

Illinois



Department of Conservation

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605 WM. G. STRATTON BUILDING • 400 SOUTH SPRING STREET • SPRINGFIELD 62706
CHICAGO OFFICE - ROOM 100, 160 NO. LASALLE 60601

David Kenney, Director • James C. Helfrich, Assistant Director

8 September 1978

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

Dear Nick:

Thank you for your letters and comments; I always appreciate them. This letter is primarily in response to yours of 9 August (carboded to Fred Thompson and Pete Petersen).

Although the Hoary Redpoll situation was third on your list of items mentioned, I will respond to that first. (Please be assured that everyone recognizes the excellent improvement in bird reports from Iowa and the increased rapport that you have gained with Iowa contributors.) On reviewing the AMERICAN BIRDS report, please note that the entire Hoary Redpoll subject was introduced with a sentence --ending with a period. Following that sentence was the account of acceptable records--each separated by a semi-colon (as is standard policy for all data pertaining to a single species.) The probable records (those with insufficient supportive evidence) were printed in the Uncorroborated Reports Section (as explained in the penultimate sentence of the Introductory remarks). Those records totally lacking any back-up support were omitted entirely from the report. Since the Iowa record was printed in the main text of the report, that clearly indicates accepted observation.

As far as credit for records go, I always acknowledge the original observer whenever that is known. Even though you did send earlier correspondence concerning this particular record, I still rely totally on your master written reports (since they are all-inclusive) for the preparation of the Iowa portion of the Seasonal report; however, if I have questions concerning particular observations, I refer to the written material submitted by the original contributor. In this case, according to your Winter report (copy enclosed), a person with the initials "RT" was responsible for the record at Marion (sorry for misspelling it); however, in the list of contributors there was no one with those initials. For that matter, my entire package of field notes from Iowa contains nothing from Fred Thompson, either. Therefore, I could not confirm the observation according to original observers.

I do apologize though, as the record was definitely intended to be in bold-face type and acknowledging it as Iowa's first authentic record as per my letter to you dated 22 Feb. 78. For review purposes, I am enclosing copies of another article from AMERICAN BIRDS concerning redpolls and some information from the seasonal report from the MISSOURI BLUEBIRD concerning an observation near St. Louis.

8 September 1978

As for item number one in your letter, I do not know what you mean by the "supplement"; in all of the materials that I have, including your follow-up letters, there is no reference to the observation of any Ferruginous Hawk. There was no supplement to your report as you indicated. I do agree, though, that a Ferruginous Hawk record is definitely worth reporting.

Now for point two, the Northern Shrike data will be duly corrected in the next issue of AMERICAN BIRDS. I'm sure that this type of error will occur periodically owing to the great volume of multi-state material used in the compilation of the report; however, I do hope such errors are few and far between.

Final comments, on receipt of the next issue, you will note that the Gray-crowned Rosy Finch observation has been moved up from the Uncorroborated Section to the fully accepted section. Thanks for provided necessary information.

Another comment may be in order at this time in that the AMERICAN BIRDS editor has been thoughtfully considering the dropping entirely all initials following the printed records. It hasn't come to this yet, even though it's been on the drawing board for many years, and probably never will happen; however, the editor has (or will very soon) reduce the names of contributors to a first initial and last name, *only*, rather than printout the entire first name. We are already forbidden to use middle initials. This is just for your advance information.

At this time, all that I can say is have a good fall season and may the birding throughout Iowa be good. Thank's again for you comments.

Sincerely,



Vernon M. Kleen
Division of Wildlife Resources

cc: Pete Petersen
Fred Thompson

were a few flocks of 75-100 birds in weedy fields (w. 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 MHP and nearby cemeteries on February 5 (RD). Strangely, Com. Redpolls did not appear in n.w. 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 (RT), 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 Com. 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 Am. Birds! Pine Siskins were also common in the s. 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 the feeder February 6 (PP);

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Re Redpolls, Siskins: see
PPs note of banding 1/18-2/26

winter were seen on January 14 (6 atorney's L., RS) and February 12 (one at Bettendorf, PP). Lapland Longspurs were irregularly common along roadsides, as far s. as Burlington (C-JF); 200 were counted on a trip from Davenport to Decorah, February 3 (PP). Almost unanimously, our correspondents reported abundant Snow Buntings, with penetration to the s. edge of the state, but many left for the n.e. (410 by actual count at Protivin on January 21, JS). The Davenport to Decorah count yielded 800-1000 individuals (PP).

Iowa City
Febr. 25
(TK)

Erratum. Dean Mosman's initials were used in the Fall Report, but his name was inadvertently omitted from the credits.

