





























887-02-1994

Species: Hoary Redpoll (*Carduelis hornemanni hornemanni*)
Location: Caernarvon Twp., Lancaster County, Pa.
Date(s): 1 March 1994 through 15 March 1994

In conjunction with the article in *Pa. Birds* (copy attached) I submit the following.

I had numerous views of the bird from virtually every angle. The most striking feature was its overall frosty appearance. It was just as easy to spot it among its relatives with the naked eye and then use a Swift Audubon 8.5X44 binocular for details. In addition to the relative smallness of the bill, the bird was chunky or chubby, giving the appearance of a stout-necked wrestler in comparison with the other redpolls. The undertail coverts were pure white. The red on the cap quite restricted. The photograph in *Collin's Bird Guide* (1980) is quite close, although I would say that the red cap was even more restricted than shown in that guide. Additionally, the Hoary's coloration was grayish, not the brown/buffy tones of a Common Redpoll. The restricted streaking on the sides was also gray not brown toned. Although it may seem bizarre to you readers, when it flew in it almost gave the impression of a winter-plumaged American Goldfinch (*Carduelis tristis*), it was that pale and that size. It was between the sizes of the average Common Redpoll and the average House Finch (*Carpodacus mexicanus*). It was a first record for Lancaster County and perhaps the southernmost sighting of the species in Pennsylvania.

More about the bill. After many hours of looking at this particular bird, my conclusion about the bill is not that it is "tiny, pushed in," but rather that it is a slightly different shape, more conical, which gives a different look. Also, it appears proportionately smaller to the head size than that with *flammea*. The angle where the forehead and upper mandible meet appears greater than with *flammea*. Nothing we saw in the literature gave us a clue as to the age or sex of this bird. However, we do feel confident that it was the Greenland race *C. h. hornemanni*.

Some references mentioned that the feathering on the legs of *hornemanni* is heavier. Despite looking at this bird often, it was only on a few occasions that it sat high enough to get a decent look and I felt it equivocal. This is another instance where banding might have filled in some blanks. And in looking through windows I could see no difference in leg coloring. It did, however, tend to expose its rump with its wings in a drooped effect. Although some *flammea* do this drooping, it does not seem to be as pervasive as with *hornemanni*.

In addition to this distinctive redpoll, there were other redpolls of interest. At least four of us independently saw one bird with an immaculate pink rump (my impression was not as rosy-toned), but not the rest of the bird at the same time. On other occasions I and others observed 1 or 2 paler birds whose bills seemed somewhat smaller. There were a few occasions when I could see a clear white rump on a bird, but not its head. The particular viewing conditions of our flock were either on a hanging feeder or on a bannister. If you could see the rump, the head was the other direction and vice versa. There was no vantage point to be able to look down or out over ground-level feeding birds. In other words, there may have been a *C. h. exilipes* that got away!

Barbara M. Haas
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A Most Documented Record of Hoary Redpoll in Pa.
Lancaster County
by Barbara M. Haas

A description of the redpoll has been submitted to P.O.R.C., so this is more a chronicle of events surrounding the sighting.

On Tuesday 1 March 1994 I was checking out the small flock of approximately 20 Common Redpolls (*Carduelis flammea*) that had frequented our feeders since 12 January. It was approximately 1000 and the weather prediction was for a significant snowfall the next day. I was immediately drawn to one specific bird, which was considerably whiter than the others. Looking harder I considered the bill to be small in comparison to its head size. I had no previous experience with a Hoary Redpoll (*C. hornemanni*), but felt immediately confident that this was in fact one. A telephone call to husband Frank (while I was watching the bird) brought the expected, "Are you sure?" response, followed quickly by, "I can't get home until after lunch time, but did you see the rump?" Ten minutes later I called that the rump was both immaculate white and more extensive than on the other redpolls.

Frantic calls went out to Ed Pederson and Jan Witmer (both of Lancaster Co.) whom I knew had some previous experience with the species. (Most close-by birders we know are not home on a Tuesday morning.) Bob Schutsky was at that moment flying to Costa Rica. Deuane Hoffman was out of state. Ed arrived first and could see no contraindication to the identification. Jan and Frank arrived about 1330, but more importantly, so did the bird. There was no doubt in their minds either. Despite the overcast conditions, cameras clicked. Then it was hit the phones time. Strategic calls were made to cover the state and get it on the Delaware Valley Hotline.

The flock that first day had at least doubled in number, with estimates in the 50 to 75 range. It was a sleepless night wondering if it would stay. The next day we had about 8" of snow, but that did not deter 17 birders from coming to view it. That night (Wednesday) we had winds gusting to 60 mph and many of the local roads became impassible due to drifting snow. Dauntless, Al Guarente and his son Bryan trekked over a mile, including walking over a car and a stop sign to meet Frank where Hammertown Rd. was plowed! Carl Perretta asked enough people to find open roads to our home. Another night with little sleep, as the forecast was for improving weather. Historically, Hoarys visit feeders when the weather is atrocious and then disappear when things improve. Nonetheless, 19 people arrived, all of whom saw the bird, except Ken Lebo who could only spend 10 minutes looking for it. (He saw it another day.)

Friday, Rick Wiltraut returned with his video camera and the bird cooperated for taping.

