

1983

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Recommended Citation

Spendelow, Howard R. (1983) "More on Pine Siskins," *North American Bird Bander*. Vol. 8 : Iss. 1 , Article 8.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/nabb/vol8/iss1/8>

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More on Pine Siskins

Howard R. Spendelow

My banding station is 7 miles (11 km) SE of Marlton, Burlington Co., NJ (394-0745) on a small lake in the Pine Barrens. In the winter, birds are trapped on the ground using Figure 8 and Potter traps. I also use a window/feeder trap with manually operated drop doors, and have caught as many as 35 Pine Siskins (*Carduelis pinus*) at one time with this 6-celled trap. I band mainly on weekends and holidays in the winter, but in the spring I occasionally use the window trap before leaving for work. Nets are rarely used in the winter unless temperatures are above 40°F (5°C).

When I compiled my data and realized that I hadn't trapped any siskins in 6 of the 13 winters that I have been banding here, I decided to see what the patterns were for 3 other wintering species: American Goldfinch (*Carduelis tristis*), Evening Grosbeak (*Coccothraustes vespertinus*), and Dark-eyed Junco (*Junco hyemalis*). Table 1 shows the total numbers of newly-banded birds, from September through June, of all 4 species, and the

number of siskins banded each month. Repeats, returns, and recoveries are not included in these figures although many siskins were caught more than once and a few were caught as many as 15 times in a single season. There appears to be little correlation among the numbers of each species banded each year.

Table 2 lists some interesting recoveries and returns of siskins I have banded, and Table 3 lists some recoveries of birds banded by others.

On 3 May 1981 I banded what I thought would be my last siskin of the season. It stayed around for a day or so and then disappeared. No more were seen again for more than 7 weeks until the afternoon of 24 June when, along with several American Goldfinches, 3 siskins were noticed on our thistle-seed feeder which hangs above the 6-celled window trap. The birds were seen again the next 2 days, and very late in the afternoon of 27 June I trapped and banded 2 of them. Unfortunately, I did not skull them.

Table 1. Pine Siskins, American Goldfinches, Evening Grosbeaks, and Dark-eyed Juncos banded at Marlton, NJ 1966-1982.

	69/70	70/71	71/72	72/73	73/74	74/75	75/76	76/77	77/78	78/79	79/80	80/81	81/82
Pine Siskin													
Nov.													12
Dec.					16				136			46	101
Jan.	88		5		3				184			76	196
Feb.	45		3		119		51		66			78	186
Mar.	29		27		123				63			2	70
Apr.	36		3		49				75			5	123
May	23		1						30				31
Jun.												6	
Total	221	0	39	0	310	0	68	0	554	0	0	213	719
American Goldfinch													
194	62	18	116	55	15	82	78	85	83	68	93	8	
Evening Grosbeak													
198	0	69	36	5	52	99	336	133	123	3	198	243	
Dark-eyed Junco													
133	77	11	58	230	167	293	322	303	123	141	181	238	

Table 2. Pine Siskin recoveries and returns

Band number	Date banded	Date recovered	Recovery location	Distance
119-58337	15 Feb 1970	27 Apr 1970	Arlington, VA	SE 140 mi (225 km)
1460-35515	25 Dec 1977	6 May 1978	Whiting, NJ	E 25 mi (40 km)
1460-35581	29 Dec 1977	28 Apr 1978	Whiting, NJ	E 25 mi (40 km)
1490-87950	30 Nov 1980	23 Aug 1982	Webster, NY	NW 270 mi (435 km)
1530-79551	26 Dec 1980	16 Jan 1982	Marlton, NJ	
1620-21226	9 Apr 1982	21 Apr 1982	Duluth, MN	NW 960 mi (1545 km)*
1620-21249	11 Apr 1982	21 May 1982	Fulton, NY	NW 300 mi (485 km)

*12 days

Table 3. Foreign recoveries of Pine Siskins at Marlton, NJ

Band number	Banding location	Date banded	Date recovered	Distance
1470-86705	Whiting, NJ	29 December 1977	16 May 1978	W 25 mi (40 km)
1490-65504	Whiting, NJ	18 March 1978	27 April 1978	W 25 mi (40 km)
1490-65658	Whiting, NJ	7 April 1978	27 April 1978	W 25 mi (40 km)
1550-17390	Houston, TX	14 March 1981	9 January 1982*	NE at least 1500 mi (2400 km)

*repeated on 3 April 1982

On 28 June we had 6 siskins, including 2 banded birds which I assumed were the same 2 I had caught the day before, at the feeder. One of the banded birds was being fed by an unbanded one. Over the course of the day, I caught and banded the other 4 birds, but was unable to retrap the 2 banded earlier. The band numbers for all 6 birds were 1550-47267/47272.

Of the 4 birds banded on 28 June, 2 showed no skull pneumatization and 2 were completely pneumatized, indicating 2 HY and 2 AHY birds, respectively. A few banded siskins, and only banded siskins, were seen

sporadically at the feeder for several weeks until 3 were noted for the last time on 17 July 1981. I presume that the adults had bred somewhere nearby in the Pine Barrens. I know of no published reports of successful breeding by siskins in this area, although there is one report by Buckman (N.J. Aud. Suppl. 4:24, 1978) of a nest with eggs that was destroyed by predation. In late April and early May of 1982, 5 of the siskins I caught showed well-developed brood patches, suggesting that this species was again breeding in the area.

Braddock's Mill Lake, RD 2, Marlton, NJ 08053



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