

the unfrozen portion of the river. Although the unusual bill configuration strongly suggested an eider, I considered this highly improbable and decided to review the various reference materials prior to committing to an identification based on bill shape alone and field marks at quite a distance.

Returning the next morning, I happily found the bird still there and much closer. The appearance matched descriptions for an immature male King Eider (*Somateria spectabilis*) fairly well. The principal exception was the upper breast, which was soft gray, with some evidence of molting to white. Most field guides depict the breast of an immature male King Eider as being pure white. The symmetrical orange bill, white eye ring, and thin, white arc behind the eye were plainly visible.

The eider proved very cooperative and remained in the same general vicinity until 17 January, allowing observation by many interested birders. I observed it almost daily.

The King Eider spent most of the time in the river and was timed in frequent dives of between 8 and 13 seconds in shallow water. Dives were often followed by wing stretching or short periods of preening. The bird would rest on the edges of ice islands at mid-river, occasionally with Canada Geese, but usually alone. This eider did not associate with Mallards and on several occasions, behaved aggressively by swimming toward an individual Mallard with bill and head thrust forward. The Mallards would always back off from the more aggressive eider.

This immature male King Eider was a good find for all of us fortunate enough to have been out to see it. The eider was particularly rewarding for me as I am a newcomer to Illinois and the discovery put me directly in touch with the local birding community as well as led to membership in the Illinois Ornithological Society.

— Roy Netherton, 1201 Thoroughbred Circle,
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Chicago Area's first winter Indigo Bunting

Early 3 January 1994, I was performing the mundane morning ritual of washing dishes and drinking coffee when I looked out my garden box kitchen window to see an Indigo Bunting (*Passerina cyanea*). The bird was hopping on my deck eating cracked corn and mixed bird seed I had strewn out a night earlier. I immediately recognized the female immature plumage.

I took the following detailed description. The bird was between goldfinch and junco sized. Its bill was grayish with some orangish yellow at the basal one-third of the lower mandible. The bird showed a plain rusty brown face with a beady black eye and no supercilium. The crown was brownish with some fine combing of blackish streaks. The bird had a whitish throat with a fine but noticeable gray malar stripe. Underparts were white. Some fine brownish-gray streaking covered the breast. The back was brownish with some fine ruddy streaking. Wing coverts were brownish with only slight buffy edgings as wingbars. The forked tail

was dark brownish. I later made a colored-pencil sketch of the bird which is on file with IORC.

Unfortunately, the bird remained at our home for only one hour and 15 minutes. At approximately 10:30 a.m. a Cooper's Hawk had arrived and was perched immediately over two hanging bird feeders. Needless to say this predator's arrival scattered my feeder birds including the bunting. Unfortunately the bunting never reappeared despite several searches of the neighborhoods near my home in southern Lake County.

This species normally does not linger in North America during fall migration. It migrates to Mexico and Central and South America by early November. This is the first Chicago area winter record for the species. Mlodinow (1984) listed no winter records for this species. A search of the literature indicates that Indigo Buntings do occasionally show up in southern Illinois in winter (Bohlen 1989). However, there are very few late fall records for central and northern Illinois; in fact, the latest northern date for the species is 15 November in Winnebago County (Chapel 1993). Wisconsin has recorded only one winter record of an Indigo Bunting (Calumet County) (Robbins 1991).

— David B. Johnson, 504 Crown Point Drive,
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Hoary Redpoll in DuPage County

Toward the end of January 1994, my co-worker, Bill Bixby, informed me that Common Redpolls (*Carduelis flammea*) were visiting his Hanover Park thistle feeder. Since redpolls were showing up at feeders all over the Chicago area, except for my thistle feeder, this report was not all that surprising. On 2 February, Bixby decided there was also a Hoary Redpoll (*Carduelis hornemanni*) at his feeder. I pointed out that this was highly unlikely and mentioned how difficult it is to tell the two redpolls apart, unless you find a hoary of the more or less "pure" variety.

Although Bixby had never seen one before, he remained convinced there was a Hoary Redpoll in his backyard. I argued that half the observers who find Common Redpolls at their feeder decide that one is a Hoary Redpoll. It is a form of wish fulfillment. Bixby then reminded me that I had not believed him two years ago when he said he found a Harris' Sparrow. I had to admit he had been right about the sparrow and I agreed to check out the mystery redpoll.

On Sunday, 6 February, Mike Madsen and I spent all morning watching redpolls at thistle feeders in Hanover Park. During the first hour, we saw six to eight Common Redpolls, none of which looked out of the ordinary. Then, after a period of about 15 minutes without any redpolls, a single redpoll landed on the nearest feeder. Right away, we could see this bird had a very different look. The main difference was its overall lighter coloring. Our bird's back was much paler than the backs of any of the Common Redpolls seen this day. There were two fine, continuous streaks along the flanks. Although the streaks were not broken, they were very faint and much thinner than the

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