

WAXWING

Bombycilla garrulus

Abundant at the Marina this winter
(2016/2017)



Waxwings are about the size of a Starling and in flight they look very similar with their short, triangular wings.

DESCRIPTION – The Waxwing is mostly pink-beige with a characteristic crest. They have a black mask and bib. The tail is tipped with yellow and there are yellow and white markings on the wings; specifically, yellow along the length of the primaries and white at the base of the primary coverts. The secondary wing feathers have red waxy "fingers". The rump is grey and the vent is red. The legs and bill are black.

HABITAT – Waxwings are natives of northern Europe where they breed in the summer and feed on insects.

NESTING – **Waxwings do not breed in Britain.**

FOOD – They will eat rowan and hawthorn and cotoneaster berries in urban gardens. They may also be enticed by apples and other fruit. They are surprisingly acrobatic while feeding, behaving more like a Tit or Warbler. They often show up around supermarkets and retail parks because many car parks are now bordered with rowan or hawthorn bushes.

SONG – A high pitched, silvery, metallic trill. Very tinkly like small bells when heard as a flock.

OTHER FACTS – They occasionally **migrate** to Britain in the winter; irruptions (sudden invasions of large numbers) occur when rowan berry crops have failed in the north European forests with birds arriving October–March and often staying until April or May.

The last large irruption was winter 2004 with flocks of several hundred birds being reported in many parts of Britain and even reaching extreme southern and western regions.