

Submission Date	2013-01-16 18:23:50
Observer's Name	Bill Etter
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Observer's Address	Street Address: 209 E South St City: Slatington State / Province: PA Postal / Zip Code: 18080 Country: United States
Names of additional observers	Christie Etter
Species (Common Name)	Hoary Redpoll
Species (Scientific Name)	Acanthis homemanni
Number of individuals	1
Have you submitted this to eBird?	Yes
Age(s) and Plumage(s) and Sex (if known)	Adult male
Observation Date and Time	01-9-2013 12:30 PM
County	Lehigh
Location (City, Borough, Township)	Washington Twp, just north of Slatington
Exact Site (E.g. Name of park, lake, road)	D&L path along Lehigh River, south of Lehigh Gap and Lehigh Gap Nature Center
GPS coordinates of sighting	40.777617,-75.607789
Habitat	Field and wet lowland along floodplain of Lehigh River; many birch trees throughout the area
Distance to bird	As close as 25 feet
Viewing conditions	Overcast day, but bright enough that sight was not impaired
Optical equipment used	Celestron 8x42 binoculars
Description	Seen well from about 20 feet as it was perched fairly low in a birch, in direct comparison to many Common Redpolls. This adult male was frosty overall, with a faint rosy pink wash across the breast. Face and head were quite pale, especially around the eyes, with what can almost be called bright eye archs (not a helpful ID point, but striking compared the Common Redpolls

around it). Cap adorned forward portion of crown and was more "rosy" in appearance than the truly red crown of the other birds. There was only very light streaking on the sides of the breast, much less so than on the more heavily marked Common Redpolls; this is evident in the pictures. Undertail coverts were pale and quite bright, with just one discernible gray smudge or streak; this is also evident in the pictures. The bird's rump was bright and pale, with little to no streaking (not shown in pictures, but noted in the field). The bill and feathering around the base of the bill is partially obscured in most of the pictures I obtained, but I believe they show a smallish yellow bill that gives the bird the pushed-in or flat-faced appearance often attributed to Hoary Redpoll. I did not focus much attention on the bird's back, but see my comments above about it being noticeably far more pale in general than the surrounding Common Redpolls.

Behavior (be as detailed as possible about what the bird was doing)

This bird was associated with a flock of over 140 Common Redpolls, which were very actively feeding on birch catkins. When I first noticed this particular bird, it was in the top branches of a birch with about two dozen Common Redpolls. I stayed on it as the flock scattered and was very lucky to have it perch much closer to eye level, perhaps 10-15 feet off the ground and about 25 feet away. It was now lower, without the back lighting of the grey sky. It was also now perched very closely to 3 or 4 typical Common Redpolls, both male and female. The true paleness of the bird was now obviously real, not a factor of light, and the color of the breast was obviously the faint rosy pink wash described above. It perched at the end of a small branch and picked at a catkin for a moment, then sat fairly still and alert for probably about a minute (long enough for be to get the camera zoomed in and reasonably focused for the attached photos, which was no easy task with cold, shaking hands...). Eventually, an adult male Common Redpoll made a pass at it, driving it away. This Common Redpoll then perched in almost the exact same spot and position, allowing a few really great comparison shots.

Separation from similar species (How you eliminated others)

See the discussion above. Common Redpoll was the only other bird in the area, and there were plenty of them to compare it with (140+). The Hoary Redpoll was much more pale, with a totally different shade of pink wash across the breast. Lack of streaking on the breast, lack of streaking on the undertail coverts, and the bright pale rump were all apparent, and are probably the best three characteristics to note and document when separating Hoary from Common Redpoll. Overall frostiness, apparent details of the bill and face, color and position of the cap, or "poll", and color of the breast are also strong contributors to the separation, but possibly of less importance according to some resources.

Discussion - anything else relevant to the observation that will aid the committee in evaluating it:

As I'm certain the committee is aware, this is shaping up to be one of the best invasion winters for redpolls in recent memory. There have been a number of recent and subsequent reports from states and

provinces north of Pennsylvania. This report is being finalized and submitted one week after the find. I attempted to start it last week, but the jotform website was down temporarily, and I've been working a lot over the past few days since the form became available again. The attached six photos are the only clear (sort of...) ones I was able to obtain, some better than others of course. I'm also including one shot of the Common Redpoll that chased the bird from its perch for comparison.

Are you positive of your identification ? (Why or why not)

Yes, I feel very comfortable that the suite of identification points noted above put this bird squarely in the Hoary Redpoll column!

During

memory

After

Most of the major field guides; plus online sources, particularly the extensive redpoll comparison page at David Sibley's website. Current discussions on other state's listservs, particularly in Colorado and New England were also helpful. While I was fairly confident of the identification to begin with, I've had no previous experience with Hoary Redpolls, and wanted to learn as much as possible as this can be a tricky and sometimes controversial ID.

Supporting evidence (check all that apply)

Photograph

Upload images, audio, video or drawings

[Redpolls_009.JPG](#)
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