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Reed bunting



The male reed bunting has a distinctive black and white head pattern. The female has a brown head with bold streaks over the eye and down the throat.

CALENDAR

Breeding season:

April to mid-August, with two or three broods per season.

Nest:

Usually on or close to the ground, well hidden in thick grass, reeds or low bushes, often wedged between stems.

Winter:

Reed buntings form flocks with other buntings and finches.

HABITAT

In summer, reed buntings breed in marshy areas, wet flushes, riversides, ditches and around ponds. Drier habitats include hedges and hawthorn bushes. In winter, they are found on farmland and by water. Winter stubble and root crops are important feeding areas.

DIET

Adults feed on or near the ground on a variety of insects and seeds such as meadowsweet, chickweed and some grasses. Chicks are fed entirely on invertebrates such as caterpillars, grasshoppers, spiders and mayflies.

HOW CAN I ENCOURAGE REED BUNTINGS?

- Maintain or create ponds with fringe vegetation to provide a habitat for feeding and nesting.
- Cut river, stream and ditch banks in alternate years to leave some nesting and feeding habitat.
- Retain damp corners and areas of scrub to provide valuable cover.
- Retain any unimproved wet meadows on the farm.
- Create rough grass field margins or conservation crop margins to provide an abundance of seeds and insects.
- Create a wild bird cover strip along a field margin to provide seed food through the winter.
- Leave winter stubbles uncultivated and unsprayed for as long as possible over winter, preferably to the end of March, to provide seed food.

You can get further information on this and other ways of managing your farm for wildlife from:



The RSPB,
Northern Ireland HQ,
Belvoir Park Forest, Belfast BT8 7QT.
Tel: 028 9049 1547



DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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Belfast BT4 3SB Tel: (028) 9052 0922

Reed bunting distribution

Data provided by *The New Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland 1988–1991*. British Trust for Ornithology, Scottish Ornithologists' Club and Irish Wildbird Conservancy, now known as Birdwatch Ireland.



Filled dot = breeding

Open dot = present during the breeding season