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Ortolan bunting

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The ortolan (Emberiza hortulana), also called ortolan bunting, is a Eurasian bird in the bunting family Emberizidae, a passerine family now separated by most modern scholars from the finches, Fringillidae. The genus name Emberiza is from Alemannic German Embritz, a bunting. The specific name hortulana is from the Italian name for this bird, ortolana.^[2] The English ortolan is derived from Middle French hortolan, "gardener".

The ortolan is served in French cuisine, typically cooked and eaten whole. Traditionally, diners cover their heads with their napkin or a towel while eating the delicacy. The bird is so widely eaten that its French populations dropped dangerously low, leading to laws restricting its use in 1999. In September 2007, the French government announced its intent to enforce long-ignored laws protecting the bird. [4][5]

Taxonomy [edit]

The ortolan bunting was described by the Swedish naturalist Carl Linnaeus in 1758 in

the tenth edition of his Systema Naturae and retains its original binomial name of Emberiza hortulana. [6] The species is monotypic. [7] A molecular phylogenetic study of the buntings published in 2008 found that the ortolan bunting is most closely related to Cretzschmar's bunting (Emberiza caesia).[8]

Description [edit]

The ortolan bunting is 16–17 centimetres $(6^{1}/_{4}-6^{3}/_{4} \text{ inches})$ in length and has a wingspan of 23–29 cm $(9-11\frac{1}{2})$ in). [9] In appearance and habits it much resembles its relative the yellowhammer, but lacks the bright colouring of that species; the ortolan's head, for instance, is greenish-grey, instead of a bright yellow. The song of the male ortolan resembles that of the yellowhammer.

A native of most European countries and West Asia, it reaches as far north as Scandinavia and beyond the Arctic Circle, frequenting cornfields and their

Distribution and habitat [edit]

neighbourhoods. It is an uncommon vagrant in spring, and particularly autumn, to the British Isles. Sightings in the UK are less common than they were, owing to the species' population decline due to overexploitation in France.[10] It was spotted at Kenjar Coastal Karnataka, India, in November 2018 and photographed by birdwatchers. Some birders commented that it is the first photographic record of an

ortolan bunting in India.[11] Behaviour [edit]

Ortolan nests are placed on or near the ground.

The maximum age recorded is six years and ten months for a bird found dead in Switzerland.[12]

Seeds are the natural diet, but beetles and other insects are taken when feeding their young.

Culinary use [edit] The birds are caught with nets set during their autumn

or boxes. They react to the dark by gorging themselves on

migratory flight to Africa. They are then kept in covered cages

grain, usually millet seed, until they double their bulk. They are then suspended upside down over a container of Armagnac, and by dipping, made to drown, and then marinated in the brandy. [14][15] The birds are then plucked, salted and peppered and cooked in their own fat for seven minutes. Many consumers of this dish then place the bird feet first into their mouth while holding onto the bird's head. They eat the ortolan whole, with or without the head, and some may spit out the larger bones, while others eat the whole bird head, bones and all.

a large napkin or towel while consuming the bird. The purpose of the towel is debated. Some claim it is to retain the maximum aroma with the flavour as they consume the entire bird at once, while according to *The Daily Telegraph*, "Tradition dictates that [the towel] is to shield – from God's eyes – the shame of such a decadent and disgraceful act", [14] and others have suggested the towel simply hides the consumers spitting out bones.^[16] This use of the towel was begun by a priest, a friend of Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin.[17] At one time, the island of Cyprus formed a chief depot for in Armagnac—were roasted whole and eaten that way, bones and all, while the diner draped his head with a linen napkin to preserve the the export of ortolans, which were pickled in spices and precious aromas and, some believe, to hide from God.

The traditional way French gourmands eat ortolans is to cover their heads and face with

were annually exported from Cyprus.[18] Noted meals [edit] The Three Emperors Dinner in 1867 included ortolans on toast among its 16 courses. prepared at the restaurant Le Chapon Fin in Bordeaux. [19]

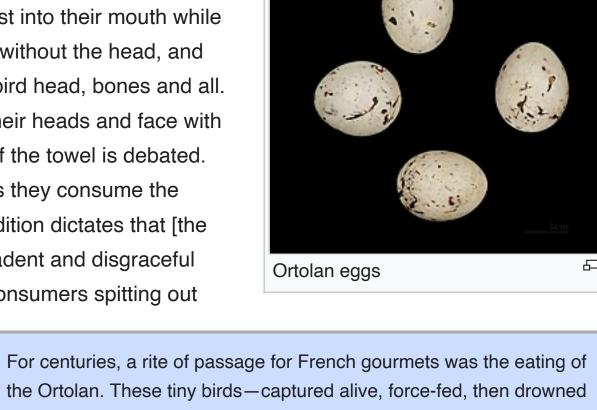
vinegar and packed in casks containing from 300 to 400

each. In the early 20th century, between 400 and 500 casks

Conservation status Least Concern Extinct Threatened (CR) (EN) (VU) (NT) EX) (EW) Least Concern (IUCN 3.1)^[1] Scientific classification Eukaryota Domain: Kingdom: Animalia Phylum: Chordata Class: Aves Order: **Passeriformes** Family: Emberizidae Genus: Emberiza E. hortulana Species: **Binomial name** Emberiza hortulana Linnaeus, 1758 Range of *E. hortulana* Breeding Non-breeding



