

DOCUMENTATION OF EXTRAORDINARY BIRD SIGHTING

Species: Long-billed Dowitcher; **Number:** 2 juvenile/basic

Location: Swan L., Johnson Co., IA

Date: 25 Nov 1994; **Time:** 3:45 to 4:10 p.m.

Name and address: Thomas H. Kent, 211 Richards St., Iowa City, IA 52246.

Others before/with/after: none that I know of

Habitat and circumstances: small natural marsh with low water, mud flats, no vegetation

Description of bird: I first saw these two dowitchers on 17 Nov. They were still present on 23 Nov. They were feeding in shallow water, dabbing their long bills into the mud. Today I decided to walk around the lake to get closer to them. They were overall gray birds, but when I got closer, one had more rufous tinge to scapulars and tertials. They were gray around the neck like juvenile long-bills usually are. They were plain light gray below. The upper parts were also quite plain from a distance and with back lighting. When I got close both seemed to have a fine rufous edge to some of the wing feathers, but this was more definite on the one bird. I flushed them three times. The wedge of white up the back was very evident. I did not see the tail markings well.

Voice: I thought I would hear them when flushed, but either they were silent or my mild hearing loss prevented me from hearing them.

Similar species: These birds did not have the bold streaking of a snipe. I wouldn't believe a Short-billed Dowitcher at this date if I saw it myself. At any rate, the gray neck and some retained thin rufous edge on wing feathers is typical of molting juvenile Long-billed Dowitcher at this date in Iowa.

Any one have reservations?: NA

Light: variable, but eventually the late afternoon light was behind me; **Distance:** about 30 yards; **Optics:** 10x binocular when close; scope from car across lake.

Previous experience: I have seen many, but this is a record late date.

References before/after viewing: none

Time of notes: none; **Final typing:** 1 hour