

DOCUMENTATION FORM for extraordinary bird sightings in Iowa

What species? House Finch How many? 1 maleLocation? Larchwood, Iowa (Lyon County)Type of habitat? In trees of neighborhood lawnsWhen? date(s)? May 13, 1988 time: 5:14 PM to 5:20 PM + occasionally through-
out rest of evening.Who? your name and address: Douglas C. Harr

others with you: _____

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, undertail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

Typical finch in size, bill shape, etc. Noted color to be an orange-red, rather than the more pinkish-red of a Purple Finch. Color extended from chin down to upper breast, and was also readily seen on forehead, with strong color in eyebrow-eyeline area; borders of color somewhat ill-defined, but did not extend over top of head nor down neck as it might in a Purple Finch. Most notable were the streaks down the sides of the breast, which I took to be the key characteristic in conjunction with the color pattern. These streaks appeared to continue down the underside of the bird. Tail was slightly notched. It first caught my attention when I heard it singing from a tree over one of our feeders. The song was fairly long and somewhat Purple Finch-like, but did not have quite the "musical" quality.

After observing this individual in our yard for about 3 minutes, I followed it across the street to a neighbor's yard and observed it in different (improved) lighting conditions for another 1½-2 minutes. After losing it there, the bird reappeared briefly from time to time during the rest of the evening, and I also heard it continue to sing extensively from several neighborhood trees. To my knowledge, this is the first good sighting of a House Finch in this far NW corner of the state, although this winter I had a report of a "Purple Finch with streaks on its belly" from a local resident who also feeds birds. At that time I dismissed the report, but perhaps it was this same individual. No female was observed anywhere by me.

Similar species and how eliminated:

Purple Finch--has no streaked breast; color more pinkish-red and extends over entire head and neck. I have previously observed House Finches in the Seattle, WA., area.

Did anyone disagree or have reservations about the identification? _____

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:
Viewed in shade and full sun from several different locations, at ranges of 20-50 feet.
Used Tasco 7x50 binoculars.

Previous experience with this species and similar ones: Familiar with common Purple Finch from regular feeder observations; Have seen House Finches in Seattle, Washington, area.

References and persons consulted before writing description: (after writing field notes):
Peterson; Robbins, et al; Audubon MASTER guide.

How long before field notes made? 10 minutes This form completed? 2 days