

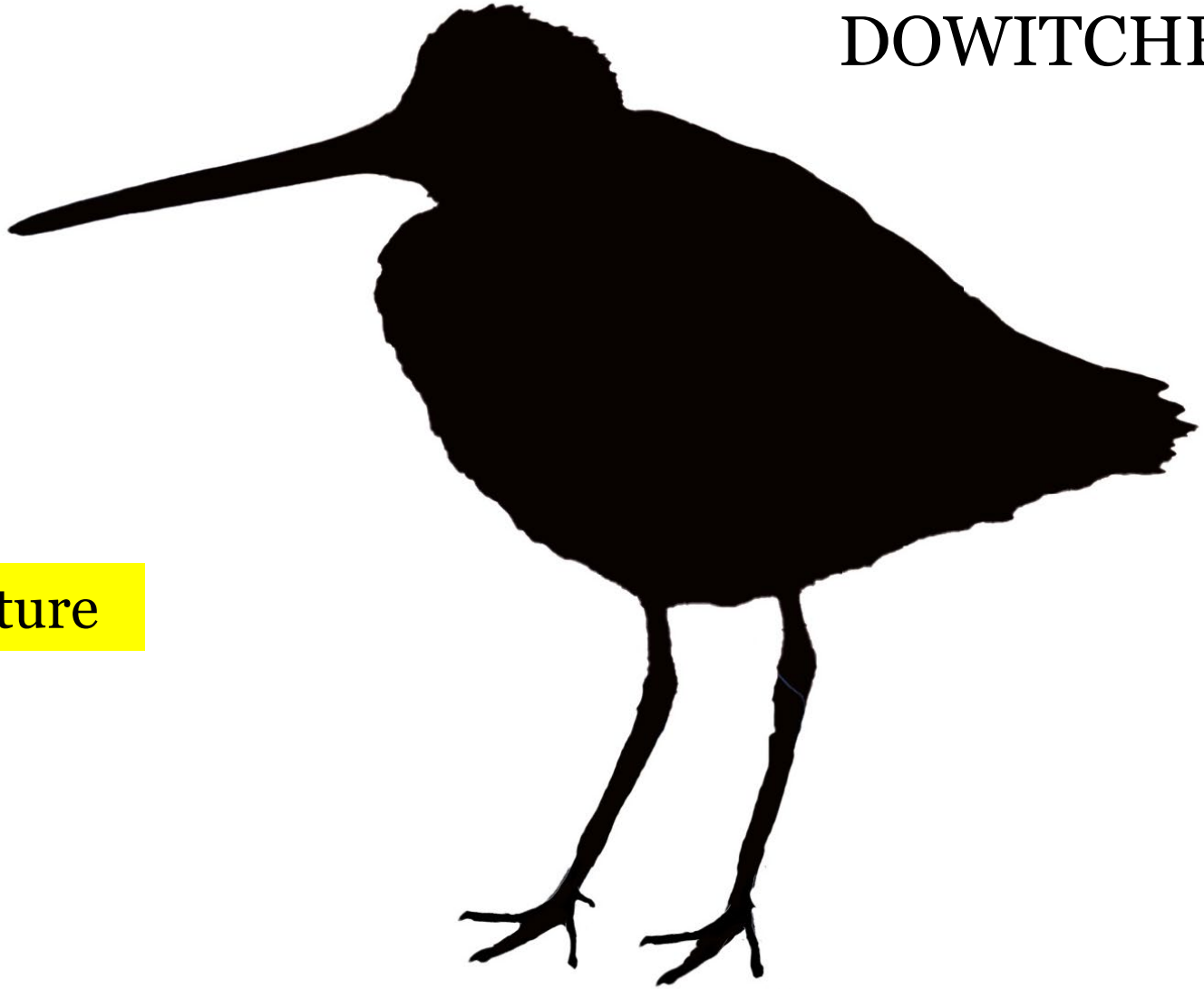
NOTE ON THE USE OF PHOTOGRAPHS

Please note that this material is being circulated for the personal educational use of the student of Travis Audubon Society classes. Please do not distribute, copy, post, share, or further disseminate any of this material.

The photographs used in these presentations are credited to Jeffrey E. Patterson or the eBird contributors named in the photographs and to the Macaulay Library of The Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, or to other photographers as indicated.

DOWITCHERS

GENERIC DOWITCHER



Structure

**GENERIC
DOWITCHER**

Alternate
(summer)
(breeding)



GENERIC DOWITCHER



Basic
(winter)
(non-breeding)

In-flight

GENERIC
DOWITCHER



SHOREBIRDS BY WEIGHT

Revised 6/13/25

339 g



Willet
(Western)

350 g



American
Avocet

358 g



Hudsonian
Godwit

454 g (1.0 lbs)



Marbled
Godwit

493 g



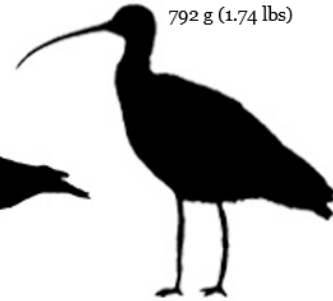
Whimbrel

700 g



American
Oystercatcher

792 g (1.74 lbs)



Long-billed
Curlew

190 g



Ruddy
Turnstone

200 g



American
Golden-Plover

211 g



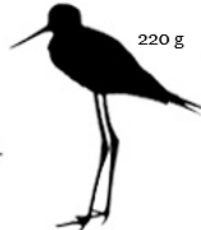
American
Woodcock

215 g



Red
Knot

220 g



Black-necked
Stilt

226 g



Upland
Sandpiper

235 g (8.29 oz)



Greater
Yellowlegs

263 g



Willet
(Eastern)

320 g



Black-bellied
Plover

70 g



Stilt
Sandpiper

85 g



Wilson's
Phalarope

90 g (3.18 oz)



Killdeer

94 g



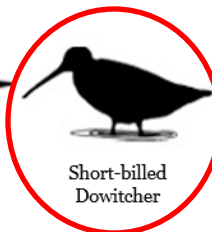
Buff-breasted
Sandpiper

100 g



Sanderling

108 g



Short-billed
Dowitcher

110 g



Mountain
Plover

111 g



Long-billed
Dowitcher

114 g (4.02 oz)



Lesser
Yellowlegs

117 g



Pectoral
Sandpiper

146 g



Wilson's
Snipe

27 g (0.95 oz)



Least
Sandpiper

35 g



Western
Sandpiper

41 g



Semipalmated
Sandpiper

48 g



Red-necked
Phalarope

50 g



Spotted
Sandpiper

51 g



White-rumped
Sandpiper

58 g



Snowy
Plover

58 g



Baird's
Sandpiper

63 g



Piping
Plover

64 g



Dunlin

65 g



Solitary
Sandpiper

69 g



Semipalmated
Plover

70 g



Wilson's
Plover

WEIGHT VARIES ESPECIALLY DURING MIGRATION

Female Short-billed

50-80% weight
increase

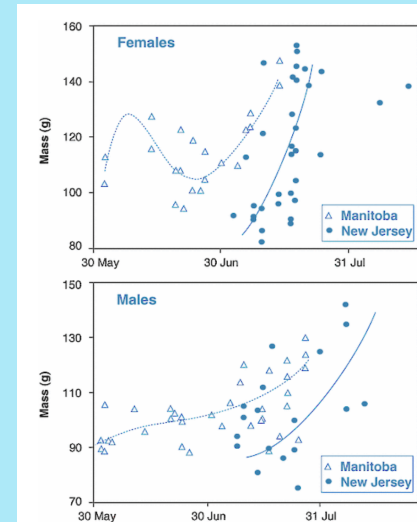
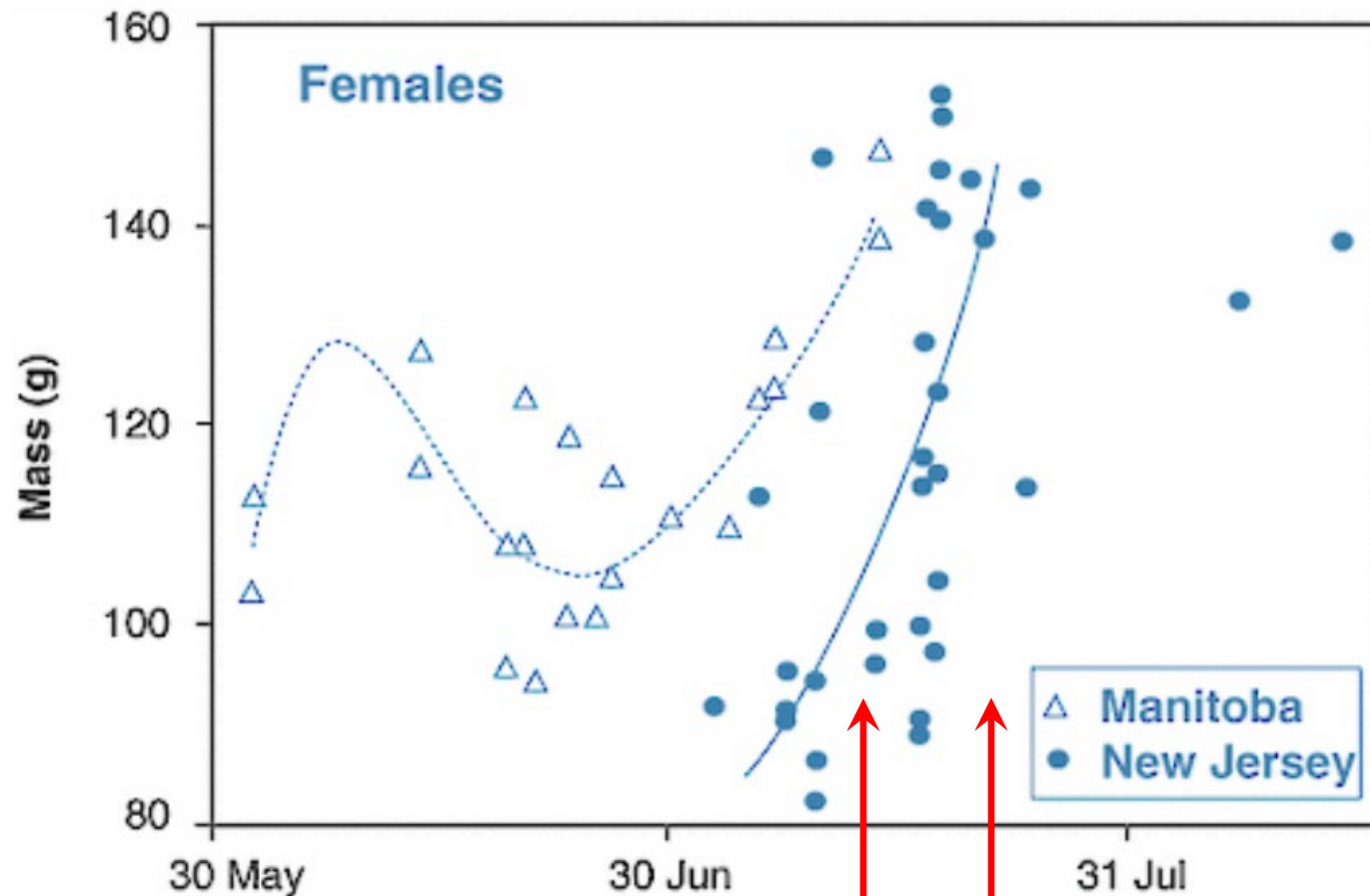
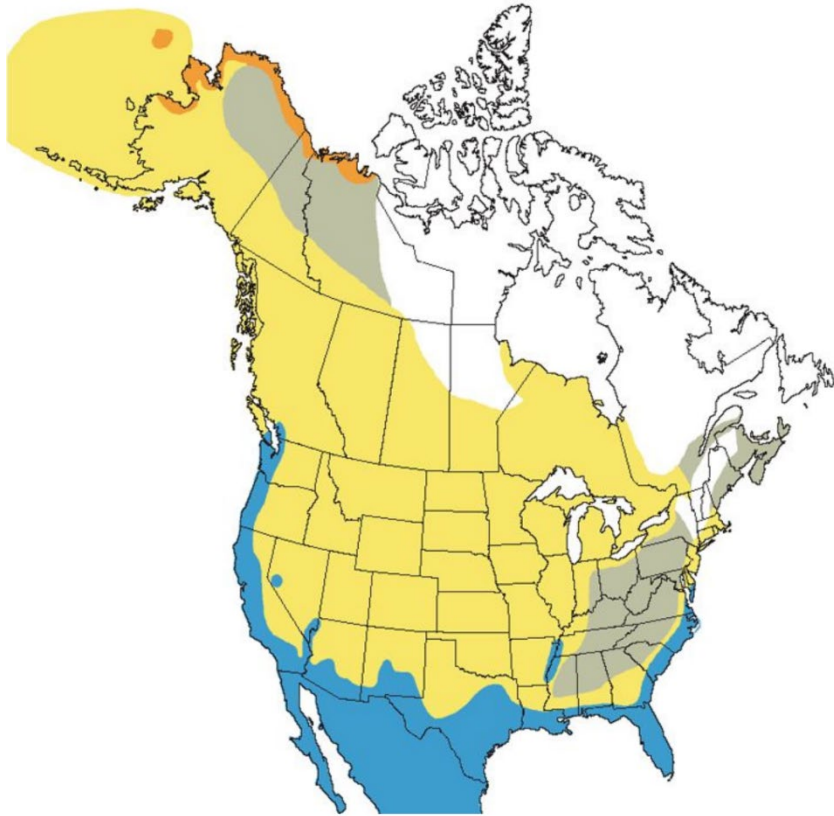


