

THE COLOURFUL GROSBEAKS

#7 GOLDEN-WINGED GROSBEAKS

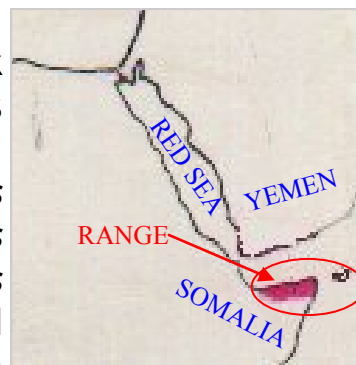


GOLDEN-WINGED GROSBEAK
Rhynchostruthus socotranus
(photographer unknown)

The genus *Rhynchostruthus* is a small group of finches in the family Fringillinae, that are commonly known as Golden-winged Grosbeaks. They are attractive, chunky, medium-sized and large-billed. They inhabit southern Arabia and northern Somalia, including Socotra Island.

Golden-winged Grosbeaks are found at heights of 1,060m to 2,800m in forested waddies and scrubby areas. Their staple diet consists the fruits of junipers, acacias and spurges (*Euphorbia* spp.).

There is a slight colour variation between the sexes. The males have a grey-brown body, a black bill, dark mask, white cheeks, and large, bright yellow patches on the wings and tail. There are three subspecies, these being: Socotra Grosbeak, *Rhynchostruthus socotranus*, Arabian Grosbeak, *Rhynchostruthus percivali* and the Somali Grosbeak, *Rhynchostruthus louisae*. The extent of the dark head-pattern and white cheek-patches varies considerably between them. Females are similar to the males but of a duller hue. Juveniles are of a streaky appearance and lack the distinctive head pattern of the adults.



The large bill suggests a relationship with the Asian Grosbeaks, but the song and calls are more like that of the European Goldfinch, *Carduelis carduelis*, European Greenfinch *C. chloris*, and Yemen Linnet *C. yemenensis*. The species has been observed performing a Greenfinch-like slow-winged flight display which is suggestive of the *Carduelis* species. The *Rhynchostruthus* genus may well belong to a group of Carduelinae which includes such birds as the European *Carduelis* species, the Oriole Finch, *Linurgus olivaceus*, and the Canaries, most of which have large amounts of brilliant yellow in their plumage. But the exact placement of the Golden-winged Grosbeaks is not very well resolved. However, what seems certain is that *Rhynchostruthus* is not very closely related to any of the other species commonly referred to as "Grosbeaks".

R.V.C. With help from Wikipedia. Concludes.