

3-3-01 - 1996

Long-billed Dowitcher
(*Limnodromus scolopaceus*)

Pymatuning Area, Crawford County, Pennsylvania / November 3, 1996

by Mike Fialkovich

While leading an outing for the Audubon Society Of Western Pennsylvania, I took the group to the Miller Ponds Area where we found several species of shorebird including two Long-billed Dowitchers (*Limnodromus scolopaceus*).

DESCRIPTION:

Both birds were in basic plumage, grayish on the back, wings, head and neck. The gray washed out to a dull white on the sides and belly.

Vertical barring was present along the flanks. The barring was dark gray in color.

Bill: dark gray. The bills on these birds were average in length for dowitchers.

Legs: dark gray.

Supercilium: whitish; broad. It ran from the base of the upper mandible, curved upward and over the eye, and extended just past the eye.

A few dark scapulars remained on the birds, and were very obvious against the mostly gray backs. These remaining non-winter (juvenile) plumage feathers were brownish black with pale brownish edges. There were no internal marks on these scapulars.

The tertials were also remaining from the summer plumage. They were dark brownish black with pale rufous brown edges. There were no internal marks in the tertials.

The birds fed with the typical dowitcher "sewing machine" action of moving the bill up and down in the mud.

The birds did not call.

The clincher to me when observing these birds were the few remaining scapulars left over from summer, and the remaining tertials without internal markings, and with pale brownish to rufous edges. This point is discussed in *Advanced Birding* by Kenn Kaufman. In the chapter on the Dowitchers, it states: "As the juvenile molts in October and November, the small, dark scapulars that remain become conspicuous against the large, gray scapulars of nonbreeding plumage. These feathers and some of the tertials may be retained into the new year, allowing specific identification

as long as they are present.” (Kaufman, 1990). I believe these birds were juveniles based on these characters.

In Shorebirds An Identification Guide, the birds are illustrated in full basic plumage, but there is mention in the text that the scapulars and tertials “. . . are retained at least to November, and sometimes to February” (Haymond, *et al.*, 1986).

Another key to identification is timing. Long-billed Dowitchers migrate later than Short-billed which move through mainly in August. Long-billed Dowitchers are expected in September, and into early October, so these individuals were rather late migrants.

Literature cited:

Haymond, P., J. Marchant, T. Prater. 1986. Shorebirds An Identification Guide. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston.

Kaufman, Kenn. 1990. Advanced Birding. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston.

References:

Haymond, P., J. Marchant, T. Prater. 1986. Shorebirds An Identification Guide. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston.

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Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round # 1 of

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

Date of Sighting: 3 November 1996 to 3 November 1996

Location: PYMATUNING - MILLERS POND

County: CRAWFORD

Observer(s): Mike Fialkovich

Date of Submission: 1996

Submitted by: Mike Fialkovich

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			6					1
DECISION								

Comments:

Signature (Secretary):

F C Haas

Date:

8-16-97