

First record of *Limnodromus scolopaceus* (Say, 1823) (Scolopacidae, Aves) in Bulgaria

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Abstract. Two adult individuals of the Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* were observed on 31.12.2021 in the shallow basins in the southern part of the Atanasovsko Lake near Burgas.

Key-words: vagrant birds, long-distance migration, Bulgarian bird fauna.

Introduction

Until present the long-billed dowitcher (*Limnodromus scolopaceus* (Say, 1823)) has not been recorded in Bulgaria. The species was not listed in the Western Palearctic fauna (Harrison, 1982), but included in it by (Cramp & Simmons, 1983). *L. scolopaceus* is a long-distance migrant. It breeds in the Far North in the north-east Siberia and North America (northern and western Alaska), and winters in southern United States of America, south to Guatemala. In many parts of Europe the occurrence of the species is accidental – in Britain, Ireland, France, Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Spain (Cramp & Simmons, 1983). It is surprisingly that *L. scolopaceus* occurs more often in Europe than other species, the short-billed dowitcher (*L. griseus* (Gmelin, 1789)) which is spread closer to Europe (incl. Eastern Canada). The global IUCN conservation status of *L. scolopaceus* is Least Concern (Birdlife international, 2016).

Material and Methods

The observation was carried out on 31 December 2021 in the Burgas Salt Farms (Bulgarian = Burgaski solnitsi) Protected Locality. We used binocular “Auriol 10-30 x 60 BN22” and the photographs were taken by digital camera “Nikon CoolPix L 830”. The weather was calm, sunny and clear and daily temperature reached up to 130 C. Previous two days were rainy, colder and of dense clouds.

Results and Discussion

First announcement on the two birds was made by Dr. Petar Yankov (Poda Protected Area, Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds) and Kiril Bedev during the routine monitoring of the birdlife of the Atanasovsko Lake on 15 December 2021 (Anonym., 2021; Aleksova, 2021). As Kehayova (2022) reports, after P. Yankov “... the species has not been observed in our region and in the Balkans in general for 60 years. The last time ornithologists detected it was in 1962 in Greece.”. In fact, the species is extremely rare on the Balkan Peninsula.

In the afternoon of 31 December 2021 at the southern part of the Atanasovsko Lake, in the Burgaski Solnitsi Protected Locality we recorded two adult individuals feeding near the concrete dike of one of the salt basins of the salt farms, near the birdwatchers’ observation hut of the “Avocet Alley” in Burgas (Fig. 1). The birds were feeding together with pied avocet (*Recurvirostra avosetta* Linnaeus, 1758) and Eurasian teals (*Anas crecca*

Linnaeus, 1758). Two days later Konstantin Nyagolov (a qualified birdwatcher and bird expert) observed obviously the same two birds on 02.01.2022 in the Atanasovsko Lake.

During our observation on 31 December 2021 (it longed ca. 40 minutes) the Long-billed Dowitchers were accompanied by the great white pelicans (*Pelecanus onocrotalus* Linnaeus, 1758), greater flamingos (*Phoenicopterus roseus* Pallas, 1811), common shelducks (*Tadorna tadorna* (Linnaeus, 1758)), etc., but all these birds occupied more open and remote parts of the neighbouring salt basins with greater depth. As the long-billed dowitcher prefers freshwater and/or brakish shallow water bodies the location of both birds suggests their longer stay, at least until the winter weather permits.

Bulgaria is the second Balkan country where the long-billed dowitcher was recorded. After Michev *et al.* (2012) it occurs on the Balkan Peninsula only during the wanderings in Greece. The species has never been recorded in the Burgas Wetlands, incl. the Atanasovsko Lake (Michev *et al.*, 2004).

The occurrence of a typical boreal wader as *L. scolopaceus* after a long seasonal transcontinental migration to the Balkan Peninsula, a region of intensive Mediterranean impact, may be explained by the global warming phenomena in the recent decade that caused numerous and highly varied changes in the phenology of birds. The more and more regular and numerous records of the greater flamingo in the Atanasovsko Lake along with the record of the long-billed dowitcher are only two of these phenological changes.



Fig. 1. Long-billed dowitchers (*Limnodromus scolopaceus*), Burgaski Solnitsi Protected Locality, Atanasovsko Lake, 31.12.2021 (Photo: Z. Boev).

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