

Hoary Redpoll

27 Dec 1980

Waterloo, Black Hawk Co., IA

\*Moore,\*Stone,\*Stone,\*Myers,\*Kent

also 29 Dec; 3, 6 Jan 1981; IBL 51:3-4, 19, 31, 33; 52:41

Record Number: 80-25

Classification: A-D

## DOCUMENTATIONS

Francis L. Moore, 27 Dec 1980

Thomas L. Stone, 27 Dec 1980 to 6 Jan 1981

Tom Stone jr., 27 Dec 1980 to 6 Jan 1981

Robert K. Myers, 29 Dec 1980

Thomas H. Kent, 3 Jan 1981

## LETTERS

Thomas H. Kent to Kim Eckert, 24 June 1981

Eckert to Kent, 7 July 1981

## REFERENCES

Christmas Bird Count: IBL 51:3-4, 19

Field Reports: IBL 51:31, 33

Records Committee: IBL 52:41

VOTE: 1-II, 2-III, 1-IV, 1-VI, 1-?, 1-abstain

III, I have misgivings about field identification of this species, if it is indeed a separate species.

VI (II?), Even though I think record is most likely correct, this based mostly on documentation by FM, by far the best. Bill proportions and sparse narrow streaks on sides suggest.....

(Balch, Illinois Audubon Bull) after examining 175 specimens found that some *A. hornemani* have some streaking on rump and that a very few *A. flammea* have unstreaked rumps); the nearly immaculate undertail coverts also lend support to the bird's being a hoary. However, the 2 spp hybridize at least in the old world (Solomonsen, Birds of Greenland) and Brooks (1968, Wilson Bull 80:253) suggests the existance of intergrades in Alaska as well. It may be that only records of immaculately white birds can be accepted to avoid the few genuine hoarys in a sea of possibles. If not, then suggest category II.

IV, need photos.

?, Well documented, but more study of the whole question of hoary redpoll needs to be done. I don't know what this is.

III, not II because of some minor discrepancies. Some doubts expressed by Myers and Kent regarding a very small amount of streaking 'leading into' the rump. Also 'pushed-in' bill noted by some observers but not others. If an intergrade, hybrid, etc, this bird is 90% hoary. I would accept it as a Hoary just as I would a Ross'-Snow Goose hybrid showing 90% Ross' characteristics. I suspect we are abnormally cautious about accepting records of Hoary Redpoll in Iowa. This bird seems 'clean' to me. The photo of Iowa's first record at Marion in IBL- also could be described as having a few streaks leading into the rump.

REVOTE at meeting of 5 Sep 1981: 6-II, I-abstain

The record was reconsidered in light of the previous vote, further comments, the letter from Kim Eckert, and further reading by members of the committee.



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# Iowa Ornithologists' Union



STATE BIRD OF IOWA: THE GOLDFINCH

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Iowa Bird Life

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Kim Eckert  
9735 North Shore Drive  
Duluth MN 55804

June, 24, 1981

Dear Kim,

The Records Committee of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union would appreciate your help in evaluating a report of a Hoary Redpoll from Waterloo IA in Dec 1980 and Jan 1981. The only previous records of this species are from the 1978 invasion year (The year I first saw them at your house).

The current report is detailed <sup>by</sup> the five enclosed accounts. Unfortunately the bird was not netted or photographed (with my new equipment I could easily photograph it now). My initial impression was that the bird was a light Common Redpoll, but now I am unsure. Next time I will take better notes regardless of what I think.

The Records Committee, which consists of 7 members and is in its first year of operation, had difficulty evaluating this record because of limited experience with this species. We are most interested in your comments on identification (yes, no, uncertain) and less interested in your evaluation of the observers. With this in mind, let me summarize the findings that the observers seem to agree upon (based on documentations and additional conversations).

