

School-to-Nature



European Finch

We are fortunate to have European Finches successfully nesting in Southeastern Wisconsin; some remain year-round where there is good shelter. They are seen mainly at backyard feeders that supply niger finch seed or black sunflower seed, two favorite foods. Seeing one of these finches for the first time is a treat. They are believed to have escaped or been set free from pet cages, and survived.

European Finches nest in April and May, earlier in the warm season than their close relatives, Goldfinches. They may have two broods per season. Data suggests they like to nest in fruit trees or in conifers such as pines. Their native feeding habitat is in open, weedy fields such as those at King's Corner, where a wide variety of daisy-like weed seeds (rosinweed, field daisy, aster, etc.), and dandelion seeds, are plentiful to eat, to feed their young, and to use the fluff from these flower seeds to line their nests. (See the nest photo.) They like to be within about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile of a water source. European Finches are "flock" birds; 2 to nine pairs will nest close together in one area, most likely for safety.



Photos show that the Male (left) and Female (right) European Finches can be difficult to tell apart without a close view; the red forehead patch in the male typically extends **past** the back edge of the eye; the red forehead patch of the female ends **right at** the back edge of the eye. It's a very subtle difference to view.



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