

Hoary Redpoll

22 Jan 1978

Marion, Linn Co., IA

\*Fred Thompson, \*Shires, \*Halmi

to 7 Feb, photos (Petersen); Halmi 1978, Petersen 1978, letter (Kleen)

Record Number: 81-KN

Classification: A-P

DOCUMENTATIONS

Fred K. Thompson, 22 Jan

N. S. Halmi, 4 Feb

Thomas K. Shires, 4 Feb

PHOTOGRAPHS

Peter C. Petersen, 11 Feb, P-0016

LETTER

Vernon M. Kleen to Nicholas Halmi, 22 Feb 1978.

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 48:50-51

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

Photograph: IBL 48:54

Editor [P.C. Petersen]. 1978. Editor's note. IBL 48:54.

VOTE (1981): 5-I-P, 1-I, 1-pass

I-P, need to get measurements in the record.

I, Photographed- color & b & w. Caught and measured.

I-P, well described and photographed.

81-KW

Hoary Redpoll

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

p 50-51

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; ColI, 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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81-KN

### 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 4½ - 5½ 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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Illinois



Department of Conservation

life and land together

81-KN

305 STATE OFFICE BUILDING • 400 SOUTH SPRING STREET • SPRINGFIELD 62706  
CHICAGO OFFICE - ROOM 100, 160 NO. LASALLE 60601  
David K. Rodey, Director • James C. Helfrich, Assistant Director

22 February 1978

Dr. Nicholas Halmi  
Rt. #6  
Iowa City, IA 52240

Dear Nick:

On reviewing the notes concerning the Hoary Redpoll observations, I think you have satisfactorily described Iowa's first record for this species. This has been the year for them as they have been identified elsewhere, too.

Therefore, I will provide boldface print for this species in the forthcoming Winter Season Report to AMERICAN BIRDS.

