

DOWITCHER IDENTIFICATION SUMMARY

		Long-billed	Short-billed	
Habitat		Fresh water	Salt water	
Structure	Bill	Long & uniform May be gently arced in outer third	Thick-based, tapers on outer half Kinked near end (like caught in a door)	
	Body	Rounded undercarriage (swallowed a tennis ball), thick neck, front heavy, very slightly longer-legged	Straight or slightly-elliptical undercarriage Longer neck, smaller head, even weight distribution	
	Primary Projection	Primaries very slightly shorter than tail	Primaries very slightly longer than tail	
Vocalizations		High <i>keek</i> (similar to Blue-winged Teal). May call while feeding, etc.	Mellow <i>tu tu tu</i> , (not unlike Lesser Yellowlegs). Mostly calls in flight.	
Plumage	Juvenile (mid Aug—Early Nov)		Plain gray tertials Tiger-striped tertials (orange & black striped) Orange wash on breast	
	Year-round	Eye Ring	Often has prominent lower eye ring	Narrow eye ring
		Lesser Under-wing Coverts (in-flight)	White at base of lesser under-wing coverts	Patterned base of lesser under-wing coverts
		Tail Bands	Wider black bands	Equal black & white bands
	Alternate (breeding)		Orange-red underparts Orange & black bars, with white fringes on side of breast Scapular feathers have a shallow white or orange tip	Pinkish-orange underparts brightest on neck Black spots on side of breast Scapular feathers have a deep u-shaped white or orange tip.
	Basic (non-breeding)		Smooth gray head & neck (like dipped in soot). No obvious white background. Dark back feathers with dark shafts. Darker upper parts. Flanks washed with dark gray vertical bars. Slightly more contrast flank vs belly.	Head & neck have white background with spots & streaks. Paler back feathers with white fringes & narrow dark shafts. Paler upper parts. More delicate splotches (occasionally bars) on flanks. Less contrast flank vs belly.
Diagnostic field marks, Strongly supporting field marks, Supporting field marks				

Based on a table prepared by Eric Stager.

References: *Advances in the Field Identification of North American Dowitchers*, Lee, Cin-Ty; Birch, Andrew. *Shorebirds: ID Workshop with Kevin Karlson*, Wildside Nature Tours; *The Identification and Migration of Breeding Plumaged Dowitchers in Southern Ontario*, Jaramillo, Alvaro; Pittaway, Ron; Burke, Peter. <https://chicagobirdalliance.org/blog/2024/5/8/identify-dowitchers-during-spring-migration>, Goss, Woody, Chicago Bird Alliance.