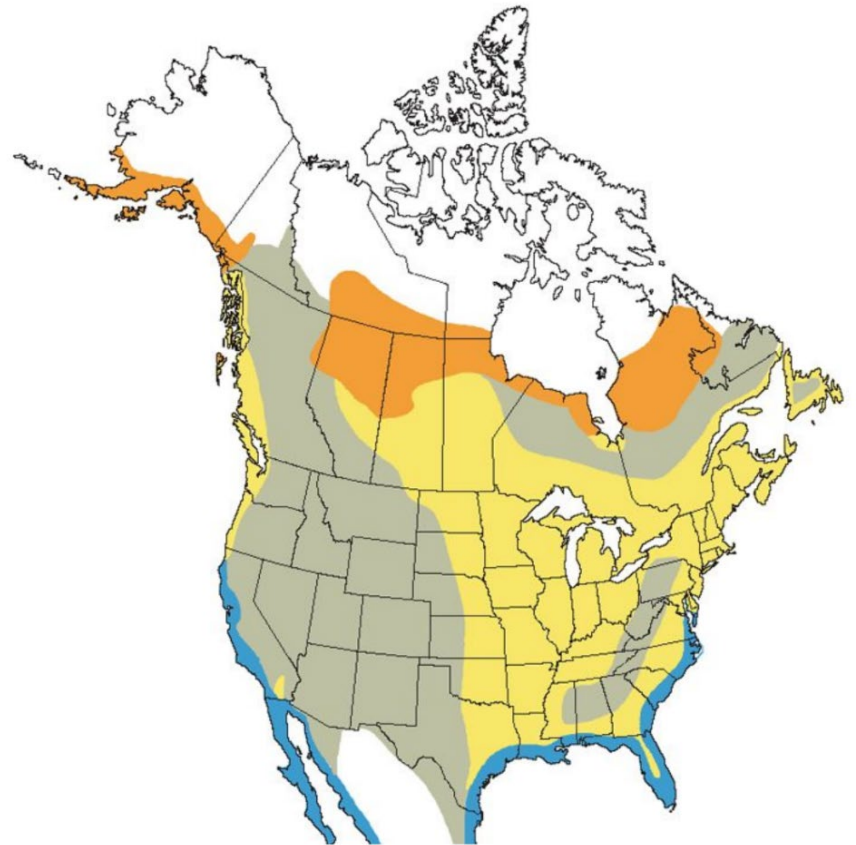
Figure 2. Weight cycles of Short-billed Dowitcher (by sex) + Enlarge
Weight cycles of Short-billed Dowitcher (by sex) breeding at Churchill, Manitoba, and of migrants arriving on the coast of New Jersey. Note the rapid fattening of female migrants. This is less evident in males because of their protracted arrival.

