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Birds of New Zealand - Locality Guide. 3rd edn.

Arun Books, Orewa, New Zealand.

Yellowhammer: pp 256-257.



YELLOWHAMMER

Family Emberizidae

Species *Emberiza citrinella*

Common name Yellowhammer

Status Introduced

Abundance Common

Size 160 mm (cf sparrow 145 mm, Chaffinch 150 mm)

Habitat A bird of open country and areas of second growth.

Worldwide range From Britain to Siberia.

New Zealand range Found throughout New Zealand and on many offshore islands.

Description – male (above)

Head and throat Yellow with some widely spaced brown markings. **Wings** Brown

streaked with dark brown. **Breast** Yellow washed with brown and streaked with dark brown. **Underparts** Yellow. **Rump** Rufous. **Tail** Brown with black outer feathers edged with white.

Description – female

Upperparts and underparts Similar to male birds but paler and with more brown streaking

Conspicuous features

- Yellow plumage.
- Tail is slightly forked.
- White outer tail feathers.

Conspicuous characteristics

- Flocks in large numbers in winter on to pastureland where they feed on grass seeds and in particular *Poa* species.
- Can be found looking for discarded grass seed in areas where farmers have recently fed out hay.

Call The song, “chitty chitty chitty chitty swee”, made by the male bird, is commonly translated as “little bit of bread and no cheese”. It is usually delivered from a post or a low shrub. New Zealand birds seem to omit the “cheese” note, except when in full song in mid-December. Singing period starts in September and ends in February.

Nest A cup of grass lined with wool, feathers or moss and usually close to the ground in low growing vegetation or tall grass. Up to 4 white, scribbled over with brown, eggs are laid. It is a late nester starting in October.

From P 258

Differences between female Cirl Buntings and female Yellowhammers

- Cirl Buntings have olive-brown rumps.
- Yellowhammers have rufous rumps.
- Cirl Buntings are darker with less yellow.

Differences between male Cirl Buntings and male Yellowhammers

- Cirl Buntings have greyish crowns.
- Yellowhammers have yellow crowns.
- Cirl Buntings have yellow face separated by a bold black eye-stripe.
- Cirl Buntings have black chins.

Where to find – North Island and South Island

Common in all areas of pastureland and wilderness. Not in forests.