

Accepted
JL 1/16/124

VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF AN UNUSUAL RECORD

1. Species: SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER Limnodromus griseus 2. Number: One adult
(Vernacular Name) (Scientific Name)
3. Location: Chambers Road 1/4 mile north of 112th Ave.
4. Date(s): August 11, 1973 5. Time bird seen: 9 a.m. to 10 a.m.
6. Description of size, shape and color-pattern. (Describe in great detail all parts of the plumage including beak and feet coloration in addition to the diagnostic characteristics; however, include only what actually was seen in the field):
- The single bird was a dowitcher in an unusual habitat, a small muddy pot hole in a new sod farm. The legs were yellowish, bill greenish-yellow at base with darker tip. Wing primaries when folded quite rufous. Breast whitish with small blackish spots on sides and flanks. A little buffy on sides of lower neck. When flushed the bird gave a call similar to that of the greater yellowlegs but much lower pitch, a "teu, teu, teu" repeated several times.
7. Description of voice, if heard: teu, teu, teu repeated several times.
8. Description of behavior: Resting and docile--not feeding
9. Habitat--general: a grassy sod farm
specific: muddy pot-hole
10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated 6, 7 and 8 above; Explain:
long-billed dowitcher has barred flanks and a single call note
11. Distance (how measured?): As close as 29 feet, measured on telephoto lens
12. Optical equipment: 7 x 35 binoculars, 20x scope, and 16x telephoto lens on camera.
13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and observer):
bright sunlight with sun just to the left rear of observer.
14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species:
observed many times near the Great Lakes, long-billed in the west.
15. What made you think this species was unusual or rare?
records.
16. Other observers: Jack Reddall and LaVona Holt
17. Did others agree with your identification? Yes
18. Other observers who independently identified this bird:
19. Books, illustrations and advice consulted and how did these influence this documentation:
Field guides, especially description of voice and flank markings.
20. If bird was photographed, please attach pictures and describe equipment used:
Exakta camera with a 2x doubler on a 400 mm lens, total power of 16
- Signature Harold R. Holt Street Address: 449 S. Xavier St
- Date Prepared: August 14, 1973 City and State: Denver, Colo. 80219

(USE THE REVERSE, OR ADDITIONAL PAGES, IF NECESSARY)

VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF AN UNUSUAL RECORD

1. Species: SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER | Limnodromus griseus 2. Number: breeding
(Vernacular Name) (Scientific Name) plumage
Approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ mile north of 112th Avenue at the sod farm along
3. Location: (east side) Chambers Road in Adams County (nearest town - Brighton, Colo.)
4. Date(s): August 11, 1973 5. Time bird seen: 8:45 A.M. to 10:00 A.M. -MDT
6. Description of size, shape and color-pattern. (Describe in great detail all parts of the plumage including beak and feet coloration in addition to the diagnostic characteristics; however, include only what actually was seen in the field):

(SEE ATTACHED DETAILS)

7. Description of voice, if heard: Hurried three-note flight call: "teu-teu-teu", given only when the bird flushed; resembled call of Lesser Yellowlegs, but on a lower pitch.
8. Description of behavior: (SEE ATTACHED DETAILS)
9. Habitat--general: Large blue-grass sod farm covering about 50-60 acres.
specific: Small mud puddles where sod had been scraped away and not replanted.
10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated 6, 7 and 8 above; Explain:
(SEE ATTACHED DETAILS)
11. Distance (how measured?): (SEE ATTACHED DETAILS)
12. Optical equipment: 10X50 Bushnell Binoculars; 15X-60X B&L Telescope.
13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and observer):
Clear, bright sky; air still; bird observed at various positions in relation to sun.
14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species:
(SEE ATTACHED DETAILS)
15. What made you think this species was unusual or rare? There are only two authentic records for the state: August 14, 1909 and July 16, 1938, both specimens from Barr Lake.
16. Other observers: Mr. Harold Holt
449 South Xavier Street, Denver, Colorado 80219. Tel. 936-8845
17. Did others agree with your identification? Yes.
18. Other observers who independently identified this bird: None that I know of. Harold Holt said he was going to put it on the Denver area "Rare Bird Alert".
19. Books, illustrations and advice consulted and how did these influence this documentation:

(SEE ATTACHED DETAILS)

20. If bird was photographed, please attach pictures and describe equipment used: Harold Holt obtained a number of color photographs from 50 feet to as close to 29 feet.

Jack Reddall Street Address: 4450 South Alton Street
Signature

Date Prepared: August 12, 1973 City and State: Englewood, Colorado 80110
(Prepared from field notes taken during observation period on August 11, 1973)

(USE THE REVERSE, OR ADDITIONAL PAGES, IF NECESSARY)

SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER - *Limnodromus griseus*

6. Description of size, shape and color-pattern:

Overall appearance and relative size - A rather chunky, long-billed shore bird, slightly larger than the Killdeer which were also present in good numbers; Quite "Snipe-like" in appearance; short legged.

Bill - Considerably longer than head (roughly $2\frac{1}{2}$ times longer than head); straight, being blackish at the tip becoming grayish or grayish-green at base.

Crown and forehead - Brownish to reddish-brown.

Nape - Brownish to reddish-brown with various amounts of spotting of dark brown.

Face - Grayish; A light grayish stripe over the eye with a dark (dusky) stripe from the eye to the bill.

Eye - Appeared dark, possibly black or dark brown.

Throat - Grayish.

Breast and sides - Very pale cinnamon or reddish fading to light gray near the belly.

Belly and flanks - Light grayish to whitish with faint dusky spotting on flanks; no barring discernible on flanks.

