

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

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Edition 22.4



Pine Siskins by Dave Woehr



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Hungry Pine Siskins by Linda, Fortuna Future (CC BY-NC 2.0)

Pine Siskin (*Carduelis pinus*)

By Dave Woehr, Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist

The Pine Siskin is a bird that might be easily overlooked in southern Ohio. It is considered a casual winter visitor and would rarely be seen here in the summer. Its preferred habitats are the coniferous forests around the Great Lakes and in Canada. It ventures south into our area when deep snow and subzero winter temperatures make food supplies scarce up north. Being in the finch family, its small size and plumage hues make it easy to be confused with certain sparrows and other finch species. Although it has a shorter and more conical bill than the American Goldfinch it has been accused of being a goldfinch in disguise.

There are years when Pine Siskins are hard to find in our area. Then there are periodic irruptions when they are more numerous. Never appearing in huge numbers, they do sometimes travel in small flocks usually foraging on the ground for seeds or insects. They are also known to visit feeders and pull seeds from thistles. Siskins are quite vocal and engage in a lot of buzzy chatter among themselves.

In some areas of the country the pine siskin has suffered a significant annual decline in population since the mid-1960's. This is likely associated with the logging of coniferous forests. However, in Ohio its numbers are reportedly stable.

To learn more about this species, visit https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Pine_Siskin/id