

Lesser Redpoll

Acanthis cabaret

Bird · Resident · easiest to see in winter flocks



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A tiny, restless finch with a streaky brown body, a splash of red on the forehead and, in breeding males, a pink flush across the chest. Lesser redpolls are resident in Dumfries and Galloway, breeding in birch woodland, scrub and conifer plantation edges, but their numbers here shift with the seasons as some birds move south for winter and others arrive from further north. That movement makes autumn and winter the best time to catch up with them, when flocks gather to strip seed from birch and alder trees, often hanging at impossible angles from the thinnest twigs. Their flight call — a hard, dry rattle — is often the first sign a flock is passing overhead. Quiet and easily overlooked in summer, they become a genuinely sociable, conspicuous bird once the leaves are down and the seed crop is ripe.

BEHAVIOUR

Redpolls feed with the same acrobatic confidence as siskins, clinging sideways or upside down to reach seed heads other finches can't manage. Winter flocks move together from tree to tree with a bouncing, undulating flight, keeping in constant contact with dry, chattering calls. They favour birch and alder above almost anything else, following the ripening seed crop through the colder months.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Finches (Fringillidae)
SIZE	11.5–12.5 cm · smaller than a sparrow
UK STATUS	Red-listed

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