

Red Knot
22 Jul 1995
Rathbun Res., Appanoose Co., IA
*Tom Johnson
IBL 65:98, 66:20, 96

Record Number: 95-40
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

Tom Johnson, RR 1, Mystic 52574

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 65:98, 66:20

Records Committee: IBL 66:96

VOTE: 6 A-D, 1 NA

NA, This could be a Red Knot, but length of bill appears more suitable for Short-billed Dowitcher which also have a line through the eye and brown streaked backs. Red Knots have more "scaled" appearance on the back. Since the bird was not seen in flight, no details are given of rump color, tail pattern, or wing stripe. Also no information on bill shape or leg color.

A-D, Despite observer modesty, a convincing id.

A-D, I think an alternate plumaged adult could still be present on this rather early fall date.

A-D, Sufficient for Red Knot probably beginning to molt to basic.

A-D, adult in alternate plumage.

A-D, I think this description is fine, despite observer's reservations. Other red-breasted possibilities eliminated (Curlew Sandpiper, Red Phalarope, Am. Robin).

RE-VOTE: 6 A-D, 1 NA

A-D, I did some checking: in Hayman's Shorebirds, Killdeer bill length is given as 18-23 mm making "twice as long as Killdeers" 36-46 mm. Red Knot is given as 29-38 mm, just into the range of twice Killdeer bill length. So I'm convinced.

A-D, I don't think anything else about this description indicates dowitcher, nor do I agree that he description of bill length "twice as long as a Killdeer's" suggests dowitcher. I can't imagine an experienced birder confusing the two.

A-D, NA suggests that bill length is more suitable for Short-billed Dowitcher. The bill length is described as 2 times the length of a Killdeer. This should eliminate even the shortest Short-billed Dowitcher.

A-D, We have here a documentation by a good birder who, by his own admission, did not see all of the details desirable. He did, however, consider the possibility of a dowitcher and dismissed it because the bill was too short. I believe that any Iowa birder who would even think of a Red Knot has enough shorebird experience to recognize a dowitcher. Consequently I will stick with my original vote.

A-D, There are only occasional July records from Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Illinois, although Minnesota and Wisconsin have had records earlier than this one, and early fall birds are in alternate plumage. The date would be typical for an early Short-billed Dowitcher. The bird was seen at 50 feet with 10x binocular by an observer who has seen Red Knots in Iowa. I cannot read anything into the appearance of the upper back. Bill lengths for Killdeer are 18 to 22 mm, Red Knot 32-34 mm, and Short-billed

Dowitcher 51-65 mm. (Prater et al. 1977. Guide to Identification and Aging of Holarctic Waders). Twice the length of Killdeer bill is better fit for Red Knot than Short-billed Dowitcher. On Short-billed Dowitcher the white supercillium is more prominent than the dark eyeline. Also, one would expect that the markings on the underparts of a returning dowitcher in alternate plumage would still be evident. Thus, based on observer judgment, eyeline, bill length, and lack of breast markings, I think that Red Knot is OK.

NA, NA comments raise points which, together with the record early fall date of the sighting, engender enough doubt for me to change my vote.

95-40

IOWA BREEDING BIRD ATLAS DOCUMENTATION FORM

What species? Red Knot How many? 1

Location: County Appanoose ~~Black~~ Lake Rathbun

Location in detail Beach Ramp - East Island View - Island

Habitat? _____

When? date? July 22 Time: 7:30 to 7:35

Observer? Name: Tom Johnson

Address: RT 1, Mystic, IA. 52574

Telephone: 515 647-2666

Description of bird (s) : Include size, shape, detailed description of all parts including bill, eye, head, neck, back, wings, tail, throat, breast, belly, undertail, legs, feet; also voice and behavior. Use additional sheets if necessary.

My son and I were biking at Island view as we did almost nightly. We went to the ramp to look for shore birds as we had seen willow Pt. I saw a bird with a red breast and rode to 50' of it. With my binocs. I noticed a bird the same size as a killdeer next to it but chunkier. I knew it was unusual and also knew it was a Red Knot from the breast and the bill size which I estimated as twice as long as the killdeers bill and

Similar species and how eliminated: Donitchoc - bill was shorter (over) than Donitchoc

Did anyone have reservations about identification? If so, explain:

Viewing conditions: lighting, distance and how measured, optical equipment used.


50' - estimated B & L D-36

Previous experience with this species and other similar ones:

Juveniles - Lake Rathbun - 1992 Oct. 2.

Field notes made 5 mins from completed Inc.

dark. I tried to think of other shorebird sit 95-40
could have been and the downy species
was what I could imagine. - but its bill was
too short. I decided to note a few details
get to my car a couple of miles away and call
Ray (amusing). This is my notes with draw

 dark line thru eye, bill twice as long
a bill down in same field of view, red neck
and breast, like brown stretched back, red went
to bottom of belly. I had no back with me
but decided it was a finch and wanted Ray
to see it before dark. He wasn't home

but I have a message on his machine. I
saw him the next A.M. at the lake and he had
not heard the message but had seen a like bird
the same sat. A.M. but didn't get the same but
he got from 1/4 mile away, he didn't have time
to walk the mile. I wished I could
have made the bird fly and observed more.

I defnly this was unusual for the timing
and wanted another to see it with me. It
~~didn't~~ won't hurt my feeling if this
isn't accepted - I should have looked
for more details.