

# Pine Siskins: Spring of 1982

Nadia M. Mutchler

In *North American Bird Bander* 7 (1):37 I invited banders to submit data regarding Pine Siskin (*Carduelis pinus*) movements in early spring 1982. I was surprised both by the overall lack of response, and by receiving responses from the Midwest and the South. Although both "A Guide to Field Identification, Birds of North America" by Robbins, Bruun, and Zim (1966) and "A Field Guide to the Birds East of the Rockies" by Peterson (1980) indicate the broad wintering range of this species, it did not occur to me that there would be response from outside the Northeast. Because the responses came from widely separated areas (Figures 1 and 2), no definitive pattern emerged. There were some interesting comments from those who did respond, and this paper is a general summary of the information they gave.

John M.C. Peterson reported that the winter-spring of 1982 was clearly not the season of the siskin in the Adirondack-Champlain region of New York and even the return flight did not match that of the spring in 1981. However, Mr. Peterson reported that it was a good winter for Common Redpolls (*Carduelis flammea*) with 267 banded near Elizabethtown (411-0733) 26 January through 22 April 1982 and 1 Hoary Redpoll (*C. hornemanni*) banded on 31 March 1982. From 22 February to 7 May 1981 he banded 403 siskins in the Elizabethtown area, but from 29 April to 5 May 1982 he banded only 18 at Elizabethtown, and from 13 May to 15 May 1982 only 21 were banded at Crown Point (440-0732). Some of the siskins banded at Crown Point peninsula in mid-May had brood patches or cloacal protuberances, and Mr. Peterson assumed they may have just finished nesting somewhere to the south. (Our referee noted that if they still had brood patches or cloacal protuberances they most probably had nested locally). Mr. Peterson reported that he used band series 1590-07101/07400.

From Jamesville, NY (425-0760) just below Syracuse, Dorothy Crumb reported that she banded only 207 siskins in 1982 because they hadn't wintered that far north. (One wonders how many she banded in 1981!) She continued, "I know of very few people here who had any this winter. I got my first one in the traps 18 April. They stayed at the feeding station until 24 May. However, both last year and this year there were a few that stayed around to breed and bring young to feeders. Our big thing this winter was redpolls. I banded just short of 1200 Commons and 5 Hoarys. I was out of town the first week in May. Chris Spies came to band twice

while I was gone and he said the siskins looked like the redpolls in winter — all over the place, so I must have missed the peak time for siskin banding. The only recovery that I have had was one found dead the day after banding, 15 mi (24 km) to the east." Ms. Crumb's note of 11 August ended with the comment "back to the Blue Jay mob." Band series used were 1500-99179/99200, 1620-89653/89700, 1630-83701/83800, 1630-83901/84000, & 1640-09101/09200.

From Limestone (420-0783) in southwestern New York, Regina VanScoy reported that she banded 53 siskins from 27 March to 5 May 1982 using band series 1510-97798/97951. This was her first year of siskin banding, and 30 April was the best day with 11 siskins banded. At the same latitude and a little to the east at Apalachin, NY (420-0760), Glenys J. Curran reported 1982 was not a siskin year. Only 41 were banded in 1982 using series 1580-76001/76779, while from 21 February through 6 May 1981 she banded 568 siskins. There are American Goldfinches (*Carduelis tristis*), redpolls, and Dark-eyed Juncos (*Junco hyemalis*) interspersed with the siskins on her band series. In 1981 her subpermittee, Helen Dorber, banded 348 siskins between 22 February and 22 March near Vestal, NY (same lat/long) using series 1580-7700/77400.



Figure 1. Northeastern reporting locations: a. Champlain region, NY; b. Jamesville, NY; c. Limestone, NY; d. Apalachin, NY; e. Forestburgh, NY; f. Storrs, CT; g. Fairfield, CT; h. Wayne, NJ; i. Budd Lake, NJ; j. Marlton, NJ; k. Marysville, PA; l. Clark Co., VA; m. Charlottesville, VA.

