



Goldfinch

Scientific Name: *Carduelis carduelis*

Irish Name: Lasair choille

The Goldfinch is one of Ireland's most widespread garden birds. It is part of the finch family. Finches are small and medium-sized passerine birds, which means they are song birds that perch. Finches are also seed-eating birds. The Goldfinch's narrow, conical-shaped bill is well adapted to collecting seeds.

Many Goldfinches migrate south to mainland Europe in winter and stop once they reach suitable conditions. Some do not migrate at all, but overwinter in Ireland near where they breed, which is during April and September. During this time, Goldfinches are common and can be seen in large flocks in mature gardens and deciduous trees. The female builds its delicate nest in bushes and trees, making its deep, cup-shaped nest from moss, grass, wool and feathers.

The Goldfinch is striking in colour—it has a red face, a black and white head, a golden body, black wings with white marking and across these wings is a band of gold. When the male wants to attract a female he shows off the band of gold on his wings.

The typical lifespan of a Goldfinch is about two years.

A Spiky Meal

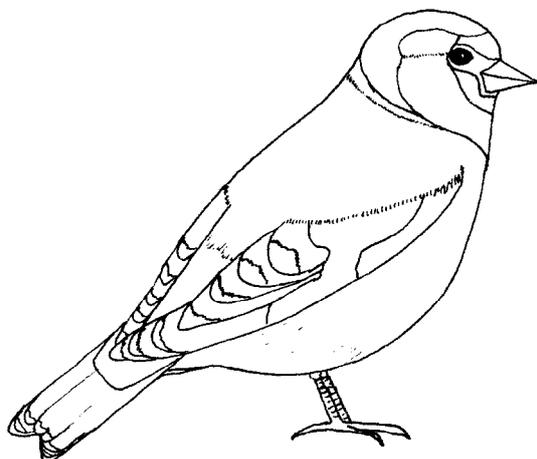
If you would like to attract Goldfinches to your garden, they love thistles and teasel. In flower, the teasel (right) has thistle-like flowerheads that fade and dry into spiky seedheads. If you leave these seedheads in the garden, Goldfinches may visit in autumn/winter as they love to feed on the seeds. Their beak is ideally suited to extracting the seeds between the spikes.



Image courtesy of Robbie Murphy

Teasel seedhead

Colour Me!



Bird drawings courtesy of Audrey Murphy Cain/Sherkin Island Marine

FACT FILE:

Colour: Red face, with black and white head. Black wings, with band of gold across them.

Length: 12-13½ cm

Diet: Seeds and insects; especially fond of thistle and teasel seeds.

Habitat: Gardens, parks, weedy farmland and wooded areas.

No. of eggs: 5-6

Group Name: A group of goldfinches is known as a 'charm' of goldfinches.