Under tail coverts - Not noted.

Back - Rich reddish-brown spotted and streaked with dark brown.

Wings - Rich reddish-brown marked with spotting and some barring in the primaries.

Underwings - Light (grayish or whitish).

Rump - White sparsely spotted with black; the white extending in a tapered patch well up on the lower back which showed up well in flight.

Upper tail coverts and upper tail - Conspicuously barred with black and white.

Underside of tail - Not noted.

Legs and feet - Greenish legs; feet not noted.

8. Description of behavior:

We first noted the bird approximately 50 feet from the road in a small mud hole at rest. I proceeded to get out of the car and approach the bird. Upon seeing me it crouched down very close to the earth. I tossed a few stones in its general direction hoping to flush it but it would not take flight even though a couple of the stones came very close to hitting it. Clapping and shouting likewise would not dislodge the bird. Just as I was about to climb the barbed wire fence to chase it up,

SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER - *Limnodromus griseus*

the bird flushed, flying away to the southeast with rapid, short wing strokes. As it flushed, I distinctly heard the bird utter a three-note call - "teu-teu-teu" which caught my attention immediately. I returned to the car and asked Harold Holt if he had heard the bird call as it flew off. Harold verified the call as I had heard it. I mentioned at the time that I suspected a Short-billed Dowitcher because of the call. We immediately checked our "Peterson Guide" and verified the three-note flight call of the Short-billed versus the plaintive "keek" of the Long-billed form. The two of us then proceeded to stalk the bird for about an hour or so as it flew from one mud hole to another. Each time we got within 100 to 150 feet of where it would go down, other shore birds (Killdeer and Baird's Sandpipers) associated with it would flush scaring it off. Finally, the dowitcher came to rest in a rather large wet area by itself and began feeding by probing into the mud in typical dowitcher fashion. Harold began to approach slowly in order to obtain color photographs. The bird stopped feeding and stayed motionless as Harold was able to approach closer and closer. He was able finally to obtain a number of pictures the last two from as close as 29 feet. Eventually I joined Harold and was able to observe the bird for a full five minutes from between 30 and 35 feet using 30 power on my telescope. The diffused spotting on the flanks was clearly evident and I could discern absolutely no barring what-so-ever. During the hour that we stalked the bird we heard its flight note no less than a dozen times.

10. Similarly appearing species which were eliminated:

Curlews have long decurved bills; Godwits have long upturned bills; Common Snipe has heavily striped crown and back; American Woodcock has a barred crown and is a warm brown colored bird; All other sandpipers are eliminated on the basis of shape and bill size and shape; Long-billed Dowitcher is eliminated on the basis that it normally has quite heavy barring on the flanks and its flight call is altogether different, being a somewhat weak and plaintive - "keek" much higher pitched than that of *griseus* and most oftenly given as a single note (occasionally doubled or trebled). For several years now I have been alert to the possibility that I might come across a Short-billed Dowitcher in Colorado based solely on flushing flocks of dowitchers and listening to their flight notes. I have listened to many flocks and on August 11, 1973, I finally was able to hear the diagnostic call of *griseus*. For several years I have been able to separate flocks of dowitchers along coastal California based on flight notes where large numbers of both *griseus* and *scolopaceus* occur during the winter months. Undoubtedly there are many people who will question whether the two dowitchers can be safely identified in the field. I feel that they can under very favorable conditions such as we had on August 11. John Bull in his Birds of the New York Area, 1964, page 210, has this to say regarding field separation of the two dowitchers:

"The relationship of the dowitchers has long been misunderstood until Pitelka (1950) did much to clarify it. They were formerly considered to be conspecific; some authorities still consider them so. Pitelka pointed out that they are morphologically and possibly ecologically distinct, but he did not discuss their vocalizations. Some authorities attribute different call notes to the two species.

this is a feature of ad. ♂ & ♀
in alternate plumage, not
of imm. in June.

SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER - *Limnodromus griseus*

Contrary to what is believed, scolopaceus can be identified in the field under favorable conditions (from griseus and vice-versa). The flight note of scolopaceus is usually a single flat "keek" or "peet" (sometimes doubled) in contrast to the whistled double or triple "teu" of griseus"

11. Distance (how measured?):

We variously observed the bird from roughly 50 to 200 feet or more which was estimated. Harold Holt, by using his camera range finder was able to obtain pictures from 29 feet to 50 feet.

14. Previous experience with this and similarly appearing species:

I have seen and heard Short-billed Dowitchers for more than twenty-five years on both coasts, Long Island, New York; North and South Carolina; the Florida and Texas coasts and the California coast from Marin County south to Newport Beach. I have seen and heard Long-billed Dowitchers for almost nine years throughout eastern Colorado and along the California coast. In March of this year (1973) I spent four days birding at Newport Beach harbor where I was able to find both species quite readily by call.

19. Books, illustrations and advice consulted and how did these influence documentation:

Birds of the New York Area by John Bull
A Field Guide to Western Birds by Roger Tory Peterson
A Field Guide to the Birds by Roger Tory Peterson
Life Histories of North American Shore Birds by Arthur Cleveland Bent
Birds of North America by Robbins, Brunn, Zim and Singer
Audubon Water Bird Guide by Richard H. Pough
South Carolina Bird Life by Sprunt and Chamberlain
Manual of the Birds of Minnesota and Neighboring States by Thomas Roberts
Bird Sounds of Marsh, Upland and Shore - Recordings prepared by Peter Paul Kellogg,
Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology for the National Geographic Society

Jack Reddall
August 11, 1973