

Hoary Redpoll
8 Jan 1978
Maffit Res., Polk Co., IA
*Stuart L./Sue Burns
Halmi 1978, IBL 50-51

Record Number: 81-KM
Classification: NA

DOCUMENTATION

Stuart L. Burns/Sue Burns

REFERENCE

Field Reports: IBL 48:50-51

Halmi, N.S. 1978. Hoary Redpoll (*Carduelis hornemanni*) in Iowa. IBL 48:53-54.

VOTE (1981): 1-III, 5-IV, 1-VI

IV, observers uncertain.

IV, a tough id in the field.

IV, Documentation mentions 'white rump' - but how white? definitive details need.

III, Although some problem with documentation (see Burns' own comments), the white rump is diagnostic. Indeed, some hoaries exhibit slight streaking on the rump and undertail coverts (see Bent). Far too much strictness has been used in separating these species, in my opinion. (They are probably conspecific anyway).

Hoary Redpoll

Halmi, N. S. 1978.
Hoary Redpoll
(*Carduelis hornemanni*)
in Iowa.
Iowa Bird Life
48:53-54

Hoary Redpoll (*Carduelis hornemanni*) in Iowa. -Since Hoary Redpolls have been seen in several states as far as or farther south than Iowa, and since redpolls this winter were apparently widespread in the state, it was perhaps to be hoped that Hoary Redpoll will be added to the state list in 1978. On January 8, Mr. and Mrs. Stuart Burns saw 2 light birds with apparently white rumps in a flock of Com. Redpolls at Maffit Reservoir, Des Moines. They took them to be Hoarys, but lost faith in the diagnosis when they subsequently realized that this species had never been reported from Iowa before. Since the birds had not been seen from closer than 70 ft., the skepticism expressed in Mr. Burns' documentation form appeared justified. On February 3, through the good offices of Mr. Weir Nelson, I was put in touch with Mr. Fred Thompson of 2830 McGowan Blvd., Marion, who gave an excellent description of an apparent female Hoary Redpoll he had been seeing every morning for over 2 weeks at his feeders. He was eager to have the identification confirmed by other observers. Fortunately, on January 28 Drs. Thomas Kent and Thomas Shires and I had been to Duluth, and had an excellent opportunity to study both redpolls from 5 feet at the feeder of Kim Eckert, one of Minnesota's leading birders. On February 4, before daybreak, the 3 of us therefore drove to Marion, and soon picked out a "frosty" looking female among the 20-25 Com. Redpolls flitting around in Mr. Thompson's yard. When he joined us, he pointed out that the light-colored female had a buffy tinge around her face, which facilitated her identification. The birds were quite restless, but finally the "suspect" alighted on a thistle feeder, along with several Com. Redpolls; and subsequently sat relatively still on a branch of a tree, some 10 feet off the ground and not more than 18 feet from the observers. In addition to the overall lighter coloration and the buffy facial tinge, it had several features clearly seen by all 4 of us that set it apart from Common Redpolls: a) its black chin spot was smaller than that of most other birds. b) It had only 2-3 thin, interrupted longitudinal black streaks on each side of the breast. c) The streaks of the back were very narrow. d) When the bird flipped its wings, it was clear, as Mr. Thompson had observed on many occasions, that these

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Hoary Redpoll, Marion, Iowa Photos by Peter C. Petersen

streaks came to an abrupt halt at the upper end of the pure white rump. e) The crissum, which could be studied at leisure because the bird perched above eye level, was entirely white. In contrast, all Common Redpolls studied had a distinctly streaked rump and a crissum flecked with black. The observations were made between 8:00 and 8:20 a.m. The sky was overcast, light snow was falling, and the bird was west or northwest from the observers, so illumination was excellent. Although Tom Kent had a camera along, he did not feel that critical field marks could be well shown in a photograph because of the viewing angle and skittishness of the birds, which made it inadvisable to attempt a closer approach. Separate verbal documentations were prepared by the individual observers, and these have been submitted to the IOU Checklist Committee and the Regional Editor of Am. Birds in support of this first state record for Hoary Redpoll that was obtained under the "ideal conditions" Robbins considers necessary for reliable separation of Hoary from Common Redpoll in the field. N. S. HALMI, R No. 6, IOWA CITY.

