Hands On Learning
with Reading Museum Service

READING MUSEUM SERVICE

BRAMBLING
(Fringilla montifringilla)

Z89/A

Description
The brambling is a bird of the birch and light conifer forests of northern Europe, where it breeds. It travels south in the winter, which is when they are mostly seen in the UK. The largest arrivals reach our coast during October, soon penetrating inland. Nowadays, these immigrants pass unmolested. But a century ago bird catchers would be waiting to spring their deadly chap-nets. In the nineteenth century Thomas Bewick noted that it made better eating than the chaffinch, if rather bitter in taste.

Similar in size and shape to the chaffinch, the male has a black head in summer, and an orange breast with white belly. In flight it shows a long white rump. It is a gregarious bird and may form flocks of many thousands.

What does it eat?
The main food of the brambling is seeds and nuts although, unlike most finches, the young are fed extensively on insects. Bramblings are well-known for their unpredictable appearances and this irregularity may be associated with the dependence of brambling flocks on the seeds of a few trees (especially beech) that tend to be produced plentifully in alternate years in different localities. When beechmast is exhausted, bramblings will flock with other finches onto arable land, feeding on any weed seeds or grain. It will also take food from bird tables.



Breeding
It makes its nests in the mixed birch and conifer forests of Scandinavia and other northern countries. It builds its nest in a tree fork, and decorates the exterior with moss or lichen to make it less conspicuous. It lays 5-7 eggs.

What does it sound like?
A nasal 'wayk' call, a 'chuk chuk' flight call, and a wheezing song.

Reading Borough Council

Heritage Lottery Fund

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Vital Statistics
Eggs: 5-7
Incubation: 11-12 days
Fledging: 13-14 days
Maximum lifespan: 14 years
Length: 14cm
Wingspan: 25-26cm
Weight: 17-30g
UK breeding: 0-8 pairs
UK wintering: 50,000-2 million birds





UK Distribution