RANGE

Long-billed



Short-billed



SHORT-BILLED SUBSPECIES

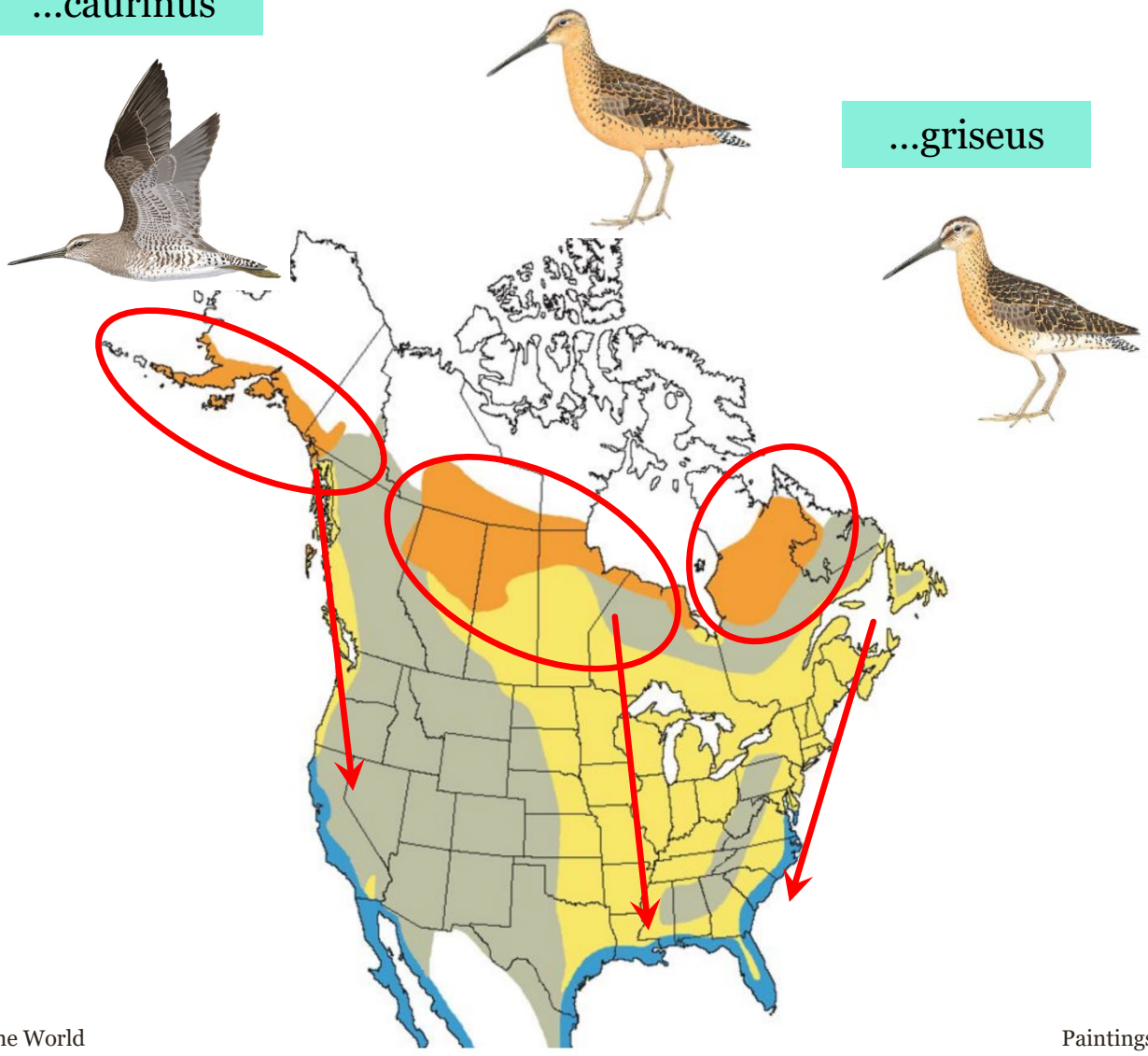
SHORT-BILLED – 3 SUBSPECIES RANGE

Limnodromus griseus **subspecies**

...caurinus

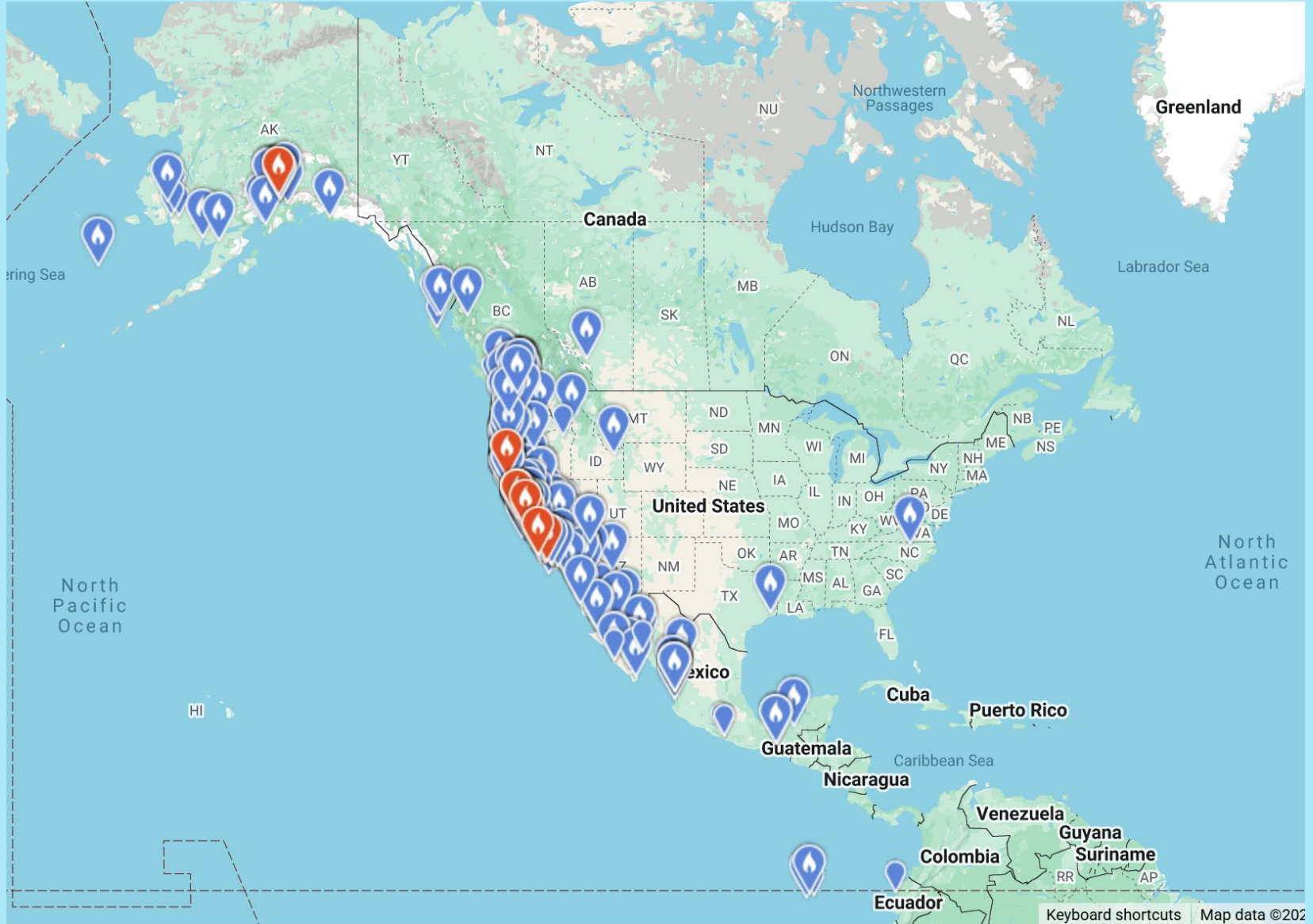
...hendersoni

...griseus

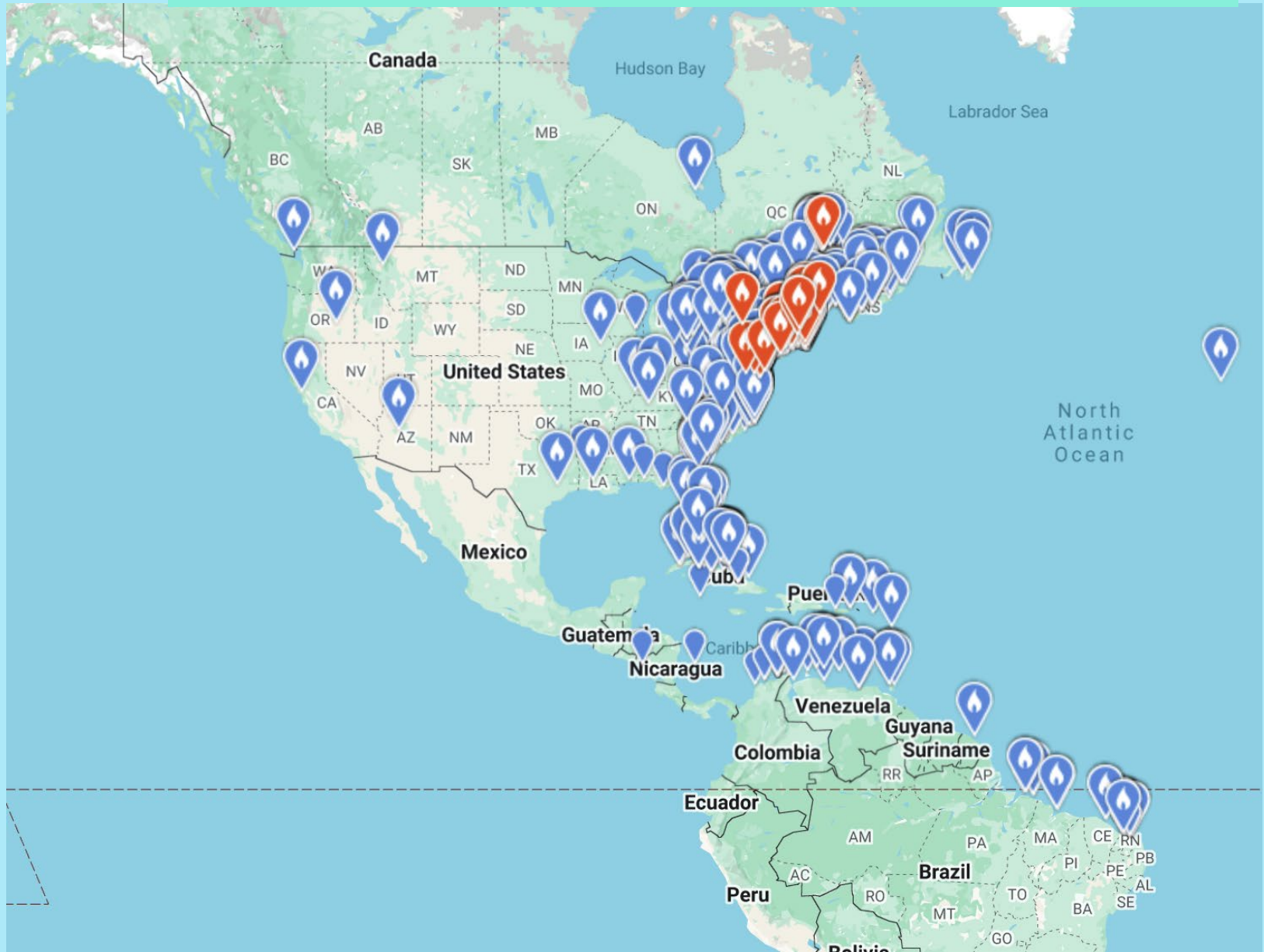


SHORT-BILLED (CAURINUS)

(YEAR ROUND)



SHORT-BILLED (GRISEUS) (YEAR ROUND)



DOWITCHER IDENTIFICATION

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 keek (similar to Blue-winged Teal). May call while feeding, etc.	Mellow tu tu tu, (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.

HABITAT PREFERENCE

Field Mark

Review:

Holds up well,
90% of the
time.

Often looking
for the 10%.



Both

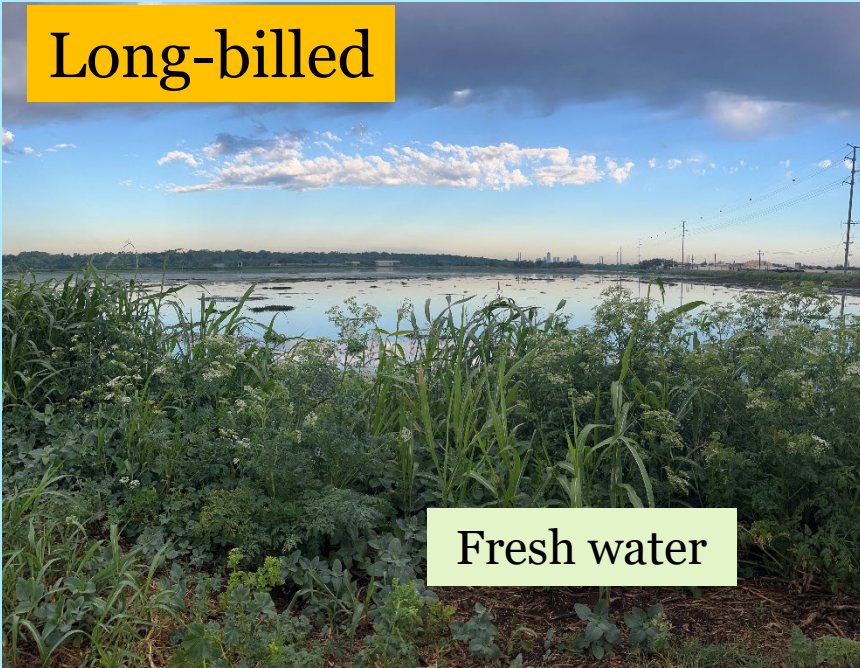
Brackish water

**HABITAT
PREFERENCE
IS
STRONG !!**

Less so during
migration

Photos by Jeffrey E. Patterson

Long-billed



Fresh water

Short-billed



Salt water

HORNSBY

**MOSTLY
LONG-BILLED**

Photos by Jeffrey E. Patterson

“Fresh” water



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 keek (similar to Blue-winged Teal). May call while feeding, etc.	Mellow tu tu tu , (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.

THE BILL

THE BILL

Long-billed

Short-billed



Long and uniform
May be gently arced in outer third

Thick-based, tapers on outer half
Often kinked near end
(like caught in a door)



THE BILL

Long-billed



Long and uniform
May be gently arced in outer third

Short-billed



Thick-based, tapers on outer half
Often kinked near end
(like caught in a door)

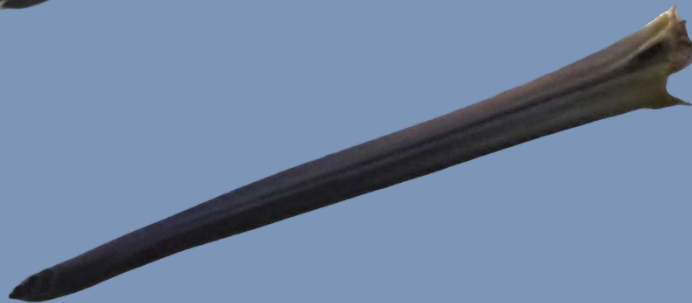
Long-billed

THE BILL

Short-billed

Long and uniform
May be gently arced in outer third

Thick-based, tapers on outer half
Often kinked near end
(like caught in a door)



Field Mark Review:

Strongly supporting, but can't
count on bill length alone!!!

Use shape too!!!