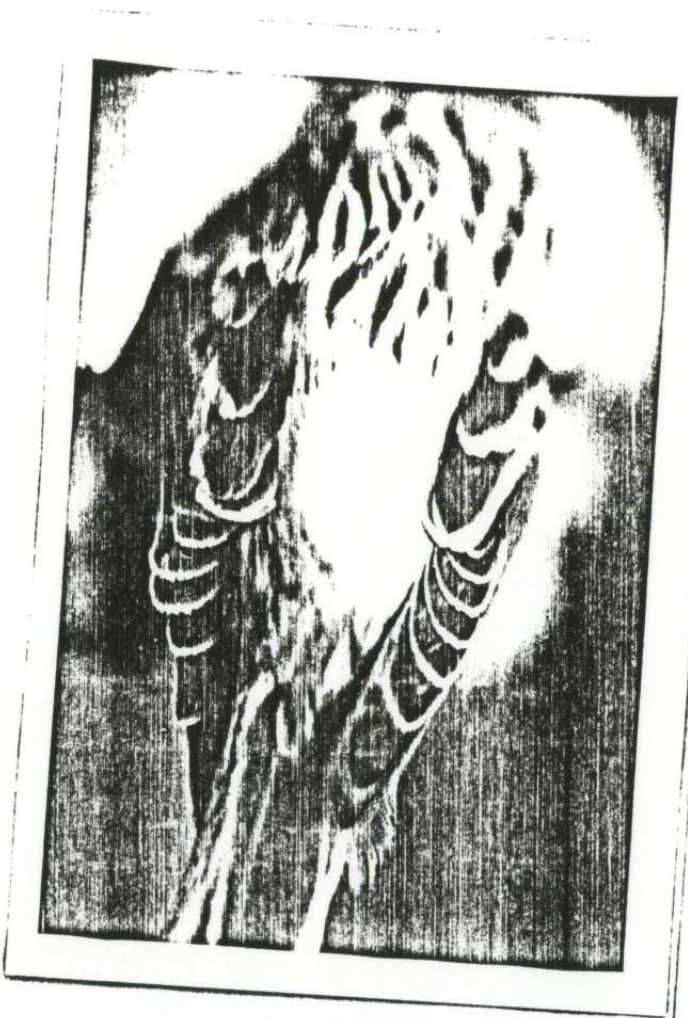
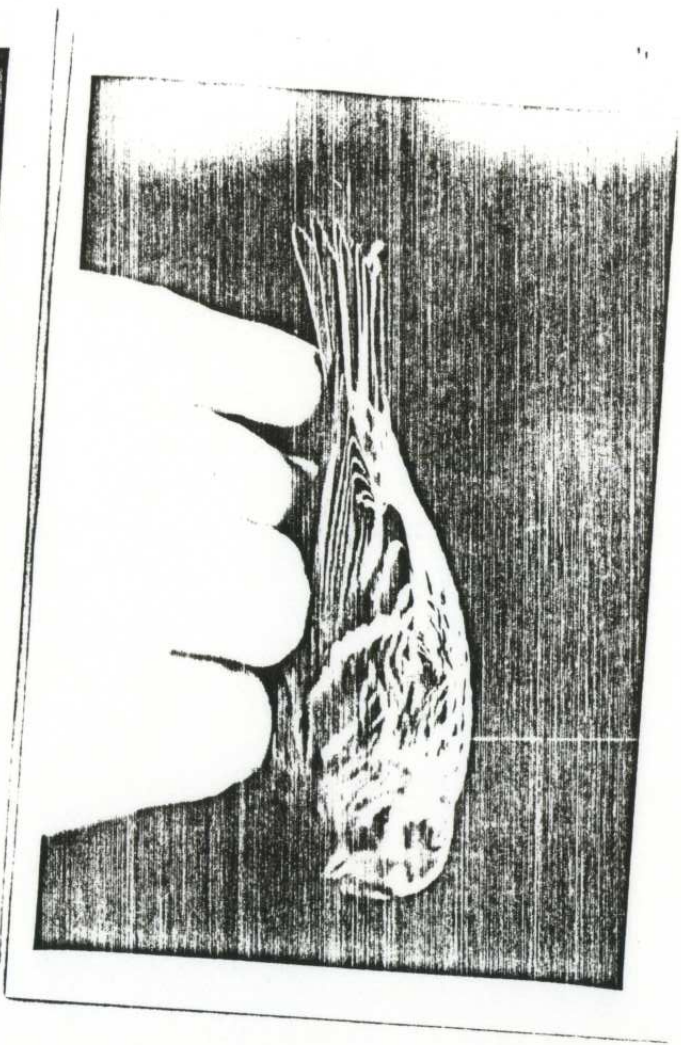
As for my September issue, I still do not have one--and I have requested same twice from the New York office. I understand that there is a good article on how to keep good field notes--which I definitely want to read and which I hope many of our observers have already read.

Looking forward to getting your winter season report.

Sincerely,

Vernon M. Kleen  
Division of Wildlife Resources

encl.



Stony Ridge, ♀  
Nashua  
2/11/78  
photo PCP

81-KN

81-KN

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

(11)

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD.

- 1. Species Carduelis hornemanni - Hoary Redpoll 2. Number: 1 female
- 3. Location 2830 McGowan Blvd., Marion, Iowa
- 4. Date: 22 January, 1978 to date 5. Time Bird seen: 7:00 A.M. to 10:30 A.M.

6. 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):

Size 4½ - 5½" -- 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".

- 7. Description of voice, if heard: Not heard
- 8. Description of behavior: Seems to be more nervous than common redpoll otherwise same
- 9. Habitat - general: My back yard at thistle feeder, near city park with flocks of common redpolls  
specific: 1/4 mile from large weedy field and farmland

Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7, & 8; Explain:  
Carduelis flammea - common redpoll - by color and beak size

- 11. Distance (how measured)? As close as (6) feet 12. Optical equipment: 7 x 35 binoculars
- 13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you):  
Seen at all angles and lighting conditions
- 14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species:  
None with Hoary but experience with common redpoll
- 15. Other observers:  
Dr. Nick Halmi, Tom Kent, Tom Shires, Weir Nelson
- 16. Did the others agree with your identification?  
Yes
- 17. Other observers who independently identified this bird: Dr. Nick Halmi, Tom Kent, Tom Shire

\* 18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description:  
The Audubon Society Field Guide to N. Am. Birds - Eastern Region by J. Bull and J. Farrand, Jr.; Life Histories of N. Am. Birds by Arthur C. Bent; A Guide to Field Identification Birds of N. Am. by C. Robbins, B. Bruun, H. Zim and A. Singer

19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description?  
Made notes each day the bird was sighted - seen approximately 10 times including today

Signature Frederic M. Thompson Address: 2830 McGowan Blvd.

