

LOUISIANA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

REPORT FORM

This form is intended as a convenience in reporting observations of species on the Louisiana Bird Records Committee (LBRC) Review List. The LBRC recommends the use of this form or a similar format when submitting records for review to assure that all pertinent information is accounted for. Attach additional pages or files as necessary. Please print or type for hard copy. For electronic copy, be sure to save this file to your computer before entering text. Attach field notes, drawings, photographs, or tape recordings, if available. Include all photos for more obscurely marked species. When completed (if hard copy), mail to Secretary, Louisiana Bird Records Committee, c/o Museum of Natural Science, 119 Foster Hall, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA 70803-3216, or e-mail electronic copy as an attachment to Paul Edward Conover at <zoiseaux@lusfiber.net> .

1. English and Scientific names: Cassin's Finch Haemorhous cassinii
2. Number of individuals, sexes, ages, general plumage (e.g., 2 in alternate plumage):
1 female, mature plumage
3. Parish: Cameron
Specific Locality: 1086 Highway 384, Lake Charles, LA 70607
4. Date(s) when observed: Wednesday, April 21, 2021 and Thursday, April 22, 2021
5. Time(s) of day when observed: 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
6. Reporting observer and city/state address

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| Reporting observer: <u>Suzanne McFatter</u> |
| City: <u>Lake Charles</u> , State: <u>LA</u> Zip: <u>70607</u> |
7. Other observers accompanying reporter who also *identified* the bird(s): none
8. Other observers who *independently identified* the bird(s): none
9. Light conditions (position of bird in relation to shade and to direction and amount of light): midday sun, some dappled shade, first day observed was partly sunny, second day observed was mostly sunny; bird was at feeders on east side of house
10. Optical equipment (type, power, condition): Bushnell 8X42 Binoculars,
Canon EOS 60D camera with EF 70-300 mm zoom lens
11. Distance to bird(s): 16-18 feet
12. Duration of observation: approximately 2 hours first day and 3 hours second day
13. Habitat: yard surrounding my home which has mature trees and shrubs
14. Behavior of bird / circumstances of observation (flying, feeding, resting; include and stress habits used in identification; relate events surrounding observation):
Bird was eating at home bird feeder. See further descriptions of behavior on attachment.

15. Description (include only what was actually seen, *not what "should" have been seen*; include if possible: total length/relative size compared to other familiar species; body bulk, shape, proportions; bill, eye, leg, and plumage characteristics. Stress features that separate it from similar species, *or for species that are known to hybridize frequently, stress features that help eliminate possible hybrids*):

See attached full written narrative of observations of this bird.

16. Voice: no confirmed voice was heard or recorded

17. Similar species (include how they were eliminated by your observation):

Pine Siskin, House Finch, and Purple Finch; See attached full written narrative.

18. Photographs or tape recordings obtained? (by whom? attached?):

Yes, photos and videos obtained by myself and are being submitted with this form.

19. Previous experience with this species:

None

20. Identification aids: (list books, illustrations, other birders, etc. used in identification):

a. at time of observation: Birds of Eastern North America (Sterry & Small), Cornell Lab or Ornithology's AllAboutBirds.org website, Merlin Bird ID app

b. after observation: Birds of Eastern North America (Sterry & Small), Cornell Lab or Ornithology's AllAboutBirds.org website; Gulf Coast Bird Club Facebook page, other birders named in full narrative, which is attached

21. This description is written from:

| | | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | notes made during the observation. | Are notes attached? | yes |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | notes made after the observation. | At what date? | 4/21 & 22/21 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | memory | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | study of images | | |

22. Are you positive of your identification? If not, explain:

Yes, I feel confident as I feel that the identification has been confirmed by half a dozen or more knowledgeable birders who have observed and studied the photos and videos that I took on the days of observation. I also feel that the aspects of the birds appearance that I observed confirmed it to me.

23. Date: May 2, 2021

Time: 12:20 p.m.

24. May the LBRC have permission to display in whole or in part this report and accompanying photos on the LOS-LBRC website and LBRC Facebook page? Yes

If yes, may we include your name with the report? Yes

ATTACHMENT: See attached full narrative of my observation of this bird.

**Narrative of observation of Cassin's Finch (*Haemorhous cassinii*)
at my home (1086 Highway 384, Lake Charles, LA) on April 21 and 22, 2021**

On Wednesday, April 21, 2021 a unique bird showed up at my home bird feeders here in northern Cameron Parish, Grand Lake, Louisiana (1086 Highway 384). When I looked out my kitchen window and saw it, I thought I had never seen this bird before, or had I? The little brown and white streaked bird that showed up at my feeder piqued my interest, but I was thinking that surely, she was the female version of the migratory species I had seen already. I've found that the best way for me to make a strong effort in identifying a bird is to photograph it first then look at it with my binoculars. This way I can sit down and study the photos of it for as long as it takes me to come to the proper identification. I pulled out my camera (old and simple as it might be), the lighting was perfect, and I took as many shots as I could. My attempt was to get good shots of its beak, head, wing, and tail. I took my photos and began to examine them, but I still struggled to get a proper ID. In my continuing effort to ID it, I pulled up the Merlin Bird ID app on my phone and used the Photo ID function. Merlin gave me the following three suggestions as possible ID: "Pine Siskin, House Finch, and Purple Finch". I went to the Cornell Lab site to take a look at the female versions of these three species of birds. Merlin was right that these were very close in appearance and can be found in my area but to me things still didn't match up.

On April 21 I took my photos and posted them on the Gulf Coast Bird Club Facebook page asking for ID assistance. No responses came during the day, but that evening there was a sudden flurry of responses. This FB post received responses from John Dillon, Erik Johnson, Van Remsen, Donna Dittman, Daniel Lane, and Nick Ramsey, stating that they believed my photos showed a Cassin's Finch. It was also stated that this would be a first Cassin's Finch officially recorded in Louisiana.

Wednesday, April 21 was the first day I sighted this Cassin's Finch female. She would return the next day Thursday, April 22. On the second day I took more photos and two videos. She spent even more time at the feeders on the second day. She ate strictly black oil sunflower seeds, not touching all other seeds, nuts, fruits, berries, etc. that I put out for the birds. She seemed to be on a mission to fuel up on that second day. Unfortunately, I was not able to get an audio recording.

David Booth asked for permission for himself and three other expert bird watchers to come to my home in hopes that they could see the finch. They came on the morning of Friday, April 23, sat in my yard, and watched for three hours (7:00 a.m. until 10:00 a.m.). They recorded 38 other species of birds that morning, but the Cassin's Finch never appeared, which was heart breaking. My bird feeders never have bird traffic as light as they did that morning. Within minutes after the bird watching visitors left my yard, a large number of birds came out of hiding. The Cassin's Finch, however, did not show up and has not been seen since.

Whatever strange circumstances of this year's Spring migration brought her here this year, it is my hope that she found her way safely home to the evergreens and aspens in the mountains of western North America. I would be happy if she returns again during another migration period and brings others with her. I know I would certainly welcome and feed them.

I'm attaching some photos and video that I took of my Cassin's Finch visitor on the two days she spent at my feeders.

If you have further question regarding this observation you are welcome to contact me.

Suzanne McFatter, cell phone: (337) 302-2123; home address: 1086 Highway 384, Lake Charles, LA 70607; e-mail: suzgreatmc@yahoo.com









