

Mathews should not have been followed when he (in one of his pseudo-historical excursions) adopted it in preference to the earlier name *superba*. Some detail on this point is given in my article "Ornithological Oddities" in the *Emu* for June 1967 (66 : 373). The older name, it may be noted, is preferred in both Newton's *Dictionary of Birds* (1896) and the British Ornithologists Union's *New Dictionary of Birds* (1964).

Finally, one may express the hope that Queenslanders will take every care possible to conserve their two members of one of the world's most notable bird-groups, Prince Albert's Lyrebird of the rain-forests and Prince Edward's Lyrebird of the rugged and highly spectacular Granite Belt.

A Second Victorian Record of the Asiatic Dowitcher

By FRED T. H. SMITH, Kew, Victoria

Whilst observing waders, with Rod Sympson and Robert Swindley, about mud and sand-flats, at the south end of Swan Island, near Queenscliff, southern Victoria, at approximately 2 p.m. on January 6, 1974, a medium sized wader came flying low towards us in elegant neck extended flight, and alighted on sand at the water's edge, about 15 m from us. Before it landed it was recognized as an Asiatic Dowitcher, *Limnodromus semipalmatus*.

On the ground it extended its neck upright to view us. The sunlight was full on the bird, highlighting the long straight black bill and black legs. It was confirmed mutually as the species before it suddenly flew about 90 m to a similar position, where it alighted in approximately 50 mm of water, close to the shoreline where we cautiously approached it.

It soon settled down and for the next hour we had many fine close views under excellent light conditions. It flew short distances occasionally, allowing good views of the upper parts in particular.

Once several hundred waders in the general vicinity took to the air as a Brown Hawk, *Falco berigora*, flew over the area high up. The Dowitcher remained where it was but kept a wary eye skyward until all apparent danger was past.

It mostly fed in shallow water, sometimes up to its belly, where it deeply probed the mud below with bill held perpendicularly, sometimes with the head submerged in the water. At times the bird fed over soft mud just clear of the water, and the bill went full length straight down into it. On one occasion a small thin worm about 38 mm long was seen to be extracted from the mud and swallowed. The Dowitcher fed near and among all the other wader species there; mainly Bar-tailed Godwit, *Limosa lapponica*, Black-tailed Godwit, *L. limosa*, Great Knot, *Calidris tenuirostris*, Knot, *C. canutus*, Greenshank, *Tringa nebularia*, Grey-tailed Tattler, *T.*

brevipes, Grey Plover, *Pluvialis squatarola*, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, *Calidris acuminata*, Curlew-Sandpiper, *C. ferruginea*, and Red-necked Stint, *C. ruficollis*.

FIELD DESCRIPTION AND COMPARISON WITH SIMILAR SPECIES

General Appearance: Like a small Bar-tailed Godwit in shades of light to dark grey, with pale edgings to feathers of the upper parts. Long straight all-black bill and black legs.

General Size: A little larger in body size than accompanying Greenshanks, and, consequently, a trifle bulkier. Bill noticeably thicker and longer, and legs darker and apparently a little shorter than those of a Greenshank. Noticeably smaller and shorter legged than smallest Bar-tailed Godwit, although the bill seemed longer than that of the shortest Bar-tailed Godwit's bill. Otherwise the bill was all-black and lacked the pink base as in godwit bills.

Upper parts: Some resemblance in pattern to Great Knot. Feathers mid to dark grey with pale edgings. Rump, wedge up back and upper tail whitish, closely barred dark grey or brown. Pale shade across rear of upper wing with dark barring. The lighter upper part areas contrasted well in flight with the generally dark grey of that region. Crown dark brown forming a narrow peak at base of the upper mandible. A wide pale eye-stripe from lores to behind the eye.

Under parts: Whitish with greyish short streaking on foreneck, sides of neck to the breast area. Abdomen to under tail-coverts plain whitish with some odd dark fleckings on the under tail-coverts. Some barring on sides below wing bend and some large, well spaced, spotting along the flanks. Chin pale.

Bill: Long, straight, all-black, slight swelling distally from dorsal aspect.

Legs: Black.

Eye: Dark with thin off-white orbital ring.

Call: Not heard.

GENERAL

The Asiatic Dowitcher described here was seen a year after the first Victorian bird, about 55 km south of Melbourne, and approximately 26 km south-east of where the first bird was seen. It is not possible to state categorically that this bird was not the first bird seen again. The lapse in time between the two sightings may give reason to suspect two separate birds. If, in future years, other Asiatic Dowitchers are noted in the south of Australia it will add strength to the suggestion that present records are of two individual birds of that species.

REFERENCE

Smith, Fred. T. H., 1974. "A Victorian Record of the Asiatic Dowitcher", *The Australian Bird Watcher*, 5 : 111-118.