





Hoary Redpoll 887-01-2008  
Bushy Run Battleground, Westmoreland Co  
1/19/2009 Mark McLaughlin







HOARY Redpoll 887-012008  
Bushy Row Burdick Rd, Westminster CO  
2/2/2008 GERT MARSH



House Redpoll 88701-2008  
Bonyon Brook Bethel, Westmorland Co  
2/2/2008 Geoff Myles

**PENNSYLVANIA RARE BIRD REPORT FORM**

This form is presented as a convenience and guide. It can be used if desired, but is not necessary for submitting a report. Species requiring documentation are those on the Review list or not on the Official List of Birds in Pennsylvania. Send documentation to:

**Nick Pulcinella, Secretary**  
**Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee** 887-01-2008  
**613 Howard Ave.**  
**West Chester, PA 19380**  
[nickpulcinella@verizon.net](mailto:nickpulcinella@verizon.net)

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**SPECIES** (Common and Scientific Name): Possible Hoary Redpoll, *Caduelis hornemanni*

**Subspecies:**exilipes

**NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS:**1      **SEX(ES):** probably a female, but cannot exclude first year male

**AGES(S) AND PLUMAGE(S)** (e.g., immature; adult in breeding plumage; year for gulls; basic or alternate if you prefer those terms; state of molt if applicable):  
Adult female or first year male

**DATE OF OBSERVATION:** 1/16/2008 through at least 2/12/2008      **TIME:** Various daytime – it visited feeders on numerous occasions

**LOCATION** (city, borough, township): Harrison City, PA 15636

**EXACT SITE** (e.g., name of park, lake, road): Bushy Run Battlefield Historic Site, Box 468, Harrison City, PA 15636-0468

**OBSERVER REPORTING:**

Name: Mark A. McConaughy  
Address: 3787K Logans Ferry Road (Home address, work above)  
City: Pittsburgh State: PA Zip: 15239  
Email (optional): TimeTraveler@msn.com (home), mmcconough@state.pa.us

(work) Telephone (optional): 724.733.5299 (home, evenings), 724.527.5585 x103 (work)

**OTHER OBSERVERS** (only those who saw and identified the bird with you):  
Others saw the bird, but only Mike Fialkovich saw it while I was with him. They will have to submit their own reports.



**HABITAT** (e.g., mowed field, woodland edge, any other details):  
Mixed deciduous/coniferous forest

**DISTANCE TO BIRD:** 10 to 20 m.

**VIEWING CONDITIONS** (sky, weather, position of sun relative to you):  
Under both sunny and cloudy weather. Also, in snowfall.

**OPTICAL EQUIPMENT USED:** Leica 10x42 binoculars, Sony A-100 Camera, Sony DSC-707 camera

**DESCRIPTION** (Include as much detail as you observed – size relative to other species Present; “jizz”= e.g. posture, body shape, and proportions; colors and patterns of plumage; bill, eye, and leg characteristics; other features relevant to this individual):  
The bird in question was seen with a flock of approximately 30 Common Redpolls. It appears to be the same general size as the Common Redpolls. It displays the typical redpoll notched tail, a whitish rump with faint streaks, undertail covers are white and only faintly, if that, marked. The mantle is streaky grayish-brown and white. The nape of the neck is also streaked with grayish-brown and some white. There is a red spot on the top, forward (“forehead”) portion of the head. The beak is yellow and conical with a black edging or mask around the beak. It lacked any reddish blush on the breast and it likely a female redpoll or less likely, a first year male.

**BEHAVIOR** (be as detailed as possible about what the bird was doing):  
It was feeding on the ground and on a thistle feeder.

**VOCALIZATIONS:** None heard that could specifically be assigned to this bird. However, the Common Redpolls were making the rising swee-eee-eet call.

**SUPPORTING EVIDENCE, IF ANY:**

Photograph  Video recording  Audio recording  Drawing

**Photographer/recorder/illustrator:**

Name: Mark A. McConaughy

Address: 3787K Logans Ferry Road (home address)

City: Pittsburgh State: PA Zip: 15239

Email (optional): [TimeTraveler@msn.com](mailto:TimeTraveler@msn.com) (home), [mmcconaugh@state.pa.us](mailto:mmcconaugh@state.pa.us)

(work)

Telephone (optional): 724.733.5299 (home), 724-527-5585 x 103 (work)

Photos are available online at:

<http://s5.photobucket.com/albums/y178/McConaughy/CommonRedpoll/>

Geoff Malosh also has photos (better than mine) of the bird online at:

<http://home.earthlink.net/~pomarine/id80.html>

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**IF THIS IS A DEAD BIRD:**

General condition: NA

If collected (by permit), location and number of specimen if known:

