

## Colorado Field Ornithologists--Sight Record Form

Species: Short-tailed Dowitcher *Limnodromus griseus*

PHOTOS

Birds sighted: 1 im.

ACCEPTED 7-0

Time: 18 Aug., 1995; 10-11:00am

Location: Fruitgrower's Reservoir (Hart's Basin) 1 mi. E. of Eckert, Co.

Status: Accidental in west-central Co.

**Setting:** Coen Dexter and I had been surveying migrating shorebirds at the reservoir for about an hour and a half and were about to leave. We checked the shore next to the road on the west side of the lake once more before leaving. A dowitcher with a markedly differently colored back from the Long-billed Dowitcher we had just left caught our attention. After watching the bird for 20 minutes or so, two Long-billed Dowitchers landed about 5 meters away from the bird, providing an excellent opportunity to compare the birds. The sun was high and about 90 degrees from our line of sight. After about 50 minutes, I circled the birds and pushed them closer to Coen. As I pushed, they grew nervous and flushed, flying out over the reservoir. After I returned to the road, all three birds returned to the shore and continued to feed.

**Behavior:** The bird was actively feeding along a weedy, muddy shoreline. It did not go into the water, but rather fed by picking and probing shallowly on the muddy shore.

**Description:** The ferruginous back color of the bird first caught my attention. It was a much different color than the brownish-black base color of the Long-billed Dowitcher we had just left and of the ones that arrived shortly after. In the scope we could tell that the rufous edging of the scapulars extended into the black centers, but could not distinguish whether the pattern was that of a juvenile or that of an adult. The underparts were very light, almost white from the undertail coverts forward to the breast. The breast had a salmon reddish wash which graded into grayish at the throat. The hind neck was grayish, about the color of the gray on a Virginia Rail. There was very little spotting at the sides of the throat, perhaps a half dozen rather indistinct spots on either side. The flanks were spotted lightly, clearly not barred. This spotting extended through the undertail coverts. The bird seemed slightly shorter-billed, slightly longer-legged, slightly slimmer, and slightly smaller than the Long-billed Dowitchers nearby. When I flushed the bird, it flew directly away from toward Coen, then braked, spreading its tail. The tail was quite light, not contrasting sharply with the white rump, although the fine black lines crossing the tail made it appear slightly dirty from that distance (perhaps 30-35 yards). The combination of the very ferruginous back color and the whitish underparts suggests the juvenile bird.

**Vocalizations:** When the bird flushed it uttered a rapid series of low notes--tu tu tu tu--quite different from the sharper, slower keek, keek notes uttered by the Long-billed Dowitchers as they flushed.

**Similar Species:** Long-billed Dowitcher is the only bird that could be confused with this bird. Long-billed (present at the observation) has narrow, buff edging on its scapulars rather than extensive rufous. Its tail is darker, contrasting sharply with the white rump. It has barring on the flanks rather than sparse spotting. It is uniformly rufous beneath, rather than whitish. It is more heavily spotted at the throat and breast.

**Experience:** I have seen hundreds, perhaps thousands of Long-billed Dowitchers in Western Colorado. I have seen Short-billed Dowitchers twice before--once at Hart's Basin, once at Cheney Reservoir.

**Books consulted:** National Geographic

**Report:** Prepared from memory shortly after returning home.

Rich Levad  
2924 Ronda Lee Rd  
Grand Junction, CO 81503



## COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

**PHOTOS**NEW STATE RECORD ☐UNUSUAL RECORD ☒

Please print or type. Attach photographs and additional pages if necessary.

Species: Short-billed Dowitcher (Vernacular Name) Limnodromus griseus (Scientific Name)Date(s): Aug 18, 1995Number of birds seen: 1 Sex: ? Plumage: JuvenileLatilong: # 16 Distribution Code: M Habitat Code: ShorelineLocality: Hart's Basin Elevation: 6000'Nearest town: Delta County: DeltaTime(s) observed: 10:00 AM to 11:00 AMDuration of observation (e.g. 1 sec., 5 min., etc.): 1:00 hours

Other observers who saw the bird with you (give names, addresses, telephone numbers):

Rich Leivad - CFO Records Committee

Other observers who saw the bird independently (give names, addresses, telephone numbers):

?

Light conditions (position of bird to light and shade, direction and strength of light):

As good as it gets from all directionsOptical equipment used (e.g. power, types): 8x40 binocs & 45 Power ScopeDistance and how measured: 50 ft. estimateIf photographed, type of equipment and film: fargot cameraWho else photographed the bird: ?

Describe the bird's behavior (e.g. flying, feeding, or habits used in identifying):

feeding and probing in mudflat - flew about on two occasions and became quite vocal as bird appeared to interact with two long-billed adult Dowitchers

Describe in detail the bird's relative size, overall shape, plumage and color pattern. Include details of bill, wing and tail shape. Give particular emphasis to marks you used to identify the bird. Reference to its resemblance to field guide descriptions and illustrations is not enough. Describe only what you actually observed in the field: Bird was, at times, near

two Long-billed Dowitchers, Killdeer, Least and western Sandpeeps. The bird was nearly the same as the other two dowitchers but bill was somewhat shorter and straighter, body was slightly more slender. Back (scapulars) and tertials showed extensive chestnut fringes and



Description (continued): internal markings. Underparts  
were white with slight buff speckling. Under-  
tail coverts were spotted (tiny and in rows  
which were aligned length-wise with tail. Tail was  
very light when in flight and showed very little contrast  
between white at back, rump and tail.  
Describe the bird's song and call, if given, including method of delivery,  
(i.e. from perch, in flight, duration):

Tu, Tu, Tu, Tu, Tu - Soft and given several  
times when in flight - One or two notes were  
given when feeding - Tone of a Lesser yellowlegs.  
We flushed the bird once and it flushed on its  
own once but would always return to same location.  
Describe the general and specific habitat in which you observed the bird:

Mudflat near edge of water - bird was feeding  
near edge by probing in soft mud. Bird had  
in mud while long-bills would feed a few  
feet into the water covered mud.  
How did you eliminate similarly appearing species? Call of both species  
were heard several times. Calls are very different  
and may be the most reliable way to separate adults.  
This bird was a juvenile and could be separated from  
long-billed by back color and under parts. The tail  
also provided good information.  
What is your prior experience with this and similarly appearing species?

Have seen both dowitcher species several times.

I studied several <sup>(race - caurinus)</sup> short-billed Dowitchers a  
few weeks ago near Homer, Alaska.

List books, illustration, recordings, other birders, etc. consulted and how  
this influenced your identification:

a) At time of observation: Nat. Geographic.

b) After observation: Shorebirds - An identification Guide  
The Guide only supported what I already suspected  
This report was written from reports made during                     , after  
observation X, from memory                     

Date and time report was written: Aug 18, 1995

Reporting observer: Coen Dexter Signature: Coen Dexter

Address: 175 Sunset Circle, Palisade CO

All reports will be maintained permanently at the address below:

PI 526

Return to: CURATOR, DEPARTMENT OF ZOOLOGICAL COLLECTIONS  
DENVER MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY  
CITY PARK  
DENVER, CO 80205



Dark Brown  
Chestnut  
this pattern  
was also  
very noticeable  
on the back.  
(Scapulars)



Long-billed  
Chestnut  
edging only





Short-billed Dowitcher  
Harts Basin  
Delta County  
Aug 18, 1995

1997-30

1997-30  
SB Dowitcher

CCSC

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