

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

NEW STATE RECORD

UNUSUAL RECORD ☒

Red 10/7/99 wpl

ACCEPT 70

Species: Short-billed Dowitcher (*Limnodromus griseus*)**Date:** 13 September 1998**Number seen:** one**Sex:** unknown**Plumage:** juvenile**Locality:** Rocky Ford sewage ponds**Elevation:** 4178'**Nearest town:** Rocky Ford**County:** Otero**Time observed:** about 13:30 MDT**Duration of observation:** about 5 minutes

Description: While looking over the shorebirds and ducks at the eastern end of the eastern-most pool at the Rocky Ford sewage ponds with Peter Gaede, I found a dowitcher at long range that appeared bright and contrasty. I told Peter that I thought I had a Short-bill (SBDO) and suggested that we get closer and study it. We did so and at closer (though still not close) range, the bird was obviously a juvenile SBDO and looked very similar to the SBDO I had found at Lower Latham Res. about three weeks earlier. Peter had no experience with that species so, because we still weren't all that close, he could not be sure that the identification was correct. He did, however, agree that the bird showed all the characters that I pointed out.

The bird was very bright, with strong buff-rufous fringing on most upperparts feathers, though the bird had started its molt into Basic (thus, had some gray scapulars and back feathers). The head and face were a warm brownish-gray, not contrasting strongly with the bright orangish breast. The orangish breast contrasted rather strongly with the white belly. I could not discern whether the belly had any spotting or barring. The scapulars and tertials were dark with wide, bright fringes and I could see internal squiggles on the tertials, but not the scaps (the bird wasn't very close and some of the scaps were gray Basic feathers). The upperside wing coverts were generally much-less-heavily fringed and the fringing color was paler. I could not discern the precise pattern of the wing coverts, but they were obviously plainer than the brightly-fringed juvenile scaps. This created a contrast between the bright scaps and the duller wing coverts. I could not discern the color pattern on the rectrices.

Similar species eliminated: Adult Long-billed Dowitcher (LBDO) ruled out as the bird had a white belly and strong fringing and internal markings in scaps and tertials, yet had only replaced a few scaps and back feathers as part of the Pre-basic molt (a white-bellied adult LBDO is obviously well along in its Pre-basic molt, so there should much more gray Basic feathers among on the upperparts). Juvenile LBDO was easily eliminated by the following features: head color (usually gray in LBDO contrasting strongly with orangish breast), tertial pattern (no internal squiggles in LBDO), and contrast from scaps to coverts (both sets of feathers are fairly plain in LBDO, thus not creating a strong contrast in brightness). Stilt Sandpiper eliminated by plumage pattern and bill structure (bill did not have terminal droop).

Describe the bird's song and call, if given, including method of delivery (i.e. from perch, in flight, duration): The bird was not heard.

What is your prior experience with this and similarly-appearing species? I have seen bazillions of SBDOs (mostly *griseus*, but quite a few *hendersoni*) and 1000s of LBDOs, and many 100s of Stilt Sandpipers. No other species is at all similar. My experience with dowitchers is mostly in eastern North America where birders search through SBDSs looking for LBDOs, so I know the former very well.

Light conditions: sun was behind me and to my left

Optical equipment used: Kowa 30x wide angle

Distance, and how estimated: estimated at 175 feet minimum distance

Other observers who saw the bird with you: Peter Gaede

Other observers who saw the bird independently: none of which I'm aware

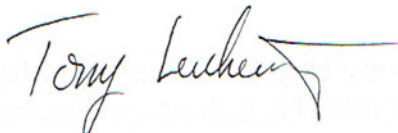
If photographed, type of equipment and film: not

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

a) at time of observation: none used

b) after observation: none used

Reporting observer: Tony Leukering

Signature: 

Address: Colorado Bird Observatory, 13401 Piccadilly Road, Brighton, CO 80601

Date report was written: This report was written (from field notes written from memory about eight hours after observation) on 15 September 1998 and 4 October 1999.