

Siskins regularly breed south to northern Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan, but only recently have they stayed to breed in Illinois. Though many attempts fail, young have been fledged several times. The first Illinois breeding record was in 1973 at Normal. Chapel (1983-84) listed 16 breeding records from 1973 to 1982, and there have been at least two since then, in 1985 and 1986. Most of Chapel's records came from residential areas, cemeteries, city parks, and school campuses. The nest is usually placed in a conifer. The only egg date recorded is May 4. Most young have been seen from mid-April to mid-June.

## AMERICAN GOLDFINCH

*Carduelis tristis*

COMMON MIGRANT; SUMMER AND WINTER RESIDENT

Although American Goldfinches are common at all seasons, they also migrate and wander about. Those seen in one season are not necessarily the same birds occurring in another season. These bright yellow and black birds are often referred to as wild canaries. Males are in their bright plumages only from April, when the colors are acquired by partial prenuptial molt, to mid-September, when basic plumage is acquired after complete postnuptial molt. Goldfinches have an undulating flight in which they give call notes with each dip. The song is canarylike but jumbled. In spring many often sing together in fully leaved trees, making it difficult to determine the number present. They are found in many habitats, including forests, forest edges, weedy fields, shrub areas, pasturelands, and suburban areas. They have become mainstays at thistle feeders (a bird with expensive taste). They are mostly seed eaters, and goldfinches feeding on dandelions are a common sight. They feed on birch, thistle, hemlock, sweet gum, sunflower, and ragweed. Goldfinches also take insects, especially to feed to their young. The subspecies in Illinois is *C. t. tristis*.

Even though the wintering population most years is fairly large, an increase in numbers becomes evident about mid-to late April. Numerous goldfinches are recorded nearly every year on spring bird counts, but totals have ranged from 3287 in 1978 (low because of severe winters) to 11,067 in 1986. The highest count was 1211 in Calhoun County on May 8, 1982 (VK). Other high counts for spring: 80, Jackson Park, May 4, 1981 (HR-SR29:14); 120, Chicago, May 14, 1982 (JL); 60, Palos, April 4, 1981 (JL).

Graber and Graber (1963) found little change in the estimated goldfinch population in Illinois between 1907 and 1958, but there is some year-to-year fluctuation: 880,000 in June 1957 and 1,000,000 in 1958. Robbins et al. (1986) found the population declining in eastern and central North America, except in Illinois and Indiana. The mean number of goldfinches per breeding bird survey route for 1965-79 in Illinois was 9.7. Goldfinches nest rather late; Illinois egg dates are June 14 to August 27. They nest in weedy,

shrubby areas, usually in small trees. The lining of the nests is normally thistledown. These well-made nests last many seasons, and some are so well built they can hold water. The full clutch is five to six eggs, which are pale bluish. Young have been noted in the nest as late as September 27 in Whiteside County (IAB108:11).

The beginning and end of fall migration goes undetected, but concentrations have been recorded: 270, Vermilion County, September 15, 1985 (SB-IB&B2:55); 175, Chicago, September 6, 1985 (JL); 172 banded, Blue Island, November 10, 1982 (KB-SR35:17); 400, Springfield, October 24, 1981 (HDB); 115, Quincy, November 6, 1983 (AD-SR39:26).

Winter numbers are fairly high, probably because these birds are easy to detect in winter. Graber and Graber (1963) estimated the winter population at 1,600,000 in 1906-7 and 900,000 in 1957. Christmas bird count totals for 1976-85 ranged from 4898 in 1978 (a severe winter) to 8650 in 1985. The highest count was 769 in Union County in 1985. Eight hundred were counted at Sand Ridge State Forest on January 26, 1986 (LA-IB&B2:79).

## EUROPEAN GOLDFINCH

*Carduelis carduelis*

HYPOTHETICAL—PROBABLE ESCAPES

These Old World finches were released in the United States as early as 1846 at Brooklyn, New York. Several other releases followed from Cincinnati; Cambridge, Massachusetts; and San Francisco (Long 1981). These populations eventually died out, however, and European Goldfinches seen recently are probably escaped cage birds. Recent records for Illinois: one with a flock of American Goldfinches, Barrington, November 13-23, 1981 (RM-SR31:18); male, Wilmette, January 31, 1971 (RR-AB25:585); one with American Goldfinches, Quincy, October 26, 1957 (TEM-AFN12:36).

## EVENING GROSBEAK

*Coccothraustes vespertinus*

UNCOMMON AND IRREGULAR MIGRANT AND WINTER RESIDENT

These large, plump finches show white patches in the wings during their undulating flight, and they give a rasping call note that is easily recognized with practice. They also have a loud House Sparrowlike call. Male Evening Grosbeaks are yellowish. Females are grayish, but they resemble the males enough to be easily identified. The large greenish bill should especially be noted. Evening Grosbeaks are most often seen at bird feeders, where they may stay a few minutes or all winter. They are also found in bottomland