

**AMERICAN GOLDFINCHES ASSOCIATE
WITH PINE WARBLERS IN NORTH FLORIDA**

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During banding operations in the autumn of 2002 near my home in suburban Tallahassee, Florida, I caught on three occasions American Goldfinches (*Carduelis tristis*) and Pine Warblers (*Dendroica pinus*) simultaneously in the same mist net. The location was a boggy spot in a small wooded area that borders on pasture-like clearings and fields. Altogether 9 Pine Warblers were netted there between 23 and 30 November, all of them together with American Goldfinches. The counts were 4 Pine Warblers with 6 American Goldfinches, 3 with 1, and 2 with 5. In addition to the 12 goldfinches of these groupings, I caught another 23 during that time period. Of these, with two exceptions when I captured three, only one or two were netted on each occasion. One of them actually was trapped in a net next to the one with three Pine Warblers and a single American Goldfinch. On three different occasions, single Yellow-rumped Warblers (*Dendroica coronata*) happened also to be captured at the same time as goldfinches, but they were trapped in nearby mist nets. In December, I netted just five goldfinches at that banding location and no Pine Warblers.

My observations suggest that some migrant American Goldfinches may join Pine Warblers in small flocks. Gaddis (1983) has identified these two species as occasional members of the multi-species mixed flocks of forest birds that form outside the breeding season in north Florida and are led by Carolina Chickadees (*Poecile carolinensis*) or Tufted Titmice (*Baeolophus bicolor*). Such flocks apparently are a rarity near my home, presumably because the availability of bird feeders in the neighborhood makes foraging excursions unnecessary for chickadees and titmice. The American Goldfinches described here apparently sought the company of Pine Warblers after arrival from the north before moving on or detecting the readily available food resources in bird feeders. Resident Pine Warblers would appear to be attractive partners because they supplement their arthropod diet with seeds during the winter months and often forage close to or on the ground at that time (Rodewald et al. 1999). Seeing individuals of the two species next to one another in the same net, I could not help but wonder whether the superficial similarity of their basic plumages facilitates their interaction.

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LITERATURE CITED

- GADDIS, P. K. 1983. Composition and behavior of mixed-species flocks of forest birds in north-central Florida. *Florida Field Naturalist* 11:25-34.
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