



**Natural Heritage  
& Endangered Species  
Program**

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*Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife*

**Purple Finch  
*Haemorhous purpureus***

State Status: **None**  
Federal Status: **None**

**SPECIES DESCRIPTION:** Purple Finches are sexually dimorphic songbirds; the female (and immature males) has a sparrow-like plumage (brown back and streaks on chest), while only the adult male has the characteristic reddish-purple plumage for which the species is named. The species is similar to and often mistaken for the House Finch, which is more common in urban and suburban areas.

**DISTRIBUTION AND ABUNDANCE:** The breeding range of the Purple Finch includes the northern portions of the eastern and central United States and southern Canada (boreal forest). It can be commonly found nesting throughout central and western Massachusetts, but Purple Finches have become increasingly uncommon as a breeding bird in eastern portions of the state (Walsh and Petersen 2013). In fact, the Purple Finch has significantly declined in Massachusetts, New England, and throughout eastern North America since 1966 (Sauer et al. 2014).

**HABITAT DESCRIPTION:** Purple Finches are classified as a habitat generalist and can be found nesting in a number of different habitat types. They primarily breed in moist coniferous or mixed forests, but can also be found in deciduous forests, orchards, pastures, hedgerows, and suburban areas (Wootton 1996).

**THREATS:** Strong declines have been documented in Purple Finch populations in both the United States and Canada, and there is evidence that these declines are a direct result of inter-specific competition with the introduced House Finch (Wootton 1996).

**REFERENCES:**

- Sauer, J.R., J.E. Hines, J.E. Fallon, K.L. Pardieck, D.J. Ziolkowski, Jr., and W.A. Link. 2014. *The North American Breeding Bird Survey, Results and Analysis 1966 – 2013*. Laurel, MD.
- Walsh, J. and W.R. Petersen. 2013. *Massachusetts Breeding Bird Atlas 2*. Massachusetts Audubon Society and Scott & Nix, Inc.
- Wootton, T. 1996. Purple Finch (*Haemorhous purpureus*). *The Birds of North America Online* (A. Poole, Ed.). Ithaca: Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

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***A Species of Greatest Conservation Need in the Massachusetts State Wildlife Action Plan***

**Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife**

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