Male



• The favourite dish of medicine Nobel laureate and inventor of the lobotomy procedure, António Egas Moniz, was ortolans as

Female

- In the 1958 film *Gigi*, which begins in the year 1900, Gigi's aunt instructs her in gourmet dining, including one particular scene
- of the consumption of ortolans. • In 1975, food critic Craig Claiborne made a winning \$300 bid in an auction for a dinner for two, courtesy of American

The Wine Spectator^[13]

(\$20,665 in 2022) that included a course of ortolans. • In 1995, former French President François Mitterrand's last New Year's Eve meal included this specially prepared bird. [14]

Express, at any restaurant in the world that takes its credit card. Claiborne selected Chez Denis in Paris for a \$4,000 meal^[20]

- Bill Cosby describes eating ortolan in an Italian restaurant on his 1973 album Fat Albert.[21]
- Ortolan hunting was banned in France in 1999, but the law was poorly enforced and it is thought that up to 50,000 ortolans were illegally killed each year during the autumn migration: mostly birds from breeding grounds in Finland and the Baltic area.

According to France's League for the Protection of Birds, France's ortolan population fell 30% between 1997 and 2007. [22] In 2007, the French government vowed to strictly enforce some existing rules about banning the practice, with the maximum fine set at €6,000. Killing and cooking ortolans is banned across the European Union. In 2007, the pressure from France's League

Legal status [edit]

for Protection of Birds and from the EU resulted in the French government promising to enforce the EU directive protecting the ortolan. After several years of active citizen watch revealing little if any change in the field situation, [23][24][25] the local representative of the government repeated this statement in 2016.^[26] EU member states prohibit:[27] deliberate killing or capture of these birds by any method; deliberate destruction of, or damage to, their nests and eggs or removal of their nests; taking their eggs in the wild and keeping these eggs;

deliberate disturbance of these birds particularly during the period of breeding and rearing, insofar as this would have a

- significant negative effect on the birds;
- keeping birds, the hunting and capture of which is prohibited; • sale, transport for sale, keeping for sale and the offering for sale of live or dead birds and of any readily recognizable parts or derivatives of these birds.
- stable isotopes, archival light geologgers, and population genetics suggests the species is in decline. [28] See also [edit]
- Ambelopoulia Animal rights Animal welfare

As of 2018, the overall ortolan bunting's population is listed by the IUCN as Least Concern (LC). However, a 2019 study using

• French cuisine Occitan cuisine

Cruelty to animals

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- Oiseaux ☑ Photographs, text, map; (in French) Ageing and sexing (PDF; 1.6 MB) by Javier Blasco-Zumeta and Gerd-Michael Heinze
- **Taxon identifiers**
- Wikidata: Q206630 · Wikispecies: Emberiza hortulana · ADW: Emberiza_hortulana ☑ · Avibase: 4721056132879EB7 2 · BioLib: 9034 2 · BirdLife: 22720916 2 · BOLD: 73249 2 · BOW: ortbun1 2 ·

BTO: bob18660 년 · CoL: 39FT7 년 · eBird: ortbun1 년 · EPPO: EMBRHO 년 · EUNIS: 1024 년 · EURING: 18660 년 · Emberiza hortulana

Fauna Europaea: 97529 년 · Fauna Europaea (new): 6dd2aeb5-0c13-4677-94c3-4e4f1c67874d 년 · GBIF: 2491482 년 · iNaturalist: 9196 년 · IRMNG: 10592524 년 · ITIS: 559883 년 · IUCN: 22720916 년 · NBN: NHMSYS0000530728 년 · NCBI: 498208 년 · Observation.org: 56 년 · Open Tree of Life: 145223 년 · TSA: 6443 년 · Xeno-canto: Emberiza-hortulana 2 · ZooBank: DA8EA563-CBD9-4834-9804-DC12D8318417

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Wikimedia Commons has media related to *Emberiza*

hortulana.

• 343: Poultry Slam 2007 ☑, a November 2007 episode of *This American Life* with a segment about eating ortolan

Categories: IUCN Red List least concern species | Emberiza | Animal welfare | Birds of Europe | Birds of Central Asia

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