

European Goldfinch

Rejected 0 votes For, 7 Against

This report was discussed by the Committee at the meeting. There was no consensus on the identification of this bird to the species level. All committee members however agreed that this was conclusively not a European Goldfinch. European Goldfinch is a species which, as of yet, does not show a pattern of accepted vagrancy to North America. There are small populations of escaped/released cage birds of this species, and all sightings are currently believed to be resultant from those escapes/releases. The committee agreed that there could be some abnormal plumage issues on the head of the bird in question which could lead observers astray. But whether that abnormality was a pigmentation issue, loss of feathers, or even a misleading photo, the Committee could not say. Structurally and plumage-wise this bird is far off from European Goldfinch as discussed in some Committee Member comments below. Outside expertise was sought to confirm that the Committee was not overlooking some molt or other issues which would be unfamiliar to North American birders.

Committee Member Comments:

CM1: I don't know what the bird in the photo is, but I don't see how it could be a European Goldfinch. The white on the head touches the bill, which it would not in a European Goldfinch. Also, the wings lack the prominent yellow coloration of a European Goldfinch.

CM2: Poor photos make things hard, but I see wing bars and it looks like a mutant House Finch to me.

CM3: This is definitely not a European Goldfinch. Starting at the head, the "white" patch doesn't seem too white from the photos. Perhaps an exposure error. There should be a black rear border to the white patch in males which is not evident. The nape should be concolorous with the back and golden yellowish/brown. This bird has a reddish nape that blends to brown. The pattern of this bird on the back and wings is completely wrong for a European Goldfinch. There are no yellow wing bars and no hint of yellow anywhere on the bird ... all at odds with European Goldfinch. The tail and primary projection are both wrong for European Goldfinch. This bird is a Haemorhous species of finch which are expected in the area, I would suspect possible Purple Finch based on the coloration, but ID at the generic level is as far as the photos take us.

CM4: After review, I would have to vote against. It was only seen by the one individual.

CM5: I have reconsidered this submission of the European Goldfinch along with the other committee member comments. The record does not meet the criteria of "recognizable photographs" (Bylaw V.E.2.). Photographs do not give enough detail to distinguish from similar

species. Written description gives some detail to identify as a EUGO, but only provides one sight record which fails the test of “at least three persons” (Bylaw V.E.4.). Photographs and descriptions do not provide enough evidence to identify the bird as a EUGO when taken in totality. The standards are not met set forth in Bylaws V.E. I shared the Report Form with friend, Eric Dempsey, who lives in Ireland and wrote the The Complete Field Guide to Ireland's Birds. His response “Hi LeJay, thanks for emailing the record and I'm always happy to offer my thoughts. On this one I can say with 100% accuracy that this is NOT a European Goldfinch. Colour of the bird, wingbars and head all wrong. I even wonder if the bird has head feathers...it looks bald which can happen if the bird is diseased? Can't offer any suggestions as to what it might be...but it certainly is not a European Goldfinch.

CM6: I agree the photo is poor and there is not any other observation. It could be an escapee too.

CM7: Given all evidence that was presented by the observer I personally don't believe that the bird can be ID'd to species level.