** male is deep yellow below, yellowish-green above, with blackish wings and prominent yellow wing bars; the rump is yellowish, but perhaps the most distinguishing features are the bluish-grey head and breast sides, with contrasting yellowish chin, forehead and eye surrounds. Abrasion causes mantle to appear more streaked by the end of winter, this feature being most prominent on late spring/summer birds. **Adult** female considerably duller overall, with more streaked mantle. The completely yellowish underparts and lack of streaking (in males) distinguish this species from European Serin, and different range prevents confusion with rather more similar Syrian Serin (q.v.). Might be confused with Eurasian Siskin or even European Greenfinch in flight, but lacks conspicuous yellow patches in tail base and on wings. Beware confusion with escaped cagebirds, especially Cape Canary *S. canicollis*, which has more streaked upperparts, yellower crown, less grey on breast sides and less prominent wing bars. **Juvenile** very drab grey-brown overall, paler below, streaked dark brown, with double buff wing bars; rather similar to several other juvenile small finches, but young Citril lacks any yellowish or greenish tones in plumage (even in wings and tail) unlike all other juvenile *Serinus* of our region apart from Atlantic Canary. Citril Finches are sociable, behaving much as European Goldfinches, with bounding flight and twittering calls.

SEX/AGE See Identification. After post-juvenile autumn moult, 1st-years resemble respective adults, but are rather more streaked above and a little browner on mantle, not attaining full adult plumage until second autumn. 1st-year females are especially drab, having little or no yellow on face and breast.



VOICE Usual call a Eurasian Siskin-like clear, plaintive 'tsi-ew', but also gives a nasal, metallic 'chiht' in flight, often repeated to form a short twitter ('di-di-di-di-di') and sometimes mixed with ascending 'hui' notes. Song is varied and sweetly musical, recalling both Eurasian Siskin and European Goldfinch, being short phrases interspersed with call notes, quite different from that of European Serin; often given in brief circling song flight. Race *corsicana* may lack 'hui' notes in flight twitter and has a slow, steady, beautiful 'chanting' alternative song-type (with purring, fluting and trumpeting notes) that appears absent from repertoire of nominate race; main, twittering and tinkling song-type more similar to that of nominate race but can be differentiated by its clearly segmented (rather Winter Wren-like) structure.

TAXONOMY The distinctive form *corsicana* of Corsica and Sardinia is sometimes treated as a full species under the name **Corsican Finch**.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 2 races (both illustrated). Race *corsicana* of Corsica and Sardinia is paler yellow below than nominate race and male has warm brown, streaked mantle; female paler than in nominate race, with light streaking along flanks.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. Edges of montane coniferous forests, rocky slopes with scattered conifers and scrubby grassy slopes above tree-line. Descends lower in winter. Race *corsicana* occurs in maquis down to sea level all year, as well as high in mountains.

EUROPEAN GREENFINCH *Carduelis chloris*

Greenfinch

L 15 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Rather large, stocky, greenish finch, with plump body, relatively short, cleft tail and large,

powerful pale bill. **Adult male** olive-green, washed yellow, becoming very yellow on underparts and

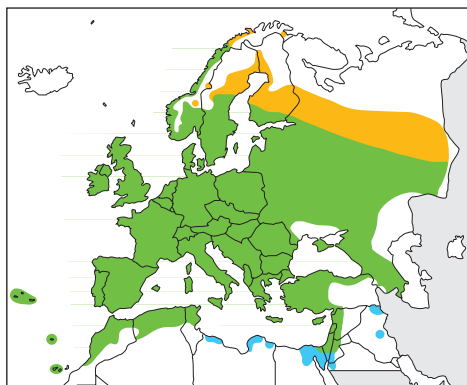
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rump; clear bright yellow fringes to primaries form noticeable patch at rest, and has similar patch at base of outer tail feathers. **Adult female** duller and browner overall, less yellowy green, with less yellow in wings and tail. **Juvenile** still duller and browner, weakly streaked darker above and below, with only weak yellow fringes to primaries and tail feathers. Unlikely to be confused with other species, although juveniles perhaps confusable with juvenile Common Rosefinch; latter, however, is slimmer-bodied and a little longer-tailed, with no hint of yellow in wings or tail, and more uniformly streaked on head. In flight, adult males show conspicuous yellow wing and tail flashes, although these are less obvious in females and juvenile males. Readily forms mixed flocks with other finches outside breeding season and visits birdtables in gardens.

SEX/AGE See Identification. Adult males becoming brighter yellowish-green through wear by spring/summer. 1st-years resemble respective adults after first autumn moult, but males not fully as adult until autumn of second calendar year. A certain amount of variation makes ageing and sexing of some birds difficult.

VOICE In flight, utters a rapid twittering 'djururur', softer and drier than flight twitter of Common Linnet; other calls include a soft, Atlantic Canary-like 'tsooet' and a short 'chup'. Song, often delivered in short,



circular song flight (with slow, almost rowing wing-beats), is a series of twittering phrases, ending in a nasal, harsh, extended 'dzweeeee' (or sometimes a more Brambling-like 'dzweeeesh').

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Rather slight. 4 races (nominate illustrated). Becomes brighter in the south, and paler and greyer in east of range.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. Woodland edges, scrub, farmland copses, tall hedgerows, gardens, parks etc.

EUROPEAN GOLDFINCH *Carduelis carduelis*

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Goldfinch

L 12.5 cm.

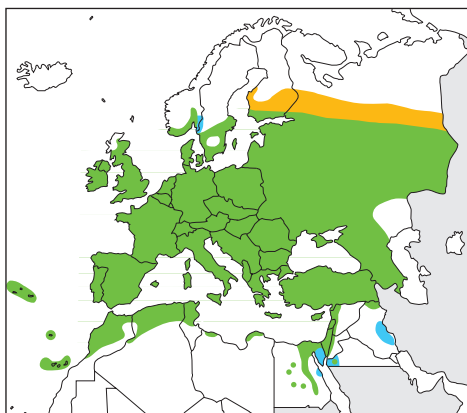
IDENTIFICATION Easily distinguished in all plumages by black wings with conspicuous bright yellow band along full length, a combination not shown by any other finch of our region. **Adult** shows characteristic red face and strong black and white head pattern, the sexes being very similar. **Juvenile** lacks distinctive head pattern, being uniform grey-brown on head and body. Sociable, distinctive little finch, with particular fondness for waste ground with thistles and teasels, probing for seeds with its long, sharply pointed bill. Often first noticed because of their beautiful liquid calls. Flight very deeply undulating, showing to advantage white rump and mostly black tail as well as striking wing pattern.

SEX/AGE See Identification. 1st-years resemble adults after first autumn moult.

VOICE Usual call is an attractive, liquid, twittering 'tickleIT', very tinkling and delicate, and quite distinctive when known. Song is combination of twittering phrases, mixed with sweeter call-like elements.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight in our region, local populations varying in intensity of tawny or grey in brown of body plumage. 9 races (*britannica* illustrated).

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped



range, has bred Cape Verde Is during failed introduction attempt.) Farmland with trees and hedgerows, orchards, parks, large gardens, waste ground and woodland edges or clearings.

EURASIAN SISKIN *Carduelis spinus*

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Siskin

L 12 cm.

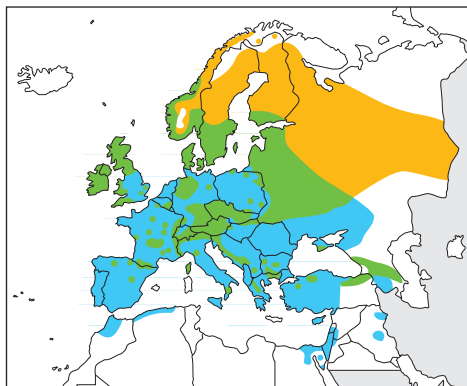
IDENTIFICATION At all ages, may be distinguished from finches of genus *Serinus* by yellow bases to outer tail feathers and relatively longer bill, as well as by often rather tit-like feeding habits. **Adult male** is distinctive with yellowish-green overall appearance, blackish crown and chin, yellowish rump and prominent yellow wing bars, latter highlighted by blackish

surrounds. **Adult female** is duller, lacks black on crown and has underparts more streaked, but retains rather prominent wing and tail markings of male. **Juvenile** is still duller, more greyish-brown, heavily streaked above and below, with yellowish flashes at base of outer tail and prominent pale wing bars. Feeds mainly on spruce or pine seeds during breeding

period. Outside breeding season, forms mixed flocks with Common Redpolls, feeding in tit-like fashion, often hanging upside down in outermost branches, on seeds of birches and alders; in dull light, when colours not easily discernible, Eurasian Siskins may be distinguished from redpolls by their longer bill and relatively shorter tail; when seen well their yellow tail flashes and yellow tones in the wings make separation easy. Females and juveniles possibly confusable with European Serin (q.v.). In some areas comes into gardens outside breeding season, feeding on peanuts. Sociable, flock members exhibiting very bounding flight and giving distinctive calls.

SEX/AGE See Identification. 1st-years resemble respective adults, but often retain all or some juvenile greater coverts which have only narrow whitish tips (very broad and yellow in adult male, broad and yellowish-white in adult female).

VOICE Usual call a characteristic, clear, thin, plaintive 'DLU-ee', or alternatively 'DLEE-u', often given in flight; a low, dry twittering 'tetetet' also heard from feeding flocks. Song a sweet, rapid, undulating series of twittering phrases, ending in a rasping 'kreee'; delivered from the top of a spruce or other tree, or in circling, butterfly-like display flight.



STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Faeroes, Sardinia, Sicily.) Breeds in coniferous and mixed woods, with a liking for spruce. Outside breeding season, resorts to birches and alders along streams, and locally (but increasingly) visits gardens.

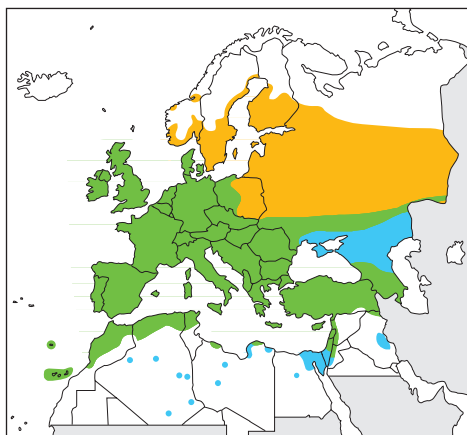
COMMON LINNET *Carduelis cannabina* Linnet, European Linnet, Eurasian Linnet

L 13 cm.

IDENTIFICATION In all plumages, this small brownish finch shows whitish edges to outer tail and primary feathers and relatively unstreaked greyish head that offers some contrast with brown mantle. Whitish wing flash is surprisingly obvious in flight. **Adult male** unstreaked, with chestnut-brown mantle, greyish head and rose-red forecrown and breast, being brightest in spring (when unlikely to be confused) and drabdest in autumn/winter, when plumage obscured by brownish feather tipping, often giving only an indication of male pattern; there is a certain amount of individual variation in amount of red on breast, being most extensive in older birds. **Adult female and juvenile** have streaking on underparts, and less obviously above, with a rather contrasting greyish head, but lack the rose-red of male. Generally encountered either in pairs or in flocks, feeding in open country and forming mixed flocks with other finches outside breeding season. Flocks fly in tight groups, dancing over fields before descending to ground to feed on weed seeds, twittering noisily. See Twite and Common Redpoll, the most likely confusion species.

SEX/AGE See Identification. Autumn/winter males can be very close to females, with only a pinkish tinge to breast and marginally brighter upperparts. Juvenile is warmer brown than adult female, with head less greyish and more defined streaking below. 1st-years resemble respective adults after first autumn moult, but male in first spring/summer usually shows less bright rose-red on breast and forecrown.

VOICE Usual call a soft twittering 'tett-tett-terrett', less hard than twitter call of Common Redpoll and higher in pitch than that of European Greenfinch; also gives a short 'tett' in flight and a sweet 'tsooet' when perched. Juveniles have a harder twittering contact call, which could be confused with twitter of Common Redpoll. Song a series of twittering phrases



interspersed with fluty notes, whirring trills and 'tsooet' calls.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Rather slight. 6 races (nominate and *bella* illustrated). Most markedly different race is *bella* of E Turkey, Caucasus and Middle East, in which males are paler and brighter than nominate race, with more extensive red on breast and white in wing and on uppertail coverts. Small, dark races occur on Madeira (*nana*) and W Canary Is (*meadowaldoi*).

STATUS/HABITAT Common. Farmland with hedgerows, heaths, open woodland, parks, scrubby thickets and open country with scrub (up to the alpine zone in mountain areas) are favoured breeding habitats. Outside breeding season, also frequents open farmland, beaches and saltmarshes.

Plate page 788

TWITE *Carduelis flavirostris*

Plate page 788

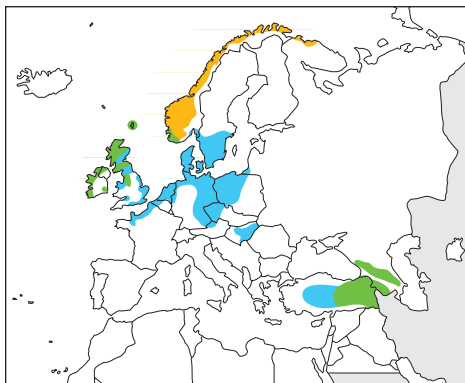
L 13.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Similar to female Common Linnet in most respects, but a little longer-tailed, and distinguished by warm buff throat and face, generally darker and more streaked appearance and presence of an obvious pale wing bar on greater coverts (in addition to whitish-edged primaries). In fact, many plumage features (and also yellowish bill of winter adults) tend to suggest Common Redpoll rather than Common Linnet, but Twite is very much a bird of rather wild, open country (not woodland like Common Redpoll) and lacks black chin or any hint of red on crown or breast. Flight features and behaviour resemble those of Common Linnet, but Twite has rather longer tail and some distinctive call notes (see Voice). Adult/1st-winter males have a rosy-pink rump, often visible on take-off, but this is harder to see in fresh plumage in autumn/winter when partly obscured by brownish feather tips. Asian races markedly different, differing from local form of Common Linnet (*bella*) in having extensive white wing flashes, seemingly forming band along most of length of wing in flight (see Geographical Variation). Twites feed on ground, creeping about in rodent-like fashion. Often rather wary, flocks flying some distance when disturbed.

SEX/AGE Male in breeding season has brighter pink rump than in winter (female lacks pinkish rump). Bill of adults greyish in breeding season, yellowish in winter. Juvenile resembles adult female, but buff of throat less intense, with some streaking. 1st-years resemble respective adults after first autumn moult.

VOICE Has Common Linnet-like twittering call ('jek-jek-jek'), although notes are a little harder, interspersed with characteristic rather harsh 'tweet' or 'chwaik' calls (especially in flight), latter sound, after which the bird is named, being much harsher and more nasal than Common Linnet's 'tsooeet'. Song rather Common Linnet-like, interspersed with call notes, but twittering chatter is harder.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Two groups of subspe-



cies, one confined to N Europe (nominate race of Scandinavia, and *pipilans*, a slightly paler race of the British Is), the other a mainly C Asian group. 4 races in our region (*pipilans* and *brevirostris* illustrated). Race *brevirostris* of E Turkey and the Caucasus is distinctly different from N European races, having a greater amount of white visible in the wing in flight and blackish patches on the sides of the breast. Race *kirghizorum* (wintering in Ural River region) is similar to *brevirostris*.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Faeroes, Sweden, Finland.) Rocky and grassy mountain slopes, moorland and rough grassland in upland districts in breeding season, locally also on rocky ground by coast in NW Europe. Outside breeding season, N European populations usually winter in lowland pastures and cultivation or on waste ground, especially by coasts (where salt-marshes also frequented).

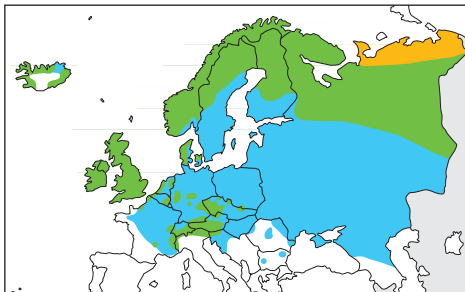
COMMON REDPOLL *Carduelis flammea*

Plate page 789

Redpoll; Mealy Redpoll (*C. f. flammea*); **Lesser Redpoll** (*C. f. cabaret*)

L 12–13.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A small, streaky, grey-brown finch with rather soft expression. Plumper than Common Linnet or Twite, but most races smaller. Unlike these species, habitually feeds among trees, often forming mixed parties with Eurasian Siskins in winter. The combination of generally brownish and heavily streaked plumage, red forehead, black chin, pale wing bars and short, sharp, yellowish bill distinguish Common Redpolls from other small birds (although juveniles lack the red forehead). **Adult male** shows variable amount of rose-pink on throat, breast and rump (in some pink extends from lower face to flanks), but always brighter in spring when pale feather tips have worn off. **Adult female** normally lacks pink on breast and rump etc, but some show faint pink tinge on breast in spring. This species is racially variable in size and overall coloration (see Geographical Variation), and some individuals of pale, greyish N European nominate race (known as 'Mealy Redpoll') may be very difficult to separate from Arctic Redpoll (q.v.). Otherwise likely to be confused only with Twite and female Common Linnet, but both these species show some whitish in primaries and tail, are larger than most races of Common Redpoll, lack black chin and do not feed tit-like in trees. The twitter call of the Common Redpoll is also quite dis-



tinctive. See also Eurasian Siskin.

SEX/AGE See Identification. Juvenile is very dull overall, being more streaked below than adults and lacks any red on forehead or pink in plumage, and indeed even the black chin is less extensive. After first autumn moult, 1st-years resemble respective adults, although males in first winter tend to lack pink on breast, though there is normally some pink on rump.

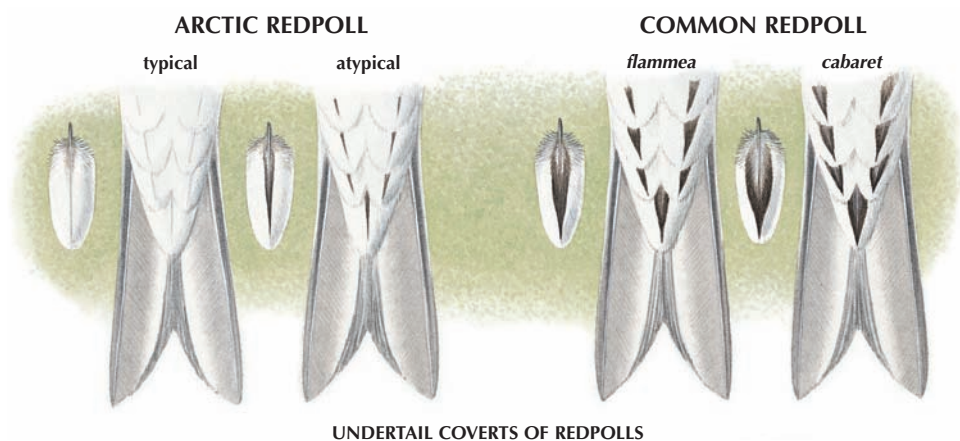
VOICE Usual twitter call ('chut-chut-chut' or 'djek-djek-djek') considerably harder and more metallic than twitter of other cardueline finches, quite distinc-

tive when known and approached only by twitter of juvenile Common Linnet, which can be surprisingly similar. Other calls include a ringing 'tsooeet' or 'djueee', rising at end and normally accompanied by twittering. Song a high-pitched trilling, interspersed with rolling sweeter notes and call notes, often given in short circular song flight.

TAXONOMY/GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Rather marked. 3 races (nominate and *cabaret* illustrated). Smallest and brownest populations, *cabaret*, often termed 'Lesser Redpoll', occur from British Is to C Europe and may merit specific status; these have quite strong buff-brown tones to mantle and sides of breast, the latter often contrasting with white breast centre. Nominate race of Scandinavia and N Russia, often termed 'Mealy Redpoll', is greyest and palest, approaching Arctic Redpoll. Largest birds are the very dark (brownish) and heavily streaked, large-billed popula-

tions from S Greenland/Baffin Is, *rostrata*, which occasionally winter in Iceland and British Is. The Icelandic population (sometimes treated as a full race, *islandica*) is mostly close to *rostrata*, but a minority of individuals are distinctly pale and may stem from an original colonization by either *C. f. flammea* or possibly Arctic Redpoll *C. hornemanni*. Nominate race includes a minority of individuals of the form '*holboellii*' (sometimes treated as a full race in the past) which is longer-billed and averages slightly larger, but which is otherwise very close to typical *flammea*.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Latvia.) Birch and alder woodland, plantations, scrub woodland, also coniferous forest and, in far north, dwarf birch and willow scrub in tundra. Outside breeding season, in variety of scrubby wooded habitats, with preference for birches and alders by streams.



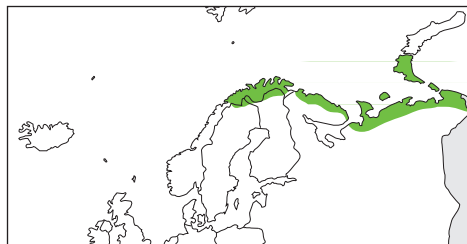
ARCTIC REDPOLL *Carduelis hornemanni*

Hoary Redpoll (N America)

L 13–14 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Arctic representative of Common Redpoll, which it closely resembles. Generally much whiter overall than dark southern race *cabaret* of Common (known as 'Lesser Redpoll') and large but dark race *rostrata* from S Greenland/Baffin Is (plus most individuals of controversial Icelandic population: see Geographical Variation under Common Redpoll), with majority of individuals looking strikingly different. 'Classic' Arctic of large nominate race (a vagrant from Greenland or NE Canada) is very pale overall and unstreaked on both underparts and rump, and is unlikely to be confused. The slightly larger size of nominate *hornemanni* is enhanced by its overall whiteness and by its softer, fluffier plumage, which often make individuals look substantially bigger than Common of European races. The main problem lies in separating the N European race of Arctic, *exilipes*, from the N European nominate race of Common (known as 'Mealy Redpoll') or from pale individuals belonging to the Icelandic population of Common (which look like a larger version of a pale 'Mealy Redpoll'). 'Mealy Redpolls' are highly variable and many individuals are very grey and pale in general appearance, leading to possible mistaken identity as Arctic when they turn up in winter in flocks of southern 'Lesser Redpolls' (race *cabaret*). Size is very simi-

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lar, but structure differs subtly: *exilipes* Arctic tends to appear more compact and shorter-necked; plump appearance is enhanced by its softer, fluffier plumage. Arctic also has, on average, a proportionately shorter, deeper-based, squatter-looking bill with a straighter culmen, but there is extensive overlap. In comparison with typical nominate Common, typical *exilipes* Arctic is almost lacking in brown or buff tones in plumage, being basically grey and white, and has an unstreaked white band on rump that sometimes extends to back, only weak dark streaking on flanks and sides of breast, and conspicuously white greater-covert bar and fringes to wing feathers. Arctic typically shows a broad white unstreaked rump patch (tinged

pale pink in adult males in spring/summer). Nominate Common typically shows a greyish-white or buffy-white rump patch (tinged pink in adult males in spring/summer) which is diffusely streaked throughout, but some individuals have a distinctly white rump patch and some adult males may have part of rump unstreaked, while some Arctic, particularly females, have faint streaking in the rump patch (especially when heavily worn in late spring/summer). Arctic typically exhibits only weak, sparse and rather pale dark streaking on sides of breast and flanks (in adult males often restricted to breast sides, or occasionally even lacking). Common is usually noticeably more heavily streaked on sides of breast and flanks, the streaks being darker, denser and longer and tending to form stripes on flanks. Some adult male Common show only weak streaking on sides of breast and on foreflanks, but rear flanks usually heavily streaked. Some Arctic's undertail coverts (which can sometimes be observed as birds feed in outer canopy of trees and bushes) are either all-white or else have a narrow dark (greyish) central streak on the longest feathers (i.e. those projecting furthest). Common usually shows a broad dark (blackish) central streak on the longest pair of undertail coverts and narrower dark central streaks on the remainder, but occasional adult males have these streaks weak or even lacking. Some *exilipes* Arctic's, especially adult females or 1st-years in fresh plumage in autumn/winter, have a pale yellowish-buff suffusion on sides of face and breast which differs subtly from the brownish-buff suffusion of many nominate Common, but as usual there is some overlap. Head pattern often differs, Arctic tending to have weakly streaked nape and ear-coverts, and a broad, almost unstreaked, pale supercilium, Common tending to have all these areas heavily streaked, with darker ear-coverts contrasting with narrow pale supercilium. Mantle/scapulars average paler and greyer in Arctic, Common averaging darker and browner, with heavier dark streaking, but note that coloration varies with age, sex and wear: fresh adults are palest and least heavily streaked (males most of all). In fresh plumage (autumn onwards), Arctic tends to show broader white fringes to wing coverts, tertials and flight feathers, and a more obvious white wing bar (formed by broader white tips to greater coverts), but this difference is diminished by wear. In addition, adult male Arctic in spring/summer has only a rather weak pink flush on breast and rump while adult male

Common in spring/summer usually has strong pink or pinkish-red suffusion on breast and often sides of head, flanks and rump. Some adult female Common are close to males in extent of pink suffusion, whereas female Arctic's and some males in their first spring/summer generally lack pink. Some Arctic (probably 1st-years) are noticeably darker on upperparts and more heavily streaked on flanks and sides of breast. Such birds may have faint streaking on rump (and also fairly obvious dark central streaks on longest undertail coverts), making them especially difficult to separate from some nominate race Common. Juveniles are tinged buffish on mantle, sometimes also on wing bars, so are still more problematic. Careful assessment of all the field characters should allow most individuals to be identified correctly, but, with some degree of overlap occurring in all field characters, there will always be some redpolls which are not specifically identifiable and indeed in northern Scandinavia, where the two species overlap, hybridization (possibly on quite a large scale) has been recorded. The significance of this hybridization as regards field identification of redpolls has not yet been fully assessed.

SEX/AGE Much as Common Redpoll. 1st-years resemble respective adults, but have buffish wash to mantle when fresh in autumn/winter.

VOICE Calls and song are very much as Common Redpoll. Twitter call may be slightly slower and higher-pitched, and the ringing whistle given when perched sounds hoarser and more hesitant to some ears, falling slightly rather than rising at end.

TAXONOMY Hybridization in N Europe and elsewhere has lead some taxonomists to suggest that the redpolls are just one species (*C. flammea*) consisting of a large group of variable subspecies. Others suggest that 3–4 species are involved.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 2 races (both illustrated). The breeding form of our region is *exilipes*. The nominate race, which breeds in Greenland and arctic Canada, is only a vagrant to NW Europe; this race is larger than the breeding form, with wing length of 79–88 mm (against 68–78 mm in *exilipes*), and is the whiter of the two, with a wider pale rump band and less streaking on the flanks.

HYBRIDIZATION See Identification.

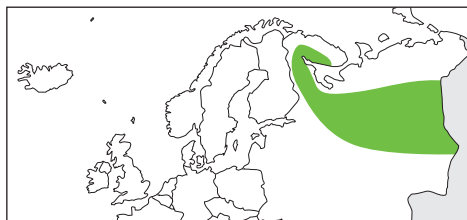
STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon. Breeds in arctic tundra scrub such as dwarf willows, birches, etc. Outside breeding season, may be encountered in similar habitats to those frequented by Common Redpoll, with which it sometimes forms mixed flocks.

TWO-BARRED CROSSBILL *Loxia leucoptera*

White-winged Crossbill (N America)

L 15 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Basic structure and plumages similar to those of Common Crossbill, but Two-barred normally easily separated at all ages by its conspicuous, broad double white wing bars and white-tipped tertials. Female can even suggest female Common Chaffinch in poor view, but latter has white outer tail feathers and greenish restricted to rump. Common Crossbill and other crossbill species, however, also sometimes shows double whitish wing bars and tertial tips, but these are relatively narrower and buffish-white, rather than pure white as in Two-barred. Further, the greater-covert bar tapers noticeably towards the edge of the wing in Two-barred, and the median-covert bar seems not to be parallel to it, whereas in aberrant Common or other crossbills the pale wing



bars are much more parallel and the greater-covert bar is of uniform width. (Note: some young birds retain all or most juvenile median and greater coverts, and when these are heavily worn, between first winter and

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first summer, the wing bars appear quite similar to those shown by some individuals of Common Crossbill or other crossbill species, while white tertial tips may be largely or wholly worn away.) Additional features are Two-barred's relatively slimmer bill, slightly smaller size and slimmer build (with slightly longer tail). Compared with other crossbills, adult males have rather rose-red (instead of orange-red or brick-red) plumage, darker mantle and usually blacker wing coverts (making white wing bars more contrasting); adult females usually show some dark streaking on breast and flanks (usually absent in other crossbill species) and overall coloration is typically more yellowish, especially on rump. Often forms mixed flocks with Common, but usually prefers to feed on larch cones.

SEX/AGE Much as Common Crossbill.

VOICE Usual call rather weaker and less metallic than that of Common Crossbill, a dry 'chiff-chiff-chiff' or 'kip-kip-kip'; also has a liquid, rather nasal 'peet' and a characteristic, somewhat Common Redpoll-like 'chet-chet'. Song contains trilling phrases delivered at varying pitches.

STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon. (May not breed regularly in western part of range in N Russia. In addition to mapped range, probably breeds Finland most years, occasionally breeds Sweden, Norway and has bred Germany.) Like Common Crossbill, sometimes subject to periodic irruptions, well away from normal areas, and often caught up in irruptions of Common. Coniferous forests; compared with other crossbill species, shows marked preference for larches (rather than spruces or pines) and feeds more often in deciduous trees such as birches, rowans etc.

TYPICAL BILL SHAPE IN ADULT MALE CROSSBILLS



TWO-BARRED



COMMON



SCOTTISH



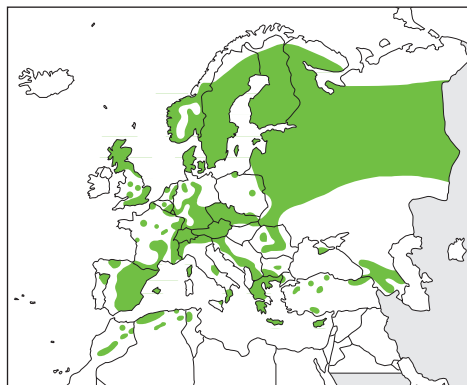
PARROT

COMMON CROSSBILL *Loxia curvirostra* Crossbill; Red Crossbill (N America)

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L 16.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A relatively large, plump finch of coniferous forests, with relatively short, deeply cleft tail, large head and parrot-like feeding habits. At close quarters, the very distinctive large bill with its crossed mandible tips (a unique adaptation amongst crossbill species for extracting seeds from cones) may be discerned. Plumages very variable, according to age and sex. **Adult male** in full plumage is brick-red overall, with dark greyish-brown wings and tail; some attain full red plumage in second calendar year, but others resemble female for a further year; indeed, there is much individual variation, and ageing of some birds can be difficult, even many apparently adult males appearing yellowish or orange-red. A small minority of adult males are mottled greenish-yellow and red. **Adult female** is overall rather dull greenish-yellow, with yellower rump (quite obvious in flight) and weakly streaked upperparts. Some look particularly dull and greyish-tinged. **1st-years** mostly closely resemble adult female after first moult in summer or autumn of first calendar year, but some males have a golden-yellow body colour while others have some orange-red feathering mixed with greenish-yellow. **Juvenile** is greyish-brown, streaked darker overall, and lacks yellowish rump of adult female, and fresh feathers of wing show pale fringes giving semblance of faint wing bars, but hardly enough to create confusion



with Two-barred Crossbill. Very rarely, however, birds with buffish-white wing bars and even tips to tertials occur, even among adult males, and these '*rubrifasciata*' individuals cause real problems with records of out-of-range Two-barred (q.v.). Very young juveniles lack the cross-tipped mandibles of older birds, but soon acquire them after leaving the nest. For distinctions from very similar Parrot and Scottish Crossbills,

see those species. Common Crossbills are often very tame and are very sociable, with flocks working the cones of various species of conifer, although in N Europe they show a marked preference for spruce.

SEX/AGE See Identification.

VOICE Usual call a distinctively loud, explosive 'chip-chip-chip' or 'glip-glip-glip', similar to call note of European Greenfinch but louder and harder; once learnt, is quite distinctive. Has several other calls of a conversational nature, including a harsh, muffled 'chewk' when nervous or alarmed. Flight call a ringing 'jip-jip-jip'. Song is reminiscent of that of European Greenfinch, but more varied, with trills and warbling phrases intermingled with call notes.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Generally rather slight. 5 races (nominat illustrated). Nominat race is widespread race of our region, but other subspecies iso-

lated on Mediterranean islands and in N Africa are hardly separable in the field except by range, although males of these birds tend to become less red when fully adult. Race *guillemardi* (Cyprus and Turkey to Caucasus and Crimea) has large bill, thus recalling Scottish Crossbill, but, owing to restricted range of latter, hardly likely to be confused.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally fairly common. (Breeding is sporadic in most of extreme west of European range. In addition to mapped range, has bred Ireland, Israel. Subject to 'irruptions' into areas where normally absent, usually from late summer into winter, at intervals of several years; reaches south to Israel during such irruptions.) Coniferous woodland, with preference for spruce in the north, but will feed among pines; indeed, populations in south of our region, where spruces absent, are birds of pine forest.

SCOTTISH CROSSBILL *Loxia scotica*

L 16.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Very similar to Common Crossbill in plumages and size and shape. In comparison with Common, the bill is more massive, deeper and blunter, with the base of the culmen relatively straighter (less curved). Typical individuals best told from typical individuals of Common by their more massive, deeper-based bills, but separation of lone individuals, as opposed to flocks, can be very difficult or impossible as structural differences relatively slight and measurements overlap. (See Parrot Crossbill for a comparison of crossbill bill measurements.) The head is rather broader than that of Common and Scottish is a rather larger bird, being intermediate in many respects between Common and Parrot, sharing the latter's preference for feeding on pine cones. Seldom found in large flocks. Some calls are also said to be diagnostic (see Voice). See also extremely similar Parrot Crossbill.

SEX/AGE As Common Crossbill.

VOICE General calls and song similar to those of



Common, but 'chip' notes of Scottish relatively louder and fuller and flight calls are deeper and coarser, 'tyoop-tyoop-tyoop' rather than the ringing 'jip-jip-jip' of Common. Differences are slight, however, and apparent sounds can vary according to density of woodland or other factors.

TAXONOMY Has been variously treated as a race of either Common Crossbill *L. curvirostra* or Parrot Crossbill *L. pytyopsittacus* in the past, but now generally considered a full species. In Scotland, where its range has recently been invaded by Common Crossbill, the two forms apparently behave as separate species.

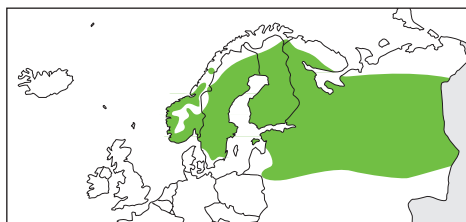
STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon, but localized. Mature Scots pine forests.

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PARROT CROSSBILL *Loxia pytyopsittacus*

L 17.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Although only a little longer than Common Crossbill, Parrot is markedly bulkier, with a larger, more bull-headed appearance and a considerably more massive bill. The bill is deeper and more strongly arched towards the tip, with a relatively straighter base to the culmen. The head/bill outline is smoother, with a more shallowly sloping forehead that at times almost appears to merge seamlessly with the culmen. In side-on profile, tip of lower mandible does not project beyond culmen, but this is true of some Common Crossbills (and many Scottish) also. Plumages closely resemble those of Common Crossbill. Scottish Crossbill is intermediate between Parrot and Common in size, bill structure and head/bill outline (although closer to Parrot), while plumages are closely similar, making separation of Parrot and Scottish, other than on range, hazardous. Like Scottish, Parrot shows a preference for feeding on pine cones rather than spruce. A comparison of measurements helps to separate the three species in the hand: Common (nominat race) has wing 91–100 mm, bill depth 10.5–12.0 mm and bill length 16.5–20.0 mm. Comparative figures for Scottish Crossbill are 94–106 mm, 12.0–14.5 mm and 17.0–21.0 mm, and for Parrot Crossbill 98–110



mm, 14.0–15.5 mm and 19.0–21.5 mm. Like Common, this species is also subject to periodic irruptions, but on a smaller, less frequent scale, and during such influxes may form mixed parties with Common Crossbills. Often quite tame.

