

Siskin

Spinus spinus

Bird · Resident · numbers swell in winter



Photo by cazalegg, CC BY 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons

The siskin is a small, streaky yellow-green finch of conifer woodland, acrobatic enough to feed hanging upside down from the very tips of branches. Adult males have a bright yellow-green body with a neat black cap and bib; females and young birds are duller and more streaked. Siskins breed in conifer plantations across Dumfries and Galloway and are present year-round, but the population swells noticeably each winter as birds arrive from further north and east to escape harsher weather. That's when they become far easier to see, forming lively flocks that raid alder and birch seed heads and, increasingly, garden peanut feeders. Their calls — thin, wheezy and constant — often give a feeding flock away before it's spotted. By spring most have dispersed back to breeding woodland, leaving gardens quieter until the following winter.

BEHAVIOUR

Siskins feed acrobatically, often hanging upside down from cones and catkins to extract seeds with a fine, pointed bill. Outside the breeding season they gather in mixed flocks, sometimes alongside lesser redpolls, moving nomadically between good feeding areas as supplies run low. Garden feeders stocked with niger or sunflower hearts can pull in dozens through the coldest months.

WHEN TO SEE IT

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Finches (Fringillidae)
SIZE	12 cm · smaller than a sparrow
UK STATUS	Green-listed

Photo by cazalegg, CC BY 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons