

SPECIES OF THE MONTH**YELLOW GROSBEAK**

DECEMBER 2024

The Yellow Grosbeak (*Pheucticus chrysopheplus*) is endemic to the western slope of Mexico and Guatemala. In the northern part of its range (southern Sonora) it is present in the summer, typically arriving in mid-May and departing in mid-September. It occasionally wanders into the United States. The Yellow Grosbeak is found in deciduous to semideciduous forests, thorn forests, and clearings in evergreen forests, where it forages singly or in pairs in fruiting trees.

There are now more than 20 accepted and pending records for Arizona, 5 for New Mexico, and 1 each for Texas, Wyoming, Colorado, and California. Most U.S. occurrences are from May to August. Exceptions are from New Mexico and Texas where individuals were discovered in December 2005 and January 2019 lingering into the following May and April respectively. There is also an October 2002 record from New Mexico.

In Arizona only 3 reports are outside the April to August time span, all in October and all in the last 3 years: 26 October 2021, Sedona (Yavapai County); 6 Oct 2022, Tempe (Maricopa County); 12-17 October 2024, Boyce Thompson Arboretum (Pinal County). The October reports were also among the 4 most northern reports in the state. Reports are mainly from Santa Cruz County.

The Yellow Grosbeak is the largest grosbeak occurring in Arizona, including its congeneric species: Rose-breasted Grosbeak (*P. ludovicianus*) and Black-headed Grosbeak (*P. melanocephalus*). The species is distinctive for its massive head and bill. Males are brighter yellow with an all-yellow head and black wings, boldly patterned with 2 white wing bars. Females are less vividly patterned with dusky auriculars, streaks on head and crown, and olive to olive-yellow on the head and upperparts. Immature birds resemble adult females, though the immature male has a more yellow head and conspicuous white flash at base of primaries.



Immature female Yellow Grosbeak feeding in Chinese pistache tree, Boyce Thompson Arboretum, Pinal County, 14 October 2024. Photo by Jill Jones