

**Long-billed Dowitcher (*Limnodromus scolopaceus*)
Shenango Reservoir, Mercer County
September 27, 1998**

by Mike Fialkovich

While searching for shorebirds at Shenango Reservoir, Bob Machesney and I noticed 5 dowitchers feeding on one of the distant mudflats. Other observers reported Long-billed Dowitchers at Shenango a few days before, so I knew it was possible these were the Long-billed Dowitchers they saw, so we moved closer to obtain better views.

The group of birds (and all other nearby shorebirds) flushed before we could get close enough for better viewing (due to the presence of a soaring raptor). After they settled, we began searching for the dowitchers once more. We were able to locate the birds, however, only two individuals were close enough for detailed observation. Bob and I ran into Chuck and Joan Tague and we studied the birds together.

Description:

The two birds studied were juveniles in fresh plumage. Adults would almost certainly be in full (or nearly full) basic plumage at this time of year where they would be completely gray, lacking any rufous or buffy tones.

The birds were recognized as dowitchers by their medium size, rather heavy build, (slightly larger and much bulkier than Greater Yellowlegs) long straight bills, and feeding action of probing the mud with a straight up and down motion of the bill.

The head and upper neck were entirely gray, contrasting with the buffy breast and sides. The buff washed out on the belly. The contrast between the gray head and orange/buffy breast is typical of juvenile long-billed. Short billed Dowitchers show little or no contrast between head and upper breast, and the head shows a darker (rufous) cap. Overall, juvenile short-billed are more colorful than long billed.

Supercilium white.

Scapulars, wing coverts and tertials blackish with buffy to orange fringes. Internal markings to the feathers were absent. Juvenile Short-billed Dowitchers show not only orange and buffy fringes to these feathers, but also show internal buffy/orange markings, particularly on the tertials.

Legs and bill dark gray, almost black. The bills on the two birds studied at close range were average length. Although bill length is not to be relied upon to identify dowitchers due to overlap between the two species, two of the birds viewed from a distance showed extremely long bills.

323-01-1998

Late September is the time to expect to see Long-billed Dowitchers in Western Pennsylvania. Short-billed Dowitchers move through during August and early September (however stragglers cannot be completely ruled out).

Experience with this species:

I have seen adult and juvenile Long-billed Dowitchers several times in Western Pennsylvania at the following locations: Shenango Reservoir, along RT. 19 in Lawrence County, and in the Pymatuning area at the Miller Ponds and Shelletto's Pond. I have also seen Long-billed Dowitchers in Delaware, New Jersey, and Texas.

I have seen numerous Short-billed Dowitchers in many locations in Pennsylvania, as well as Delaware and New Jersey.

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Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round One

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

Date of Sighting: 27 September 1998 to 27 September 1998

Location: SHENAGO RESERVOIR

County: MERCER

Observer(s): ~~Bob Machesney~~ Bob Machesney & Mike Fialkovich

Date of Submission: 1998

Submitted by: ~~Bob Machesney~~ Mike Fialkovich

WRITTEN DESCRIPTION YES PHOTO NO SPECIMEN NO RECORDING NO

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A				Abstain
					Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	
D. Couchman			X					
T. Floyd								X
P. Hess			X					
R. Ickes			X					
J. McWilliams			X					
B. Reid					X			
P. Rodewald			X					
TOTALS			5		1			1
DECISION			X					

Comments: 5/1/1

Signature (Secretary):

Date:

10/8/00