

Birdlife November 2020

Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*) is one of our most common and familiar birds and in winter they are joined by their northern cousins, the Brambling (*Fringilla montifringilla*) a winter migrant, flying to the UK to avoid the harsh conditions in Scandinavia and Russia. Birds typically begin to arrive in September and will normally have departed by April. Bramblings have been recorded travelling in huge flocks on mainland Europe, with some containing millions of birds. It is a passerine bird in the finch family *Fringillidae*. The common English name is probably derived from common West Germanic ‘brama’ meaning bramble or a thorny bush. It has also been called the Cock o’ the North and the Mountain Finch. *Montifringilla* is from Latin *mons*, *montis* mountain and *Fringilla* finch.

Not to be confused with the chaffinch...bramblings are well-built birds and are slightly larger than the chaffinch on average and are distinguishable by their orange hue and white rump which is visible in flight. Summer or breeding males have a bright orange and white breast, while females are similar but slightly less vibrant. The brambling's wings are black with shades of white and orange and are pale underneath. In winter, males have a mottled grey-brown head, which turns jet black during the summer. Females are a similar colour all year round to the winter male. Non breeding bill colour is yellowish in the brambling and dull pinkish in the chaffinch, breeding-plumaged male bramblings have black bills, common chaffinches in the corresponding plumage have grey

The vast majority of bramblings found in the UK do not breed here; instead they fly north to spend the summer in Scandinavia and Russia. A very small number of birds – currently estimated at no more than two pairs – may stay in the UK all year round. The nest is built by the female and usually in a conifer tree close to the trunk and normally within the fork of a tree. A deep cup is built from moss, grass and hair, lined with feathers and wool, and decorated with bark and lichen. The chicks hatch after close to two weeks and fledge around 14 days later.

Their natural diet is seeds and berries in the winter and insects in the summer. While breeding they feed mainly in the trees, but at other times on the ground. In the winter they often form large flocks and feed in agricultural areas and beech woods.



The brambling above was ringed this Autumn as a first year male at a farm fifteen minutes from Thorndon.

Currently at the shore pools north of **Dunwich**, Suffolk is a Greater Yellowlegs wader whose breeding habitat are the bogs and marshes in the boreal forest region of Canada and Alaska. They migrate to the

Atlantic and Pacific coasts of the United States, the Caribbean and south to South America. They are rare vagrants to western Europe. Adults have long yellow legs and a long, thin, dark bill which has a slight upward curve and is longer than the head. The body is grey-brown on top and white underneath; the neck and breast are streaked with dark brown. The rump is white. These birds forage in shallow water, sometimes using their bills to stir up the water. They mainly eat insects and small fish, as well as crustaceans and marine worms.

Also showing north of Dunwich are an Alaskan wagtail, Snow buntings, Twite, Great White egrets, Hen harrier and a Merlin. Parking at Dunwich and walking north, this is one of the best coastal walks in Suffolk, it can be hard on the feet as it is a beach walk but on a calm winters day nothing is better.

Trichomoniasis is the name given to a disease caused by the protozoan parasite *Trichomonas gallinae*. It has been recorded in a number of garden bird species and is widely acknowledged to be the causal factor in the rapid decline of the Greenfinch (*Chloris Chloris*) population that was first noted in late summer 2006. The poor infected birds look lethargic, weak, sleepy, fluffed up, have difficulty breathing, are reluctant to fly, hang around bird feeders and attempt to eat. They physically cannot swallow food or drink. Unfortunately, food or water does not reach their stomach due to the 'cheese' like lesions in the bird's crop, caused by the parasite. Tricho' does not pose a health threat to **humans** or other mammals such as dogs and cats. Bird food feeders and water sources should be **cleaned regularly**.

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