



Dear Community Members,

We are experiencing a possible outbreak of Salmonellosis among songbirds in Sonoma County. Birds most commonly affected by the disease are Goldfinches and Pine Siskins. Both are small yellow and brown-yellow finches that frequent backyard bird feeding stations. Typical signs of illness are lethargy, puffy or fluffed up appearance, and occasionally swollen/irritated eyes.

Over the past few weeks, we have received multiple calls about ill and dead songbirds in people's yards, and we have received a number of Pine Siskins at the hospital who were ill with the Salmonella bacteria.

We experienced a similar outbreak in 2008 during the last big irruption of Pine Siskins. An irruption of birds typically occurs when natural food supplies are scarce in their usual range and the birds disperse in search of food. You may have noticed an increase of Pine Siskins at your feeders beginning in mid-October.

We will send a specimen to the lab to confirm the disease as soon as we are able. In the meantime, all signs and symptoms are consistent with salmonellosis and affected birds are being treated as such. As with any disease spread at feeding stations, responsible feeding practices apply regardless of the exact disease.

Please help reduce the spread of disease. Salmonellosis can be deadly to birds and spreads rapidly through songbird populations. An epidemic can start when birds feed together at bird feeders, or when they use improperly-cleaned birdbaths. If you observe sick birds at your feeder, the best thing to do for the birds is to take the feeder down for a few weeks.

If you are feeding birds, you have a responsibility to the birds and other wildlife to follow the "intelligent feeding guidelines" on the back of this flyer. To learn more about Pine Siskins, visit this website: [http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Pine\\_Siskin/lifehistory](http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Pine_Siskin/lifehistory).

If you have found an ill or injured songbird or have questions about the outbreak, please contact us at (707) 484-6502. Thank you for helping care for our native songbirds.

For the birds,

Veronica Bowers, Director  
Native Songbird Care & Conservation



## **Intelligent Bird-Feeding Guidelines**

(Information from National Audubon Society, Cornell Lab of Ornithology and WildCare)

### **If You Have Dead or Sick Birds In Your Yard**

- Immediately REMOVE bird feeders and birdbaths.
- Disinfect feeders and baths with a bleach solution made of 9 parts water to 1 part bleach.
- Scrub well and allow to soak 10 - 20 minutes.
- Rinse very well and allow to dry.
- Do not rehang feeders or birdbaths for at least one month after the last sick or dead bird is seen in your yard.
- Resterilize and allow to dry before rehung.

### **If You Have Not Yet Seen Sick or Dead Birds**

Please take the following preventative measures. These measures should also be practiced as regularly scheduled maintenance to ensure healthy birds.

- Birdfeeders should be disinfected every two weeks regardless of disease outbreaks.
- Birdbaths should be emptied and cleaned daily regardless of disease outbreaks.
- For feeders: Immerse feeders in bleach solution (9 parts water to 1 part bleach.) Soak 10 minutes, scrub, rinse thoroughly and allow to dry fully before refilling (a dry feeder will deter mold growth on seeds). Do not use wood feeders.
- For baths: You can make a 9:1 bleach solution in a jug to bring outside. Scrub with a hard brush and soak for 10 – 20 minutes. Cover with board while soaking to prevent birds bathing in bleach, rinse very thoroughly, allow to dry before refilling.

### **Additional tips:**

Wear gloves to prevent skin contact with bleach. Wear a mask to prevent the accidental ingestion of fecal matter while cleaning feeders. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water after contact with a sick bird or birdfeeder.