

American Goldfinch

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff



The American Goldfinch is a prized backyard visitor. The Goldfinch is so adored that it is the state bird in both - New Jersey and Iowa.

This small bird is commonly recognized by its eye-catching lemon color, joyful flight pattern, and beautiful song. The American Goldfinch is found almost anywhere flocking in fields and open areas, thickets, shrubs, and residential neighborhoods. Drawn to thistle seed, this species enjoys the social atmosphere found around backyard feeders. Abundant throughout a majority of North America, the American Goldfinch is in the same family as the Pine Siskin, House Finch, and Lesser Goldfinch.

Interesting Facts:

Family: Fringillidae

Scientific Name: *Carduelis tristis*

Location: A common wild bird, the American Goldfinch is found throughout Southern Canada, a majority of the United States, and parts of Mexico. Habitat ranges from open fields to urban backyards and roadsides.

Migration: Many goldfinches are non-migratory or will only migrate very short distances in search of food.

Nesting: Goldfinches begin breeding in late summer, classifying them as one of the latest nesting birds. The nest is an open cup constructed of plant material and lined with plant down for comfort. Nests are usually located between 4'-20' high on tree branches. A typical goldfinch lays 3-7 eggs. This species typically remains monogamous during the breeding season, but may change partners every year.

Diet: In nature, the goldfinch feeds primarily during the day on seeds of grasses and trees. They may occasionally feed on insects and berries. They frequently visit [backyard feeders](#) - particularly those filled with [thistle seed](#).

Size and Color: A small bird, the American Goldfinch is generally between 4"-5". During the summer (breeding months), the male American Goldfinch displays bright lemon yellow plumage with a black cap, wings, and tail feathers with white edges. A female displays yellowish brown plumage with blackish brown wings and tail feathers and white edges. During the non-breeding, winter months, these goldfinches develop a duller plumage ranging from a dull yellow for males and an olive green for females. The non-breeding plumage molts again in the early spring.



Song: A long, twittering "per-chic-o-ree" or "po-ta-to chip." The American Goldfinch is known for singing in flight, which adds to their cheerful, "wave-like" flight pattern.

Attracting: The goldfinch is a seed eating bird and prefers to feed on [Nyjer](#) [thistle seed](#). To attract this species to your yard, place a [thistle seed feeder](#) in your backyard near shrubs so the goldfinches have a place to retreat to if they get frightened.

Life Span: Approximately 7 years in the wild.