

DOCUMENTATION FORM for extraordinary bird sightings in Iowa

What species? House Finch How many? 1 ♀

Location? Iowa City, Iowa

Type of habitat? Suburbs - Nige Feeder in Sycamore Tree

When? date(s): 10 May 1986 time: 6 PM to 6:30 PM

Who? your name and address: Richard Hollis, 3351 Lower West Br Rd Iowa City 52240

others with you: No other experienced birders - my wife saw it

others before or after you: _____

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 voice and behavior.

Size: longer than Goldf. same size or a touch smaller than House Sp.

Shape: somewhat slimmer than House Sp

Beak: conical, finch like - Not like a Siskin, but not overpowering like a Grosbeak

Back - uniform light brown - The brown of the back + stripes was a very light grey-brown - a mouse brown, as opposed to the darker chocolate brown of P Finch + ♀ Rose-b Grosbk

Underside - series of spots arranged into stripes

The stripes sort of gave the impression of being drawn with pastels as opposed to being pen-and-ink contrasty as in ♀ Pu. Fi. The spots were light brown.

About 1/2 way down, the spots either decreased in size, contrast, or about half of them disappeared. I am not sure which it was, but when you looked at the belly from underneath, head on, it looked as if there was a bit of bib.

Head - although it was not uniformly brown, there were no strong markings - no stripes about the malar region or near the eye

Tail - very slightly notched \sqsubset - not strongly notched like Goldf. i.e. the tail was not straight across \sqsubset or rounded \cup - you could see that the central feathers were shorter than those to the outside.

Wings - 2^{thin} whitish - wing bars. (OVER)

Similar species and how eliminated:
OVER

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? Not applicable

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:
Good diffuse light. The day was overcast.

7x35 binocs at 18-25 feet (depending on the bird)

Previous experience with species and similar ones: I probably saw several hundred House Finches last Christmas in Md. In some occasions Purple Finches were also present allowing me to compare the ♀s.

References and persons consulted before writing description: None
Initial notes were made w/out other refs. Before finalizing I did ✓ the st 3 Field Guides - just to ✓ on things like Cassin's S.
How long before field notes made? 0-20' this form completed? 2 hours

The bird spent the best part of the 30 odd minutes stuffing itself with Niger seed. Once in a while, it would fly to a nearby branch, when disturbed.

When it left for good, I did not see it again. Although it shared the feeder with Goldfinches, it was not 'traveling' with them: Different GF's came + left while the HoFi stayed on or near the feeder.

Similar Sp.

Purple Finch: lack of strong marking around face
the pale mousey brown

Rose b grosbeak; the above and
size
bill shape

Pine Siskin - this bird showed no yellow
Bill shaped wrong
Pine Siskins' tails are very strongly notched.

Cassin's Finch. I am not familiar with this species, but from reviewing the Field Guides it would appear to be ruled out by

Bill Shape - if Cassin's really has bill as long as in Geog guide, I would have noted same.

Tail of Cassin's appears more notched than this bird

Cassin's have more strongly marked head and the spots on Cassin's the belly are darker + more distinct