

## EUROPEAN GOLDFINCH NEAR NEW YORK CITY, 1915-1935.

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THE first record of a completed nesting of the introduced British Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis britannica*) on Long Island, N. Y. (Nichols, D. G. and J. T., 1935, *Bird-Lore*, p. 288), which so far as I am aware is also the first record in the United States since this bird used, in the nineties, to be a common resident in Central Park, New York City, leads me to set down a résumé of my personal observations and some others that have come to my attention bearing on its history in the vicinity of New York.<sup>1</sup>

Griscom, 1923 (*Birds of New York City Region*) says that it had completely disappeared from Central Park in 1907.

From the fall of 1910 to the spring of 1916 I resided in Englewood, New Jersey, and shortly after leaving there prepared an annotated manuscript list of the birds of that area in cooperation with Mr. Griscom (Nichols and Griscom, 1918, *Birds of Englewood*) based on our personal observations and such others as were available to us at the time. In it we say of this species, 'uncommon in fall, winter and spring, probably breeds.' I find record in my journal of a flock of about eight on January 28, 1912; about six at Leonia on February 16, 1913; one on February 21, 1915, seven, one in full song, in a heavy wet snowstorm on March 6, a flock of about five at Coytesville on March 13 with the remark 'They seem to be unusually common in the Englewood region this year,' and the species singing on March 23, 1915.

While publishing records of an individual in Brooklyn, May 27, 1915, and April 27, 1918 (Fleischer), and one in Central Park, New York City, May 9, 1920 (L. N. Nichols), Griscom, 1923, was of the opinion (in which I did not concur), that the species had practically gone from the New York City region. It was very rarely observed and reported and may well have reached a low point in its numbers between 1915 and 1925. I had resided at Garden City, Long Island, for seven years before meeting with it there on May 20, 1923, one associated with and chasing a bright male American Goldfinch. There had been a number of scattered American Goldfinches about for some days, and a Pine Siskin seen in their company as recently as May 12. The association of the European with migrant or drifting native Finches is worth noting.

It was another ten years before I again observed a European Goldfinch in Garden City. Scattering records of its occurrence meanwhile are to be

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<sup>1</sup> See Adney, 1886, *Auk*, III, p. 409; Woodruff and Paine, 1886, *Forest and Stream* (June 10), pp. 386-387.

found published in 'Abst. Proc. Linn. Soc. N. Y.' and 'Bird-Lore' as follows:<sup>2</sup> 1925, New York City; 1927, Clason Point, June 14 (Muller); 1928, Pelham, February 13 (Johnston); 1929, Ward's Island, August 8 (Cromwell), University Heights, New York City, October 10 (Cruikshank); 1930, Lambertsville, N. J., May 27 (Elliot); 1931, Westbury, Long Island, June 3 to 6, two birds (Matuszewski), Brooklyn Botanic Garden, two on October 10 and one on the 12th (Wilmott), and the species reported there in mid-September by another observer; 1932, Central Park, New York City, two on September 23 (Miss Johnson and Mrs. Edge) to September 26 (Brand and Watson); 1933, one at Bayside, Long Island, March 18, in song (Bohn).

To review briefly recent observations at Garden City. On April 21, 1933, I observed two, one in full song and one also carrying nesting material into a large, thick-foliaged pine tree. After two days, however, they were not seen again about this tree, though two were seen not far away, on April 30 and May 5, and three birds on May 11. Reports indicate that several individuals were present in Garden City that April. In 1934 a singing bird was observed in the same general locality on April 24, and on April 26 two together, after which the species was not seen again. In 1935 two were observed there on April 4 (D. G. Nichols), one singing bird on April 25, and on May 12 we found two birds flying back and forth in company and saw one of them visit and thus disclose their essentially completed nest, at a spot where they also had been observed May 3, 9, and 10 (D. G. N.). On the late afternoon of May 14 they were present, and one carried a beakful of material to the nest. On some seven dates that the nest was visited from May 15 to 30 one bird was on it, the other nearby only twice. On June 6, 7 (p.m.) and 9 (midday, overcast) it was uncovered and the old birds seen only on the 7th, feeding here and there together without approaching the nest tree. However, on the morning of June 12, D. G. Nichols found both old birds present and one on the nest, and on climbing the tree that it contained two young, well grown but still more or less in the pin-feather stage. That afternoon the nest was uncovered, and in some 15 minutes wait I observed the pair come into adjoining trees, but they did not go to the nest. When it was visited on the mornings of June 13 and 14 no old birds were about, but on the latter date there was a silent young bird, seemingly ready to fly fidgeting on its rim, and this is presumably the date on which the young left, without our having seen their parents bring food to them at any time; and neither old nor young were seen again that summer. Whereas it is true that visits had been few and scattering, partly due to other pre-occupations and partly to avoid disturbing the birds, it does seem that the young had relatively little attention from their parents, perhaps correlated

<sup>2</sup> Abst. Linn. Soc., 1925-26, p. 63; 1927-28, p. 40; 1929-30, p. 29, 54; 1931-32, p. 57, 68; 1933-34, p. 99. Bird-Lore, 1931, p. 406; 1932, p. 397; 1933, p. 157.

with there being only two or with a long period in the nest. The nest was collected on June 19, and found to be plastered along the outer rim with excreta. The young had apparently been very untidy their last few days at home. It was placed 14 ft. 3 or 4 inches from the ground in a small maple, more than half way out from the trunk of the tree just above a limb where this began to fork, and rather well concealed by the leaves.

From a little study of the above data we perhaps can get a better understanding of the present status of this species. The same pair may have nested nearby for the last three years, it could easily have been overlooked, or it may not. The appearance of the species in April is attributable to a regular vernal movement corresponding to spring migration dates in Britain, just as mid-May corresponds to a first brood nesting date there. The small number of young in this brood and lack of any record of the birds at second brood dates may be due to chance but is probably significant. Most rare birds in these latitudes are so by reason of being out of their range of abundance but this one is probably adjusted to its environment on the basis of small numbers per unit area throughout.

Very likely the Westbury birds of June, 1931, only a few miles from Garden City, had a nest somewhere but at too great a distance to be found. The one at Garden City in May, 1923, may have been an unmated male, or have had a sitting mate. The correspondence of late winter dates at Englewood in 1912, 1913 and 1915 seems to me to indicate that such birds were also well established in their shallow environmental niche rather than lost stragglers; and though from further knowledge of its behavior I am less confident than then, that the species nested nearby, I see no reason to accept the opinion that it did not persist in the Englewood region, or to surmise that the Englewood birds may have left when I did and eventually relocated me at Garden City! In this connection I may call attention to the hypothesis that one living in an area may have better opportunity to pick up casually certain data that interest him there than any number of active field-trippers to the same area, though they obtain much the larger migration lists.

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