- (1) The rump was white; however, there were a few fine streaks extending into the rump from the back and a few even finer ones coming up from the tail. The rump was almost constantly exposed because of the bird's injury.
- (2) The bird was lighter than the commons, but "shades of gray" lighter rather than "frosted."
- (3) The breast and side streaks were less pronounced than the Commons, but the difference could have been on a "continuum."
- (4) The "pushed-in" bill could not be confirmed by all in comparison with the Commons.

We greatly appreciate your help in evaluating this record. It will undoubtedly help us establish criteria for sight records of this species in Iowa. Incidentally, your article and others on the Minnesota Records Committee have been of great help and we have adopted many of the same procedures.

Sincerely,

Thomas H. Kent, M. D.  
Secretary, Records Committee, Iowa Ornithologists' Union



Tom -

Sorry for the delay in answering but I haven't been home much lately. This is not the first time I've seen this record since the same documentation was submitted with the Cedar Falls CBC. I left the species on the count, commenting that it was probably correctly identified. But not definitely. A classic Hoary is very easy to identify, ~~especially~~ since it is an altogether different looking bird. But most "Hoaries" seen are not like this - they are "sort of" paler, with a "mostly" white rump and/or undertail coverts, and maybe with a "somewhat" stub-bier bill. When such birds are seen in n. Minnesota (their normal range) by birders experienced with the variation in Common + Hoary Redpolls then there is no problem. But if it's a less than classically pale Hoary, seen by an inexperienced observer, and in s. Minnesota then there has to be doubt. Most experts agree that there is a continuum <sup>sp.?</sup> from light to dark in redpolls (indeed, the latest gossip is they will be lumped in the next AOU Checklist). From the plumage descriptions it seems clear that the Waterloo bird was one of those "in between" birds that would take an <sup>observer</sup> experienced with both redpolls to identify (apparently no one was). So while it sounds like it could have been a Hoary, I'd say there's no way to say for sure it was. I just noticed there is some uncertainty about whether it was a ♂ or ♀ and whether the bill was pushed in or not (some consider it is the best ~~mark~~ or most diagnostic mark but it is usually difficult to see). I know you said not to evaluate the observers, but with redpoll identification the experience of

(CONT.) the observers has to be considered. Two further points that may help with this or future redpoll observations: males tend to look frostier than females (so beware of reports of a ♂ "Hoary" among ♀ Commons), and redpolls look lighter when perched in trees than when on the ground (probably because you're mostly looking at <sup>the</sup> paler underparts when the redpoll is up in a tree - I've often seen a possible Hoary in a tree that looked very pale, but when it flew down to the ground it "became" just another Common).

So, in conclusion, if I were on your committee I'd vote no. It could very well have been a Hoary, but I'm not entirely convinced. There is plenty of ~~some~~ evidence to suggest Hoary, however, so if your committee votes to accept the record I'd go along with it.

Kim



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## FIELD REPORTS EDITOR

DR. THOMAS KENT  
211 Richards Street  
Iowa City, Iowa 52240

86-25

29 October 1981

To: Francis Moore, Tom Stone Jr., Tom Stone, Bob Myers

From: The Records Committee of the IOU

Your careful documentations of Hoary Redpoll at Waterloo have been reviewed twice by the committee. The first independent review by mail produced variable opinions and frustrations on criteria for identification. The second review at the September meeting of the committee occurred after obtaining an outside opinion from Kim Eckert and after more review of the literature, especially review of an article by Balch in the Illinois Audubon Journal.

It appears that there are typical "hoary" redpolls and atypical ones that have a less distinctive frosty appearance. The slight streaking in the rump of the Waterloo bird seems to be an allowable feature. Also we found two references to Hoary's exposing their rump more than Commons, a feature that was initially attributed to injury in the Waterloo bird. The slight streaking of the under-tail coverts also is within limits seen in Hoarys. The pushed-in bill is a difficult feature to see. Balch suggests looking at the bill shape: an equilateral triangle in the Hoary and an isosceles triangle narrower at the base in the Common.

In the end, the committee was unanimous in the opinion that the bird should be classified as a Hoary, albeit not a "classic" one. There is still some doubt as to whether the Hoary Redpoll should be a separate species, but as long as it is, the committee judged your record to be an example of it, even though borderline.