Date: 7 February, 1978 City, State: Marion, Iowa 52302

\* Guided me to look for diagnostic characteristics.

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD.

Species Hoary Redpoll (female) 2. Number: 1  
Location 2830 McGowan Bvd., Marion, Iowa  
Date: Febr. 4, 1978 5. Time Bird seen: 7:50 to 8:20 AM

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): With some 25 Com. Redpolls. Similar in size, yellow bill, notched tail, 2 white wingbars, red cap. Differences: black chin spot quite small, chest and abdomen white, with narrow, interrupted streaks on the side (2-3 on each); overall coloration quite light; buffy tinge on cheeks helpful in picking the bird out from the flock; stripes on back much narrower than in Com. Redpolls, ending abruptly at the upper edge of the rump; both rump and crissum pure white, with no trace of streaking.

Description of voice, if heard: no sound traced to this individual bird

Description of behavior: sitting on thistle feeder, on a small tree, and in bushes; while in the tree and on a feeder, it occasionally flipped its wings and revealed the rump

Habitat - general: suburban yard adjacent to an open area (school yard)  
specific: on feeders, tree and bushes; best seen when perched 7-10 ft. off ground

Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8, Explain:

Com. Redpoll: light overall coloration (all birds around were quite brownish in comparison); only faint streaking on undersides, white unstreaked rump and crissum (all Com. Redpolls in flock had clearly streaked rumps and a crissum flecked in back); narrow streaks on back

Distance (how measured)? min. 18 ft. (close to near-point of 12. binoculars) Optical equipment: 7x35 Leitz

Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you): overcast, light snow; good diffuse lighting; bird W or NW from observers

Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species: both redpolls seen together from 5 ft. at Kim Eckert's feeder in Duluth Jan. 28, 1978

Other observers: Fred Thompson, Dr. T.H. Kent, Dr. T.K. Shires

Did the others agree with your identification? yes

Other observers who independently identified this bird: Fred Thompson had seen it daily in his yard (address above) for some 2 weeks, and asked for confirmation of his identification  
Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description: standard field guides and Roberts' The Birds of Minnesota read in advance of sighting. No consultation between sighting and writing of this report

How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? 5 hours

W. H. H. H.

Address: R # 6

Febr. 8, 1978

City, State: Iowa City, IA 52240

81-KN

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

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD.

Species Hoary Redpoll 2. Number: one

Location home of Mr Fred Thompson in Marion, Iowa

Date: Feb 4, 1978 5. Time Bird seen: 0800 to 0830

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): The bird was about the same size as other redpolls with which it was associated. Breast, belly, and undertail coverts were white. Light, thin streaking occurred on the side of the breast. The streaking was not organized into distinct "stripes" as in common redpolls in adult plumage, it did not extend caudally into the sides of the belly as in common redpolls. The back was very light, to me a light grayish color. It was very finely streaked, the width of the individual streaks was much narrower than those on the backs of the common redpolls. The bird's rump was white; perhaps snow white. No streaking from the back penetrated the rump's white, as occurs with some common redpolls. On the bird's head was a red poll. I did not study the very top of the bird's head well. (continued on back)

Description of voice, if heard: no vocalization  
Description of behavior: The bird was feeding at various bird feeders in Mr Thompson's yard in the company of common redpolls. Aside from feeding with the common redpolls, it tended to sit alone in nearby trees after feeding as a flock associate rather than as a flock member.  
Habitat - general: The bird and its common redpoll compatriots were feeding on backyard feeders. The yard abutted on an extensive track of school grounds.  
Specific: The bird and its common redpoll compatriots were feeding on backyard feeders. The yard abutted on an extensive track of school grounds.  
Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8, Explain:

see obverse

Distance (how measured)? 20 feet maximum, 15-20 feet minimum 2. Optical equipment: 7 x 35 (Bushnell) binoculars  
Observations were made standing inside a garage or an adjoining porch  
Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you):

Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species: completely overcast with light to moderate snow and light wind

Other observers: -see obverse

Did the others agree with your identification? N. Halmi & T. Kent

Other observers who independently identified this bird: Fred Thompson

Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description:

No available field guide is competent for field identification of hoary redpoll. This includes The Peterson guides, Pough, Robbins, the new Audubon guide

How long after observing this bird did you first write this description?