SEX/AGE As Common Crossbill.

VOICE Typical calls very similar to those of Common, but typically deeper in tone (e.g. 'choop-choop' rather than 'chip-chip'), although it tends to be rather quieter when feeding than does Common. Call when nervous or alarmed is deeper and harder, 'cherk' rather than 'chewk'. Flight call a deeper 'chup-chup-chup' in comparison with that of Common. Song also rather

Plate page 790

like that of Common, but often includes a piercing (and probably characteristic) 'chweeLER-chweeLER'.
STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon, but localized. (In

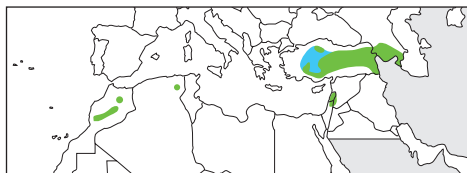
addition to mapped range, has bred Britain, Netherlands, Denmark, Poland.) Resident in pine forests, but during irruptions may turn up almost anywhere with conifers.

CRIMSON-WINGED FINCH *Rhodopechys sanguinea*

Plate page 791

L 15.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A bulky and relatively short-tailed finch of semi-arid mountain slopes and plateaus. Overall plumage brown, with white belly, sooty crown and much pink in wings, white of belly extending upwards to form a white 'T' across the lower part of the otherwise brown breast; males have more well-marked plumage than females, with blacker crown and pinkish patch about eye. Both sexes show a stout, yellowish bill, but summer males often show pinkish tinge. Juveniles overall more uniform rusty- or sandy-brown, lacking obvious head pattern (crown dusky rather than blackish) and having rusty- or sandy-brown breast shading into whitish belly, but have contrasting dusky-horn bill and blackish eye and pinkish-white flight feathers. Adults in flight show striking whitish band extending along full length of wings, contrasting with brownish coverts and dark trailing edge to wing (the pink on outer webs of flight feathers often being inconspicuous compared to white of inner webs, the opposite of the situation when perched); rump also pinkish (in adult males), and tail mostly black with white tip. Could possibly be confused with adult Desert Finch in poor view, but adult easily distinguished by darker and browner mantle with dark streaking, blackish crown, yellowish bill and brown mottling on underparts. Much more uniform juvenile is more problematic; best told from juvenile Desert by bulkier, more compact structure, by greater contrast on underparts between white belly and darker rusty- or sandy-brown breast and flanks, by somewhat darker crown (although this often only weakly contrasting) and by blacker tail. In flight, the



heavy appearance and largely black tail easily distinguish this species from Desert Finch, which shows a similar wing pattern. See also Mongolian Finch. Sociable, parties frequenting semi-arid hillsides with scattered scrub, feeding chiefly on the ground but also clambering about to feed on tops of seeding plants.

SEX/AGE See Identification. 1st-years resemble respective adults after post-juvenile moult.

VOICE Call notes include a sweet, musical 'tlweep' or 'dewleet' when flushed, a rippling 'turd-el-edel-weeep-ou' and a weak silvery twitter that may be heard from feeding flocks. Song a fairly subdued, rather sparrow-like, but more grating 'tchwilil-tchwilichip'.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 2 races (both illustrated). Nominate race occurs in SW Asia; isolated population in NW Africa, *aliena*, has greyer nape, paler throat, less white in tail and brownish uppertail coverts (not pinkish as in nominate adult).

STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon, but rather localized. Semi-arid mountain slopes, cliffs and gorges, with or without scattered scrub; descends to adjacent plains and mountain plateaus in winter, often visiting cultivation.

DESERT FINCH *Rhodospiza obsoleta*

Plate page 785

L 14.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A pale sandy finch with pinkish-white wings, frequenting trees and cultivation in arid regions. Hardly likely to be confused with anything else, this pretty finch is sandy overall, shading to whiter on the belly, the adult males having a contrasting black bill and mask; females lack the black on the lores, but have a black or brownish bill. All plumages show striking wing and tail patterns, which are most marked in adult males, with wings largely pinkish-white with black tips to flight feathers, primary coverts and greater coverts, whitish uppertail coverts and outer tail, and blackish tail centre. (Pink is most obvious on folded wing, looks whiter in flight.) Wing pattern resembles that of Crimson-winged Finch, but Desert distinguished by slimmer body and longer, slimmer, more deeply cleft tail (with much white), very uniformly sandy grey-buff body plumage, different habitat and, in adults, usually blackish bill. Sociable outside breeding season, otherwise generally seen in pairs, feeding in fields and gardens. See also Crimson-winged Finch.

SEX/AGE See Identification. Juvenile resembles adult female, but the bill is yellowish-horn. Adults in winter, however, may have bill quite pale brownish- or yellowish-horn and ageing may then be difficult. 1st-years resemble respective adults after post-juvenile



moult but male shows retained brown juvenile tertials and often some brown outer greater coverts (tertials black and greater coverts black and pink in adult male). Bill darkens towards spring.

VOICE Usual call a soft purring 'prrrr' or 'churrrr', rather undulating and high in pitch (recalling Eurasian Skylark or even European Bee-eater), but fairly inconspicuous. Song is a repetitive twittering, based on variations of the call notes, interspersed with grating trills and nasal notes, reminiscent of some of the *Carduelis* finches.

STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon, but localized. Orchards, gardens, small stands of trees or areas with scattered bushes and shrubs in arid regions; only rarely in more open semi-desert away from trees. Often found near water, including irrigation ditches.



MONGOLIAN FINCH

MONGOLIAN FINCH *Bucanetes mongolicus*

Plate above

Mongolian Trumpeter Finch

L 13 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Small, dumpy, fairly stout-billed finch of extreme Eastern Turkey and adjacent Armenia.

Adult male is mainly brown on head, mantle and uppertail coverts, but has lovely rose-pink suffusion on rump, supercilium and from lower face to flanks. Wings and tail are blackish with prominent pinkish-white feather edgings. Bill is horn-coloured. Easily separated from Desert Finch by pink coloration on head and underparts, and (compared with adult male Desert) horn rather than blackish bill and absence of black on lores. Told from adult male Trumpeter Finch by largely brown rather than largely grey head, horn rather than red bill, lack of any pink on browner mantle, more restricted rose-pink on underparts and much more 'black-and-white' wings and tail. Could be confused with adult Crimson-winged Finch in poor view, but is noticeably smaller with pink rather than brown breast and flanks, and lacks blackish crown. **Adult female** is mostly similar to male but has rose-pink suffusion much duller and more restricted on rump, supercilium and underparts; pink is often restricted to throat and flanks, with rump appearing whitish-buff. At any distance, often appears to lack pink tinge except in wings and tail, breast and flanks being washed with buff.

Juvenile is still drabber, lacking any pink tones and with much more restricted pale areas in wings (in particular, lacks the striking whitish edges to greater coverts and instead shows two warm buff wing bars formed by tips to median and greater coverts). Both older females and juveniles present more identification difficulties. Most likely confusion is with female or juvenile Trumpeter. Adult female Mongolian quite easily separated by much more 'black-and-white' wings and tail, but difference less marked in juvenile or 1st-year. Latter best told by their smaller, horn-coloured bills, double buff wing bars, more



obvious dark streaking on crown and mantle, and more extensive white on outer tail feathers. Juvenile Crimson-winged is larger and bulkier, with more two-tone underparts (mottled with brown on breast and flanks, contrasting with white belly and undertail coverts) and a darker crown (although this is not nearly as contrasting as in adults/1st-years). Juvenile Desert has more deeply-cleft tail, is paler and unstreaked on mantle (sandy grey-buff rather than brown) and has darker (blackish) centres to the flight feathers; often shows rather two-tone bill with yellowish base and dark tip. Typically found in pairs or small groups, feeding unobtrusively on ground.

SEX/AGE See Identification. 1st-years resemble adult female, but retain most of juvenile wing feathering.

VOICE Rather silent outside breeding season. Sometimes gives a slightly nasal 'deedjud' or a clear, melancholy 'piu'; in flight occasionally gives a short, twittering rattle. Has two distinct song-types, one consisting of a musical series of rather Common Rosefinch-like whistles, the other a more complex series of chirping notes with a sonorous growling rattle at or near end.

STATUS/HABITAT Uncommon and very localized. Broken arid or semi-arid mountain country, favouring crags, ravines and rocky and grassy slopes with herbaceous plants (and sometimes a few low bushes). Descends lower in winter, visiting cultivation in nearby valleys and plains.

TRUMPETER FINCH *Bucanetes githagines*

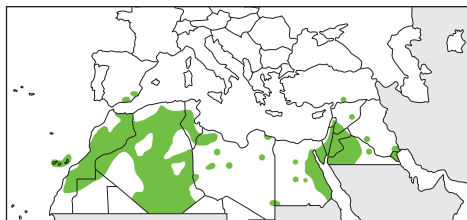
Plate page 785

L 12.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A small, dumpy, stout-billed, sandy-coloured finch of arid regions. **Adult male** is overall unstreaked sandy grey-brown, with a rose-pink wash on head, underparts, rump, wings and tail (strongest when body feathers worn, in spring/early summer); the short and very stout bill is bright red in spring, more brownish or dull orange after the breeding season. **Adult female** is duller and browner, lacking the greyish and pinkish tones of adult male, and the bill is also duller and browner. Confusion possible with Desert Finch when latter has wing pattern hidden by fluffed-up flank feathers, but Trumpeter is dumper, with shorter tail, and is greyer overall; the darker areas of the feathers in wings and tail are blacker in Desert, and the latter is also more a bird of cultivation than of the desert proper. Female Sinai Rosefinch is a longer-tailed bird and faintly streaked on mantle. Trumpeter Finches are often quite confiding and sociable, flocking at drinking stations such as small pools. Unobtrusive, yet rather tame, and often first noticed owing to their distinctive nasal song.

SEX/AGE See Identification. Juvenile resembles adult female, but is rather more buff in tone and has yellow lower bill. 1st-years resemble respective adults after post-juvenile moult.

VOICE Typical call a rather soft, nasal 'eeez'. Song a



remarkable, repeated, nasal bleat, reminiscent of blasts from a child's trumpet or a high-pitched, old-fashioned motor horn, interspersed with a few twittering notes.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Rather slight. 4 races (*zedlitzi* illustrated). Race *amantum* of the Canaries is darker than NW African *zedlitzi*, being browner and rosier, nominate race of Egypt is less rosy and more clay-coloured, and *crassirostris* of the Middle East is greyer, paler and less rosy.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common, but often localized. (In addition to mapped range, has bred SE Turkey.) Arid, rocky, heavily-eroded, desert hills and plateaus, often in areas with little or no bushy or shrubby vegetation, with a liking for ravines.

COMMON ROSEFINCH *Carpodacus erythrinus*

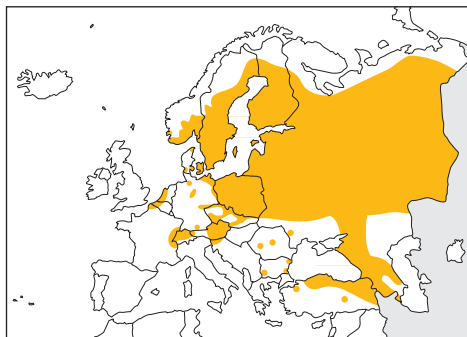
Plate page 792

Scarlet Rosefinch, Scarlet Grosbeak

L 14.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION The only widespread rosefinch of our region, and the only one likely to be encountered in trees and bushes. **Adult male** in full plumage has deep red breast, head and rump, but extent of red varies with age and individual concerned. **Adult female** is very drab, dull grey-brown with weakly darker-streaked upperparts and underparts, usually showing two weak pale wing bars and with a black beady eye on an otherwise plain face. The very stout bill and black beady eye, no indication of any facial markings (including supercilium), no pale flashes in wings or tail, the streaked breast and skulking behaviour rule out confusion with all other similar species, e.g. juvenile European Greenfinch or female House Sparrow. Often attracts attention by its very distinctive song, as it is normally a cover-loving species, rarely feeding high up in trees. Smaller and slimmer than Corn Bunting, with less pronounced streaking below and darker legs, and much more skulking. Crossbills are bulkier, with relatively shorter tail and crossed mandible tips, the females being greener or yellower and juveniles much more heavily streaked. See also other rosefinch species.

SEX/AGE See Identification. Adult males in fresh plumage (autumn/winter) have red of head, upperparts and throat to upper belly partly obscured by brownish feather tips on head/upperparts and whitish feather tips on underparts. Juvenile resembles adult female, but is brighter overall, with much more obvious wing bars and pale tertial tips (both tinged warm buff) and heavier streaking. Post-juvenile moult delayed until arrival in winter quarters. 1st-years closely resemble adult female (although a few males show some red in plumage), males usually not attaining fully adult plumage until autumn of second or even third calendar year!



VOICE Usual call a sweet, clear, but slightly harsh 'ueet' or 'shw'eeek'; becomes a harsher, more European Greenfinch-like 'djuwee' when alarmed. Very striking song can dominate its woodland habitat: a clear fluty phrase of three or four notes, rather plaintive and rising and falling in pitch, with a certain amount of individual variation, e.g. 'ste-too-weet-tew' (reminiscent of a 'wolf-whistle', but more complex).

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (nominate illustrated). Race *kubanensis* of Turkey and Caucasus eastwards is doubtfully distinguished from nominate race by paler, more rosy-red colour of males.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (Range is spreading slowly westwards. In addition to mapped range, has bred Britain and more widely in mainland Europe, Crimea. Winters in S Asia.) Deciduous or mixed woodland, thickets, lakeside or lakeside willow scrub, damp and bushy meadows, parks etc.

SINAI ROSEFINCH *Carpodacus sinoicus*

Plate page 792

Pale Rosefinch

L 14.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Adult male must rank as one of the brightest birds of its rocky desert habitat. Similar in size and shape to Common Rosefinch, but a little longer-tailed; the two species are most unlikely to be confused owing to their habitat differences. **Adult male** is an unmistakable bright rose-red bird with sandy-brown mantle, wings and tail. Crown and rear ear-coverts are a lovely silvery-pink. **Adult female** is sandy-brown overall with sandy-buff underparts, and is only very faintly streaked on mantle and breast, perhaps the most obvious feature being its beady black eye. Female likely to be confused only with Trumpeter Finch, which is dumpier, with shorter tail and paler bill (bright red in spring/summer males). Pale Rockfinch has less cleft tail with indistinct pale terminal spots, paler supercilium and unstreaked mantle and breast, but note that streaking on female Sinai Rosefinch can be difficult to see unless very close views obtained. Sociable, often forming flocks at springs and waterholes in its arid habitat.



SEX/AGE See Identification. Juvenile resembles adult female, but when fresh appears warmer, more buffy in tone with paler, more obvious wing bars. 1st-years closely resemble adult female, males not gaining rose-red coloration until autumn of second calendar year.

VOICE Calls include a sparrow-like 'cheep' or 'chip', a high-pitched 'tuit' of alarm and a weak, sharp 'stip' of bunting-like quality. Poorly documented, the song has been described as melodious and varied.

STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon, but very localized. Very arid mountain valleys, crags, gorges and ravines, with at most sparse scrub, descending to lower foothills in winter.

PALLAS'S ROSEFINCH *Carpodacus roseus*

Plate page 792

L 16 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Asian vagrant (breeds C and E Siberia). Rather larger and relatively longer-tailed than Common Rosefinch. **Adult male** is unlikely to be confused. Has bright rose-pink on head, rump and entire underparts, the main contrasts in the plumage being provided the glistening pinkish-white on the forehead and throat, the prominent double pinkish-white wing bars, the heavily streaked mantle/scapulars and the brownish wings and tail. **Adult female** differs from female Common in having pinkish suffusion to plumage (including forehead and back/rump and often throat, breast and uppertail coverts) and much more prominently streaked head, mantle/scapulars and underparts. Pale edges to tertials are more distinct. **Juvenile** resembles adult female, but plumage lacks pink tinge and it thus approaches female Common, from which it may be

distinguished by more heavily streaked underparts, larger size and relatively longer tail.

SEX/AGE See Identification. 1st-years are similar to adult female, but some young males show more red on crown/upperparts, while young females show less pinkish-red than in adult; attain fully adult plumage by autumn of second calendar year.

VOICE Call is a short subdued buzzy whistle (almost Dunnock-like or Goldcrest-like to some ears). Song, unlikely to be heard in our region, recalls call but has more rising and falling notes, which are often repeated.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Europe). In natural range, breeds in rather open coniferous or mixed forest with undergrowth, usually in high mountain areas. In winter, in tall scrub as well as in woodland.

GREAT ROSEFINCH *Carpodacus rubicilla*

Plate page 792

L 20–21 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A very large and relatively long-tailed rosefinch of the higher regions of the Caucasus. **Adult male's** combination of large size and bright red appearance, as well as its rocky, high mountain habitat, is quite unmistakable. In fresh plumage in autumn it is a deeper and darker red, wearing to a brighter red by the spring, when bill becomes whiter (more yellowish-horn during non-breeding season). **Adult female** is a very large, overall drab grey-brown finch, with darker streaking above and below, perhaps the most prominent feature being the pale yellowish-horn bill. Unlikely to be confused with any other finch owing to its combination of very large size and streaky appearance. Rather wary birds of the alpine zone, feeding on the ground. Flight relatively slow and markedly heavy for a finch, males looking quite dark at a distance in flight.

SEX/AGE Juveniles resemble adult female, but streaking more prominent, especially on breast and throat. 1st-years resemble adult female, young males attain-



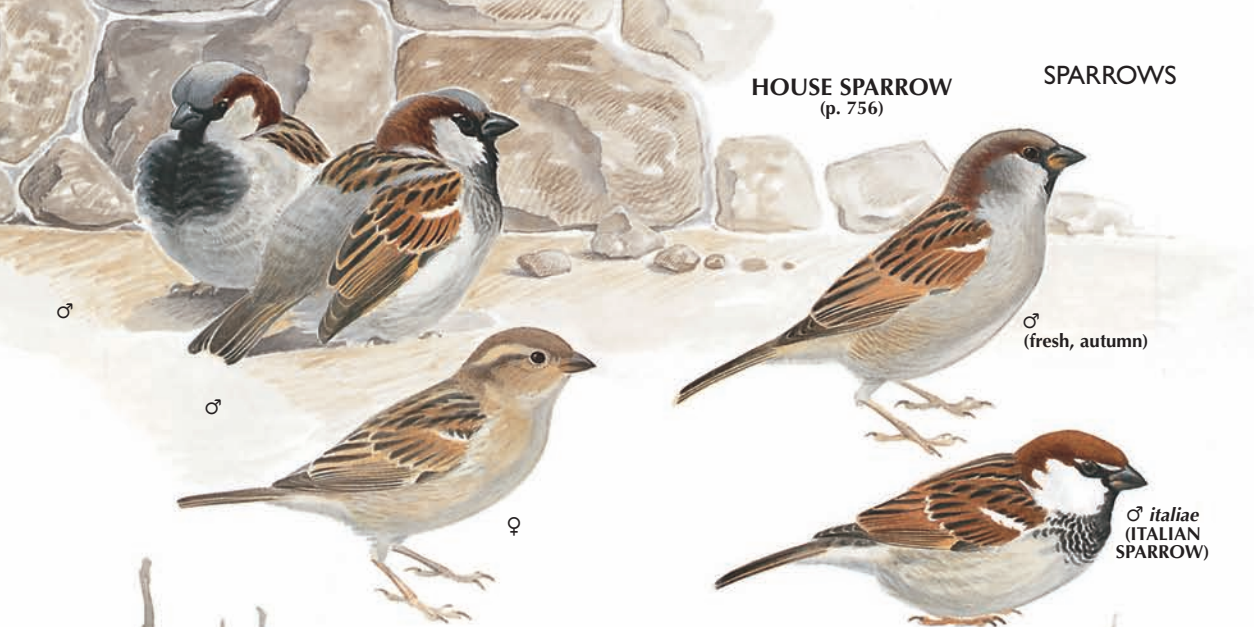
ing red plumage only during second autumn.

VOICE Usual call a soft, muffled, fluty 'peu' or 'peeueen' (recalling Eurasian Bullfinch), but short twittering notes also heard from flocks in flight. Song, usually given from a boulder, a rather repetitive, fluty series of notes, 'fyu-fyu-fyu-fyu-fyu', with the first few notes loudest, becoming weaker and lower at end of song sequence; a series of low twittering and shrill notes may also be heard at close range.

STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon, but localized. Breeds in the alpine zone of the main Caucasus range, above the tree-line, preferring boulder-strewn slopes with grassy meadows and *Azalea* and *Rhododendron* thickets. Moves to lower, adjoining valleys in winter.

SPARROWS

HOUSE SPARROW
(p. 756)



EURASIAN TREE
SPARROW
(p. 759)



SPANISH
SPARROW
(p. 757)

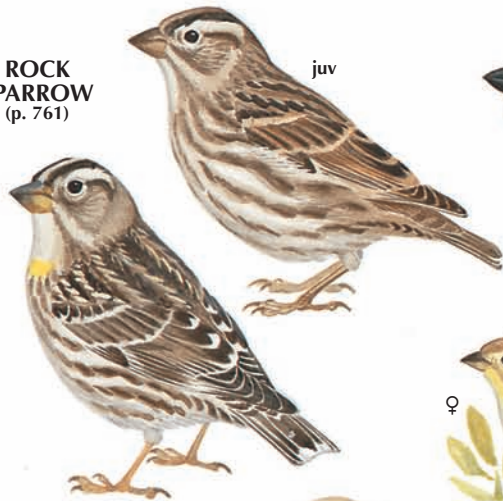


IAGO
SPARROW
(p. 758)

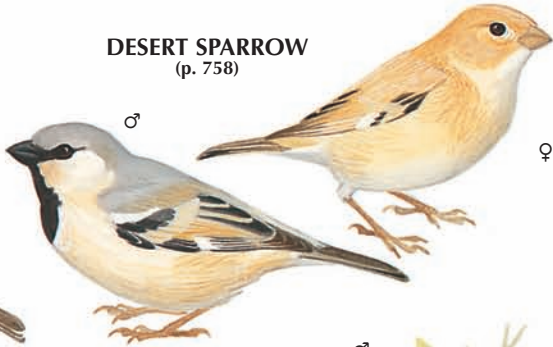
DEAD SEA SPARROW
(p. 758)

SPARROWS

ROCK
SPARROW
(p. 761)



DESERT SPARROW
(p. 758)



SUDAN GOLDEN
SPARROW
(p. 759)



PALE
ROCKFINCH
(PALE ROCK
SPARROW)
(p. 760)



CHESTNUT-
SHOULDERED
SPARROW
(YELLOW-THROATED
SPARROW)
(p. 760)



WHITE-WINGED SNOWFINCH
(p. 761)



DESERT FINCH
(p. 779)

♂ (autumn)

♂ (spring)

♀ (spring)

juv

♂

♂

♂

♀

♂
(fresh,
autumn)

TRUMPETER FINCH
(p. 781)

juv

**COMMON
WAXBILL**
(p. 763)

♂

juv

RED AVADAVAT
(p. 764)

♀

juv

RED-BILLED FIREFINCH
(p. 763)

♀

juv

FINCHES

COMMON CHAFFINCH
(p. 768)



**EUROPEAN
GREENFINCH**
(p. 771)

FINCHES



♂



♂



♂



juv



♀

**EUROPEAN
SERIN**
(p. 770)

♂



juv



♀

**SYRIAN
SERIN
(TRIS-
TRAM'S SERIN)**
(p. 770)

juv



♂



♀



♂



♂

**ATLANTIC
CANARY**
(p. 770)

♂



♀



juv



juv



♂



CITRIL FINCH
(p. 771)



♂



♀



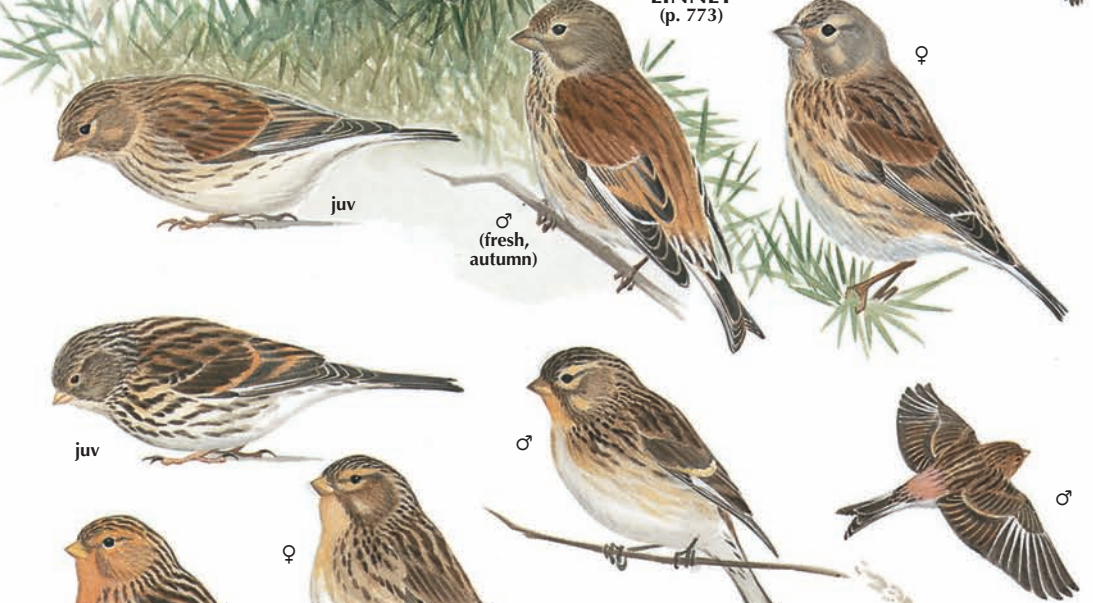
♂ *corsicana*
(CORSIKAN FINCH)

FINCHES

EURASIAN SISKIN
(p. 772)



COMMON
LINNET
(p. 773)



TWITE
(p. 774)



♂ *brevirostris*

♂ cabaret
(LESSER
REDPOLL)

juv cabaret

♀ cabaret

♂ flammea
(MEALY REDPOLL)

COMMON
REDPOLL
(p. 774)

juv flammea

♀ flammea

♀

ARCTIC REDPOLL
(p. 775)

juv

♂

♂ hornemanni

juv

RED-FRONTED
SERIN
(p. 769)

♂

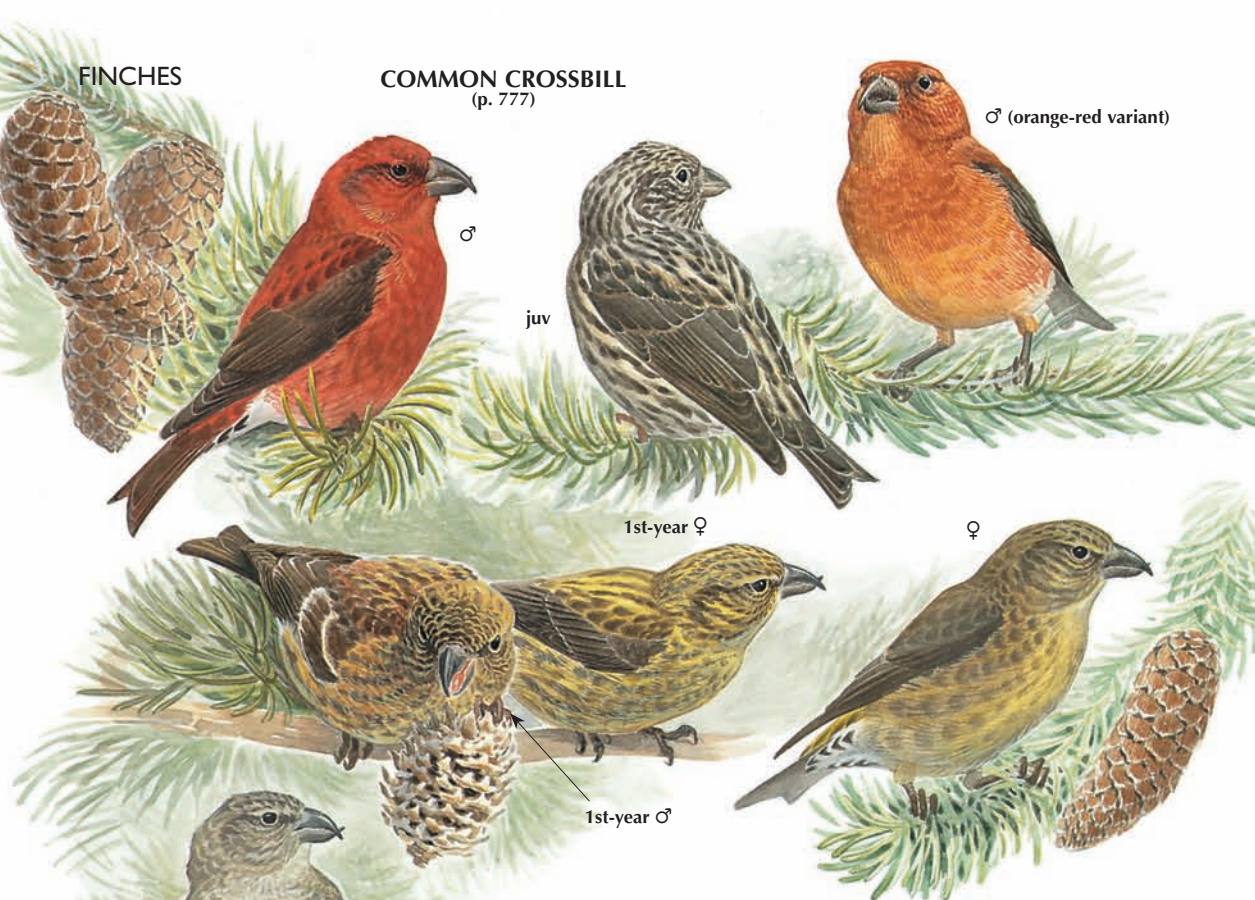
♀

EUROPEAN GOLDFINCH
(p. 772)

juv

FINCHES

COMMON CROSSBILL (p. 777)

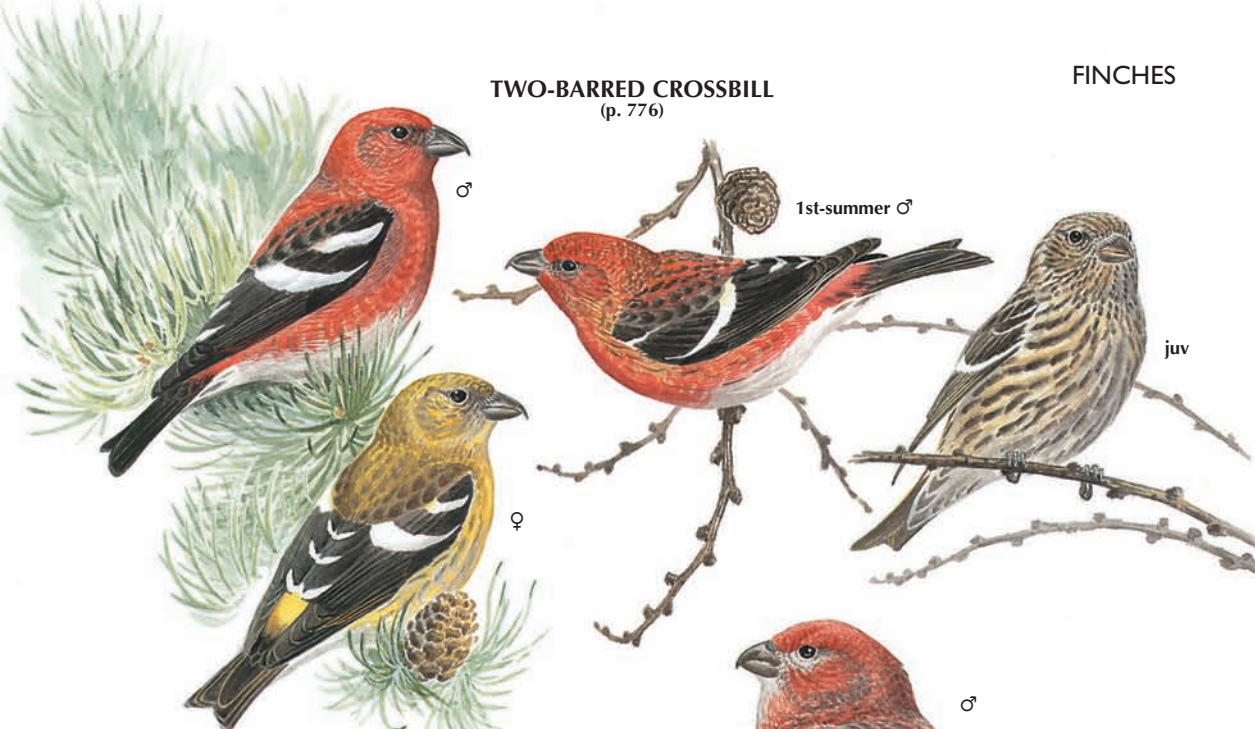


SCOTTISH CROSSBILL (p. 778)

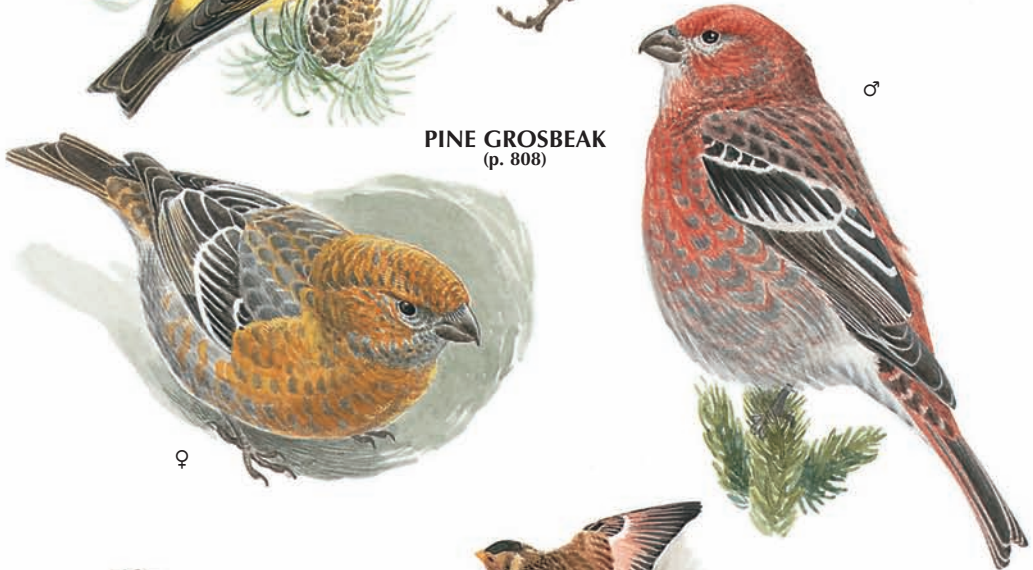


PARROT CROSSBILL (p. 778)

TWO-BARRED CROSSBILL
(p. 776)