The record will be noted as Class II (sight record with acceptable independent documentation by three or more observers). It serves as a outstanding example of careful study of a difficult bird. It is too bad it could not have been collected or caught and photographed.

Keep up the good work!



ADDENDUM TO THE  
CEDAR FALLS, IA  
CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT - DECEMBER 27, 1980  
COMPILER - FRANCIS MOORE

80-25

(10)

DETAILS OF UNUSUAL OBSERVATIONS:

1. Mallard - 950; There has never been more than an estimated 315 Mallards on the Cedar Falls, IA count previous to this year. Due to our moderate fall weather and excellent feeding areas close to the open waters along the Cedar River in Cedar Falls we found approximately 950 this year.
2. Peregrine Falcon - 1; A Peregrine Falcon any time in Iowa is a rare occurrence but one on a Christmas Bird Count is even rarer. The bird was seen by Tom Stone and Tom Stone, Jr. from their vehicle as it chased Rock Doves close to the Cedar River near downtown Cedar Falls, IA near the center point of the count area. The bird was observed using 7X50mm binoculars from a distance of 50 feet to 200 yards in good light. See attached documentation forms for further details.
3. Red-breasted Nuthatch - 9; The high count on a Cedar Falls CBC of Red-breasted Nuthatch prior to this count was four. Red-breasted Nuthatches were found readily where there were "evergreen" type trees. A usually "hard-to-find" species, this year it was more-or-less common throughout the area.
4. Brown Thrasher; Seen during count period not count day; Brown Thrashers this far North during the winter is very unusual. The bird seen was a rufous brown bird about the size of an American Robin with a long rufous brown tail. It had been coming to a feeder in Cedar Falls all during December and was seen the two days before the count but not on count day.
5. Varied Thrush - 1; The Varied Thrush that was seen on the count day was seen four different times on count day by several people taking part in the count. The third Varied Thrush to be in the Waterloo - Cedar Falls, IA area in the past three years, this one at least stayed around for the count. It had been seen for about three weeks prior to the count and has been seen after the count, too. See attached documentation form for further details.
6. Pine Grosbeak - 1; One bird, a male, was seen on the North side of Mark Sand Prairie in a small stand of Cedar trees where it appeared to have been trying to go to roost. See attached documentation forms for further details.
- ⑦. Hoary Redpoll - 1; One Redpoll in a flock of 12 stood out from the rest of the other birds. After careful consideration of all field marks and knowing that there may be some geographic variation in Hoary Redpolls as well as there is geographic variation in Common Redpolls I came to the conclusion that the bird was a Hoary Redpoll which was independently verified by several other observers from our count group. See attached documentation forms for further details.



BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF  
AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD

86-25

(10)

1. Species Hoary Redpoll 2. Number One

3. Location 1727 Plymouth Street, Waterloo, IA

4. Date: December 27, 1980 5. Time Bird Seen: 1:30 p.m. to 1:40 p.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): General overall appearance of bird was that of a somewhat lighter colored bird than the Common Redpolls with which it associated. The bird had the typical coloration of a Redpoll, red patch on forehead, yellowish beak, white wingbars, dark brown wings and tail, also had a very light touch of pink on the breast, feet black, eyes black, chin and base of beak was black, The black of the chin didn't cover as much area as that of the Common Redpolls. Rump was white and clear of dark streaking, there was less streaking above the rump and in the upper tail coverts than in the Commons. There appeared to be three ill defined streaks down the side of this particular bird and not nearly so wide a streaking as in the Commons. The under tail coverts were almost pure white except that three of them had a very small vein of black in them at their very tips, they would have been immaculately white except for those small black streaks, only seen when using 20x60 mm telescope on them. The face of this bird appeared more "pushed-in" than the other Redpolls seen. This bird appeared a little larger than the others around it and did not associate closely with the other Redpolls at all even fighting with them if they came too close even though it seemed to be handicapped by the loss of use of one of its legs.