Best used when bill is really
long (Long-billed female)

BILL LENGTH CAN BE A RED HERRING

Both are Long-billed



BODY SHAPE

Long-billed



Rounded undercarriage (swallowed a tennis ball), thick neck, front heavy, longer legged

Short-billed



Straight or slightly-elliptical undercarriage
Longer neck, smaller head, even weight distribution

BODY SHAPE

Long-billed

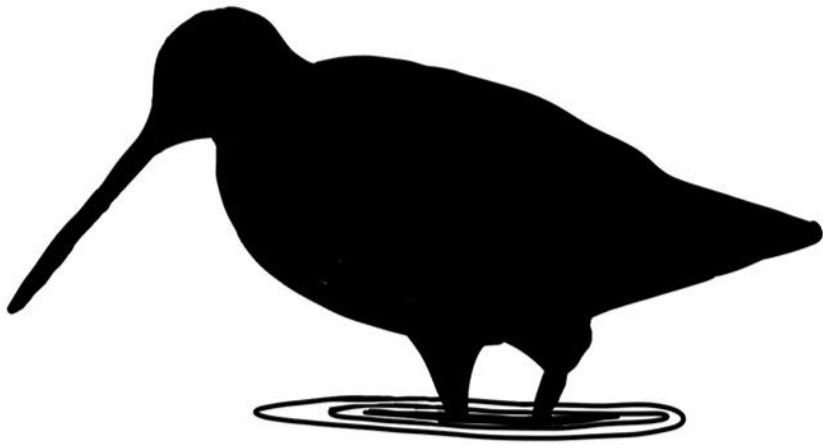


Short-billed

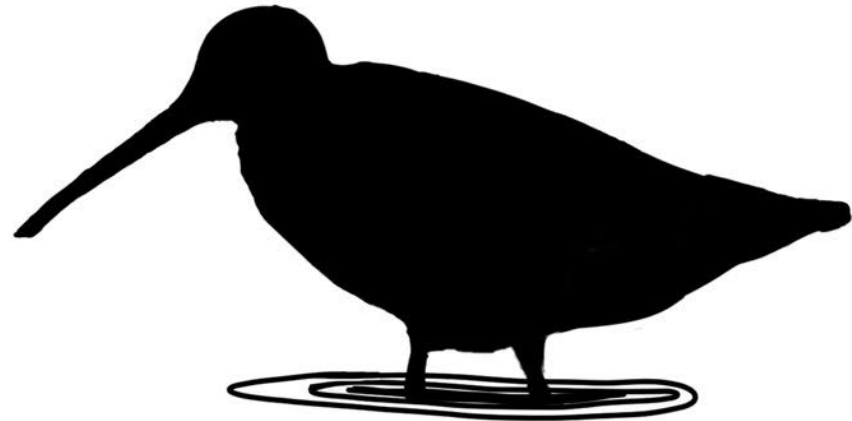


Rounded undercarriage (swallowed a tennis ball), thick neck, front heavy, longer legged

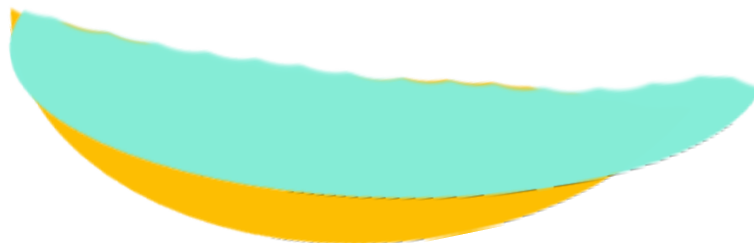
Straight or slightly-elliptical undercarriage
Longer neck, smaller head, even weight distribution



Long-billed



Short-billed



BODY SHAPE

Short-billed

Short-billed



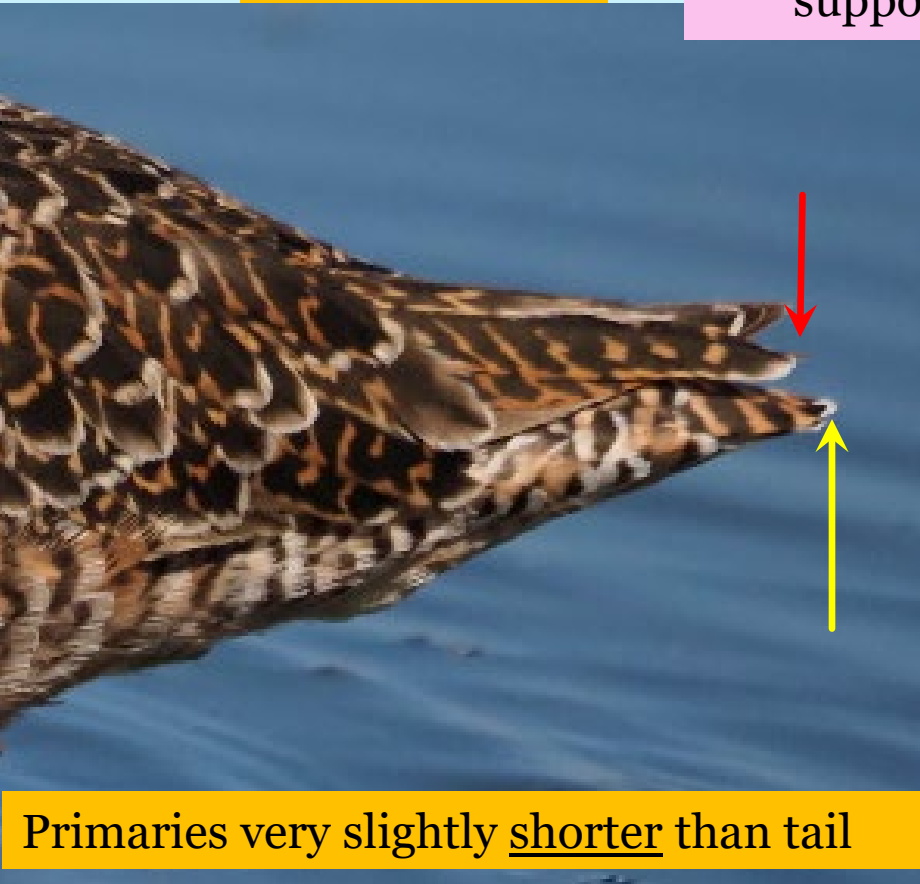
Field Mark Review:
Supporting.
Subjective.
Feathers are movable !
Body weight changes !

PRIMARY PROJECTION

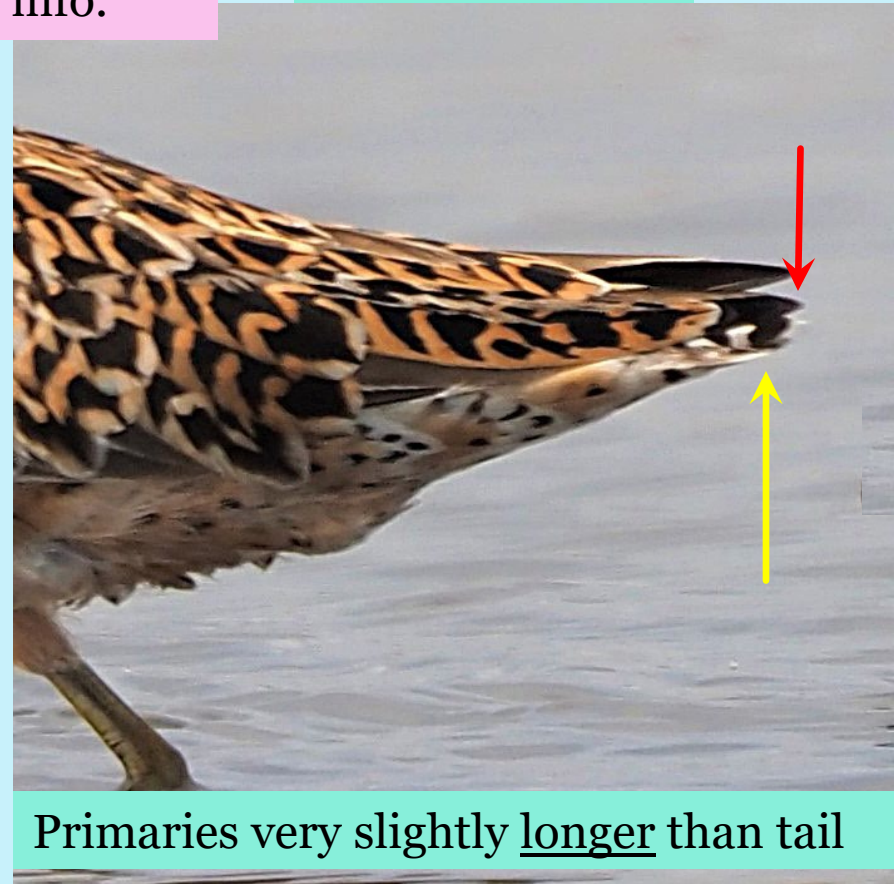
Field Mark Review:

Supporting.
Can be hard to see.
If seen well, good
supporting info.

Long-billed



Short-billed



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 keek (similar to Blue-winged Teal). May call while feeding, etc.	Mellow tu tu tu, (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.

VOCALIZATIONS

VOCALIZATIONS

Field Mark Review:
Diagnostic !!!

High ***keek*** (similar to Blue-winged Teal).
May call while feeding, etc.

Mellow ***tu tu tu***, (not unlike Lesser Yellowlegs). Mostly calls in flight.

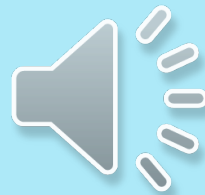
Long-billed



Short-billed



Both



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 keek (similar to Blue-winged Teal). May call while feeding, etc.	Mellow tu tu tu, (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.

PLUMAGE

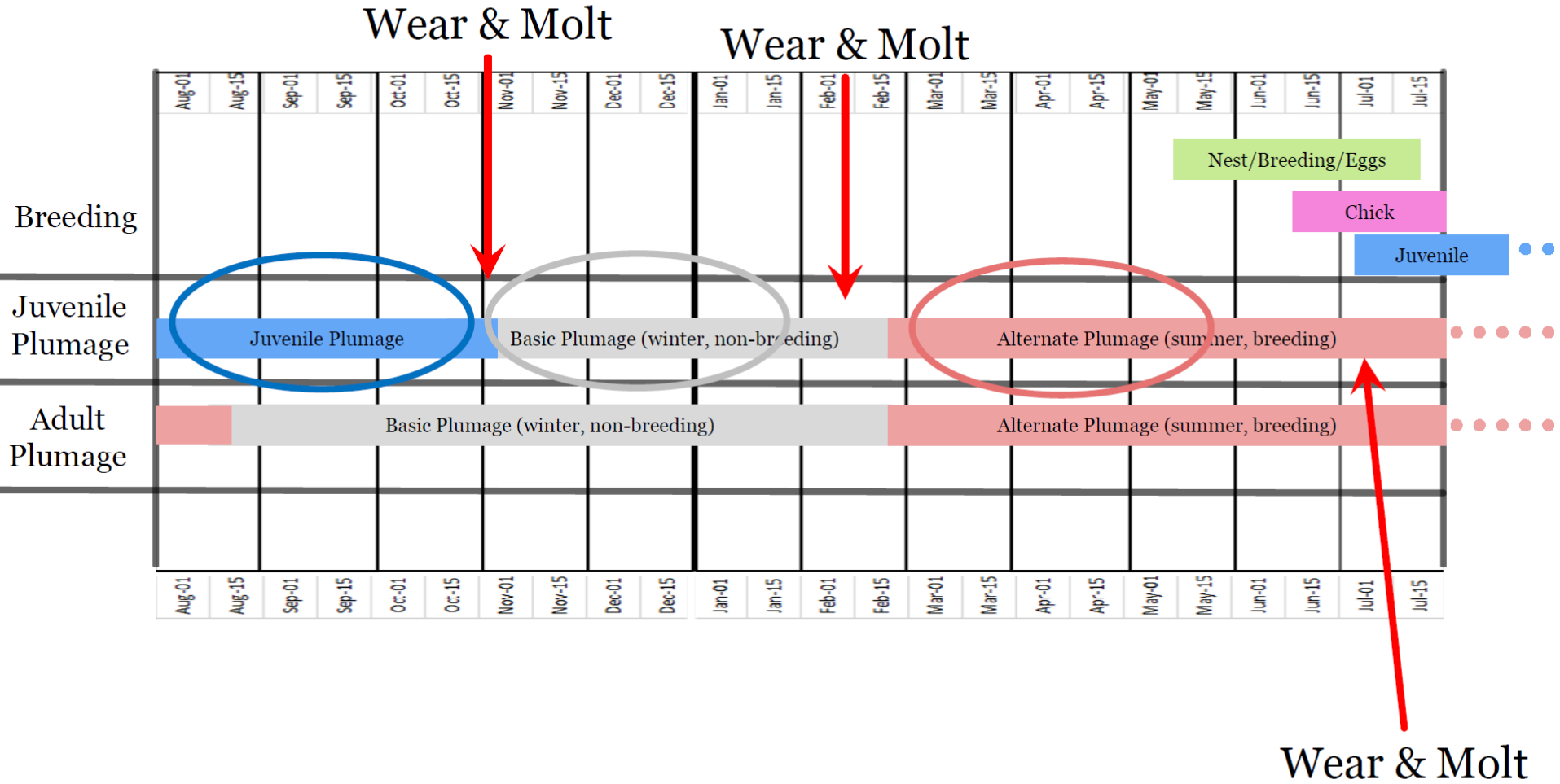
3 PLUMAGES

▶ Juvenile – 1st few months of life

▶ Basic – winter, non-breeding

▶ Alternate – spring/summer, breeding

3 Plumages Generic Shorebird



NOTE: Timing shown is for the species rather than a single individual

PLUMAGE YEAR-ROUND

- ▶ Lesser underwing coverts (open wing)
- ▶ Eye ring
- ▶ Tail bands

JUVENILE PLUMAGE

Field Mark Review:

Diagnostic !!!!

