

BIOLOGY, LEGAL STATUS, CONTROL MATERIALS AND DIRECTIONS FOR USE

Goldfinches

American Goldfinch, *Carduelis tristis*

Lesser Goldfinch, *Carduelis psaltria*

Family: Fringillidae



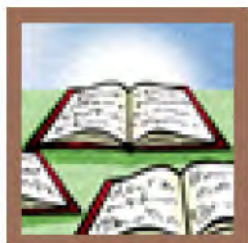
Introduction: Goldfinches are a familiar and abundant small colorful bird. They can be found in weedy fields and visiting feeders. They have a particular liking for thistles, eating the seeds and using the down to line their nest.



Identification: Goldfinches are small birds with a small, pointed, conical, pink bill. They have a bright yellow to dull brown body; their wings are dark with large white wing-bars. The tail is short and notched. During the breeding and summer seasons the male is bright yellow with a black cap whereas female is drab olive, both sexes are similar and drab in winter. Their call is a long series of twittering and warbling notes. Further information including audio is available at:

[Cornell Lab of Ornithology](#)

[The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds](#)



Legal Status: Goldfinches are classed as migratory nongame birds in the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations. They may be controlled under permit from the U. S. Fish

and Wildlife Service.



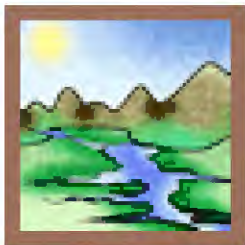
Damage: Commercial flower and vegetable seeds, strawberries, and disbudding of almonds and apricots.



Range: Both species breed and winter in California and other western states. There is no regular migration, though there are occasional movements.

[American Goldfinch](#)

[Lesser Goldfinch](#)



Habitat: Farms, weeds, fields, gardens, wooded streamside's, groves, parks, and orchards.



Biology: These goldfinches are largely permanent residents in California; nesting is in May and June. The American goldfinch is gregarious but not a colonial nester. However, numerous pairs may occupy a suitable area. Nests of both species are usually built one to forty feet off the ground in trees, bushes, or tangles of vegetation. Four to six eggs are laid by both the American goldfinch and the lesser

goldfinch. Incubation period is not known exactly, but is thought to be 12 to 14 days. Age at first flight is 10 to 16 days for the American and thought to be about 14 days for the lesser.

Goldfinches are seed eaters although some insects are taken in the spring and during nesting. Weed seeds, especially seeds of composites are preferred foods. Damage to flower seeds is occasional but may be severe as the birds fly in flocks of up to several hundred in winter.



Damage Prevention and Control Methods

Exclusion: Protective plastic netting, preferably ½ inch mesh has provided excellent protection in some crop situations.

Habitat Modification, Fumigants, Repellents, Toxic Bait, and Trapping: None of these provide adequate or appropriate methods of control.

Frightening Devices: Gas cannons and other noise making devices have produced limited results in repelling goldfinches from crops.

REFERENCES AND ADDITIONAL READING

Braysher, Mike, P. O'Brien, M. Bomford, 1996. Towards "Best Practice" Vertebrate Pest Management in Australia. Proc. 17th Vertebrate Pest Conf. (R.M. Timm & A.C. Crabb, Eds.) Published at Univ. of Calif., Davis. Pp. 18-23.

Gorenzel, W.P., T.P. Salmon, A.C. Crabb, 2000. A National Review of the Status of Trapping for Bird Control. Proc. 19th Vertebrate Pest Conf. (T.P. Salmon & A.C. Crabb, Eds.) Published at Univ. of Calif., Davis. Pp. 5-21.