NA

**SEPARATION FROM SIMILAR SPECIES** (how you eliminated others):

When I first saw it on January 16 (and that is when most of my better photos of it were taken) it stood out from the Common Redpolls by having a noticeably white rump and general whiter appearance. The undertail coverts were also white and mostly unstreaked, unlike the boldly streaked ones of the Common Redpolls. Later in February, the rump and undertail coverts did appear to have some faint streaks in them and this may be due to more wear on the feathers of the bird. The flanks of the bird are streaked, but the streaking is not as bold than that on the Common Redpolls. The mantle is streaked with grayish-brown and white instead of grayish-brown and tan streaks on all the female and male Common Redpolls. The red spot on the head of the bird appears to be smaller than that on the Common Redpolls. The bill appears to be a little smaller and not as thick as that of the Common Redpolls. David Sibley has a scale on his website for Hoary versus a Common Redpoll at <http://sibleyguides.blogspot.com/2008/01/character-index-for-redpoll.html>

Based on this character guide, I would rate this bird a 4 for the whitish undertail coverts, a 4 for the streaking on the flanks and a 5 (when originally seen) or 4 (February) for the whitish rump. The total of 12 or 13 points would put it on the upper end (i.e., closer to Hoary) of what he calls intermediates between Hoary and Common Redpoll.

**DISCUSSION** – Anything else relevant to the observation that will aid the committee in evaluating it:

The bird in question has been debated as to whether or not it is a Hoary Redpoll on PABirds listserve. There are some features of the bird in question that are more like that of Common Redpolls. The secondaries of the wings (to me, I have seen some photos taken by other people that seem to contradict this) do not seem to be whiter than that of the Common Redpolls. The angle and general size of the bill does not seem to be greatly different from that of the Common Redpolls. I would also say the streaking on the nape of the neck did not appear to be greatly different from that on the Common Redpolls. I have to admit that I am torn by this bird. It clearly stands out as more whitish and different from the other redpolls in the flock when it is seen. However, I do not know if the differences are sufficient to definitively conclude it is a female Hoary versus a Common Redpoll at the edge of the range of variation for this latter species.

**PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE WITH THIS AND/OR SIMILAR SPECIES:**

None with Hoary Redpoll, however, I have seen many other Common Redpolls

**ARE YOU POSITIVE OF YOUR IDENTIFICATION?** (why or why not):

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I am not positive of the identification since I have little experience with Hoary Redpolls and for the reasons stated above.

**REFERENCES CONSULTED:**

During observation: National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds, Sibley's Field Guide to Birds of Eastern North America

After observation: Sibley's Field Guide to Birds of North America, his web blog, ID Birds (? Not certain if this is correct name) listserv.

**DATE OF THIS REPORT:** 2.13.2008

**SIGNATURE OF OBSERVER:** Mark A. McConaughy – online  
signature

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**Hoary Redpoll (*Carduelis hornemannii*) at Bushy Run Battlefield, Westmoreland County, PA, 2-Feb-2008**

**Observer:**

Geoff Malosh

450 Amherst Ave.

Moon Township, PA 15108-2654

412.735.3128

[pomarine@earthlink.net](mailto:pomarine@earthlink.net)

**Facts:**

Temperature: 20-25 F

Wind: W 5-10mph

Sky: overcast, periodic snow showers

Time: 10 AM to 1 PM

Equipment: Leica Ultravid 10x42 binoculars

Camera: Canon 20D Digital SLR, 100-400mm IS, 1.4x extender

Photos or audio recordings: 5 photos submitted, taken from a distance of 20-30 feet, attached to this message

Accompanying observers: none

Documentation date: February 2 to 5, 2008

Submission date: February 20, 2008

**Photos:**

- PORC1\_Redpoll\_BshyRnPA\_20080202\_20D2\_5002S.jpg (profile, bird in tree)
- PORC2\_Redpoll\_BshyRnPA\_20080202\_20D2\_5002S.jpg (profile, bird in tree)
- PORC3\_Redpoll\_BshyRnPA\_20080202\_20D2\_5015S.jpg (profile, bird in tree, best view of undertail in this pose)
- PORC4\_Redpoll\_comp\_BshyRnPA\_20080202\_20D2\_4994S.jpg (comparison with obvious Common Redpoll)

- PORC5\_Redpoll\_comp\_BshyRnPA\_20080202\_20D2\_4995S.jpg (comparison with obvious Common Redpoll)

Please note: all submitted pictures are reprocessed and sometimes cropped down from the original camera file, then JPEG compressed to reduce their file size. As with all JPEG compression of digital pictures, in some cases, subtle detail is lost. Uncompressed, full resolution TIFF images are available on request.