Must determine age.

Juvenile plumage
present in Texas from

~Mid-August – ~Mid-October

JUVENILE TERTIALS

Long-billed



Plain tertials

Plain gray tertials

Short-billed

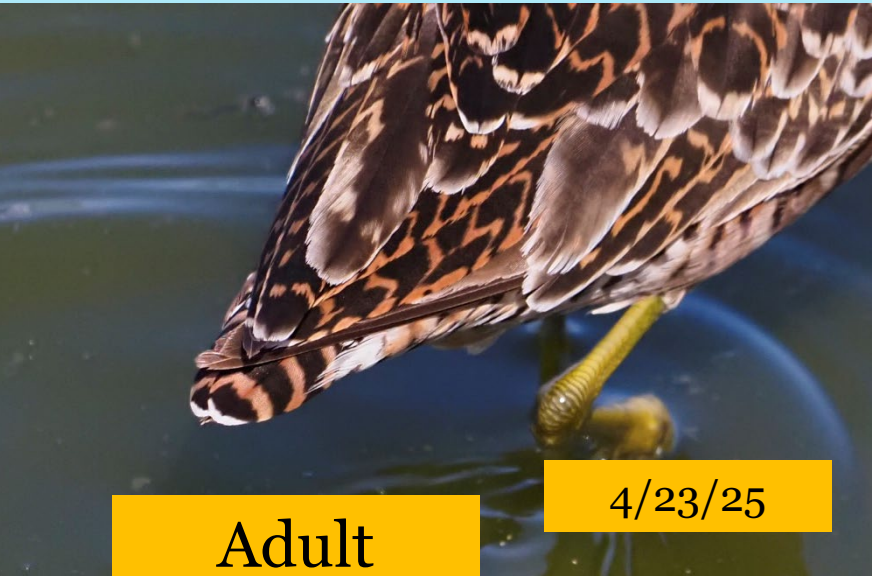


Tiger-striped tertials

Orange & black striped tertials
(tiger-striped)

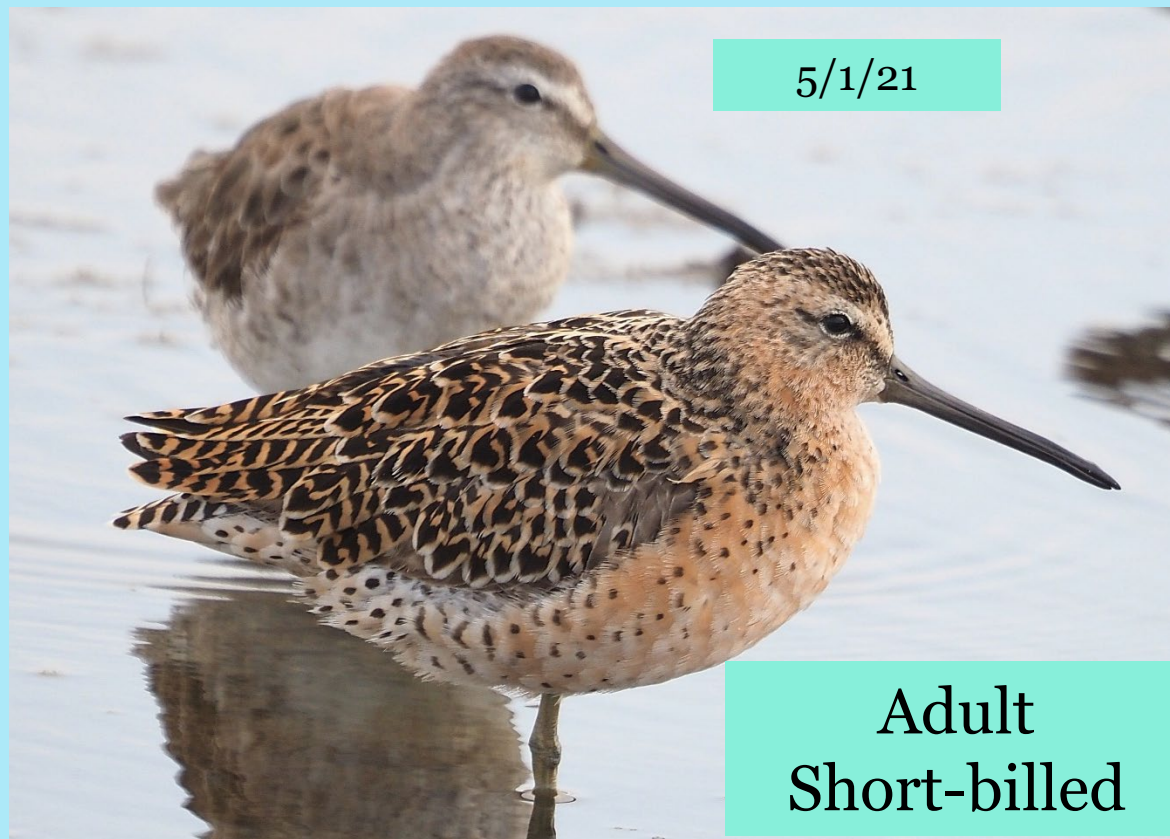
TIGER STRIPED TERTIALS

Not just for juveniles



4/23/25

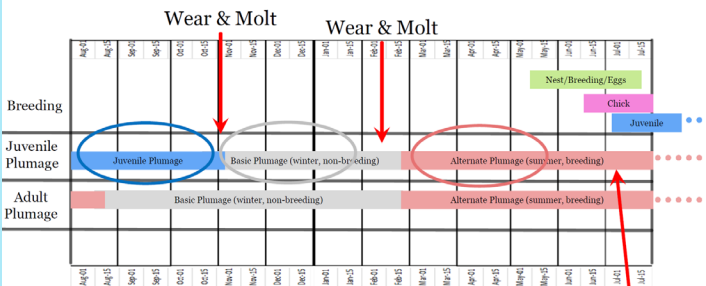
Adult
Long-billed



5/1/21

Adult
Short-billed

3 Plumages



Wear & Molt

NOTE: Timing shown is for the species rather than a single individual

Photos by Jeffrey E. Patterson

Easiest to
ID

Long-billed



October

Photos by Jeffrey E. Patterson

JUVENILE

Short-billed



Orange wash on breast

Orange & black striped tertials
(tiger-striped)

JUVENILE LONG-BILLED



Rufous-fringed scapulars

Plain gray tertials

JUVENILE LONG-BILLED

How do we know
it's a juvenile?



JUVENILE SHORT-BILLED

How do we know
it's a juvenile?

Tertials



JUVENILE LONG-BILLED

What else do we
see on this bird?



Photos by Jeffrey E. Patterson

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 keek (similar to Blue-winged Teal). May call while feeding, etc.	Mellow tu tu tu, (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.

LOWER EYE RING

Field Mark Review:

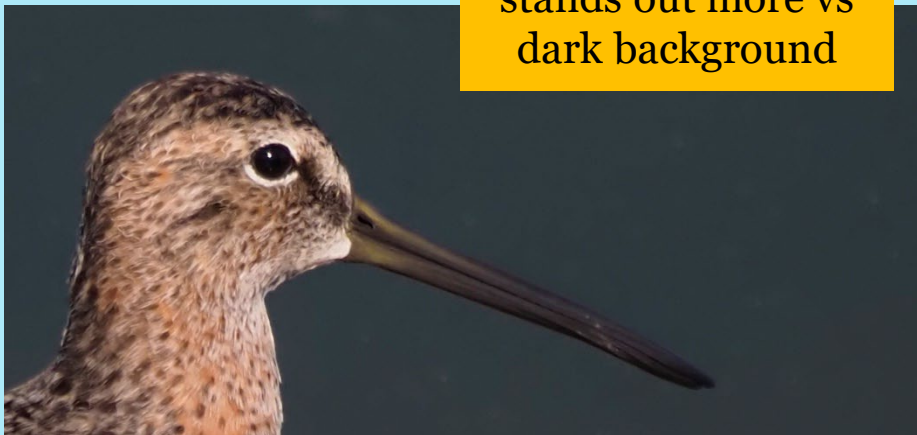
Supporting.
If seen well, good
supporting info.
Can be ambiguous.

