





















**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 of Pennsylvania.

Send documentation to:

**Nick Pulcinella, Secretary**  
**Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee**  
613 Howard Ave.  
West Chester, PA 19380  
nickpulcinella@verizon.net

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**SPECIES** (common and scientific name) Hoary Redpoll  
**Subspecies** (if known) nominate homemanni

**NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS** \_1\_ **SEX(ES)** 1 Male

**AGE(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): The bird in question did not have a tail.

**DATE OF OBSERVATION:** 3/29/ 08-3/30/08 **TIME :** between 10-12 AM

**LOCATION** (city, borough, township) Middle Paxton Township, 771 Blue Mountain Pkwy., Harrisburg, PA. 17112

**OBSERVER REPORTING:**

Name: Randy and Mary Brenner  
Address: 771 Blue Mountain Pkwy  
City: Harrisburg, PA 17112  
e-mail (optional) rbrenner527@comcast.net phone (optional) 717-599-5659

**OTHER OBSERVERS** (only those who saw and identified the bird with you): Ramsay Koury, Cameron Rutt, and others first saw the tailless redpoll at our feeders on 3/29 while we were out of town. We received an e-mail from Ramsay describing the tailless bird and how everyone present thought that it was a good candidate for a hoary. They also noted that the bird was bigger than the other redpolls. Luckily, we were able to photograph the bird the very next day.

**HABITAT** (e.g. mowed field, woodland edge, any other details): Wooded mountain, elevation less than 1000 feet, north side of mountain near the top

**DISTANCE TO BIRD:** 10-20 feet

**VIEWING CONDITIONS** (sky, weather, position of sun relative to you): Excellent! A very nice, partly sunny day on 3/30.

**OPTICAL EQUIPMENT USED** 10X50 SLC and 8.5x42 EL both Swarovski's

**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 )

The most obvious feature of the bird is the size difference with the other redpolls. The Hornemann averages 14 cm compared to the "Southern" hoary(exilipes) 12.5 cm.(Pittaway) Pictures #1-6 show this size differential. The contrast is similar to the Hornemann picture shown in Pittaway's article. The other telling feature is the pure white undertail coverts that is seen in picture #7. The bird also shows a very light pink suffusion on the breast with relatively light streaking. The head and neck are obviously larger and thicker than the other redpolls. In my opinion, the bill appears shorter due to fluffy nasal feathering. I am unable to reliably tell if the culmen is straight, although some of the pictures, especially #8, gives that impression. The white wing-bar also seems thicker than the other redpolls. This bird was also "fluffier" than most of the other birds.

However, picture #9, shows some streaking on the rump which may eliminate the bird as a candidate for this rare subspecies. One thing that I know from my observations this winter/spring concerning redpolls, is that there is so much individual variation among redpolls and also among the subspecies that I would argue that the number of common traits to the Hornemann's may outweigh this one discrepancy.

**BEHAVIOR** (be as detailed as possible about what the bird was doing): Since we only observed this bird for a few hours, we have very few observations except that the bird was very aggressive towards the other redpolls at the nyger feeder.

**VOCALIZATIONS**

We were unable to detect any difference in vocalizations from the other redpolls. In fact, we don't remember hearing any sounds from either bird.

**SUPPORTING EVIDENCE IF ANY:** We consulted with Ramsay Koury and Scott Weidensaul. Ramsay and Scott both thought that the bird was a probable/possible hoary but neither would commit to the Hornemann's due to the lack of expertise with the subspecies.

**Photographer/recorder/illustrator:** Mary Brenner

Please include a copy of the photograph or recording with your report, and accompany it with a complete written documentation if the identification is obvious to you. If you made a drawing, please include it.

**Photograph:** The photographs show the obvious size difference between the bird in question and the other redpolls. We do have a number of other pictures of this bird.

**IF THIS IS A DEAD BIRD:**

General condition: NA

**SEPARATION FROM SIMILAR SPECIES** (how you eliminated others): I believe the bird to be a definite hoary redpoll but, due to its size, I would lean to a Hornemann's over the Exilipes.

