

## Twite

### Description

The twite is a member of the finch family. It resembles a linnets in size and shape. The upperparts and under parts are more heavily streaked with black than linnets. It has a distinctly buff appearance and no dark spotting on the throat. The summer-plumaged male has a pale pink rump which is much more subdued during the rest of the year. The stubby yellow bill is diagnostic in winter but the bill darkens in summer.



The twite is probably the rarest breeding member of the finch family in Ireland. In Northern Ireland, they breed in marginal coastal habitats with a heathland element and move to coastal areas to overwinter. They feed on a variety of seeds including those of dandelion, sorrel, thistle and annual meadow grass. They nest close to the ground and usually lay five or six eggs. After breeding, most twites move to the coast where they spend the winter months before returning to breeding sites in April and May.

### Distribution

The best chance to see one in Northern Ireland is to examine closely any coastal wintering finch flock. Favoured locations include reclaimed land on the north and south shores of Belfast Lough and Lough Foyle; the presence of wintering flocks are regularly reported to Flightline. A number of pairs breed on the coastal edges of Rathlin Island and the North Coast.

### Action

The Northern Ireland species action plan. Most breeding and wintering occurs within ASSIs. Research is underway in Ireland.

Implementation of the Northern Ireland Habitat Action Plans for Coastal Saltmarsh and Maritime Cliff and Slope

### Further Information

<http://www.habitas.org.uk/priority/species.asp?item=508>

### MLA Species Champion