



Fringillidae the FINCHES

Finches and their allies have a worldwide distribution. Taxonomists have classified 224 species in the finch family (including Euphonias) and the American Birding Association lists 25 species in North America. Of these 25, only 11 have been reported in the Carolinas and just nine of these have been found in the Central Carolinas. The White-winged Crossbill is discussed in the Supplementary Bird List. The Pine Grosbeak is discussed in the Hypothetical Bird List. Species profiles for the remaining seven are presented below. *Note: A Lesser Goldfinch (Spinus psaltria) was found in Winston-Salem on September 27, 1985. Another sighting of this western species in the Carolina Piedmont could occur.*

Two of our seven finches are permanent residents that breed here. The other five are known as “winter finches.” Winter finches are nomadic birds that periodically disperse out of Canada’s boreal forests into the lower 48 states during periods of winter food (tree seed) shortages. The diversity and number of these birds can vary dramatically in the Carolinas from year to year. Scientists have been studying the movements, or “irruptions,” of winter finches since 1873. Today, scientists compile data gathered by citizen scientists to prepare an annual “forecast” of winter finch movements that is made available to everyone interested in these fascinating winter finch migrations.