

ogy pers. com.). Figure 1 illustrates the increase in mean numbers of House Finches visiting bird feeders in Illinois, with the corresponding increase in percent of total feeders visited. The upward trend in both measures of House Finch numbers is evident from the graph. When these data are compared with a similar graph prepared for House Sparrows in Illinois over the same time period (Figure 2), a less obvious but still clear downward trend in House Sparrow numbers becomes evident. While House Sparrows are found at over 90 percent of reporting feeders each year, the mean number of birds reported per feeder, though fluctuating, is dropping. It will be interesting to see if this trend continues as Project FeederWatch continues to compile the data provided by their many volunteers.

Bohlen (1989) listed the House Finch as an "uncommon permanent resident and increasing," and noted that nesting had occurred in all sections of the state. Although they are now more common in the Cook County region than they are in the remainder of the state (Hill 1993), we have observed House Finches on every birding trip we have made in Illinois, providing that the trip includes at least some areas of human habitation.

The conversion of vast areas of forest, grassland, and desert into uniform areas of lawns, ornamental trees, and buildings has created enormous areas of ideal habitat for both western and eastern House Finches (Hill 1993). It is possible that the eastern House Finches are more dependent on artificial feeding than their western relatives (Aldrich and

Weske 1978), so as farmland continues to be converted to housing developments in Illinois, and as more people feed the birds that remain after this conversion, we can expect the numbers of our newest species to continue to rise. Although we are still explaining to puzzled homeowners what the "red sparrows" at their feeders are, it is probable that the House Finch will soon be as familiar to them as their other back yard cohorts.

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