LOWER EYE RING

Long-billed



Lower eye ring
stands out more vs
dark background



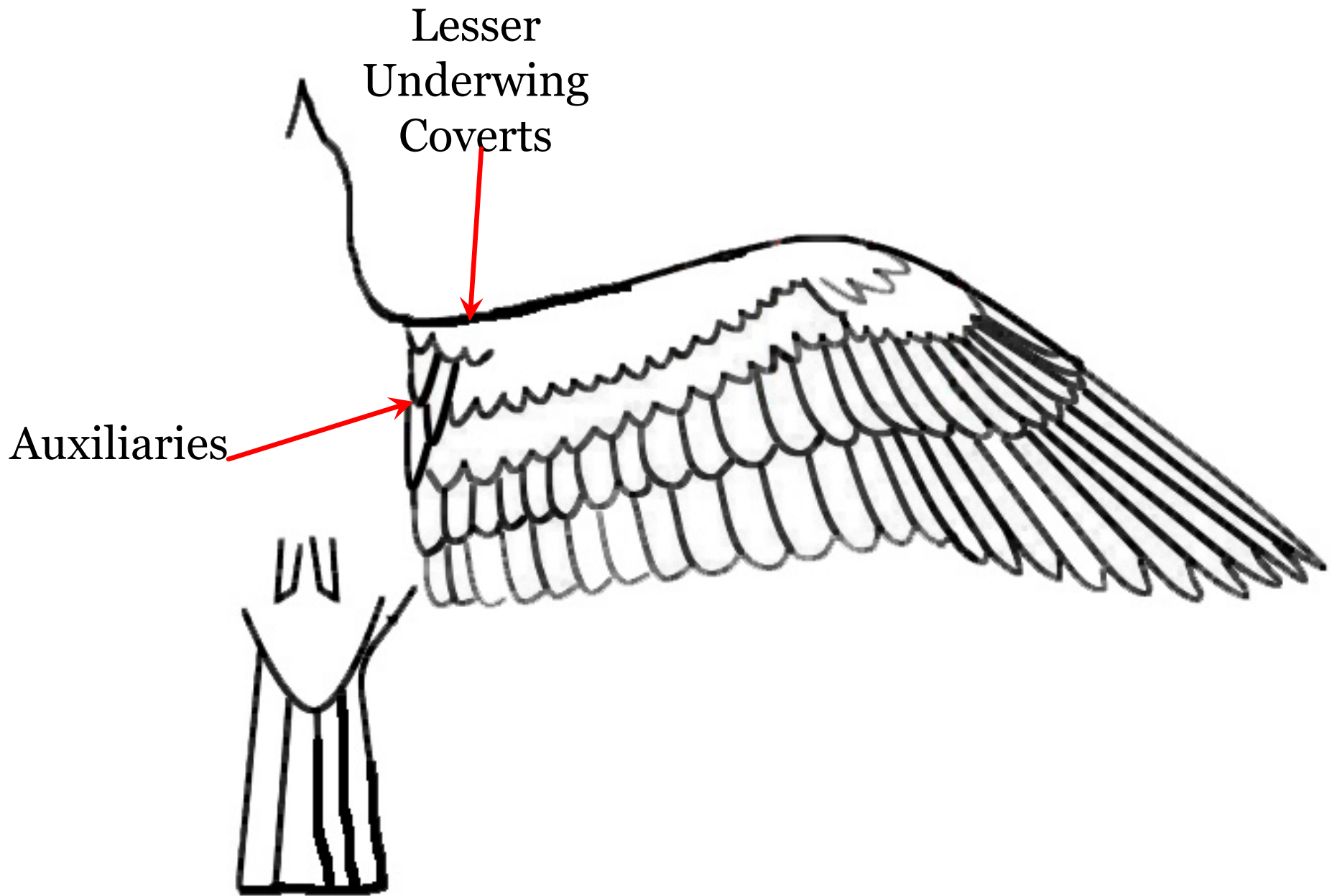
Short-billed



Lower eye ring
present, but thinner,
or absent



LESSER UNDERWING COVERTS



Long-billed



White at base of lesser under-wing coverts

Short-billed

Patterned base of lesser under-wing coverts



LESSER UNDERWING COVERTS

Field Mark Review:

Diagnostic!

May be hard to catch.

Try for photos.



Long-billed



Short-billed

TAIL BANDS

TAIL BANDS

Long-billed



Wider black bands

Short-billed



Equal black & white bands

TAIL BANDS

Long-billed



Wider black bands

TAIL BANDS

Long-billed

Wider black bands



TAIL BANDS

Short-billed



Equal black & white bands

TAIL BANDS

A bird is shown in flight, its wings spread wide. The tail feathers are clearly visible, showing a pattern of alternating black and white bands. The bird's body is light-colored, and its wings have a mottled appearance. The background is a blurred, natural setting, possibly a beach or a field.

Short-billed

Equal black & white bands

Field Mark Review:

Supporting.
Often ambiguous.

TAIL BANDS

Long-billed



Wider black bands

Short-billed



Equal black & white bands

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 keek (similar to Blue-winged Teal). May call while feeding, etc.	Mellow tu tu tu, (not unlike Lesser Yellowlegs). Mostly calls in flight.	
Plumage	Juvenile (mid Aug—Early Nov)		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.

**ALTERNATE:
COLOR OF UNDER PARTS**

ALTERNATE: COLOR OF UNDERPARTS

Field Mark Review:

Ambiguous.
Subject to lighting &
individual opinion.
May work well with
experience.

Long-billed

Orange-red underparts

Short-billed

Pinkish-orange underparts



Photos by Jeffrey E. Patterson



Field Mark Review:

Ambiguous.
Subject to lighting &
individual opinion.
May work well with
experience.

Long-billed

Orange-red underparts



ALTERNATE: COLOR OF UNDERPARTS



Short-billed

Pinkish-orange underparts

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 keek (similar to Blue-winged Teal). May call while feeding, etc.	Mellow tu tu tu, (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				

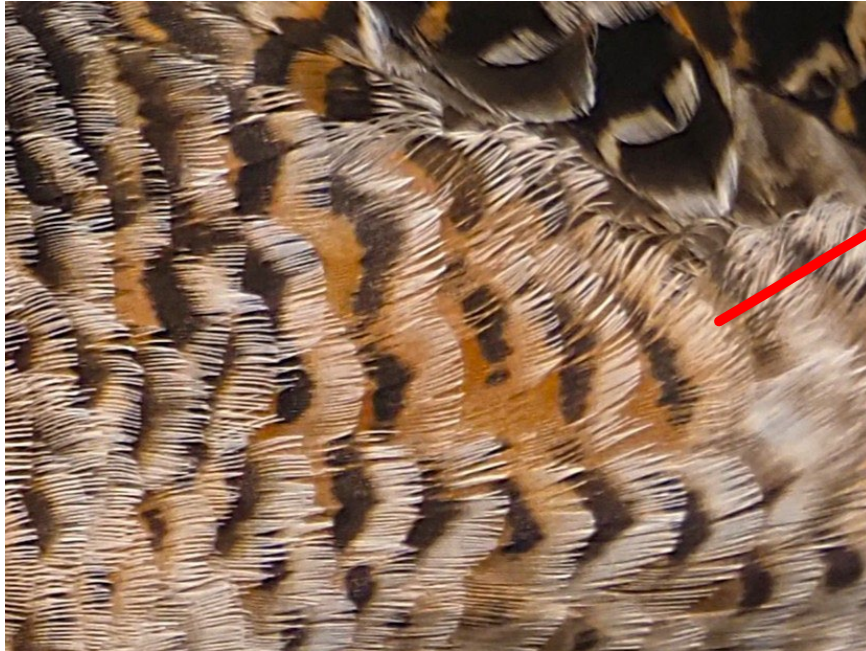
Based on a table prepared by Eric Stager.

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.

**ALTERNATE:
SIDES OF BREAST**

SIDES OF BREAST

LONG-BILLED



Orange & black bars, with white fringes
on side of breast (fresh plumage).

Long-billed

ALTERNATE: SIDES OF BREAST

Orange & **black bars**, with white fringes on **side of breast** (fresh plumage).

Field Mark Review:
**Must be very exact on which
feather tracts under review.**
White fringes wear away.

Yes



Long-billed

ALTERNATE: SIDES OF BREAST

Orange & **black bars**, with white fringes on **side of breast** (fresh plumage).

Field Mark Review:
**Must be very exact on which
feather tracts under review.**
White fringes wear away.

No



ALTERNATE: SIDES OF BREAST

Short-billed

Black spots on sides of breast.

Field Mark Review:
Short-billed sometimes shows
bars (but not white fringes).



**ALTERNATE:
SCAPULAR FEATHERS**

Secondaries

(white)

Scapulars

Mantle

(white)

