

American Goldfinch — a beauty of a state bird

BY BRUCE MCCAMMON

The American Goldfinch is one of the most common birds in our area.

This bright bird is easily seen and appreciated by everyone.

You'll see them high in trees, flying as an undulating group, or at feeders.

American Goldfinch are almost exclusively vegetarian, preferring seeds to all other foods.

They respond well to nyjer thistle seed that is presented to them in a

wide variety of feeder types including web socks, plastic tubes, wire mesh tubes. Fill a feeder and sit back to enjoy the energy and beauty of these small birds.

Or, if you want to really help goldfinch and other birds, plant native thistles or milkweed in your yard.

The American Goldfinch is the State Bird of Washington. Because they are widespread and common birds, New Jersey and Iowa also claim the species as their state bird.

The bright yellow color of the male during breeding season is certainly one of the reasons that the species climbs to "state bird"



Bruce McCammon is retired, color-blind and enjoys photographing the birds in north central Washington.



The male American Goldfinch, left, is a brilliant yellow during mating season, while the female, right, is more muted.

status.

The male American Goldfinch is a brilliant yellow during mating season. The male also shows a prominent black spot or cap on the top of its head.

Females are a duller yellow on their undersides and an olive color above. Their under-tail area is white. They have black wings with bright white wing-bars.

During winter, both sexes become more muted, drab brown and the bright yellow disappears from the males. You can find more information about goldfinch on the Wenatchee Naturalist website (<https://www.wenatcheenaturalist.com/curious-about-american-goldfinch/>)

American Goldfinch nest later than other birds since that provides the young with a greater opportunity to find seeds as

.....
Fill a feeder and sit back to enjoy the energy and beauty of these small birds.

they fledge.

As they begin to nest, you may see them gathering nest materials from a variety of sources. If you set out balls of clean wool or dog hair the birds may entertain you as they extract a portion of your supply.

Your entertainment will increase by knowing that you are providing quality, healthy, nesting material during this critical time.

American Goldfinch may over-winter in north central Washington. We see them all

year at our feeders and at several locations in the lowlands around Wenatchee. Sometimes their numbers dwindle but they always seem to return after a short absence.

Last winter, finches and siskins experienced a variety of diseases, falling ill or dying.

If you feed birds in your backyard, please make a serious effort to keep your feeders clean and safe. Clean up under the feeders to remove waste.

If you see birds that look lethargic or that have a fungal-looking growth around their beaks, consider taking your feeders down for a few weeks to make sure you are not contributing to the spread of disease. While you aren't feeding is a great time to thoroughly clean and disinfect your feeders.

Thanks for your help.