

## DOCUMENTATION FORM

## Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

Species House Finch (Female)  
 Location 934-13<sup>th</sup> S.E., Mason City, Ia 50401  
 Habitat Suburban lawn with 4 large ash trees and shrubs  
 Date(s) June 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 22 Time 9:20 to 9:21 on June 5  
 Name and Address Jim Walter, 934-13<sup>th</sup> S.E., Mason City, Ia 50401  
 Other observers Jim Walter

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, under-tail, legs, feet). Also mention behavior and voice. *Smaller and slimmer than adult House Sparrow. Black eye prominent in plain face. Bill larger, thicker, and less pointed than House Sparrow. Forehead, crown, neck, & back brown, finely streaked with darker brown. Wing brown with narrow tan wingbar. Tail brown, proportionately longer & narrower than House Sparrow, with squared end with very slight notch. Side of head paler than crown, with very fine streaking, giving a plain brown appearance. Throat, breast, belly, and undertail whitish, streaked with brown. Streaks wider and darker than those on upperparts. More and brighter white on flanks. Feet and legs brownish. Behavior and voice on other side.*  
 Similar species and how eliminated: *Heavier, thicker bill, lack of facial markings, and more extensive streaking on underparts eliminated streaked breast sparrows. Lack of white eyebrow stripe and white stripe and darker whisker stripe on lower face eliminated female Purple Finch.*  
 Did anyone disagree or have reservations about identification? No

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment: *Bright sunshine, bird at feeder in shade. Distance - 17 feet measured with steel tape. Binoculars 7X50 and 7X35*  
 Previous experience with species and similar ones: *None with this species. Have seen many female Purple Finches, the latest May 13, 1987*  
 References and persons consulted before writing description: *Golden Plover Birds of North America, National Geographic Birds of North America*  
 How long before field notes made? Immediately. How long before this form completed? 2 days except for dates and additional voice & behavior details.

On the 7:05 A.M. June 7<sup>th</sup> visit to the feeder, the bird was accompanied by a second bird, similar in appearance with these exceptions. The second bird was slightly smaller; its beak was smaller, more conical, more sharply pointed, and less thick; it had wider, whitish wing bars; and it had an ill-defined whitish eyebrow stripe.

I did not notice any other facial markings. I suspect the second bird may have been an immature, but since none of my books give any details of immature House Finch plumage, I didn't try to identify it. This was the only time I saw the second bird.

Behavior: The bird flew directly to the sunflower seed feeder, ate for from less than one to over five minutes at a time, then flew away. On two occasions it also ate from the peanut feeder. On the days I saw it, I saw it at the feeder from four to ten times a day. At times it shared the feeder with House Sparrows, giving a good opportunity for comparison of size, bills, etc. A few times the sparrows drove it away. More often it drove the sparrows away. One time it shared the feeder with a female Cardinal.

Voice: None heard the first few days. After that, a couple times it perched on a nearby exposed tree branch and gave repeated low, raspy, chip-type notes after leaving the feeder and before leaving the yard. After that it gave a more musical 2 to 3 note call as it was flying away. One time when a Blue Jay was at the feeder, the Finch perched on a nearby tree branch and squawked constantly till the Jay left, then flew directly to the feeder and ate.