Then came Saturday. Gorgeous weather. The

bird was first seen at 0705, then briefly on two occasions in the latter part of the morning. At one point, 50 to 60 people were milling about the house, many of whom never saw the bird. The early birders were fortunate. Others had to return another day. For Dick Colyer it was number 300! for Pa. Sunday (6 March) the bird was a bit more cooperative as it was overcast (or maybe it was that fewer people were at the windows). Monday was a bummer for birders that arrived after 0712. I had stressed being here before 0700 (the bird appeared at 0658 and 0712 only), so as it turned out I was the only observer that day, despite many eyes later. Georgette Syster and Gloria Lamer (from Indiana Co.) were encouraged to spend the night and did. Marvelous houseguests. Cooked the dinner, stripped the beds, got the laundry going the next morning (Tuesday), AND saw the bird by 0635!

The earliest it ever showed up was 0619 (13 March) and the latest it was observed was 1610 (12 March). We had two snow storms during its stay and on those days it was coming into the feeders every half-hour or so, but no longer than a hour separating visits. In good weather the interval between sightings was as much as three hours. The last time and date it was here were about 0730 on 14 March. Bob Schutsky was the last person to sign in and see the bird. Was it karma that he was one of the first called and the last to see it?

Speaking of signing in. We set up a notebook for people to register. And although there were probably some who did not know about it in the confusion of the first weekend, 196 known visitors were in our home. We had guests from North Carolina and Maine, as well as the expected from New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland. Our farthest visitor was Ann O'Leary, who lives in Germany. She was in the States for foot surgery, but managed to limp her way here for a life bird.

Little did we know that last August when we designed the form letter for property owners hosting a rare bird, that we would be doing the hosting. In addition to the sign-in log, we set up a bucket for contributions to the Nature Conservancy in the name of the Hoary Redpoll. The sum collected was \$343.55, which has been sent to the Nature Conservancy with a cover letter. At first blush it seems like quite a tidy sum. But considering it was a life bird for most observers and a state bird for virtually all, personally I'm not particularly impressed with the average donation/ visitor (\$1.75) to this worthy cause. One of the closest locations to reliably get a Hoary Redpoll is Churchill, Manitoba. Granted, you will see more than just redpolls, but cost per lifer will be a hellava lot more. Considering one couple gave \$30.00 it makes it even a worse average (\$1.61).

We recognize that this is a new concept for American and Pennsylvania birders and we hope that in the future it is something that will catch on across the country. It is our understanding that when a Golden-winged Warbler (albeit a national record) showed up in England that \$2000.00 was raised just for that bird alone. Unfortunately, I do not have the number of twitchers that viewed it.

We would like to thank our neighbor who came in with a front-end loader and cleared our driveway for increased parking. And our thanks go to the Zerbe sisters who allowed overflow parking in their employees lot across the street. We went through almost 35 pounds of Niger seed during the first three weeks of March, so we thank the Baird Ornithological Club and Elverson Supply for their generous contributions of more Niger seed for the cause. We received many notes of appreciation and goodies from birders across the state and thank each of you. A conservative count suggested that we were feeding at least 150 redpolls. On bad weather days they would go through up to 8 cups of thistle!

Looking back over the 0530 wake up calls, the giving directions to here from every direction, answering the question, "Is it still there?" to the final days when we had to say, "No, it hasn't been seen since early on the 14th," was it worth it? You bet. We got to put faces to names of other birders known only from subscription blanks. Saw many friends. More birders learned about *Pa. Birds* and subscribed, others resubscribed after a hiatus. Except for some fiascos in the parking area, our home was treated with respect (as anticipated). Our cats managed to take it all in stride, and, no, we do not have any redpoll specimen in our freezer.

After more than 20 years of feeding birds and each year we go through more than a *ton* of seed, it was great to have the Hoary Redpoll visit. Imagine, two species of redpoll, but no Evening Grosbeak on our yard list. Although it may not have been as awesome as having an Ivory Gull coming to your suet, getting a lifer at your own feeder was still pretty exciting. Is there a White-winged Dove lurking for next year? We'll be ready to greet you.

Also, I do believe that we had at least one and probably two *C. h. exilipes* here as well. Subsequent reading and discussion with Allan Keith and his observations of a Hoary Redpoll (*exilipes*) in New Jersey add credence to this belief.

In addition to the Hoary Redpoll here, we have learned about others (Indiana, Luzerne, Pike, Tioga, @)

2469 Hammertown Rd.
Narvon, PA 17555

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round # 1 of

Species: **Hoary Redpoll (Carduelis hornemanni)**

Date of Sighting: **1 March 1994 to 14 March 1994**

Location: **NARVON**

County: **LANCASTER**

Observer(s): **Barb & Frank Haas**

Date of Submission: **1994**

Submitted by: **Barb & Frank Haas**

Written Description: **YES** Photo: **YES** Specimen: **NO**

Recording: **NONE**

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV	Class V			Abstain
					A	B	C	
F. Haas	X							
N. Pulcinella	X							
E. Kwater	X							
R. Ickes	X							
G. McWilliams	X							
P. Schwalbe	X							
J. Skinner	X							
TOTALS	7							
DECISION	X							

Comments:

Signature (Secretary):

F. C. Haas

Date:

9-25-94