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The House Finch in Illinois

by Nancy Bent

This well-known story started when California cage bird dealers shipped wild-caught House Finches (*carpodacus mexicanus*) to New York dealers in 1940 for sale as "Hollywood finches." To avoid prosecution under the International Migratory Bird Treaty for possession of a native species, the New York dealers released the birds. House Finches were soon observed in the wild on Long Island, and have been increasing their range ever since (Elliott and Arbib 1953, Bent 1968). House Finches were seen in New Jersey by 1949 (Leck 1987), in Virginia in 1962, reached Ohio in 1965, were found breeding there in 1981 (Peterjohn 1989), and were first observed in Illinois at Mt. Vernon

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Figure 2. House Sparrow in Illinois, 1987-1995. Data provided by Project FeederWatch. Modified from graphs provided by Ken Rosenberg, Chief Scientist, Project FeederWatch.

