

## First record of Brambling, *Fringilla montifringilla*, for North Dakota

Thomas A. Gatz and Rebecca Quanrud



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A FEMALE BRAMBLING (*Fringilla montifringilla*) was observed December 15, 1979 to April 4, 1980 at the feeder of Rebecca Quanrud in Bismarck, North Dakota.

Quanrud first sighted the bird feeding with House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) and Dark-eyed Juncos (*Junco hyemalis*). Realizing that it was not a species pictured in her North American field guide, Quanrud took notes on its behavior, made a sketch of its plumage and summoned local birders to her home. Based on his experience with this species in Alaska, Kenneth Johnson identified the bird as a Brambling. The bird was subsequently seen by over 30 observers, including ornithologist Craig Faanes (U.S.F. & W.S.), who concurred with the identification after examining skins from the U.S. National Museum collection. Photographs were sent to Daniel Gibson in Alaska who

further identified it as a female but could not age the bird from the photos available.

The bird was about junco-size with a shorter, notched tail. The general appearance was that of a blackish-brown finch with a robin-red breast, white belly, prominent white wing bars and a striped head and streaked back (Fig 1). It showed a narrow white rump in flight and had a distinctive gray face patch and neck collar. Its bill was dark with a yellow base on the lower mandible. The reddish color on the breast extended to the sides which were flecked with darker streaks. The reddish color also occurred on the wing coverts, behind the white wing stripe and on the back.

The Brambling was usually present for a short period soon after sunrise and was most consistently present during periods of inclement weather when it often fed intermittently all day. It usu-

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Figure 1. Female Brambling, Bismarck, North Dakota, Feb. 9, 1980. Photo/Lloyd Paynter.

ally fed on the ground but occasionally used a feeding tray, and was occasionally observed turning over leaves. The Brambling often flushed into the nearby trees and bushes for no apparent reason, and rarely remained at the feeder for more than a few minutes.

The Brambling occurs as a breeding species in northern Europe and Asia from Norway to Kamchatka (Demant'ev and Gladkov 1970), and is an annual spring and fall migrant in the western Aleutian Islands (Kessel and Gibson 1978). This species is of irregular occurrence as far east as mainland Alaska.

Citing five reports, Banks (1970) considers the status of the Brambling to be casual in the northeastern United States. A record for Portland, Oregon is apparently the only one for the western United States outside Alaska (Banks 1970).

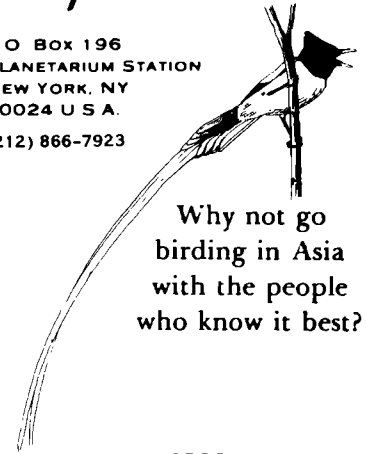
There are six additional records since 1970: a possibly escaped Brambling in Vancouver, British Columbia, a likely wild female on Graham Island, British Columbia (Crowell and Nehls 1972), one in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania (Hall 1978), a male at Swan Lake, Montana (Rogers 1979), a male at Sutcliffe, Nevada (Kingery 1979) and one at Mansfield, Massachusetts (Vickery 1980). The 1979 sighting in Bismarck, North Dakota is apparently the twelfth published record for North America outside of Alaska, the tenth published record for the lower 48 states, and the first record for the central United States.

**B**ANKS (1970) CITED several convincing factors suggesting that most, if not all, of the published eastern United States records of Bramblings should be assumed to be wild birds. These factors included 1) the wandering tendencies of

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the Brambling as evidenced by its regular occurrence in Alaska, 2) the lack of "cage wear" noted on many of the eastern sightings, and 3) the multiple records in the eastern United States in the winter of 1961-1962 that coincided with a season documented by Borrer (1963) to have been one of wandering by several European species. D.D. Gibson (*pers. comm.*) reported that "since Bramblings are sold only illegally in this country and in Canada now—the species is protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act since Japan became a signatory country—and since it is an annual migrant in far western Alaska, I think it is highly unlikely that your first North Dakota record is of

other than a *bona fide* wild bird."

In addition, the North Dakota Brambling was extremely wary, showed no signs of feather wear from being captive, occurred on the northern great plains far from any point of bird importation or zoos and aviculturists that are known to keep Bramblings, and was observed during a period consistent with the migratory periods known for this species (Dement'ev and Gladkov 1970).

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank Robert Randall for reviewing this manuscript, and Daniel Gibson for supplying references and commenting on the photographs.

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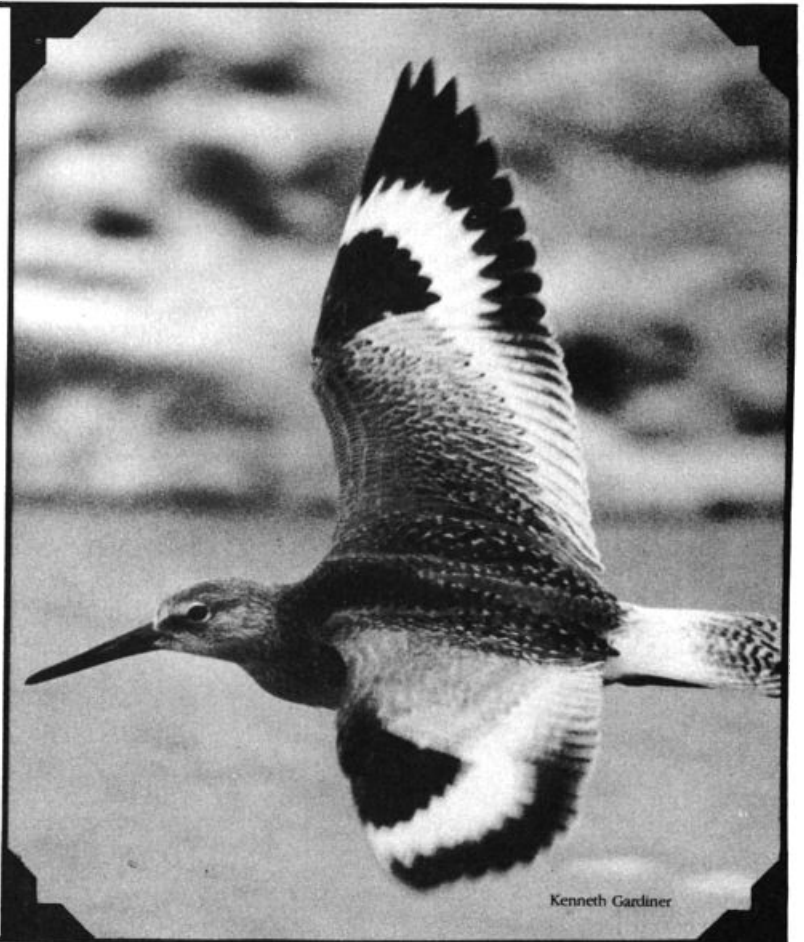
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