All of our banding at Forestburgh, NY (413-0744) 10 mi (16 km) south of Monticello, is done at a second floor window (see NABB 3:107) in a wooded area beside a lake, 10 mi (16 km) north of the New York-New Jersey-Pennsylvania border. Our siskins arrived with an early April blizzard (6 April); 106 were banded in 5 hours. About 10 were banded per day sporadically from 7 April to 4 May 1982. On 4 May another 49 were banded. After we banded 41 more on 6 May, the birds appeared to leave the area, perhaps continuing their northern migration. Our total for 1982 was 290. In the three years before this time we had handled only 69 (65 in 1978). On 10 June 1982, 3 siskins appeared, 1 banded and 2 unbanded. Traps were set and both the unbanded birds caught. An additional siskin was caught the next day. All 3 birds were HY, a new breeding record for this area. We had 5 foreign encounters; 3 had been banded in Maryland about 150 mi (240 km) SW, 1 in New Jersey about 50 mi (80 km) S, and we have no information on the 5th bird as yet. The birds from MD must have been in northern migration; 1 banded 14 February 1982 was retrapped 22 April 1982, 1 banded 20 February 1982 was retrapped 3 May 1982 and 1 banded 8 April 1982 was retrapped 6 May 1982. On 13 September 1982 we were entertained by a single trap-elusive siskin.

Apparently it was not a siskin year in Connecticut either, for Ruth Lof wrote that 160 were banded using series 1320-83401/83500, 1500-35901/36000, & 1510-35701/35800 at Storrs (414-0721). Carl Trichka reported only 43 banded 31 October 1981 to 2 April 1982 at Fairfield

(410-0731). Carl used series 1580-42201/42400. The only bird banded on 31 October was an HY-U. The next appearance of siskins was on 6 February 1982 when 17 were banded. 17 more were banded 2 days later, but then none were banded until 11 March 1982 when 5 more were handled.

Eileen Kokorsky wrote that 66 siskins were banded at Wayne, New Jersey (405-0741) from 12 February to 5 April 1982. She banded only for an hour in the mornings before leaving for work. In northwestern New Jersey, Charlene Kelly banded 165 siskins at Budd Lake (405-0744) between 14 February and 29 April 1982 using band series 1590-06369/06400, 1590-06502/06598, 1590-06701/06719 & 1590-06815/06900. One of the Budd Lake siskins (1590-06521), banded on 5 March 1982, was encountered 53 days later at our traps (413-0744), about 50 mi (80 km) due north, on 27 April 1982. On 23 April Ms. Kelly trapped a foreign encounter (1580-86319) that had been banded a little more than 2 months earlier on 14 February in Maryland, about 100 mi (160 km) SW of where the bird was recovered.

In southern New Jersey near Marlton (394-0745), Howard R. Spindelow had his best siskin year in 13 years of banding at this locality. During the winter 1981-82 he banded 719 siskins, more than 3 times as many siskins as he had banded the previous winter. More information on the siskin banding done at this station is given in his accompanying note.

Steven Boyer reported from Marysville, PA (402-0762), about 8 mi (13 km) NW of Harrisburg, that he banded a total of 1,246 siskins (495 males and 801 birds of unknown sex). Along with the siskins, 89 Common Redpolls and 25 American Goldfinches were banded using series 1550-06501/06800, 1590/72501/73000, 1630-33201/33700, & 1630-85601/85700. Mr. Boyer stated he could have banded many more but kept running out of size "0" bands. His peak days were: 23 February with 202 siskins banded, 26 February, 167 banded; and 10 April, 206 banded. The first siskins were banded 2 February and the last 23 April 1982.

J. William Oberman reported from Calmes Creek, Clark Co., Virginia (390-0775) an average of 31 siskins banded on Sundays from 28 February to 9 May 1982. His best day was 6 March when he banded 67 siskins. A total of 220 siskins (9 males, 8 females, and 202 of unknown sex) were banded using series 1590-92641/92998 and 1590-03018 1590-93018/93079. Pring Davenport from Charlottesville, VA (380-0783) noted that although she banded only 11, there were siskins on their feeders all winter for the first time in 20 years. She banded from 24 January to 3 March 1982 using band series 1550-10901/11000.

Raymond Bates of Birmingham, Alabama (333-0864)



Figure 2. Midwestern and southern reporting locations: a. Aberdeen, SD; b. Independence, MO; c. Baldwin City, KS; d. Birmingham, AL.

thought we would be interested in data from the Southeast. At his backyard location he banded only 7 Pine Siskins in 1982 using series 1600-00142/00144 on 1 March and 1600-00158/00159 on 2 March. He banded 81 at this location from 27 January to 15 March 1981 using series 1300-71969/71995 and 1470-65702/65798. The siskins were usually accompanied by American Goldfinches.

