

Purple Finch 1  
10 Jul 1990  
Norwalk, Polk Co., IA  
S. Spieker  
IBL 61:101,106, 62:23

Record Number: 90-21  
Classification: NA

## DOCUMENTATION

Sue Spieker

## REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 60:101, 106  
Records Committee: IBL 62:23

VOTE: 4 A-D, 3 NA

A-D: A most unusual time for Purple Finch. Iowa has only one old breeding record, likewise Illinois has several. With the amount of birds which are fed overwinter I can see a chance of bird remaining and maybe nesting attempts.

A-D: Face pattern and breast streaking appear to decide conclusively in favor of Purple Finch. Could be a non-breeding wanderer.

NA: The white head stripes do favor female purple finch, but I suspect that all of us in Iowa really are not familiar with all plumages of House Finch yet--especially juvenile plumages. The presence of a pair of House Finches suggests that may be the case with this bird. Kauffman (ADVANCED BIRDING) states that juvenile plumages of carpodacus finches is only seen for a few months and presents no problem because juveniles are so often seen with adults. Kauffman goes on to say that juvenile finches can show finer streaks than adults. Audubon Master Guide mentions the buff-edges to wing coverts can form wing bars on freshly plumaged House Finches. Perhaps the best ways of separating these two species are rather subtle--shape of bill and especially a notched tail for Purple Finch vs. square for House Finch.

A-D: Pretty clearly a Carpodacus finch. Cassin's was not eliminated, but I consider that far less probable than an out-of-range Purple. House Finch seems to be adequately eliminated by presence of white above and below eye, although this was not described as well as it might have been. Further supporting the ID was the presence at about the same time of House Finches assisting in comparative analysis.

NA: The documentation goes into detail, but the notes weren't taken for 5 hours after the sighting. The ID here seems to be between female/immature Purple, House, and Cassin's Finches. The documentation lists characteristics which support each species. 1) For Cassin's Finch a) light breast w/ fine dark streaks. 2) For House Finch a) tan/gray back b) distinct wing bars. 3) For Purple Finch a) white eyebrow stripe. The most diagnostic features depth of the fork in the tail and bill size and shape were not discussed. Although I tend to think this bird is most likely a Purple Finch because of the eyebrow stripe, I am confused and will vote NA for now.

A-D: Description adequately eliminates other species. Though this is an extremely unusual date for this bird to be here in Iowa I can find no fault with the description or alternative



species that this might be.

NA: This may be a Purple Finch female, but such a rare sighting in Iowa during summer needs some more details. I'm uncertain what the description of "the eye had a lighter area above and below" means in the main description. Is this the very noticeable eyebrow stripe of a female Purple Finch or some other field mark that was noted? Did this bird have a dark ear patch and broad light stripe behind the eye and a light cheek stripe like a female Purple Finch should? More definite details were needed. Don't be discouraged and keep making reports of your observations.

RESULT OF 2ND REVIEW: 4 A-D; 3 NA

A-D: To me the description is adequate. The date is wrong but more birders are seeing species at earlier and later dates every year. Many dates in Iowa Birds are no longer valid.

A-D: Unless young House Finches look like female Purple Finches, this seems like a reasonable record.

NA: I feel there is a good possibility that this bird was a female Purple Finch, but I still would like to have had more detail about tail and bill given the unusual date.

A-D: Despite some good comments by NA voters, I will stay with my A-D. No one has effectively explained away the presence of the diagnostic eye stripe. Based upon the description provided in the documentation, I feel the preponderance of evidence supports the ID. Another comment: two reviewers mentioned the lack of detail of bill shape. Barring a meticulously written description or photo, I feel that this mark is far too subjective and subtle to be legitimately used against this record.

NA: As previously mentioned I don't think the details are sufficient to eliminate beyond reasonable doubt female/imm House and Cassin's Finch.

A-D: I still think this documentation adequately describes a female Purple Finch. Nothing in the comments by NA reviews give any evidence that I did not take into account during my review and has not materially altered my thoughts on this record.

NA: Enough doubt remains to vote NA. Also, the possibility mentioned by one reviewer of a juvenile House Finch in a different plumage than normally seen causes more doubt.

1. Purple Finch--female
2. one
3. 830 Hudson, Iowa City, Iowa
4. Back yard, with fruit trees, walnut trees, shrubs and bushes and garden.
5. July 10, 1990
6. 3:05 to 3:15 PM
7. Sue Spieker, 1000 Gordon Ave., Norwalk, Iowa
8. None
9. Before: Linda Packard from Norwalk and Shirley and Clark Cox  
830 Hudson, Iowa City

10. I went to this address to check out the possibility of a Purple Finch. My friend, Linda Packard said she saw both the male and female here the previous week. I first saw a pair of house finch. Then I saw this female Purple Finch.

The bird preened while waiting for me to leave the vicinity of the sunflower seed feeder. Then she flew to the feeder and ate 2 seeds along side a house sparrow. She then flew off and was silent the entire time I viewed her.

The overall color of this bird was a light tan. She had the typical finch beak. Her size was about the size of a house sparrow. The eye had a lighter area above and below. The back was a tan-gray color and the wings had distinct wing bars. The tail had no outstanding features that I could see. The beak was also tan-gray.

Her breast was light with fine dark streaks running down onto her belly and also on the sides. The throat was streaked with them closer together than on the breast.

11. Female House Finch has more overall brown coloring and the streaks on breast and belly are wider and bolder. Also House Finch does not have the light area, eyebrow stripe, above and below eye.

12. None

13. It was a cloudy day. I was facing north and east while watching it, distance of 20 to 40 ft. as it moved around. My binoculars are Minolta, 7X50. Measured off equal distance.

14. Last Purple Finch I saw was in Dec. 1989 on Saylorville Christmas Count, 4 females and 1 Male. I see many House Finch in my yard, at my feeders and at birdbath.

15. Called Robert Cecil. He said to document it. Consulted Audubon Soc. Master Guide to Birding, Peterson's Field Guide to Eastern Birds and Audubon Handbook Eastern Birds. Also checked out early and late dates in IBL Win 87 Vol 58 Number 1 and Iowa Birds, Dinsmore etal.

16. 5 hrs before notes made

17. 19 hrs before filling out form.