

LBJs – Buntings

Buntings – plump birds, with smallish heads. Seed eaters, so have a strong, short, conical bill, and all have shallow cleft at the end of a relatively long tail. Generally found in the countryside, avoiding human settlements. Mainly ground-living. 16-18cm



CORN BUNTING - relatively large bunting – 18cm – between a robin and a starling. Male and female alike, but male does most of the displaying and singing

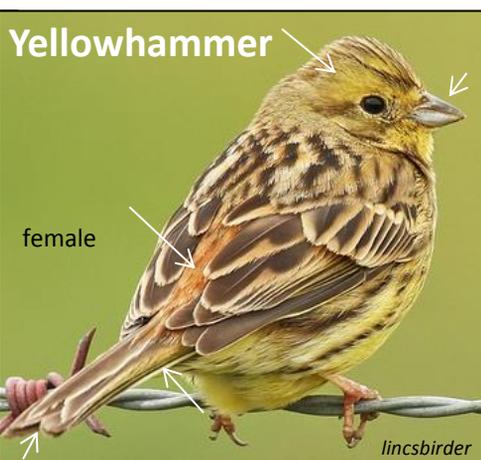
Plump – stout billed. A bird of open country, farmland, scattered hedges.

Uniform streaked brown above, pale streaked below – heaviest streaks on upper breast. Pale indistinct eye-ring, light-coloured bill.

Unlike most other similar brown birds – the Corn Bunting has no white wing-bars or outer tail feathers (cf Linnet)

Song: fast high-pitched chipping, followed by sound of 'jangling keys'

Male often sings from a prominent perch – a wire, or high branch. Can also be seen doing display flights – short flights with rapid wing-beats and dangling legs, singing as it goes.



YELLOWHAMMER – from the old english 'amer', derived from germanic for bunting '-ammer'.

Bird of farmland – hedgerows and woodland edge.

Male – bright yellow, streaky head and breast, dark chestnut-brown streaked back and rump

Female - similar to male, but more muted – paler yellow streaks on head, browner back but retains distinctive chestnut rump.

Both sexes have white outer tail feathers, particularly conspicuous in flight.

Song: well known mnemonic for birdsong – "little bit of bread and no cheese" (although often lacks the cheese!). Sings - sings from tops of bushes throughout the summer – one of the true sounds of the summer countryside.



REED BUNTING – very different habitat – almost exclusively reedbeds and marshes especially in summer, although will occasionally visit gardens in winter.

Male has distinctive black head, white nape and collar, and white moustachial strip. Streaked chestnut back, with darker tail. Underparts grey-white with faint streaks on breast. White outer tail feathers especially obvious when in flight. In winter, male appears much like female.

Female is a paler version of the male. Darker brown crown and face – complex facial pattern unlike other female LBJs. Has same moustachial strip as male, and also a buff supercilium. Back and tail as male but paler browns. White outer tail feathers.

Song: Male sings perched on a prominent reed – monotonous song – sometimes turned into the phrase 'here comes the bride, oh yea'

LBJs – Pipits, Larks, Finches

LBJ - Larks and Pipits – both like the open spaces, in contrast to buntings. Resident. Sexes alike. Generally less rounded shape than buntings, with long thin pale bills adapted for insect feeds - cf buntings. Most common locally – Skylark and Meadow Pipit



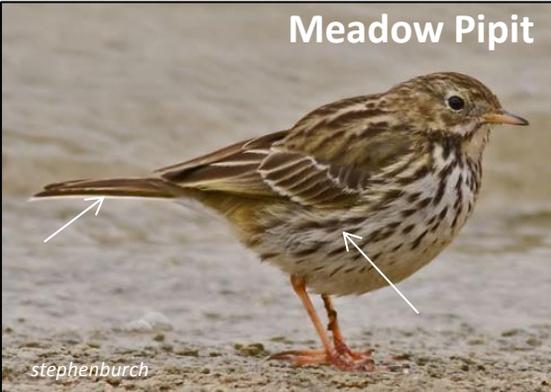
SKYLARK – robust, larger lark (18cm, 7in) almost starling sized – seems quite upright, but will crouch low to ground when disturbed.

Ground-living, liking very open habitats – with taller ground vegetation, nesting on ground – no need for hedges. Normally seen in flight or on the ground, only rarely seen perching higher up. Seen solitary or in pairs – not generally congregating in flocks.

Upper parts brown, finely streaked with strong dark brown. Under side pale, with fine streaks of dark brown nearer the top of the breast - no streaks on belly or flank. Obvious crest, but this can be raised or lowered, so not always visible. Long tail, white outer tail feathers, but relatively short, pointed-wings. Something of a pale eyestrip.

Song: nearly always and heard seen in the air – characteristically singing almost continuously while hovering high over territory.

When returning to ground, it descends slowly singing as it goes until, near the ground, it suddenly stops singing and plummets, scurrying along the ground to the nest.



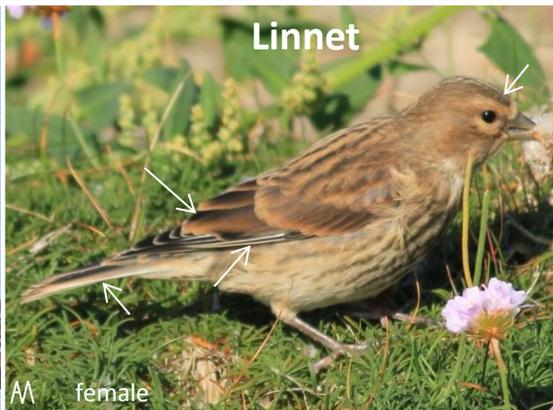
MEADOW PIPIT – more squat shaped. Smaller (14.5cm), more delicate. Also likes open ground. Very flighty – easily put up. More gregarious, often seen in small groups.

Dark brown upper parts – maybe slightly olive in colour. Whiter underparts are more distinctly and heavily-streaked on breast and flanks.

Lacks such definite facial markings, but this can vary between individuals. Often raises tail slightly – a relative of the wagtails.

Song: readily recognisable high-pitched repeated twittering flight song

LBJ - Finches – about robin sized 12-14cm. Gregarious – commonly in small flocks, often found on open ground. Conical, pointed bills, seed eaters. More deeply forked tails. Dancing, somewhat random flight.



Linnet

LINNET – resident. Both sexes have chestnut back, streaked with black, darker brown wing feathers with white edges and black tips.

Pale buff rump and white wing patch in flight, deeply forked tail, edged in white. Undersides more buff-coloured. Grey bill.

In summer, male has grey head with red forehead, and two red patches on breast (more pink in winter).

Female – lacks grey head and red colour of male, less strongly chestnut back. Pale brown around eye. Undersides buff-coloured, with less obvious streaking.

Song: twittering; high pitched 'tet-tet' flight call



Lesser Redpoll

LESSER REDPOLL – Partial migrant, winter visitor locally. Breeds in birch woods in northern UK.

Characteristic black chin and lores. Short, pointed, straw-coloured bill. Eats small seeds

Both sexes have dark brown back streaked black, with more black on wing feathers than linnet, and no white edges on wing or tail feathers. Pink rump in flight, deeply forked tail. Underparts buff-coloured, with streaked flanks.

In early spring/summer, male has bright red crown and breast patches – pale pink in winter.

Female – like male but lacks red breast. Retains small red crown and black chin and lores.

Call: Repeated fast 'deek, deek deek'