

Pine Siskin

Carduelis pinus

Pine Siskins are another occupant of northern coniferous forests whose historic status as a summer resident in Ohio is uncertain. Kirtland provided circumstantial evidence of nesting near Cleveland between 1850 and 1853 (Jones 1903), but these sightings were not corroborated by other 19th century naturalists. If siskins nested in Ohio during the 1800s, they were probably sporadic summer residents in the northeastern counties following sizable winter invasions.

During the first half of the 20th century, the only summer records of Pine Siskins came from the former Pymatuning Bog in Ashtabula County between 1928 and 1930 (Hicks 1933a). Nesting was strongly suspected at this site but breeding was not confirmed before the bog was destroyed. In the 1950s, courtship behavior was noted at Cincinnati by Kemsies and Randle (1953) but a nest was not located.

The first published nesting attempt in Ohio was reported from Columbus following the massive invasion of the winter of 1972–1973 (Peterjohn 1989a), but earlier nests were suspected following similar invasions during the late 1960s. Every large winter flight of siskins during the 1970s produced additional nesting records, primarily from Toledo, Cincinnati, Columbus, and Cleveland. Mid-summer sightings at other locations suggested possible breeding attempts. Since 1978, nesting siskins have been discovered during every year except one, even following winters when there were no movements of siskins (Peterjohn 1989a).

Siskins nested within Ohio during each year of the Atlas Project, producing records from 7 priority blocks, 2 special areas, and 4 other locations within 10 counties. These records were primarily from Cuyahoga and adjacent counties in northeastern Ohio and the southwestern counties of Hamilton and Butler. There were also scattered records from Columbus, Richland County, and Seneca County. Most locations were occupied during only 1–2 years of the Atlas Project, and no location hosted breeding pairs during each summer. In general, only 1–2 pairs nested in Ohio following winters with no sizable movements of siskins. After winter invasions, as many as 3–8 pairs were confirmed nesting and others were suspected of breeding. These records indicate Ohio currently hosts a small population of breeding siskins, but given the sporadic nature of these nesting attempts, they are not considered to be established in any portion of the state. This pattern of sporadic nesting records continued after the Atlas Project within this limited range.

While Hicks (1933a) encountered summering Pine Siskins in a bog, virtually all recent nesting records have been from ornamental conifers within cities. Residential yards are seemingly preferred, especially where bird feeders supply a reliable source of food. They have also been found in parks and cemeteries where they feed on abundant crops of conifer cones.

