

returned with her on at least four of five trips she made to the nest in about 55 minutes. This behavior is typical for nesting pairs (see Dawson 1997). The male would land one meter or less from the female each time. Both birds called fairly frequently while flying back and forth and while perched in the nearby maple. The female never flew directly to the nest with material, but first landed in the same spot in the maple. Although the male followed the female closely into the nest tree, he was never seen to go to the nest, but instead immediately followed the female when she left the nest to gather more material. The female appeared to be gathering the material each trip from within the base of a 75-foot tall blue spruce tree. One piece of nest material seen fairly well was a somewhat flimsy, thin, woody piece, likely a small, dead spruce twig, and about two times as long as the length of the bird's bill.

When found, the nest was little more than a ring of material within the base of a large cluster of red pine needles, at the very end of the nest limb in the pine. The nest was 13 feet up and about 8 to 9 feet out from the trunk on a fairly substantial limb. It was also fewer than 20 meters from the resort building, only 2 meters from a paved parking lot, and only 5 meters from the sidewalk.

The habitat around the general area of the resort includes mature, upland deciduous forest. Although there are native aspen and paper birch within the forest, there are no conifers. The well-kept resort grounds including the parking lot area near the nest had been planted with a variety of evergreens, including the aforementioned species, but also shortleaf pine. A long row of small red pines was also planted in the middle of the parking lot. Deciduous tree species around the

immediate area of the nest included six large (50-to-55 foot) tall white oak, three large 40-foot tall silver maples; farther away, more than 50 meters from the nest tree, in the forest were more white oak (*Quercus alba*), ash (*Fraxinus* sp.) and basswood (*Tilia americana*). The parking lot also contained about a dozen ornamental crabapple (*Malus* sp.).

The only other bird species likely nesting nearby included American Robin, House Finch, Chipping Sparrow and House Sparrow. An active Eastern Phoebe nest, underneath the resort building, was less than 30 meters away from the siskin nest.

Luckily I was able to revisit the site two weeks later 10 May 2002. When I walked up to the nest tree, the female was incubating. As I wished to check the contents of the nest, I made a brief attempt to climb the tree, but the limb wasn't sturdy enough to support my weight. I tried to retrieve a ladder from the lodge maintenance staff, but was told they had left for the day. As I was pondering what to do next, an employee approached me and asked what I was doing. After hearing my dilemma, he offered to get the lodge's truck which contained a cherry picker bucket that would reach the nest. As the bucket neared the nest spot, to my surprise, the female was still on the nest. She quickly left, at which time I could see three very pale blue eggs, faintly spotted with brown. I quickly took photos and left the nest site. I found only one other Illinois clutch mentioned in the literature; that one (4 May) contained two eggs. However, the number of eggs contained in at least two nests at the Morton Arboretum was not determined (pers. comm. E. Walters). A typical clutch consists of three to four eggs, but may vary from two to six (Harrison 1975).

Given that the female builds the nest in five to six days (Dawson

1997), this clutch was complete, and the female had probably been incubating for several days. Unfortunately I was not able to make a third visit to determine the outcome of this nesting.

From past Illinois breeding records, Pine Siskins may begin nesting activities in the state quite early. Nest building has been observed as early as 4 March in Urbana, with most nest records coming during April. Often, the birds disappear after both failed or successful nestings, although some will bring their fledglings to feeders into June or July, indicating possible attempts to renest.

Although Pine Siskin migrants in Illinois often linger into May and sometimes (rarely) into June, any siskins observed that appear to be mated or are regularly seen away from feeders in conifer habitats should be checked for possible nesting. As you may gather from the above experience, nests are fairly easy to find if you have some time and watch the birds closely. Common places where most Pine Siskins have nested in Illinois include cemeteries, parks, arboretums, college campuses and residential areas where small numbers of evergreens grow. Four pairs and two nests were located in 1994 at Lowden-Miller State Forest (Ogle County), which contains large stands of planted pines (Kleen 1995). All the information I could gather regarding breeding Pine Siskins in Illinois showed the nests were built in conifers, mainly pines, but at least one larch and one spruce were used (pers. comm. E. Walters). An ornamental yew was used in a 1982 Joliet nesting (see Chapel 1984).

From 1973 to 2001, at least 33 Pine Siskin nests were documented, and at least 10 other incidences of nesting evidence. Most records came from the Champaign-Urbana region