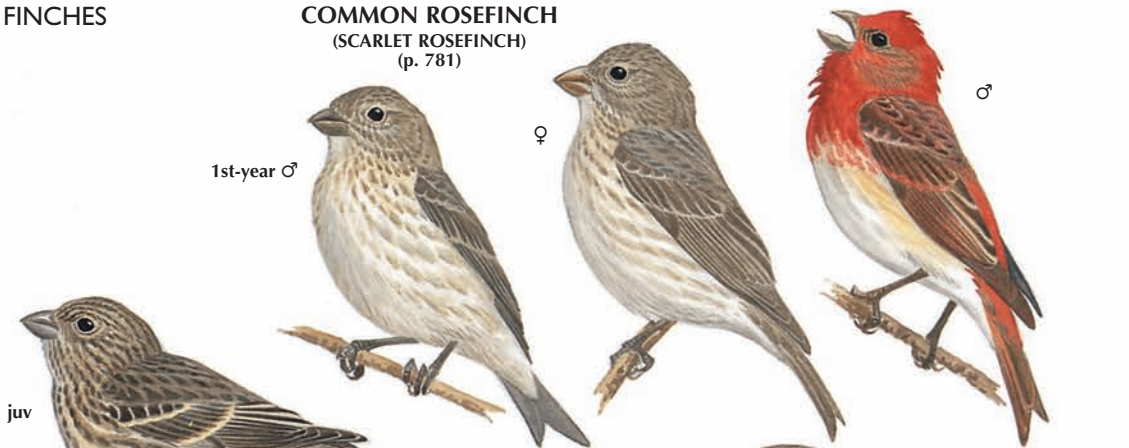
PINE GROSBEAK
(p. 808)



CRIMSON-WINGED FINCH
(p. 779)

FINCHES

COMMON ROSEFINCH
(SCARLET ROSEFINCH)
(p. 781)

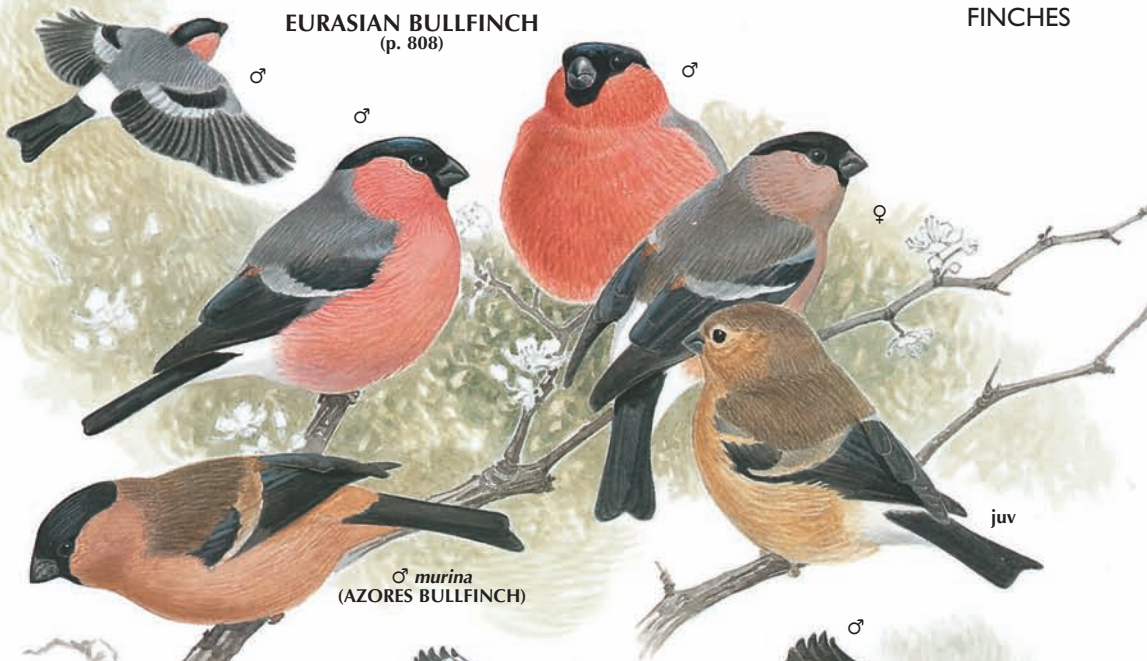


GREAT ROSEFINCH
(p. 782)



PALLAS'S ROSEFINCH
(p. 782)

EURASIAN BULLFINCH
(p. 808)



HAWFINCH
(p. 808)



EVENING GROSBEEK
(p. 809)

AMERICAN WOOD-WARBLERS

BLACK-AND-WHITE
WARBLER

(p. 810)

1st-winter ♀

♂ summer

summer

RED-EYED VIREO

(p. 767)

1st-winter

♀ winter

♂ summer

TENNESSEE WARBLER

(p. 810)

♀ summer

♂

♀

1st-winter ♀

YELLOW
WARBLER

(p. 811)

1st-winter ♀
(dull variant)

♂

♀

NORTHERN PARULA

(p. 811)

1st-winter ♀

CAPE MAY WARBLER
(p. 813)

♂ summer

1st-winter ♀

♀ summer

1st-winter ♂

♀ winter

♀ summer

♂ summer

YELLOW-RUMPED
WARBLER
(p. 814)

PALM WARBLER
(p. 814)

winter

winter
(dull variant)

summer
hypochrysea

♀ summer

♂ summer

BLACKPOLL WARBLER
(p. 814)

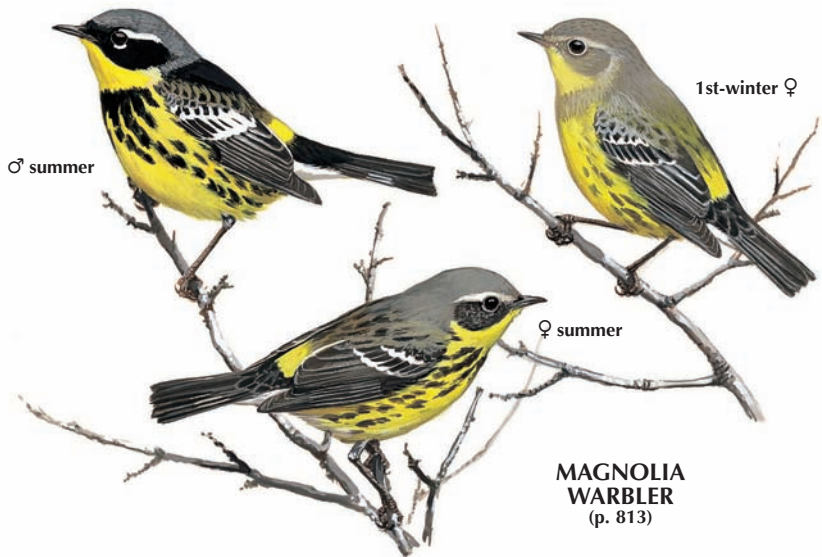
1st-winter

♂ winter

AMERICAN WOOD-WARBLERS



**BLACK-THROATED
GREEN WARBLER**
(p. 812)



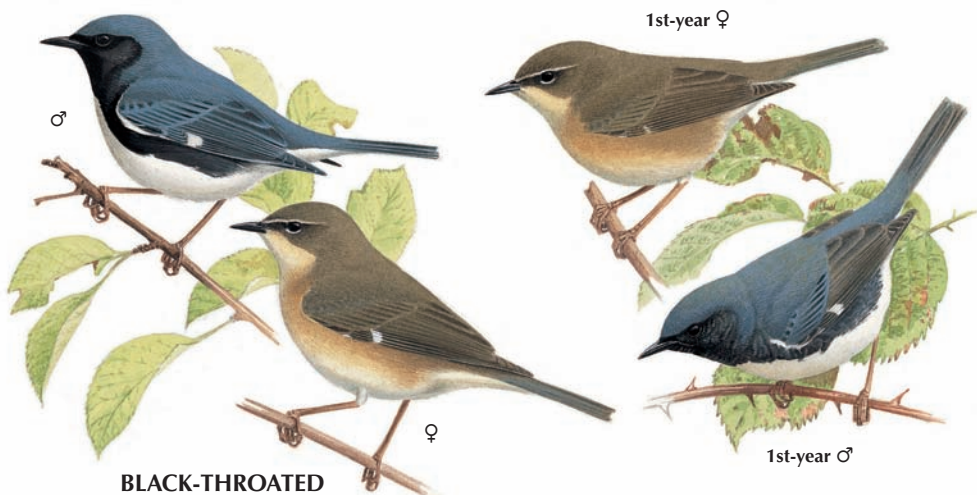
**MAGNOLIA
WARBLER**
(p. 813)



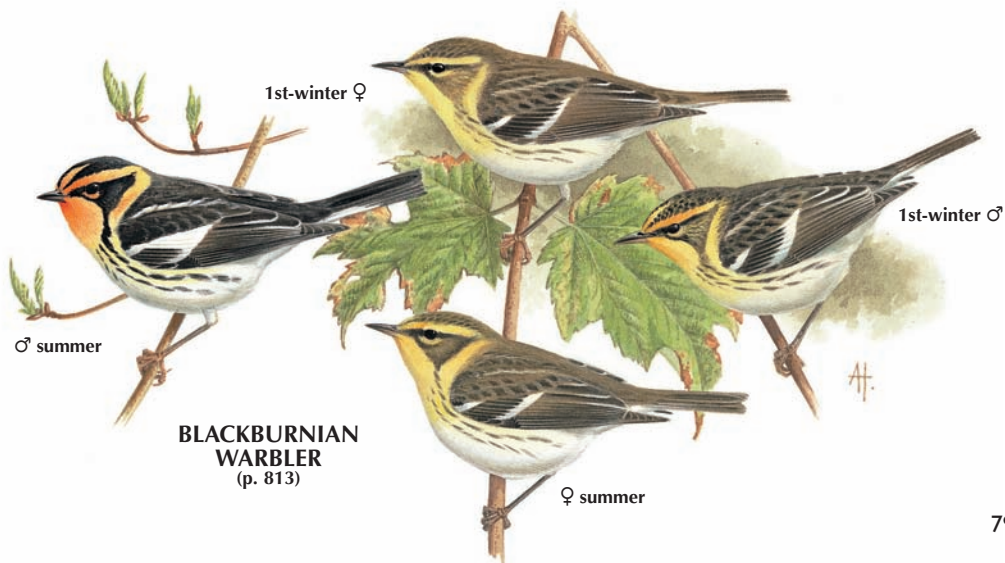
CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER
(p. 812)



**GOLDEN-WINGED
WARBLER**
(p. 810)



**BLACK-THROATED
BLUE WARBLER**
(p. 812)



**BLACKBURNIAN
WARBLER**
(p. 813)

AMERICAN WOOD-WARBLERS

OVENBIRD
(p. 815)



AMERICAN
REDSTART
(p. 815)

(paler variant)



NORTHERN
WATERTHRUSH
(p. 816)



1st-winter ♀



♂

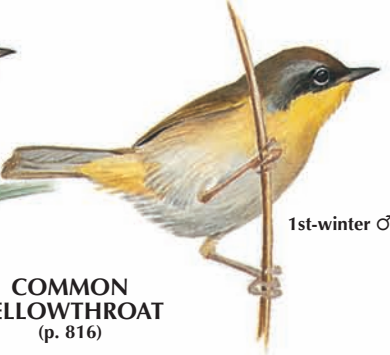


♀



COMMON
YELLOWTHROAT
(p. 816)

1st-winter ♂



♀



HOODED
WARBLER
(p. 816)

1st-winter ♀



♂



TANAGERS, AMERICAN BLACKBIRDS & ORIOLES

SUMMER Tanager
(p. 818)



♀



♀
(brighter
variant)



♂ summer

SCARLET
Tanager
(p. 818)

♂ winter



♀



BOBOLINK
(p. 841)

♂
summer



winter



♀ summer



1st-winter ♀



♀



♂

BALTIMORE ORIOLE
(p. 844)

1st-winter ♀



BUNTINGS

ROSE-BREADED
GROSBEAK
(p. 838)

♂ summer



♂ summer



♀

♂ summer

BLUE
GROSBEAK
(p. 839)

♀ summer



1st-winter ♂



♂ winter



♂ summer



INDIGO
BUNTING
(p. 839)

♀ summer



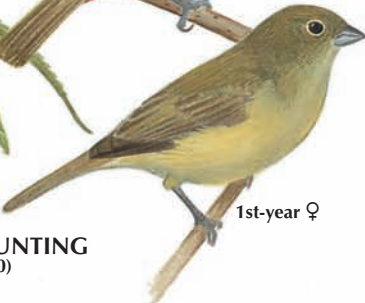
♀



♂



1st-year ♀

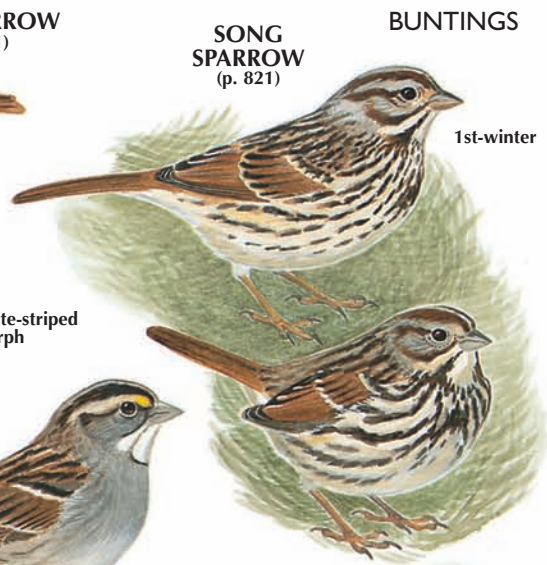


♂ winter





FOX SPARROW
(p. 821)



SONG SPARROW
(p. 821)

BUNTINGS

1st-winter



white-striped morph

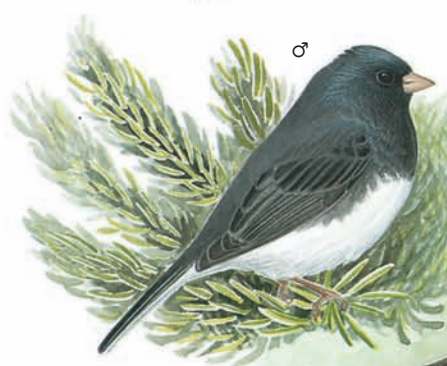
WHITE-THROATED SPARROW
(p. 822)



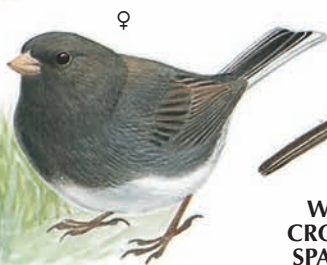
tan-striped morph



1st-winter

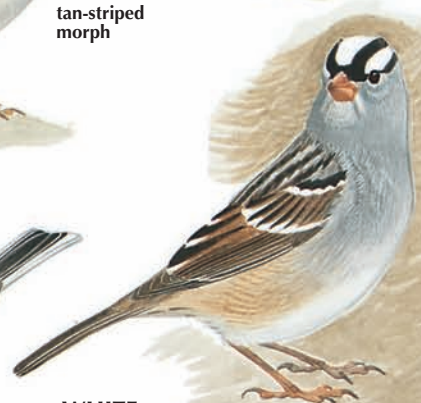


♂



♀

DARK-EYED JUNCO
(p. 822)



WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW
(p. 821)



1st-winter ♀



1st-winter



♂



♀

EASTERN TOWHEE
(RUFOUS-SIDED TOWHEE)
(p. 819)

BUNTINGS

PINE BUNTING
(p. 825)

♂

juv

♂
(fresh, autumn)

♀

♀

♂
(fresh, autumn)

♂

YELLOWHAMMER
(p. 825)

juv

♂
(fresh, autumn)

♂

♀

CORN
BUNTING
(p. 837)

juv

juv

GIRL BUNTING
(p. 826)

LAPLAND BUNTING
(LAPLAND LONGSPUR)
(p. 822)

BUNTINGS



♂
(fresh, autumn)

1st-winter ♀

LAPLAND

SNOW
BUNTING
(p. 823)



♀

♂
(fresh, autumn)

♀
(fresh, autumn)

1st-winter ♀

♀
(fresh, autumn)

juv ♀

♂
(fresh, autumn)



♂ (eastern type)

BLACK-FACED BUNTING
(p. 824)

1st-winter ♂

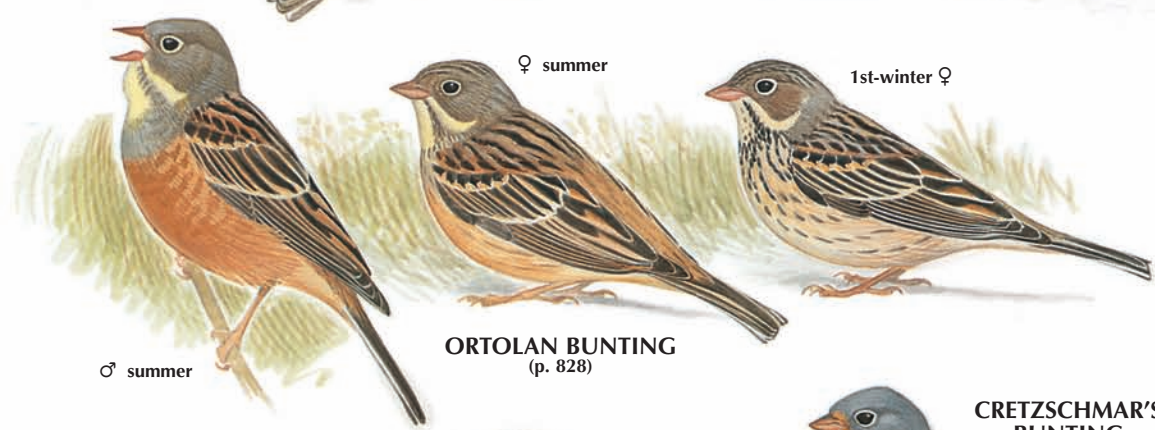
BUNTINGS



CINEREOUS BUNTING
(p. 828)

1st-winter ♀

♂
semenowi



ORTOLAN BUNTING
(p. 828)

♂ summer

♀ summer

1st-winter ♀

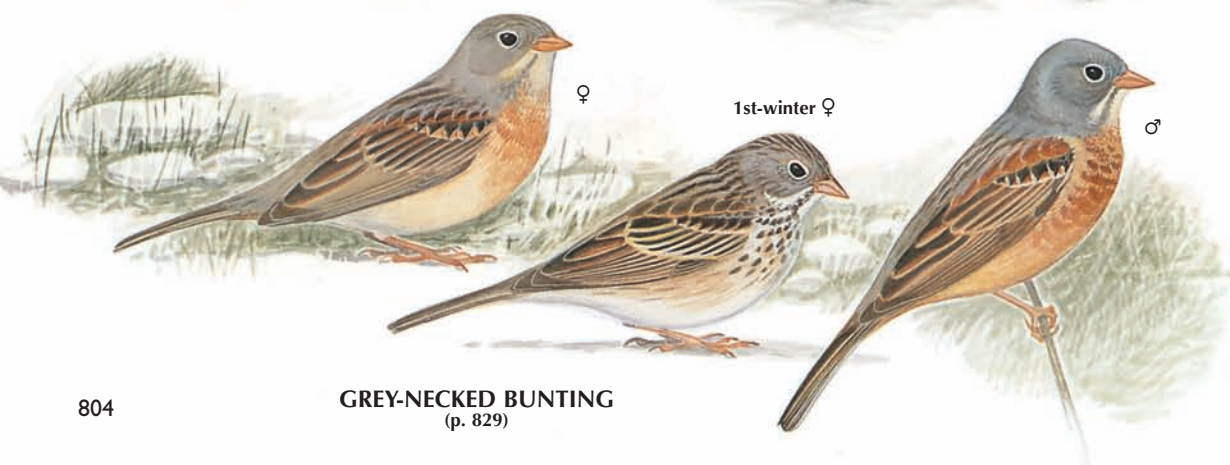


CRETZSCHMAR'S
BUNTING
(p. 830)

♀ summer

1st-winter ♀

♂ summer



GREY-NECKED BUNTING
(p. 829)

1st-winter ♀

♂

**ROCK
BUNTING**
(p. 827)

♂

♀

juv

HOUSE BUNTING
(p. 827)

♂ *sahari*

♀

♂

♀ *sahari*

**RED-HEADED
BUNTING**
(p. 835)

♀ summer

♂ summer

1st-winter ♀

♀ summer

1st-winter ♀

♂ summer

**BLACK-HEADED
BUNTING**
(p. 836)

BUNTINGS

**YELLOW-BROWED
BUNTING**
(p. 830)



1st-winter ♀

♀ summer

♀

♂

♂ summer

LITTLE BUNTING
(p. 831)



1st-winter

juv

♂

**CHESTNUT
BUNTING**
(p. 832)



1st-winter ♀

♀

1st-winter ♂

YELLOW-BREASTED BUNTING
(p. 833)



1st-winter ♀

♀

♂ summer

♂ winter

RUSTIC BUNTING
(p. 831)

BUNTINGS

♀ summer

♂ summer

♀ winter

♂ winter

1st-winter ♀

♂
(fresh,
autumn)

**COMMON
REED BUNTING**
(p. 834)

juv

♀ (fresh, autumn)

♂
(fresh,
autumn)

♀

♂

♀ (fresh, autumn)

PALLAS'S REED BUNTING
(p. 834)

juv

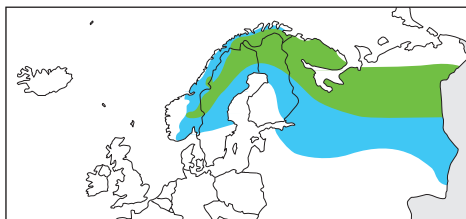
PINE GROSBEAK *Pinicola enucleator*

Plate page 791

L 19 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A heavily built and relatively long-tailed crossbill-like bird of northern coniferous forests. The second largest resident finch of our region. Unlikely to be confused. **Adult male** recalls male Two-barred Crossbill in pattern and overall rose-red coloration, but has double white wing bars (tinged pink when fresh) less conspicuous and is a much larger bird with greyish rear flanks and belly, a longer tail and short, deep, uncrossed bill. **Adult female** has head, breast and rump quite dull orange-yellow, offering contrast with the usually greyish upperparts and flanks, and whitish wing bars; after autumn moult appears rather brighter, with orange-yellow tips to upperpart feathers obscuring the grey. Spends much time hopping about while feeding on ground, but often first spotted perched at very top of conifer; can be very confiding. In flight, appears very bulky with a fairly long tail, moving on very undulating flight path. Forms small flocks outside breeding season, but usually found in pairs, often clambering rather clumsily about in berry-bearing trees, especially rowans.

SEX/AGE See Identification. Juvenile resembles adult female, but after first autumn moult 1st-year males are pinkish on head and breast, attaining fully adult plum-



age in second autumn.

VOICE Usual calls include an explosive fluty 'chulee-woo-chulee-woo' and a low, quiet, Eurasian Bullfinch-like 'puee' or 'pew'. Song, normally delivered from top of conifer, a short, explosive, sweet fluty warbling.

STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon. Breeds in northern coniferous and mixed forests, particularly dark, damp spruce forests with stands of birch and a rich undergrowth of berry-bearing bushes. Outside breeding season, often in mixed forests with berry-bearing trees, with a particular liking for rowans. Like crossbills, sometimes irrupts well south of normal range in autumn and winter in response to scarcity of food.

EURASIAN BULLFINCH *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

Plate page 793

Bullfinch, Common Bullfinch; Azores Bullfinch (*P. p. murina*)

L 14.5–16 cm.

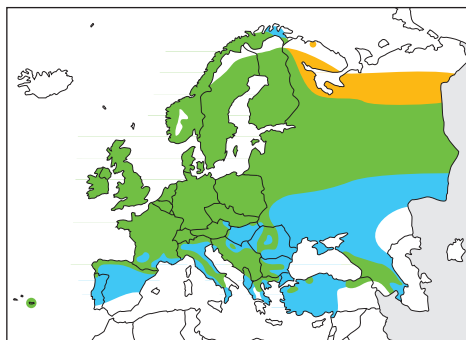
IDENTIFICATION A distinctive, fairly large and stout finch that is unlikely to be confused. Combination of short, deep-based, dark bill, black crown, blackish wings with a single pale wing bar and blackish tail that strongly contrasts with clean white rump is distinctive in all plumages, while all but juvenile also have conspicuous black crown and surrounds to bill. Male has rose-red underparts and grey mantle, female has grey-brown underparts and mantle. Rather shy and quiet, often first seen when flying from bush to bush, when combination of black tail and white rump and soft call aid identification. Especially fond of buds in winter and spring, locally causing damage to fruit trees.

SEX/AGE Juvenile resembles adult female, but lacks black on crown and around bill, and has buff-brown (not white) wing bar. 1st-years resemble respective adults.

VOICE Usual call a distinctive, but quiet, low, melancholy whistled 'peeu' or 'pew'. Song, very inconspicuous and audible only at close range, a weak, scratchy and creaking warbling interspersed with soft whistles.

TAXONOMY The distinctive form *murina* of the Azores is probably best treated as a full species under the name **Azores Bullfinch**.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight, except as regards race *murina* of the Azores. 6 races (*pileata* and *murina* illustrated). N European birds of nominate



race are the largest and brightest. In the rare, isolated race *murina* of São Miguel in the Azores, size is larger, bill is longer and deeper, and wing is shorter and more rounded. Both sexes have grey-buff (not white) rump and the adult males lack red below and instead have brownish underparts (thus closely resembling females, which are slightly greyer with less obvious buff tinge on rump, mantle and scapulars).

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. Woodlands, both coniferous and deciduous, with dense undergrowth; also orchards, tall scrub, parks and gardens.

HAWFINCH *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

Plate page 793

L 18 cm.

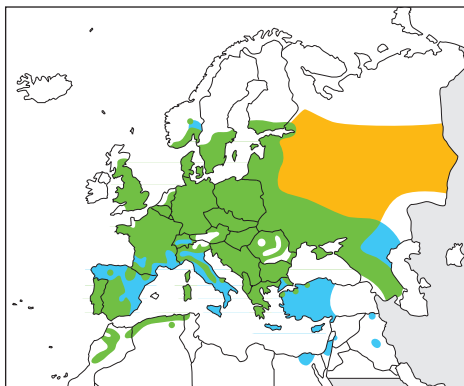
IDENTIFICATION A large, stout, almost 'top-heavy' finch of broadleaved woodland. The massive bill, large head and short tail give this unmistakable species a distinctive silhouette. Overall appearance is of a heavily built pinkish-brown finch, with darker

upperparts and conspicuous white wing patches and whitish tips to tail. Closer views reveal a greyish nape, black chin and lores and a massive bluish-grey bill (yellowish- or whitish-horn in winter adults, and in juvenile). Very shy and unobtrusive; although fre-

quently seen feeding quietly in treetops, this is an easily overlooked species in spite of its size and strong patterning. Usually spotted in flight, when its white wing patches, undulating motion and low but distinctive calls are conspicuous. White tail tips may be obvious as birds rise from ground. Good clue to presence is split stones of seeds below bushes. Forms flocks after breeding season, often feeding on ground. See also vagrant Evening Grosbeak.

SEX/AGE Sexes are similar, although females are duller than males, lacking warm brown tinge to head and having greyer secondaries and inner primaries (dark purplish-blue in males). Juveniles are paler, buffer-brown and more uniform (lacking black chin patch), with dark scaling on underparts and pale yellowish bill (as in winter adults), young males having some black at base of bill and much white on underwing; after first autumn moult appear similar to adults. **VOICE** Usual calls, often given in flight, include a short, explosive 'tzik' and a thin, squeaky 'seep' or 'sreee'. Song is very inconspicuous, low, squeaky and wheezy, interspersed with call notes.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Rather slight. 3 races (nominate illustrated). Birds of Iberia and NW Africa,



buvryi, are greyer, with less white in wings, and those of S Russia and Caucasus, *nigricans*, are the darkest. **STATUS/HABITAT** Not uncommon, but often localized. Deciduous and mixed woodlands, orchards, parks and riverside scrub.

EVENING GROSBEAK *Hesperiphona vespertina*

Plate page 793

L 19 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Resembles Hawfinch in general shape, but is even larger with a massive greenish-yellow bill and completely different plumage. Unlikely to be confused. **Adult male** has predominantly yellow body plumage, with dark brownish head, mantle and breast, yellow supercilium and forehead and black wings and tail, the wings with conspicuous white patch on secondaries/tertials (especially prominent in flight). **Adult female** is duller and greyer, being merely washed with yellow on sides of breast and neck. White patch on secondaries/tertials is smaller and it shows an additional white patch at base of primaries and white tip to tail. This impressive finch

often visits birdtables in its native N America.

SEX/AGE See Identification. 1st-years resemble adult female, although young males show the appropriate wing and tail patterns of their sex and juvenile tertials (with pale brownish-grey outer webs and blackish inner webs) are often retained.

VOICE Usual call a loud, metallic 'cleep-ip' or 'cleer' (recalling House Sparrow, but louder and more ringing). Song, unlikely to be heard in our region, is a rambling, rather jerky warble.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, breeds in mixed and coniferous forests, visiting all kinds of woodland, parks and gardens in winter.

AMERICAN WOOD-WARBLERS Parulidae

21 species (all vagrant)

Despite their basic similarity in size, shape and behaviour to our Old World warblers, American wood-warblers (or 'parulids') are more closely related to the tanagers and buntings. These small, agile, arboreal, primarily insectivorous birds inhabit mainly forest, woodland, scrub and marshy thickets. Most species utter a short 'chip', 'tik' or similarly abrupt call note. These calls are freely given by vagrants, but their attractive songs are unlikely to be heard in our region. Recorded chiefly from coastal regions of Britain, Ireland and Iceland following transatlantic storms. The great majority of records coincide with the autumn migration from N American breeding grounds to C American winter quarters, but some have been in winter, suggesting that birds had arrived in the autumn and overwintered before discovery; spring records are exceptionally unusual (unlike the pattern of occurrence of American sparrows).

Many members of this large family show striking differences between adult and winter plumages, and some also between the sexes. Immatures in first autumn typically closely resemble winter adults.

Many American wood-warblers, or 'parulids', are quite distinctive, but others strongly recall Old World warblers (Sylviidae), especially leaf-warblers of the genus *Phylloscopus*, so caution is required.

Some species are straightforward to identify while others are tricky, especially in winter plumage. Despite the relatively large number of species recorded, several others could also turn up, and so

reference to N American identification guides is recommended. As the great majority of individuals that reach our region are 1st-winter birds, the features of this plumage stage are given special attention in the text. Points on which to concentrate are:

Overall coloration and pattern • Presence or absence of wing bars • Extent of streaking above and below • Presence or absence of white in outer tail (best seen when tail spread or viewed from below)
• Leg colour

BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER *Mniotilta varia*

Plate page 794

L 13 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Unmistakable. In all plumages, highly distinctive black and white striped ('mint-humbug') overall appearance makes confusion unlikely. Summer male Blackpoll Warbler is the only other parulid which comes close: has all blackish crown contrasting with white lower face and all-white undertail coverts compared with Black-and-white's broad white median crown-stripe and supercilium separated by a broad black lateral crown-stripe, and black-spotted undertail coverts. Feeds within tree canopy, gleaning bark for insects, often running along branches or up and down trunks in manner recalling a nuthatch.

SEX/AGE All plumages similar, but adult female has weaker, sparser dark streaking on flanks and sides of breast, paler ear-coverts and buffish-brown wash on rear flanks; male has black throat and extensive black on ear-coverts in summer plumage, but white (like

female) or dark-spotted throat and little black on ear-coverts in winter plumage. 1st-winters resemble adult female, but have browner (retained juvenile) flight feathers, contrasting with fresh black greater coverts; may often be sexed on flank markings, which are frequently noticeably darker and denser in males. 1st-summer male is as adult male apart from browner flight feathers.

VOICE Calls include a sharp, hard 'tik' and a thinner, rather treecreeper-like 'tseet'. Song is a fairly slow, very high and thin, somewhat treecreeper-like series of 'wee-see' couplets, with stress on first syllable, ending in a more complex series of notes.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, deciduous or mixed woodland, especially in damp situations, orchards; more locally coniferous woodland with alder or willow thickets.

GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER *Vermivora chrysoptera*

Plate page 797

L 11.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Unmistakable. In all plumages a distinctive warbler with bluish-grey upperparts, large bright yellow wing bands (forming almost a solid patch), yellow (or greenish-yellow in females) patch on forecrown, white supercilium and malar stripe and black (grey in females) mask and throat. Underparts are unstreaked whitish and outer tail feathers show much white. Very agile, often feeding upside-down like a tit at ends of branches; also picks and probes accumulated dead leaves within bushes, feeding as much in low bushes

and shrubs as in tree canopy.

SEX/AGE Male has black mask and throat, these grey in female; forecrown brighter yellow in male. 1st-years closely resemble respective adults but have green fringes to secondaries and tertials.

VOICE Usual call a short, soft 'chip'. Song is a soft buzzing 'zee-bee-bee-bee' (sometimes more trilling).

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, favours rank undergrowth, bushes and shrubs, in such situations as bushy pastures, woodland edges and clearings and especially thickets near water.

TENNESSEE WARBLER *Vermivora peregrina*

Plate page 794

L 11.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. A small, fairly plump, short-tailed parulid. In 1st-winter or (slightly less bright) adult female winter plumage in autumn, an unstreaked green and yellow warbler, with contrasting white undertail coverts, a rather poorly-defined (and not very long) yellow supercilium and one or two faint pale wing bars; often (perhaps only adults) shows a small whitish area at tail corners. Clearly suggests a *Phylloscopus*, with call confusingly similar to that of Arctic Warbler. Brightness of plumage not normal for Arctic (race of Arctic breeding from Kamchatka to Japan, *xanthodryas*, not yet recorded in our region, is, however, very yellow below), and further differs in having clean whitish tips to primaries in fresh plumage, greyer legs and greyer, more sharply pointed bill with pale greyish lower mandible. Overall colour more suggestive of Wood Warbler, but latter is stockier and has longer

primary projection, whiter underparts from lower breast down, brighter green fringes to wing feathers, no white tips to primaries, no pale wing bar, a blunter bill with more pinkish lower mandible, pinkish legs and a different call (but is usually silent on passage). Compare also Green Warbler and Philadelphia Vireo. Adult female winter is very similar to 1st-winter and so similar identification problems apply, but averages duller. Adult male winter is often whiter below and on supercilium, and greyer on crown, than adult female winter, but many are indistinguishable. Adult male summer is markedly whiter below and on supercilium, and has crown and ear-coverts distinctly dull bluish-grey, while adult female summer is similar but has yellow tinged supercilium and ear-coverts, greenish crown and more yellow on underparts; consequently both are less likely to be confused with *Phylloscopus* warblers. Very active

warbler, constantly on the move in the canopy of trees and shrubs, calling freely.

SEX/AGE Adult male summer has whitish supercilium and underparts and bluish-grey crown and ear-coverts, contrasting with dull olive upperparts; adult male winter has head more olive, less grey, and there may be a hint of yellowish in underparts. Adult female summer is less grey on head than male, with stronger yellow wash to supercilium and underparts; in winter plumage, much brighter overall and similar to 1st-winter birds. 1st-winters are very bright green and yellow (see Identification), but often not distinguishable

in the field from brightest adult females.

VOICE Calls, given freely by migrants, a short, rasped 'zik' (recalling Arctic Warbler, but sharper and less metallic) and a thin 'zeep' (recalling single note of Firecrest). Song is distinctive; a fairly loud, staccato series of two-syllable notes, followed by a few higher-pitched single notes and finally a trill: 'sidity-sidity-sidity-swit-swit-swit-sit-sit-sit-sit-sit-sit'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, breeds in coniferous and mixed woodland; on migration also in open deciduous woodland, scrubby areas and thickets.

NORTHERN PARULA *Parula americana* Parula Warbler

L 11 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Unmistakable. A small warbler with bluish-grey upperparts, two broad white wing bars and a bright yellow throat and upper breast, latter contrasting with whiter lower underparts in all plumages; closer views may reveal broken white eye-ring (but no supercilium), olive-bronze mantle, bluish-grey sides of breast and white patches on outer tail; males show a narrow orange-rufous breastband and often some orange-rufous patches on upper flanks. An active little warbler, constantly on the move, flicking wings and dropping to lower perches in manner of a Goldcrest, usually in middle to upper canopy of trees.

