

Facts at a Glance

TYPE OF ANIMAL

Avian/Bird

SCIENTIFIC NAME

Spinus tristis

FOUND WHERE

All across North America,
mostly middle U.S.

HEIGHT/LENGTH

4.33 – 5.2 in. (11 – 13 cm)

WEIGHT

Averages 11 – 20 g

CONSERVATION STATUS

Least Concern



If you are walking outside on a summer day, and a bright flash of buttery marigold plumage catches your eye as it flies past the dappled light from trees, you have likely noticed the American goldfinch. A spectacular summer sight, the males are brightly colored with bold yellow or gold feathers tipped with glossy black wings, tails, and tops of their heads. The females and juveniles are more reserved, in a more brownish coloration with spots of yellow and brownish-black. They also have sharp, conical beaks, perfect for seed-eating, and small, dark legs.

HABITAT

Goldfinches are another species that have adapted to a wide variety of habitats, including many urban settings. They prefer shrubland, grasslands, and forested areas. As its name might suggest, the American goldfinch is a widespread species across North America. Native plants like thistles (*Cirsium spp.*), sunflowers (*Helianthus spp.*), asters (*Symphyotrichum spp.*), goldenrods (*Solidago spp.*), and willows (*Salix spp.*) will often attract these birds to wild spaces. These plants can be found across much of this species' range, including in backyards.

DIET

Goldfinches actively forage in weeds, shrubs, trees, and occasionally from backyard feeders. Their diet consists primarily of seeds and some insects. They are especially fond of daisy seeds and seeds from Birch and Alder trees. They will also eat buds, bark, and even maple sap.

LIFE & BEHAVIOUR

American goldfinches are highly social birds and flocks of goldfinches may be seen crafting musical refrains together in the summer. Though not necessarily migratory, these birds are quite nomadic and only truly settle when breeding. They generally breed once a year in the early summer, but can breed up to three times a year. Females are responsible for building the nest, though both parents will feed nestlings and take care of the young after they are hatched. Goldfinches have about 2 to 7 young and raise chicks for roughly 6 weeks.

ATTRACTING BIRDS

Native plants like brown-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*), Joe-Pye weed (*Eutrochium spp.*), hawthorne (*Crataegus spp.*), native roses (e.g., *Rosa virginiana* & *Rosa caroliniana*), and fruiting bushes like wild raspberries (*Rubus idaeus var. strigosus*) will attract grain-eating birds like goldfinches and encourage plant growth.