

## BIRDING FULLERTON'S MARSH IMPOUNDMENT:

by David Seeler

On the morning of August 15<sup>th</sup>, I headed out to Fullerton's Marsh - a mere 10 km out at sunrise. After wading through grass and weeds waist tall and stumbling on the ridges left by the potato planter, I thought I had it made when I hit the trees where I would cut into the berm. Unfortunately, the grasses and weeds in there were shoulder high and I think I found every fallen tree or sapling in the area. Sure wish some agency would place a trail in there!

After hitting the berm - I realized it may well of been worth it. The water levels were low and there was an extensive mudflat visible. Running about like drunken individuals were a few Greater and a good number of Lesser Yellowlegs along with a fair number of peeps.

I headed to the East end of the berm so that I could keep the sun to my back as I scanned the mudflats. Unfortunately, further east than the dam were 2 Dowitchers in worn alternate plumage which were very inconsistent with 99.9 percent of the Short-billed Dowitchers I had observed in the last two weeks. Almost all of the Short-bills are close to being in their basic plumages or at the very least well along the molting process.

These two birds were "hanging out" with 2 Wilson's Snipe and 2 Killdeer in a small narrow area of the east end of the marsh. Over time I was able to get reasonable views of both birds and, as time progressed, I was of the opinion that they were Long-billed Dowitchers but needed more time to observe details such as "barring" and "spotting" of specific areas of each. I had to do this before the sun was high enough to cause significant backlighting and glare thus leading to reduced visibility.

As the tide on the north side of the berm rose - large numbers of shorebirds invaded the fresh water impoundment giving good views of Black-bellied and Semipalmated Plovers; Least, Semipalmated and White-rumped Sandpipers AND in excess of 200 Short-billed Dowitchers which flew into the mudflats as one group - quite a ways from the original 2 birds which ignored the intruders.

Of those which arrived, all but perhaps three were mostly in basic plumage. Of those three, two were *Limnodromus griseus griseus* (Short-billed Dowitchers Atlantic race) and one *L. g. hendersoni* (Short-billed Dowitchers interior race). The interior race specimen was molting and provided enough detail to compare the two original birds. There were clear differences and, combined with the tail and other markings consistent with Long-billed Dowitchers, I am reasonably confident that the two were Long-billed Dowitchers but hopefully others will get a chance to verify this.

Interestingly at no time did these two birds attempt or show any interest in joining the others. The rest of the shorebirds spent their time chasing insects and other morsels on the mudflats and given the short distances involved - provided excellent views. Of the Least Sandpipers, most were in fact immatures, with a few adults mixed in. Of the Semipalmated Sandpipers, only one appeared to be an immature.

An excellent place to bird - but more than a little difficult to get into. While in the past we have made this particular trek in early September - it clearly has good potential in mid-August.  
(Editor's Note: adapted from a PEI Birder's List Server August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2004 release. Fullerton's Marsh is located upstream from Fullerton's Marsh the first major tributary on the south side of the Hillsborough River just east of Charlottetown.)

## BIG DAY REPORT:

by David Seeler

Sunday, 6 June, Ray Cooke, Eric Marcum and myself headed out for a Big Day. After 21 hours, we identified 141 species of which the following were (and are) of note:

1. Eastern Screech-Owl (Rtes 216 and 5 - NE Quadrant)
2. Cliff Swallow (East Point)
3. Broad-winged Hawk
4. Razorbill (East Point)