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

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

We have seen both common and hoary redpolls during the summer of 2005 in Churchill, Manitoba. We have also spent countless hours observing redpolls at our feeders this winter. We saw the first redpoll on January 2<sup>nd</sup>, and, by the end of February, we had over 100 birds/day through the first week in April, with the estimated high of 250 on 3/14. The last redpoll was seen on 4/15.

**ARE YOU POSITIVE OF YOUR IDENTIFICATION ?** (why or why not) Somewhat! As I mentioned previously, there is so much individual variation with redpoll identification and relatively little information, I can't be absolutely certain. I do know that this bird was very unusual, bigger, and fits most of the characteristics of a Hornemann's hoary redpoll.

**REFERENCES CONSULTED:**

During observation: Sibley

Before and after observation: Sibley and Pittaway

**DATE OF THIS REPORT:** April 20, 2008

**SIGNATURE OF OBSERVER:** Randy Brenner



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**SPECIES** (common and scientific name) Hoary redpoll  
**Subspecies** (if known) NA

**NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS** 1 to 3+ **SEX(ES)** Males only

**AGE(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): Not applicable, only adult males were considered for this report.

**DATE OF OBSERVATION:** April 7, 2008 **TIME** 8:00 to 10:00 am

**LOCATION** (city, borough, township) 771 Blue Mountain Parkway, Harrisburg, PA. This is the home of Randy and Mary Brenner.

**OBSERVER REPORTING:**

Name Chuck Berthoud  
Address: 47 Brookside Avenue  
City: Hershey, PA 17033  
e-mail (optional) [cberthoud@verizon.net](mailto:cberthoud@verizon.net) phone (optional) 717/533-7136

**OTHER OBSERVERS** (only those who saw and identified the bird with you):

Randy and Mary Brenner  
771 Blue Mountain Parkway  
Harrisburg, PA

**HABITAT** (e.g. mowed field, woodland edge, any other details): Wooded mountain, elevation less than 1000 feet. This is the back side of Blue Mountain, the first Appalachian ridge north of the Lebanon Valley.

**DISTANCE TO BIRD:** 20 feet

**VIEWING CONDITIONS** (sky, weather, position of sun relative to you): Excellent. From the comfort of the Brenner living room we could carefully sort out at close range, 50 redpolls at a time at the feeders on their deck. On most visits, the weather was cloudy and viewing the birds on the treetops before they would come into the feeders was rather difficult. Therefore the descriptions are of birds seen at around 20 feet away.

**OPTICAL EQUIPMENT USED** 8x42 binoculars

**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:

Since the end of December 2007, redpolls frequented the feeders on the deck of the Brenner home. I personally viewed them 3 or more times in, March and April 2008. Many times I saw lighter colored birds which drew my attention for a closer look. The first time HORE was identified was on March 3, 2008 with Deuane Hoffman, one of the most experienced observers I know in PA. This individual was in a tree top under poor lighting conditions. Deuane had more time on the bird as I was trying to view it with a telescope when it flew away. On that day there were at least 150 and as many as 250 redpolls around the house.

On April 7, 2008 I spent about 2 hours in the Brenner living room with Randy and Mary viewing a flock of at least 50 redpolls. There were 2 or more individual birds that were clearly lighter than the others. Randy and Mary probably have over 50 hours each viewing redpolls from their living room this year. They have carefully researched field guides and internet resources. They have even corresponded with bird guide author David Sibley. Here are the distinctive characteristics as I learned them from my hosts in order of importance:

