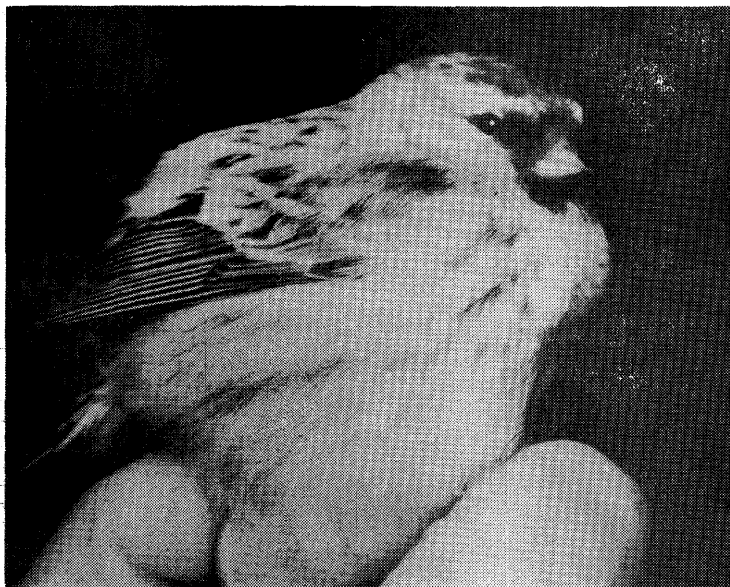


PHOTOGRAPHS OF NEW YORK STATE RARITIES

9. Hoary Redpoll



Hoary Redpoll – Photograph by Robert P. Yunick

The systematics of redpolls is extremely complex, has given rise to much discussion, and is still unsettled. Most authorities recognize two species: the Common Redpoll, *Acanthis flammea*, and the Hoary Redpoll, *A. hornemanni*.

Following Vaurie [*The Birds of the Palearctic Fauna* (Passeriformes), H. F. & G. Witherby, London, 1959: 617–620], nominate *A. f. flammea* has a circumpolar distribution except where replaced by *A. f. rostrata* on Baffin Island and Greenland, by *A. f. islandica* in Iceland, and by *A. f. cabaret* in the British Isles and the Alps. *A. f. holboellii* is no longer recognized as valid.

A. h. exilipes is also circumpolar in distribution, except where replaced by nominate *A. h. hornemanni* on Ellesmere and Baffin Islands and northern Greenland.

In Greenland, *A. h. hornemanni* occurs in the north whereas *A. f. rostrata* and *A. f. flammea* replace it in the south. Overlapping does take place as hybrids between *hornemanni* and *rostrata* are known (Salomonson, *The Birds of Greenland*, Ejnar Munsgaard, Copenhagen, part 3, 1951: 515). On Baffin Island, however, the latter two forms are sympatric, and “behave as distinct species in that they do not interbreed or hybridize” (Wynne-Edwards, *Auk*, 69: 380–381, 1952).



Common Redpoll



Hoary Redpoll

Photographs by Robert P. Yunick

To further complicate the problem *A. h. exilipes* and *A. f. flammea* are sympatric, without hybridizing, in northeastern Siberia and apparently in northern Russia (Vaurie, *Amer. Mus. Novit.*, no. 1775, 1956). In Scandinavia, however, these same two forms interbreed, forming hybrid swarms in northern Norway (Salomonsen, *op. cit.*).

Practically every redpoll flight into New York brings reports of *A. hornemanni*. The Hoary Redpoll in the accompanying photographs was captured by Robert P. Yunick at his feeder, as reported in the *Kingbird*, 16(4): 204-205, October 1966.

The identification of redpolls is a difficult matter; museum specimens offer a bewildering array of confusing specimens. The field marks given in the literature, including the standard field guides, are population differences and individual birds frequently cannot be identified with certainty.

Because of these difficulties expert opinion was sought. At the suggestion of Dr. Charles Vaurie, the original slides were sent to Dr. Heinrich K. Springer of College, Alaska, an expert on redpolls. His comments follow:

"There is no doubt in my mind that this individual belongs to *Acanthis hornemanni exilipes*. It is a 'pure' individual and most likely a bird of the year. The measurements [exposed culmen 7.8, wing (chord) 73 mm] fit well within the range of the North American *A. h. exilipes*.

Redpolls are indeed very confusing. I have been studying them for seven years now and have examined thousands of skins and living birds. There are always individuals which one cannot surely identify. However, with this bird there is no doubt."

A Common Redpoll photograph is included for comparison. Note the general paleness, pure white unstreaked rump, reduced streaking of the underparts, and the more stubby, conical bill of the Hoary Redpoll.

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THE PRESIDENT'S PAGE

The problems of man and his environment are a tangled mess today. Most of us who are interested in birds are interested in the rest of nature as well, because we realize that the natural community is all of one piece and that no one species exists unto itself.

I have been interested to observe that the rest of the world is catching on. The Third Annual Yearbook of Conservation is called "The Third Wave", and its theme is that conservation in the United States is now entering its third phase, the phase based on recognition that you cannot conserve organisms — you must conserve environments. Conservation is a problem of human ecology as well as a problem in technology.

Since I have spent a number of years in trying to teach this concept to both young people and adults, I am gratified to see that it is now official doctrine. But it has a corollary which is perhaps just a little more difficult to recognize. The conservation movement has been fragmented ever since it began. Technicians did not understand conservation philosophy. Foresters were not concerned about birds, bird lovers were not concerned about soil and water, sportsmen were at odds with preservationists, and each one was trying desperately, and vainly, to improve the particular resource he was interested in without regard to the others.

Now that we understand that it won't work, that you can't have one without the other, we ought to be able to overcome the narrowness of viewpoint that has hampered us in the past. We of the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs should cooperate fully with the Nature Conservancy, which is interested in natural areas; with the Adirondack Mountain Club, which is interested in trails; yes, even with the sportsmen's clubs whose interests are close to ours even though their reasons are different.

If we are to breath pure air, drink pure water, walk in untouched forests and observe untamed wildlife in a natural habitat, we must unite on all points of agreement. Our common areas of interest are greater than the areas of divergence. We must work together today, or tomorrow there may be little left worth working for.

Allen H. Benton