SEX/AGE All plumages similar. Adult male bright bluish-grey above, with blackish lores and bright orange-rufous breast band bordered above by a narrow slaty band; head and upperparts duller and washed olive in

fresh plumage in autumn/winter (when two-tone nature of breast band sometimes obscured). Adult female lacks slaty band across breast and shows little or no orange-rufous. 1st-year male is similar to adult male but often shows less intense orange-rufous band on breast and no slaty; flight feathers are edged greenish (bluish in adults) and tail shows less white. 1st-year female differs from adult female in having greenish edges to flight-feathers (typically bluish in adults) and less white in tail.

VOICE Call a sharp, sudden 'zip' or 'chip'. Song is a fast, ascending, buzzing, metallic trill that ends abruptly with a 'zip'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, breeds in all kinds of woodland, especially near water; on migration also in bushy areas and thickets.

Plate page 794

YELLOW WARBLER *Dendroica petechia*

L 12.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. As the name suggests, a very yellow bird with bright yellow on face and underparts, yellowish-olive upperparts (rump and crown/nape yellower-olive than mantle and back) and diffuse yellow eye-ring that highlights dark eye (but no supercilium). Darker wings have yellowish feather edges and tips to median and greater coverts, forming rather diffuse, narrow wing bars. Tail has no white, but, when spread, feathers show distinctly yellow inner webs (most extensive in males); underside of tail appears very yellow when viewed from below. Adult male has distinct reddish streaking on underparts and much yellower head than female, and is unlikely to be confused. For females and 1st-winter males, confusion possible with female Wilson's Warbler, but latter has uniformly dark tail (without yellow), a yellow supercilium that is clearly differentiated from greenish or blackish crown, plainer wings that lack yellow wing bars or feather edges, paler legs and slightly more conical, two-tone bill. Female Hooded Warbler has conspicuous white in outer tail feathers and has greenish crown and nape clearly differentiated from yellow face, uniformly olive wings (without yellow) and uniformly dark tail (without yellow). Female Common Yellowthroat skulks low in cover and has yellow restricted to throat and upper breast plus undertail coverts (oily toned on latter), brownish flanks, very

uniform olive wings (without yellow) and a rounded, uniformly dark tail (without yellow). Yellow is less cover-loving than many other warblers, freely perching on tops of bushes, but very active, dropping to feed in open on ground and returning to perch, often flicking tail.

SEX/AGE Adult male summer has deep yellow head and reddish streaking on underparts; adult male winter is very similar but has crown and nape tinged greenish and less distinct reddish streaking below. Adult female duller and paler overall, with greenish crown/nape and at most faint streaking on underparts. 1st-winters resemble adult female, but have tertials more worn, with whitish rather than yellow edges, and less yellow in tail; young females distinctly pale yellow and greyish-olive overall compared with brighter young males, and latter may show very weak reddish streaking at sides of breast under optimum viewing conditions.

VOICE Usual call a soft but clear 'chip'; in flight gives a high, thin 'zeet'. Song is a clear, lively 'tseet-tseet-tseet-sitta-sitta-see' (sometimes rendered 'sweet-sweet-sweet-I'm-so-sweet').

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, found in thickets, especially willows or alders near water, bushy open woodland, clearings, hedgerows, garden shrubbery; also mangroves.

Plate page 794

CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER *Dendroica pensylvanica***Plate page 796**

L 12.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. In winter plumage, all birds are unstreaked lime green on crown and upperparts (adult male may show weak dark streaks on crown and mantle), contrasting with greyish-white ear-coverts and entire underparts, and with blackish wings, the latter with two bold yellowish-white bars. There is no supercilium, but a white eye-ring may be noticeable. The dark tail shows whitish patches, and the bill and legs are blackish. Summer-plumaged birds are totally different, having heavily streaked upperparts, yellowish crown, blackish crown sides and malar stripe, rich chestnut flanks (most extensive in males) and whitish remainder of underparts and sides of head. Unlikely to be confused in winter plumage; unmistakable in summer. Feeds in low shrubbery and small trees, hopping through foliage and chasing insects in short flights. Often cocks tail.

SEX/AGE Sexes similar, but in adult summer plumage female duller than male, with paler yellow crown, less distinct head pattern and less extensive chestnut on flanks, but probably inseparable from some 1st-summer males. In autumn and winter all birds similar (see Identification), but adult males have vestiges of chestnut on flanks and often show some streaking above. 1st-summers closely resemble respective adults, but average slightly duller.

VOICE Usual call a sharp 'chip', slightly softer than call of Yellow Warbler. Song is a loud, clear, somewhat variable whistling, sometimes rendered 'please-please-please-to-meetcha'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, breeds in bushy undergrowth, thickets and areas of small trees, especially favouring woodland edges, regrowing cleared deciduous woodland and abandoned fields or pastures.

BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER *Dendroica caerulescens***Plate page 797**

L 12.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Unmistakable in all plumages. **Male** is dark blue on head and upperparts, with black face, throat, sides of breast and flanks contrasting with gleaming white centre of breast and lower underparts and conspicuous white patch at base of primaries; has conspicuous white patches in outer tail. **Female** is also quite distinctive, being a rather dull dark greyish olive-green above and buffy-yellow below, with conspicuous whitish supercilium, a broken whitish eye-ring and (as in male) conspicuous whitish patch at base of primaries. Some 1st-year females, however, have wing patch very small or absent and this could cause confusion, but no other parulid or Old World warbler approaches this species in coloration except perhaps Dusky, which is often skulking, more uniform in overall appearance (lacking strong contrast between pale underparts and whitish supercilium and dark upperparts of female Black-

throated Blue) and has wider supercilium and pinkish base to finer bill (bill of Black-throated Blue is sharply pointed, narrowly conical and wholly black). A bird of the tree canopy, where it actively flits and flycatches for insects as it works through the foliage.

SEX/AGE Sexes differ (see Identification). 1st-years resemble respective adults, but males often have whitish mottling on chin and lores and olive fringes to flight feathers contrast with blue fringes to greater coverts; young females often inseparable from adults, but often has white wing patch small or sometimes even absent.

VOICE Calls include a quiet ticking and a weak 'sep'. Song is a lazy, wheezy 'zweea-zweea-zweea-zwee', the last note ascending.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, breeds in deciduous and mixed woodland with shrubby undergrowth; also mountain laurel thickets.

BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER *Dendroica virens***Plate page 796**

L 12.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Combination of virtually unmarked green crown, mantle and rump, largely yellow or yellowish sides of head, blackish wings with bold double white bars and whitish, but well-streaked, underparts is diagnostic in all plumages. Throat and upper breast range from all black to all yellow, depending on sex and age. Tail has outer feathers mostly white on inner webs. Prominent wing bars and streaked underparts recall both Yellow-rumped and Magnolia Warblers, but both of these have yellow rump, and only Magnolia is greenish above (but has yellow underparts). An active bird of the tree canopy, where it spends much of its time working over a small area, rather than flitting from tree to tree like so many other species.

SEX/AGE Adult male has black throat and upper breast (with yellow feather tips in fresh plumage in

autumn) and very wide blackish streaking on flanks; adult female has unmarked pale yellow throat, black-mottled yellow upper breast and less intense streaking on flanks. 1st-winter males resemble adult female and are not separable in the field, but 1st-winter females have brownish-olive upperparts and palest yellow throat/upper breast (with little or no black mottling) and weakest flank streaking of all.

VOICE Usual call a high, thin, often repeated 'sit'. Song is a husky 'zeeee-zeeee-zee-zo-zee' (first two syllables recalling final buzz of Yellowhammer), often preceded by some fast ticking notes.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, breeds in more open coniferous and mixed woodland, especially areas with birch or aspen, woodland edges; on migration in all kinds of woodland, thickets etc.

BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER *Dendroica fusca***Plate page 797**

L 12.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Adult male summer is unmistakable with its flaming orange throat and chest and lighter orange crown centre, supercilium and sides of head, almost blackish upperparts and huge white wing patch. In other plumages the blackish ear-covert patch, surrounded by yellow or orangey supercilium, sides of neck and throat, dark greyish upperparts, double white wing bars, pale yellowish underparts with streaked flanks and very dark legs are the distinctive features of this warbler. Tail shows extensive white in outer feathers when spread. Unlikely to be confused. An active warbler of the tree canopy, conspicuously flitting, hovering and flycatching in search of insects among the outer leaves. Tends to keep high up in conifers on the breeding grounds.

SEX/AGE Compared with adult male summer, adult female is paler orange on throat, face and crown patch, has greyer upperparts and shows double wing

bars instead of a solid white patch. In winter plumage, male is closer to female in colour, but flank streaking, upperparts and ear-coverts are blacker. 1st-winters resemble adult female, but there is some contrast between black-centred greater coverts and browner, retained juvenile, flight feathers (especially in male); young females are the duller of all, and show little or no trace of a yellow patch on crown centre. 1st-summer male closely resembles adult male but shows moult contrast in wings.

VOICE Usual call a rich 'chip'. Most frequent song type is high and thin, ending in an ascending buzzy trill: 'sip-sip-sip-sip-titi-tzeeee'. A variant type sounds like 'zillup-zillup-zillup-zizizizi'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, breeds in tall coniferous and mixed forest, but at other times found in a variety of woodland and tall bushes.

CAPE MAY WARBLER *Dendroica tigrina***Plate page 795**

L 12.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Summer male is unmistakable; a distinctive, brightly-coloured warbler with chestnut ear-coverts, blackish crown, very large white wing patch and bright yellow neck sides. Combination of greenish upperparts and yellow underparts and sides of neck, heavy streaking on underparts, virtually unstreaked yellow or yellowish rump, whitish wing bars and tail patches, dark legs and sharply pointed, slightly decurved bill distinctive in most other plumages. Only confusion risk concerns duller 1st-winter females, which can be confusingly drab, grey-and-white birds, with little or no green or yellow in plumage apart from on rump. Such individuals suggest Yellow-rumped Warbler, but latter has clear lemon rump patch and (usually) patch at side of breast, browner and more heavily streaked upperparts, broken white eye-ring, clean, contrastingly pale throat and shorter, blunter bill. Autumn Blackpoll Warbler can also be similar, but general colour more uniform overall, with weaker streaking below, more streaking on rump and usually pinkish or yellowish (not blackish) legs. An arboreal warbler of the tree canopy, often keeping high in conifers on breeding grounds.

SEX/AGE Summer adults have bright yellow sides of head and underparts, with upperparts almost

unstreaked in fresh plumage (bolder when more abraded); male has almost blackish crown, chestnut ear-coverts (and sometimes supercilium above/behind eye), yellow rump and massive white wing patch, whereas female has plainer greenish head (with no chestnut on ear-coverts or supercilium), greenish-yellow rump, paler yellow underparts with less distinct streaking, and double whitish wing bars (instead of a solid patch). In winter plumage, male duller on head (with little or no chestnut on ear-coverts) and resembles brighter version of female, but easily sexed by wing patch. 1st-winters are similar to adult female, but males brighter (and show some contrast in wing between browner, retained juvenile, flight feathers and black-centred greater coverts); duller females may virtually lack green and yellow in plumage (see Identification). 1st-summer male resembles adult male summer, but shows less chestnut on ear-coverts.

VOICE Call a thin, very high 'tsip', recalling one of calls of Tennessee Warbler. Song is a very high, sibilant 'seet-seet-seet-seet'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range breeds in coniferous and mixed woodland, especially spruce forest; at other times all kinds of woodlands and thickets, but often favours pines.

MAGNOLIA WARBLER *Dendroica magnolia***Plate page 796**

L 12 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. In all plumages, has distinctive combination of yellow underparts and rump patch, grey head (blackish at sides and with white supercilium above and behind eye in summer males), whitish eye-ring, greenish mantle (blackish in summer males) and double white wing bars (huge, fairly solid white patch in summer males). The most notable feature in all plumages is the prominent white band halfway along otherwise blackish tail (with white on inner webs of all but central feathers); this white subterminal band is conspicuous when tail fanned (a frequent behaviour) or when bird seen from below. Summer adults are unmistakable, male being stunningly beautiful. Streaking on underparts especially black and broad in summer plumage, and streaking

usually apparent on mantle except in 1st-winter females. 1st-winters, especially females, are sometimes virtually unstreaked and may be more confusing, but yellowish underparts and clear yellow rump patch, plus tail pattern, are distinctive features. Unlikely to be confused in any plumage with species recorded from our region (but compare 1st-winter and adult female Prairie Warbler *D. discolor*, not yet recorded from our region; these can be similar, but have olive rump uniform with mantle, white in tail extending further towards tip, and the greyish breast band often shown by Magnolia is lacking). Magnolia is an arboreal warbler, actively foraging in interior of trees and shrubs, often flycatching and dropping to lower perches.

SEX/AGE Summer female duller than male, with

greener and more streaked (less blackish) mantle, greyer (less blackish) sides of head and double wing bars (instead of a fairly solid white patch); 1st-summer males, however, can be very similar to adult female. Adult male winter closely resembles adult female winter, but streaking generally bolder both above and below; in both sexes upperparts are greenish with reduced streaking, head/neck (except throat) is grey, there is a narrow, almost complete grey breast band and there are two distinct white wing bars. 1st-winters closely resemble adult female and most cannot be

aged, but males usually more streaked (as in adults), females often virtually unstreaked. 1st-summer closely resemble respective adults, but average duller.

VOICE Call a distinctive, high, rather hard 'dzip' or 'tlep', sometimes repeated. Song is a rather variable, clear, ascending whistling 'weety-weety-weety-weeteo', 'wisha-wisha-wisha-witsy' or similar.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, breeds in stands of young conifers, especially spruce or fir, but occurs in other kinds of woodland or thickets on migration.

YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER *Dendroica coronata*

Plate page 795

Myrtle Warbler

L 13.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Rather long-tailed, but with a shorter bill than most other *Dendroica* species. In all plumages, has white or whitish underparts with dark streaking (but clean white or whitish throat), bright (strongly contrasting) yellow rump and patch on side of breast, usually a small yellow patch at centre of crown, boldly streaked blue-grey (summer male) or grey-brown upperparts, and double white wing bars. Tail shows extensive white on inner webs of outer feathers near tips. Streaking on underparts forms blackish breast band in summer-plumaged males. Unlikely to be confused in any plumage, but note that yellow patches on crown and sides of breast are reduced and difficult to see, or even absent in 1st-winters (and crown patch much reduced in adult females also). Forages lower than many species, happily feeding in low weedy vegetation, or hopping on ground, but equally at home among foliage of bushes and trees.

SEX/AGE Adult male summer has blue-grey upperparts, yellow crown centre, blackish ear-coverts and breast, and white throat; adult female duller and

browner-grey on ear-coverts and upperparts, with yellow crown patch small or faint and breast streaking less prominent (often not forming a dark breast band). Adult male winter and 1st-winters resemble adult female, but adult males often show some bluish-grey on upperparts and have more boldly streaked breast and flanks; 1st-winters difficult to age, but duller birds without yellow crown patch, with only weak yellow patch on breast side (or no yellow at all) and reduced dark streaking on underparts are females. 1st-summer closely resemble respective adults, but average a little duller.

VOICE Calls include a loud, hard, rather metallic 'chek' or 'tick' and a thin 'tsi'. Song is a slow, clear 'tuwee-tuwee-tuwee-tuwee...', often changing in pitch towards end.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, breeds in more open coniferous and mixed woodland than most other warblers: at other times of year all kinds of woodland, hedgerows, thickets, parks, gardens etc.

PALM WARBLER *Dendroica palmarum*

Plate page 795

L 13.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Spends much time feeding on ground where overall appearance may suggest a strange, stumpy pipit rather than a warbler. Summer-plumaged birds have bright chestnut crown, yellow supercilium and underparts (belly whitish in nominate race), with reddish-brown streaking on flanks and breast and a dark malar stripe; the upperparts and ear-coverts are dull brownish-olive, with very weak streaking, becoming brighter and more yellowish on the rump and uppertail coverts, and there are only indistinct double wing bars. Unlikely to be confused. In autumn markedly duller overall, with brownish crown and underpart streaking and pale yellow or whitish underparts contrastingly with the bright yellow undertail coverts (especially in nominate race, which is otherwise whitish or at most yellowish-tinged below). Pipit-like impression enhanced by constant tail-wagging and white corner spots in spread tail; readily feeds in open, on lawns etc., retiring to safety of low perches when alarmed. Dis-

tinctive behaviour and bright yellow undertail coverts of winter-plumaged individuals render them unlikely to be confused.

SEX/AGE All plumages similar. In winter plumage, chestnut of crown partly obscured by brownish feather tips, upperparts browner (less olive), underparts less strongly streaked, and supercilium and throat to belly pale yellow (in eastern race, *hypochrysea*) or whitish (in nominate race) contrasting with bright yellow undertail coverts. Ageing and sexing not possible owing to individual variation.

VOICE Call a weak 'sip', but generally silent.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 2 races (both illustrated). Western, nominate race has uniformly yellow underparts in summer plumage. Racial identity of vagrants to our region uncertain.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, breeds in northern spruce/larch bogs, but winters in open areas (often near water) such as damp fields, ditches, garden lawns and woodland borders.

BLACKPOLL WARBLER *Dendroica striata*

Plate page 795

L 13.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. A relatively large, dull greyish-olive warbler in most plumages,

with diffuse streaking on mantle and flanks of varying intensity, duller birds appearing almost unmarked.

Underparts whitish from lower breast down, with buff wash on throat and breast. Dull overall coloration contrasts with mainly blackish wings and double white wing bars. Legs are usually pinkish or yellowish (but in some are darker and browner). Shows white tail patches when hovering. Compare with drabber autumn Cape May and Blackburnian Warblers, but otherwise confusion unlikely except with similar 1st-winter Bay-breasted Warbler *D. castanea* (see Appendix), which has dark grey legs, is more buff or yellowish on flanks and belly (sometimes very pale chestnut on flanks), is virtually unstreaked either above or below, has slightly greener upperparts, has little or no trace of a pale supercilium and dark eye-stripe (so looks very 'blank-faced'). Summer male recalls Black-and-white Warbler (q.v.), but has solid black crown and different behaviour so is most unlikely to be confused. Very active, constantly on the move between trees and bushes, hovering and fly-catching; flight very strong and bounding.

AGE/SEX Adult male summer is heavily streaked black and white (including sides of breast and flanks), with black crown and white throat and ear-coverts. Adult

female has dark-streaked, greyish-green crown and ear-coverts, greyish-green tinge to mantle, whitish supercilium and dark eye-stripe (absent in male) and a very faint yellow tinge to underparts; lacks black sides to throat. Winter adults of both sexes and 1st-winters all very similar and because of individual variation are difficult to sex and age, but most strongly streaked birds are adult males and most indistinctly streaked are 1st-years. Differ from adult female summer in having weaker dark streaking on upperparts, a yellowish-buff suffusion on supercilium, throat and breast, extending more weakly to flanks, and only weak, diffuse streaking on underparts (mainly on breast sides).

VOICE Calls include a loud 'smack' (like a brief kiss to the back of the hand), a loud, hard 'chip' and a thin, high 'seet'. Song is an extremely high 'sit-sit-sit-sit-sit...', increasing in volume before fading.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, breeds in northern coniferous forest, especially spruces, and including burnt areas, forest edges and stunted forest at the edge of the tundra; at other times found in a broad range of woodlands, thickets, bushy areas etc.

AMERICAN REDSTART *Setophaga ruticilla*

Plate page 798

L 13 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Unmistakable. A rather flycatcher-like bird with prominent tail which is often held cocked and partly fanned to expose extensive bright orange or yellow patches on either side of tail base. **Adult male** has head, breast and upperparts black throughout year, and tail, wing and breast side patches are orange. **Other plumages** are much less striking, consisting of greyish-olive upperparts, greyish head and whitish underparts, but yellow or pale orange patch on side of breast and yellow wing and tail patches are distinctive and make confusion very unlikely. Dullest 1st-winter females may lack yellow wing patches and have only dull pale yellow patches on sides of breast, but distinctive tail pattern always present. Flits and flycatches within canopy of thickets and trees, often briefly hovering to expose striking tail pattern, or perching with wings slightly drooped and tail cocked and partly fanned.

SEX/AGE Adult males and females differ markedly (see Identification). 1st-winters/summers resemble adult female, but young males have yellow extending onto primary bases (yellow patch usually, but not always, restricted to bases of secondaries in adult females) and often some black mottling in 1st-summer plumage, while 1st-winter/summer females are prone to lack any visible yellow in wing.

VOICE Calls include a thin, clear 'tzit' and a hard clicking 'chick' or 'tsip'. Song is variable; usually a high, lisping 'tsee-tsee-tsee-tsee-sir' with the last note down-slurred, but also has a version with up-slurred last note and a Black-and-white Warbler-like 'teetsy-teetsy'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe, Azores). In natural range, breeds in fairly open deciduous and mixed forest (especially second growth), woodland edges, groves and thickets.

OVENBIRD *Seiurus aurocapillus*

Plate page 798

L 14.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Unmistakable. Recalls a skulking, plump, short-tailed pipit in plumage and ground-feeding habits, this pipit-like impression is enhanced by characteristic tail-pumping behaviour. In all plumages, has unstreaked dull olive-brown upperparts, whitish underparts with heavy dark, pipit-like streaking on breast and flanks, and a rufous median crown-stripe bordered prominently on either side by a blackish lateral crown-stripe. Recalls Northern Waterthrush, but lacks latter's conspicuous supercilium (having a plain-faced appearance apart from a conspicuous whitish eye-ring) and crown pattern/coloration distinctly different. Walks sedately on open ground under trees or bushes searching the leaf litter, flicking tail suddenly upwards and depressing it slowly; when nervous, tends to skulk under dense undergrowth.

SEX/AGE 1st-years in autumn/winter often still show inconspicuous rufous tips to retained juvenile tertials and sometimes buffy tips to retained juvenile greater coverts (forming a weak wing bar), they also (especially females) tend to have duller, less distinct crown pattern (with orange-rufous washed with olive or buff).

VOICE Call a sharp, clicking 'chuk' or 'tsuk', repeated when agitated. Song is a monotonous but clear 'teacher-teacher-teacher...', or variantly 'teach-teach-teach...', gaining in volume as it proceeds.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, breeds in deciduous, closed-canopy woodland with rather dry open ground and much leaf litter at the forest floor; also locally in rather open mixed or coniferous forest, including swampy situations.

NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH *Seiurus noveboracensis***Plate page 798**

L 14 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Like Ovenbird, resembles a skulking, plump, short-tailed pipit rather than a warbler in plumage and ground-feeding habits, this again enhanced by tail-wagging behaviour. Has unstreaked dull earthy-brown upperparts, pale yellowish-white underparts with heavy dark streaking and a very conspicuous long buffy-white supercilium, reaching almost to nape. Striking supercilium (and rather plain dark crown) easily separates this species from plainer-headed Ovenbird. Very similar, but slightly larger, Louisiana Waterthrush *S. motacilla* (not yet recorded in our region) difficult to separate owing to individual variation within both species, but Louisiana has stouter bill, whiter supercilium (but may be brown-tinged on lore, and some Northern have very white supercilium, too), unspotted throat (throat usually finely speckled in Northern) and whiter, less boldly-streaked underparts that show some contrast with warm buff rear flanks and undertail coverts

(underparts creamy-white or, more often, tinged pale yellow in Northern). Walks on ground, skulking in waterside cover, bobbing head and wagging tail like a Common Sandpiper as it feeds. Explosive call usually first clue to its presence.

SEX/AGE 1st-years in autumn/winter often show inconspicuous rufous tips to retained juvenile tertials and sometimes buffy tips to retained juvenile greater coverts (forming a weak wing bar); also lack small whitish tail spots of adults (but these generally invisible in field).

VOICE Call is an explosive, sharp, metallic 'chink', recalling call of White-throated Dipper. Song is a loud, clear series of notes with a lower-pitched but accelerating staccato ending; 'sweet-sweet-sweet-sweet-sweet-wee-wee-chew-chew-chew'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, breeds in waterside or boggy thickets, especially willows and alders, and wooded swamps; at other times also frequents mangroves.

COMMON YELLOWTHROAT *Geothlypis trichas***Plate page 798****Yellowthroat**

L 12.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Very skulking brownish-olive and yellow little bird with short, sharp bill, relatively steep forehead, pinkish legs and (rather unusually for a parulid) a round-tipped tail, usually drawing attention to itself by its call. **Adult male** unmistakable, with black facial mask bordered above and behind by a whitish-grey band and bright yellow throat and breast. **Female** (and many young males) very plain brownish-olive above and buffy-yellow below, with yellow wash only on throat, centre of upper breast and undertail coverts (flanks and sides of breast pale buff-brown), but distinctive shape, call and skulking habits are useful clues; short wings often produce a relatively long-tailed impression. Often shows a pale yellowish, frequently incomplete eye-ring. Unlikely to be confused. Skulks in low, dense, usually damp vegetation, calling frequently, sometimes clambering into view briefly with tail cocked before descending out of sight. **SEX/AGE** Sexes differ (see Identification). Ageing dif-

ficult in the field, but many 1st-winter males in autumn show at least a hint of blackish facial mask and whitish-grey border coming through; some individuals approach adult male, but these have some brown and white mottling on ear-coverts, and often retain a pale eye-ring. 1st-summer males often closely resemble adult male. 1st-winter females tend to be duller than adult female and often show only a hint of yellow on throat and upper breast (occasionally throat/upper breast is plain buff).

VOICE Call a sharp, husky 'chep' or 'tchuk', repeatedly uttered as bird moves through vegetation. Song is a loud, rolling, but rather variable 'witchity-witchity-witchity'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, found in bushes, rushes and other low cover by marshes, pools and streams, or in brushy pastures, roadsides, woodland edges and regenerating woodland.

HOODED WARBLER *Wilsonia citrina***Plate page 798**

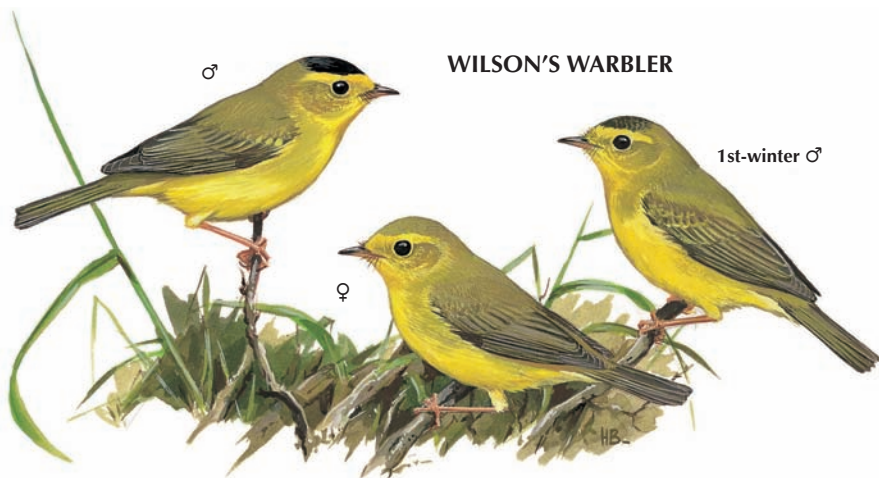
L 12.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. The only warbler with a combination of greenish upperparts, yellow underparts and conspicuous white on outer tail feathers, lacking any streaking or wing bars. **Male** unmistakable with its black hood and upper breast and clear yellow ear-coverts and forehead. **Female** resembles female Wilson's Warbler, but is larger, with a larger bill, a longer, fuller and more round-tipped tail with much white in outer feathers (tail shorter, cleft-tipped and plain-coloured in Wilson's), a dusky stripe on lore and a more clear-cut border between yellow face and greenish nape; also shows either an all-black bill (breeding season) or a slightly paler, horn-coloured base to lower mandible (base of lower mandible pale pinkish in Wilson's). Feeds in low bushy cover, but not very skulking, readily hovering and actively flitting and flycatching while feeding, showing conspicuous white outer tail.

SEX/AGE Sexes differ (see Identification), but many females have vestiges of male's black (especially on the crown and behind the ear-coverts, less often on throat), and a few (probably older individuals) show quite extensive black. 1st-winters closely resemble respective adults and cannot be reliably aged in the field (but those individuals lacking even a trace of black on head/throat are probably 1st-winter females).

VOICE Calls include a sharp 'chip' (loud and metallic when agitated) and a higher 'cheep'. Song is a loud, rapid, clear, ringing 'weeta, weeta, wee-tee-o'; recalls Magnolia Warbler, but 'tee' note is much higher than rest of song and final part is louder and more emphatic than in Magnolia.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, breeds in the dense, low understorey of mature deciduous woodland, often near streams.



WILSON'S WARBLER

WILSON'S WARBLER *Wilsonia pusilla*

Plate above

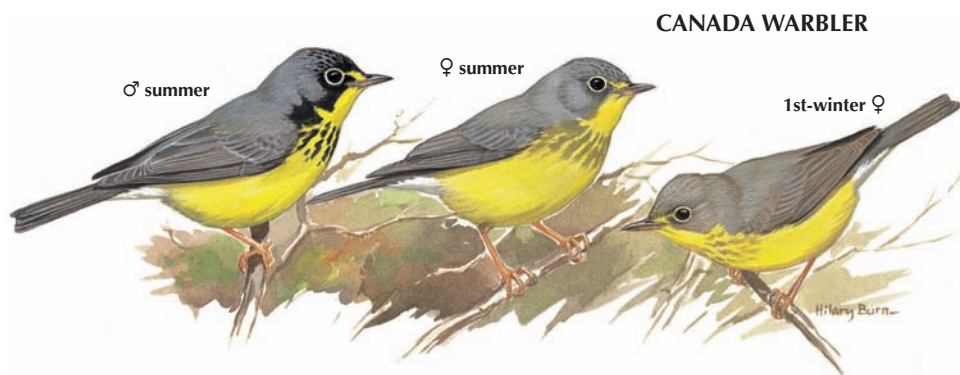
L 11.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. A small (Chiffchaff-sized) bright olive and yellow warbler, lacking wing bars, tail pattern or streaking. **Male** unmistakable with its neat black 'skullcap'. **Female** usually shows little or no black on crown and so might be confused with female Hooded Warbler (q.v.). An active warbler, often feeding higher up than Hooded, but freely feeds in low bushy cover and may descend briefly to ground. Constantly flicks wings and tail while foraging and indulges in brief flycatching and hovering antics.

SEX/AGE Sexes differ (see Identification), but some females show some blackish mottling on crown (especially when worn). 1st-years closely resemble respective adults.

VOICE Usual call a sharp 'chip'. Song is a rapid, staccato, chattering 'chi-chi-chi-chi-chi-chet-chet', dropping in pitch at end.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, breeds in waterside thickets (especially willows or alders), dwarf birches, streamside tangles and, in mountains, bushy hillsides or alpine meadows.



CANADA WARBLER

CANADA WARBLER *Wilsonia canadensis*

Plate above

L 12.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Unmistakable. In all plumages shows unstreaked blue-grey upperparts and canary-yellow underparts with contrasting white undertail coverts; head shows bold whitish eye-ring and a yellow streak on lore, and there is a necklace of black (male) or dusky (female) mottling across upper breast; legs a strikingly pale pinkish-orange. Lacks pale wing bars or tail spots. An active warbler, feeding quite conspicuously in foliage of bushes and low trees, sometimes

cocking tail. Keeps low down, often hovering briefly.

SEX/AGE All plumages similar, but male brighter than female, with blackish (rather than greyish) markings on forehead and side of head/neck, and bolder, blacker necklace. 1st-winters/summers closely resemble respective adults, but average a little duller (so some young males close to adult female).

VOICE Call a quiet, dry 'chick' or 'check', recalling one of calls of House Sparrow. Song is a rapid burst of

rather staccato notes, often introduced or terminated by a single or double 'chip', and often incorporating a characteristic 'ditchety'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, breeds in moist mixed forest with dense undergrowth, waterside thickets.

TANAGERS Thraupidae

2 species (both vagrant)

Tanagers are a large and varied New World family of fairly small, mostly brightly-coloured, perching birds, two species of which have occurred as vagrants to our region. Adult males are usually very brightly coloured (either all year or at least in summer plumage), but adult females and immatures are considerably duller and, as with most vagrants, it is usually immatures which turn up in our region. Found primarily in forest and woodland, where they feed largely on insects and also on fruit and seeds to a lesser extent. The two species which have occurred here are fairly small but rather bulky arboreal birds with rather large, strong bills. They usually feed within the tree canopy, but sometimes flycatch from perches. Their flight action is strong and bounding.

Sexes differ markedly in N American species. Immatures in first autumn closely resemble adult females. Attain adult plumage by second autumn.

The chunky shape and stout bill of tanagers suggest European Greenfinch in some respects, but their bills are longer and less conical and their canopy-feeding behaviour is quite different. Some escaped cagebirds, especially female-type weavers, recall adult female/immature tanagers in overall coloration, but once again behaviour and bill shape differ.

SUMMER TANAGER *Piranga rubra*

Plate page 799

L 17 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. A bulky, rather finch-like bird (larger than European Greenfinch) with a stout, fairly pale bill. **Adult male** is a remarkable rose-red all over, including wings and tail, although both a little duller than body plumage; red plumage retained throughout the year, but bill browner in winter. Lack of black in wings and tail prevents confusion with Scarlet Tanager. Uniform red from chin to tail prevents confusion with rosefinches and crossbills, which also have brownish in wings and tail and different head-and-bill shape. **Female and 1st-winter male** are dull brownish-olive with a yellowish tinge above (paler and yellower on forehead and rump) and deep yellow or orange-yellow below, lacking any markings or facial pattern of note. Female and 1st-winter male Scarlet Tanager are similar, distinctions being discussed under that species.

SEX/AGE In both sexes, bill palest in breeding season. Some adult females show red tinge to plumage of wings, tail and body. 1st-winter male is a deeper orange-yellow below than adult female or 1st-winter female; 1st-summer male shows red patches on body, 2nd-years are close to adults but are a duller, yellower red. 1st-winters of both sexes may show pale tips to retained juvenile tertials.

VOICE Migrants generally silent, but may give a 'chick' (sometimes repeated) or a rapid, chattering, staccato 'pit-a-chuck' or 'pik-i-tuck', or longer 'pik-i-tuck-i-tuck'. Song is a sweet, clear series of rather thrush-like phrases.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, breeds in oak or pine-oak woodland, cottonwood groves.

SCARLET TANAGER *Piranga olivacea*

Plate page 799

L 16 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. A bulky, rather finch-like bird (a little larger than European Greenfinch) with a stout, usually fairly pale bill. **Adult male summer** a striking scarlet bird with contrasting black wings, scapulars and tail. **Adult male winter** loses red coloration, males then resembling adult females but differing in retaining all-black wings, scapulars and tail, also an easy distinction from Summer Tanager. **Female or 1st-winter male** plumage recalls that of Summer Tanager (q.v.). Scarlet, however, is duller and cooler, more lemon-yellow, below (not the deeper, warmer yellow or orange-yellow of Summer), and bright olive-green above (not the dull brownish-

olive of Summer); the bill is shorter, not so thick and usually darker, there is usually a complete whitish eye-ring (broken in Summer) and the underwing coverts are whitish (not yellowish or pale orange as in Summer; this is almost impossible to see in the field, but useful in the hand). Additionally 1st-winter male Scarlet shows striking black 'shoulders', which is diagnostic, as Summer never shows any black in wings.

SEX/AGE Adult male winter differs from adult female in having black wings, scapulars and tail. Moulting males show strange patchwork of red and green feathering. 1st-winters closely resemble adult female but 1st-winter male easily identified by black upperwing

coverts and scapulars. 1st-winters of both sexes usually show pale tips to retained juvenile tertials and sometimes to retained juvenile outer greater coverts. 1st-summer male closely resembles adult but can be aged by brownish, retained juvenile, flight feathers (wings wholly black in adult male).

VOICE Migrants generally silent, but typical call is a distinctive soft, hoarse 'chip-burrr'. Song is rather similar to that of Summer Tanager.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, breeds in mature deciduous woodland (sometimes mixed woodland or pines).

