

BAIT FOR GOLDFINCHES AND SISKINS  
By Dr. Paul H. Fluck

Goldfinches--along with siskins, purple finches, house finches, etc.-- can be effectively baited into traps of the allpurpose kind with a number of free natural baits. I recall that some years ago, I stopped to pick up some dead goldfinches which had been killed on the highway while feeding on smashed osage oranges. Every one of the birds has osage orange seeds in its crop.

Since then we have collected osage oranges in the fall and by January they have rotted so that the seeds are available to the birds. Not a seed escapes. Just unload a ton or so in your trapping area and rake them into the traps through the winter.

Right now you can bait your traps with the buttonballs from sycamore trees. Look around for a sycamore tree, and you may find one with heavy brown fuzz covering the ground underneath, like snow. Each piece of fuzz has been clipped from the seed by a goldfinch, siskin, or purple finch. Just set your traps under the tree and bait up with buttonballs.

Later you can use the seed stalks of dandelions, cockscombs, cosmos, or evening primrose next fall. During the summer you can collect the seed pods of bull thistles, and screen the seeds after drying. This is excellent bait. And none will cost a dime. However, we usually combine these special baits with small sunflower seed.

Lastly, remember that every seed-feeding bird arrives at your feeder carrying seeds. Often these are dropped in your area, and if you are not too energetic about the grass clipping next summer, many of these seeds will grow up. As far as bird feeding is concerned, the best bird feed is still free.

Every bander should be familiar with the paper-bound \$2.00 book AMERICAN WILDLIFE AND PLANTS. A GUIDE TO WILDLIFE FOOD HABITS by Martin, Nelson and Zim. This book can be obtained from Dover Publications, 180 Varick St., N. Y. C.

However, it is interesting to note that even in this highly researched publication, the osage orange is given virtually no notice at all as a food plant. This is probably because it is a delayed food crop - and not fed on until it rots during the winter.

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