In the description that follows the photos are referenced by their prefix PORC1, PORC2, etc.

#### **Observation:**

A pale redpoll among a flock of at least 30 Common Redpolls had been seen at Bushy Run Battlefield for two weeks beginning around 20-Jan. After a few brief and distant encounters I had over these two weeks during which I couldn't discern much about the bird, I finally got to study it closely and at some length on 2-Feb, and I obtained some detailed photographs. It was in the company of about 30 Common Redpolls that were hanging around the area of two thistle feeders on the battlefield property. These redpolls generally traveled as one flock. Occasionally two or three redpolls were seen in the vicinity of the feeders away from the main flock, but the pale bird only appeared with the large group. On 2-Feb, the large flock appeared 5 times in three hours, for periods of 2 to 10 minutes. Three times the pale redpoll was seen among them.

All observation and photography was done from the driver's seat of my car, which I parked nearby to the feeders.

A description of the bird follows, taken from notes made on the 2-Feb and posted to the pabirds listserv and to my website.

#### **Description:**

The bird is obviously a redpoll from the photos; herein I describe the features of this bird relevant to assigning ID as either Common or Hoary.

-- Shape and structure: The bill appeared somewhat shorter than nearby Common Redpolls most of the time (photo PORC1), but the overall shape of the bill (angle to forehead) did not seem very different than Common. Overall the bird gave an impression of being a bit larger than the Commons nearby, but this was subtle and probably not reliable. The feathers at the base of the bill appeared to be somewhat fluffier or at least more extensive than nearby Commons; this is well-seen in a few of the attached photos (PORC1 especially)

-- Plumage, general characters: total absence of red on the breast, eliminating adult male of either species. The bird was very obviously paler overall, with brighter, frostier whites and lighter brown tones. The overall impression was of a lighter-toned ground color.

-- Flanks: The bird had fairly extensive flank streaking in terms of numbers of streaks, but these streaks were thin compared to a typical Common, and the streaking tapered off well before reaching the undertail.

-- The undertail coverts showed two very thin streaks, easily missed, and often the bird appeared to be totally white on the undertail. Two photo attached shows these streaks (PORC3 and 4) but they are hard to discern.

-- Rump: unfortunately not photographed, the bird's rump was nonetheless briefly seen, and showed a few scattered streaks particularly closer to the scapulars. Overall the rump also appeared whiter than any Common present, but the streaks present on the rump did show up much more clearly than the streaks on its undertail. I was not able to count up the streaks nor would I be comfortable sketching it out... suffice to say that the bird's rump appeared well whiter compared to other redpolls present.

-- Scapulars: The bird's scapulars were lighter overall than nearby Commons, but not of a truly different color... they were best described as a lighter shade of brown and white and not gray or silvery as is sometimes described for Hoary.

-- Not seen well in flight, never heard calling.

-- Often this bird would break away from the flock, either by remaining in nearby bushes and trees while the main flock fed, or by feeding while only one or two of the main flock were at the feeders. Only once was it seen among the large aggregate group, this was while the bird was on the ground with about 15 Commons, and this was also when the bird's rump was observed.

### **Discussion:**

In the case of this bird, I see all features as well within the safe range for Hoary Redpoll; the question is whether these features are safely out of range for Common Redpoll. Identification of non-male Hoary Redpolls is problematic at best, with many ideas old and new as to the best approach. Recently David Sibley resurrected an old idea, a "character index" comprised of three estimates of a redpoll's "streakiness". See the link in the references. By this account, the Bushy Run Redpoll is well into the Hoary range, scoring an 11 or 12 (4-5 for undertail, 3-4 for rump, 4 for flanks), and can easily be separated from Common. But Sibley's ideas are untested and provide only one perspective and approach.

The photo of the two birds on the feeder is perhaps most telling (photos PORC4 and PORC5). Initially I suspected that this may not have been the same pale redpoll as the bird pictured sitting in the tree, but have since decided this was almost certainly not the case. Though there were a few reports alluding to the possibility of two birds, I can say that I personally never saw two pale redpolls at once, and further, what can be seen of the bird on the feeder is not at odds with the bird pictured in the tree. It is considerably more likely that this is the same bird and not a mysterious second pale redpoll.

In this photo, the obvious difference in ground color and overall tonality is readily apparent, and this photo also shows the tonality of the scapulars and the nape very well. Given this and the near total lack of undertail streaking, and the lightly streaked rump, I believe Common Redpoll is reasonably enough eliminated. Of course, one can only say this if one takes the view that non-male Common and Hoary Redpolls are separable at all. I think they are, and I believe the Bushy Run bird to be safely called a Hoary.