BUNTINGS *Emberizidae*

36 species (17 vagrant)

A rather complex family of small or fairly small seed-eating birds. Found mainly in scrub, woodland, open country with scattered trees or bushes and at edges of cultivation, but some species inhabit reed-beds or tundra. Feed mainly on ground, often underneath bushes or among weedy vegetation. Gait hopping, flight quite strong. Often form small flocks outside breeding season. Songs quite varied, but typically scratchy and rattling. Most of the species found in our region fall into two categories: Old World buntings of the genus *Emberiza* and vagrant American 'sparrows'.

American sparrows and buntings are rare vagrants, the majority having occurred on the coasts of Britain, Ireland and Iceland in spring. This pattern of occurrence differs markedly from that of vagrant American wood warblers, which have turned up almost exclusively in autumn. As with vagrant American wood warblers, a number of additional species could well reach our shores and so reference to N American field guides is essential. Despite their name, American sparrows are actually buntings, being relatively longer-tailed and sleeker than the Old World sparrows, and several of the drabber species have streaked underparts, unlike true sparrows. Like Old World sparrows, but unlike most Old World buntings, most American sparrows lack white in the tail. In most species, there is little or no sex- or age-related variation in plumage. As with most buntings, they feed on the ground under cover of bushes or among weedy vegetation. Owing to the predominantly spring occurrence of these vagrants, some individuals have been found in song.

Sexes differ in most species (but are similar in many American sparrows). Juveniles typically resemble adult females. Adult plumage is often attained by first spring, but sometimes only by the autumn of second calendar year.

Buntings differ from finches and true sparrows in being relatively longer-tailed and in having more curving, almost S-shaped cutting edges to the mandibles. Many species also have a distinctive 'stripy' facial pattern complete with pale submoustachial stripe bordered above by dark moustachial stripe and below by a dark malar stripe.

Bunting identification can be tricky. So far as *Emberiza* are concerned, points on which to concentrate are:

Head colour and pattern (including presence or absence of conspicuous pale eye-ring) • **Underpart coloration** • **Bill coloration**

EASTERN TOWHEE *Pipilo erythrophthalmus*

Plate page 801

Rufous-sided Towhee

L 19–20 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Unmistakable. A fairly large, bulky, long-tailed, strong-billed, finch-like bird with black (male) or dark brown (female) head, upper breast and upperparts, white central underparts, rusty flanks and sides of lower breast, buff undertail coverts, and white tail corners and wing patch (on primaries). Feeds on ground, often with raised tail, under cover of bushes, into which it retreats when alarmed.

SEX/AGE Male has black head, upper breast and upperparts; these areas dark brown in female. Juvenile (very unlikely to be seen in our region) resembles adult female but is heavily streaked both above and below. 1st-winters resemble respective adults, but have browner flight feathers and initially a drab (not red) iris.

VOICE Usual call a rising, interrogative 'tow-whee?' or sometimes 'chee-wink'; also gives a soft 'hew' and a sharp, metallic 'sit'. Song variable, but based on two clear notes (second lower in pitch) followed by a medium-pitched trill; 'tuee tuee tee-tee-tee-tee' (has been rendered as 'drink-your-tea-ee-ee-ee-ee').

TAXONOMY Western forms (not recorded from our region except as escapes) have bold white spotting on scapulars and double white wing bars, and are now treated as a full species: **Spotted Towhee** *P. maculatus*.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION. Moderate, but only nominate race so far recorded from our region.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, bushy undergrowth, thickets, woodland edges and gardens.

LARK SPARROW

**LARK SPARROW** *Chondestes grammacus*

Plate above

L 16 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. A distinctive large, plump New World 'sparrow' with blackish, slightly round-tipped, tail that is broadly edged and even more widely tipped with white. Striking chestnut and white striped head pattern, blackish malar stripe, conspicuous white tail corners (in flight) and virtually unmarked underparts, except for often inconspicuous dark spot in centre of breast, make confusion with any other species unlikely. A bird of open country, feeding on ground and perching on

low vegetation.

SEX/AGE Juvenile (very unlikely to be seen in our region) has streaked underparts and duller head pattern.

VOICE Call a sharp, often rapidly repeated 'tsip'. Song consists of two clear notes followed by a series of musical notes and trills and harsh buzzings.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, found in open farmland and waste ground with grassy and weedy vegetation.

SAVANNAH SPARROW

**SAVANNAH SPARROW** *Passerculus sandwichensis*

Plate above

L 14 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Nondescript, recalling a small, short-tailed female bunting or pipit in its rather featureless and overall well-streaked appearance. The tail is notched and short (being clearly shorter than the length of the closed wing), and lacks obvious white in outer feathers (although these are paler and sandier-buff, they show no obvious contrast). The most useful features are the yellow lore and fore-supercilium (between bill and eye), and the bright pinkish legs, but yellow on lore/supercilium varies, being very pale and inconspicuous in some populations, especially in fresh plumage in autumn. Overall coloration varies from sandy-brown to relatively dark brown, and intensity of streaking also variable, being finest on paler races. Streaked crown shows fairly clear whitish median stripe. Easily sepa-

rated from some otherwise superficially similar female/immature Old World buntings (e.g. Reed, Yellow-browed) by lacking white outer tail feathers and in having a relatively shorter tail; also shows broader dark centres to tertials and narrower pale fringes. Only Corn Bunting is so well streaked and lacking white in outer tail, but this is a bulkier, longer-tailed bird (with pale tips to tail feathers), has plain crown, lacks yellow in loreal area and has different call. See also Song Sparrow. In behaviour recalls a small pipit, running and walking in open country (some races also hop), but bunting-like bill and lack of white in tail easily exclude that possibility.

VOICE Calls include a thin 'tsi' or 'seep' (often given in flight) and a harder 'sip'. Song starts with 2-5 sharp 'chip' notes followed by two buzzing trills of different

pitches, usually the first being longer, very high-pitched and insect-like; song of race *princeps* (Ipswich Sparrow) tends to be less buzzing, often terminating in a sound recalling 'kee-arr' of Common Tern.

TAXONOMY The only race which has wandered to our region is *princeps*, which was formerly considered a full species under the name **Ipswich Sparrow**.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Complex. A large number of races occur in native range, but only one

recorded from our region, *princeps*, which is relatively larger, longer-legged and paler and more sandy-grey than most others.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, found in open country with dense but fairly low vegetation, including grassland, weedy fields, marshes, alpine meadows and tundra. Race *princeps* ('Ipswich Sparrow') also feeds amongst dune slacks and along sandy shorelines.

FOX SPARROW *Passerella iliaca*

Plate page 801

L 18 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. A bulky, bunting-like bird (same size as Corn Bunting) with strong bill, heavily streaked underparts and no white in slightly notched tail. Very variable in coloration of upperparts over its native range, but only eastern nominate race recorded from our region. This race has broad rusty or dark brown streaking on mantle and underparts (the triangular markings on underparts often coalescing to form dark blotch at centre of breast), bright russet rump and tail, mainly rusty-brown wings (especially secondaries and greater coverts), and grey tones to supercilium and sides of neck that contrast with rusty-brown ear-coverts. Large size and reddish-brown rump and tail, without white sides, prevent confusion with other bunting-like birds, but compare Song Sparrow, which is slimmer and slightly longer-tailed and has blunter-tipped and less rufous tail, darker streaking below and paler ear-co-

verts with dark surround. A shy and skulking bird, feeding on ground under cover of undergrowth among leaf litter, often noisily kicking leaves about as it feeds.

VOICE Calls include a 'chip', a 'click' and a drawn-out 'stsssp'. Song a series of loud, clear, melodious notes, gradually rising in pitch before falling away and often admixed with some buzzing trills.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Complex, with a large number of races in native range, but only eastern nominate race recorded in our region so far. (Western races tend to be unstreaked above, and range from overall dark brown on head, upperparts and tail to rusty on rump/tail and either brown or grey on head/mantle.)

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, favours dense undergrowth in both coniferous and deciduous woodland, especially thickets by streams; also stunted conifers, tall scrub etc.

SONG SPARROW *Melospiza melodia*

Plate page 801

L 15 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Colour and pattern of upperparts as well as ground-feeding habits remarkably similar to those of Dunnock, but head and underparts suggest a female Common Reed Bunting. Head shows dark reddish-brown crown sides with pale median stripe (often inconspicuous), pale buffy-brown ear-coverts bordered with dark reddish-brown and a dull, fairly pale greyish supercilium. The breast and flanks are strongly striped with dark brown, and there is a heavy blackish malar stripe bordering pale throat. Lack of white in relatively long, blunt or slightly round-tipped tail is an easy distinction from similarly patterned female Old World buntings (and tertial pattern differs in same way as for Savannah Sparrow). Bold underpart streaking a ready distinction from drabber White-throated Sparrows. Darker races of Savannah Sparrow are less reddish-brown overall and have yellowish loreal area, brighter pink legs (dull pinkish-brown in Song), a slight notch at tip of markedly shorter tail and a tendency to feed in

more open situations (recalling a pipit rather than a Dunnock). Compare also markedly larger, brighter rufous-tailed Fox Sparrow (tail dull rufous and brownish in Song), which has darker rufous ear-coverts, purer grey supercilium and sides of neck and small notch in tail. Very skulking, feeding on ground under cover of bushes and low scrub, hopping about with tail slightly raised; tail is readily pumped up and down, both on ground and in flight.

VOICE Calls include a distinctive nasal, hollow 'chimp' and a thin 'tsee'. Song a series of clear notes followed by a short buzzing rattle and a trill.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Complex. A number of races in native range, but only eastern nominate race recorded from our region. (Westernmost races are darker, greyer and larger, whereas birds from more arid regions are paler and more sandy.)

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, found in scrub and thickets, especially undergrowth by streams and ponds, woodland edges and hedgerows.

WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW *Zonotrichia leucophrys*

Plate page 801

L 17 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. **Adult** is virtually unmistakable, having unmarked ash-grey sides of head, throat and breast, becoming white on belly and pale brownish-buff on flanks. Head pattern striking, with bright white median crown-stripe and supercilium, black crown sides and eye-stripe and mainly pinkish bill; white crown feathers often fluffed up into a low ruffled dome. **1st-winter** has duller, although

still striking, head pattern. Only possible confusion is with White-throated Sparrow which has bright white throat, darker bill and usually yellowish lores. Less skulking than many American Sparrows, feeding on ground in open, but usually not far from cover into which it retreats when alarmed; readily perches on bushes.

SEX/AGE Juvenile (most unlikely to be seen in our

region) is similar to 1st-winter but is finely but distinctly dark-streaked on breast and flanks, and lacks grey neck sides and clean-cut head pattern (instead has dark border to ear-coverts, dark malar stripe and dark spotting on pale buff median crown-stripe). 1st-winter has duller head pattern than adult with crown sides and eye-stripe brown, brown-washed ear-coverts and white areas on head tinged with buff.

VOICE Calls include a sudden, rather metallic 'chink' or 'pink' and a thin, high 'tseep' (similar to calls of White-throated). Song variable, being one or two

clear whistled notes followed by two or three drier, and often more trilled notes.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. Some races lack black on lores, whereas northeastern nominate race (to which vagrants to our region belong) has black eye-stripe reaching bill base.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, breeds in a wide variety of shrubby habitats including open woodland, bushy thickets, stunted conifers, bushy tundra, mountain shrubbery, parks and gardens.

WHITE-THROATED SPARROW *Zonotrichia albicollis*

Plate page 801

L 16 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Polymorphic. Brighter, white-striped morph adults have black-and-white head pattern, ash-grey ear-coverts and breast and a bright yellow fore-supercilium. These recall adult White-crowned, but easily separated by striking white throat (bordered narrowly with black, especially below), darker bill and yellow fore-supercilium. Bill is mostly horn-coloured rather than pinkish. Tan-striped morph adults are duller, with pale buffish-brown supercilium (dull yellow in front of eye) and median crown-stripe, browner lateral crown-stripe and eye-stripe and more brownish-grey breast and sides of head and neck, but striking white throat prevents confusion with otherwise fairly similar 1st-winter White-crowned. Upperpart coloration and posture markedly Dunnock-like. Juvenile (very unlikely to be seen in our region) is very similar to juvenile White-crowned Sparrow but is more rufous above, whiter on lower underparts and has a more obvious supercilium in front of eye. Could be confused with Song Sparrow,

but has less prominent dark malar stripe, more prominent pale median crown-stripe and finer streaking on underparts. Feed on ground in open, but usually not far from cover, into which it retreats when alarmed. Readily perches on bushes.

SEX/AGE Sexes similar, but adults polymorphic (see Identification). Juvenile described under Identification. 1st-winter closely resembles duller tan-striped adults, but has dull brown, not reddish-brown, iris.

VOICE Calls include a thin, high, sibilant 'tseet' and a sharp, rather metallic 'chink' or 'pink' (similar to calls of White-crowned). Song sweet, high and penetrating, two clear notes followed by three fuller notes; has been rendered as 'pure sweet Canada Canada Canada' or even 'old Sam Peabody Peabody Peabody'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Europe). In natural range, found in woodland undergrowth, clearings and edges (especially in coniferous or mixed forest situations), parks and large gardens, scrub and waterside thickets.

DARK-EYED JUNCO *Junco hyemalis*

Plate page 801

Slate-coloured Junco

L 15 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Unmistakable. A predominantly dark grey (male) or brownish-grey (female) unstreaked bunting with contrastingly pale pinkish-white stubby bill (with small dark tip), white belly to undertail coverts and extensive white on outer tail feathers (strikingly apparent in flight). Perches openly on trees and bushes and feeds on ground among weedy vegetation, picking at food rather than scratching around amongst leaf litter like many other American 'sparrows' do. Readily associates with House Sparrows and other garden seed-eaters in winter.

SEX/AGE Adult female has slate-grey areas paler and tinged with brown, not clean dark slate-grey as in adult male. Juvenile (unlikely to be seen in our region) is distinctly streaked both above and below. 1st-winters resemble respective adults, but young males often browner and thus more like adult female, while young

female paler brown and less greyish than adult female, especially on flanks; both sexes show retained juvenile tertials and often some outer greater coverts in autumn and winter (these feathers more abraded, lighter brown and often with pale tips and edges).

VOICE Calls include a liquid 'chek', a sharp 'dit', and a dry, rapid twitter in flight. Song a rapid rattling trill on one pitch, recalling Cirl Bunting or Yellowhammer (but without extended final note of latter), sometimes incorporating weak, warbling phrases.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Marked. Only the eastern nominate race (known as 'Slate-coloured Junco') has been recorded from our region. See N American guides for details of other races.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W & C Europe). In natural range, breeds in coniferous or mixed woodland, especially clearings and edges, but in winter also found in gardens, parks, scrub and farmland.

LAPLAND BUNTING *Calcarius lapponicus*

Plate page 803

Lapland Longspur

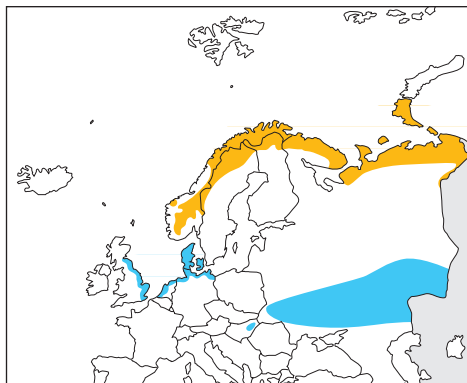
L 15.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A fairly large, heavy bunting which is characteristic of the tundra zone in summer. **Adult male summer** unmistakable with its black crown, face and breast, white band behind eye and down side of

neck, chestnut nape and yellow bill with dark tip. Compare also Rustic Bunting. **Adult female summer** less distinctive, but combination of rusty-rufous nape (often showing dark spotting), broad creamy surround

to ear-coverts, yellowish bill (with dark tip), heavy dark markings on rather 'cold' upperparts and very whitish underparts (with blackish markings on breast sides and flanks) distinguish it from other buntings. **Adult winter and 1st-winter** plumages recall female Common Reed Bunting, but Lapland is distinctly bulkier and has much longer primary projection, making it appear relatively shorter-tailed. The long wings contribute to a strongly bounding flight action, giving flight a distinctly lark-like character; indeed, it usually associates with larks and pipits in open country outside breeding season (and can be difficult to separate from Eurasian Skylark in flight, although has shorter, noticeably notched tail and does not hover before landing). In comparison, Common Reed appears relatively short-winged and long-tailed, especially if flying overhead. On ground, easily separated from Common Reed Bunting by bright rusty-rufous bases to greater coverts framed by double whitish wing bars and by stubby yellowish bill; with feather wear, chestnut or rufous on nape often begins to appear by mid-winter (especially on adult male), but initially this colour is wholly or virtually all hidden (even in adult males) by pale feather fringes. **Juvenile** much less distinctive than older birds, recalling juvenile *Emberiza* buntings, especially juvenile Common Reed. Best distinguished by structure, voice, double whitish wing bars (enclosing rusty panel), broad sandy median crown-stripe (only occasionally shown by young Common Reed), pale spot on rear ear-coverts, dark spots at rear edge of ear-coverts and irregular blackish spotting (rather than rather regular dark streaking) on flanks, breast sides and malar area. Feeds on ground in open fields and similar habitats in winter, running freely with hunched posture and usually found in small flocks, readily associating with Eurasian Skylarks, Meadow Pipits and Snow Buntings. Can be hard to see well at that season, but in breeding season much more often found perching in open or on low bushes. Call distinctive (although Snow Bunting similar), invariably given when flushed, and often first clue to its presence if flying with other birds. Single birds are often remarkably confiding.

SEX/AGE Spring/summer appearance almost entirely due to feather abrasion: little moult involved. Adult male winter close to adult female winter in appearance, with many difficult to sex, but nape typically brighter rufous and dark markings on head blacker



(with crown streaking more prominent); by mid-winter much blackish blotching appears on breast. Juvenile is noticeably more yellowish-buff and rufous above compared to adult female winter, with much weaker blackish streaking, and underparts are tinged with yellowish-buff. 1st-winters closely resemble adult female winter, but there is virtually no rufous on nape in female.

VOICE Usual call (often given in flight) distinctive (but see Snow Bunting): a dry, rattled, twitter ('ticker-tik-tik', 'ticky-tik' or 'prrrt'), often followed or preceded by a short, clear, piped 'teu' (e.g. 'ticky-tik-teu'). On breeding grounds repeatedly gives a piping 'dyuee' followed after a pause by 'treeu'. Song a short, warbled, jingling phrase similar to that of Horned Lark, usually given from a boulder or in a short song flight (descending on outstretched wings).

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races (nominate illustrated).

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Scotland.) Breeds on tundra and open mountaintops with low shrubbery of dwarf birches, dwarf willows, crowberries etc, often favouring damp, hummocky situations; also boggy or water-side areas with taller willow bushes. Outside breeding season in open lowland country, ranging from stubble fields and short grassy pastures or steppe to estuarine and coastal saltmarshes.

SNOW BUNTING *Plectrophenax nivalis*

L 16–17 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Obvious and (in males) very extensive white in wings renders Snow Bunting virtually unmistakable in all plumages (which range from strikingly black-and-white to a beautiful and subtle combination of cream, buff, rufous, orange-brown, white and black). Range and habitats similar to those of Lapland Bunting (breeding in tundra and high mountain zones). White-winged Snowfinch has similar wing pattern, but is unstreaked above, with greyish hood and longer bill and a more clean-cut tail pattern, and is unlikely to overlap in range. (Note: drab juvenile Snow Bunting, with its greyish hood and distinct pale buff eye-ring, is closest to White-winged Snowfinch; in addition to differences already outlined, has greyer mantle/scapulars and darker, drabber breast. This plumage can also vaguely suggest Oortolan Bunting or related grey-hooded buntings with pale eye-rings.) 1st-winter females have least white in wing, confined to secondaries and lesser coverts; in many young females white only present along bases

of secondaries in a mid-wing band. White-winged Lark also has white secondaries but has pale (not black) legs, is larger and longer overall, with slightly longer bill, has longer tertials (showing few exposed primaries), has browner tail with less white at sides and has brownish or rufous median coverts. Usually found in small flocks in open country in winter, freely mixing with larks, pipits and Lapland Buntings. Often remarkably confiding, especially lone birds.

SEX/AGE Spring/summer appearance entirely due to feather abrasion: no moult involved. Sexes differ most in spring and summer, when males have clean-cut black-and-white plumage while females show less white in wing and have brown-streaked upperparts, nape, crown and upper breast sides. Juvenile is rather different from other plumages: has brownish-grey head and mantle/scapulars (the latter heavily streaked with blackish), a rather obvious pale buff eye-ring and a pale brownish-grey tinge to throat, upper breast and flanks (which are weakly streaked). In fresh plumage,

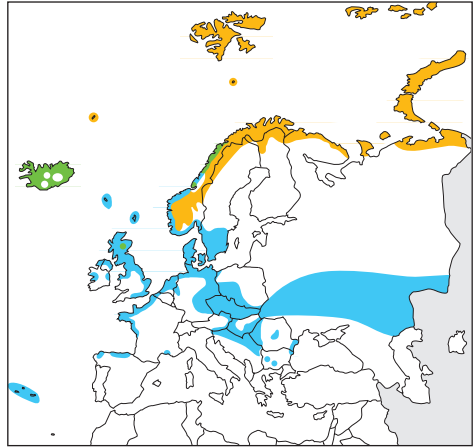
Plate page 803

in autumn and winter, adult male closer to adult female, but has much more white in wing. 1st-winters closely resemble adult female, but young males have more white in wing, young females less. Ageing and sexing difficult in autumn and winter owing to individual variation.

VOICE Call distinctive, a soft, rippled, twittering 'pirr-rir' (recalling Crested Tit), often preceded or followed by a clear ringing 'pee-u', both sounds often given separately; quite similar to call of Lapland Bunting, but twitter is less dry and more rippled and 'pee-u' is clearer and more ringing. A rasping 'trree' sometimes heard from flying flocks. Song a variable, sweet, warbling phrase uttered from boulder or in short descending song flight on outstretched wings, sweeter and less jingling than song of Lapland: e.g. 'tzwee-tzwee-chu-wee-tu-(wee)'.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 3 races (nominate illustrated).

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Faeroes.) Breeds on open, boulder-strewn mountaintops and tundra, also sea cliffs and locally human settlements. Outside breeding season occurs in open, mostly lowland country,



ranging from stubble fields, moorland and steppe to grassy dunes, beaches and coastal saltmarshes.

BLACK-FACED BUNTING *Emberiza spodocephala*

Plate page 803

L 14.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Asian vagrant (breeds C Siberia eastwards and southwards). **Adult male** has distinctive combination of greyish hood, pale whitish (with faint yellow tinge) or yellow lower underparts and blackish loreal region. (Intensity of yellow on underparts varies geographically, see Geographical Variation.) Has less clean-cut appearance in autumn/winter, see Sex/Age.

Female and most 1st-winter males are rather drab, being notable for their sheer lack of distinctive field characters; overall appearance is dull greyish-brown, with dull and fairly indistinct pale supercilium and median crown-stripe, a more obvious pale submoustachial stripe, greyish sides to neck, faint dark streaking on breast and more obviously on flanks, and sometimes a yellowish tinge to belly; bill is distinctly two-tone, with dark grey upper mandible and pink lower, and is sharply pointed with a virtually straight culmen. In such plumage, recalls poorly marked female Common Reed Bunting, especially in size and shape, but upperparts more olive-brown, less warm brown, flanks browner and base colour of remainder of underparts often dull pale yellowish, less whitish; most importantly, lacks rufous on lesser and median coverts (i.e. 'shoulder') and has two-toned bill. Female Cirl Bunting shares some plumage characters, but is plumper and has a slightly swollen, wholly grey bill (blue-grey on lower mandible) and usually some rufous on scapulars and rufous streaking at sides of breast; further differs in having finer and better-defined dark streaking on underparts and more distinct pale supercilium and pale patch on ear-coverts, while dark malar stripe and pale median crown-stripe faint or absent. Easily separated from female Pine Bunting or dull Yellowhammer by lack of rufous on back, rump and uppertail coverts (these areas dull brownish in Black-faced). Could be confused with those female Yellow-breasted Buntings that show little yellow, but latter has more prominent supercilium and pale median crown-stripe, less prominent dark malar stripe, more obvious dark framing to ear-coverts, more obvious pale wing bars and a well-streaked rump that is often rufous-

tinged. See also vagrant Yellow-browed Bunting. Rather shy, skulking bunting of bushy watersides (or damp stubbles in winter); freely perches on outside of bushes, but tends not to feed in the open. Has sharp ticking call typical of many eastern buntings.

SEX/AGE Unlike many buntings, has pre-breeding moult. In adult male winter, colours dulled by fresh feather fringes, and some very like females whereas others have extensive grey on head and neck but are more streaked in this area than in summer plumage. 1st-winters mostly closely resemble adult female, but iris dull grey-brown (more reddish-brown in adults, but this difference very difficult to discern in field); some young males are quite close to adult male, while others are inseparable from adult female and yet others are female-like but have very indistinct supercilium and median crown-stripe, a greyish tinge to head and perhaps some blackish on loreal area; ageing and sexing of many individuals is difficult.

VOICE Call a quiet but sharp, European Robin-like 'tick' or 'tzit', a little thinner than similar call of several other Asian vagrant buntings. Song a short, quick, rather variable ringing phrase, not unlike that of Common Reed Bunting or Pied Flycatcher, usually delivered from mid-level of a tree.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Marked but partly clinal. 3 races occur in E Asia, but only nominate race so far recorded from our region. Eastern races and also eastern populations of nominate race have distinctly yellow-tinged underpart, heavier streaking on flanks and greenish tinge to head, but western populations of nominate race have little yellow below, only faint flank streaking and lack greenish tinge to head. Nominate race also shows less extensive black face mask.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W & N Europe). In natural range, breeds in moist deciduous or mixed woodland with undergrowth, bushy woodland edges and thickets, usually near water. In winter found in damp rice stubbles, bushy margins of ditches and rivers, moist scrubby areas etc.

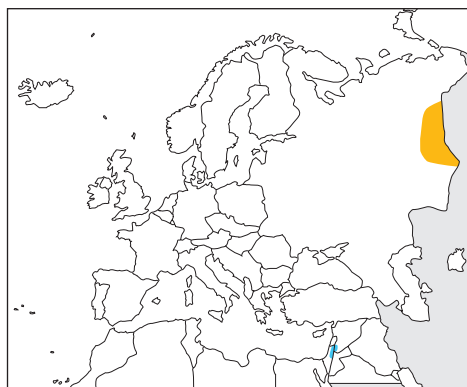
PINE BUNTING *Emberiza leucocephalos*

Plate page 802

L 16.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Breeds in extreme NE of our region, wintering very locally in Middle East. Very close to its near-relative the Yellowhammer in size, shape and behaviour. **Male** highly distinctive, with reddish-brown, black and whitish head pattern and rufous breast band. Head pattern somewhat duller in fresh plumage in autumn and winter, but still obvious. **Female** closely resembles female Yellowhammer, but overall appearance cold brown and whitish, lacking yellow or olive plumage tones, but sharing rufous rump and uppertail coverts and call. Yellowhammer (even fresh 1st-year female in autumn) almost always shows at least some yellow on supercilium, throat, belly and edges to the primaries, and a slight greenish tinge to mantle and lesser coverts. Vagrants need to be distinguished from occasional aberrant-coloured Yellowhammer lacking yellow pigment in plumage. Such birds are exceedingly similar to Pine, but should show a hint of pale yellow at least on belly; Pine often shows rusty streaking on breast and flanks (occasionally a suggestion of male's rufous breast band), but other individuals have dusky streaking like Yellowhammer (although Pine has a more intense band of dark streaking on upper breast and a darker, more obvious 'malar blotch'); fresh-plumaged Pine often has a pale buffy throat (Yellowhammers lacking yellow pigment show whitish throat), while the greenish breast band present in male Yellowhammers and some females is never present. Some adult female Pine show a whitish crown centre in spring/summer and even some rusty coloration on supercilium, lower face and throat, hinting at male's head pattern and making separation straightforward. Variation within both species, however, let alone frequent hybridization, makes separation of some individuals questionable. Could also be confused with female/winter male Rustic Bunting, but latter is smaller with small erectable crest, shorter tail, more conical bill, more prominent head pattern, whiter and more prominent wing bars, rufous lesser coverts (and often some rufous on nape) and a very different call. In winter, likely to be found associating with flocks of other buntings, especially Yellowhammers.

SEX/AGE Spring/summer appearance entirely due to feather abrasion: no moult involved. In fresh plumage, in autumn and winter, male pattern duller due to pres-



ence of obscuring feather fringes, but still obvious. Juvenile very similar to adult female but duller above, buffer below and more heavily streaked overall. 1st-years closely resemble respective adults, but many adult females show a whitish crown centre absent in young birds.

VOICE Calls and song are identical to those of Yellowhammer.

TAXONOMY Sometimes regarded as conspecific with Yellowhammer *E. citrinella*, but hybridization, although frequent, is less common than might be expected with such a wide overlap of breeding range.

HYBRIDIZATION Pine is very similar vocally, structurally and in behaviour to Yellowhammer, and despite the striking differences in male plumages these species frequently hybridize in Urals and W Siberia where breeding ranges overlap; offsprings of such pairings show a variety of mixed characters, most obviously in males.

STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon in breeding area in extreme NE of our region; generally a vagrant elsewhere, but small numbers regularly winter in Israel. Breeds in open woodland (especially coniferous), forest edges and clearings, overgrown cultivation, village edges. In winter, favours orchards, scrubby edges of cultivation etc.

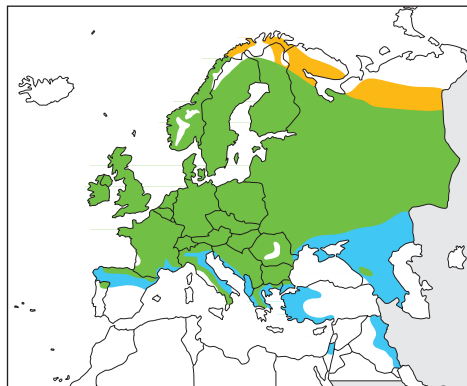
YELLOWHAMMER *Emberiza citrinella*

Plate page 802

Yellow Bunting

L 16.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION The most familiar and most widespread bunting of our region (only approached by Common Reed Bunting in these respects). A fairly large, long-tailed bunting with yellow on head, rusty-rufous rump and uppertail coverts and white outer tail feathers. **Adult male** often appears to have almost entirely bright yellow head and throat in spring/summer, unlike all other buntings. Appearance duller in fresh plumage in autumn and winter due to grey-green feather fringes, but still shows obvious yellow on head and throat. **Other plumages** show yellowish and olive tones on head and underparts, and a bright rufous rump and uppertail coverts, a feature shared by Pine and Rock Buntings (q.v. for discussion). Compare also Cirl Bunting. Some females, especially 1st-years in fresh plumage in autumn, show only a trace of yellow or, rarely, none at all and such individuals, which look very greyish-buff overall, streaked with olive-



brown, could quite easily be confused with Pine Bunting (q.v.). Far less skulking than many buntings, readily perching in the open on wires, hedges and bushes. Hops on ground, often with crouched posture. Forms small flocks outside breeding season, mixing freely with finches and sparrows in winter while feeding in hedgerows and open fields.

SEX/AGE Spring/summer appearance entirely due to feather abrasion: no moult involved. In fresh plumage, in autumn and winter, male colours duller, but soon becomes progressively brighter as dull feather tips abrade to reveal yellow. Juvenile duller and more heavily streaked both above and below compared with adult female (especially noticeable on chin, throat, crown and supercilium), with duller rufous rump (hardly more rufous than mantle) and dull yellowish or yellowish-white ground colour to underparts. 1st-years in autumn resemble adult females, but young males have brighter yellow ground colour to head and underparts, females duller and more buffy yellow below (or even whitish, with little or no yellow). Ageing and sexing of many autumn birds difficult in the field owing to individual variation.

VOICE Commonest call, given both on ground and in flight, a rather metallic 'tzit'; also gives a thin 'see' of alarm, a clicking 'tit-tit-tit-tit' (either in flight or prior to flushing, when accompanied by tail flicking) and a liquid 'trp-trp' (heard from flying flocks). Song distinct-

tive, a series of rapid, high, insect-like notes followed by a longer thin wheeze: 'zi-zi-zi-zi-zi teeeeeee' (often rendered as 'little bit of bread and no cheeeeeee'); sometimes final note is dropped and song then suggests that of Cirl Bunting. In some areas (mainly E Europe) song sounds more like 'tee-tee-tee-tee-tee siiiiiiiii'. Pine Bunting song and calls are identical.

TAXONOMY See Pine Bunting *E. leucocephalos*.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Rather slight and clinal. 3 races (nominate illustrated). Western populations of nominate race tend to be more richly coloured than those from further east, with the underparts of males less heavily marked with chestnut. Easternmost race *erythrogenys* (Ukraine to the Urals) is palest above and males have broad rufous breast band and extensive rufous on flanks. Westernmost race *caliginosa* (W Britain and Ireland) is darkest above and male has dull but extensive rufous on breast and flanks (but little trace of the olive band across upper breast typically shown by other populations).

HYBRIDIZATION See Pine Bunting.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. Open, bushy or shrubby country of all types, from hedgerows, overgrown farmland, bushy pastures, scrubby coastal slopes and heathland to shrubby hillsides and mountainsides; also sparse forests, clearings, burnt areas, woodland edges, orchards etc. Outside breeding season, spends much time feeding in stubbles and weedy fields.

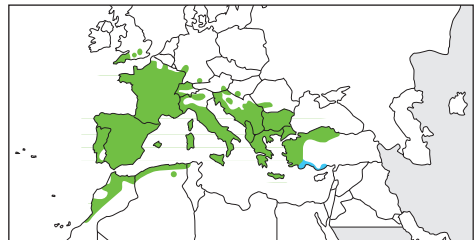
CIRL BUNTING *Emberiza cirlus*

Plate page 802

L 16 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Resembles Yellowhammer in size, shape and behaviour, but averages marginally smaller and more compact in appearance; range and habitats of the two overlap widely. Easily distinguished at all ages by dull olive-brown (not rusty-rufous) rump and uppertail coverts. **Male** has highly distinctive 'stripy' patterning with blackish throat and eye-stripe, yellow supercilium, stripe from base of bill to ear-coverts and half-collar, and broad olive and rusty breast bands, so is unlikely to be confused. Pattern partly dulled by feather fringes in fresh plumage in autumn and winter, but still apparent. **Female** resembles female Yellowhammer, but always has dull brownish-grey, rather than rusty-rufous, rump (although uppertail coverts sometimes tinged rusty). Cirl also has finer streaking on head and underparts and typically (but by no means always) a fainter yellowish tinge to underparts; supercilium often better-defined and more contrastingly pale. Beware juvenile Yellowhammer, which has finer streaking below and may have duller rufous rump than adult female, but these are plainer-headed than female Cirl Bunting, lacking latter's relatively wide olive-grey upper and lower borders to ear-coverts, and calls also differ. Oortolan Bunting also has dull rump, but has pinkish (not grey) bill, a prominent whitish eye-ring and more rufous lower underparts. Favours weedy fields with shrubby hedges, forming small parties outside breeding season; feeds and perches in the open like Yellowhammer, but generally less conspicuous unless in song.

SEX/AGE Spring/summer appearance entirely due to feather abrasion: no moult involved. In fresh plumage, in autumn and winter, male colours duller, becoming brighter as dull feather tips abrade during the winter. Juvenile paler and browner above than fresh adult female, lacking chestnut on mantle and wings, and



more heavily streaked both above and below. 1st-years in autumn closely resemble respective autumn adults, duller individuals being 1st-year females. Ageing and sexing of many autumn birds difficult in the field owing to individual variation.