Thomas K. Shires Address: 301 Woodridge  
Signature: Feb 5, 1978 City, State: Iowa City, Iowa



Shives

(continuation of bird description)

But the back of the head and nape were of the same general coloration and streaking pattern as the back. Lores were black and a faint line extended back from the eye over the auricular region which was very light and merged indistinctly with the which breast and throat. I saw no pink coloring on the bird's breast, throat, belly, or auricular regions. The black chin patch was very small. With the bird in frontal view, the area projected by the patch was smaller than that projected by the bill. The bill of the bird was conical and stubby with a possibly yellowish cast. One wing bar showed on the very light gray wing coverts. The tail was slightly forked. Underwing coverts and the top of the tail were not well observed.

#### Previous experience with hoary redpolls:

As a boy birding in the region of Hartford Connecticut in the early 1950's, the common redpoll were an erratic winter visitant, while the hoary redpoll was viewed as extremely rare. I do not remember its occurrence in the Hartford region during the time I was an active birder. However, in Massachusetts, while still rare, the hoary seemed to be reported with greater frequency. My experience with it was limited to Plum Island near Newberryport. My records show my sightings of it on 3 occasions in 3 separate Winters. It is my recollection that the species was identified in the field with great care but with confidence by the Boston birders, with whom we usually were associated on Plum Island trips, but it was not a bird that generated great excitement. I was trained to rely on a snow-white rump and generally pale visual gestalt as adequate field marks. Observation conditions in Winter on Plum Island were usually not ideal for observing flocks of redpolls, but on one occasion I was in a group led by Audlow Griscom and Allen Morgan whose interest of the day was the greater redpoll (*A. flammea* *rostrata*), then regarded as a separate species from *A. flammea* *linaria* but I believe shortly thereafter lumped (perhaps largely as a result of the onslaughts of that day). Firing into several flocks that were encountered that day, their shot usually brought down several birds at a time. One of their victims after careful measurement on the spot was pronounced a hoary redpoll. Mr Griscom that day was not overly assiduous in edifying enthusiastic young teenage boys, but he did spread *A. flammea* and *A. hornemanni* out side-by-side to demonstrate the overall paleness and white rump of the latter.

After a significant hiatus, I did not reencounter redpolls until the 1976 Iowa City Christmas count. Since Dec 24, 1977, a flock of common redpolls has been in continuous residence at my thistle seed feeder, affording detailed observations never possible on the Winter dunes of Plum Island. These birds are strikingly different from the eastern redpolls, being much darker brown and more boldly striped. Immature birds bearing several rows of dark stripes down their sides superficially resemble pine siskins when facing away from the observer, a confusion not bothering the Eastern birder. One and possibly 2 individuals at my feeder have noticeably light rumps, but it is possible to discern fine streaking from the back that extends across the rumps of both birds.

Exactly one week before the observation of the bird in question, we observed nearly a half dozen hoary redpolls in Duluth MN at the feeders of Mr Kim Eckert. These birds were observed through a window from above at distances perhaps a small as 6 feet. Most of these individuals were in apparently poorer feather than the Marion bird, and all were darker. The Marion bird was never observed from quite the same angle as the Duluth birds, but its generally more pale appearance in contrast to the associated common redpolls was striking compared with the birds seen a week earlier where virtually no difference in back coloration was noticeable. The Marion bird in fact, when viewed from the front or slightly to the side had more the general appearance of Eastern *A. flammea*. When viewed from the rear, however, with its wings on the white rump of the bird unmarked by continuations of the streaking from the back argues against its being a vagrant Eastern form. On the other hand, Mr Griscom's hoary redpoll was a truly hoary bird - much lighter than the Marion bird. Based on what Mr Eckert identifies as an *A. hornemanni*, it seems that Midwestern *hornemanni*, like Midwestern *flammea*, do however tend to be darker birds than their Eastern counterparts.