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A Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla* in the Delhi National Capital Region

On 13 March 2022, we were on a casual birding trek along the roads of Bhondsi (28.36°N, 77.04°E), Gurugram, Delhi NCR, India. At 0810 h, we observed a single Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla* perched on a tree (as a bulbul sized bird), overlooking the waterbody in Bhondsi. It had a black forehead, crown (extending down to the cheeks) and upper back, with scattered paler feathers, an orange breast, and black tipped yellowish beak. It was at first hidden between the leaves, then emerged and perched on a protruding branch of a Neem *Azadirachta indica* tree. The bird seemed to be a male moulting from non-breeding to breeding plumage [139].



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139. Male Brambling in Delhi NCR.

After our sighting, many other birders also visited the place and got to observe the species. It was seen frequently with a flock of Red-vented Buleuls *Pycnonotus cafer*, either foraging with or being chased by them, the latter seeming more plausible. As per the updates on eBird and by referencing sightings mentioned in online birding groups based out of Delhi-NCR, the last reported sighting of the Brambling at this site was on 18 March 2022.

The Brambling breeds in a broad band spanning northern and north-eastern Europe, eastwards to eastern Russia (Chukotka), southwards to north-eastern Kazakhstan, central and south-eastern Altai, Tuva, S L Baikal, Russian Far East (south to Amurland, Sakhalin and Kamchatka) and winters in west, central, and southern Europe, northern Africa, the Middle East, and south-western, central, and eastern Asia. These finches are also prone to random dispersive movements in years of periodic abundance, following successful breeding seasons. Abundance of food such as beech *Fagus* mast, which is the birds' 'staple', also affects their dispersal. In India, it has been reported along

the Himalaya from Ladakh (Pfister 2004), Kashmir (Ward 1906), Himachal Pradesh (Robson 1997; Prasad 2006, Robson 2000; den Besten 2004; Sharma et al 2013), and Arunachal Pradesh (De Souza Q., 2015). Since then, it has been reported from all these regions on eBird (nearly 200 reports, excluding reports of this bird) indicating that it is an annual visitor to the Himalayan region. However, based on literature available (Pittie 2022) and citizen science portals (eBird 2022), there has been no record of Bramblings from the Indian Subcontinent southwards of the Himalayas or east of the Balochistan ranges in Pakistan. From eBird records and observers' reports, we can see that there was an influx in the 2021–2022 winter, with Bramblings recorded in large numbers in the Vale of Kashmir, especially between January and March 2022. Ours, evidently, is of a vagrant individual that strayed from its usual migration pattern. There had been no unusual storms or adverse weather recorded around the time of the observation that could serve as an explanation of its presence there. Nevertheless, this is an addition to the avifauna of the Delhi region (Vyas 2019), and we may expect such out of place Brambling sightings in years with eruptions.

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A nest of the Yellow-bellied Fantail *Chelidorhynch hypoxanthus* in the Valley of Flowers National Park

The Yellow-bellied Fantail *Chelidorhynch hypoxanthus* is distributed along the Himalaya Range and in South-east Asia (Boles 2020). It often participates in the mixed-species bird flocks during winter, as well as occasionally during summer. Its small size, face markings, and colours are similar to those of the Black-faced Warbler *Abroscopus schisticeps*, with whom it forms mixed flocks along with leaf-warblers and tits. It is an altitudinal migrant, moving to the foothills and plains during winter, and summers in the mixed coniferous, birch (*Betula*) and rhododendron (*Rhododendron*) forests up to the treeline (Boles 2020). In the Western Himalaya, the highest nest was reported from 4,200 m by Osmaston (1897, 1898, 1918), and Whympers (1911), with Thompson finding it nesting at around 300 m (Baker 1924), which last is remarkably