7. Description of voice, if heard: Call of Redpolls heard but could not be directly associated with this particular bird.

8. Description of behavior: Acted like other Redpolls that were present when feeding but had lost use of one leg. Stayed some distance from other Redpolls and fought with them when they became too close.

9. Habitat - general: Residential area with each house having typical tree plantings.

specific: Bird seen feeding in Paper Birch at West side of house at above address.

10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8. Explain: Most of the time there were Common Redpolls near. Each of the other birds had a completely streaked rump and a lot of streaking in the undertail coverts. Sides of Common Redpolls were much more streaked with dark and they all appeared to be darker on the back head and rest of body than the bird identified as a Hoary Redpoll.

11. Distance (how measured)? Min: 10 ft. Max: 60 ft. 12. Optical equipment: 8xL 7x35mm Roof Prism binoculars and 20x60 Bushnell Specemaster telescope.

13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you): Mostly cloudy, bright overcast sky. Sun was behind and above me as I faced North watching bird with full light (though subdued) falling on bird.

14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species: No previous experience with this species. Have seen Common Redpolls in March of 1978 and alongside this particular bird.

15. Other observers: Russell Hays, Tom Stone, Tom, Jr. Stone, Bob Myers

16. Did the others agree with your identification? Yes

17. Other observers who independently identified this bird: Russell Hays, Tom Stone, Tom Stone, Jr., Bob Myers

18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description: Birds of North America, Robbins, Bruun, Zimm + Singer; A Field Guide to the Birds, East, R.T. Peterson; The Birds of Canada, Godfrey. My identification was made more certain by illustrations and descriptions used in the text of these books. They helped me to confirm my suspicions about a very rare bird in Iowa.

19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? 3 days.

Signature: Francis A. Moore Address: 264 Western Ave.

Date: December 30, 1980 City, State: Waterloo, IA 50701



BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF  
AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD

80-25 (10)

1. Species Hoary Redpoll 2. Number 1
3. Location 1727 Plymouth St Waterloo
4. Date: Dec 27 to Jan 6 5. Time Bird Seen: Dec 27-12:30 PM 12:45 PM  
Jan 6 10:30 to 10:40
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):

Red spot on head, Rump white with a few streaks ~~lines~~  
larger than other Redpolls observed. Beak yellow.  
Almost ~~100%~~ 100% free of streaks on side, wingbar  
possible broken leg

7. Description of voice, if heard:

8. Description of behavior: always fed along and fought with

9. Habitat - general: other Redpolls  
Residential neighborhood  
specific: white Birch tree

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

Common Redpoll, other redpolls were much more streaked  
on sides and rump

11. Distance (how measured)?

6 ft to 20 ft  
(steps)

12. Optical equipment:

7, 50

13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you):

OVERCAST on Dec 27

clear on Jan 6

sun was behind us while

14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species: observing  
NONE

15. Other observers:

Tom G Stone, Russel Hays, Francis Moore, Bob Myers

16. Did the others agree with your identification? Yes

17. Other observers who independently identified this bird:

Tom G Stone, Russel Hays, Bob Myers, Francis Moore

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

Book of North America

March 1978 Dove Birdlife Article

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

Signature: Thomas G Stone Address: 1632 Woodmaple

Date: Jan 11 City, State: Waterloo Pa



BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF  
AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD

80-25

(10)

1. Species Hoary Redpoll 2. Number 1 ♀  
3. Location 1727 Plymouth St. Waterloo, Ia  
4. Date: Dec. 27, Jan. 6 5. Time Bird Seen: Dec. 27 12:30 Pm Jan 6 12:45 Pm  
10:30 AM to 10:40 AM

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):

Slightly bigger than common Redpolls. Red spot on head. Small amount of black surrounding the beak. The beak seemed to have a "pushed-in" appearance at close range. Very pale compared to the common Redpoll. Back - streaked with black, rump - white, very little if no streaking. Very little streaking on sides. Wings bare. Beak - yellow. Seems to have a broken leg. No rosiness on breast.

