



# BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

Volume 24 Issue 1 | January/February 2017

Intermittent Interloper

## Pine Siskin

+ Prevent Meal Moths  
7 Winter Bird Myths



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*Bird's-Eye View* is published to share the joy of backyard birds with All Seasons Wild Bird Store's customers and friends.

#### EXPERT TIPS

By Minnetonka Manager CAROL CHENAULT

## Smart Seed Storage Prevent Indian Meal Moth Invasions

Get the most out of your seed and ensure the birds you feed are healthy with these simple seed storage tips. Our biggest concern that we'll address today is meal moths and critter infestations; specifically, the Indian meal moth eggs present in most grain products, including birdseed.

### Storage Locations

There are two simple techniques to keep meal moths out of your pantry: 1) store birdseed outside of the house, or 2) store seed in a freezer. Both methods decrease the likelihood of meal moths hatching. As a general rule, we recommend using seed within six weeks to prevent the meal moth eggs from hatching into larvae and then evolving to moths.

### Storage Containers

Galvanized metal cans are the best. They keep mice, chipmunks and squirrels out of your seed.



A 10-gallon can holds a 30-pound bag of Joe's Mix (our most popular-selling specialty seed mix).



The smaller 6-gallon size and the "easy pour," 6-quart, 8-quart and 32-quart plastic containers are great for 5- and 10-pound bags of seed, like Nyjer™ and golden safflower. Simply pour the birdseed from

your bag into the container or set the smaller 5- or 10-pound bags of seed right into the galvanized can or plastic container.

### Smart Birder Tip:

Tape a meal moth trap to the underside of the galvanized storage container lid to trap meal moths. This will prevent a meal moth infestation. Occasionally replace the trap to ensure its effectiveness. ■





## CHIRPS

**I'd like to share a recent poetic discovery that beautifully captures the hopefulness hidden in our frozen surroundings this time of year. Enjoy the season!**

### *The Darkling Thrush*

by Thomas Hardy, circa 1900

I leant upon a coppice gate,  
When Frost was spectre-gray,  
And Winter's dregs made desolate  
The weakening eye of day.  
The tangled bine-stems scored the sky  
Like strings of broken lyres,  
And all mankind that haunted night  
Had sought their household fires.

The land's sharp features seemed to be  
The Century's corpse outleant,  
His crypt the cloudy canopy,  
The wind his death-lament.  
The ancient pulse of germ and birth  
Was shrunken hard and dry,  
And every spirit upon earth  
Seemed fervourless as I.

At once a voice arose among  
The bleak twigs overhead,  
In a full-hearted evensong  
Of joy illimited.

An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small,  
In blast-beruffled plume,  
Had chosen thus to fling his soul  
Upon the growing gloom.

So little cause for Carolings  
Of such ecstatic sound  
Was written on terrestrial things  
Afar or nigh around,  
That I could think there trembled through  
His happy good-night air  
Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew,  
And I was unaware.

~Dave Netten



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## SEASONAL CHECKLIST

JAN.  
&  
FEB.

## Mid Winter

By Minnetonka Manager CAROL CHENAULT

- ☐ **Combat cabin fever by creating an indoor fairy or gnome garden. Our Minnetonka and Wayzata stores have all the accoutrements to make your project a success.**



- ☐ Help birds refuel quickly by providing foods loaded with fat and protein, like **mealworms, suet, suet pellets, peanuts** and **sunflower out of the shell**.
- ☐ Provide a clean water source with a heated birdbath. Remember to refill your **heated birdbath** with cold water to reduce evaporation.
- ☐ Scatter **Critter Crunch** on the ground, on a tree stump or in a screened-bottom ground feeder for over-wintering Mourning Doves, Blue Jays, cardinals, pheasants and Wild Turkeys.



- ☐ **Stock feeders with Nyer™ and chips for goldfinches and other visiting finches. Mixed nomadic foraging flocks will be abundant one day and scarce the next. We'll help you be prepared.**

- ☐ Listen for hooting owls, drumming woodpeckers and bird calls like the "fee-bee" of the Black-capped Chickadees. Bird sounds increase in January and February.
- ☐ Watch for winter-visiting Pine Siskins, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Purple Finches and irruptive species like Red Polls, Great Gray Owls and Snowy Owls.
- ☐ Be on the look-out for the hardy population of Bald Eagles, Mourning Doves, American Robins, Northern Flickers and Eastern Bluebirds who overwinter in Minnesota.