VOICE Contact call a thin, sharp 'zit' or 'sip', which may be repeated as a sibilant 'sisisi-sip-sip' when agitated; also gives a long, descending 'zeee' when alarmed and a very fast series of clicks. Song an extended dry rattle ('zezezeze...'), very similar to song of Lesser Whitethroat, less high-pitched than first part of song of Yellowhammer and lacking terminal 'cheese', but tone varies and faster, higher-pitched version sounds more like song of Arctic Warbler.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally fairly common. (In addition to mapped range, formerly bred Belgium and more widely Britain where now local and uncommon.) Farmland with tall hedges and trees, hillsides and ravines with bushes and trees, open woodland, woodland edges and clearings, orchards, vineyards and large gardens. In winter, often frequents stubbles and weedy fields not far from tall hedges and trees. Prefers more tree-dominated habitats than Yellowhammer.

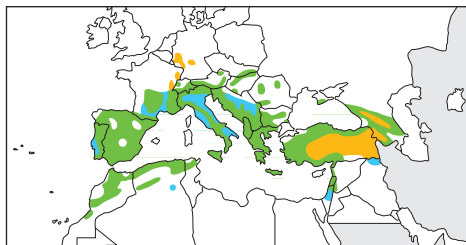
ROCK BUNTING *Emberiza cia*

Plate page 805

L 16 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Bushy mountain slopes. Resembles Yellowhammer in size and shape and in having a conspicuous rusty-rufous rump and uppertail coverts, but relatively shorter wings create slightly longer-tailed impression, especially in flight. Both sexes have grey head and breast, contrasting with black facial 'bridle' and very rufous lower underparts; the upperparts are warm brown and streaked, with a narrow white wing bar on median coverts. Juvenile very streaky, recalling dull juvenile Yellowhammer, but lacks yellowish tones and has rufous-buff lower underparts and distinctive narrow white bar on median coverts. Only other buntings with similar adult pattern have much more restricted ranges: both Grey-necked and Cretzschmar's have conspicuous whitish eye-ring and pinkish (not grey) bill, and House Bunting has bright rusty wings and lacks Rock's white in outer tail feathers. Usually met with in pairs, family parties or small flocks on bushy, rocky hillsides, mixing little with other buntings even in winter. Shows conspicuous white on outer tail feathers on flushing. Sings from prominent perch on rock or in bushes/trees.

SEX/AGE Spring/summer appearance entirely due to feather abrasion: no moult involved. In fresh plumage, in autumn and winter, colours of male dulled by buffish feather fringes, especially the clean grey of head and breast. Female like a dull version of male with, in particular, dark brownish-black rather than black head markings, a brownish tinge to grey hood (most noticeable when worn in spring/summer) and some fine spotting on breast. Juvenile streaky (see Identification). 1st-years in autumn recall respective autumn adults, although young males duller and thus intermediate between adult male and female; young females have head and breast buffish-grey, with less well-defined



dark eye-stripe, rear border to ear-coverts and malar stripe and more extensive fine spotting and streaking on throat, breast and flanks than in adult female.

VOICE Calls include a weak sharp 'tzi' or 'tzit' (thinner and higher in pitch than equivalent call of Cirl Bunting), a fuller 'tewp' and, when alarmed, a thin, squeaky, indrawn 'seeee'; in flight, or on landing, gives a rattling 'si-titi' or more vibrant 'zi-dididi'. Song rather inconspicuous, recalling Dunnock: a fairly long, rather squeaky series of rapidly but jerkily delivered high-pitched notes, rising and falling in pitch (has been rendered 'seut wit tell-tell wit drr weeay sit seey').

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight and clinal. 3 races (nominate illustrated). Eastern part of range inhabited by races *prageri* (E Turkey to Crimea) and *par* (N Iraq) which are larger and paler overall, with paler grey head and breast (but note that some southern populations of nominate race look equally pale when worn).

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. Open, rocky, hill and mountain slopes, often with bushes and scattered trees; also small mountain fields and gardens, or clearings and edges in sparse upland forests. Descends from higher levels in winter.

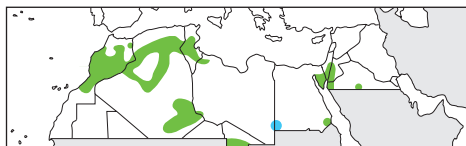
HOUSE BUNTING *Emberiza striolata*

Plate page 805

L 13.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Small bunting of N Africa and the Middle East. Grey head, neck and upper breast and rufous remainder of underparts suggest a small version of Rock Bunting, but all plumages easily separated from other buntings by combination of bright rusty-rufous wings and lack of white in outer tail feathers; bicoloured bill, yellowish on lower mandible and contrastingly blackish on upper, is also a useful character (but note that juvenile has all-dark bill). Head pattern variable: eastern nominate race has black and white head stripes (often very pronounced when worn), whereas western race has ear-coverts mottled blackish and shows less contrast between whitish supercilium and submoustachial stripe and dark eye-stripe and moustachial stripe (although head pattern more clear-cut in some populations, especially when worn). This bunting really lives up to its name only in parts of N Africa, where it is a common sight in towns and villages, but in the Middle East it is a much more localized bird of arid wadis. Feeds on ground, usually in pairs or small parties, flying up on to rooftops or cliff faces when disturbed. In N Africa, often associates loosely with House Sparrows and can become very confiding, whereas Middle Eastern birds are markedly wary.

SEX/AGE Sexes similar, but adult female duller overall, with browner-grey head and breast, lacking strong pattern of many males, and has weak streaking (rather than blackish spotting) on breast. In both sexes, facial



pattern more distinct in worn plumage (spring/summer). Juvenile resembles adult female, but is duller overall with greyish-horn bill (not clearly yellow on lower mandible) and little or no dark streaking on head, neck and upper breast. 1st-years closely resemble respective adults; may be aged when fresh by retained juvenile primaries which have rufous fringes that extend to tips, when worn by contrast between fresh bright rufous greater coverts and worn, yellowish-fringed primary coverts.

VOICE Calls include a harsh, nasal 'zweer' or 'zweeak', a thin, sharp 'tchik' and a short, harsh, nasal, sparrow-like chirp in flight. Song a short series of rising and falling notes, recalling song of Common Chaffinch, but weaker, higher in pitch and more sibilant.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Moderate. 2 races (both illustrated). Western race *sahari* over most of N Africa, replaced by nominate race from SE Egypt and Sinai eastwards. Latter is a little paler, more sandy-rufous, overall with more prominent dark streaks on mantle and a noticeably paler (pinkish-cinnamon

rather than rufous-cinnamon) tone to lower underparts; males show tendency to have striking black and white head pattern (especially in worn plumage), with whiter median crown-stripe, supercilium and sub-moustachial stripe and blacker eye-stripe and moustachial stripe than in *sahari*.

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common in N Africa, but distinctly scarce and very localized in Middle East. Rocky desert hills with sparse vegetation and deep wadis with sheer cliffs (especially near water), ruins and, in NW Africa, villages, towns and adjacent cultivation.

CINEREOUS BUNTING *Emberiza cineracea*

Plate page 804

L 16 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Turkey and the Middle East. Rather sombre but distinctive bunting. **Male** is unlikely to be confused. The overall grey, rather washed-out appearance of the western race is relieved by yellowish-olive head and neck, brighter and clearer yellow throat, clear pale yellow eye-ring, whitish undertail coverts and white outer tail feathers (obvious on flushing). In adults, streaking is confined to the upperparts, but even here it is relatively diffuse, the double pale wing bars and dark centres to the wing feathers offering more contrast. Males of the eastern race are quite distinctive, having a stronger yellow wash to the head and dull yellow over entire underparts, including undertail coverts. **Female** is much less distinctive, but overall greyish appearance (yellow below in eastern race), greenish-yellow tinge to throat (and sometimes head), lack of any warm brown coloration in plumage and combination of grey bill and pale yellowish eye-ring are useful features. (Note that female, especially 1st-year, is more obviously streaked on mantle and breast than male.) Confusion unlikely, but compare female Black-headed and Red-headed Buntings, which are buffer (lacking grey tones), with obvious yellow often restricted to undertail coverts, little or no streaking on underparts and no white in tail. Yellower eastern race of Cinereous lacks rusty rump of Yellowhammer and in comparison seems virtually unstreaked, or only weakly so. **Juvenile** is not unlike young Ortolan, Cretzschmar's and Grey-necked Buntings; perhaps most easily separated by greyish, rather than pale pinkish, bill. A quiet and unobtrusive bunting with an insignificant song, thus easily overlooked. On passage associates with other buntings, especially Ortolan and Cretzschmar's.

SEX/AGE Sexes similar, but female duller overall, with throat dull yellow (often tinged buff) and almost uniform with head coloration and eye-ring whitish rather than yellowish. Both sexes may show diffuse darker streaking on breast in fresh plumage in autumn, but



adult males have clearer yellow throat than either 1st-year males or females; males have yellow on head (but not throat) dulled by olive feather fringes. Juvenile not unlike adult female but is warmer- and browner-toned above, with heavier streaking on mantle, and buff-tinged on underparts with quite heavy streaking on throat, breast and flanks. 1st-years resemble respective adults, but retain some diffuse streaking across breast and along flanks into first summer; young females are especially dull, having little or no trace of yellow on head.

VOICE Calls include a soft 'tsik' or 'kiyp', resembling that of Ortolan, and a descending 'tieu'. Song a short, clear, ringing phrase of some 4–6 rapid notes, the first few increasing in pitch and volume, followed by two weaker, longer, descending notes: 'drip-drip-drip-drip-drie-drie' or similar.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION 2 races (both illustrated). Western nominate race breeds east to central-southern Turkey, being replaced by much yellower race *semenowi* in SE Turkey; females and immatures of latter also have some yellowish below, especially on undertail coverts.

STATUS/HABITAT Local and uncommon. Favours dry, rocky, sparsely vegetated, grassy slopes and ridge tops, often with scattered bushes and occasional small trees, from the foothills up to about 2000 m. On passage, in similar habitats and also lowland stubbles and weedy fields.

ORTOLAN BUNTING *Emberiza hortulana*

Plate page 804

L 16.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Pinkish bill and striking whitish eye-ring are useful features at all ages, but these are shared by much more localized Grey-necked and Cretzschmar's Buntings, which can be difficult to separate in autumn (see those species for discussion).

Adult has greenish-grey (male) or olive-grey (female) head, neck and upper breast (enlivened by pale yellow throat and submoustachial stripe), contrasting with rufous lower underparts. Colours are duller in fresh plumage in autumn and even more so in females, which often show breast streaking and may lack clear-cut division between greyish upper breast and rufous lower underparts (see Grey-necked). Very different from Yellowhammer, and separable even in brief flight view (when head pattern and bill coloration not discernible) by greyish-brown rather than

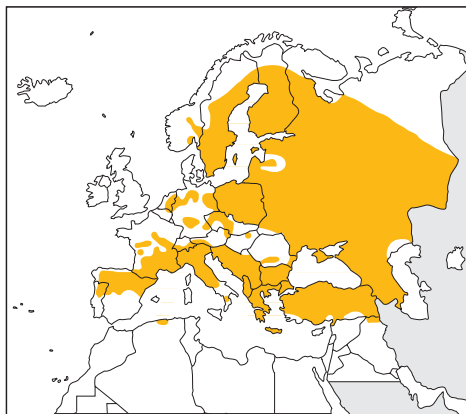
rusty rufous rump and uppertail coverts. **1st-winter** birds in autumn, especially females, are heavily streaked both above and below and resemble some pipits in this respect; when found feeding in stubbles or weedy fields, such individuals could be mistaken for a small pipit if head not seen well, but pinkish bill and pale eye-ring are important features and rufous-buff lower underparts are already apparent. Flight call distinctive, but not unlike call of Pechora Pipit.

SEX/AGE Unlike many buntings, has pre-breeding moult. Sexes fairly similar, but female duller overall, with grey hood tinged with olive-brown, paler underparts and a band of dark spots on upper breast (extending as dark streaks onto malar area); both sexes are duller in fresh winter plumage in autumn. Juvenile very heavily streaked above and below, with greyish

bill when first fledged. 1st-winter male resembles adult female winter, but breast has fine streaks rather than spots (the streaking extending to flanks) and crown is more brownish-olive. 1st-summer male closely resembles adult male summer but grey hood often has reduced greenish tinge and yellow on throat and submoustachial stripe often paler. 1st-winter female very heavily streaked below compared with adult female winter, with fine streaks extending along flanks, and warm buff of lower underparts extending over breast. These features also persist into first summer.

VOICE Calls include a clear, ringing, metallic disyllabic 'tsleuu' or 'tseeip' (or almost monosyllabic 'tsie') and a short, incisive 'pwip' or 'plit' (latter typical of flushed migrants); on breeding grounds, a short 'chu' often given in regular alternation with the 'tsleuu' note. Song individually variable: a clear, ringing phrase, recalling introductory section of song of Yellowhammer, with terminal notes lower and more melancholy; may be rendered 'sweet-sweet-sweet-sweet-sweet, droo-droo' or 'droo-droo-droo-droo, seea-seea' or sometimes 'seea-seea-seea' (like terminal portion of Tree Pipit song). In south of range, song usually only has a single terminal note (see Cretzschmar's Bunting).

STATUS/HABITAT Locally not uncommon, but sparsely distributed over most of range. (In addition to



mapped range, has bred NW Norway.) Open cultivated country with scattered trees and bushes, tree-lined roads, vineyards, orchards and parkland, more locally woodland edges and clearings; in southern part of range favours more upland habitats, including bare mountainsides and gullies with scattered trees and bushes. On passage, also in stubble fields and dry cultivation.

GREY-NECKED BUNTING *Emberiza buchanani*

Plate page 804

L 16 cm.

IDENTIFICATION C Asian counterpart of Ortolan Bunting, reaching western limit of range in southeast of our region. Relatively long bright pink bill and prominent whitish eye-ring prevent confusion with most other buntings in all plumages, but these characters are shared by Ortolan and Cretzschmar's (although range does not overlap with that of latter). Generally appears longer-tailed than either of these. **Adult** has ash-grey (male) or brownish-grey (female) head, neck and malar stripe and whitish throat and submoustachial stripe (lacking yellowish tone shown by Ortolan, or orange-rufous of adult male Cretzschmar's). Lacks the olive-grey or bluish-grey breast band of either Ortolan or Cretzschmar's, having rusty-pink underparts from lower throat to undertail coverts (most intense from lower throat to breast, becoming pale on ventral area, and often rather mottled-looking owing to whitish feather fringes), but note that grey extends from neck on to sides of breast and upper flanks. The upperparts are much more weakly streaked, and show a distinctly greyer wash, although, as in Ortolan, the lower scapulars are distinctly rusty (but more contrasting, as mantle paler). **1st-year female** is very drab, with finer (but quite intense) dark streaking on upperparts and breast than equivalent plumages of Ortolan and Cretzschmar's, lacking rufous tone to rump and uppertail coverts of Cretzschmar's or any grey or olive on breast (pinkish-rufous comes up to lower throat). (Note, however, that many female Ortolan lack defined breast band.) The lower underparts become paler towards ventral region, being pinkish-white or pale buffish-white on lower belly and undertail coverts (these areas much more uniform buff or rufous-buff on the other two). Tertiaries are dark brown with lighter sandy-rufous brown fringes, whereas they are much blacker-brown with cleaner warm brown fringes in Ortolan and Cretzschmar's (this distinction not valid in worn plumage).

SEX/AGE Sexes similar, but adult female duller over-



all, with brownish tinge to grey of head and neck, weaker rusty-pink tinge to underparts and fine streaking on upper breast and crown; in fresh plumage, pale fringes to underpart feathers in both sexes give distinctly mottled appearance to breast and partly obscure rusty-pink, while pale grey-brown fringes on upperparts likewise obscure rusty on scapulars. Juvenile has intense, fine dark streaking on breast, head and upperparts. 1st-years resemble respective adults but duller 1st-winter males can be very similar to adult females (with dark streaking on upper breast and crown), so that ageing and sexing is not recommended except in case of obvious males. 1st-year females often quite drab, with only weak pinkish-rufous tinge to lower underparts and much heavier dark streaking on upper breast than in adult (streaking extending to throat).

VOICE Calls include a rather soft, short 'tsip' or 'tsik' and a sweeter 'seeoop' or 'choup'; both rather similar to equivalent calls of Ortolan Bunting and given both in flight and when perched. Song, which also recalls Ortolan, typically a rising four note series followed by a two- or three-syllable lower-pitched rapid terminal flourish, e.g. 'tsee-tsee-tsee-tsee-dew de-dew'; ending of Ortolan song phrase is usually a single note in south of range, but songs of both species individually variable.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight. 2 races, including vagrant *obscura* (*cerrutii* illustrated).

STATUS/HABITAT Not uncommon, but localized.

Migrates southeast to winter in Pakistan and W India. Arid, rocky hillsides, mountainsides, plateaus and ravines, typically with sparse grassy and herbaceous

vegetation but sometimes including scattered scrub; breeds in upland regions, usually above 1500 m. On passage, also in stubbles and weedy cultivation.

CRETZSCHMAR'S BUNTING *Emberiza caesia*

Plate page 804

L 16 cm.

IDENTIFICATION E Mediterranean region. Bright pink bill and prominent pale eye-ring prevent confusion with most other buntings in all plumages, but these characters are shared by Ortolan and Grey-necked (range overlaps only with that of Ortolan). Slightly smaller and sleeker than Ortolan, with relatively shorter tail and slightly smaller, shorter bill.

Adult and some 1st-winter males differ from Ortolan in having bright (male) or dull (female) bluish-grey head and breast and orange-rufous (male) or buff (female) throat and submoustachial stripe; many Ortolan, especially females, have greyish-olive head and breast which can suggest Cretzschmar's but their throats and submoustachial stripes are pale yellow, never orange-rufous or buff. The mantle, scapulars and back are warm rufous-brown (i.e. much warmer than in Ortolan), lacking the contrast with the rusty scapulars shown by both Ortolan and Grey-necked (most obviously in fresh males), and the rump is strongly tinged with rufous (uniformly olive-brown in Ortolan). **1st-winter female** is heavily streaked below, differing from Ortolan in much the same way as adults: i.e. warmer brown (not olive-brown) coloration above, with distinct rufous wash to rump, pale buffish (not pale yellowish) throat and submoustachial stripe, greyer ground colour to head and neck and warmer buff lower underparts. Some individuals are problematic, showing an olive wash to the grey-brown of the head (i.e. suggestive of Ortolan), but the strong blackish crown streaking of Cretzschmar's gives a slightly capped appearance (crown streaking less sharply defined in Ortolan). In the hand, the underwing coverts are whitish, tinged rufous (pale yellow in Ortolan). Grey-necked differs in being paler, almost greyish sandy-brown, above, with weak, diffuse streaking on mantle, has pinker-rufous underparts which become almost whitish on lower belly, and lacks breast band (see Grey-necked for further discussion). Warm rufous appearance in flight may even suggest House Bunting if tail closed and white corners not visible, but white evident when tail spread on landing. Compare also female Rock Bunting. **Juvenile** heavily streaked and probably indistinguishable from juvenile Ortolan. Most easily told from juvenile Rock Bunting by having rump and uppertail coverts buffy (with dark streaks) rather than rufous. Generally less arboreal than



Ortolan, singing from ground or bushes rather than trees. On passage, usually in small parties.

SEX/AGE Unlike many buntings, has pre-breeding moult. Sexes similar, but adult female summer duller overall compared with adult male summer, with obvious brown tinge to grey of head, neck and breast band, fine dark streaking on crown and upper breast, and throat and submoustachial stripe buff or cinnamon-buff rather than orange-rufous. In winter plumage, both sexes duller than in respective summer plumage, females having pale buffish throat and submoustachial stripe. Juvenile more heavily streaked above, with obvious dark streaking across breast and along upper flanks. 1st-winter males mostly resemble adult female winter, but breast and head duller and more streaked; some, however, are inseparable from adult males. 1st-winter female very heavily streaked below. 1st-summer male very similar to adult, but grey areas often duller and belly less intense rusty-rufous; 1st-summer female often indistinguishable from adult but some show heavier streaking on crown and upper breast, and paler belly. **VOICE** Usual call differs from that of Ortolan Bunting; a sharper, harsher, more metallic and more chirped 'tchip' or 'styp'; also gives a piping 'cheu' when agitated. Song distinctly thinner and higher in pitch than that of Ortolan, and often shorter, typically a plaintive, rising, rather wheezy 'tsee-tsee-tsee tsew' or more musical variant; song has only one terminal note, and this is drawn-out rather than ringing as in Ortolan (which often utters just one terminal note in south of range).

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common. Favours drier habitats than Ortolan Bunting, typically dry, rocky hillsides with scattered bushes (and sometimes trees), also edges of small areas of cultivation, up to about 1300 m. On passage, often found in stubble fields and other cultivation.

YELLOW-BROWED BUNTING *Emberiza chrysophrys*

Plate page 806

L 14.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Asian vagrant (breeds C Siberia). A skulking, heavily streaked bunting with distinctive head pattern in all plumages: blackish or dark brown lateral crown-stripes and ear-coverts (latter with clear white spot near rear corner) contrast with whitish median crown-stripe and submoustachial stripe and especially with prominent broad yellow supercilium that becomes white towards rear (but note that yellow very inconspicuous or apparently absent in some females, perhaps always 1st-years). Most similar to slightly larger female Rustic, but at all ages fine blackish or blackish-brown (not blotched reddish or red-

dish-brown) streaking on underparts, narrow and insignificant malar stripe, whiter median crown-stripe that extends to forehead (pale area usually most obvious on rear crown in Rustic) and mainly yellow supercilium are clear distinctions. Fine underpart streaking and malar stripe suggest Little Bunting, but head lacks both the rufous and the obvious pale eye-ring of Little. Compare also Common Reed and Pallas's Reed, which clearly differ in head pattern and have different calls (calls of Yellow-browed, Rustic, Little and several other Asian vagrant buntings are all very similar). Yellow-breasted has similarly strong crown pattern, but

has bright yellow wash to underparts. Individuals lacking yellow in supercilium are not unlike female Black-faced Bunting in plumage and bill coloration/shape (latter is pinkish, with mostly dark upper mandible and almost straight culmen), but have much more prominent head pattern, brighter upperparts (with chestnut tinge), finer and more clean-cut dark streaking on sides of breast and flanks, and no yellow tinge on belly (although this often absent or hard to discern on Black-faced). Typically feeds on ground among low cover and is very skulking in behaviour, flying to low perch with much wing- and tail-flicking, invariably calling when flushed.

SEX/AGE Unlike many buntings, has pre-breeding moult. All plumages similar, but adult male summer and some 1st-summer males have blackish ear-coverts and crown sides and brightest yellow in supercilium;

winter male and other plumages (including many 1st-summer males) have brownish or brownish-black on crown and ear-coverts (latter being noticeably darker-framed) and duller yellow in supercilium (some females, perhaps 1st-years, have yellow almost absent). Ageing and sexing of other than very bright males difficult.

VOICE Call a short, sharp, distinct 'zik', often repeated when agitated; recalls Rustic Bunting. Song a short phrase of sweet notes with a rising terminal flourish: 'sweee swee-swee doe-do-doe dweeeee' (first note especially clear and drawn-out).

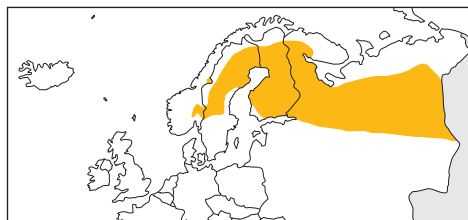
STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Europe). In natural range, breeds in moist mixed or largely coniferous forest (including spruces, larches or pines) with undergrowth. In winter quarters, thickets, bushy edges of cultivation, woodland edges.

RUSTIC BUNTING *Emberiza rustica*

Plate page 807

L 15 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A relatively small bunting, but fairly stocky appearance can make this difficult to appreciate; between Little and Common Reed in size, with relatively shorter tail than Common Reed and with call suggestive of Little. In all plumages has white or buffish-white underparts with coarse rusty-chestnut blotching, broad and conspicuous whitish supercilium and submoustachial stripe, unmarked whitish throat and heavy dark malar stripe. Often exhibits characteristic 'half-crested' appearance when crown feathers raised to create strongly-peaked effect. **Adult male summer** unmistakable, with largely blackish crown and ear-coverts strongly contrasting with prominent white supercilium and submoustachial stripe, and rusty-chestnut hindneck, upperparts, breast band and flank blotching. **Other plumages**, especially in autumn, suggest female Common Reed, but relatively shorter tail, longer bill with straight (rather than convex) culmen, often high-peaked crown, pale spot on rear ear-coverts, blotchy rusty-chestnut streaking on breast and flanks (rather than finer, blackish streaks), white bar on median-coverts, relatively longer primary projection, rusty (rather than brownish-grey) rump/uppertail coverts and different call are easy distinctions. (In addition, bill is noticeably heavier than in all but some 'parrot-billed' southern races of Common Reed, which have strongly curved culmen.) Some of these features suggest 1st-winter Lapland Bunting, but Lapland has fuller 'tick' call (not so European Robin-like), rusty panel across greater coverts, blackish markings on breast and flanks, and black (not pinkish) legs, and is bulkier overall. See also Little and Yellow-browed Buntings for further discussion. Feeds on ground, usually close to cover, shuffling along with some wing- and tail-flicking like a Dunnock; on breeding grounds keeps to areas with bushes and trees, but migrants occur in more open situations and may mix with other buntings. Flight strong and direct



when flushed, less jerky and hesitant than that of Common Reed.

SEX/AGE Unlike many buntings, has pre-breeding moult. Sexes differ in summer plumage, but all winter plumages are similar and female-like and ageing and sexing then difficult; duller birds are probably 1st-winter females, but only well-marked males may be safely sexed by wide black border to rear ear-coverts and very black centres to crown feathers (and even such individuals include some 1st-winters as well as adults).

VOICE Usual call a short, sharp, distinct 'zit' (recalling Song Thrush) or softer 'tsik' (more European Robin-like), often repeated when agitated; also gives a thin, penetrating 'tsee' (recalling Eurasian Penduline Tit) when alarmed on breeding grounds. Song a short, thin, clear, rather mournful, Dunnock-like warbling: has been rendered 'DUdeleu DII-dah deLUU-delee'.

STATUS/HABITAT Fairly common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Latvia. Winters in E Asia, and to a lesser extent C Asia.) In breeding season, favours swampy sections of coniferous forest (especially areas of stunted, half-dead pines or spruce with scattered birches or willows) and streamside or bogside bushes bordering mixed or coniferous forest. On passage, occurs in more open situations, such as field edges, but usually not far from bushes and thickets.

LITTLE BUNTING *Emberiza pusilla*

Plate page 806

L 13.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A small, almost Common Linnet-sized bunting, recalling female Common Reed in basic appearance, but overall size distinctly smaller, tail relatively shorter and bill slightly longer, with hint of turned-up appearance (owing to almost straight, rather than convex, culmen), which, coupled with

more distinct whitish eye-ring, gives Little a different facial expression. Overall coloration of upperparts duller brown than in most Common Reed, contrasting with extensive rufous wash on head (which, while varying with sex and age, is also highly individually variable). Lesser coverts are dull brown (always rusty

in Common Reed), but these are virtually impossible to see in the field and so, as adjacent median coverts and scapulars are often quite rufous-tinged (and more obvious) in Little, great care needs to be taken over this difference. Pale wings bars are more obvious, especially median-covert bar. Streaking on both the upperparts and underparts is much narrower and blacker, and Little also has a weak dark malar stripe (heavy and blotched in Common Reed) and a narrower dark border to lower ear-coverts which does not reach base of bill (border is bolder and obvious, usually reaching bill in the form of a dark moustachial stripe, in Common Reed). Amount of rufous on head varies: it is least obvious in fresh plumage in autumn, especially in young females, but the ear-coverts are typically rufous (grey-brown in Common Reed), and there is a rufous tinge to fore-supercilium, lore and median crown-stripe; in spring males, rufous is very bright and extends over throat. Median crown-stripe is narrower and more distinct and pale spot on rear ear-coverts also more distinct compared with winter-plumaged Common Reed, while summer-plumaged Common Reed usually lack both median crown-stripe and pale spot on ear-coverts. The sides of the crown are blackish in Little, forming lateral stripes, but are either streaked or reddish-brown in Common Reed (but Common Reed is very variable and some have dark brown lateral crown-stripes). Legs are usually clearer pinkish than those of Common Reed (and never dark, as in some Common Reed), and calls also differ. Confusion most likely in autumn, when lone migrant Common Reed may be found associating with coastal passerines, e.g. Meadow Pipits, well away from damp habitats; as Common Reed is smaller and slighter than most other common buntings which normally occur in such situations, risk of confusion may be compounded. Compare also Pallas's Reed, Yellow-browed and Rustic Buntings. Feeds on ground, flying to low perch with much wing- and tail-flicking, almost invariably calling when flushed. Sociable, mixing freely with finches and other buntings outside breeding season, and has been found joining com-



munal Common Reed Bunting roosts in autumn and winter, when presence usually detected by calls.

SEX/AGE Unlike many buntings, has pre-breeding moult. Sexes similar, but in late spring the brightest summer-plumaged males may be sexed by rich rufous-chestnut of head extending over chin and upper throat and by very prominent black lateral crown-stripes, whereas in many summer females the throat is whitish, the lateral crown-stripes browner (and less contrasting) and the rufous duller. In autumn (and again, to a lesser degree, in late winter/early spring), colours dulled by greyish feather fringing; fresh winter-plumaged adults tend to show more rufous on head than 1st-winters, with some young females appearing duller of all, but ageing and sexing unreliable except for extreme cases.

VOICE Usual call a sharp, clicking, European Robin-like 'tik' or harder, more Hawfinch-like 'tzik' (when more agitated), often repeated. Song a short, variable, cheery series of notes recalling, according to phrase-type, Ortolan, Common Reed and Rustic Buntings or even part of song of Tree Pipit (but more 'chirpy' in delivery); one variant has been rendered 'pie-pie-sturi sturi-tulee-tchee'.

STATUS/HABITAT Uncommon in west of breeding range, but more numerous further east. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Sweden. Winters in S and E Asia.) In breeding season, favours rather open birch or spruce stands with dwarf birch undergrowth, also damp willow thickets, usually near water. On passage, occurs in more open situations, especially hedgerows and weedy cultivation.

CHESTNUT BUNTING *Emberiza rutila*

L 14.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Asian vagrant (breeds C and E Siberia). Smallish bunting with largely yellow underparts and rufous rump area in all plumages. Shows little or no white in outer tail feathers, unlike all other small buntings. **Adult male** is striking, with rufous-chestnut head, upper breast, upperparts and much of wing and pale yellow lower underparts. Unmistakable even in fresh plumage in autumn, when pale feather fringes dull chestnut areas. **1st-year male** often very similar to adult male, and so unlikely to be confused, but others indistinguishable from females. **Female** recalls female Yellowhammer in having yellowish underparts and rufous rump and uppertail coverts, but is smaller, with buffish-white (not yellowish) throat, virtually unstreaked underparts, no dark olive facial pattern and very little or no white in relatively shorter tail; adults often show some chestnut on crown, mantle and lesser coverts (some older adult females show extensive chestnut on head, upper breast and upperparts and are inseparable from 1st-year males). Female Yellow-breasted Bunting has similar call and yellowish underparts, but has obvious white in outer tail, stronger head pattern (with more prominent median crown-stripe, pale supercilium and dark framing to ear-coverts, but often a weaker malar stripe), more

obvious wing bars (especially median-covert bar), duller (less rufous), well-streaked rump and more heavily streaked underparts. The undertail coverts are whitish or pale buffish (rarely yellowish) in Yellow-breasted, but always yellow or yellowish in Chestnut; conversely the throat is often yellow in Yellow-breasted, but is usually whitish or pale buffish in Chestnut. Female Black-faced Bunting is similarly skulking, with similar call, and is also yellowish, but has two-toned bill, no rufous on rump and extensive clear white in outer tail. **Juvenile** plumage is sometimes retained until reaching winter quarters, and shows heavily streaked breast, flanks and rump area, but otherwise recalls duller 1st-year females (streaking finer and better defined than in female Yellowhammer). May be separated from juvenile Yellow-breasted by same differences in head and tail pattern as for adult/1st-year female. An unobtrusive bunting, feeding on ground among bushy cover, invariably calling in typical Asian bunting manner when flushed.

SEX/AGE Sexes differ, but 1st-summer males show variable mixed sexual features, as do older females, and sexing of some birds difficult, but in spring young males have very abraded wings, these being relatively fresh in adults. In fresh plumage in autumn, adult

Plate page 806

male has chestnut slightly dulled by buffish feather fringes, but colour and pattern still evident. 1st-year males in autumn often very similar (differing in showing no chestnut on upper throat and clearly narrower rufous fringes to tertials that become whitish towards tip), but others have heavy streaking on crown and mantle and buffish areas on sides of head and throat, some being difficult or impossible to tell in the field from adult females. 1st-year females in autumn show no chestnut except on rump, and may be aged by grey-brown lesser coverts (chestnut in adult female) if these are visible. Some birds retain juvenile plumage into autumn; these resemble dullest 1st-year females,

but have extensive dark streaking on breast, flanks and rump area.

VOICE Usual call a short, sharp, European Robin-like 'tik' or 'stip', often repeated (and very similar to call of Little Bunting). Song rather similar to that of Black-faced Bunting, being a short, rapid, very variable jingle, somewhat recalling both Tree Pipit and Pallas's Leaf Warbler.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (Europe). In natural range, breeds in rather open forest, both deciduous and larch, with a rich ground cover of herbaceous plants. On passage and in winter, occurs in cultivated areas with bushy cover, woodland clearings etc.

YELLOW-BREASTED BUNTING *Emberiza aureola*

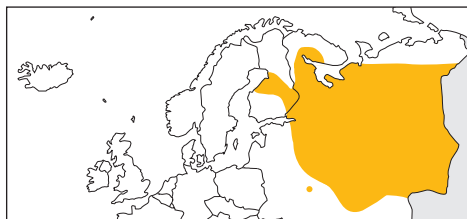
Plate page 806

L 14.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A small, stocky bunting with bright yellow underparts and white in outer tail feathers.

Male unmistakable in adult summer plumage, with maroon-chestnut crown, upperparts and breast band and black face and upper throat contrasting with bright yellow of rest of underparts; shows large white 'shoulder patch' and a narrow white bar on wing coverts, evident also in flight (and reminiscent of Common Chaffinch). 1st-summer male often has yellow throat, broken breast band and mixed dull brownish feathering on head and upperparts, while others closely resemble female (but some are very close to adult male). Winter plumage initially very like female (see below), but male characters emerge through abrasion as winter progresses. **Female** is dull brownish on head and upperparts, heavily streaked darker, with a rufous-tinged, often well-streaked rump/uppertail coverts; the ear-coverts show a conspicuous dark border and the crown is striped, having dark lateral stripes contrasting with a pale median stripe and prominent pale supercilium; the underparts are almost unstreaked except along flanks (and sometimes sparsely on breast) and are washed with yellow (sometimes only very faintly, and yellow tinge may not be apparent unless bird facing observer); there is little or no trace of a dark malar stripe. (A few older adult females show more male-like plumage with some chestnut on crown and breast, and more extensive white upperwing bar.) Female Chestnut and Black-faced Buntings have similar call and yellowish underparts (see those species for discussion). Separated easily from female Yellowhammer by much more prominent pale supercilium, presence of a pale median crown-stripe, much less extensive streaking on underparts (restricted to flanks and sometimes breast) and obvious whitish wing bar on median coverts. Similar head and upperpart pattern is shown by vagrant Bobolink (q.v.). **Juvenile** plumage is often (perhaps always) retained well into autumn and shows heavily streaked underparts. For differences from very similar juvenile Chestnut, see that species. Males sing from bush tops in swampy meadows; otherwise feeds on ground among grasses and weeds, flying up into bushes or other low perches when disturbed. Sociable, but in west of range very local and so flocks unlikely to be seen.

