

Brambling, *Fringilla montifringilla*: A New Species of Bird for Thailand

During the late afternoon of 15 November 1989, Dr James F. Clements and I were walking through the Kuomintang Chinese village of Ban Luang, Doi Ang Khang, Chiang Mai Province (19° 52' N; 99° 02' E; 1500 m elevation) when my attention was caught by the sudden movement of a bird in a bush in the corner of a house-yard. It had a finch-like bill and a blackish-brown head, together with some bright rufous on the upper back and sides of the breast. I began to think of Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala*, the only similarly marked finch-like bird then recorded for Thailand and drew JC's attention to it. The bird jumped out of the bush, perching briefly in full view, and I immediately recognised it as a Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*, a species with which I am familiar from the United Kingdom. In my excitement, I shouted "Brambling", and the bird then flew out, perching briefly in a nearby taller tree, before flying off. It was not seen again. The range of observation was only ca. 20–25 m.

Description: a slim, medium-sized and longish-tailed finch. Head, including both crown and sides, blackish, with some brown feathering admixed. Bright orangey upper back, orange upper breast and whitish belly. Two bold whitish wing bars, visible both at rest and in flight. Large square white patch on rump observed in flight.

The very brief period of observation (30–40 sec) did not allow for a more detailed description to be taken. The extent of blackish on the head indicates that the bird was a male (SVENSSON 1992). The orangey colour on the "upper back" was probably on the scapular feathers rather than on the mantle itself.

The Brambling ranges widely across northern Eurasia, from Scandinavia east to Kamchatka and south to the Altai and northwestern Mongolia (VAURIE 1959). It is highly migratory: eastern populations winter widely throughout China south to southern Yunnan, Fujian and Taiwan (CHENG 1987). A few have also been recorded in Hong Kong during some years, where it is regarded as 'Category D—species which have occurred in an apparently wild state but for which the possibility of escape or release from captivity cannot be satisfactorily excluded' (CHALMERS 1986). There was no indication of any widespread keeping of cagebirds locally on Doi Ang Khang and in view of this species' highly migratory habit, the Ang Khang bird was almost certainly a genuine wild vagrant. Three of the four Hong Kong records listed by CHALMERS (1986) came from the period 16–18 November, almost exactly coincident with the Doi Ang Khang sighting, and a further likely indication of truly wild origin for both Thai and Hong Kong birds. This is the first record for Thailand and is referred to in LEKAGUL & ROUND (1991: p. 407).

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