

34 Bittern



MOULT

Complete **postbreeding** moult; usually finished in January. Partial **postjuvenile** moult confined to body feathers; some birds have a more extensive moult changing wing coverts, tail, scapulars and flight feathers; usually finished in November.

PHENOLOGY

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

BITTERN (*Botaurus stellaris*)

IDENTIFICATION

70-80 cm. Brown upperparts with golden tinge and strongly streaked; underparts brown-yellowish; black crown and moustachial strike; yellow greenish bill.

SIMILAR SPECIES

This species is unmistakable

SEXING

Plumage of both sexes alike. Size can be an useful character: **male** with wing longer than 335 mm; **female** with wing shorter than 327 mm. Only in **breeding season**, **male** with bare skin between bill and eye clearly blue; **female** with bare skin between bill and eye greenish-brown.

AGEING

3 types of age can be recognized:

Juvenile recalls an **adult** but all flight feathers of one generation; outer primary narrow and pointed; iris uniform dull pale olive-yellow.

1st year autumn/2nd year spring similar to **adult**; recognizable as long as feathers on wing and tail have only one age; if there are two generations of feathers only if the bird has the pattern of juvenile iris (olivaceous-yellow with orange tinge in outer eye).

Adult with primaries and secondaries with three generation of feathers; iris uniformly tinged with orange or red, darker than in **juveniles**, sometimes uniformly brown; outer primary broad and rounded.

STATUS IN ARAGON

Resident, with located breeding pairs in reed fields of Gallocanta, Cinco Villas, Sariñena and Bajo Cinca.