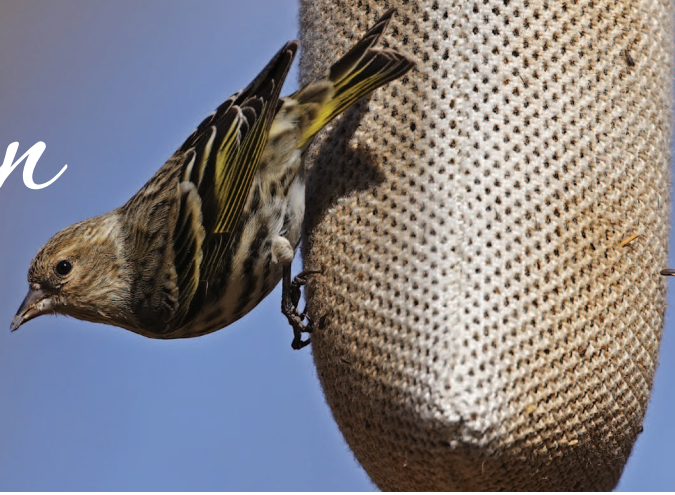
- ☐ Enjoy the transformation of American Goldfinches as they begin to molt into their bright yellow feathers.
- ☐ In mid-January, keep an eye out for great Horned Owls on the nest. They're our earliest nesting birds.
- ☐ Watch for returning Redtailed Hawks. Some overwinter here, but a greater number migrate, returning to build nests in late February.
- ☐ Catch a glimpse of Bald Eagles near open water of marinas and rivers. Bald Eagles begin building nests in February.
- ☐ Keep an eye on your yard in early February when Horned Larks, the first spring migrants, arrive. They'll soon be followed by the arrival of Wood Ducks, Red-winged Blackbirds, grackles, American Robins and, in the last days of the month, Canada Geese.
- ☐ **Schedule Feed-and-Fill service to regularly keep your feeders stocked. This service provides uninterrupted bird feeding when you're on vacation or out of town. Call the Wayzata store at (952) 473-4283 to schedule today.**



- ☐ See your bird photos featured on our digital sign in the stores or on our Facebook page. Send your bird photos to [carol@wildbirdstore.net](mailto:carol@wildbirdstore.net) for consideration.
- ☐ Participate in The Great Backyard Bird Count February 17-20. See [gbbc.birdcount.org](http://gbbc.birdcount.org) for more information.
- ☐ Check out our blog at [WildBirdStore.com/blog](http://WildBirdStore.com/blog) for more great birding news, tips, and recommendations. We take birding seriously but we also have fun!

# Pine Siskin

THIS UNASSUMING BIRD IS A  
INFREQUENT BACKYARD VISITOR

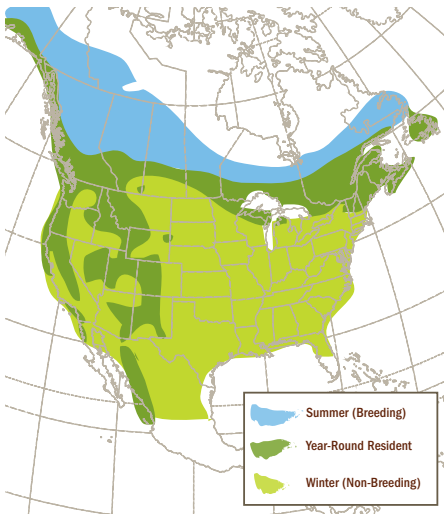


**C**leverly cloaked as a sparrow, the Pine Siskin is really a finch in disguise.

Like other finches, they have a notched tail. They're streaky brown overall with subtle yellow edging on their tails and relatively long wings help them blend in with other small songbirds. If you look closely, you can identify them even when they're mixed in with American Goldfinches at Nyjer™ feeders. Watch for their sharp, pointed bills—this is the key feature that differentiates them from other finches.

## Range and Migration

Pine Siskins are an *irruptive* species. This term alludes to the fact that we may see an influx of Pine Siskins during the winter one year and then not see them for a few years. Their migration south is based on the availability of cone crops in North America. Pine Siskins form flocks year round. They sometimes migrate in flocks of several thousand. The range map depicted here (source: Audubon Field



Guide) shows the typical range of Pine Siskins.

## Flight & Song Style

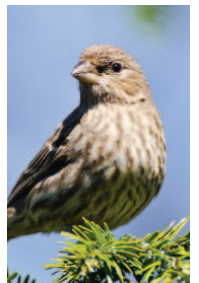
Pine Siskins have an undulating flight like other finches. While in flight, they most commonly call out a buzzy, rising zreeeeee. Their songs are a lot like the songs of goldfinches but a little huskier sounding.

## Preferred Dining

Small seeds without tough shells—such as Nyjer™, millet, and hulled sunflower seeds—delight our Pine Siskin friends. They may forage near heavier-beaked birds to catch fragments of larger seeds that are discarded. These amazing birds can temporarily store seeds totaling as much as 10% of their body mass in a part of their esophagus called the *crop*. That amount of food could get them through five to six hours of subzero temperatures overnight.

