

American Goldfinch

American Goldfinch

Appearance

Fairly small, slim, somewhat small-headed bird with a fairly long notched tail, and short conical bill. Sexually dimorphic.



Male

Pale pinkish-orange bill.
Black cap, bright yellow body with white undertail covers;
two white wing-bars on black wings.



Female

Pale pinkish-orange bill.
Greenish-yellow crown; bright yellow underparts with white undertail covers; dusky
olive/yellow upper parts; two white wing-bars on black wings.

American Goldfinch

Appearance

Fairly small, slim, somewhat small-headed bird with a fairly long notched tail and short conical bill. Sexually dimorphic.



Female (left) and male (right)

American Goldfinch

Appearance

Immatures are olive/brown above, pale yellow below, shading to buff on sides and flanks; throat of males progressively brighter yellow with age. Flight feathers dark blackish-brown, males darker than females; wing-bars and feather tips buffy.



Immature American Goldfinch



Immature American Goldfinch

American Goldfinch Sounds

From The Cornell Lab of Ornithology: <https://www.birds.cornell.edu/home/>

SONGS

Males sing a long and variable series of twitters and warbles that can be several seconds long. The notes and phrases are variable and repeated in a seemingly random order. Birds continue to learn song patterns throughout life.

CALLS

The American Goldfinch's most common call is its contact call, often given in flight. It sounds like the bird is quietly saying *po-ta-to-chip* or *per-chik'-o-ree* with a very even cadence. Birds sometimes give harsh threat calls when in feeding flocks or at the nest. Males make a *tee-ye* courtship call upon landing near a female in spring or early summer, often followed by a burst of song. Females brooding nestlings make a rapid sequence of high notes when they hear their mate approaching with food. Birds at their nest make a loud, two-parted *bay-bee* call if they feel threatened.

Listen to the songs and calls at:

https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/American_Goldfinch/sounds

American Goldfinch

Diet

The American Goldfinch is as close to a vegan as any bird.



The conical shape and size of beak aids in the extraction of seeds from the seed heads of thistles, sunflowers, and other composite plants while clinging with their feet.



American Goldfinches especially like long, delicate seeds, like those of the milkweed and thistle.

American Goldfinch

Diet

Goldfinches eat seeds almost exclusively. Finches have conical bills with the strength to crush seeds.



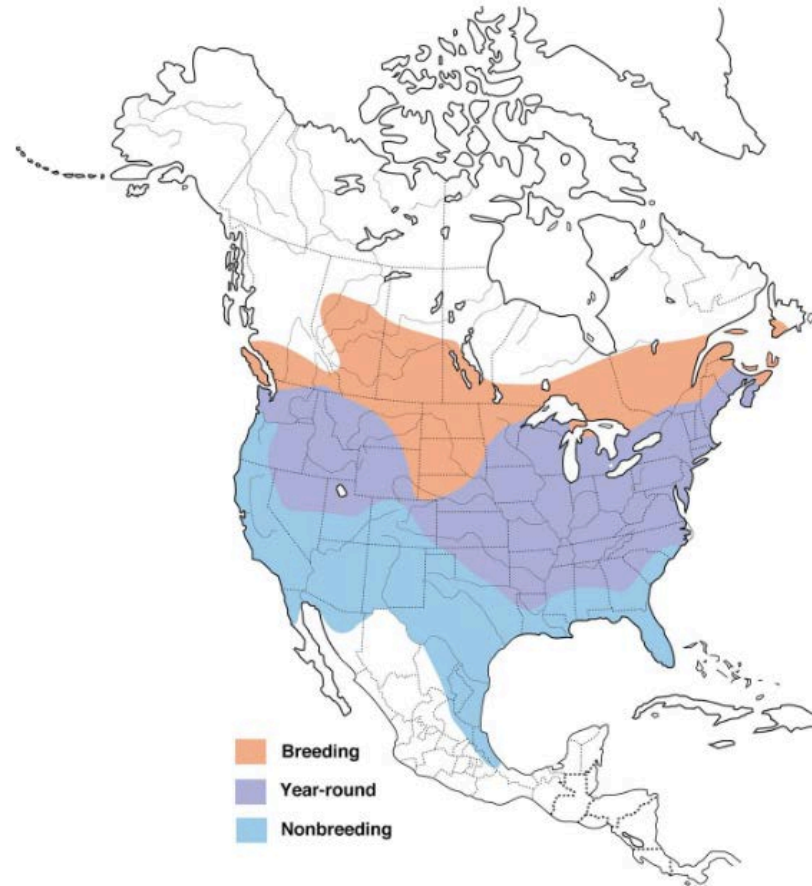
American Goldfinch on a sunflower.



Sunflower seeds are one of the types of seeds goldfinches commonly eat.

American Goldfinch Range

Birds we see in summer migrate south and those we see in winter are from farther north.



Map: The Cornell Lab of Ornithology
https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/American_Goldfinch/maps-range

American Goldfinch Habitat

Common in orchards, hedgerows, overgrown fields, and suburban gardens.
The American Goldfinch prefers trees in open places, especially in orchards and along roadsides.



American Goldfinches in a weedy field.



American Goldfinch in a field.



American Goldfinches perched on a treetop.

American Goldfinch Habitat

When breeding in late summer, favors weedy fields with thistles and other composites.



American Goldfinch

Behavior

American Goldfinches nest late in the season compared to most other songbirds in the Great Lakes region.

This is likely an adaptation to food supply: one of the American Goldfinch's favorite foods is thistle seed, which is most abundant in July and August, when they breed.



Male American Goldfinch with thistle seeds.

American Goldfinch

Behavior

Female builds the nest; both male and female care for young.



Female American Goldfinch carrying nesting material.

The nest is an open cup of rootlets and plant fibers lined with plant down, the fluffy material taken from the same types of seedheads that goldfinches so commonly feed on.

American Goldfinch

Behavior

While the female is incubating (or warming), the eggs, she is dependent on her mate for food.
As the nestlings grow in both size and appetite, both parents must feed them.



For the first few days after hatching, the mother broods them closely while her mate brings all the food.

American Goldfinch Behavior

Except during the nesting season, the American Goldfinch is a sociable bird that seeks its own kind to feed and fly with. In winter it mingles with its relatives, the redpolls and siskins.



American Goldfinch with a Pine Siskin



American Goldfinches with Common Redpolls

American Goldfinch Literature/Prose



“One thing is certain, and I have always known it –
the joys of my life have nothing to do with age.

They do not change.

Flowers, the morning and evening light, music,
poetry, silence, the goldfinches darting about.”

by May Sarton

American Goldfinch Feeders

It is fairly easy to attract American Goldfinches to feeders. At feeders, they prefer nyjer and sunflower seeds.



American Goldfinch eating sunflower seeds.



American Goldfinches at a feeder filled with nyjer seeds.

American Goldfinch Names

Common name

American Goldfinch

American The American Goldfinch is an abundant and widely distributed species in temperate North America. Also, distinguishes the American Goldfinch from the European Goldfinch.

Gold refers to the bird's predominant golden-yellow color.

Finch refers to the family the American Goldfinch belongs to.



Scientific name

Spinus tristis

Spinus tristis describes the goldfinch's genus and voice.

Spinus Greek *spinus* meaning "linnet" or "siskin."

tristis Latin for "sad," an allusion to its voice.

Some may not agree that their song or call is sad!

