

Details on a Pine Siskin pair in Jo Daviess County

by Steven D. Bailey

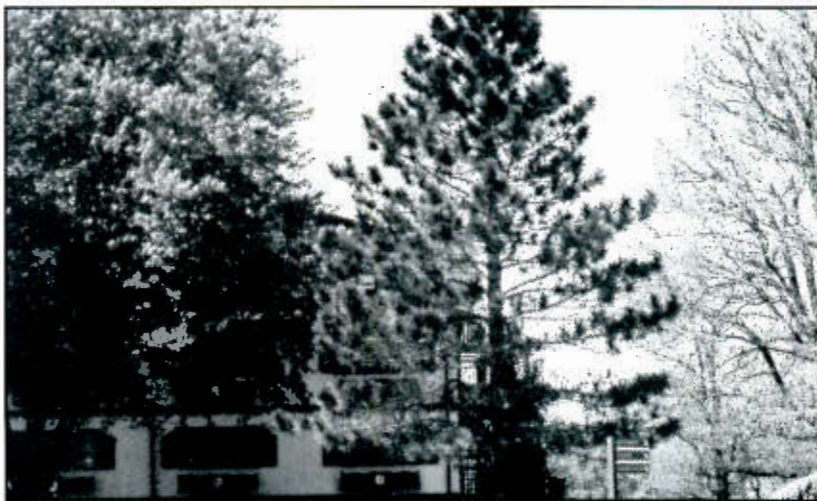
Pine Siskins (*Carduelis pinus*) have a rather unusual history of breeding in Illinois, at least in the literature. Chapel (1984) discusses Illinois' first documented nesting Pine Siskin, located in central Illinois in 1973, as well as subsequent sporadic nests through 1982, in various parts of the state. In 1982, numerous nests and nesting evidence were documented, especially in central and northern Illinois (Chapel 1984). Nests or strong evidence of breeding also occurred each year from 1984 through 1991, according to past issues of *Illinois Birds & Birding*.

Since then, the only nests found were in 1994, although birds were noted in several locations in northeastern Illinois carrying nest material in 1998, and birds most likely at least attempted nesting, according to recent issues of *Meadowlark: A Journal of Illinois Birds*. The strongest breeding evidence since that date was a pair with two young at a feeder 2001 May 6 at the Morton Arboretum (Kleen 2002).

In this article, I report details of the first nest to be found in Illinois since 1994. After only what one could call a mild invasion of Pine Siskins during the 2001/2002

winter, and even fewer numbers (maximum count 5 in one place) into spring, it did not appear it would be a good year for breeding siskins in Illinois. However, upon arriving at the Chestnut Mountain Lodge just south of Galena in Jo Daviess County along the Mississippi River for the annual Illinois Ornithological Society meeting, 26 April 2002, one of the first birds I noticed was a pair of siskins calling frequently from the larger trees in front of the lodge. The thought occurred that this might be a pair remaining to nest. As I carried various items into the lodge over the next hour, I heard the siskins calling from the same location at least three times. No feeders were present in this immediate area. Events of the meeting kept me busy until we were about to leave on 28 April. Sheryl De Vore and I decided to spend a half hour or so searching for a possible nest.

Luckily, it only took about 15 minutes to observe the female collecting nesting material, close to the lodge and less than 50 meters from the tree where I would soon find the nest. At approximately 9 a.m. 28 April, the female was seen with nest material, what appeared to be fine, dead leaves of vegetation or a very small twig. Since sexes are similar, I refer to this bird as the female in that the female alone builds the nest (Harrison 1975). The female flew up to a mature silver maple (*Acer saccharinum*) next to the red pine (*Pinus resinosa*), with the male following closely behind. She then flew about 6 feet over to the outer edge of one of the lower, larger limbs of a 35-to-40 foot tall red pine, and disappeared in a dense cluster of needles. After spending a short time placing the nest material, she would fly about 100 meters back along the side of the lodge. The male followed her each time and



*Site location of Pine Siskin nest
in red pine at Chestnut
Mountain Lodge grounds,
south of Galena,
Jo Daviess County. 10 May 2002.
Photo by Steven D. Bailey.*