

A Nest Record for the American Goldfinch in Mississippi

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On 17 June 1976, Warren found an American Goldfinch (Carduelis tristis) nest about 11.2 km (7 miles) southwest of Wahalak, Kemper County, Mississippi in a Weyerhaeuser Company 5-year-old loblolly pine (Pinus taeda) plantation, an area that had been site prepared by tree-crushing and burning. The female was seen as she was flushed from the nest.

The nest contained 3 pale bluish-white eggs and was lined with thistle down. A common plant in the immediate area at the time was yellow thistle (Carduus spinosissimus). Nest measurements were: 4.50 cm inside diameter, 4.10 cm depth, 7.25 cm outside diameter, and 7.20 cm height. The nest was in a forked limb of a willow oak (Quercus phellos) sapling, about 1.1 m above the ground. Four smaller branches radiated around the fork, thus making a whorled arrangement. The sapling had a diameter of 4.6 cm and was 2.4 m tall. The upper crown was dead, having been "top killed" by an aerial application of herbicide in May 1975.

On 23 June, when the nest was revisited, neither parent was observed and the eggs were gone. Although the nest was not disturbed, predation by a snake was suspected. Several gray rat snakes (Elaphe obsoleta spiloides) had been seen within 100 m of the nest site. The nest was collected and is in the ornithological collection in the Biological Sciences Department at Mississippi State University.

American Goldfinches have been seen carrying nest material, feeding, and just flying about the many young pine plantations in Kemper and Oktibbeha Counties since 1974 (Randy Warren, M.Sc. Thesis, Miss. State Univ., Miss. St., 1979). As far as we know, however, the observations reported here are the first documentation of American Goldfinches nesting in Mississippi.

We regard young pine plantations with many hardwood saplings and thistle plants as excellent American Goldfinch nest habitat. With the southern forest industry creating hundreds of thousands of acres of pine plantations annually, the relationship of American Goldfinches to pine plantations should be further investigated.