

Short-billed Dowitcher – plumage scores

When on their Arctic breeding grounds Short-billed Dowitcher have rufous throat and head and breast, densely spott and barred with black. There is much individual variability in the extent to which this extends toward belly. Upperparts and some coverts blackish-brown marked rufous and pale buff. Remaining coverts gray-brown, the outers with pale fringes, the inners with white fringes. This is variously referred to as breeding, nuptial, alternate (US) or summer (Europe) plumage. The term Breeding Plumage is used here.











When on the non-breeding grounds Short-billed Dowitchers have upperparts and coverts uniform gray-brown and inner median coverts fringed white. Underparts are white with neck and upper breast suffused pale gray-brown with indistinct fine streaking. This is variously referred to as non-breeding, basic (US) or winter (Europe) plumage. The term Non-Breeding plumage is used below.

The terms basic and alternate plumage are unfamiliar outside of North America, and the terms summer and winter plumage are unfamiliar outside of Europe. The latter are also technically incorrect for birds spending the non-breeding season in the Southern Hemisphere. However, given the international involvement in the project you may hear any of these terms being used.

The breeding plumage is acquired during a partial pre-nuptial molt (i.e. one not involving flight and tail feathers) starting in late April / early May and completed by the time they arrive on their Arctic breeding grounds in early June. Adult Short-tailed Dowitchers revert into the non-breeding plumage during a full post-nuptial molt (i.e. complete replacement of feathers) in late fall to early winter.

Plumage is scored on a scale of 1 thru 7. The score codes the proportion of breeding plumage averaged over the entire bird

NOTE: This species exhibits considerable individual variation in the extent of rufous on underparts displayed when in full breeding plumage – do not confuse replaced white belly feathers for unreplaced white belly feathers .

No Picture Available						No Picture Available
1: Whole plumage non-breeding	2: Trace of breeding plumage	3: ca 25% breeding plumage	4: ca 50% breeding plumage	5: ca 75% breeding plumage	6: Trace of non-breeding plumage	7: Whole plumage breeding
No Picture Available						No Picture Available