Contributors. Dick Bierman, Cherokee; *1 Marion Brewer, Cherokee; Woodward Brown, Des Moines; Sue and Stuart Burns, Des Moines; Marie Carlson, Boone; Gay and Lloyd Crim, Lucas; George Crossley, Dubuque; Raymond Cummins, Pocahontas; Rich De Coster, Iowa City; G. Edgar Folk, Jr., Iowa City; Charles and Jane Fuller, Burlington; Ione Getscher, Hamburg; *2 Nicholas Halmi (NiH), Iowa City; Nelson Hoskins (NeH), Ottumwa; Thomas Kent, Iowa City; Pearl Knoop, Marble Rock; Darwin Koenig, Decorah; Richard Mooney, Des Moines; Dean Mosman, Elkhart; Mike Newlon, Iowa City; Emma Lou Oldenburger, Cedar Rapids; Peter Petersen, Davenport; Ruth Phipps, Shenandoah; Joe Schaufenbuel, St. Lucas; Conrad Schlemmer (CoS), Spencer; Charlotte Scott, Seymour; Lillian Serbousek, Cedar Rapids; Thomas Shires (TSh), Iowa City; W. Ross Silcock, Malvern; *3 Tom Staudt (TSt), Iowa City; Fred Thompson, Marion; John Van Dyk, Sioux Center; Hank and Linda Zaletel, Ames. N. S. HALMI, Rte. 6, IOWA CITY, IA 52240.

double
space

Reminder. Please send your reports for the Spring Season as soon as possible after its end (May 31), and certainly no later than June 5.

*1 ^ add: Gladys Black, Pleasantville } case reports with
*3 ^ add: Jon Stravers, Pella (JSt) } some useful ideas
*2 ^ add: Janet Greer, Council Bluffs

clear - 0 - 25 knots

Bendgate Conservation Area

Total Species 7

FRINGILLIDS — *Pheucticus* grosbeaks were below normal. Only two Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were reported, both at New Jersey feeders, and a ♂ Black-headed Grosbeak spent Dec. 28 – Jan. 20 at a Basking Ridge, Somerset Co., N.J. feeder (ph. — F. Shanholtzer, RK). It was the third winter in a row for that species in the immediate area. Only two Dickcissels were reported, both at coastal New Jersey feeders, after a poor fall.

It was a banner year for winter finches. Every potential species was represented. The ubiquitous Evening Grosbeaks passed through and diminished later in the season. Purple Finches were numerous and widespread, although we have no very precise data. For the first time since 1972-73 Pine Grosbeaks appeared in good numbers, though they were largely restricted to the north and west of the Region. There small flocks were quite widespread, with maxima of "well over 300" in Dutchess Co., N.Y. (R.T.W.B.C.) and 50 at Skyline Manor, Passaic Co., N.J., Jan. 14 (RS). They did not range south of Princeton in interior New Jersey, and thinned out markedly toward the coast. Aside from several Westchester County flocks, the only coastal record was 14 at Eatontown, Monmouth Co., N.J., Dec. 31 (K.Apps). There were none at all on Long Island. Only small flocks reached s.e. Pennsylvania, such as 15 at Nockamixon S.P., Feb. 26 (J. De Wayne) and up to ten throughout the period at Allentown (BM).

A massive redpoll invasion seemed to some observers the greatest incursion ever. We doubt that it exceeded the 1959-60 flight, although concentration this time at feeders may have made it seem that way. Although flocks reached every part of the Region, the largest groups were in the west and south, such as 400 at Layton, N.J., Jan. 31 (RK) and 560 banded by RJM at Norristown, Pa. They were his first since 1960, when he banded 60.

Siskins were everywhere; 22 New Jersey CBCs totalled 4307 as compared with 18 last year. For the first time since the incursions of 1973-74, White-winged Crossbills were more widespread than Red Crossbills. Reds moved into the interior early, with the highest regional count 25 at Rancocas S.P., Burlington Co., N.J., Dec. 22 (V. Lavia). White-winged Crossbills became widespread later in the season, and nearer the coast. By far the largest group was 125+ in a barrier beach pine plantation at Gilgo, L.I., in February. Groups of up to 20 ranged widely in central and coastal New Jersey, while farther s. and w. there were only four at Wilmington Feb. 1 (PJ) and eight Jan. 2 at Allentown (BM).

A ♂ Lark Bunting remained at an Elwood, L.I. feeder, Jan. 14 – at least Mar. 5 (R. Benjamin, m.ob.). Of more than a dozen previous New York state records, a majority are in autumn. Among an exceptional number of winter Vesper Sparrows were surprising cases of feeder visits: one at Paulsboro, Gloucester Co., N.J. (J. McNeil), and no less than six instances in s.e. Pennsylvania (AM *et al.*, *fide* DAC). Are these retiring birds often overlooked in winter, except when driven out of the fields by deep snow? One late fall Lark Sparrow lingered to Jan. 8 at Hemp-

S.A.

Among the redpolls were some paler ones, but pale redpolls are not automatically Hoary Redpolls. Redpolls "vary more in size and color than most bird species" (Ian Newton, *Finches*, 51). To make matters worse, Com. Redpolls become paler in late winter owing to feather wear, and, on the breeding grounds, Hoary Redpolls are said to be as dark as Commons except for rump and undertail coverts. Trays of museum skins leave an impression of bewildering diversity, and some specimens are mislabelled.

