

School-to-Nature



AMERICAN GOLDFINCH

Goldfinches live in Wisconsin year-round and are found on all Conservancy properties. The male goldfinch is easy to identify from late spring to mid-autumn, for their bright yellow and black coloring and black caps. In winter, males lose that bright color and appear very much like the females with olive and black coloring. These are the only finches to molt twice per year to go through this exciting color change. Some people call Goldfinches “wild canaries” and they are correct in that these finches are directly related to canaries kept as pets.



There are three varieties of Goldfinch in the U.S. The other varieties live in the western and northwestern U.S., and in California and Arizona. These finches all lay eggs later than most North American birds. They wait to nest until late in June or July when the milkweed, thistle and other plants have produced seeds with fluffy fibers, to line their soft nests and also for seeds needed to feed the young.

Goldfinches are among the strictest “vegetarians” in the bird world, selecting an entirely seed/vegetable diet and only swallowing an occasional insect. At backyard feeders, goldfinches (and all finches) prefer black sunflower seeds and niger (thistle) seed. Finches can be prone to a viral eye disease passed at feeders, so to protect the ones in your yard, please wash feeders periodically with hot soapy water, and keep the ground raked clean.

The Goldfinch is the state bird of New Jersey, Iowa and Washington. Enjoy the ones we have with us in Caledonia.

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Caledonia Conservancy | P.O. Box 044714 | Racine, WI | 53404
262-498-4993 | www.CaledoniaConservancy.org