

house finch *Haemorhous mexicanus*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Passeriformes

Family: Fringillidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, nonnative

FEATURES

The house finch averages five to six inches in length (tail tip to bill tip in preserved specimen). This small bird is often confused with the purple finch, which it resembles. The male has red feathers on the head, throat and at the base of the tail and dark stripes on the sides and belly. The female is brown with stripes on the sides and belly.

BEHAVIORS

The house finch has become a permanent resident statewide in Illinois. This bird is native to western North America but spread to Illinois from the eastern United States. House finches were shipped from California to New York in 1940 as “Hollywood finches” for sale as pets. Pet sellers in the New York City area released the birds after it was learned that they were illegal to keep as pets. The freed birds established a population on Long Island, New York, and have been spreading across the United States ever since. They can now be found in most of eastern North America. House finches reached Illinois in 1971. The house finch produces a warbling song. This bird nests in gutters, awnings, conifer trees and other locations. The nest is made of twigs, grasses and debris. The female deposits two to six, blue-green eggs with black dots. She incubates the eggs for the entire 12- to 14-day incubation period.

Two or more broods may be raised per year. The house finch eats seeds, fruits and insects.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests; marshes; peatlands; swamps; wet prairies and fens

Woodland Habitats

bottomland forests; coniferous forests; southern Illinois lowlands; upland deciduous forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats

black soil prairie; dolomite prairie; edge; gravel prairie; hill prairie; sand prairie; shrub prairie

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