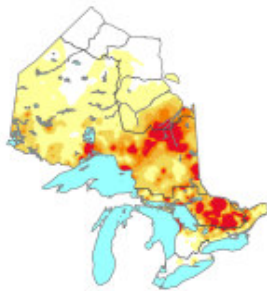


Purple Finch Factsheet

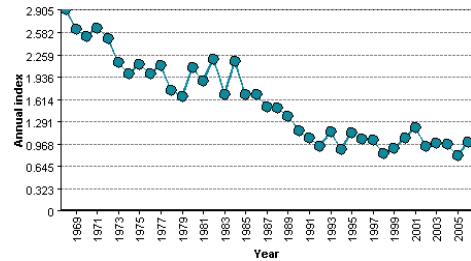
Boreal Bird Toolkit



Purple Finch



Relative Abundance



Breeding Bird Survey Index Trend 1968-2006 (Canada)

Description and biology: The Purple Finch (12-15cm) is a sexually-dimorphic species meaning that males and females differ in appearance. Brownish upperparts of males are covered in a raspberry red colour that also extends onto the sides and breast. Females and young birds are brown, strongly streaked, and have a white eyebrow above a brown ear patch. The Purple Finch feeds on buds and seeds and is a relatively common visitor to bird feeders across Ontario.

Habitat requirements: The Purple Finch breeds in moist coniferous forests, mixed coniferous-deciduous forest, riparian corridors, and open habitats with scattered shrubs and conifers. The presence of conifers is favourable because a conifer branch is the preferred site to build a nest.

Natural history: Purple Finch numbers vary considerably from year to year across its wintering range, presumably due to variation in cone crop production. In Ontario, it is less abundant in the northwest, perhaps illustrating the species' preference of moister forest habitats.

Conservation status: Of the North American and world population, nearly one half breed in Canada's boreal forest. Breeding Bird Surveys reveal that the Purple Finch declined significantly by 3.1% per year between 1968 and 2006 across Canada, and during the same time period declined significantly by 2.5% per year in Ontario. Results from the second Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas (2001-2005) show the species has declined significantly in the province – by 38%, 19% and 6% in the Hudson Bay Lowlands, Northern Shield and Southern Shield regions, respectively. Partners in Flight designate the Purple Finch as a species of regional concern and one that would benefit from regional stewardship.

Environmental threats: Reasons for the decline in the Purple Finch are not known conclusively. Possible factors include: collisions with windows and motorized vehicles; extensive clearcutting which reduces breeding habitat; and, natural population variation due to Spruce Budworm cycles.

Conservation opportunities: The Purple Finch's preference for cool, moist and moderately open coniferous or mixed forest may explain the species' greater breeding density in Ontario's north-central and north-eastern areas. Protection of suitable breeding habitat would benefit this declining species. Forest management approaches which maintain significant tree cover would likely benefit the species also. Further population monitoring and research is required to determine reasons for the species' decline.

Boreal Bird Toolkit:

Toolkit and factsheet: © Wildlife Conservation Society Canada and G.G. Beck Ecological Consulting 2008

Breeding Bird Survey: courtesy Canadian Wildlife Service, volunteers & coordinators; www.cws-scf.ec.gc.ca/mgbc/trends

Abundance map and point count data: courtesy *Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Ontario, 2001-2005*; www.birdsontario.org

Photo: © Gregor G. Beck. See toolkit for literature cited.