

# THE COLOURFUL GROSBEAKS

## #9 PINE GROSBEAK



Photo:  
"72426950scott"

The Pine Grosbeak, *Pinicola enucleator*, is a large member of the true finch family, Fringillidae. It is found in pine woods across Alaska, the mountains of the western United States, Canada, and in subarctic Fennoscandia\* and Siberia. They are a very rare vagrant to temperate Europe. For instance, each year since 1980 not more than four individuals and often none at all have been recorded in Germany.

Adults, of both sexes, have a long forked black tail, black wings with white wing bars and a large beak. Adult males have a rose-red head, back and rump. Adult females are olive-yellow on the head and rump and grey on the back and underparts. Young birds are a dull version of the female, and appear shaggy when moulting their coloured head plumage.



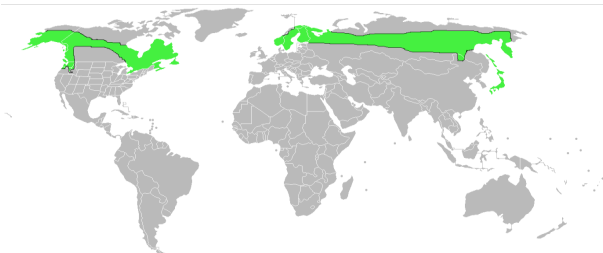
Photo: "Mdf"

The Pine Grosbeak's vocalisation is geographically variable, and includes a whistled "pui pui pui" or "chii-vli". The song is a short musical warble.

Their preferred breeding habitat is coniferous forest. The nest is constructed on a horizontal branch or in a fork of a conifer. They are permanent residents throughout most of their range. But in the extreme north, or when food sources are scarce, they may migrate further south.

The Pine Grosbeak forages in trees and bushes. The main components of their diet are seeds, buds, berries and insects. In the non-breeding season they often feed in flocks.

This species, together with its close Himalayan relative the Crimson-browed Finch, *P. subhimachala*, represents an ancient divergence from the



RANGE

Map: Alois Staudacher

same stock that gave rise to the true Bullfinches (*Pryhula*). The *Pinicola* lineage diverged from its relatives about twelve million years ago.

\*Fennoscandia is the geological term used to describe the Scandinavian Peninsula, the Kola Peninsula, Karelia and Finland.



Front view of female, notice the distinct forked tail  
Photo: D. Gordon E. Robertson

While at the same time, the evolutionary radiation of the Pyrrhula throughout Eurasia and the Holarctic\* expansion of the closely related *Leucosticte* mountain finches and relatives began. These genera evolved in the interior of Asia. Therefore, the original *Pinicola* stock was probably a conifer forest bird already living to the north of the Himalayas.

Separation of into the modern species is most likely the result of climate change that shifted *Pinicola* habitat to subarctic northern and subalpine Himalayan regions. It is probable that the ancestors of the North American Pine Grosbeaks were wind-blown individuals which arrived via the northern Pacific, as the Bering Land Bridge was generally submerged at that time.

\*The Holarctic ecozone refers to the habitats found throughout the northern continents of the world as a whole.

R.V.C. with help from Wikipedia

Concludes

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BIRD KEEPING IN AUSTRALIA