Petersen, P. C. 1978.
Editor's note. Iowa
Bird Life 48:54

Editor's note -- On February 11 Mary Lou and I netted and photographed this bird. The diagnostic photos are reproduced here. The bird was seen by Lillian Serbousek, Weir Nelson, Dr. Peter Wickham and Mr. and Mrs. Thompson. A male Hoary appeared at our feeder in Davenport on February 12. The following description was taken from the documentation sheet filed by Fred Thompson: Size 4 1/2 - 5 1/2 Finch shape - feet dark - crown, pale red cap - chin black - beak yellowish - Auriculars light buffy - nape, throat light buffy - breast, belly and under tail coverts ash white, no streaks - side, flank broken grey streak - mantle, back dark grey and silvery white streaks no buff - rump ash white no streaks or spots - wing bars silvery white no buff - secondaries, primaries, wing coverts and tail feather edges silvery white no buff. Beak short and stubby compared with other redpolls seen. Bird much lighter than other redpolls seen. Complete lack of buff below nape. As described by Arthur Bent, "frosty appearance". The I.O.U. Checklist Committee has accepted this species to the Iowa List.

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Hoary Redpoll

Halimi, N. S. 1978. Field reports. Iowa Bird Life 48:47-52

70-51

Finches, Sparrows. Northern Cardinals were scarce in Sioux Center (JV). Evening Grosbeaks staged a massive invasion, reaching s.c. Texas. Only in some places in Iowa did they linger: 5-7 daily at Ruth Phipps' feeder, one for 3 weeks until January 4 (DM), and 4-12 at Davenport area feeders (PP). Good numbers, possibly birds in transit, were recorded in YRF (December 2, 24 on December 24, DK, JS). Late observations (2 on February 10 at Seymour, ChS, 1 at Central City, February 11, LS) may signal the start of a retreat to the north. Purple Finches were widely seen, but not in large numbers, and with apparent hiatuses. The highest count seems to have been about 30 in HHP in mid-January (MN). One of the glories of the season was an invasion of Pine Grosbeaks. At least 14 were seen January 7 - February 10 at St. Lucas and West Union (JS), 10 on December 22 in YRF (DK), 2 east of Larabee (MB), one at a Des Moines feeder in mid-January (fide RM), 3 in Glendale Cemetery, January 24 (RM, WB et al.; documented), and 5 in HHP and the adjacent cemeteries January 12 - February 11 (RD, TK, Tst, TSh; documented), for a new area record. The birds seen on the CBC in Cedar Rapids were probably those that kept showing up on January 27 in a yard not far from Cedar Memorial Cemetery (EO) with such regularity that they could be viewed by virtually all active birders in Cedar Rapids and 2 from Iowa City (TSh, NiH) (up to 7 birds). With a slight departure from the checklist order, let me write first about Common Redpolls. Having appeared in the northeast in November, they swept across the state, reaching Shenandoah in mid-January (IG, RP). There were a few flocks of 75-100 birds in weedy fields (west of Des Moines, WB; CoR, MN, RD), but for the most part the birds came to feeders in towns, in moderate numbers. In Davenport, 59 were banded January 18 - February 1 (PP). A relatively large urban group was 50 in HHP and nearby cemeteries on February 5 (RD). Strangely, Common Redpolls did not appear in northwest Iowa (Cherokee, Spencer) until well into February (DB, CoS). Perhaps because of the affinity of the redpolls for feeders, the stage was set for the addition of Hoary Redpoll to the state list. See the longer note on the sighting of a female in Marion on January 22 (FT), subsequent confirmation by others, netting and photography. As of February 15, this bird has been seen by numerous observers from the Cedar Rapids area (Weir Nelson, LS), Iowa City (TK, TSh, NiH) and Davenport (PP). Its presence lends plausibility to an earlier sighting under much less favorable conditions (S-SB, see longer note) and several subsequent ones (1 from 20 yards with a 20x scope in Pocahontas Co., February 5, and 2-5 with white rumps or light appearance in a flock of some 80 Common Redpolls, February 12, Buffalo Creek Conservation Area) (RC). More convincing is a second documented sight record at a feeder, of a male (February 12, PP). Even though the Hoary Redpoll is now a solid addition to the Iowa list, only extremely detailed observations will be considered corroborated, for I.B.L. or American Birds! Pine Siskins were also common in the southern part of the state, all the way to Hamburg (IG) and Seymour (ChS). Petersen banded 152 January 18 - February 1. But few were left in the N.E. (5 on December 18, JS). While some northern finches brought glamour to an otherwise tiresome Iowa winter, Red Crossbills were not reported at all. White-winged Crossbills were "common" in the N.E. in early December, but not thereafter (DK) (one on December 24 at YRF, JS); 4 were at Eagle Point in Clinton on December 3, and one at a nearby feeder February 6 (PP); a single female has been a regular at a Cedar Rapids feeder since December 28 (LS). A Rufous-sided Towhee at Hamburg on January 22 was, atypically, of the eastern race; later, a member of the western race appeared (IG). "Many" Harris' Sparrows were at Riverton on January 22 (RP); the 70+

