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Notes from the Bbi

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Notes from the BBL

M. Kathleen Klimkiewicz

Aging and sexing American Goldfinches

It seems that there is some confusion regarding the aging and/or sexing of the American Goldfinch.

American Goldfinches **can be sexed** by the color of the wings. Birds with **black** wings are safely sexed male; those with **brown** wings are safely sexed female. Occasionally you will encounter a bird with very dull black wings or very rich brown wings which may appear black. It is best to sex these birds unknown *unless* there are some black feathers in the crown. If there are black feathers in the crown, then it is safe to sex them male.

There is **no** accurate way to **age the female** goldfinches by plumage coloration. However, the **males** can be relatively easily **aged by plumage**. Birds with rich, black flight feathers **and** yellow shoulder patches **and** extensive white tippings to the secondaries and several of the primaries may be safely aged AHY in fall and ASY from January through the breeding season. Birds with dull black wings **and** brown to olive shoulders **and** little white edging on the secondaries and primaries may be safely aged HY in the fall and SY from January through the breeding season.

Please contact me at BBL if you need further assistance.

Aging and sexing House Finches

There are several problems involved in aging and sexing House Finches. Geographic variation and the effect of diet on the plumage coloration complicate the picture. Please **do not** use the article by McEntee (*EBBA News*, 1970, Vol 33) to age House Finches.

Birds in juvenal plumage **cannot** be sexed. However, sexing is possible as soon as the postjuvenal molt is complete. Birds with red, orange, or gold on the head, throat, rump, and/or breast are males. Females are brown-gray and seldom have more than an occasional red or yellow feather.

Aging is another problem. Until the questions of geographic variation and diet effect are solved, females must be aged by skull pneumatization: incomplete = HY/SY and complete = AHY (January—October) and U (November—December). Males with pink edges to **all** wing coverts can safely be aged ASY (January—May) and AHY (June—December). Males which have gold or yellow-orange on head, throat, and rump can be aged HY/SY. All other males **must** be aged by skull pneumatization (incomplete = HY/SY; complete = AHY (January—October) and U (November—December).