The information shared from the Midwest was unexpected and, I believe, very interesting. The re-encounter information was amazing. Katherine Kelley of Baldwin City, Kansas (384-0951) wrote that she had banded 1,542 siskins from 17 December 1981 to 13 May 1982. Series used were 1590-19345/20000, 1620-24201/24400, 1620-24601/25000, 1620-91001/91200, & 1620-91301/91376. Ms. Kelley added that she has banded 4,641 Pine Siskins since 1976; before that date she had banded only 1 in 1966. She gave the following information on re-encounters of 24 of her banded siskins:

**Table 1. Encounters of Pine Siskins banded at Baldwin City, Kansas**

Number	Length of time	Distance	Location
9	2-59 days	10 mi (16 km) NE	Lawrence, KS
1	25 days	10 mi (16 km) E	Spring Hill, KS
1	47 days	60 mi (100 km) NW	Topeka, KS
9	2-47 days	60 mi (100 km) W	Shawnee, KS
1	70 days	600 mi (1000 km) N	Hudson, WI
1	92 days	600 mi (1000 km) ENE	Danville, IL
1	28 days	700 mi (1125 km) NNE	Little Falls, MN
1	29 months	1400 mi (2250 km) NE	Little Gull Island, NY

From approximately 25 mi (40 km) NE of the Kelley banding location, James and Mary Louise Myers of Independence, MO (390-0942) sent another interesting report. From 22 November 1981 to 16 April 1982, they banded 103 siskins using series 1570-88201/88600, 1580-47601/47900, and 1610-78001/78100. In a follow-up letter Ms. Myers related, "We have been banding since 1955. Until the fall of 1980 our banding operations were in Shawnee, KS. Katherine Kelley's recoveries of siskins from Shawnee were our recoveries. Until 1966 we had not handled siskins, but in 13 years between 1966 and 1981 we banded 1,740 siskins." Four of their most outstanding recoveries include a siskin banded 26 April 1976 that was re-encountered 20 months later on 25 December 1977 at Modesto, CA 1,320 mi (2125 km) W. Mrs. Meyers' letter ended with this interesting note: "On 6 May there were still 3 siskins feeding and 1 was

**Table 2. Encounters of Pine Siskins banded at Independence, Missouri**

Number	Length of time	Distance	Location
1	20 months	1320 mi (2125 km) W	Modesto, CA
1	2 years	700 mi (1125 km) SW	San Antonio, TX
1	27 months	90 mi (145 km) NE	Wisconsin Rapids, WI
1	12 days	80 mi (130 km) N	Cornell, WI

trapped, a female with a large brood patch. Siskins are not considered to be a nesting species in Missouri."

Dr. Dan Tallman, editor of *South Dakota Bird Notes* noted that in Aberdeen (in the northeast corner of the state — no co-ordinates given) 1981 was a better siskin year with 800 banded in his residential backyard. A few siskins bred in the summer of 1981, but breeding is not an annual occurrence. The winter of 1982 looked as though it were going to be another siskin year, but there was an invasion of Common Redpolls and the siskins disappeared, not to return until May, when he banded 251. One of his 1981 siskins was encountered in Kansas by Katherine Kelley in early 1982. Dr. Tallman had some questions that perhaps our readers can answer: "Do you know anything about yellow-breasted siskins? Several of the 1982 spring siskins were chrome-yellow-breasted. The weird thing was that I was able to pick up a window-killed bird and this yellow color faded on the specimen. Local birders reported siskins with red in the tail but I did not see these birds myself. Are you aware of any color-marking having been done?" Dr. Tallman can be reached at the Dept. of Biology, Northern State College, Aberdeen, SD 57401.

Although there is nothing definitive about this paper, I believed it should be presented as a courtesy to the banders who shared their information. I am left with questions: Do redpolls preempt siskins at feeding stations? Why do siskins "invade" so sporadically that groups appear only here and there? Perhaps 1982 was not a siskin year everywhere. I wonder what happened elsewhere in 1981; we banded only 3 birds.

I wish to thank all of the banders who took the time to share and have given permission to use their data. I also wish to thank Dr. Charles Collins for his critique and suggestions, and Jeff Spendelow for his hours of aid, suggestions, and improvement of this writing.

RD 1 Box 212X, Monticello, NY 12701

