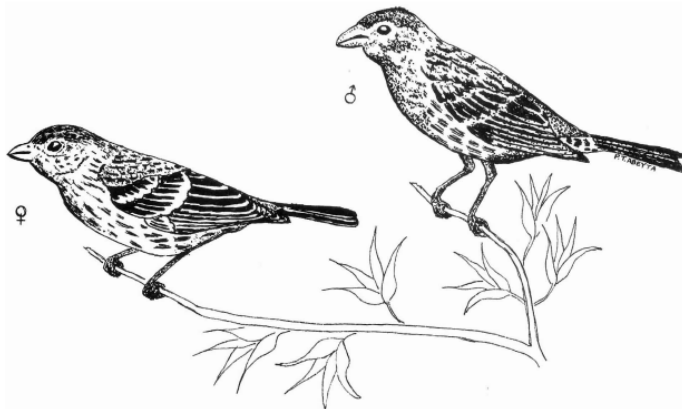


BIOLOGY, LEGAL STATUS, CONTROL MATERIALS AND DIRECTIONS FOR USE

House Finch (Linnet)

Carpodacus mexicanus

Family: Fringillidae



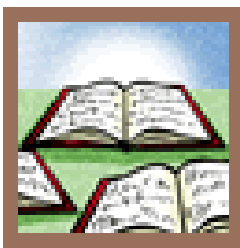
Introduction: House finches, also known as linnets, are a bright red and brown-striped bird who frequent cities and suburbs. Their call is similar to the house sparrow. They are primarily seed and fruit eaters.



Identification: About the same size as sparrows. Males are brownish with a bright red breast, forehead, rump, and stripe over the eye. They also have narrow dark stripes on their flanks and belly. Females are very sparrow like with a plain head and eye stripe. Their call is a warbling song. Further information is available at:

[Cornell Lab of Ornithology](#)

[The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds](#)



Legal Status: The house finch is classed as a migratory nongame bird in the [U.S. Code of Federal Regulations](#). It may be controlled under the general supervision of the county agricultural commissioner or under a depredation permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.



Damage: House finches feed on practically all deciduous fruits, berries, grains, and vegetable and flower seeds. Included are ripening fruits: apricot, cherry, peach, pear, nectarine, plum, prune, avocado, grape, apple, fig, strawberry, blackberry, raspberry, etc; buds of almonds, apricot, pear, plum, prune, nectarine; and seeds of sunflower, lettuce, broccoli, miscellaneous vegetables and flowers, and tomato plantlets. They also detach the bracts buds and devour the bud. At blossom time, they knock flower petals and eat the embryonic fruits. There are three of damage to ripening fruits:

1. Early season damage by nesting adults.
2. Mid and late season damage by young and adult birds resident in the locality.
3. Winter damage to late ripening fruit by flocks of birds gathering in their winter habitat.



peach,
milo,

of fruit
off
types

Disbudding of fruit trees can occur in October or November but becomes most noticeable in January. A relatively small resident flock of house finches can completely disbud a considerable acreage because of the long period of activity. This damage is done by three types of flocks:

1. Resident local birds.
2. Birds in their winter habitat.
3. Migratory flocks moving from one range to another.

Definite localization of house finch activity was the rule in both summer and winter depredations studied by Piper and Neff (1937), though there were some exceptions.

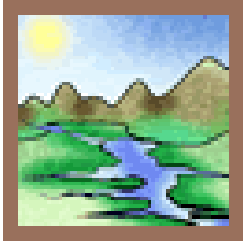


Range: House finches are abundant residents throughout California, western United States, and Mexico, wherever food and water are available. They

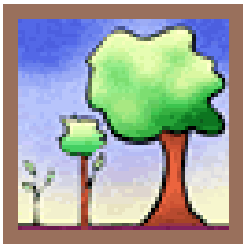


are most numerous on the valley floors and in the foothills. Though classified along with other finches as migratory nongame birds under Federal law, authorities agree that the California house finch is relatively non-migratory. In late summer they wander into the higher mountains and have been collected as high as 9,800 feet. They are relatively resident birds and most of those in the valley districts may spend their lives within a few miles of the place where they were hatched.

House Finch



Habitat: Open woods, scrub-growth areas, deserts, ranches, farmlands, suburbs, and towns. Human development has created extensive favorable habitat i.e. hedgerows, field edges, and crop fields.

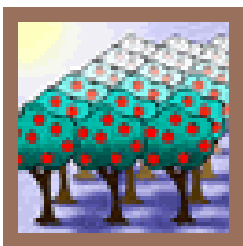


Biology: House finches nest in a great variety of places, and there are few areas where they cannot find suitable nesting sites. Nesting begins in March in the southern portion of the state and extends to July in colder areas. House finches have adapted well to man's presence and the female will build a nest in almost any sheltered spot including ledges in buildings. Almost any soft material is used, including fine twigs and grasses. Four to five eggs are laid and they hatch in 12 to 16 days. Age at first flight is 11 to 19 days. Two broods are commonly raised, often in

the same nest.

During the nesting period, adults are widely scattered. As summer progresses, groups of young birds and a few adults band together to feed in the general area where they were reared. These bands grow larger as additional broods of young and their parents flock to them. By mid-August, most of the young are out of the nest and have joined the neighborhood band.

The only movement is that of broods of young as they join the flocks and a minor drift of a flock as it follows a succession of fruits or maturing seed about the general area it inhabits.



Damage Prevention and Control Methods

Exclusion: Protective plastic netting $\frac{1}{2}$ inch mesh has provided excellent protection in covering crops like blueberries, bush berries, and strawberries.

Habitat Modification: Elimination of cover: Remove large brush piles, stacks of irrigation pipe, and piles of boxes to eliminate nesting and resting areas for house

finches.

Frightening Devices: Frightening devices in general have little practical value as methods of crop

protection against house finches. Cases have been reported where good results have been obtained using gas cannons mounted above the crop and moved frequently. Some grape growers have reported limited success in repelling house finches with silver reflective tape cut in small strips and tied to outside vine branches. Homeowners have reported similar results in protecting fruit trees when strips of tape are tied to branch ends. The entire tree needs to be covered to gain maximum protection.

Fumigants: None are registered.

Shooting: Shooting can reduce the number of birds present but is costly and a rather futile method of complete crop protection.

Toxic Bait: None are registered.

Trapping: Modified Australian crow traps and cotton trailers converted into traps have been effective in trapping large numbers of house finches. The wire covering of traps used for house finches must be of a small mesh such as 1/2" x 1/2" mesh hardware cloth or aviary wire. Canary grass seed, a wild bird mixture of seeds, or chick scratch (cracked corn, milo, and other grains), makes an excellent bait and food source for decoy and captured birds.

Trap location is one of the most important factors in achieving good results. Before placement, observations should be made to determine flyways, resting, perching, and feeding areas. Traps have been most effective when placed in locations where the birds enter an area or near a resting or perching location. Traps should be placed in open areas where they can easily be seen and are readily found by the birds. If the trap does not begin catching birds within 1 week it should be moved to a new location.

Trapped house finches serve as decoys to other birds. Decoy birds are usually essential in attracting other house finches. Use one to fifteen live decoys depending on trap size. Provide food water and shade at all times to keep decoys alive and make the trap more attractive.

All traps should be serviced on a regular basis to insure the timely release of non target species and to maintain adequate food, water, shade, and roosts for the trapped birds.

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