

887-02-1996

Rarity description - compiled 19th Feb. 1996

Species: Hoary Redpoll Carduelis hornemanni exilipes

Location: 1830 Woodside Avenue, Alburtis, Berks County, PA 18011

Date: 18th February 1996 **Time:** 09:50-13:30 hrs

Duration of obs.: c.1 hour in total

Weather: mostly fine and very sunny, with occasional scattered clouds. Cold and breezy. Temp. 10-25°F.

Observers: J L Muddeman, P G Saenger, K Lebo & C & A? Elwell.

Optical equipment: Leica 8X32 binoculars X 2; Questar Field Scope with 24mm eyepiece (JLM) & Bushnell Spacemaster with 20X lens (PGS).

Previous experience of sub-/species in question: JLM: 4 or 5 of the species in Britain, including 3 or 4 of the ssp. exilipes & 1 hornemanni; PGS: none.

Previous experience of similar species: JLM: Several thousand common redpolls of the ssp. caberet in Britain, at all seasons, including c.15 birds handled for banding ; c.40 of the ssp. flammea seen in the field. PGS: c.35 at feeders for over a month in 1993, plus c.200 in field. 2 flammea common redpolls (an adult male and a 1st-winter/adult female) present at the same time for direct comparison.

Who found it?: PGS **Who first identified it?:** JLM

Does anyone disagree?: Not to my knowledge.

Was it photographed?: Yes, by KL **Certainty of ID:** 100%

Circumstances

During the course of normal feeder watches at the address above, KL rang PGS to ask about information on a Northern Shrike seen by JLM, PGS and PGS's daughter the day before, near Hawk Mountain. Whilst JLM was talking to KL about this bird, two redpolls flew down to the ground under one of the feeders in the garden and PGS swiftly commented on their (unexpected) appearance. As the first redpolls that JLM had seen in N America, JLM handed the phone back to PGS before taking a look at the birds. KL half-jokingly remarked to PGS that we should look for hoaries, whereupon, JLM, noticing that one of the birds looked subtly, but distinctly different, suggested that indeed

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there was one. A third redpoll joined the other two at around this point, allowing good comparisons to be made, and a few comments were relayed to KL over the phone relating to the particular bird, especially that the under-tail coverts (from a side view) appeared to be pure white, and that it was structurally different. Knowing that the bird required good prolonged views for identification, we ended the telephone conversation to check the bird thoroughly, agreeing to phone KL back as soon as we had had better views.

The following c.30 mins. were spent checking the bird (when present) from as many angles as possible, including prolonged views from below, as it perched in trees, and on the ground when feeding side-by-side with a common redpoll in similar plumage state. This gave multiple views from c.7 to c.35 yards, with the light at various angles. The identification was greatly aided at the time using the article on redpoll identification in the December 1995 issue of Birding magazine.

KL was phoned back after the identification was confirmed, and he and A&CE were able to see the bird feeding with a common redpoll several times in good light from c.11:30 hrs, though it regularly disappeared into the surrounding trees and scrub for varying periods of time. Last seen at c.13:30, when PGS and JLM had to leave for a couple of hours.

Description (taken from field notes)

A first-winter, or adult female bird, very close to, but slightly larger in size than a similarly plumaged common redpoll. This was perhaps accentuated by a distinctly thicker-necked and more front-heavy appearance (see figure), which, combined with a slightly paler and colder brown-gray plumage tone and reduced streaking of the head, breast, and flanks, made the bird readily separable in the field.

Bill very similar to the commons present, but appearing fractionally shorter, and deeper at the base, with a straight culmen. (- however, not like 2 of the previous exilipes seen before by JLM which had typically short, conical bills, and one of the reasons for making more notes of the bird than I probably would have otherwise!). Yellow with a blackish tip and culmen ridge.

Head pattern reasonably clearly defined, and noticeably lacking in streaks, especially to the (brown-)gray ear-coverts. Typical redpoll blackish mustache and bib, with a few buffy tips. The whole of the 'face' and throat (and extreme upper breast?) were washed in pale buff. Rear part of the supercilium also washed in buff, though the part in front of the eye was much whiter, and more clearly defined than in the accompanying common redpolls. Supercilia just met over the bill-base, where buff tones reappeared, though the black (mustache) at the bill-base pointed up in the center, almost reaching the red forehead patch. Buff-white eye-ring above and below broken by darker eye-stripe.

Nape?, mantle and back finely and densely streaked with blackish lines on brown-gray base, though with 1 noticeable white streak running down from the mantle along the

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center-line of the back (2-3 of these visible on the common redpoll), into boldly black-and-white streaked lower back (usually hidden by tertials). A very slight grade in tone of the fringes of the mantle and back was evident, becoming paler towards the central back and on the innermost scapulars (subtle though). Exposed rump (seen well on one occasion when feeding on the ground by JLM & PGS) showed a narrow white unstreaked band (c.40% of the rump area), bordered by a broader gray-white, faintly dark-streaked band between this and the upper-tail coverts. This white rump band not very noticeable in flight however, and not always seen in flight, even when looked for.