SEX/AGE Unlike many buntings, has pre-breeding moult. Sexes differ in spring and summer, but 1st-summer male often shows a mixture of male-type and female-type plumage features, as do older females, and so sexing of some poorly marked birds difficult. In



fresh plumage, adult male winter resembles adult female, but is brighter yellow below and less streaked on crown and mantle, with blacker framing to ear-coverts and noticeably more white on upperwing bar (both lesser and median coverts being white); other male features (particularly maroon-chestnut of crown, mantle and narrow breast band) become more evident as winter progresses and pale feather fringes are abraded away. 1st-winters of both sexes closely resemble adult female (which delays post-breeding moult until reaching migratory stop-over areas in China), young males differing from adult male winter in having much more heavily streaked mantle/scapulars and less extensive white on upper wing bar; with abrasion, chestnut on crown, mantle and breast band of young males becomes apparent (but these characters also shown by a few adult females). Many (perhaps all) young birds retain juvenile plumage well into first autumn (perhaps moulting into 1st-winter at same migratory stop-over areas as adults); these closely resemble adult female, but have extensive fine dark streaking on both breast and flanks.

VOICE Usual call a short, sharp, European Robin-like 'tsik', slightly less dry or sharp than call of Little Bunting but very similar; on breeding grounds, also gives an abrupt 'chup' when flushed. Song individually variable, a far-carrying, rather monotonous, rising jingle of clear, ringing notes that usually falls at very end; may be rendered as 'do-do-dee-dee-do-de' or 'tru-tru-tree-tree-tri-tri-ih-tiu'. Recalls Ortolan Bunting most of all.

STATUS/HABITAT Very local and uncommon in west of range, but more numerous further east. Winters in S and SE Asia. Breeds mainly in both wet and dry grassy meadows with scattered willow, birch or alder bushes, or in thickets at margins of marshes or rivers; also regenerating burnt areas or clearings in forest and edges of sparse birch woodland. Outside breeding season, in stubble fields and weedy cultivation.

COMMON REED BUNTING *Emberiza schoeniclus*

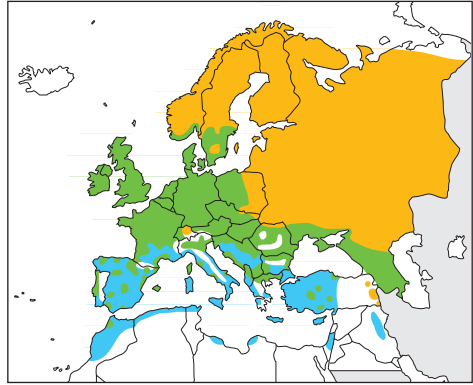
Plate page 807

Reed Bunting

L 15–16 cm.

IDENTIFICATION One of the most widespread buntings of our region, found mostly, but by no means exclusively, in wet habitats. A medium-sized species with relatively short primary projection, small bill (in most races) and relatively long tail, latter showing obvious white in outer feathers. **Male** in worn plumage in spring/summer, with black head and throat contrasting with white collar and submoustachial stripe, whitish underparts and warm brown, heavily streaked upperparts, is virtually unmistakable (but see Pallas's Reed Bunting). **Other plumages** provide numerous pitfalls as a result of age-related, racial and individual variation, but typically have whitish underparts with (usually) a heavy dark malar stripe, broadly streaked breast and flanks and a well-marked dark border to ear-coverts (lower border often reaching bill in the form of a narrow dark moustachial stripe); some eastern birds are markedly greyish-brown, with very pale greyish rump area, while many individuals have chestnut crown sides and are distinctly reddish-brown above (with rusty tinge to greyish rump area); the pale crown centre is usually (but by no means always) indistinct. Worn females in spring/summer have much darker (dark brown) ear-coverts and whitish (rather than buff) supercilium and submoustachial stripe, with a distinct grey tinge to neck sides. For distinctions from similar species, see discussions under Lapland, Rustic, Little and Pallas's Reed Buntings (all of which have only limited range overlap with Common Reed). Call is a useful aid to identity, as are the minimal projection of the primaries beyond the tertials and the rufous lesser wing coverts (although the latter are often obscured). Typically seen perched on reed tops, but feeds mostly on ground in waterside vegetation or (in autumn and winter) in stubbles and cultivation with other finches and buntings, or sometimes larks and pipits. Flight somewhat whirring and hesitant when well underway, distinctly jerky when flying only short distances. Often flicks and flares tail when flushed and rising up to a perch.

SEX/AGE Spring/summer appearance almost entirely due to feather abrasion: little pre-breeding moult involved. Adult male in autumn has brownish-buff feather tips obscuring black on head, but shows reasonably extensive black on throat and a whitish nape, unlike females, while rump is greyer. Juvenile resembles fresh adult female, but ground colour of underparts yellowish-buff and upperparts colder brown, with more intense, better-defined streaking both above and below. 1st-years in autumn resemble respective fresh autumn adults, but tail and flight feathers more abraded (fresh in adults): young male has even less black visible on head and throat than adult male (owing to even broader pale feather fringes), has buffish supercilium, and nape shows some whitish but less than in adult males; 1st-year



female difficult to age, but has underparts more heavily streaked, crown browner (less reddish-brown) and more heavily worn flight and tail feathers.

VOICE Most familiar calls are a penetrating, clear, indrawn 'tseeu' and a deep, hoarse 'chew' or 'chup' (often given in flight, and especially outside breeding season). Song individually variable, a rather insignificant rising and falling, rather jerky ('hiccupping') series of four or five notes with a final whirr, 'seep-surp-seep-surp-sissii' or similar.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Fairly marked, but complex and clinal, most noticeably involving size, coloration and bill shape. 12 races (n nominate illustrated), in two groups. The *schoeniclus* (or northern) group of 5 races, which become paler and rather greyer (especially on rump) towards the east of our region; these birds all have small and insignificant bills. The *pyrrhuloides* (or southern) group of 7 races breeds across southern Europe from Portugal and southern France through SE Europe to the Caspian; these are a little larger and have stouter bills than nominate group, with more arched mandibles, and again become greyer in the east; reaches extreme with 'parrot-billed' race *pyrrhuloides* of northern shore of Caspian Sea eastwards, a very large, very pale race which has a very stout bill with strongly arched mandibles, being much more massive-billed and larger than other races in the southern group.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred Faeroes.) Various wetland habitats, from reedbeds, stands of rushes, wet willow thickets and wet meadows with tall herbage to wet, bushy tundra and estuarine saltmarshes; locally also in tall cultivation or young conifer plantations well away from water. Outside breeding season, in greater variety of habitats, including stubbles and other cultivation and coastal grassland.

PALLAS'S REED BUNTING *Emberiza pallasii*

Plate page 807

Pallas's Bunting

L 13.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Extreme northeast of our region only. Recalls a Common Linnet- or Little Bunting-sized Common Reed Bunting in all plumages. Distinctly smaller and relatively longer-tailed than Common Reed, with more prominent tail notch and

more conical bill (culmen straighter than in most northern races of Common Reed, while southern races of latter have distinctly convex culmen), but bill shape is often very difficult to evaluate in the field. The lower mandible is usually more pinkish than in Com-

mon Reed (except in summer males, which have all dark bills), giving bill a more two-tone appearance, and the legs are also usually pinker (but Common Reed can be similar in these respects). Typically looks paler overall than Common Reed, with paler rump and (except in juvenile and some 1st-year females) little or no streaking on breast and flanks (but beware pale eastern races of Common Reed). Despite plumage variation in both species, a diagnostic feature is the dull grey (male) or greyish-brown (female/juvenile) lesser coverts of Pallas's Reed (these feathers rufous in Common Reed), but unfortunately this is difficult to see unless bend of wing is clearly visible and not hidden by scapulars or fluffed-up breast feathers. **Male** in worn plumage in spring/summer has similar black-and-white head/neck pattern but lacks Common Reed's reddish-brown ground colour to the upperparts, being almost greyish-straw, with blacker, more clear-cut streaking, becoming almost unstreaked whitish on rump (but some eastern populations of Common Reed are also quite pale-rumped) and two narrow white wing bars; in spring many individuals still have yellowish-buff nape, but this becomes whitish with wear (and thus like Common Reed). **Female** (and fresh-plumaged male) show a blackish malar stripe like female Common Reed, but the stripe does not reach the bill (as it does in Common Reed) or may even be vestigial (in fresh adult females in autumn), and the underparts are either unstreaked or weakly streaked with rufous-brown, often appearing unstreaked except at close range; streaking usually obvious and dark brown or blackish in Common Reed, which tends to have less of a buff tinge to underparts. (Note, however, that some young Pallas's Reed retain dusky underpart streaking of juvenile plumage well into first autumn.) The head is much duller in pattern than that of Common Reed, having a less conspicuous supercilium (often weak behind eye) and more uniformly streaked dull brown crown (autumn/winter Common Reed often has darker brown crown sides, with an indistinct pale median crown-stripe, although some Pallas's Reed show slightly darker crown sides). The nape and sides of neck are virtually uniform with crown, lacking the obvious greyish tinge seen in many Common Reed. Ear-coverts are more uniform and dark-framing is either absent or less distinct (instead Pallas's Reed often shows a dark spot in lower rear corner). Upperparts lack the rufous tones of western populations of Common Reed, except for a rufous panel on the secondaries which contrasts with the heavily black-streaked straw-brown of the rest of the upperparts; the wing also shows two narrow but quite distinct buffish-white bars formed by pale tips to median and greater coverts (these bars either lacking in Common Reed, or else not so pale) and also a more obvious black bar formed by the bases to the median coverts; rump is paler, being pale buff-brown (becoming whiter when worn). Clearly differs from western races of Common Reed, but some eastern populations of latter are very cold greyish-brown in overall plumage tones, show a pale greyish rump, a pale ground colour to the remainder



of the upperparts, similar pattern to ear-coverts and pale tips to greater wing coverts and thus suggest Pallas's Reed, but such birds have chestnut lesser wing coverts, a striking supercilium and a malar stripe that reaches bill and lack rufous wing panel. Small size suggests Little Bunting, but latter has relatively shorter tail, a distinct pale eye-ring, prominent supercilium, extensive fine dark streaking on underparts, often extensive rufous in supercilium and crown, and a different call. **Juvenile** is very similar to juvenile Common Reed (and also closer to female Common Reed than adult/1st-year plumages); best distinguished by more pinkish lower mandible, greyish-brown (not rufous) lesser coverts and different call. Skulks in low vegetation, and feeds less in open than Common Reed, invariably uttering a distinctive call when flushed; migrants seem to have an annoying tendency of flying considerable distances when disturbed.

SEX/AGE Spring/summer appearance entirely due to feather abrasion: no pre-breeding moult involved. Adult males in fresh plumage in autumn are very similar to fresh adult female, but often have bluer-grey lesser coverts and show increasing black mottling on crown, ear-coverts and throat as pale feather fringes wear away. Worn female in spring/summer is darker on crown than fresh female, with more prominent supercilium (but still weak in front of eye), more prominent dark malar stripe, grey tinge to nape and whitish (rather than buff-tinged) underparts with faint brownish streaking on breast and flanks. Juvenile resembles fresh adult female, but is darker above, with heavier streaking on rump area and quite heavy dusky streaking on breast and flanks which may be retained well into first autumn. 1st-years in fresh plumage in autumn closely resemble respective autumn adults; young male has broader pale feather fringes on head and throat than adult male, initially almost completely obscuring black on head and to a lesser degree throat (black becomes increasingly visible through abrasion as winter progresses).

VOICE Usual call distinctive, and very different from Common Reed Bunting, a sweet Eurasian Tree Sparrow-like 'tsleep' or, especially in flight, a more Tawny Pipit-like 'chelup'; also gives a quiet 'sip sip'. Song insignificant, but also distinctive, being merely a rather monotonous series of four almost even-toned notes: 'swee-swee-swee-swee'.

STATUS/HABITAT Recently discovered breeding in tundra in extreme northeast of our region; otherwise a vagrant to W Europe. Winters in E Asia. Breeds in willow or alder thickets in wet tundra. Outside breeding season, in reedbeds, wet grassy areas, damp, scrubby cultivation and riverine thickets.

RED-HEADED BUNTING *Emberiza bruniceps*

Plate page 805

L 16 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Eastern counterpart of Black-headed Bunting; breeding N Caspian region only. A large, rather heavy, large-billed bunting that shows no white in tail in all plumages. **Adult male summer** is unmistakable, with bright reddish-brown head, throat

and centre of upper breast, unstreaked yellow underparts and rump and greenish-tinged, finely-streaked mantle. Colour of head strangely variable, some birds having reduced area of reddish-brown, with yellow on upper throat and extending from nape over whole

crown, while others have yellowish-brown tone rather than reddish-brown. **Adult male winter** has reddish-brown partly obscured by pale fringes, and browner nape and mantle, but basic pattern still discernible and confusion unlikely. **Female and 1st-winter male** very similar to those of Black-headed, sharing overall plain buffish and almost unstreaked appearance (with prominent dark eye staring out from very plain face, lacking any obvious pattern), pale greyish-buff or yellowish underparts with brighter yellow undertail coverts, and lack of white in tail, features which distinguish them from all other buntings. Separation from Black-headed frequently impossible, but Red-headed has marginally stouter (but shorter) bill and in fresh plumage can have a greenish-grey wash on mantle and scapulars, more defined mantle streaking and a yellow-rump than Black-headed, and sometimes (in summer) even a hint of rufous on head, throat or breast centre (especially forehead); Black-headed often shows reddish-brown tones to mantle and rump (never shown by Red-headed) and sometimes a dusky wash on crown and ear-coverts that creates a ghost-image of the male's pattern; between these two extremes, many (especially 1st-year females) are quite inseparable. In the hand measurements can sometimes help; wing length of Red-headed is 81–92 mm, that of Black-headed 86–101 mm. **Juvenile**, which has dark-spotted upperparts and fine dark streaks on breast (forming band across upper breast) and flanks, apparently inseparable from juvenile Black-headed. Behaviour and voice as for Black-headed. Hybridization further complicates the issue.

SEX/AGE Unlike any other bunting, apart from Black-headed, has complete pre-breeding moult. Sexes differ in summer plumage. In autumn, adult male has pale feather fringes which dull coloration of head and throat, but has much brighter yellow underparts and rump than female or young male. Juvenile dark-spotted above and has breast band of fine dark streaks that extends down flanks, and yellowish-white undertail coverts. 1st-years in autumn closely resemble adult female, but wings and tail fresher (very abraded in adults) and some dark-scalloped juvenile scapulars often retained; lower underparts and rump often yel-



lower in young males. 1st-summers usually inseparable from adults, but some males may be distinguished by more streaking on crown and less extensive reddish-brown on head and centre of upper breast.

VOICE Usual calls include a short, sharp 'zrit' (given in flight, or before), a House Sparrow-like 'chip' or 'tlyp' and a harsher 'cheu' (often given in alternation with 'chip' call). Song a short, ringing, monotonous, harsh but cheery phrase usually preceded by 1–4 sharp staccato 'zrit' notes: 'zrit-zrit chri-chri-cheuh-cheuh-ah' or 'zrit-zrit dedederoroo'. Vocally almost identical to Black-headed Bunting, but song typically a little more hurried.

TAXONOMY Breeding range marginally comes into contact with that of Black-headed Bunting *E. melanocephala* in both north and south Caspian regions, where some hybridization is known to occur; in Indian winter quarters, forms huge mixed flocks with Black-headed in areas of cultivation; song and behaviour are also basically the same. In view of this the two forms are sometimes regarded as conspecific (under *E. melanocephala*).

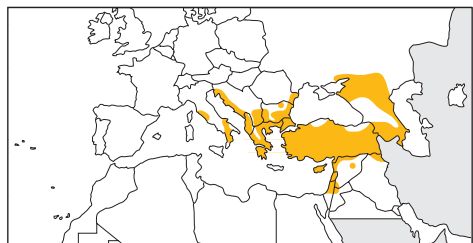
STATUS/HABITAT Common. Breeds only in N Caspian region, but widely recorded in Europe and Middle East either as a vagrant or as an escaped cagebird; vagrancy likely, as forms mixed flocks with Black-headed in S Asian winter quarters and is a very long-distance migrant, but also formerly imported in very large numbers as a cagebird. Breeds in grassy steppe and semi-desert with bushes or tall herbaceous patches, cultivation with scattered bushes, thickets, grassy hillsides and mountainsides with scrub. Outside breeding season, in open cultivation and thorn scrub.

BLACK-HEADED BUNTING *Emberiza melanocephala*

Plate page 805

L 16.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION A large, rather heavy, large-billed bunting of SE of our region. Shows no white in tail in all plumages. **Adult male summer** is unmistakable, with black hood contrasting with canary-yellow throat and rest of unstreaked underparts; in flight, shows mostly rufous-chestnut upperparts and no white in tail. 1st-summer male Yellow-breasted can appear yellow-throated and dark-hooded, but white in tail and obvious white 'shoulder patch' provide an easy distinction. **Adult male winter** has black hood and rufous-chestnut nape and mantle partly obscured by pale brownish fringes, with yellow of underparts partly obscured by whitish fringes (especially on throat and breast), but basic pattern still discernible and confusion unlikely. **Female and 1st-winter male** are large, rather long-bodied buntings, almost plain buffish overall (with prominent dark eye staring out from very plain face, lacking any obvious pattern), with pale yellowish or grey-buff underparts but brighter yellow undertail coverts; the upperparts are weakly streaked, but this disappears with wear, and the rump is often tinged rufous-brown. Some females have dusky wash on crown and ear-coverts, creating



ghost-image of male's head pattern. Confusion with other than extremely similar Red-headed Bunting (q.v.) unlikely, but with suspected vagrants the possibility of escaped cagebirds should be considered; e.g. female weavers can be similar in coloration, but these are stockier, shorter-tailed birds. Quite conspicuous in behaviour, singing from exposed perches such as bush tops or telephone wires. Outside breeding season forms flocks on passage, freely mixing with sparrows and other granivorous species feeding in cultivation.

SEX/AGE Unlike any other bunting, apart from Red-

headed, has complete pre-breeding moult. Sexes differ in summer plumage. In autumn, adult male has pale feather fringes which dull coloration of head, but has much brighter yellow underparts than female or 1st-winter male. Juvenile dark-spotted above and has breast band of fine dark streaks that extends down flanks, and yellowish-white undertail coverts. 1st-winters in autumn resemble adult female, but wings and tail fresh (abraded in adults), upperparts more clearly streaked, and they retain some variable fine streaking on breast and the dark-scalloped scapulars of juvenile plumage; lower underparts yellower and mantle more rufous in young males. 1st-summer is inseparable from adults.

VOICE Usual calls are very similar to those of Red-headed Bunting, being a short, clicking, metallic 'pit' or 'pleut' (often given in flight, and recalling Ortolan

Bunting) and, when perched, a soft, low 'siu' often alternating with a higher 'si-tik'. Song a monotonous, short, ringing phrase beginning with 1–6 sharp, almost metallic 'zit' notes; e.g. 'zit-zit-zit-zit chirri-chirri-chirli-cheurleu-cheurleu'. Song is variable but is often identical to that of Red-headed Bunting.

TAXONOMY See Red-headed Bunting *E. bruniceps*.

STATUS/HABITAT Common. (In addition to mapped range, has bred N Italy.) Winters in S Asia. Vagrants recorded elsewhere in Europe as likely to be escaped cagebirds as genuine vagrants (see comment under Red-headed Bunting). Breeds in open country, such as rolling cultivation, with scattered trees and bushes, also maquis, open woodland with bushy undergrowth, olive groves, vineyards and hillsides and mountainsides with scrub. Outside breeding season, in open cultivation and thorn scrub.

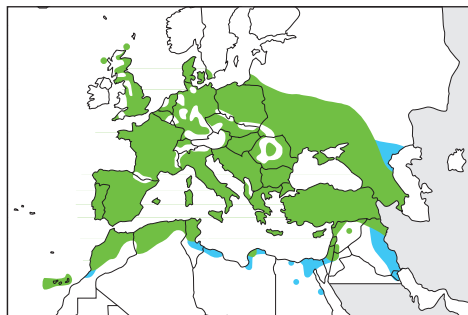
CORN BUNTING *Miliaria calandra*

Plate page 802

L 18 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Large, bulky, stout-billed, heavily streaked, dull greyish-brown bunting of open country (rather lark-like in coloration). Unusual amongst Old World buntings in having all plumages similar. Lacks obvious field marks, but absence of any white in outer tail feathers provides an easy distinction from other buntings apart from female Black-headed and Red-headed, which are sleeker and much less streaked (especially below). Most vagrant American 'sparrows' are skulking in behaviour, but are also streaked below and lack white in tail. In flight, pale tip to tail sometimes apparent (especially when plumage fresh), but most distinctive is the soft but sharp 'pit-pit' call. Bulky flight appearance might suggest a lark, but action is heavier and absence of white in tail, lack of pale trailing edge to wing, relatively longer tail and very distinctive call make it unlikely to be confused (also tends to dangle legs frequently). Compare also smaller Rock Sparrow, which has tail more clearly pale-tipped, boldly striped crown and different call. Females of other sparrows have virtually unmarked underparts. Conspicuous in behaviour, singing from exposed perches, especially telephone wires and fences (or during fluttering display flight with legs dangling). Outside breeding season, forms flocks which associate with other buntings and larks in cultivation, especially Eurasian Skylarks and Yellowhammers in stubbles.

SEX/AGE Juvenile has more yellowish-buff, less grey, ground colour to plumage, with streaking blacker and bolder, often having a suggestion of weak crown-strips; flank streaking weaker than in adults, whitish fringes to tertials and wing coverts narrower and better-defined, and legs pinker. 1st-year is indistinguishable from adult.



VOICE Typical call quiet, but very distinctive: two or three rapidly repeated sharp, almost clicked, 'pwit' or 'pit' notes (often repeated on take-off as 'pwit-it-it'). Also gives a rasping 'jurr' and nasal 'zee' (often alternating with 'pit' call). Song distinctive, a monotonous, rapidly uttered series of chipping notes followed by a harsh jangling rattle, delivered with bouncing rhythm of a ping-pong ball (may be rendered 'teuk-teuk-teuk zik-zee-zrississ'); has often been likened to a bunch of keys being shaken.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION Slight and clinal. 3 races (nominata illustrated).

STATUS/HABITAT Locally common, but markedly localized and declining in parts of NW Europe (especially British Is.). (In addition to mapped range, formerly bred SW Norway and more widely in Britain. Formerly widespread in Ireland but now virtually extinct.) Open farmland, especially pastures and grainfields, steppe and grassy hillsides; often in areas completely lacking in trees or bushes.

DICKCISSEL *Spiza americana*

Plate page 838

L 15–16 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. A little larger than House Sparrow. **Adult male** distinctive, with combination of black bib, greyish head, yellow supercilium, submoustachial stripe and lower breast, white crescent below eye and bright chestnut 'shoulders'. Unlikely to be confused. **Female and 1st-winter male** are more nondescript, but usually show some chestnut on wing coverts, yellowish on supercilium, upper part of submoustachial stripe and breast centre, and a

dark malar stripe. These features, coupled with virtual absence of underpart streaking or (in many adult females and all 1st-winters) merely fine streaking on breast and flanks, lack of white in tail and relatively large bill, prevent confusion with anything else; although Savannah Sparrow also has yellowish in supercilium, it has boldly streaked underparts and is more pipit-like in behaviour. Dullest females (mainly 1st-winters) can be problematic, lacking any chestnut

DICKCISSEL
(p. 837)

on lesser and median coverts or yellow on head and breast, but large, sharp-tipped, steely blue-grey bill and blue-grey legs are useful clues. A bird of open grassland, feeding on ground and freely associating with other species, such as House Sparrows; even visits garden birdtables in open situations outside breeding season. Flight fast and direct.

SEX/AGE In fresh plumage in autumn, adult males have pale feather fringes which slightly obscure and dull the head pattern and black bib. 1st-winters resemble adult female but show more extensive streaking on breast and flanks, males typically having more extensive chestnut on 'shoulder' (both lesser and median coverts being mainly rufous) and some black scaling often present on breast, females typically having more streak-

ing on underparts than young males, no yellow on head and breast and chestnut restricted to tips of median coverts or even absent. 1st-winters can often be aged by retained juvenile tertials, which show narrower, better defined and paler (whitish) edges and tips.

VOICE Call, often given in flight, a distinctive low-pitched, harsh, buzzing 'dzzrrrt' (vaguely reminiscent of slurred call of Long-tailed Tit). Song, uttered from conspicuous perch, a couple of sharp clicks followed by a hissing buzz; 'dik dik serrr-si-si' (sometimes rendered 'dick dick dickcissel'), with variations.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, found in open country with areas of weedy vegetation, especially grassland, grainfields and extensive meadows.

ROSE-BREADED GROSBEAK *Pheucticus ludovicianus***Plate page 800**

L 19–20 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. A bulky finch-like bird (even bigger than Hawfinch) with a massive, pale bill. **Adult male** is highly distinctive, with black head, breast and upperparts (obscured by brownish feather fringes in winter plumage), rose-red breast patch and white rump patch (especially evident in flight), lower underparts, double wing bars, patch on primaries and tail corners. **Female and 1st-winter male** (the latter the most likely plumage to be recorded in our region) are dark brown above and whitish below, with bold dark streaking on underparts and at least two bars of whitish spots on wings; the head pattern is also striking: blackish-brown crown sides and ear-coverts, and whitish median crown-stripe, supercilium and submoustachial stripe; the bill is stout and strikingly pale, and in flight the underwing coverts may flash yellow (rose-red in 1st-winter male). Unlikely to be confused on good view. Despite large size and striking plumage, is a comparatively sluggish arboreal species, feeding both in tree canopy and in bushes and thickets; most vagrants have been discovered feeding in bramble-covered hedge banks.

SEX/AGE In winter plumage, black, white and rose-red pattern of adult male are dulled by pale brownish feather fringes to head and body (including rump

patch), but wings and tail remain cleanly black and white. 1st-winters in autumn resemble adult female, but bill usually smaller. 1st-winter male has more extensive white tips on any freshly moulted median coverts and usually less streaking on breast than females of any age, about the same amount of white at base of primaries as adult female (but less than in most adult males), often some rose-red on breast (but not so much as in adult male), and rose-red underwing coverts (female underwing normally yellow, but sometimes with rose-red admixed, rarely entirely rose-red in some adults); 1st-winter female is difficult to age in the field but shows very little white at base of primaries and tends to be more buff-tinged and more indistinctly streaked below. 1st-summer male closely resembles adult but can be aged by contrast between worn brown flight feathers/primary coverts and black greater coverts.

VOICE Usual call a squeaky, metallic 'eek' or 'kink'. Song a liquid, but often subdued, almost thrush-like warbling phrase.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, open woodlands, overgrown hedges, woodland edges, open areas with trees and scrub, and large gardens, often near water.

BLUE GROSBEAK *Guiraca caerulea*

Plate page 800

L 17 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. A fairly bulky, finch-like bird of bushy thickets, with large, heavy, conical bill and rusty wing bars in all plumages. **Adult male** is virtually unmistakable, the only relief from its overall bright dark blue plumage being the rusty wing bars and black around base of two-toned bill (black upper mandible, grey lower); although male Indigo Bunting is similarly blue, it is much smaller, with a comparatively insignificant bill. Plumage can appear blackish in poor light, so beware possible confusion with similar-sized and -shaped male Brown-headed Cowbird. **Female and 1st-winter male** are almost unstreaked buff-brown overall, with weak streaking on mantle and slight streaking on flanks, and often have bluish tones to rump and shoulders; the rusty-buff wing bars, significantly larger size and massive bill again prevent confusion with Indigo Bunting. **1st-summer** males of both Blue Grosbeak and Indigo Bunting show mixed blue and brownish body plum-

age, and brownish areas in wing of Indigo Bunting might then suggest wing bars on poor view. A rather shy, cover-loving bird of bushy undergrowth, usually frustratingly difficult to see after being flushed, when it typically dives back into dense cover. Has a habit of flicking and slightly flaring tail when perched.

SEX/AGE Adult males in fresh plumage in autumn have brownish feather tipping which slightly dulls plumage colour. 1st-winter resembles adult female, but is often richer and more tawny-brown overall, young males often having some bluish feathering developing during the winter. 1st-summer males have patchy blue on head and body.

VOICE Calls include an explosive, metallic 'spink' or 'chink' and a high, rolling 'preet'. Song a short, rich series of warbling phrases that rise and fall.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, favours woodland edges, bushy fields, hedgerows, overgrown roadsides and streamside thickets.

INDIGO BUNTING *Passerina cyanea*

Plate page 800

L 14 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. A small finch-like bunting. **Adult male summer** is virtually unmistakable, the only relief from its overall bright blue plumage being the two-toned bill (black upper mandible, grey lower); compare much larger Blue Grosbeak. **Adult male winter** is browner due to extensive brownish feather fringes but blue still apparent on rump, tail and wings, and often elsewhere (compare with Blue Grosbeak). **Adult female** is warm brown above, paler below, with some diffuse streaking on breast and with paler edges to wing feathers which can form indistinct paler wing bars; some birds show a few scattered blue feathers in body plumage and a blue tinge to tail and wings; in abraded plumage appears almost uniform grey-brown, with paler, almost whitish, lower underparts. Confusion possible with female or 1st-winter male Lazuli Bunting (q.v. for discussion) and with adult female or 1st-summer male Common Rosefinch, but latter is distinctly larger, has stouter (and not two-toned) bill, paler legs, more extensive streaking on more uniformly-coloured underparts (extending onto flanks, which lack brownish tone of Indigo Bunting), streaked mantle and more conspicuous, buff wing bars (when in fresh plumage, but when worn mantle and wings of Common Rosefinch

can be very plain). **1st-winter** Indigo Bunting in autumn has more streaking below than adult female, but overall tawny appearance and plain mantle are quite different from the olive-brown, streaked, upperparts of Common Rosefinch. A small and often skulking bunting, feeding on ground in weedy cover.

SEX/AGE Adult male winter has brownish feather tipping which heavily obscures blue plumage colour, but blue still evident on wings, especially primaries. 1st-winters resemble female, but show broader and paler brown tips to greater coverts, forming more obvious wing bar, and have more extensive streaking below; by late autumn, some blue feathering starts to appear on young males, but primaries dull, not blue as in adult males. 1st-summer males either show patchy blue on head and body or closely resemble adult males but are less intensely blue.

VOICE Calls include a sharp 'tzik' and a short buzzed 'bzeet'. Song a variable series of clear, quick, high-pitched phrases, descending in pitch and fading towards end.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, favours overgrown, weedy fields and roadsides, bushy thickets (especially by water) and woodland clearings and edges.

LAZULI BUNTING *Passerina amoena*

Plate page 840

L 13.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. A small, finch-like bunting. **Adult male** is easily distinguished in summer plumage by its bright blue head and upperparts, bold white wing bars, rufous breast and flanks and white belly; in fresh winter plumage in autumn, however, extensive warm brown feather fringes give a more patchy appearance, with most of the mantle and head appearing brown, but otherwise the basic pattern and bright coloration are still evident. (Also has brown feather tipping initially in fresh summer plumage, but this wears off in winter quarters.) **Female and 1st-winter male** are very similar to female/1st-winter male Indigo, but are not so warm brown overall, show two narrow white wing bars (wing bars of fresh-plumaged

Indigo less distinct and buffish), have whiter lower underparts and lack weak streaking on breast/flanks and mantle, although very abraded individuals of both species can be difficult to differentiate. Keeps very much to cover of low bushy vegetation, feeding on ground. Replaces Indigo Bunting in western N America; the two species occasionally hybridize.

SEX/AGE Adult male winter has brownish feather tipping which heavily obscures blue plumage colour, but blue still evident on rump, throat and wings; tips to greater and median coverts are rufous, but subterminal area on median coverts white, producing a narrow rufous wing bar below a broader rufous-and-white bar. 1st-winters resemble adult female, but lack any

LAZULI BUNTING
(p. 839)



trace of blue on rump, tail and wings; by late autumn, some blue feathering starts to appear on head and upperparts of young males, but wings still lack blue (except on lesser coverts). 1st-summer males show patches of brown on head and mantle, and often some white feathering on throat.

VOICE Calls include a sharp 'tzip' or 'pit' and a dry buzz. Song resembles that of Indigo Bunting (q.v.), but is faster in delivery.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). On natural range, open woodland, bushy thickets, overgrown fields and weedy cultivation, especially near water.

PAINTED BUNTING *Passerina ciris*

Plate page 800

L 13.5 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. **Adult male** is unmistakable and indeed extraordinary in appearance with its dark blue head, green mantle and red rump and underparts. **Adult female** is also unique, being a small, olive-green, finch-like bird that is rather yellowish below but lacks any streaking or any wing and tail markings. **1st-year** (especially female) rather duller and browner above, but is still less brown than female/1st-winter male Indigo or Lazuli Buntings (with a greenish tinge), lacks wing bars, has a yellow tinge on underparts and also lacks streaking on breast/flanks shown by Indigo Bunting. Like others of the genus, is skulking by nature, feeding on ground among dense weedy cover or under bushes; despite bright coloration, often difficult to observe. In native range, visits garden birdtables and birdbaths.

SEX/AGE Adult males show bright coloration all year.

1st-years resembles adult female, but young females are more brownish-olive, less green, above and more buffish-yellow below; young males are initially similar but by late autumn become brighter green above and brighter yellow below than adult female; by first spring, most young males show traces of red on breast and dark blue on head (fully adult plumage being achieved by second autumn).

VOICE Calls include a sharp 'chip' or 'chirp'. Song a rich, varied, high-pitched, musical series of notes (thinner and sweeter than song of Lazuli Bunting).

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). Precise status unclear, as at least some suspected to be escaped cagebirds. In natural range, favours bushy and weedy fields, hedgerows, woodland edges, overgrown roadsides, large gardens and other shrubby, tangled habitats, often near water.

AMERICAN BLACKBIRDS & ORIOLES Icteridae

5 species (all vagrant)

A large and very varied New World family, a variation reflected by the species which have wandered to our region. The American blackbirds and orioles (or 'icterids') vary from fairly small to medium-sized, but are typified by sharply pointed and usually rather long bills. Some look rather Common Blackbird-like,

others starling-like, and yet others oriole-like or even (e.g. Bobolink) sparrow-like. New World orioles inhabit woodland and are predominantly insectivorous, but most other icterids, such as grackles, cowbirds, blackbirds and Bobolink, are to be found in open country, cultivation and reedbeds, feeding on a mixture of invertebrates and seeds. Songs are typically rather harsh and unmusical (although orioles are an exception), but are unlikely to be heard in our region.

Sexes differ (often markedly). Immatures in first autumn usually closely resemble adult females. Fully adult plumage typically attained by second autumn, but as early as first autumn or first spring in some species.

Vagrant icterids do not closely resemble any Old World species found in our region, so the risk of confusion is not great.

Among the five species recorded so far, identification is straightforward. As other species could conceivably be recorded in the future, however, reference to N American identification guides is recommended.

BOBOLINK *Dolichonyx oryzivorus*

Plate page 799

L 18 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. A plump, bunting-like bird (about size of Corn Bunting, but shorter-tailed), with curiously spiked tips to tail feathers and a prominent conical bill. **Summer male** is unmistakable: a largely black bird with buff nape and striking white scapulars and rump patch (extending from back to uppertail coverts). Unfortunately, this plumage unlikely to be seen in our region as species usually recorded only in autumn. **Female and winter male** are basically warm buffish with prominent dark streaking on head and upperparts (including rump), fairly obvious whitish 'braces' on the mantle, and some dark streaking on flanks and to a lesser degree breast sides (streaking may be hidden by folded wing). The head shows prominent dark lateral crown-stripe which contrasts with buff median coronal-stripe and supercilium, the latter highlighted by dark eye-stripe (from behind eye only). In these plumages Bobolink recalls a large, plump, very warm buff version of a female House Sparrow, but is easily distinguished by striking head pattern. Adult female/immature Yellow-breasted Bunting is fairly similar in plumage pattern, but is smaller, with longer tail (lacking spiky feather tips, and showing white in outer feathers), duller and less buff upperparts and yellower underparts: has dark malar stripe typical of most buntings but lacking in Bobolink. Beware escaped female weavers of certain

species which can resemble Bobolink in coloration, but these lack both strong head pattern and spiky tips to tail feathers. Spends much time feeding on ground in short grass. Flight fast and direct.

