

## House Finch

By  
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These birds are common from coast to coast (Kaufman, 1996; Sibley, 2003). They are native to the Southwest, and their original habitat was probably streamside trees and brush in



**Male House Finch**

dry areas, the edges of woodland, chaparral, and other semi-open habitats. They now are common in urban areas and farmland. They avoid unbroken forest or grassland. The adults feed mainly on weed seeds but also consume bugs and flower parts in the spring, and berries and small fruits in the late summer and fall. They also eat a few mostly small insects such as aphids. The adults come to feeders for seeds,

breadcrumbs and other foods and to hummingbird feeders for the sugar water. The birds forage for food on the ground, in weeds, and in trees and shrubs. They usually forage in flocks except when nesting



**Female House Finch**

Birds may begin to form pairs within flocks in the winter, and some pairs remain together all year (Kaufman, 1996). The male feeds the female during courtship and incubation. Males may sing throughout the year, and females sing during the spring. The adults place the nests in a wide variety of sites such as trees,

cacti, holes in man-made structures, and other places approximately 12 to 15 feet above ground. The female does most of the building of the nest that typically consists of an open cup of grass, weeds, twigs, and other plant material, including sometimes feathers, string, or other debris. House Finches often usurp nests made by Barn Swallows on the sides of the San Pedro House (pers. obs.). The female House Finch typically lays 4 to 5 eggs, sometimes 2 to 6. The eggs are pale blue and have black and lavender dots, mostly at the larger end. The female incubates them for 13 to 14 days. Both parents feed the nestlings, which leave the nest about 12 to 15 days after hatching. A pair may raise up to three broods per year and sometimes even more.

**Recognition Characters:** (Sibley, 2003) These birds (length 6 inches; wing spread 9.5 inches) are relatively long-tailed, have a round-head, and a short bill whose top is notably curved. Most mature males have prominent orange-red color on the forehead, throat, and upper parts of the breast. In a few males, yellow or orange replaces the normal orange-red color. The female is relatively drab overall in appearance and weakly patterned with gray-



**Female House Finch usurping Barn Swallow nest at San Pedro House**

brown on the head and pale grayish beneath with blurry gray-brown streaks.

## References

- Kaufman, K. 1996. Lives of North American Birds. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston. xxv+675 p.
- Sibley, D. A. 2003. The Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Western North America. National Audubon Society. Alfred A. Knopf, New York. Chanticleer Press, Inc. 471 p.