

A SUMMER SIGHTING OF PINE GROSBEAK
(Pinicola enucleator) IN MASSACHUSETTS

by Sheila Carroll and Mark Lynch, Worcester

During our annual summer Berkshire birding weekend this year, we had the good fortune to see several Pine Grosbeaks at several locations. Because we saw a total of eight individuals in a variety of sites, we did not think at the time that the sightings would be considered unusual, particularly in an area where other high-altitude or northern birds (such as the Raven) are known to occur. It wasn't until we returned to Worcester and talked with Seth Kellogg and Brad Blodget that we were informed that there were few, if any, summer records of the Pine Grosbeak in Massachusetts.

All our sightings occurred at good to excellent range and left no doubt in our minds that the birds were in fact Pine Grosbeaks. It should be noted that in 1978 and 1979 we made our summer trip to the Berkshires at approximately the same time of the season, hiked the same trails, and yet never came across a single Pine Grosbeak. Detailed notes on our sightings are given below.

7/19/80: Early in the morning at Savoy State Reservation (Florida State Forest) in a stand of conifers on a small trail that runs west off Florida Road under the power lines, while we were observing a group of warblers and chickadees, a large, almost robin-sized, grayish bird with white wing bars, rather chunky in appearance (especially compared to the warblers) and with a heavy bill was noted. All these characteristics convinced us that this was a Pine Grosbeak female.

About an hour later, proceeding down a dirt road to Tannery Falls, Savoy State Reservation, we stopped the car when we spotted three large red birds on the road eating something. When we stopped, the birds flew a very short distance to some roadside shrubbery. From inside the car we quietly observed from a distance of about 10-15 feet using binoculars. The large size, red back, red and gray breast, white wing bars, dark wings, and the bill (which we were able to observe very closely) convinced us they were adult male Pine Grosbeaks. After approximately 3-4 minutes the birds flew across the road into a small stand of conifers. We got out of the car and watched them for a few minutes among the upper branches, then lost them as they moved further back into the woods.

7/20/80: About 10 a.m. on Falls Road, south of Bashbish Falls, while watching a large group of warblers (including Blackpoll and Black-throated Green), vireos, and chickadees, we again saw a large grayish bird with white wing bars. It appeared in the same plumage as the first bird seen the previous day. We had good views at a reasonable range. It was undoubtedly a female Pine Grosbeak.

7/21/80: Two more adult males were seen at Notchview Reservation, Windsor, on the Mushroom Trail. The striking red color, red and grayish breast, wing color, hefty appearance, wing bars, and bill were all easily observed. Just as we were leaving the trails at Notchview Reservation, we spotted another adult male preening in the red spruce grove. All details mentioned above were noted.

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