SEX/AGE Adult male winter resembles adult female as black of plumage obscured by broad buff fringes, but some blackish appears with abrasion during late winter. Adult has two complete moults annually, in late summer/early autumn and again in late winter/spring, and both adult females and winter males are richer buff on head and underparts (also upperparts) when in fresh plumage; when heavily worn they are often quite whitish on sides of face and throat. Juvenile richer buff, especially below, than (worn) adult female, lacking dark streaking on sides of breast and flanks. 1st-winters cannot be sexed in the field, but some may be aged by presence of unmoulted worn juvenile tertials with whitish fringes and often darker centres.

VOICE Usual call a clear, low, liquid 'pink', often given in flight. Song is a distinctive loud bubbling, rather variable in nature (ranging from deep to high and thin) but often rendered 'bobolink-bobolink-bobolink...'; frequently uttered during fluttering song flight.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, a bird of pastures, arable fields (grain, clover etc.) and open grassland.

BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD *Molothrus ater*

Plate page 842

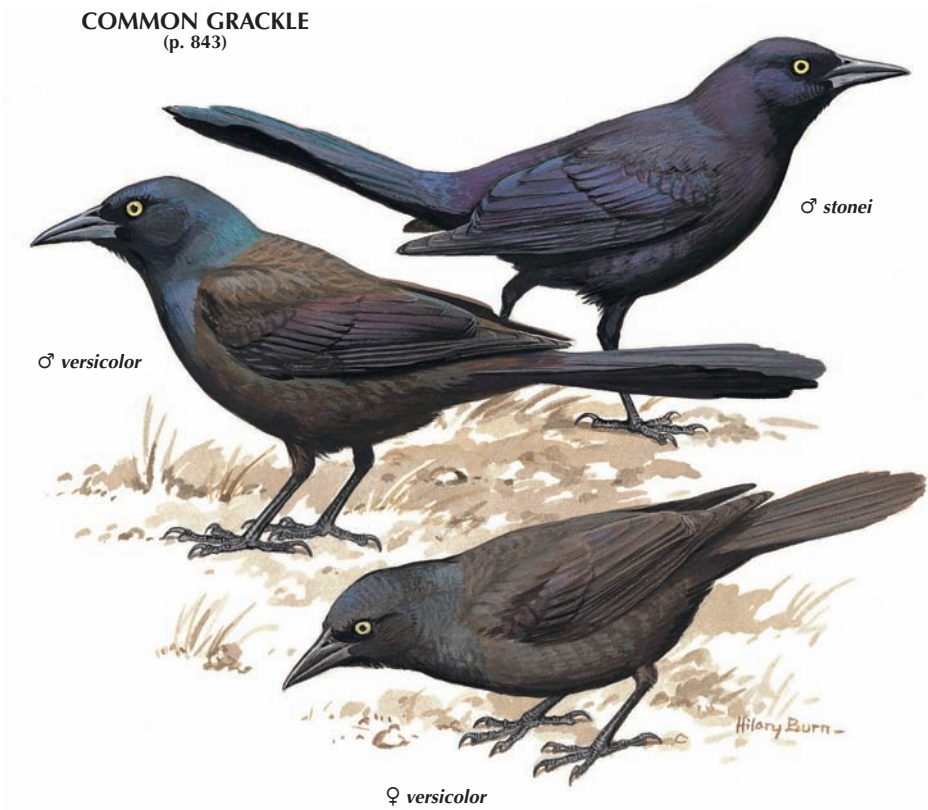
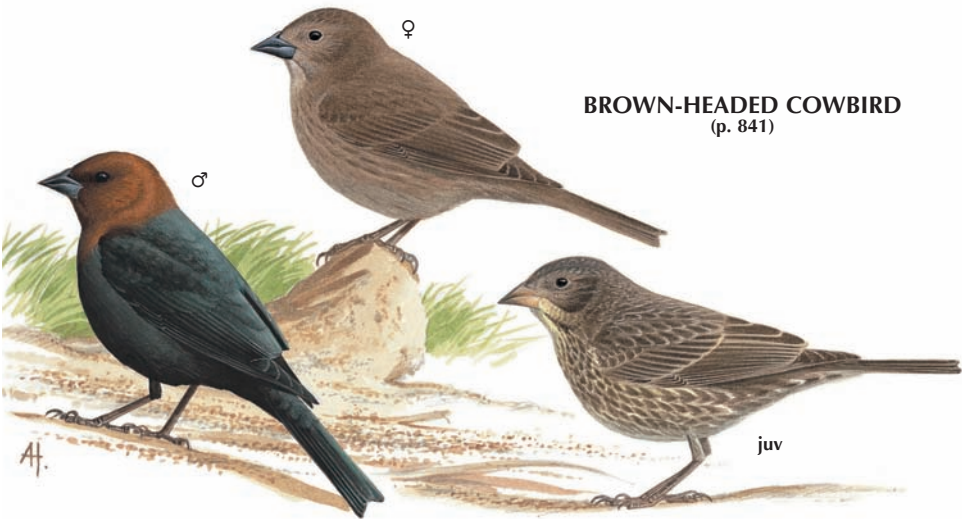
L 19 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. A medium-sized, stout-billed icterid. **Adult male** is glossy black (with greenish tinge) with contrasting dull dark brown head and neck, so is unlikely to be confused if seen well. **Adult female and juvenile** are sooty brownish-grey, with paler underparts, and recall juvenile Common Starling in overall coloration, but have stout, finch-like dark bill and longer tail. Feeds on ground in open country and behaves in Common Starling-like manner, but when on ground often carries rear end angled strongly upwards with tail half-cocked, creating most distinctive impression. In flight, appears short-winged and -tailed, with quite continuous wingbeats (unlike Common Blackbird or other thrushes). Cowbirds are brood parasites, laying their eggs in other birds' nests. See also comment on other dark icterids under Common Grackle.

SEX/AGE Juvenile has more prominent pale buff feather fringes on upperparts and wings, and more obvious streaking on underparts than adult female; prominent pale fringes on wing coverts form double buffish wing bars, while mantle looks scaly. Young males attain adult-like plumage by first autumn or early in first winter, appearing very patchy (like young Common Starlings) in late summer, but may show one or more retained brownish juvenile tertials which contrast with black flight feathers.

VOICE Calls include a harsh 'chuk' and a high, squeaky, whistling 'weee-titi' (with emphasis on first note) that is often given in flight; female gives a harsh rattle. Song is a high, squeaky bubbling.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, found in similar habitats to Common Starling, including farmland, pastures, parks, gardens and open woodland.



COMMON GRACKLE *Quiscalus quiscula*

Plate page 842

L 30–32 cm (male), 26–28 cm (female).

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. Suggests a large Common Starling with a long, somewhat spoon-shaped tail and a large, slightly decurved bill. Distinctive shape makes misidentification unlikely (but see below). **Adult male** is glossy black all over (with a strong metallic sheen: purple on head and neck, bronze or purple on remainder of plumage, depending on population) with striking pale yellowish eyes and a long, graduated tail. **Adult female** is significantly smaller and is duller black (especially on underparts), but also has pale yellowish eyes. **Juvenile** is drabber sooty-brown and has dark eyes, but retains distinctive shape. Grackles are conspicuous, sociable birds of farmland and town gardens, feeding on ground and behaving much as Common Starlings. Several other similar icterids could occur as vagrants from N America, especially Rusty Blackbird *Euphagus*

carolinus, so that reference to N American field guides is essential when confronted with such a bird. Several species of African glossy starlings could suggest grackles and are not infrequent as escapes in Europe; these also need to be eliminated (consult African field guides).

SEX/AGE See Identification; young birds attain adult female-like plumage and pale eyes by first autumn, but 1st-winter females are very lacking in gloss and in both sexes there may be one or more retained brownish juvenile tertials which contrast with black flight feathers.

VOICE Usual call is a loud, hoarse 'chuk' or 'chak'. Song is a wheezing, upslurred 'tssh-shkleet'.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, found in open grassland, farmland, parks, large gardens and open woodland.

**YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD****YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD** *Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*

Plate above

L 25–26 cm (male), 22–23 cm (female).

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. **Adult male** unmistakable, recalling Common Blackbird but with bright yellow head, neck and breast and white wing patch (on primary coverts and outer greater coverts). **Adult female** much smaller and duller, more greyish-brown overall, with yellow distinctly duller and restricted to supercilium, throat and breast, whitish streaking on lower breast/upper belly, and no white wing patch; often shows dark malar stripe. Confusion

unlikely, but beware young male Common Blackbird moulting into 1st-winter with black body plumage and dull rufous head. (Possibility of escaped individuals of similar Yellow-hooded Blackbird *Agelaius icterocephalus* from South America should also be considered: males of this smaller species lack white wing patch (but so do 1st-winter male Yellow-headed) and have purer yellow hood (Yellow-headed has oily tinge), while females lack whitish streaking on lower

breast, are more olive-brown overall and have streaked mantle.) A bird of freshwater marshes and damp fields, feeding on ground and perching on reeds.

SEX/AGE Juvenile resembles adult female, but has brownish feather fringes to upperparts. 1st-winter males have mostly yellowish head and breast (deeper toned than in female), but no white wing patch as such, merely white tips to primary coverts and often outer greater coverts. 1st-winter female closely resem-

bles adult female.

VOICE Usual call a hoarse, croaking 'ktuk'; also gives a guttural rattle. Song is frequently a harsh, strangled, rasping sound followed by a long descending buzz, but is rather variable.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, a bird of freshwater marshes and reedbeds; also farmland and pastures, especially outside breeding season.

BALTIMORE ORIOLE *Icterus galbula*

Northern Oriole

L 19–20 cm.

IDENTIFICATION Transatlantic vagrant. A medium-sized, rather slim passerine with a fairly long, sharply pointed bill. **Adult male** a startling bright orange and black bird, with black head, mantle and most of wings and tail, bright orange underparts, rump, 'shoulder patch' and tail corners, and a whitish bar on greater coverts. A small percentage of males have orange replaced by bright yellow. Unmistakable. **Female and 1st-winter male** are variably patterned but all show double whitish wing bars and edges to tertials. Many adult females are olive-brown above (brighter, more yellowish-olive, from rump to tail) and orange-yellow on forehead and most of underparts (strongest on breast and undertail coverts), often showing some blackish mottling on throat, head and mantle, but some are very dull with greyish-brown upperparts (brighter, more yellowish-olive, from rump to tail) and only a pale orange-yellow wash to underparts, while yet others are brighter orange on head and underparts than typical individuals and some (perhaps older individuals) are heavily marked with blackish on throat, head and mantle and so resemble a dull version of adult male. Most birds recorded in our region are in 1st-winter plumage (which closely resembles typical or duller variants of adult female, see Sex/Age). In this plumage, double whitish wing bars and dull orange-yellow underparts and tail underside are perhaps the most striking features of this canopy-feeding species;

the bill shape is also a useful clue to its identity, being slender but markedly conical and sharply pointed. The wing bars and bill shape are useful distinctions from the two tanagers which have occurred in our region. Feeds inside foliage of canopy and often difficult to observe.

SEX/AGE Juvenile lacks any black on head and resembles dullest adult females. 1st-winter male resembles typical adult female but usually shows a contrast between darker (fresh) greater coverts and paler brown flight feathers and primary coverts; appears almost as adult male in 1st-summer plumage (but shows variable amount of olive in upperparts and dull brown flight feathers and primary coverts). 1st-winter female closely resembles duller adult females, but it lacks the blackish mottling on head, throat and mantle shown by some of latter.

VOICE Migrants usually silent, but calls include a low, fluting 'hew-li' and a rattling 'cher-r-r-r-r' of alarm. Song is a musical, fluting but somewhat disjointed series of 'hew-li' and other notes.

TAXONOMY This species was known as **Northern Oriole** during the relatively short period when the western North American form *bullockii* (Bullock's Oriole) was treated as conspecific: the two forms are now once more considered to be separate species.

STATUS/HABITAT Vagrant (W Europe). In natural range, found in open woodland, groves and parks.

Plate page 799

APPENDIX

Recent additions (including recently-established introductions)

HERALD PETREL (or Trinidad Petrel) *Pterodroma arminjoniana*

L 37 cm. WS 95 cm. Vagrant (Azores) from S Atlantic (or possibly S Indian Ocean). This medium-sized *Pterodroma* is polymorphic. Pale morph is mostly greyish-brown but mottled whitish on forehead and lores, and white on chin, throat, lower breast and belly. Dark on neck sides extends onto sides of upper breast, forming collar of variable extent (but usually broken), and narrowly along sides of lower breast and flanks to undertail coverts. Upperside looks rather uniformly dark but shows an indistinctly darker M-shaped pattern across upperwing (and pale fringes to feathers of mantle and back visible at close range). Underwing shows extensive whitish patch on bases of primaries, secondaries, primary coverts and greater coverts, broken by dark tips to underwing primary coverts. Legs pinkish and black. Unlikely to be confused with any other *Pterodroma* of our region. Fea's and Zino's Petrels (and also vagrant Soft-plumaged of typical pale morph) are paler and greyer above with more conspicuous dark M-shaped pattern on upperwing and almost entirely white underparts (apart from variable partial collar, often complete in Soft-plumaged). Intermediate morph is generally as pale morph but darker on head, collar and undertail, and shows dark mottling on lower breast and belly. Dark morph (the only form recorded from our region so far) is rather featureless dark greyish-brown overall with white patch on underside of primaries and all black legs. Unlikely to be confused with any other *Pterodroma* of our region. It lacks gleaming white belly and lower breast of Atlantic Petrel, while very rare dark morph of Soft-plumaged Petrel is smaller, greyer overall and tends to show less white on underwing (may additionally show an indistinctly darker breast band). However, specialist sources of reference should be consulted in the event of a potential sighting of a dark morph individual in order to rule out other dark *Pterodroma* species not yet recorded from our region. Rather frequent partial albinism adds a further complication. Buoyant flight action often rather unusual for a *Pterodroma*; frequently exhibits shallow wing flaps and flies parallel to sea surface instead of giving deep flaps and arching high up into the air while turning over onto its side as is typical of the genus. Pelagic.

REDHEAD *Aythya americana*

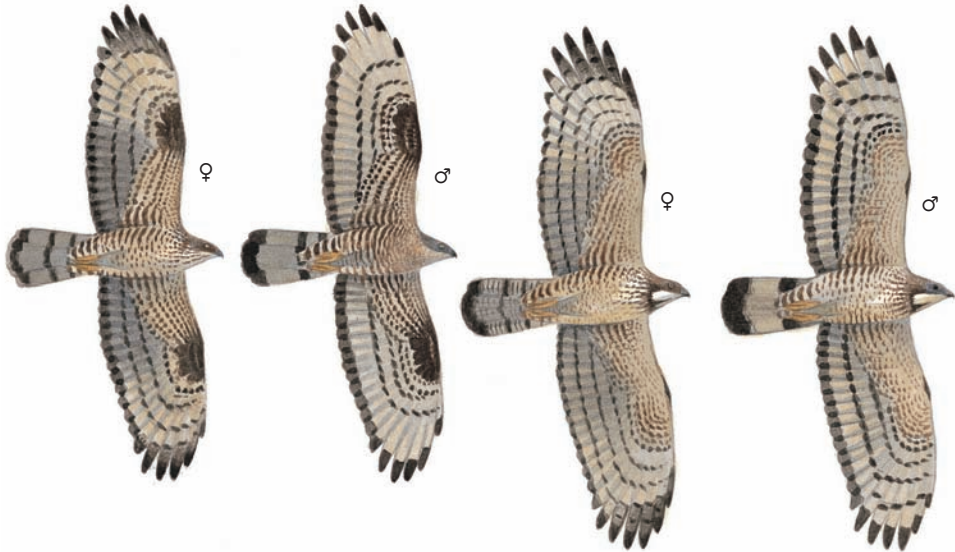
L 46–50 cm. WS 78–86. Transatlantic vagrant (Britain). Very similar to Common Pochard in all plumages, but somewhat larger and tends to ride higher in the water. Head shape closer to Red-crested Pochard, however, with steep forehead and rather full rear crown and nape. In adult male summer, mantle, scapulars, upperwing coverts and flanks are darker grey than in Common Pochard (owing to denser vermiculation) and border between black breast and pale grey flanks sometimes looks squarer-cut, less rounded (although this varies with posture adopted). Bill markedly different, being predominant pale bluish-grey with only a very narrow dark border at base (visible only at close range) and a solid black tip (with more prominent nail) that looks as if it has been 'dipped in ink', bordered behind by white (more narrowly than in Common Pochard). Head a redder shade of chestnut and iris orange-yellow rather than red. Easily separated from vagrant Canvasback by smaller size, darker grey flanks and upperparts, white belly, shorter neck, orange-yellow (rather than red) iris and especially by more conventionally-shaped, largely two-toned bill (Canvasback has very large, tapering, triangular-shaped, all black bill). Female, eclipse male and 1st-winter male closer to Common Pochard but appear more uniform overall and are often a distinctly warm tawny-brown, showing little contrast between head and breast and flanks and upperparts. Have less distinct pale areas on face and same distinctive bill pattern as in summer male. Easily separated from female-type Canvasbacks by same structural and bill pattern differences as for summer male, by white belly (if visible) and by darker and more uniformly brown overall appearance. In flight, much as Common Pochard (or Canvasback), but darker grey of body contrasts more with whitish underwing in summer males. Behaviour and habitat much as Common Pochard. Note that some male hybrid *Aythya*, probably Common Pochard x Tufted Duck, can closely resemble Redhead. Best separated by more sloping forehead (creating more wedge-shaped head and bill outline), paler and more contrasting flanks, a reddish or orange tinge to iris and a white stripe along wing. In addition, hybrids tend to show U-shaped or irregular black tip and white subterminal band to bill (lacking clean-cut appearance of Redhead).

CRESTED HONEY BUZZARD (or Oriental Honey Buzzard) *Pernis ptilorhynchus*

L 55–65 cm. WS 148–165 cm. Vagrant from Asia (breeds west-central Siberia eastwards, wintering mainly in S and SE Asia, although recently found to be a regular winter visitor in small numbers in E Arabia). In our region recorded from E Turkey, Israel and Egypt, accompanying parties of migrating European Honey Buzzards. Fairly similar in all plumages to respective plumages of European, but differences in both structure and plumage make identification of adults straightforward on good view. Although only somewhat larger in measurements, adults generally appear significantly larger and bulkier than European, with six visible primary 'fingers' (only five in European), broader wings, slower and heavier wingbeats, broader and heavier body and shorter and broader tail. At a distance can recall a pale Short-toed Eagle, but is noticeably smaller-headed and has shorter and broader wings. Note: the crest is usually invisible, being in any case less well developed in the race concerned (*orientalis*). Adult male relatively straightforward in good view: has very different tail pattern to any European, appearing largely black with a broad pale band across middle. The underwing pattern is also helpful; outermost black bar on underwing (excluding dark trailing edge) is more extensive than in European, being visible all the way from the primaries (where it follows the base of the emarginations on the 'fingers') to the body; in European it runs nearer to the base of the primaries and then disappears under the underwing greater coverts about halfway along the secondaries. Crested also tends to lack a well-developed dark carpal patch (typical of adult

EUROPEAN HONEY BUZZARD

CRESTED HONEY BUZZARD



European, except in dark morph) and many show a diagnostic dark gorget around the throat (not seen in European). At close range narrow dark gular stripe and dark iris may be visible (iris pale in European and gular stripe absent). Adult females are fairly close to adult female European in plumage but show a tail pattern more like that of adult male European, with a broad dark subterminal bar and a narrow inner bar level with the undertail coverts, although the latter is typically broader than in European males. (A further narrow dark bar is generally obscured by the undertail coverts.) The underwing pattern is rather different, with three dark bars on secondaries evenly-spaced between coverts and dark trailing edge (European usually shows only two bars and a wider gap between trailing edge and the outermost bar). Further, Crested has a fourth dark bar running across the 'fingers' that is absent in European. As in adult males, adult females typically lack a well-developed carpal patch and some show a diagnostic dark gorget, while at close range the narrow dark gular stripe may be visible. Juvenile plumage has not yet been well-studied and separation methods from European not yet fully developed. Structural differences are less marked than in adults; juvenile Crested has less broad wings than in adult, although it still usually appears somewhat larger and bulkier than European. Dark gorget bordering pale throat is diagnostic if present and lack of a dark carpal patch on paler individuals may be indicative. Behaviour and habitat much as European.

CRESTED HONEY BUZZARD



TUFTED PUFFIN *Lunda cirrhata*

L 36–39 cm. WS 54–63 cm. Vagrant (Sweden) from N Pacific. Unmistakably a puffin in adult plumage, but somewhat larger than Atlantic Puffin and has largely black plumage and longer and deeper, mainly orange-red bill. Summer adult has white face mask terminating in long creamy-gold plumes behind the eye that cascade down edge of hindneck (or stream out behind head in flight). Winter adult has narrower bill (especially at base) with orange tip and dark base, and entirely black or blackish plumage apart from a trace of whitish mask around eye and vestigial greyish-gold plumes behind eye. Legs orange (as in Atlantic Puffin.) Juvenile is sooty-brown above with greyish-brown or even whitish underparts; bill narrower than in winter adult and initially blackish, becoming yellowish on tip by first winter. Flight, behaviour and habitat much as Atlantic Puffin.

MONK PARAKEET *Myiopsitta monachus*

L 28–30 cm. WS 31–34 cm. This smallish South American parakeet is now an established introduction in Spain (Barcelona, Valencia, Torremolinos, Madrid) and the Canary Islands (Lanzarote, Fuerteventura, Gran Canaria, Tenerife and La Palma), and may be becoming established in Balearic Is., Belgium, Czech Republic and Italy. Largely green but has pale orange-yellow bill, pale greyish forehead, throat and breast (latter scalloped with whitish), yellow upper belly and bluish-black flight feathers. Gregarious and noisy, making constant chattering and loud staccato shrieks. In natural range, a bird of open woodland, eucalyptus plantations, farmland and orchards, but in our region urban parks, golf courses, large gardens, farmland etc.

BLUE-NAPED MOUSEBIRD *Urocolius macrourus*

L 33–35 cm (including tail 20–22 cm). WS 25–28 cm. This sole representative in our region of the mousebird family (Coliidae) is a localized resident or nomadic visitor on the extreme fringe of our region in Mauritania and Mali, where found breeding slightly north of 21°N. Unmistakable. A medium-sized, long, attenuated bird with a very long thin tail (with projecting central streamers), a prominent crest and a short, deep bill. Buffish-grey overall with bright pale blue band on nape, red bill with dark tip, bare red skin around eye, dusky wings and bluish-grey tail. Juvenile lacks blue nape. Highly gregarious, forming close-knit flocks in rapid flight between trees. Runs along branches in rodent-like fashion. Noisy, with many whistling and chattering calls including a long, loud, clear 'teeee' when perched and a soft, piping 'trie-trie' or 'trui-tru-tri' in flight. Semi-desert country with trees and bushes, especially where vegetation denser along watercourses.

KORDOFAN BUSH LARK *Mirafra cordofanica*

L 15 cm. This small but thick-set lark is a localized resident (or perhaps mainly a nomadic visitor) in Mauritania and Mali north to about 23°N (locally to about 26°N in Mauritania). Perhaps most likely to be confused with similar-sized Dunn's Lark, with which it overlaps. Separation from latter straightforward. In particular, has very different, *Calandrella*-like tail pattern with rufous central feathers (bordered by black) and white outermost feathers. Also has deeper rufous upperparts, obvious (if sparse) streaking on breast, virtually unmarked face, squarer head with slight crest, and somewhat smaller and narrower bill. Juvenile shows dark mottling on crown and wing coverts. Vocalizations little known but song said to be sweet and musical. Arid desert and semi-desert plains with sparse grass and scattered bushes.

RED-VENTED BULBUL *Pycnonotus cafer*

L 19 cm. Recently established as an introduction in Kuwait. Easily separated from all other bulbuls of our region by its red undertail coverts. Looks rather dark overall, with sooty, slightly-crested head, sooty breast with faint pale scalloping, dark upperparts with pale scalloping, whitish rump and white tips to outer tail feathers (conspicuous when alighting). Noisy like all bulbuls. Calls include a loud 'peep' and a chattering 'pititit'. Song is a simple but cheerful 'peep-peep-peep', with the emphasis on the last note. Gardens, tall scrub, open woodland.

CEDAR WAXWING *Bombycilla cedrorum*

L 14.5 cm. Transatlantic vagrant (Britain, Iceland). This smaller cousin of the Bohemian Waxwing is easily separated in adult plumage by its virtually unpatterned patterned wings, yellowish (rather than greyish-buff) belly and white (rather than deep rufous-cinnamon) undertail coverts. Lacks the yellow and white markings on the primary tips, the white edges to secondaries and the white band formed by tips to primary coverts, showing only the small waxy red spines on the secondaries. Also shows narrow white band across forehead (lacking in Bohemian) and is browner overall. Juvenile is similar to juvenile Bohemian, with streaked underparts, but shows same differences in wing pattern and colour of undertail coverts as adults (plus a trace of white forehead band). Call is similar to Bohemian, but higher, softer and more quavering. In natural range, habitats often similar to Bohemian, but regularly found in quite open country.

CRICKET WARBLER (or Scaly-fronted Warbler) *Spiloptila clamans*

L 9–10 cm. This small, long-tailed, *Prinia*-like warbler is probably only a vagrant just inside our region in Mauritania. Upperparts mostly vinaceous-tawny (but yellower on rump and uppertail coverts) and face and underparts creamy. Has conspicuous blackish median and greater coverts with white edges, black-centred tertials and fine black and white mottling from forehead to mid-crown. Tail greyish with prominent white feather tips. Legs pale pinkish-brown. Often seen in small restless groups, diving into cover and then emerging again prior to flying weakly to the next bush. Tail is frequently wagged up and down and from side to side. Unlikely to be confused (but see Scrub Warbler and Graceful *Prinia* in main text.) Adult males have a grey 'shawl' across nape.

Juvenile is similar to adult, but duller and browner, with less distinct dark markings on forehead and crown. Calls include a ringing whistle and a sharp 'zzt' when alarmed. Song is a variable, but generally fast, monotonous tinkling 'du-du-du-du-du' recalling a cricket; generally given while on the move. Arid desert or semi-desert plains with sparse grass and scattered scrub (especially acacias).

MUGIMAKI FLYCATCHER *Ficedula mugimaki*

L 12.5 cm. Vagrant (Britain, but not fully accepted as wild). Asian species, breeding C Siberia eastwards. Fairly small, neat flycatcher, but larger than rather similar Red-breasted. Adult male differs from Red-breasted mainly in black or dark grey upperparts, more extensive orange-rufous area on foreparts (extending lower, from throat onto breast and upper belly), white spot behind eye and large white wing patch. Has similar white base to outer tail feathers, often conspicuous when tail-flicking or in flight. Adult females and 1st-winter females in autumn differ from those of Red-breasted primarily in lacking white base to outer tail feathers and in having darker, browner (less fawn-grey) upperparts and extensive dull yellowish-rufous wash from throat to breast or upper belly; have one or two narrow and rather indistinct pale buff wing bars. Additional features shown by 1st-winter male in autumn are more conspicuous pale buff wing bar and (often) white bases to outer tail feathers. Mugimaki often feeds high in canopy, while Red-breasted tends to feed lower down and often drops on to ground in search of prey. Winter male duller than summer. 1st-winter male in autumn has more conspicuous pale buff wing bar than adult female and 1st-winter female in autumn. Usually silent, but sometimes gives a harsh 'trrt'. Song, unlikely to be heard in our region, a beautiful, fast-moving, rollicking, twittering warble. In natural range, breeds in mature mixed forest, often in hilly country.

GREY-BACKED FISCAL (or Grey-backed Fiscal Shrike) *Lanius excubitorius*

L 25 cm. Reported to breed just inside the boundary of our region in Mauritania, where probably only a seasonal migrant. A large shrike, close to Great Grey Shrike in overall length but much longer-tailed. Best separated from Lesser Grey Shrike, which it superficially resembles, by different structure (much longer tail and shorter wings) combined with whitish border to crown, black scapulars (as well as wings) and especially the prominent white bases to outer tail feathers, contrasting with otherwise black remainder of tail (Lesser Grey has tail black with narrow white edges). Most easily told from Great Grey Shrike of southern *meridionalis* group of races (Southern Grey Shrike) by structure and by black forehead, black (rather than grey) scapulars, lack of white fringes to scapulars, secondaries and tertials, and same difference in tail pattern as applies to Lesser Grey. Adult female has chestnut patch on upper flanks, but this often obscured by wings. Juvenile and immature similar to adult but black areas are duller and has grey areas replaced by pale brownish, with dark scalloping from crown to mantle, on upperpart coverts and on upper breast. Lacks dark forehead. Unlike other shrikes of our region, often rather gregarious, forming noisy, almost babbler-like groups that follow-my-leader in flight. Varied calls include a chattering 'teudleoo-teudleoo'. In our region inhabits arid open country with scattered scrub, especially acacias.

BAY-BREASTED WARBLER *Dendroica castanea*

L 13.5 cm. Transatlantic vagrant (Britain). A North American wood warbler with two prominent white wing bars in all plumages. Summer male unmistakable, with chestnut crown, throat, upper breast and flanks, black mask and creamy patch on side of neck. Summer female recalls summer female Blackpoll Warbler, showing two prominent wing bars and a streaked crown and mantle, but lacks streaking on underparts and shows some (often rather weak) chestnut suffusion on breast sides and foreflanks, and a rather indistinct creamy patch on side of neck. Winter adults and 1st-winters quite similar to equivalent plumages of Blackpoll, but show even brighter green ground colour from crown to mantle and little or no streaking on underparts (breast and flanks streaked and usually obviously tinged greenish-yellow in Blackpoll). Males and adult females usually show some chestnut on flanks (this is most prominent in adult males). Long undertail coverts (as in Blackpoll, creating a rather short-tailed impression) are usually pale buff (white or pale yellowish in Blackpoll). In 1st-winters have little obvious patterning to face, with only Legs usually all dark (pale at front and rear in Blackpoll). Calls are a soft 'chip' and a thin 'seet'. Song, unlikely to be heard in our region, is a rather quiet, high-pitched 'seetzy-seetzy-seetzy-see'. In natural range, breeds in open coniferous forest.

CERULEAN WARBLER *Dendroica cerulea*

L 11.5 cm. Transatlantic vagrant (Iceland). A fairly small, rather short-tailed North American wood warbler with two prominent white wing bars in all plumages. Adult male unmistakable, being pale bluish above (apart from wing bars) and white below apart from narrow blackish band (sometimes broken) on upper breast and bold but rather diffuse blue-grey streaks on lower breast sides and flanks. Adult female also unlikely to be confused, although less striking. Has bluish or bluish-green crown, greenish mantle, whitish supercilium (broadening behind eye), yellowish-white throat and breast, and whitish rear underparts with only rather obscure greyish streaking on breast sides and flanks. Summer female Blackpoll Warbler is much more heavily streaked both above and below and appears more 'black-and-white' overall. Winter Blackpoll is more similar but is greener above, with obvious dark streaks on mantle, and a less obvious pale supercilium. 1st-winter Cerulean is slighter greener above than adult female and somewhat yellower below (especially young females). Young males may show some bluish above and a hint of a dark breast band. Song, unlikely to be heard in our region, is a rapid buzzy series of notes terminating with a higher, drawn-out note: 'zray-zray-zray-zreeeee' In natural range, breeds in tall, open, deciduous or mixed woodlands near water, swamps.

The following vagrant species have also been reported prior to going to press but await ratification by the relevant national rarities committee or equivalent:

LESSER FRIGATEBIRD *Fregata ariel* (Israel)
AMUR FALCON *Falco amurensis* (Italy)
LESSER MOORHEN *Gallinula angulata* (Egypt)
GLAUCOUS-WINGED GULL *Larus glaucescens* (Morocco, Canary Is)
PIGEON GUILLEMOT *Cephus columba* (Norway)
WIRE-TAILED SWALLOW *Hirundo smithii* (Egypt)

Omitted Species

The following species were omitted owing to the fact that we either consider them definitely, or quite probably, erroneously recorded from the Western Palearctic or else likely to be escapes. Some introduced species that have failed to become established are also included, as are a few ship-assisted species recorded from far out in the Atlantic on the fringe of our region. A few species that we have included in the main text, ranging from Cape Petrel to Yellow-headed Blackbird, may in fact only have occurred in our region as escapes, but we (mostly following the relevant national rarities committees) have given them the benefit of the doubt.

Great Grebe *Podiceps major*
Grey-headed Albatross *Diomedea chrysostoma*
Black-footed Albatross *Diomedea nigripes*
Royal Albatross *Diomedea epomophora*
Light-mantled Sooty Albatross *Phoebastria palpebrata*
Southern Giant Petrel *Macronectes giganteus* (The sole record has been downgraded to *Macronectes* sp.)
Kermadec Petrel *Pterodroma neglecta*
Collared Petrel *Pterodroma leucoptera*
African Spoonbill *Platalea alba*
Chilean Flamingo *Phoenicopterus chilensis* (Not yet established.)
Black Swan *Cygnus atratus* (Not yet established.)
Cape Shoveler *Anas smithii*
Turkey Vulture *Cathartes aura*
Steller's Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus pelagicus*
Indian White-backed Vulture (or White-rumped Vulture) *Gyps bengalensis*
Red-shouldered Hawk *Buteo lineatus*
Upland Buzzard *Buteo hemilasius*
Erckel's Francolin *Francolinus erckelii* (Not yet established.)
Daurian Partridge *Perdix dauurica* (Not yet established.)
Wild Turkey *Meleagris gallopavo* (Not yet established.)
Hooded Crane *Grus monacha*
Spoon-billed Sandpiper (or Spoonbill Sandpiper) *Eurynorhynchus pygmeus*
Brown-headed Gull *Larus brunicephalus*
Golden Nightjar *Caprimulgus eximius*
Chestnut-headed Sparrow-lark (or Chestnut-headed Finch-lark) *Eremopterix signata*
Daurian Redstart *Phoenicurus aureus*
Variable Wheatear (or Eastern Pied Wheatear) *Oenanthe picata* (Widely confused with the relatively recently recognized dark morph of the Mourning Wheatear *O. lugens*.)
Familiar Chat *Cercomela familiaris*
Brooks's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus subviridis*
Golden-crowned Kinglet *Regulus satrapa*
White-shouldered Starling (or Grey-backed Starling) *Sturnus sinensis*
White-cheeked Starling *Sturnus cineraceus*
Village Weaver *Ploceus cucullatus*
Red-billed Quelea *Quelea quelea*
Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu *Uraeginthus bengalus*
Orange-cheeked Waxbill *Estrilda melpoda* (Not yet established.)
Pine Siskin *Carduelis pinus* (Ship record in E Atlantic.)
Long-tailed Rosefinch *Uragus sibiricus*
Yellow-billed Grosbeak *Eophona migratoria*
Japanese Grosbeak *Eophona personata*
Field Sparrow *Spizella pusilla* (Ship record in E Atlantic.)
Swamp Sparrow *Zonotrichia georgiana* (Ship record in E Atlantic.)

White-capped Bunting *Emberiza stewarti*

Meadow Bunting (or Siberian Meadow Bunting) *Emberiza cioides*

Cinnamon-breasted Bunting (or Cinnamon-breasted Rock Bunting) *Emberiza tahapisi*

Yellow-throated Bunting *Emberiza elegans*

Rusty Blackbird *Euphagus carolinus*

Eastern Meadowlark *Sturnella magna*

Red-winged Blackbird *Agelaius phoeniceus*

Black-vented Oriole *Icterus wagleri*

FURTHER READING

This list of recommended titles for further reading is by no means complete but spans most of the more recent, or not-so-recent, major publications in English concerning the identification, status and distribution or taxonomy of bird species recorded from the Western Palearctic. (A few key works in other languages are also included.)

Inevitably it cannot include the hundreds of important specialist articles on the identification of Western Palearctic birds that are the fundamental building blocks of today's highly sophisticated art of field identification. Most of these articles can be found in the journals *Birding World*, *British Birds*, *Alula*, *Dutch Birding*, *Limicola*, *Vår Fågelvärld* and others. Likewise the American Birding Association's journal *Birding* carries many identification articles covering species found in our region.

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