

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".^[3]

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 *Species Plantarum*, a book on plant classification, although it is a bird.

Ortolan bunting



Conservation status

Extinct

EW

Threatened

CR

EN

VU

NT

LC

Least Concern (IUCN 3.1)^[1]

Scientific classification

Domain:

Eukaryota

Kingdom:

Animalia

Oortolan bunting

Conservation status

Extinct (EX) | Endangered (EW) | **Threatened** (CR, EN, VU) | **Least Concern** (NT, LC)

Least Concern (IUCN 3.1)^[1]

Scientific classification

Domain: Eukaryota

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Passeriformes

Family: Emberizidae

Genus: *Emberiza*

Species: *E. hortulana*

Binomial name

Emberiza hortulana

Linnaeus, 1758

Range of *E. hortulana*

Green: Breeding

Blue: Non-breeding

Oortolan bunting bird mount preparation

Specimen label: OORTOLAN (*Emberiza hortulana*)

Ortolan Bunting

	
Female	Male



Ortolan eggs

the Ortolan. These tiny birds—captured alive, force-fed, then drowned 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 precious aromas and, some believe, to hide from God.

The Wine Spectator^[13]

- The Three Emperors

- The favourite dish of medicine Nobel laureate and inventor of the **lobotomy** procedure, **António Egas Moniz**, was ortolans as prepared at the restaurant Le Chapon Fin in **Bordeaux**.^[19]
- 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 Express**, at any restaurant in the world that takes its credit card. Claiborne selected Chez Denis in Paris for a \$4,000 meal^[20] (\$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]
- Bill Cosby** describes eating ortolan in an Italian restaurant on his 1973 album ***Fat Albert***.^[21]

Ortolan hunting was banned

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 for the 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

As of 2018, the overall ortolan bunting's population is listed by the IUCN as Least Concern (LC). However, a 2019 study using stable isotopes, archival light geolocators, and population genetics suggests the species is in decline.^[28]

- See also [[edit](#)]
-
- [Ambelopoulia](#)
 - [Animal rights](#)
 - [Animal welfare](#)
 - [Cruelty to animals](#)
 - [French cuisine](#)
 - [Occitan cuisine](#)

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Further reading

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- Xeno-canto: sound recordings of the ortolan bunting
- 343: Poultry Slam 2007 , a November 2007 episode of *This American Life* with a segment about eating ortolan
- 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: <i>Emberiza hortulana</i> • ADW: <i>Emberiza_hortulana</i> ♂ • Abibase: 4721056132879EB7 ♂ • BioLib: 9034 ♂ • BirdLife: 22720916 ♂ • BOLD: 73249 ♂ • BOW: ortbun1 ♂ • BTO: bbv18660 ♂ • CoL: 39FT7 ♂ • eBird: ebird ♂ • EPP0: EMBRHO ♂ • EUNS: 1024 ♂ • EURING: 18660 ♂ • Fauna Europaea: 97529 ♂ • Fauna Europaea (new): 6dd2aeb50-13c-4677-94c3-4e4f1c678740 ♂ • GBIF: 2491482142 ♂ • iNaturalist: 9196 ♂ • IRMG: 05092524 ♂ • ITIS: 5598983 ♂ • IUCN: 22720916 ♂ • NBN: NBNBSYS0000530728 ♂ • NCBI: 498208 ♂ • Observation.org: 056 ♂ • Open Tree of Life: 145223 ♂ • PDA: 6443 ♂ • Xeno-canto: <i>Emberiza_hortulana</i> ♂ • ZooBank: D48FA563-CD9D-4834-9804-DC12D831B417	

Categories: IUCN Red List least concern species	Emberiza	Animal welfare	Birds of Europe	Birds of Central Asia
Birds of Africa	Ceremonial food and drink	French cuisine	Occitan cuisine	Force-feeding
				Birds described in 1758