

NOTES

FIRST REPORT OF NESTING LESSER GOLDFINCH IN IDAHO

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The A.O.U. Checklist (1983) listed the Lesser Goldfinch (*Carduelis psaltria*) as casual or accidental in southwestern British Columbia, eastern Oregon, and southern Wyoming. It was not listed for Idaho by Burleigh (1972) and was reported without details as a rare spring migrant at the Minidoka National Wildlife Refuge, southern Idaho, by Larrison et al. (1967). Before 1988 there were only eight Lesser Goldfinch records for Idaho, all from southern counties (Bannock, Canyon, Elmore, Minidoka, and Twin Falls). For a review of seven of these records see Taylor and Trost (1987). An additional record not reported by Taylor and Trost is of one observed by Jeff Marks on Simco Road 0.2 mi. north of Highway 67, in Elmore County on 18 September 1982 (pers. comm.).

On 5 July 1988, Webb discovered a green-backed male Lesser Goldfinch feeding five juveniles 2.1 miles south of Pocatello along the west side of Mink Creek Road, across from Frazier's Egg Farm. Later the same day Trost observed the juveniles and confirmed that they were Lesser Goldfinches (greenish plumage above, dark bill, and yellow undertail coverts). On 12 July, Stephens observed a female Lesser Goldfinch feeding three juveniles in a half-dead Black Hawthorn (*Cragaeus douglasii*) at the same location. The juvenal plumage on these birds was not completely developed, and they could barely fly from branch to branch. An adult male was within 5 to 10 meters and another adult male was seen about 50 meters to the south.

Mink Creek runs year round and lies less than 100 meters to the east of the road where these birds were seen. The site was at the bottom of an east-facing slope on relatively level ground. The dominant vegetation in the immediate vicinity included Big Sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*), Black Hawthorn, Common Chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*), currant (*Ribes* sp.), Utah Juniper (*Juniperus osteosperma*), and willow (*Salix* sp.). Water Birch (*Betula occidentalis*) is common along Mink Creek.

Additional observations of male and female Lesser Goldfinches were made in the Pocatello area from 17 June (one in Webb's yard) through July of 1988. These include sightings in town and at Cherry Springs Nature Area (3 miles south of Pocatello on Mink Creek Road) by us and several other observers. At least one singing male was heard and seen on the west side of Pocatello during June and July of 1989, and a pair was observed at the Mink Creek nesting site on 17 July 1989, but juveniles were not seen.

During the summer, Lesser Goldfinches depend physiologically on a substantial water supply for drinking and bathing (Ryser 1985). The availability of water is believed to affect the occurrence of this species strongly (Linsdale 1957). It therefore seems possible that Lesser Goldfinches were attracted to Mink Creek because of the drying up of more traditional nesting areas to the south during the drought of 1988.

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However, increases in Lesser Goldfinch numbers observed in northern Utah during the summer of 1988 (Kingery 1988) suggest that the influx to southeastern Idaho was due to a general increase (for whatever reason) throughout the northern Great Basin region in 1988.

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Accepted 2 February 1990