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Middlewestern Prairie Region
(Iowa, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio)

81-KM

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD.

Species HOARY Redpoll 2. Number: At least two
Location NEAR MAFFITT RESERVOIR, DES MOINES
Date: JANUARY 8, 1978. 5. Time Bird seen: APPROX 1:00 P.M.

Description of size, shape and color-pattern (describe in great detail all parts of the plumage, and beak and feet coloration, in addition, to the diagnostic characteristics, but include only what actually was seen in the field):

Identified as a Redpoll by the usual notation of the red cap and black chin markings. At this point, admittedly, the credibility of the identification becomes somewhat suspect, due to my own carelessness or stupidity. Point one: Neither Sue nor myself was aware that Hoary Redpolls had not previously been seen in Iowa. So, as is our common practice, we checked the backs. I noted the white rump, as did Sue. But then we misread the Robbins & Zim book, assuming that what we had seen were Common Redpolls. We left the site and drove to Walnut Woods and only later discovered our error, at which point we returned to Maffitt (probably around 2:00 P.M.). The flock was still feeding, but this time we saw only the dark-streaked back of the Commons. On both occasions the birds were feeding in a weed field, staying fairly stationary.

Description of voice, if heard: covered our error, at which point we returned to Maffitt (probably around 2:00 P.M.). The flock was still feeding, but this time we saw only the dark-streaked back of the Commons. On both occasions the birds were feeding in a weed field, staying fairly stationary.

Description of behavior: still feeding, but this time we saw only the dark-streaked back of the Commons. On both occasions the birds were feeding in a weed field, staying fairly stationary.

Habitat - general: birds were feeding in a weed field, staying fairly stationary.
specific:

Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8, Explain:
Obviously, the only other species it could have been would be the Common Redpoll. Its ~~only~~ only certain distinguishing characteristic (noted by us) was the white rump

Distance (how measured)? 70-100 feet, estimation 12. Optical equipment: 7 x 35 Binoculars

Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you): Clear sub-zero day. Sun was above and behind as we faced north towards the

Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species: flock.

This is our only sighting of Hoarys. We have had Common Redpolls at our other observers: feeders every year since 1972.

Did the others agree with your identification? Sue Burns, the only other observer, noted the white rump.

Other observers who independently identified this bird: None. Fred Crane saw a flock at the same location (but at greater distance) the next day. Did not see Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this ~~any~~ ~~species~~

We always carry Robbins' and Peterson's books. After we noted our initial error, we read both carefully. As nearly as we can tell, the unstreaked rump is the only meaningful distinction. We had noted and agreed on that feature before we knew we had seen anything special.

How long after observing this bird did you first write this description?
Report filled out Jan. 22nd, while two Common Redpolls fed at our thistle-feed

Sue Burns Address: 5804 Ingersoll, Des Moines
Date: January 22nd City, State: IOWA 50312

(over)