

Reed Bunting

Regno: fauna

Birds

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Reed Bunting - *Emberiza schoeniclus*

The most common over-wintering passerine in the Italian marshlands. The Reed Bunting is a typical representative of the Bunting group (Emberizidae Family).

Sexual dimorphism is very evident during the breeding season but not very noticeable in winter. In nuptial dress, the male is unmistakable for its large black hood and bib and white lowerparts.

The chestnut colour of the back with black streaks is constant throughout all the seasons (and in both sexes); an important detail for identifying the bird in flight is the long, white outer tail feathers.

The typical seed-eating bill can often vary in thickness from population to population, to such an extent that in the past some with an empirical knowledge of ornithology considered the thick-billed sub-species, called the Marsh Sparrow, as a species apart.

It nests in the thickness of the vegetation a few centimetres from the ground. In winter the Reed Bunting becomes gregarious and often also frequents cultivated areas (especially fields with cereal and sunflower stubble) in mixed flocks with the Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*) and the Brambling (*Fringilla montifringilla*).

Unlike the latter two, however, it prefers to withdraw into the cane and reed thickets to pass the night. In Tuscany the species has sporadically been reported as nesting on the south coasts and in Val di Chiana.

However, there appears to be a large migratory passage and a considerable number of over-wintering birds.

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