

**Notes on the Hoary Redpoll on its central Canadian Arctic breeding grounds.—**

G. Ron Austing and I made the following observations of the Hoary Redpoll (*Acanthis hornemanni*) during the period of 30 June to 15 July 1972 while photographing birds around Bathurst Inlet Lodge at the mouth of the Burnside River on Bathurst Inlet (66° 50' N., 108° 02' W.), Northwest Territories, Canada. The site is approximately 40 miles north of the Arctic Circle. Both redpoll species are reported in the lodge log as occurring at the camp, but the Hoary Redpoll was the only one of these species we identified in the field with certainty.

Redpolls were often seen feeding in small groups on willow catkins. On 4 July I observed one male, with face and underparts stained yellow with willow pollen, to cease its active feeding and fly toward a nearby female. She responded to the approaching male with rapid twittering and wing-fluttering. The male's flight carried him to within a foot of the perched, displaying female whereupon he swung on rapidly beating wings and with constant vocalizations in several short hovering arcs, the apices of which brought him from a position in front of and slightly above the female's face to slightly above and behind her back. At the end of the third or fourth arc the male balanced with beating wings on the female's back and copulated with her. The arced flight was immediately resumed with a second copulatory attempt after which the male flew some 15 feet from the still perched female, preened, and shortly returned to his feeding.

A nest with two newly hatched young and two eggs was located on 29 June and a second nest with four eggs was found the following day. Both nests, constructed in willows, were lined with white ptarmigan feathers and almost constantly attended by the brooding and incubating female redpolls. Soon after the young in the second nest had hatched we erected a blind at the site and began to photograph the feeding activity as the male would bring food to its brooding mate. The distant approach of the food-bearing male was easily detected by its constant emission of rather loud flight notes given as it flew from its feeding ground to the nest. Normally the male would land 15 to 30 feet beyond the nest on the side opposite the blind and work its way through the willows to its rim. At this time the brooding female became excited and reacted during the male's approach with constant vocalizations and rapid wing-fluttering as reported by Baldwin and Reed (J. Colorado Acad. Sci., 4(6):62-63, 1955, quoted in A. C. Bent, 1968. U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull. 237, original not seen). Food was transferred to the still wing-fluttering female who passed it to the young as the male departed. She then removed a fecal sac from the nest site, and shortly returned to her brooding. After watching several repetitions of the above feeding procedure it suddenly became evident that this female was being fed on the nest by *more than one* male.

While Ron was in the blind a food-bearing male in a plumage not much brighter than that of the brooding female returned to the nest some 20 minutes after the previous feeding. As the male fed the female other redpolls were heard. After the transfer of food the male flew to a willow about 20 feet away and in clear view from the blind. Almost immediately a second male in similar plumage to the first came to the nest and fed the female. Both males were observed simultaneously from the blind and the first was still perched while the second was feeding at the nest. Later Ron observed a third highly colored male, which was clearly not one of the previously observed birds, nervously approach the nest and spend 15 to 20 seconds approximately six feet from it before flying off without feeding the excited wing-fluttering female.

Later in the day I was watching one of the drab-plumaged males feed the female. The highly colored male arrived with food as the first male was leaving the nest site through the willows and upon detecting it the second male chased the first several hundred yards

from the vicinity of the nest before returning and feeding the female. In every instance the female greeted each approaching male with the same excited response.

Upon relating our observations to several lodge guests who had been photographing the other redpoll nest, previously noted, we learned that they had observed two males feeding that brooding female.

Active feeding was carried on by the Hoary Redpolls 20 to 22 hours in each 24 hour period of the continuous Arctic summer daylight. Surely there must be added survival value to the species through the expression of a behavior which results in an increased food supply to the young by birds which remain somewhat gregarious throughout the nesting season.

The period of fledging was 9 days in both nests as was reported by Walkinshaw (Condor, 50:64-70, 1948 quoted in Bent [op. cit.], original not seen) contrasted to 12 to 14 days as reported by Baldwin and Reed (loc. cit.).—FRED J. ALSOP, III, *Biology Dept., East Tennessee State University, Kingsport University Center, P.O. Box 9, Kingsport, Tennessee 37660, 15 December 1972.*

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### NEW LIFE MEMBER



We welcome Dr. Robert F. Vane, an oral surgeon of Cedar Rapids, Iowa as a new Life Member of The Wilson Ornithological Society. Dr. Vane, a graduate of The State University of Iowa has been seriously interested in birds for many years, and has been a regular contributor to *Iowa Bird Life*. He is a past-President of The Iowa Ornithologists' Union, and a member of The National Audubon Society, American Birding Association, Saskatchewan Natural History Society, and Minnesota Ornithologists' Union. His special interests in birds include the study of winter birdlife and cine photography of birds, and among his other interests he lists the collecting of an ornithological library. Dr. Vane is married and has two children and one grandchild.