

PASSERIFORMES

(Songbirds)

Finches



Family FRINGILLIDAE (Finches)

House Finch (Haemorrhous mexicanus)



Red Rock Cyn NCA; NV



Corn Creek; Desert NWR; NV



Dolan prings; AZ



Hoover Dam Lodge; LMNRA



Valley of Fire SP; NV

Measurements:

Length: 6" Wing Span: 9" Average Weight: .75 oz

Distinguishing Field Characteristics:

small size; brown back and wings, paler undersides with blurred streaking; long, brown, square-tipped tail; thick triangular bill; dark eyes; (m) bright red head, neck, rump, and breast; (f) drab brown overall with no red

Notes:

very common; gregarious in small flocks; originally native to sw US and MEX, now naturalized throughout US, Hawaii, s CAN, and spreading elsewhere in a great variety of habitats, including deserts (low-elevations), open woods, fields, urban settings, etc.; formerly in genus *Carpodacus*; feeds mainly on seeds, also fruit, some insects

Mojave presence: year-round

Comments:

This very common species, dependably seen at backyard bird feeders, is easily recognized by the male's vibrant red coloration on its head and breast. However, bird enthusiasts can sometimes be confused by the occasional curveballs thrown at them by Nature. Due to dietary factors, the male will sometimes sport orange (left) or yellow (right) coloration!



Red Rock Canyon NCA



Rogers Spring; LMNRA

Family FRINGILLIDAE (Finches)

Cassin's Finch (*Haemorhous cassinii*)



Grand Canyon NP; AZ



Grand Canyon NP; AZ



Grand Canyon NP; AZ



Grand Canyon NP; AZ

Measurements:

Length: 6" Wing Span: 10" Average Weight: 1 oz

Distinguishing Field Characteristics:

small size; brown back and wings with distinct streaking, pale undersides; short, brown, forked tail; thick triangular bill; dark eyes; (m) red head, breast, and rump; finely streaked rear flanks, otherwise unstreaked undersides; (f) light brown overall with no red; boldly streaked undersides; some individuals have a pale eyeline

Notes:

uncommon; gregarious in small flocks; inhabits wooded areas and higher-elevation coniferous forests of w NA from inland WA/OR/CA east to WY/CO/NM and north into sw CAN (rare in adjoining states and provinces); formerly in the genus *Carpodacus* that includes Old World "rosefinches"; feeds mainly on seeds, plus some fruit and insects

Mojave presence: winter range

Comments:

Though very similar looking to the **Purple Finch** and **House Finch**, these birds can be distinguished in the Mojave region by their ranges and habitats. House finches pretty much stay in the lower elevations, and thus are common visitors to urban bird feeders; the Cassin's prefers higher elevations, such as the ponderosa pine forests that blanket the **Spring Mountains National Recreation Area** west of Las Vegas; while purples occupy middle elevations, but are rare in this same area.

Family FRINGILLIDAE (Goldfinches)

American Goldfinch (*Spinus tristis*)



Floyd Lamb SP; LV, NV



I-75 reststop; Cincinnati, OH



willow subspecies
S. t. salicamans

Floyd Lamb State Park; Las Vegas, NV



Floyd Lamb SP; LV, NV



Floyd Lamb SP; LV, NV

Measurements:

Length: 4.5" Wing Span: 8" Average Weight: .4 oz

Distinguishing Field Characteristics:

small size; small, orangish bill; dark wings, tail; white undertail coverts; (breeding m) vibrant yellow body (non-breeding m drab yellow-brown); black forehead; faint wingbar; (f) unstreaked, olive to brownish overall (breeding f more yellow); two buffy wingbars; white underwing "armpits" (coverts); non-breeding has darker bill

Notes:

common; gregarious; prefers open areas (orchards, fields, etc.) throughout US, southern half of CAN, and south into n MEX; 4 subspecies; formerly in the genus *Carduelis*; feeds mainly on seeds, tree buds, and insects

Mojave presence: winter range

Comments:

Though generally common and widespread, these goldfinches are not so in the Mojave. Thus far, Floyd Lamb State Park in northwest Las Vegas is the only place I have seen this species, although any area with budding trees, thistles, etc. (such as city parks, Red Rock Canyon NCA, Henderson Bird Viewing Preserve, Corn Creek at the Desert NWR), are likely stopover sites for these winter-to-spring visitors. The male can be easily mistaken for the male Lesser Goldfinch, but the black on the head is limited to the forehead, and he has an orange bill rather than blackish.

Family FRINGILLIDAE (Goldfinches)

Lesser Goldfinch (*Spinus psaltria*)



Corn Creek; Desert NWR



Corn Creek; Desert NWR



Corn Creek; Desert National Wildlife Refuge; NV



Corn Creek; Desert NWR



Corn Creek; Desert NWR

Measurements:

Length: 4" Wing Span: 8" Average Weight: .3 oz

Distinguishing Field Characteristics:

small size; small, grayish-green, triangular bill; short, notched tail; yellowish undertail coverts; (m) olive to black back, head, face (highly variable); vibrant yellow undersides; black wings with white patches; (f) olive back, duller olive-yellow undersides; dark wings with pale wingbars and white, somewhat rectangular, patch

Notes:

uncommon; gregarious, usually in small flocks, and mixed with other seed-eating songbirds; prefers open to sparsely wooded habitats, urban areas, etc., in w NA from OR east to UT, south into MEX and parts of n SA; formerly in the genus *Carduelis*; 5 subspecies; feeds mainly on seeds and tree buds

Mojave presence: year-round resident

Comments:

This small bird can easily be mistaken for a warbler. The ones here showed a particular liking for the buds in the highest parts of the mulberry trees in April at Corn Creek in the **Desert NWR** in Nevada. They congregated in small groups (left), rather than one large organized flock.

