

Journal of the Arkansas Academy of Science

Volume 72

Article 29

2018

House Finch (*Haemorhous mexicanus*) Nesting in December in Arkansas

Kimberly G. Smith

University of Arkansas, kgsmith@uark.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uark.edu/jaas>

 Part of the [Life Sciences Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Smith, Kimberly G. (2018) "House Finch (*Haemorhous mexicanus*) Nesting in December in Arkansas," *Journal of the Arkansas Academy of Science*: Vol. 72 , Article 29.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.uark.edu/jaas/vol72/iss1/29>

This article is available for use under the Creative Commons license: Attribution-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-ND 4.0). Users are able to read, download, copy, print, distribute, search, link to the full texts of these articles, or use them for any other lawful purpose, without asking prior permission from the publisher or the author.

This General Note is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks@UARK. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of the Arkansas Academy of Science by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks@UARK. For more information, please contact scholar@uark.edu, ccmiddle@uark.edu.

House Finch (*Haemorhous mexicanus*) Nesting in December in Arkansas

Cover Page Footnote

Weather data was access from www.accuweather.com/en/us/little-rock-ar/72201/month/326862?monyr=12/01/2017. Joe Neal and Kevin McGraw made useful suggestions on an earlier draft.

House Finch (*Haemorhous mexicanus*) Nesting in December in Arkansas

K.G. Smith

Department of Biological Sciences, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, AR 72701

Correspondence: kgsmith@uark.edu

Running title: House Finch nesting in December

The House Finch (*Haemorhous mexicanus*) is native to the southwestern United States and Mexico, but was introduced to the northeastern United States around 1940 (Elliot and Arbib 1953). Over the course of the next few decades, the House Finch expanded its range southward and westward in eastern United States, arriving in eastern Arkansas in 1971, with evidence of breeding there in 1985 (James and Neal 1986). By 1991, finches were breeding in the northwestern corner of the state (Arkansas Audubon Society 2015). Today it is found throughout the state and is one of the most common birds in urban and suburban areas.

Given that House Finches now occur throughout the United States, there is a great variation in the timing of nesting from early February to April (Badyaev *et al.* 2012). Here I document a nesting attempt by a pair of finches in December of 2017 in central Arkansas.

On 28 November 2017, Anthony Woods put up a wreath at his house in Maumelle (Pulaski County), Arkansas. On or about 12 December, he noticed a pair of House Finches investigating the wreath and when he took down the wreath on 29 December, he discovered a nest with 4 eggs (Figure 1). Wreaths are commonly used as nesting sites in Arkansas (*pers. observ.*)

Pair bonds persist from one breeding season to the next in some House Finch pairs and paired birds do nest earlier than newly paired birds (McGraw and Hill 2004). However, photoperiod is thought to play a role in male breeding activity (Hamner 1966), so finding a nest in December is certainly surprising. There were some warm days early in December in nearby Little Rock, with it reaching 22 °C on 11 December. Temperatures were near normal after that until 23 December when it became much colder.

Two other winter nesting attempts of House Finches have been reported in California: nests with eggs in late November (Smith 1930) and in late December (Howell and Burns 1955). There is also one report of a female starting to build a nest in November in southern Florida (Johnson 2010).

The House Finch joins the Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferous*) as the only unusual December breeders in

Arkansas (Smith *et al.* 1999). Koenig and Stahl (2007) suggested that fall breeding might be more common than originally thought. Possibly winter breeding will become more common as well, particularly at southern latitudes, as the climate continues to change.



Figure 1. Typical House Finch nest with 4 eggs discovered on 29 December 2017 in Maumelle, Arkansas. Photograph by Anthony Woods.

Acknowledgments

Weather data was access from www.accuweather.com/en/us/little-rock-ar/72201/month/326862?monyr=12/01/2017. Joe Neal and Kevin McGraw made useful suggestions on an earlier draft.

Literature Cited

Arkansas Audubon Society. 2015. Arkansas bird records database. Version 15.2 Available at: www.arbirds.org/aas_dbase.html. Accessed 12 March 2018.

- Badyaev AV, V Belloni, and GE Hill.** 2012. House Finch (*Haemorhous mexicanus*), version 2.0. In: Rodewald PG, editor. The Birds of North America. Cornell Lab of Ornithology (Ithaca, NY). Available at: <https://doi.org/10.2173/bna.46>. Accessed 1 March 2018.
- Elliott JJ and RS Arbib Jr.** 1953. Origin and status of the House Finch in the eastern United States. *Auk* 70:31-37.
- Hamner WH.** 1966. Photoperiodic control of the annual testicular cycle in the House Finch, *Carpodacus mexicanus*. *General and Comparative Endocrinology* 7:224-233.
- Howell TR and RD Burns.** 1955. Mid-winter nesting of the House Finch at Los Angeles, California. *Condor* 57:246.
- James DA and JC Neal.** 1986. Arkansas Birds. University of Arkansas Press (Fayetteville, AR). 402 p.
- Johnson DW.** 2010. Winter nesting attempt by a House Finch (*Carpodacus mexicanus*) at Cedar Key, Florida. *Florida Field Naturalist* 38:113-114.
- Koenig WD and JT Stahl.** 2007. Late summer and fall nesting in the Acorn Woodpecker and other North American terrestrial birds. *Condor* 109:334-350.
- McGraw KJ and GE Hill.** 2004. Mate attentiveness, seasonal timing of breeding and long-term pair bonding in the House Finch (*Carpodacus mexicanus*). *Behaviour* 141:1-13.
- Smith KG, WM Davis, TE Kienzle, W Post, and RW Chinn.** 1999. Additional records of fall and winter nesting by Killdeer in southern United States. *Wilson Bulletin* 111:424-426.
- Smith P.** 1930. Winter nesting of the California Linnet. *Condor* 32:121.