

323-02-1996

Long-billed Dowitcher (*Limnodromus scolopaceus*)  
Lawrence County, PA - September 8, 1996

by Mike Fialkovich

**Location:** along RT. 19 approximately 1 - 1.5 miles south of the intersection with Vosler Road in Washington Township. The bird was sighted on the west side of the road, feeding in a small pool in a freshly plowed field.

While driving along RT. 19, my companions and I noticed a shorebird flying across a freshly plowed field. At first glance we thought it was probably a Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*), but the white wedge up the back of the bird led us to believe that it was a dowitcher. We pulled off the road and scoped the bird and realized it was a Long-billed Dowitcher.

We observed the bird for approximately 10 minutes through various spotting scopes that zoomed from 10 to 60 power. Other observers were Joyce Hoffmann, Dana Shaffer, Walt Shaffer, and Jim Valimont.

**DESCRIPTION:**

- Head and neck gray. Well defined white supercilium.
- Breast and sides pale rufous/buff, becoming washed out to dull white on belly and undertail.
- Scapulars and wing coverts dark brown with dull rufous/buff fringes. No internal markings to the feathers. Tertiaries dark brown with rufous/buff fringes. No internal markings.
- Legs and bill very dark gray. Although not always a reliable character, the bill appeared to be fairly long compared to the typical Short-billed Dowitcher (*Limnodromus griseus*).
- The upperside of the tail showed broad black cross banding, as wide as, or wider than the white bands. These bands were visible for a short time as the bird bent its tail down while feeding.
- Fed with an up and down motion of the bill, submerging the bill almost completely into the mud.
- The bird was determined to be a juvenile based on the plumage characters described above, and the "freshness" of the feathers.

**Comparison with Short-billed Dowitcher:**

Juvenile Short-billed Dowitchers show much more rufous/buff color on the head and neck. They have a noticable cap formed by the rufous feather edges on the head, and show rufous/buff on the neck, breast and belly, with a lesser amount of gray on the neck than the Long-billed. The scapulars, wing coverts, and especially the tertials have internal markings of rufous/buff.

September is the time Long-billed Dowitchers pass through the area, with the juveniles arriving ahead of the adults.

**Experience:**

I have seen Long-billed Dowitchers several times in Western Pennsylvania; the most recent were a group of eight at the Miller Ponds in Crawford County on October 9, 1995. My companions have also seen Long-billed Dowitchers in the state. I see Short-billed Dowitchers in numbers every year during migration in Pennsylvania, and along the coasts of Delaware and New Jersey.

## Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

### Voting Tabulation - Round # 1 of

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

Date of Sighting: 8 September 1996 to 8 September 1996

Location: WASHINGTON TWP

County: LAWRENCE

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			7					
DECISION			X					

Comments:

Signature (Secretary):

L. C. Haas

Date:

8-16-97