

The Goldfinch



Scientific name: *Carduelis carduelis*

Irish Name: Lasair choille

Males: This small finch is strikingly colourful with its mixture of red, white and black on the head, golden brown body and bright yellow wing bars.

Male Goldfinch

In close detail the crown is black, the chin and forehead are red and the cheeks are white. The body is mainly golden or tawny brown, but the belly and rump are white. The wings are mostly black with a large striking yellow band. The bill varies from pinkish to pale grey, and the legs are flesh coloured. The male and female Goldfinch are similar except that the male's red face extends slightly behind the eye.

Juveniles: Juveniles are generally a dull brown with darker streaking on the body, and lack the red, black and white markings on the head.

Song: The Goldfinch has a number of different calls. These are sometimes intertwined into a song which is prolonged and full of energy.

Length: 12cm

Diet: Goldfinches feed on various tree seeds, such as alder and birch, and on thistle and dandelion seeds. Food left in gardens will also attract them if there are no fields nearby with thistles and dandelions, but they will also feed on sunflower hearts.



Breeding: Goldfinches begin breeding in late April. The female will lay between 3 and 7 eggs and will sit on them for 10-14 days. The smooth, glossy eggs are pale blue with reddish markings. Only the female incubates the eggs. The young are fed by both parents.

Nesting: A cup-shaped nest is built by the female with moss, grass and lichen, and lined with wool. The nest is usually in a tree towards the end of a branch or in a bush, and often in large gardens and orchards. They can also be found in open woodland and hedgerows.

Interesting Fact: In past times Goldfinches were kept as pets because of their beautiful singing and bright feathers.

On Valentines Day many people thought you could tell the occupation of your future husband by the first bird you saw. If the first bird a girl saw was a Goldfinch she would marry a wealthy man.