

323-01-1995

LONG-BILLED DOWITCHERS IN CRAWFORD COUNTY, PA
Ed Kwater

On Saturday October 7th 1995 my wife Cheryl and I were birding at Millers Ponds, Pymaturing, Crawford Co. One of the ponds had a low water level and at least 20 feet of mud were exposed around the edges. About 100 yards away from the dirt road I noticed a group of 8 dowitchers, Limnodromus sp. on the far side of the pond. The birds appeared very gray and, partly due to the late date I began to suspect that they may be Long-billed Dowitchers, L. scolopaceus. Over the course of the next few minutes the birds flew twice and ended up on the area of mud closest to the road, about 50 yards away. By this time I could clearly see that they were juvenile Long-billed Dowitchers in pre-basic molt.

Their overall plumage was very gray, especially on the head, neck and breast. The supercilium was white and quite pronounced, extending behind the eye. The mantle feathers, scapulars and coverts were dark gray with dull yellowish white edges. On several birds some plain gray basic plumage scapulars were present. The tertials were dark gray with thin yellowish-white edges. These feathers had plain centers. The belly was mainly white and the flanks were barred black, strongly so in at least 2 of the birds. The tail was barred black and white, the black bars being wider than the white ones. The undertail coverts were white, spotted with black. Although bill length is not diagnostic in dowitchers and can only be used as an indicator at best, several of these birds did have extremely long bills, longer than I ever

recall seeing on a Short-billed Dowitcher, L. griseus

In summary these birds were identified as juvenile (pre-basic) Long-billed Dowitchers based on the following characters:

1. Most juvenile feathers still retained. Only basic feathers were some plain gray scapulars on several birds. Juvenile feathers appeared quite worn.
2. Tertiaries had plain centres and thin pale edges unlike broader orange edges and internal marbling on tertiaries in Short-billed Dowitcher.
3. Tail pattern of alternating wide black and narrow white bars is strongly indicative of Long-billed Dowitcher.
4. Extremely long bills on several of the birds.

The birds were observed in fading light (6.00 p.m.) for about 20 minutes through x10 binocular and x30 spotting scope. I have extensive experience of Long-billed Dowitchers from California and have also seen this sp. in Arizona, New York, Delaware, or England (1), Scotland (1) and also 1 previous bird in Pennsylvania. I also have extensive experience of all 3 races of Short-billed Dowitcher in all plumages.

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round # 1 of

Species: **Long-billed Dowitcher (Limnodromus scolopaceus)**

Date of Sighting: **7 October 1995 to 7 October 1995**

Location: **MILLERS POND - PYMATUNING**

County: **CRAWFORD**

Observer(s): **Ed Kwater**

Date of Submission: **1995**

Submitted by: **Ed Kwater**

Written Description: **YES** Photo: **NO** Specimen: **NO**

Recording: **NONE**

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV	Class V			Abstain
					A	B	C	
F. Haas			X					
N. Pulcinella			X					
E. Kwater			X					
R. Ickes			X					
G. McWilliams			X					
P. Schwalbe			X					
S. Feldstein			X					
TOTALS			7					
DECISION			X					

Comments:

Signature (Secretary):

F. C. Haas

Date:

5-1-96