

COLORADO RARE BIRD REPORT

PURPLE FINCHCarpodacus purpureusLocation: Rocky Ford; Otero County, ColoradoDate: December 15, 1996Background:

I was birding with Brandon Percival -- scouting for the Rocky Ford Christmas Bird Count. We were observing finches at a feeder near the Eurasian Collared Dove site. We saw the Purple Finch for about 1 minute at 9:15 a.m. and again at our leisure, for about 15 minutes at 2:30 p.m. The bird was in the company of many House Finches. I observed it with my B & L Elite 10x40 binoculars and in my Kowa 20-60x TSN4 scope. We had excellent sun, bright light and the birds were at about 30-50 feet. The bird was silent.

Description:

This bird was a female. It was basically like a female House Finch -- about the same size and pattern. This identified it as a Carpodacus finch. Compare to the House Finch, it was overall larger-bodied, slightly more plump, proportionately bigger-headed, much shorter-tailed, and the tail was notched. It had short wings extending only part way along the tail. The bill was dark above, light below and the culmen was curved. The beak was not sharp, pointed or straight like a Cassin's Finch. The bird was streaky brown above, darker than the House Finch female. It had a broad white supercilium, heavier and curving back behind the eye. There was a white sub-mustachial line and a blackish mustache. The face was clearly marked with a dark brownish cheek against a whitish background. The undersides were white with clear dark streaks. The breast streaking was heavy, dark and more defined than the House Finch but not fine or sharp like a Cassin's Finch. The belly and undertail coverts were clear un-marked white.

Similar Species:

See above. House Finch is a slimmer, longer-tailed bird. In direct comparisons to this Purple Finch, female House Finches were dingier, less distinctly streaked below, had dark streaks on the undertail coverts, and completely lacked the distinct two-toned face pattern. Cassin's Finch has a longer, straighter bill, has a less distinct face pattern, has a buffier underparts, has streaks on the undertail coverts and has sharp fine streaks on the breast.

Experience with Species:

I have seen many Purple, Cassin's and House finches.

This report is prepared from notes made following observation.

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