Tertials

Tail

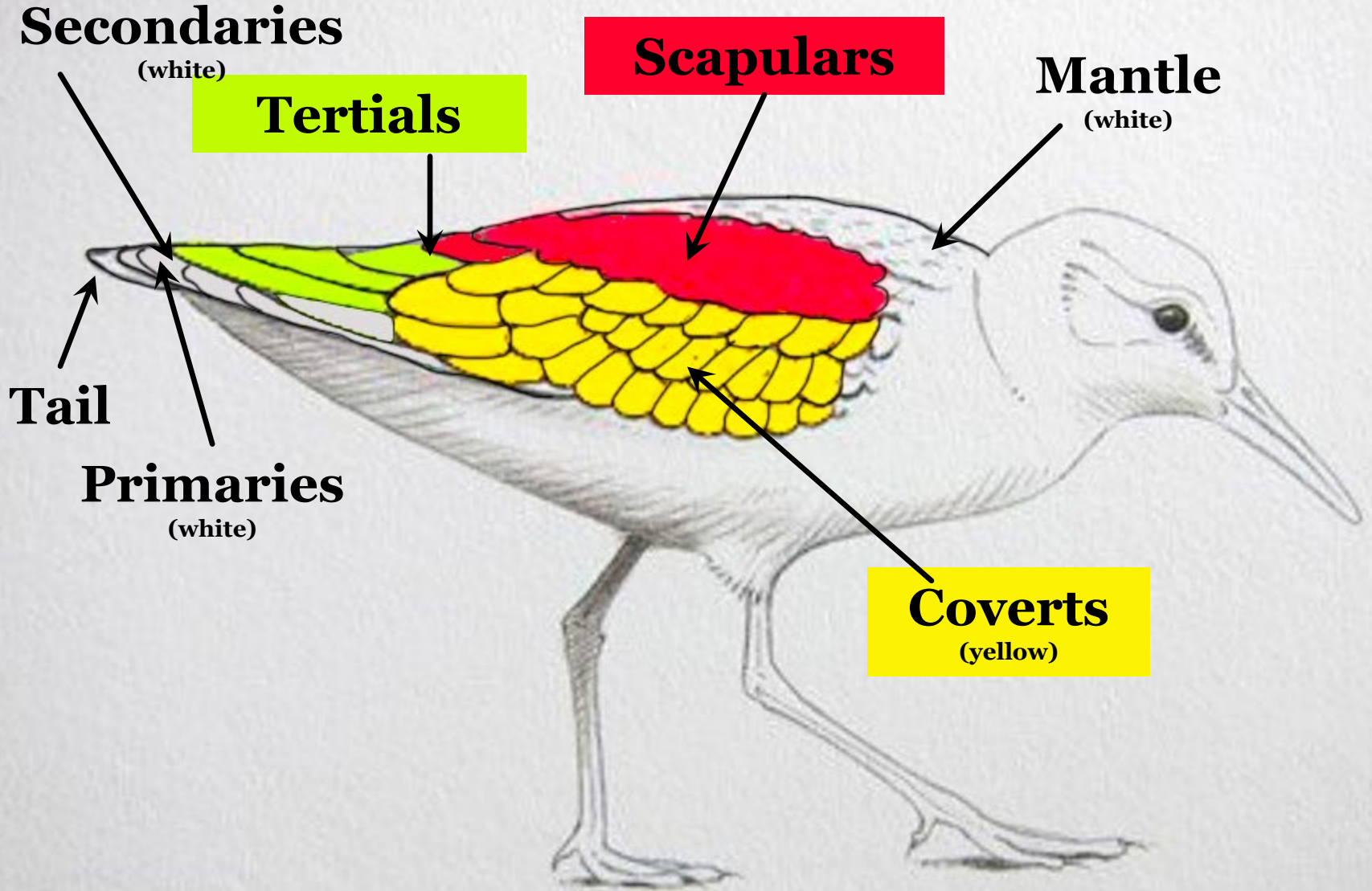
Primaries

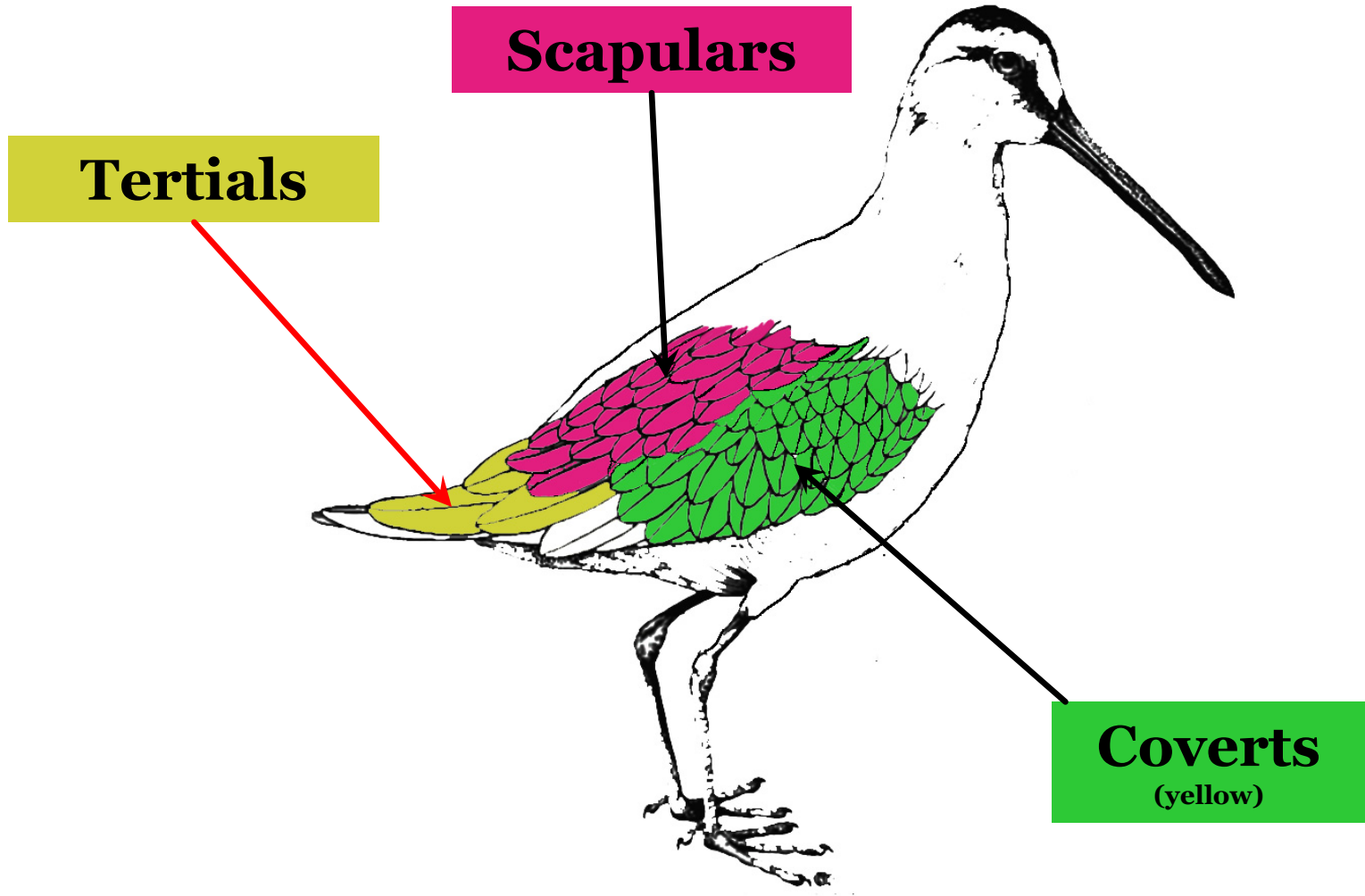
(white)

Coverts

(yellow)

Least Sandpiper





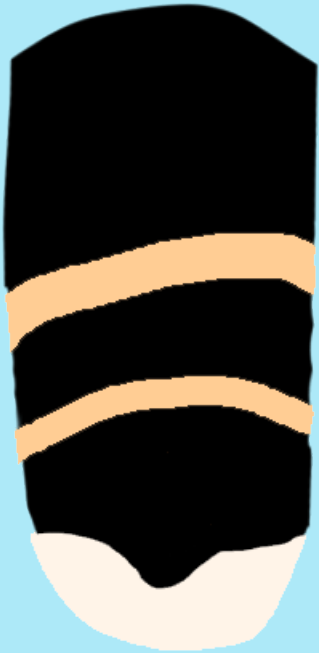
Scapulars

Tertials

Coverts
(yellow)

ALTERNATE: SCAPULAR FEATHERS

Long-billed



Shallow
white or orange tip

Short-billed



Deep U-shaped
white or orange tip



Scapular feathers have a shallow white or orange tip

Long-billed

ALTERNATE:
SCAPULAR FEATHERS

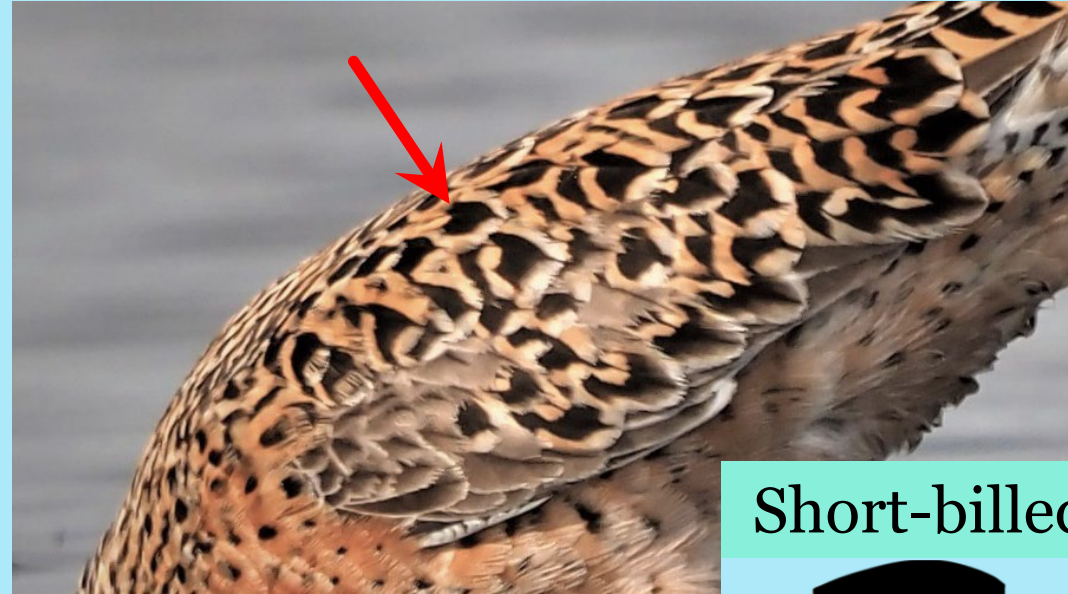
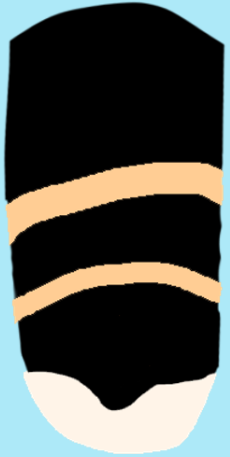


Short-billed

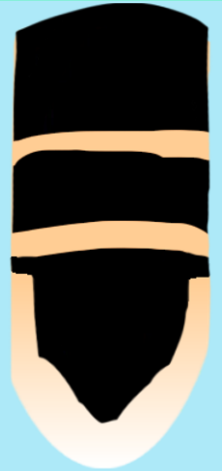
Scapular feathers have a deep u-shaped white or orange tip.

ALTERNATE: SCAPULAR FEATHERS

Long-billed



Short-billed



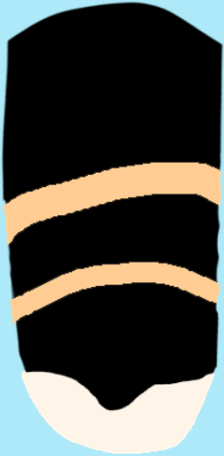
Deep U-shaped
white or orange tip

Shallow
white or orange tip



ALTERNATE: SCAPULAR FEATHERS

Long-billed



Shallow
white or orange tip

Long-billed



Field Mark Review: Best field mark in alternate plumage. Some authors include wing covert feathers, but these can be ambiguous.

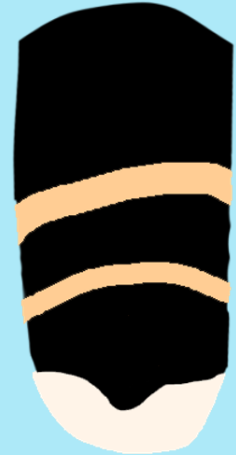
Scapular feathers have a shallow white or orange tip

ALTERNATE: SCAPULAR FEATHERS

Long-billed



Long-billed



Shallow
white or orange tip

Field Mark Review: Best field mark in alternate plumage. Some authors include wing covert feathers, but these can be ambiguous.

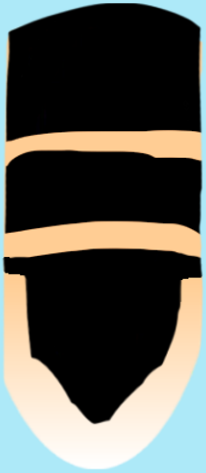
Scapular feathers have a shallow white or orange tip

Field Mark Review: Best field mark in alternate plumage. Some authors include wing covert feathers, but these can be ambiguous.

Scapular feathers have a deep u-shaped white or orange tip.

Short-billed

Short-billed



Deep U-shaped white or orange tip

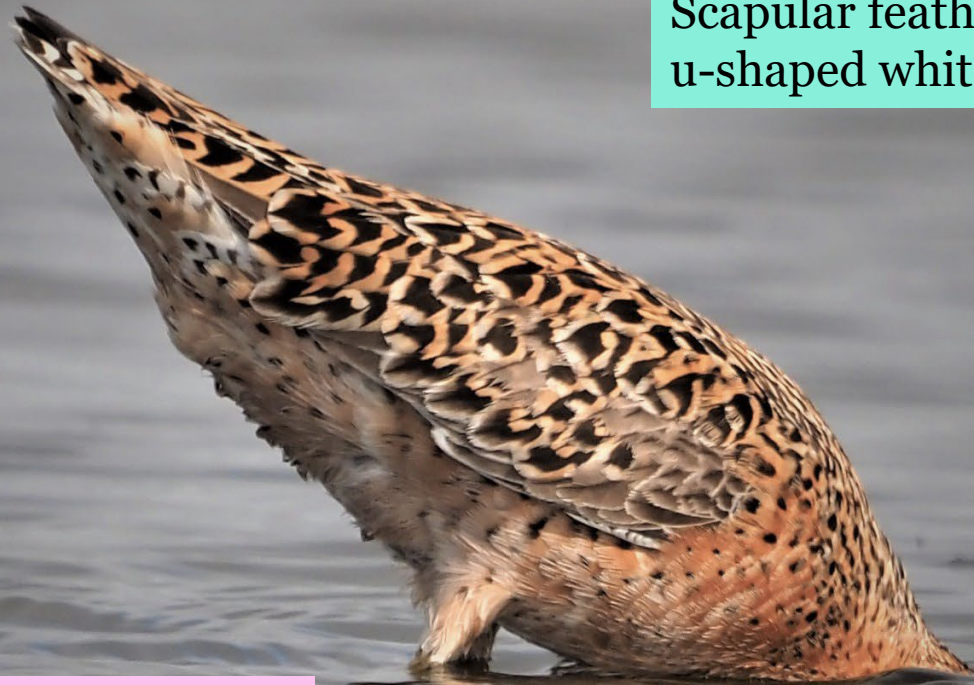
ALTERNATE: SCAPULAR FEATHERS

ALTERNATE: SCAPULAR FEATHERS

Scapular feathers have a deep u-shaped white or orange tip.

