



The Brambling

The other morning I was delighted to see a Brambling in my garden. The Brambling is a member of the finch family and is closely related to the more familiar Chaffinch. As both species look quite similar, the Brambling can be easily overlooked, especially amongst a flock of Chaffinches.

The male Brambling has an orange breast and shoulders and a yellow bill. Its head and back look a mottled brown and it has a white belly. When in breeding plumage, its head is black and this contrasts beautifully with its orange plumage. However, in the UK we do not get the opportunity to see this species in all its breeding finery because it is a winter visitor to our shores. The female is a much paler version of the male and lacks the dark head. A defining characteristic of both sexes is a white rump which is especially noticeable when they fly.

It is from late September onwards that flocks will migrate to us over the North Sea from Fennoscandia, the Baltic States and Russia. The numbers which visit us varies from year to year. In summer their main diet consists of insects and caterpillars but outside of the breeding season their favoured food is beech mast and if the crop is poor, they will make their way over here or to other parts of the continent. Beech woodlands are the best place to see this attractive bird but you may also see them amongst flocks of other birds in arable fields. If food is scarce and the weather is harsh, they will frequent our gardens but don't expect to see them on your hanging feeders as they prefer to eat off the ground or on a bird table.



Look out for this bird in your garden over the next few months and if you think you have seen a Chaffinch take a closer look, it could be a Brambling.

Jean Parrott

Jean is a voluntary Ambassador for the British Trust for Ornithology's (BTO) Garden BirdWatch scheme in Nottinghamshire. If you enjoy watching birds and other wildlife which visit your garden, Garden BirdWatch may be perfect for you. If you would like a free information pack about the scheme, contact Jean at jpbirds@talktalk.net