7. Description of voice, if heard:

8. Description of behavior: always fed alone ~~away~~ from the C. Redpolls  
often fighting when they came to close.

9. Habitat - general: In ~~to~~ a ~~big~~ typical yard,  
specific: fed in white Birch beside house.

10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8. Explain:  
Common Redpoll - all the other Redpoll had very streaked rumps and sides compared to this bird.

11. Distance (how measured)? at least door's length away at the closest. 12. Optical equipment: 7x50 binoculars

13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you):  
Overcast on Dec. 27 Sunny on ~~the~~ Jan. 6 sun almost overhead behind our backs.

14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species:  
None. I ~~feel~~ feel this bird should be captured to confirm this species ~~identity~~ identity.

15. Other observers: Tom Stone, Russ Hays, Robert Myers, Frances Moore.

16. Did the others agree with your identification? Yes

17. Other observers who independently identified this bird: Russ Hays, Tom Stone, Robert Myers, Frances Moore

18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description:  
Birds of North America by Robb + Singer  
March 1978 Iowa Birdlife - Very good picture + description

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

Signature: Tom Stone Jr. Address: 1632 Woodmize Dr

Date: Jan. 11 City, State: Waterloo, Iowa



BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF  
AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD

80-25

1. Species possible "Hoary" Redpoll 2. Number 1  
3. Location 1727 Plymouth St. in Waterloo  
4. Date: Dec. 29, 1980 to mid-Jan. 5. Time Bird Seen: many times

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):

I am including this documentation because we still feel the bird may be a hoary redpoll while not showing all characteristics of a type specimen. Bird was similar to commons around it with exception of 1. lighter overall color (but not frosty) 2. white rump with no streaks on rump but maybe a few leading into it (much whiter than commons) 3. white undertail coverts with 1 or 2 dots but no streaks 4. very light striping on sides of breast (not heavy like commons) 5. no nose color on breast - probably ♀ 6. pale back 7. broken wt. leg 7. other redpoll marks - red cap - black bib - etc. - Depending on who you read bird could be very light common or dark hoary or hybrid which is very possible.

7. Description of voice, if heard: —  
8. Description of behavior: feeding on white birch with about 10 common redpolls  
9. Habitat - general: residential area  
specific: white birch tree along side driveway

10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8. Explain:  
Common redpoll may be eliminated by 6 but bird was not "frosty" and had a few ~~streaks~~ streaks on sides and rump where hoary should not - this may not rule out hoary however

11. Distance (how measured)? 10' to 60'  
12. Optical equipment: B&L 7x35's  
Bushnell 20x scope

13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you):  
I viewed bird in many different light situations

14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species:  
no experience with Hoary and limited with common

15. Other observers: Francis Moore - Tom + Tommy Stone - Russ B Hays - Joe Schoufenbuel - most of Waterloo Audubon

16. Did the others agree with your identification? I am not sure but they agreed

17. Other observers who independently identified this bird: about my ID

18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description:  
I checked many many books - a few are 1. Field Guide to Birds - Peterson 2. Birds of N. America by Robbins - etc 3. Birds of Canada Godfrey 4. Minnesota Birds - Roberts

19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? 1 day

Signature: Robert K. Myers Address: 1236 Elycia Ave.

Date: Dec. 30, 1980 first written City, State: Waterloo, Iowa  
Feb 16, 1981 rewritten



These are the notes I made on my daily record for 3 Jan 1981 concerning the possible Hoary Redpoll seen at Waterloo earlier that day.

"One redpoll with injured leg had quite white rump which was usually exposed because wings held low. However, a few streaks from back extended onto rump and a few very fine streaks up from tail. Bill, overall color and ventral streaks not definitely different from other birds it was with. These birds on ground and in tree on Plymouth St in Waterloo."

I noted a total of 7 Redpolls. The birds were about 30 ft away and directly north of Carl Bendorf and I as we watched them for about 20 minutes with a telescope from the car window.

Thomas H. Kent  
11 March 1981