1. Pink upper chest: this is diagnostic of a male and only males are considered here since the female redpolls are too similar.
2. Overall whiteness of bird: this is the first field mark that catches your attention. Unfortunately because there are so many variations, the observations become uncertain because of the great variability between individuals of redpolls. Overall lightness in color by itself it is not diagnostic.
3. Side streaking: this is the first important feature used to narrow down the candidate from CORE to HORE. The HORE has rather fine streaking compared to the deep thick and heavy streaking of the CORE. Since there seemed to be so many intergrades between the two species, this was the first important step in the ID process. The streaking characteristics can be compared to separating song sparrow with Lincoln's sparrow. The heavy streaking of SOSP and CORE need to be contrasted with the finer streaking and more white spaces of LISP and HORE. Again, because there are so many intergrades, this field mark can not always be relied on.
4. Lightness on back: This is a feature that Randy and Mary learned to look for more carefully and we spent much time noting and discussing it. The secondary wings and coverts were whiter. In addition the streaking on the back is frosty. Sometimes the white un-streaked rump was visible but since this was hard to see it was not as reliable a field mark.
5. White rump: an un-streaked rump was noted briefly by Randy with 10x50 binoculars.
6. Streaking on the undertail coverts: after all the other field marks were examined if there was only one streak on the undertail the bird was confirmed as HORE. For this field mark, the Sibley Guide to Birds was consulted. Most of the birds in the flock had a pattern of streaks similar to types A, B and C in the Sibley inset picture. When I saw the single undertail streak of pattern D, I was convinced I finally had HORE.

**BEHAVIOR** (be as detailed as possible about what the bird was doing): sometimes the HORE were found by themselves but they usually blended in with the flock.

#### **VOCALIZATIONS**

My hearing is reduced enough to make it difficult to detect redpolls without someone else pointing it out. The Brenner's were both able to hear the birds before seeing them come around the house.

#### **SUPPORTING EVIDENCE IF ANY:**

**Photographer/recorder/illustrator:** Mary Brenner

Please include a copy of the photograph or recording with your report, and accompany it with a complete written documentation if the identification is obvious to you. If you made a drawing, please include it.

**Photograph:** The picture below shows a lighter male redpoll with almost no visible side streaking. The coverts and secondaries are whiter than the typical CORE. The undertail coverts are all white.



The picture below contrasts the two species. Note the heavy side streaking of CORE, left with the very light and fine side streaking of the right bird. The undertail coverts have only one streak in the right bird.



**IF THIS IS A DEAD BIRD:**

General condition: NA

**SEPARATION FROM SIMILAR SPECIES** (how you eliminated others): See Bullets 1 to 5 above.

**DISCUSSION** – Anything else relevant to the observation that will aid the committee in evaluating it: due to the variability in redpolls, all 6 points above were needed to separate species.

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

I have seen redpolls in Algonquin Provincial Park in 2006, one was a hoary.

**ARE YOU POSITIVE OF YOUR IDENTIFICATION?** (Why or why not) Yes. There were many viewing opportunities to obtain all the needed points of ID. With the guidance of the Brenner's, and the systematic method of reviewing all the field marks, I can conclude that hoary redpoll was a correct identification of one or more birds on April 7, 2008.

**REFERENCES CONSULTED:**

During observation: Sibley

After observation: Sibley

**DATE OF THIS REPORT:** Draft 1: April 15, 2008. Review with Randy and Mary Brenner. Draft 2: April 20, 2008  
Submitted to Ramsay Koury, Deuane Hoffman and Dick Williams for review. No changes were suggested. Submitted to PORC: May 15, 2008.

**Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee**

**Voting Tabulation – Round One**

Species: Hoary Redpoll    *Carduelis hornemanni*

Date of Sighting: 29 March 2008 to 7 April 2008

County : DAUPHIN

Location : HARRISBURGH

Observer(s): Randy Brenner, Mary Brenner et al.

Date of Submission: 2008

Submitted by: Randy Brenner, Mary Brenner, C. Berthoud

Written Description: Yes

Photo: Yes

Specimen: No

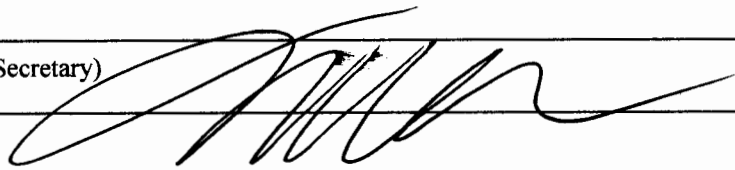
Recording: No

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	<del>X</del>					X		
TOTALS	4			1	2			
DECISION								

Comments: *Possibly two different birds*  
*Malosh votes Class IV-B March 30 bird*  
*Class IV-C April 7 Bird*

*4/3 GO TO 2ND ROUND*

Signature (Secretary)



Date: *8/20/08*