

2/10/27/76

Species: SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER

Limodromus griseus

(Vernacular Name)

(Scientific Name-use binomial)

Date(s): October 4, 1975

Time Bird Seen: early afternoon to (20 minutes)

Locality: Baseline Reservoir

Nearest Town: Boulder

County: Boulder

Other observers who independently identified this bird:

NAME

ADDRESS

TELEPHONE

Bruce Webb

Barry Knapp

Scott O'Keeffe

Optical Equipment: 7 X 50 binoculars, 15-60X B&L Zoom telescope

If photographed, type of equipment used: _____

Light Conditions: sun shining on bird at right angles from observers

Distance from bird (how measured): minimum estimated distance of 200 ft.

Number of Birds Seen: 1 Sex: ? Plumage: Molting in nonbreeding plumage

Describe the bird's overall behavior and demeanor:

The bird spent much of its time feeding in the muddy shallows of a small pond across the road from the main highway. It flew only when scared into flight by us.

Describe in great detail the bird's size, overall shape, plumage and color-pattern.

Include details on shape of bill, wings and tail. Give particular emphasis to the marks you used to identify the bird. Reference to its resemblance in field guide descriptions is not enough. Describe what you actually saw in the field:

Obviously a dowitcher. Prominent buffy superciliary line. Crown dark reddish-brown with some darker streaks in it. Back a rich tan-brown color with pale feather edgings. Wings mostly gray, extending just slightly beyond the tail when feeding. Tail white with fine(very)gray barring, extending onto lower uppertail coverts. Rump white, extending onto lower back in a V shape. Cheeks, throat white. Breast whitish, belly whitish, with some light gray spotting, primarily on the sides and flanks. Undertail coverts white with some gray spotting. Bill of moderate length, nondescript in color. Legs yellowish. (Note: bird not identified on the basis of any plumage characteristics).

Describe the bird's song or call, if heard, including method of delivery, i.e., from perch, in flight, etc:

On several occasions, when the bird was scared into flight, it gave a low, clearly tripled cu-cu-cu, rather sweet and musical, somewhat reminiscent of the Greater Yellowlegs call, although much less loud and not quite as clear. The call of this bird was not confused with any other shorebird at the pond (several Killdeer, several Lesser Yellowlegs).

Describe the habitat in which you observed this bird:

Shallow, muddy pond adjacent to reservoir.

How were similarly appearing species eliminated?

Only similar species would be Long-billed Dowitcher. Although certain plumage characteristics (such as spotted sides) suggested Short-billed, the variability of plumage characteristics in fall moult is too variable to allow positive identification of the two species. This bird was identified on the basis of the call, clearly heard by all observers on several occasions, when this bird and only this bird was calling. The call was the classic Short-billed call. It is sweeter and more musical, and more firmly and consistently structured than the call of the Long-billed. When it was first heard, all 4 observers quickly agreed that it was the Short-billed call. This bird was keeping to itself, although a flock of 5 Long-billed Dowitchers was feeding along the edge of the reservoir just across the road from the small pond.

Prior experience with this and similarly appearing species:

I am quite familiar with the Long-billed Dowitcher, having seen and heard it many times here in Colorado in spring and fall. I am less familiar with the Short-billed Dowitcher, having seen and heard it (in late winter and early spring) in California and Texas, and I have seen it (did not hear it) in Colorado once (May 13, 1975).

Books, illustrations and advice consulted and how did these influence this documentation?
Standard field guides confirmed the voice identification.

This report was written from notes made during X after observation; from memory

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