

RARE SPECIES DOCUMENTATION
Records of Vermont Birds

The following form has been prepared to encourage full documentation, when requested, of rare or unseasonal birds in the state of Vermont. These reports are put into a permanent file and should be as detailed as possible. New reports are reviewed annually by the Vermont Bird Records Committee, which evaluates records for their acceptability to future researchers and for inclusion in the state bird list.

Please print or type

SPECIES: Short-billed Dowitcher

NUMBER OBSERVED: 2

OBSERVER MAKING REPORT: OTHER OBSERVERS (and addresses if available)

Spencer Hardy and many others including Ted Murin on 10/5/14

LOCATION: (place, township, county)

Dead Creek WMA IBA - Brilyea Access, Addison County, Vermont, US

DATE:

10/5/13 and 10/17/13

TIME AND LENGTH OF OBSERVATION:

Nearly 45 mins on 10/5 (11:30 am) and several mins on 10/17 (2:30 pm)

DISTANCES FROM BIRD: Maximum__75 yards__ Minimum__10 yards__

WEATHER:

wind direction __not noted__ wind speed __not noted__

sky cover __not noted__ light in relation to observer's position temperature

Good light on 10/5. Backlit on 10/17

OPTICAL EQUIPMENT: (make, power, etc.)

10/5/13 Celestron 8 inch Schmidt-Cassegrain telescope with Televue image erector and Celestron Plossl 26mm eyepiece (for about 78x magnification) and Minox HG 8x43 binoculars

10/17 Swarovski 80mm 25-50 zoom and Minox HG 8x43 binoculars

OBSERVER'S PREVIOUS ACQUAINTANCE WITH THIS SPECIES OR SIMILAR FORMS:

One juvenile SBDO seen with other shorebirds in Springfield, VT 8/11/13 and 8/14/13.
Both species seen within the past 10 years in Texas and/or New Jersey

OTHER DOCUMENTATION: Photo __x__ Tape Recording _____ Specimen _____

If yes to the above, where is this information deposited? _____

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/61161297@N08/10103946516/in/photostream/lightbox>

HABITAT: (be as detailed as possible, include associated bird species)

Feeding directly with GWTE (~150 on 10/17) and 5 LBDO (10/5 and 10/17) in a shallow bay of the Dead Creek. Amongst lily pads in the large marsh expanse east of the Brilyea access road and just out of sight from rt. 17. Several other shorebird species present but with much greater affinity for dry ground.
<http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist?subID=S15327180>

BIRD'S BEHAVIOR: (feeding actions, manner of flight, displays or interactions, reaction to observer)

Feeding in belly deep water with GWTE. Classic dowitcher probing behavior, most often seen in small groups or all together, often far from observer, but relatively unaffected by our presence. Seen in flight several times.

VOCALIZATION: (song or calls)

One SBDO call heard from flock in flight (identified by Ted Murin) on 10/5. I remember hearing a pretty clear 3-note call.

DESCRIPTION: (Describe what you actually saw during the observation. We hope that observers will take field notes during the observation and before consulting field guides, etc. Additional pages with sketches and copies of field notes are encouraged.)

Relative size and shape:

At a distance, the SBDO appeared more slender than the LBDO nearby, especially in the chest. Visible on 10/17, when plumages had become more similar to LBDO. One memorable view on 10/17 of a single bird of each species standing on a partially submerged log right next to each other. The difference in shape was clear, as was a slight difference in size (SBDO being smaller).

Head (crown, cheeks, eye, throat, nape):

Gray with lighter supercillium, similar to LBDO but brighter tones of rufous and brown.

Feet and Bill (shape, color, length):

Bill long, hardly disguisable from the shortest-billed LBDOs, but definitely shorter than the longest-billed LBDOs.

Upper back:

More brightly patterned than on LBDO, with scapulars edged with white. These differences faded over the two weeks between sightings.

Lower back and rump:

Similar to LBDO-white wedge on back only visible in flight.

Wings (shape, length, markings):

As with the rest of the bird, brighter browns and reds than the LBDO nearby.

Breast, belly, flanks, undertail coverts:

Breast, belly, and flanks a warm brown/rufous vs. colder gray of LBDO. Belly whiter than breast and flanks. Undertail coverts barred.

Tail (shape, length, markings):

Ted Murin had a view of at least one tail that fit for LBDO. I did not get a satisfactory view of any of the tails.

IMPORTANT: WHAT SIMILAR SPECIES WERE ELIMINATED WHEN MAKING THIS IDENTIFICATION AND HOW WAS THIS BIRD DIFFERENT?

The long, straight bill, white wedge on back and sewing machine feeding behavior can eliminate all other shorebirds species. While watching the flock as a whole (10/5), it became clear that there was significant variation between individuals, with one in particular sticking out as warmer and brighter colored. This bird and

a second individual also showed the small-chested shape of SBDO.

Apparently any molt during migration indicates Long-billed, and most if not all of our 5 LBDO were clearly molting, the 2 SBDO were not.

More/better details were written up on my LBDO RSD, as that was completed much sooner after the sighting.

COMMENTS: (was age or sex determined?, etc.)
All dowitchers appeared to be juveniles in first basic plumage.

This report was written from notes taken during _____ immediately after _____ the observation, or written from memory ___x___ (please attach copies of notes if available)

NAME (print) _____ Spencer Hardy _____ SIGNATURE (not req'd) _____

MAILING ADDRESS _____

DATE ___9/1/14_____

Return electronically (preferred) to: vbrc@vtcostudies.org or mail to: Vermont Bird Records Committee, Vermont Center for Ecostudies, PO Box 420, Norwich, VT 05055