Some individuals, however, exhibit prominently all three of the following characters, not all of which are mentioned in field guides: a short, more conical bill lending a "pushed-in" look to the face; pure white or pinkish rump with no vestige of streaking; and pure white under tail coverts. Size probably does not help. Although Hoary Redpolls from Greenland, *Acanthis hornemanni hornemanni* are extremely large, so are Com. Redpolls from Greenland, *A. flammea rostrata*. Hoary Redpolls in Alaska, *A. h. exilipes*, far more likely to wander here, are no larger than most Commons. This column launched the suggestion in June 1974 (*AB* 28:620) that Hoary Redpolls wear "pantaloons" of shaggy tarsal feathering. Numerous observers agreed this time that most Commons are equally pantalooned.

Determining the three decisive characters requires close study and color photography. It is difficult to be sure from the side that all under tail coverts are white. We have examined photographs of very pale redpolls whose white rumps showed some flecking, and whose bills seemed as long and slender as Commons. Our scepticism about field identification is heightened by recollection that D. Ford banded 700 redpolls at Robert Moses S.P., L.I., in February 1974, some of which seemed very pale but which invariably, on close inspection in the hand, failed the test with respect to one character or another (*AB* 28:619).

This season, although a number of Hoary Redpolls were claimed (about 20 in New Jersey alone), we reserve judgment except where all three characters were clearly evident. The best example was of a large female, accompanied by one or two similar males, at a Rye, N.Y. feeder, from Feb. 25 – Mar. 31 (J. Gee, m.ob.), superbly photographed (ph. — J. Wall, H. Darrow). She often drooped her wings to uncover the pure white rump. A strongly persuasive photograph taken at a S. Plainfield, N.J., feeder in February (JDo, ph. — T. Koellhoffer), is still being examined in Alaska, and another probable was at Wilkes-Barre (ph. — WR). RJM examined a very pale bird in the hand at Norristown, Pa., but we do not have full details.



Hoary Redpoll, Plainfield first Feb. 11, 19 approximately 150 Springer at the Unhanded and examined photographs " . . . no doubt the hornemanni exilipes. this individual to the J. Koellhoffer.

stead Lake S.P., L.I. the same day at Matt were two remarkable Montauk Dec. 11 (GS Township, N.J. feeder, period (C. Reeves, G. 1 feeder had been host which did indeed return appear after the heavy Harris' Sparrow remain Co., Del., for several w JP). The once irregular now a regular wintere amazing 42 were at the 31 (PWS). Snow Bur banded 140, her best tot; but no coastal flocks c counted by MB in six County, Pa., in late Feb to be frequenting another Pa. MB saw some of the tops of small trees, as c Libertyville, N.J., Feb.

UNCONFIRMED RI tantalizing report was a Yellow-billed Loon at t (R. Conn *et al.*). Intens again. The only previous Atlantic are of an old remains found on a Lc have a report of six Cor 26 which would be un remain unconfirmed.

first record for Stoddard Co. (BE). Golden-winged were noted in above average numbers in the Springfield area. A female Cape May was seen at Independence May 13 (BF).

Twenty+ Yellow-throated Warblers were observed along a 13-mile stretch of the Niangua River May 20 (FL,MR). A Pine Warbler was detected just south of KC in northern Cass Co., May 20 (JG). The Palm Warbler at Rosendale, Andrew Co., Apr. 15 was early (JH). Ten were seen at Independence May 8 (BF). A Connecticut was observed at St. Louis May 21 (TB). Hooded Warblers were seen at Van Meter S.P. May 14 (CH,KH) and Cleveland, Cass Co., May 18 (Millie Stephens).

Yellow-headed Blackbirds were common in Holt Co., from mid-Apr. to the end of the period. Most young had fledged by the end of May. Thirty Brewer's Blackbirds were noted near Liberty Mar. 21 (NMCL) and 23 at Maryville Apr. 18 (TB).

FRINGILLIDS - A good concentration of Rose-breasted Grosbeaks was at Roaring River S.P. May 6 - 7 when over a hundred birds were seen (JG). Lingering Evening Grosbeaks were expected after this past winter's influx. Twelve (4 males, 8 females) were seen near the Big Piney River, Pulaski Co., Apr. 30 (MR) and a single male was observed at Mingo N.W.R. May 6 (fide BE). The first House Finch was finally recorded for the state at Glendale, St. Louis (FH et al). The bird had been present at a feeder since Dec. 1, 1977 and was still present at the end of this period. The bird was a male with excellent photos being obtained.

A probable female Hoary Redpoll visited a feeder in St. Louis Mar. 6 - 7 (Terry Barker et al). Unfortunately the bird was neither netted and measured nor collected, thus leaving some doubt to its identification as was the case with the Hoaries reported a few winters ago at KC. From 50 to 70 Common Redpolls were seen in St. Charles Co., Mar. 4 (FH et al). They lingered at KC until Mar. 17 (CH). The last reported this season were two males at Maryville Mar. 24 (DE). Pine Siskins were still plentiful throughout the state through Apr. Some were still present at the end of the