



Otis Waterman

Brambling – Pleasant Valley, Dutchess Co.

24 March 1984

PHOTOGRAPHS OF NEW YORK STATE RARITIES

46. A BRAMBLING IN DUTCHESS COUNTY

MARION VAN WAGNER and ELEANOR PINK

On 13 March 1984, we received a call from Earl Brockway, a retired employee of the New York State Conservation Department who lives at Pleasant Valley in Dutchess County. He reported a bird that he could not identify; it had been visiting his feeder for about two weeks.

We went to his home with Mary Key and Jim Key, Chairman of the "hot line" for the Ralph T. Waterman Bird Club. Using the new *Field Guide to the Birds of North America* (National Geographic Society, 1983, p. 442), we identified the bird as a male Brambling (*Fringilla montifringilla*) coming into breeding plumage. The head and back were quite spotted or scaly-looking, but with black on the cheek or ear coverts. The rump was white and there were two white wing markings. The tail was deeply notched and the bill was yellow with a black tip.

The Brambling was observed from three windows at a distance of about twelve feet. It seemed nervous and flew off at any movement inside the house. It seemed always to approach the feeder from one direction and depart in the opposite direction. Its visits occurred at intervals of a half-hour to an hour and a half. The bird fed on cracked corn on the ground, which was snow-covered at times.

We took small groups of members of the Waterman Bird Club to Mr. Brockway's house; a total of eleven people saw the Brambling. Mr. Brockway saw the bird for the last time on 27 March 1984.

The Brambling is a fairly common bird in northern Eurasia, and an irregular migrant in the Aleutians. Although it is a casual visitor to southeastern Alaska, several have been reported from various parts of North America during the winter of 1983-1984 (see *American Birds*, Vol. 38, No. 3; May-June, 1984), along with other eastern Eurasian species; more than one person has called the past winter "The Siberian Express."

28 Gleason Blvd., Pleasant Valley, New York 12569
P.O. Box 854, Pleasant Valley, New York 12569