## Similar Species

The Pine Siskin may be confused for a non-breeding (winter) American Goldfinch, Common Redpoll or Female House Finch. All lack yellow in the wings and tail and have stubbier bills. Look for the presence of a deeply notched tail, streaked body and breast and sharply pointed bills as further evidence of a Pine Siskin ■

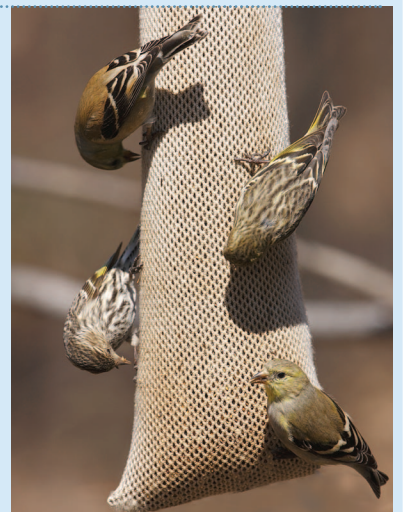


Pine Siskin (left) and female House Finch (right).

## WHO'S WHO?

Take a look at the picture to the right. Can you identify the two different bird species shown?

Ready for the answer? The topmost and bottom birds are American Goldfinches in their winter coloring. The middle two birds are Pine Siskins. ■





## 7 Winter Bird Myths

### 1. All robins and bluebirds migrate.

If there are sufficient natural food sources on their breeding grounds, American Robins and Eastern Bluebirds will remain in the area where they spent the summer. You can assist them by providing live mealworms and a heated birdbath.



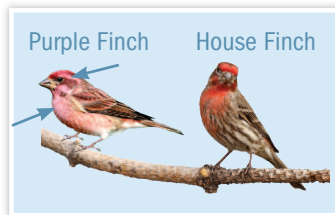
### 2. We don't have American Goldfinches here in the winter.

False! The males lack their bright yellow feathers and are colored more like the females in olive drab and brown with just a hint of yellow. Feeding American Goldfinches in your yard this winter will ensure that some will remain to nest in the spring.



### 3. Purple Finches are common visitors to my yard all winter.

Most of the finches we see with the beautiful raspberry color are male House Finches. The color of the male House Finch can vary



from orange-y red to very raspberry depending on their diet. Purple Finches feed in nomadic, foraging flocks. You may see a small flock in your yard periodically. Look for the lower sides and belly of the male Purple Finch to be clean or white without brown streaking. The female has a distinctive white eye brow (see arrows on photo).

### 4. All birds that migrate fly to areas with moderate temperatures.

Some birds are irruptive and unpredictable in their migration patterns like Red Polls and Pine Siskins. When pine cone and birch seed production is low, about every four years, these birds migrate down from Canada and other points north to spend the winter in Minnesota.

### 5. The first snow in Minnesota follows the arrival of the Dark-eyed Junco.

Thankfully, not true. Here in the metro we see our first juncos in September.



### 6. Birds don't use a birdbath in the winter.

Fresh water is vital for bird survival and a heated birdbath will attract birds to your backyard for a drink.

### 7. Squirrels and raccoons hibernate in the winter.

So sorry to say this is also false. Raccoons will den up and sleep but are out and about on winter nights of 20°F or warmer. Squirrels will emerge daily to eat but a bit later in the morning after the sun has warmed things up a bit. ■

## FEATURED PRODUCTS

### Finches' Choice

#### The Perfect Seed Blend for Finches

Finches' Choice has everything every finch, chickadee, junco or sparrow loves. This mix consists of Nyjer™ seed, fine sunflower chips, orange Siberian millet, white millet and flax seed. Finches' Choice is just the right size to fit through any finch feeder port. It is also great for spreading on the ground for juncos, White-throated Sparrows and White-crowned Sparrows.



### Aspects® Large Berry Finch Feeder

#### A Favorite Feeder for Finches

This feeder includes stainless steel wire mesh that allows the air to circulate, preventing seeds from clumping and spoiling. There's lots of clinging room for birds like goldfinches, Pine Siskins, chickadees and House Finches. Because there are no perches, starlings, Red-winged Blackbirds and grackles are less likely to access the seed. Inside, a triangular metal seed deflector at the base diverts all seed to each side of the feeder. The base is removable for quick and easy filling and cleaning. The top and base are made from heavy-duty metal to provide years of use. ■



**Have an idea for a future issue of *Birds-Eye View*?** Photos and articles may be submitted by email to [info@wildbirdstore.net](mailto:info@wildbirdstore.net). Sign up for our weekly e-newsletter at [WildBirdStore.com](http://WildBirdStore.com) to receive information about backyard birding, store events and exclusive discounts.