

DOWITCHER IDENTIFICATION SUMMARY

		Long-billed	Short-billed	Field Mark Review	
Habitat		Fresh water	Salt water	Holds up well, 90% of the time. Often looking for the 10%.	
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)	Strongly supporting, but can't count on bill length alone!!! Best used when bill is really long (Long-billed female)	
	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	Supporting. Subjective. Feathers are movable. Body weight changes !	
	Primary Projection	Primaries very slightly <u>shorter</u> than tail	Primaries very slightly <u>longer</u> than tail	Supporting. Can be hard to see. If seen well, good supporting info.	
Vocalizations		High keek (similar to Blue-winged Teal). May call while feeding, etc.	Mellow tu tu tu , (not unlike Lesser Yellowlegs). Mostly calls in flight.	Diagnostic!!	
Plumage	Juvenile (mid Aug—Early Nov)		Plain gray tertials	Tiger-striped tertials (orange & black striped) Orange wash on breast	Diagnostic !!! Must determine age. Juvenile plumage present in Texas from ~Mid-August – ~Mid-October
	Year-round	Eye Ring	Often has prominent lower eye ring	Narrow eye ring	Supporting. If seen well, good supporting info. Can be ambiguous.
		Lesser Under-wing Coverts (in-flight)	White at base of lesser under-wing coverts	Patterned base of lesser under-wing coverts	Diagnostic! May be hard to catch. Try for photos.
		Tail Bands	Wider black bands	Equal black & white bands	Supporting. Often ambiguous.
	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.	Color of Underparts: Ambiguous. Subject to lighting & individual opinion. May work well with experience. Sides of Breast: Must be very exact on which feather tracts under review. Short-billed sometimes shows bars (but not white fringes). White fringes wear away. Scapular Feathers: Best field mark in alternate plumage. Some authors include wing covert feathers, but these can be ambiguous.
Basic (non-breeding)		Smooth gray head & neck (like dipped in soot). No obvious white background.	Head & neck have white background with spots & streaks.	Head & Neck Color: Strongly supporting. Usually effective. Depends on lighting.	

	Basic (non-breeding)	Dark back feathers with dark shafts. Darker upper parts. Flanks washed with dark gray vertical bars. Slightly more contrast flank vs belly.	Paler back feathers with white fringes & narrow dark shafts. Paler upper parts. More delicate splotches (occasionally bars) on flanks. Less contrast flank vs belly.	Hue of Upper parts: Strongly supporting. Usually effective. Depends on lighting. Feathers subject to wear. Flank markings: Can be ambiguous.
Diagnostic field marks, Strongly supporting field marks, Supporting field marks				
<p>Based on a table prepared by Eric Stager.</p> <p>References: <i>Advances in the Field Identification of North American Dowitchers</i>, Lee, Cin-Ty; Birch, Andrew. <i>Shorebirds: ID Workshop with Kevin Karlson</i>, Wildside Nature Tours; <i>The Identification and Migration of Breeding Plumaged Dowitchers in Southern Ontario</i>, Jaramillo, Alvaro; Pittaway, Ron; Burke, Peter. https://chicagobirdalliance.org/blog/2024/5/8/identify-dowitchers-during-spring-migration, Goss, Woody, Chicago Bird Alliance.</p>				