### **Prior experience:**

I have never before seen a Hoary Redpoll in Pennsylvania, but I have seen a few dozen in northern Michigan when I was a resident of that state. Observing large flocks of redpolls in Michigan was a very good situation for learning these two species and forms well over 90% of my total experience with redpolls, but I have not been back there for the past 5 years.

### **References:**

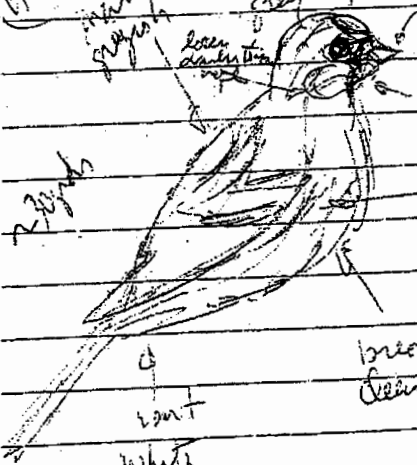
Sibley, David. A Character Index for Redpoll identification.

<<http://sibleyguides.blogspot.com/2008/01/character-index-for-redpoll.html>>

9 Feb 09 AM  
 mixed leaf - large?  
 medium sized patch - large? thin  
 Hummer?  
 Plus edges whiter than Hummer.  
 legs - darker than wings

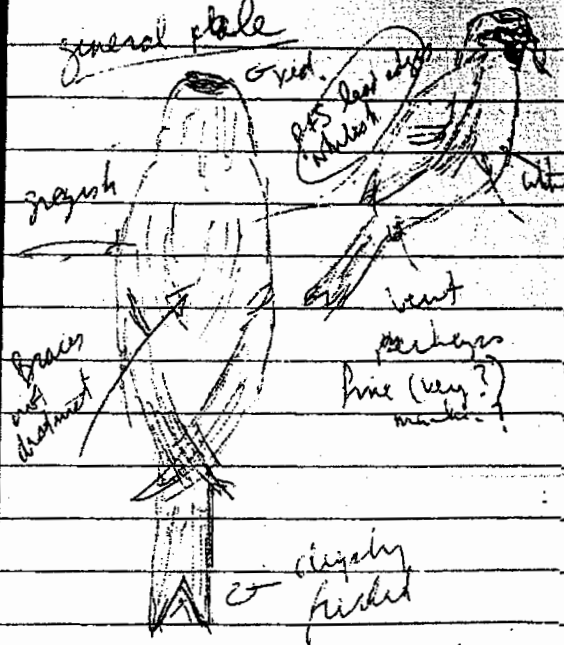
9 Feb 09

mostly down  
 (T. R.?)  
 Hummer?  
 with pale  
 & common Hummer  
 red cap  
 yellow  
 black  
 breast  
 clean whitish  
 white  
 clear, very  
 sharp faint  
 markings.  
 2-3 days  
 breast  
 streaked  
 breast  
 clean whitish  
 white  
 clear, very  
 sharp faint  
 markings.



general state

9 Feb 09 AM  
 mixed leaf - large?  
 medium sized patch - large? thin  
 Hummer?  
 Plus edges whiter than Hummer.  
 legs - darker than wings



vents of  
 common  
 strongly marked. ~ 70  
 male  
 + female

T. Roberts

## Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

### Voting Tabulation – Round One

Species: Hoary Redpoll    *Carduelis hornemanni*

Date of Sighting: 16 January 2008 to 12 February 2008

County : WESTMORELAND

Location : BUSHY RUN BATTLEFIELD HISTORIC SITE

Observer(s): Mark McConaughy et al.

Date of Submission: 2008

Submitted by: M. McConaughy, G. Malosh, T. Roberts

Written Description: Yes

Photo: Yes

Specimen: No

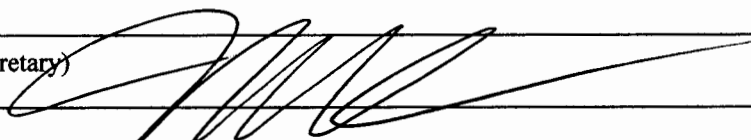
Recording: No

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A	Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	Abstain
R. Wiltraut	X							
A. Guarente	X							
T. Johnson	X							
B. Coulter	X							
E. Witmer	X							
J. Heller	X							
G. Malosh	X							
TOTALS	7							
DECISION	X							

Comments:

7/0

Signature (Secretary)



Date:

8/30/08