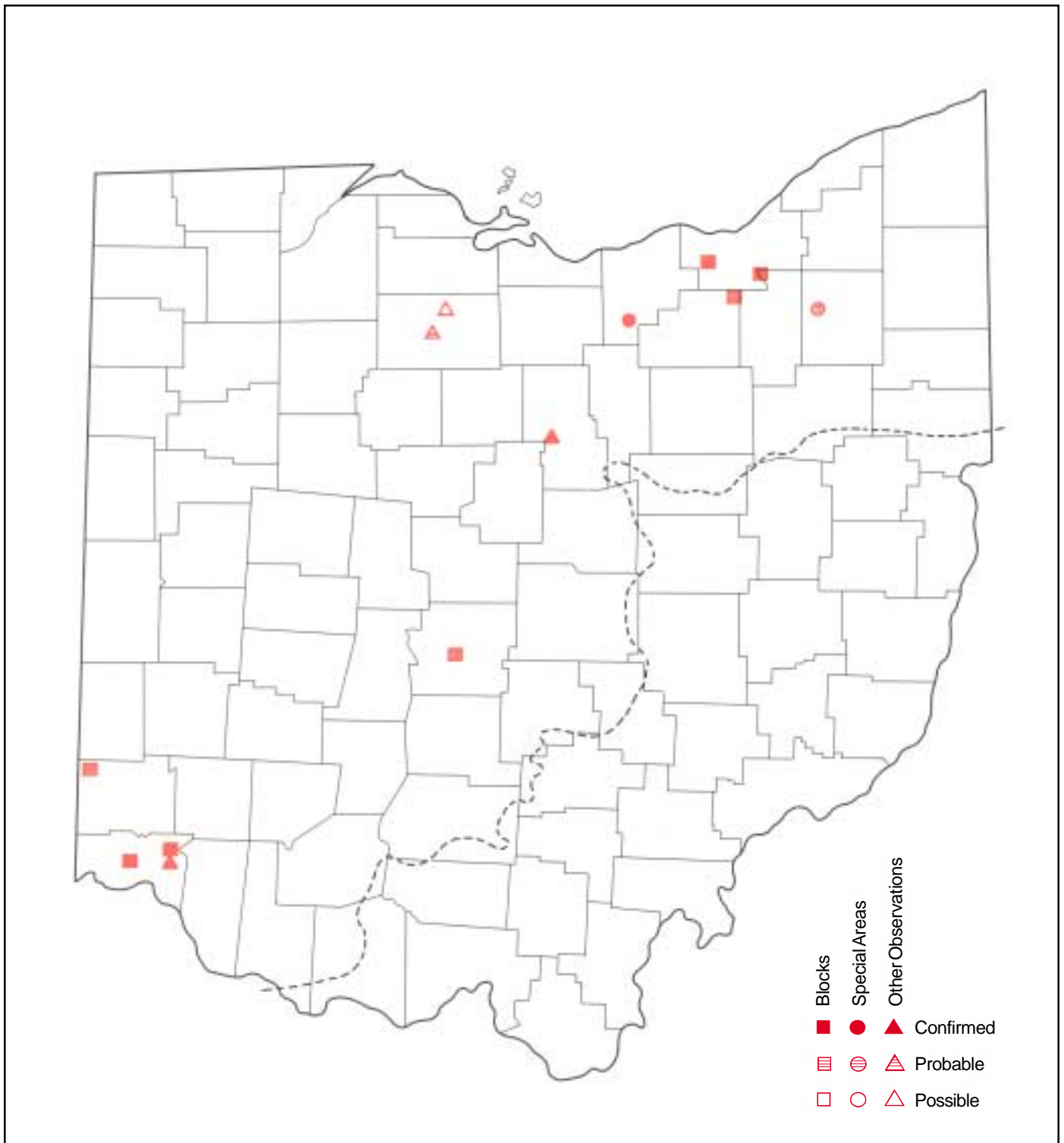
Within Ohio, Pine Siskins begin nesting earlier than most other passerines. Courtship activities are most frequently ob-

served during March, and many active nests are initiated during the second half of March and early April. Adults accompanied by recently fledged young have been noted as early as April 12 (Peterjohn 1989a), indicating some nests may be built during the first half of March. Most nests have been discovered between April 12 and May 6, although these nests primarily contained young. Fledglings have generally appeared during late April and early May. It should be noted that the adult siskins leave their territories as soon as the young are able to fly, and these adults may travel considerable distances while feeding dependent young. Hence, the appearance of adult and dependent young siskins does not necessarily indicate nesting occurred in that vicinity, especially if the siskins were not observed during the months preceding the appearance of the dependent young.



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The majority of Atlas Project records were of confirmed breeders with active nests providing confirmation at each location. Reports of probable breeders were limited to adults building nests. Courtship displays were not considered adequate evidence of probable nesting status since displaying siskins are regularly observed on their wintering grounds prior to migration. The two reports of possible breeders were siskins that summered in Ohio and were suspected of nesting, although no positive evidence was ever obtained. Reports of siskins observed on single dates during late May and early June were not mapped since these individuals were probably migrants.



Analysis of Block Data by Physiographic Region

Physiographic Region	Total Blocks Surveyed	Blocks with Data	% with Data	Regional % for Ohio	Ave. # Individ per BBS Route (1982–1987)
Lake Plain	95	–	–	–	–
Till Plain	271	3	1.1	42.9	–
Ill. Till Plain	46	2	4.4	28.6	–
Glaciated Plateau	140	2	1.4	28.6	–
Unglaciated Plateau	212	–	–	–	–

Summary of Breeding Status

No. of Blocks in Which Species Recorded		
Total	7	0.9%
Confirmed	4	57.1%
Probable	3	42.9%
Possible	–	–