Short-billed

Field Mark Review: Best field mark in alternate plumage. Some authors include wing covert feathers, but these can be ambiguous.



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 keek (similar to Blue-winged Teal). May call while feeding, etc.	Mellow tu tu tu, (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.

BASIC

**BASIC:
HEAD & NECK COLOR**

BASIC: HEAD & NECK COLOR

Long-billed



Smooth gray head and neck
(like dipped in soot).
No obvious white background.

Short-billed

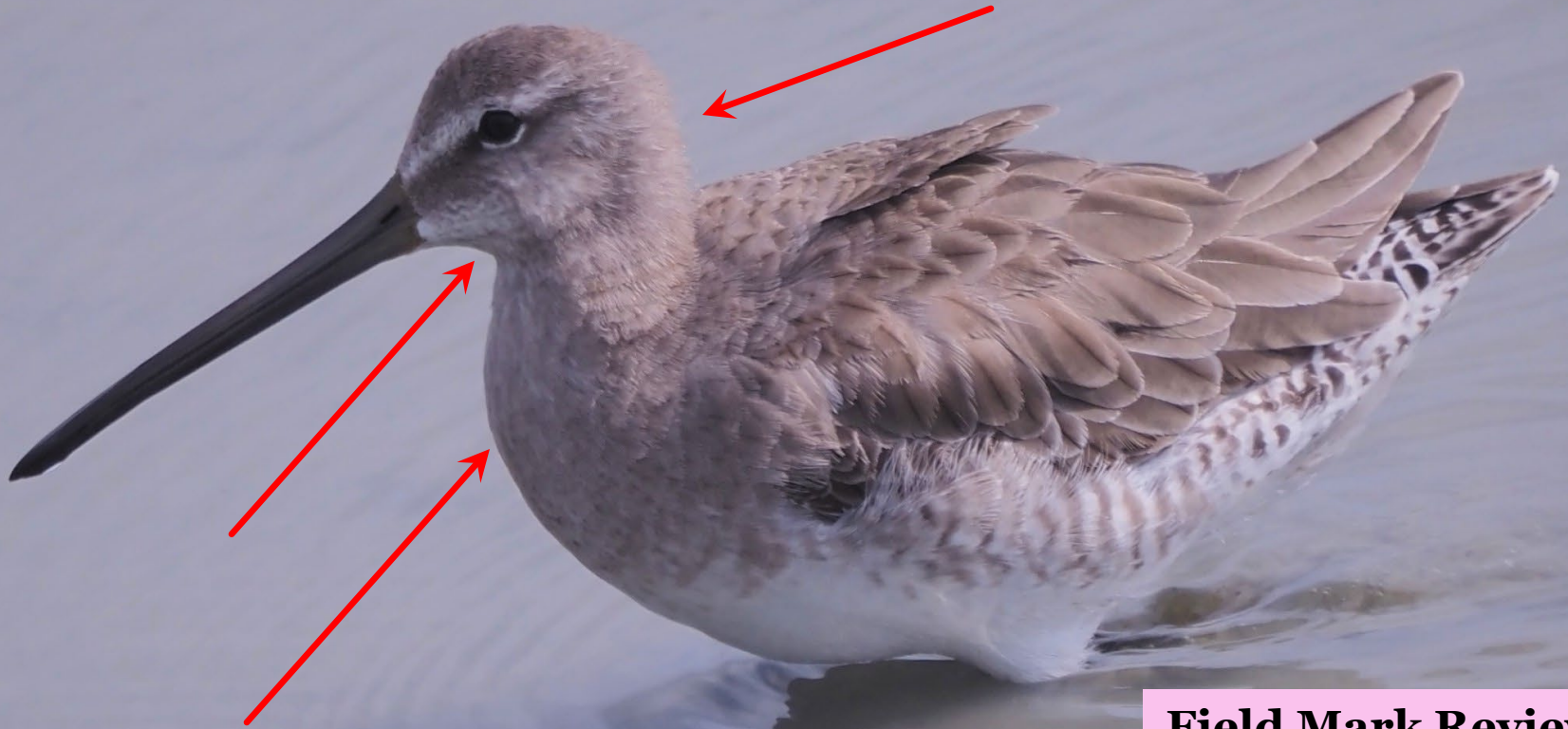


Head and neck:
white background
with spots & streaks.

BASIC:

Long-billed

HEAD & NECK COLOR



Smooth gray head and neck (like dipped in soot).
No obvious white background.

Field Mark Review:

Strongly supporting.
Usually effective.
Depends on lighting.

Head and neck:

white background,
with spots & streaks.

BASIC: HEAD & NECK COLOR

Short-billed



Field Mark Review:

Strongly supporting.
Usually effective.
Depends on lighting.

**BASIC:
HUE OF UPPER PARTS**

BASIC: HUE OF UPPER PARTS

Long-billed



Dark back feathers with dark shafts

Short-billed



Paler back feathers with white fringes
& narrow dark shafts

Field Mark Review:
Strongly supporting.
Usually effective.
Depends on lighting.
Feathers subject to wear.

BASIC: HUE OF UPPER PARTS

Long-billed

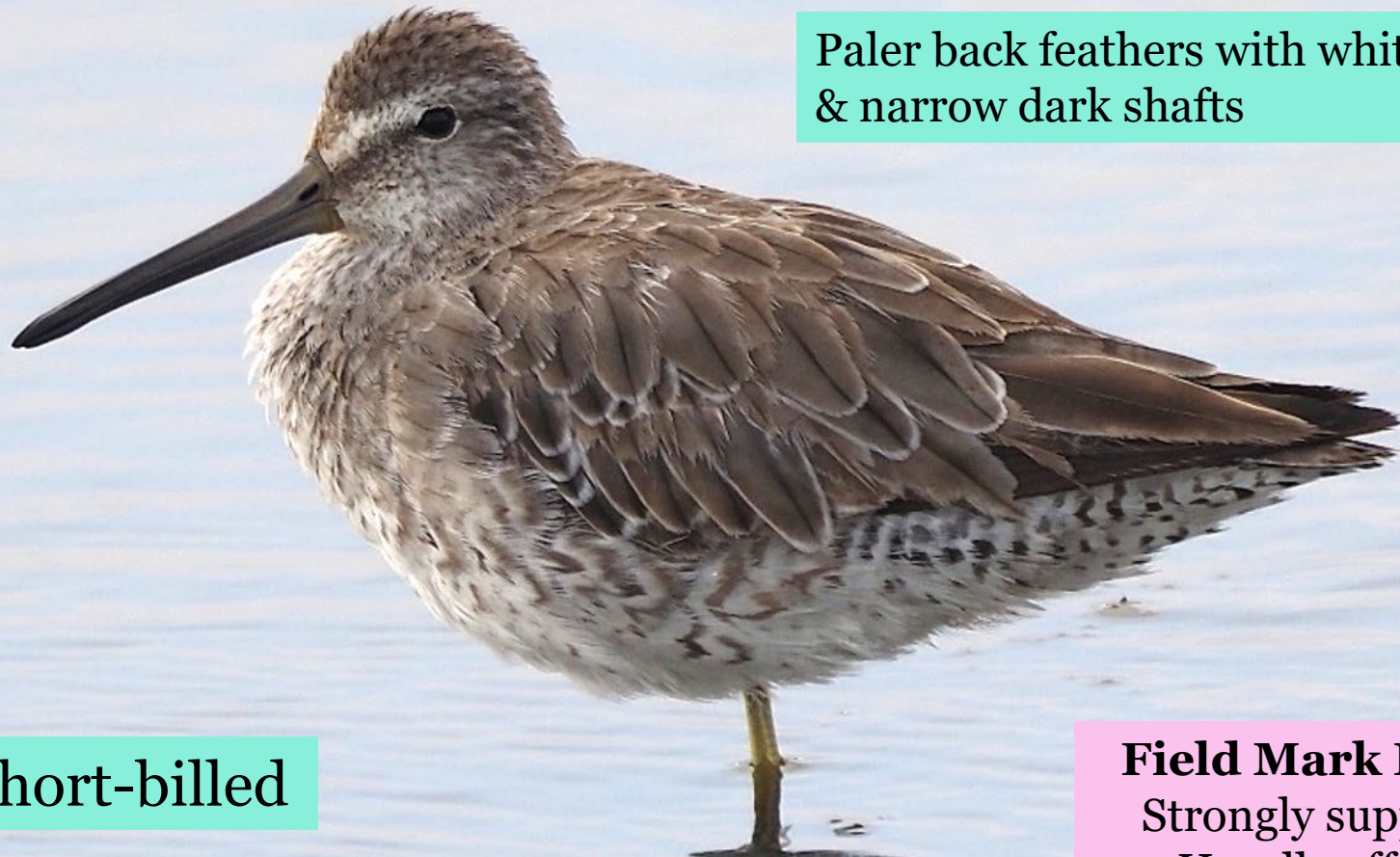


Darker back feathers
with dark shafts.

Field Mark Review:
Strongly supporting.
Usually effective.
Depends on lighting.
Feathers subject to wear.

BASIC: HUE OF UPPER PARTS

Paler back feathers with white fringes
& narrow dark shafts



Short-billed

Field Mark Review:
Strongly supporting.
Usually effective.
Depends on lighting.
Feathers subject to wear.

BASIC: HUE OF UPPER PARTS

Field Mark Review:

Strongly supporting.

Usually effective.

Depends on lighting.

Feathers subject to wear.

Long-billed



Darker back feathers with dark shafts

Short-billed



Paler back feathers with white fringes & narrow dark shafts

BASIC: FLANK MARKINGS

BASIC:

FLANK MARKINGS

Long-billed



Thick smudgy bars on flanks

Field Mark Review:
Can be ambiguous.
Can be confused with flank
marks of Short-billed.

BASIC: FLANK MARKINGS

Field Mark Review:
Can be ambiguous.

Long-billed



Thick smudgy bars on flanks

Short-billed



**More delicate splotches
(occasionally bars) on flanks.**

Basic

Short-billed



LONG-BILLED

Basic



LONG-BILLED

Basic



A large group of Long-billed Curlews is shown in shallow water. The birds are mostly brown and grey, with long, straight bills. They are scattered throughout the frame, some standing and some wading. The water is calm, reflecting the birds. A yellow banner is at the top, and a white box with the word 'Basic' is on the right side.

LONG-BILLED

Basic

LONG-BILLED

Basic



Basic



Short-billed

Basic

Short-billed



SHORT-BILLED

Basic



SHORT-BILLED

Basic



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 keek (similar to Blue-winged Teal). May call while feeding, etc.	Mellow tu tu tu, (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.