Underparts strikingly pale, especially when seen perched upright and head-on, in trees: pale buff throat and upper breast graded quickly into gray-white or white lower breast, belly, flanks, vent and under-tail coverts. From the breast-sides down to the vent, well-defined, mid-gray streaks were present, though most restricted on the flanks (where often formed a single wavy line plus a few scattered streaks), and most extensive on the breast-side just below the bend of the wing and around the vent, where scattered small streaks were evident. These were much less numerous and prominent than on either of the accompanying common redpolls. From side-view, under-tail coverts pure white, though with prolonged views from behind, with the bird on the ground three black 'spots' (formed by looking at the end of the streaks present) were visible. Only with excellent views of the bird perched 12-15 yds away high in a tree, could three relatively short, narrow, rather diffuse blackish streaks be seen (see diagram), with that on the longest feather fractionally broader than the other two. None of these approached the apparent length, width or prominence of those on the commons present.

Wing color and pattern not markedly different from the common redpolls, though unlike the similarly-plumaged common present with it (adult male pattern not noted), it exhibited a fine pale buff median covert bar (formed by the pale tips), contrasting with the white (buff-white on innermost) greater covert bar, and did not show two, fine white bars. Wing feathers looking fresh.

Tail basically dark (gray?) with fine whitish fringes. Fresh-looking, with no obvious molt contrasts. Shape of feather-tips not clearly determined, but not sharp and narrow as in many 1st-winters, nor clearly broad and rounded as in 'good' adults.

Rather shaggy 'leggings' were seen on the bird later on, when it was feeding on its own in thistle spread on the ground for it, and though not especially prominent, more noticeable than on the commons present, the feathers extending below the 'knee'.

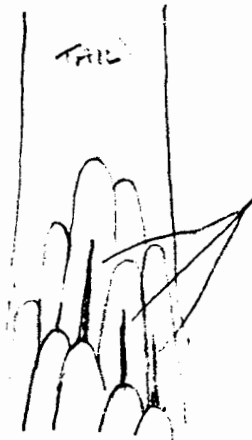
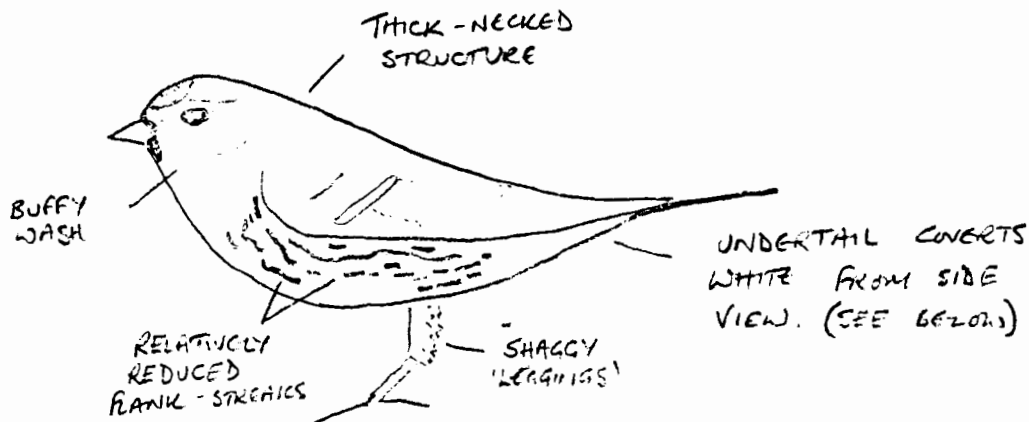
The combination of overall grayer color, front-heavy, thick-necked shape, fine and relatively weak streaks to only a few white under-tail coverts and the flanks, weakly streaked ear-coverts, and buff wash to the face, throat and lower forehead identify the bird as a hoary redpoll. The relatively dark color and relatively extensive streaking are characteristic of the race exilipes. The lack of visible molt contrasts in the wings or tail, unstreaked white rump-band and good condition of the plumage suggests an adult bird (and therefore female, because of the total lack of any red feathers in the plumage except

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on the fore-crown), but this is impossible to ascertain fully from the views obtained. However, in addition, the buffy median covert bar suggests a first-winter bird to me.

Written by JLM from my field notes, incorporating a few comments from PGS.

DIAGRAMS COPIED FROM ENLARGED PHOTOCOPIES OF FIELD-SKETCHES TAKEN PRIMARILY TO SHOW STRUCTURE, + EXTENT OF FLANK-STREAKING (UPPER FIGURE) + UNDER-TAIL COVERT STREAKS (LOWER FIGURE).



THREE FINE, BLACKISH STREAKS VISIBLE FROM BELOW ON PERCHED BIRD.

JLM 11/2/95

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round # 1 of

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

Date of Sighting: **18 February 1996 to 18 February 1996**

Location: **ALBURTIS**

County: **BERKS**

Observer(s): **J L Muddeman**

Date of Submission: **1996**

Submitted by: **J L Muddeman**

Written Description: **YES** Photo: **NO** 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					
S. Feldstein				X				
TOTALS			6	1				
DECISION			X					

Comments:

Signature (Secretary):

J. Haas

Date: *2-22-97*