

19-77-6

Species: SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER

Limnodromus griseus

(Vernacular Name)

(Scientific Name-use binomial)

Date(s): 23 MAY, 1976 - 24 MAY, 1976 Time Bird Seen: 8:00 AM to 8:30 AM

Locality: UNION RESERVOIR

Nearest Town: LONGMONT

County: WELD

Other observers who independently identified this bird:

NAME	ADDRESS	TELEPHONE
<u>BRUCE WEBB & JEANNE CONRY</u>	<u>#3 CHAUTAUQUE, BOULDER, COLO.</u>	<u>447-2614</u>
<u>MIKE MOULTON</u>	<u>1328 SO. COFFMAN #3 LONGMONT, COLO.</u>	<u>772-0283</u>

Optical Equipment: 20-45X 60 TELESCOPE 7X35 BINOCULARS

If photographed, type of equipment used: NA

Light Conditions: FAIR; EARLY MORNING, OVERCAST

Distance from bird (how measured): 100 FT MINIMUM

Number of Birds Seen: 4 Sex: ? Plumage: ADULT- SPRING

Describe the bird's overall behavior and demeanor:

4 BIRDS SAT HUDDLED ON THE SHORE. AS THE WEATHER WAS COOL, OVERCAST AND INTERMITTENTLY RAINING, THEY SEEMED ONLY TO BE PROTECTING THEMSELVES FROM THE ELEMENTS. THEY WERE NOT FEEDING NOR WALKING ABOUT ON THE SHORE. WE WALKED UP TO THEM AND AFTER A FEW WELL-AIMED ROCKS, ^{THEY} FLEW RELUCTANTLY, CALLING AS THEY WENT. THEY FLEW LIKE LONG-BILLED, CLOSE TO THE WATER, AND CIRCLING, LOOKING FOR A PLACE TO LAND, ALMOST BEFORE THEY FLEW.

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:

SIZE AND SHAPE OF LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER.

PLUMAGE BROWNISH ABOVE, PALER BELOW, WITH DISTINCT MARBLINGS. WINGS POINTED AND ALMOST REACHING TAIL TIP WHEN AT REST. NO OBVIOUS WING STRIPE IN FLIGHT.

LEGS AS IN LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER.

A WHITISH RUMP EXTENDED UP BETWEEN THE WINGS (IT SEEMED TO EXTEND FURTHER ANTERIORLY THAN IN LONG-BILLED, BUT THIS IS NOT AN INCONTROVERTIBLE FIELD MARK) AND DOWN ONTO THE BASAL PORTION OF THE TAIL. TAIL TIP WAS DUSKY, MARBLED (DARKER DISTALLY) AND NOT CLEARLY MARKED.

THE BILL WAS RATHER LONG, SLIGHTLY DECURVED AND BLACK. IT SEEMED RATHER SHORT FOR THIS TYPE OF BIRD, BUT DUE TO POSSIBLE OVERLAP IN BILL LENGTH THIS IS NOT A RELIABLE FIELD CHARACTER.

THESE PLUMAGE NOTES ARE NOT DISTINCTIVE OF THE SPECIES, AS THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THESE SPECIES ARE NOT OBVIOUS ON A PURELY MORPHOLOGICAL BASIS. THE SUBJECT BIRDS WERE IDENTIFIED ON THE BASIS OF CALL NOTE.

AT THE TIME OF OBSERVATION WE WERE ACTUALLY CHASING A LITTLE GULL, TRYING TO OBSERVE MORE PLUMAGE DETAILS ON THAT BIRD. WE APPROACHED THE DOWITCHERS AND, ALMOST IN PASSING, FLUSHED THEM TO DETERMINE (OVER) THEIR SPECIES BY VOCALIZATION.

Describe the bird's song or call, if heard, including method of delivery, i.e., from perch, in flight, etc: IN ORDER TO HEAR THE CALL WE WALKED TO A 100 FT. DISTANCE AND THREW ROCKS IN THEIR DIRECTION TO FORCE THEM TO FLUSH. AS THEY DID SO THEY UTTERED THE DISTINCTIVE 3-NOTE CALL. IT WAS LOWER-PITCHED AND MORE MUSICAL IN NATURE THAN IS THE CORRESPONDING CALL OF THE LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER. THE LONG-BILLED MAY CALL A SERIES OF SHORT NOTES, BUT UNDER PRESSURE USUALLY GIVES ONLY A SINGLE SHARP NOTE.

Describe the habitat in which you observed this bird: OPEN MUDFLAT AT THE EDGE OF A PRAIRIE RESERVOIR. SEEMED MORE PARTIAL TO THE MUDDY, RATHER THAN SANDY, AREAS. THIS IS ALSO THE AREA AT UNION WHERE THE LONG-BILLED OCCURS AND THE HABITAT IS NOT A SEPARATING FEATURE IN ANY CASE.

How were similarly appearing species eliminated?

COMMON SNIPES - USUALLY DOES NOT OCCUR ON OPEN MUDFLAT, THOUGH IT HAS BEEN SEEN ON THE SAME MUDFLAT AREA BY MYSELF AND BRUCE BOSLEY. IT HAS SHORTER LEGS, A DARK RUMP AND A STRIPED HEAD. IT SHOWS MORE FRONT TO BACK CONTRAST.

LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER - IS THE ONLY REALLY SIMILAR SPECIES, AND IT HAS OCCURRED IN NUMBERS ON THIS MUDFLAT. IN POINT OF PLUMAGE, IT IS NOT DIFFERENT ENOUGH TO CALL ON THIS BASIS ALONE. ITS HIGHER-PITCHED, ALMOST SCREECHY CALL NOTE OCCURS SINGLY OR IN SHORT GROUPS OF NOTES, BUT LACKS THE LOWER PITCH AND MUSICAL QUALITY OF THE CALLS UTTERED BY THE SUBJECT BIRDS. NONE OF THE SUBJECT BIRDS WAS SEEN ^{TO HEAR} TO CALL OTHER THAN IN TRIPLETS OF NOTES. THESE TRIPLETS WERE RAPIDLY DELIVERED, TAKING ABOUT 1 SECOND IN DURATION, BUT WERE SO MUSICAL AS TO SEEM UNHURRIED.

Prior experience with this and similarly appearing species:

THE LONG-BILL IS A COMMON MIGRANT IN COLORADO AND I HAVE OBSERVED IT MANY TIMES FROM SPRING TO FALL. ~~IN WINTER~~ I HAVE OBSERVED MANY OF BOTH SPECIES IN MEXICO, WHERE THE PLUMAGES ARE SO ALIKE THAT CALL NOTES ARE THE ONLY MEANS OF SEPARATION.

Books, illustrations and advice consulted and how did these influence this documentation?

THE BIRDS WERE OBSERVED WITHOUT FIELD GUIDES IN HAND. AS LITERAL DESCRIPTIONS OF VOCALIZATIONS ARE UNSATISFACTORY, THE MOST USEFUL SOURCE FOR CONFIRMATION WAS THE FIELD GUIDE TO WESTERN BIRD SONGS RECORDING OF VOICES.

This report was written from notes made during _____ after X observation; from memory _____
ALTHOUGH JUST AFTER, AS I HAD LEFT MY NOTEBOOK IN THE CAR.

PRINT NAME: PETER J. MOULTON SIGNATURE: Peter J. Moulton DATE: 2/3/77
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