

RARE BIRD IN PEI NATIONAL PARK:

by David Seeler

Date of Observation: 10 August 2003 **Time of Observation:** 09:30 – 09:40

Place of Observation: PEI National Park, Brackley Marsh Mudflats **UTM:** 486785 E 5141582 N

Weather: Early in the morning (06:30) there was considerable fog, limiting visibility. As a result, we walked / birded Dalvay Beach before returning to Covehead by 09:00. By that time, the fog had lifted and there was excellent visibility. By the time we had reached the Brackley mudflats, the sky was lightly overcast (about 1.5 to 2 stops lighter than mid-gray) resulting in very good conditions for viewing – the light was bright, yet flat with no highlights or shadows. This allowed for detailed visualization of feather and colour details.

Temperature:	19 °C	Humidity:	96%
Visibility:	16 Km	Winds:	0
Barometric Pressure:	102.0 KPa		

Habitat: The observation was made in the mudflat area of the saltwater marsh between Brackley Bay and the Gulf Shore Parkway of the PEI National Park. The bird in question was roosting on a small linear grass "island" within the mudflat along with several other birds.

Distance from Bird: 50 to 60 feet

Equipment: Pentax 80mm ED Spotting Scope with 20 – 60 power zoom eyepiece.
Bausch and Lomb Elite II Binoculars 8x42

Circumstances of Observation: I was scanning (20 X) a small group of roosting shorebirds approximately 50 feet out from the side of the road (in order to enumerate the various species present) on a small grass island. The group consisted of 1 Greater and 5 Lesser Yellowlegs; and 3 Short-billed Dowitchers along with one other bird. These birds were roosting in a line, most facing to the south, a couple were positioned so I could see their sides. I noticed very quickly that one of the birds within the group was distinctly different from those with which it was roosting. Two observations made this bird distinct from the group at low power (20 X): 1. the legs were a bright, light orange colour in comparison to the leg colours of the other birds present; and 2. the mantle and upper scapulars were well patterned in a way which was significantly different from the other birds present – especially the Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs. The bird in question, although roosting, appeared to be similar in size, if not slightly smaller, to the Lesser Yellowlegs and significantly smaller than the greater yellowlegs beside it. Since the birds were roosting in a line, there was no magnification problem related to distance in respect to "apparent size" of each bird. In order to obtain more detail, I used my zoom at about 30 – 35X for the duration of my observations. I was able to obtain some detail before an excessively speeding truck flushed the birds. They did not return to the area within the next 30 minutes.

Subsequent visits to the PEINP later that day and in subsequent days did not result in the bird being observed again

Details:

This was not a "bulky" bird, having a stance and bearing similar to the Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs species with which it was roosting. It was similar in size – if not slightly smaller than the Lesser Yellowlegs roosting beside it. As mentioned above, it had a distinctly "orange" colouration to its legs and a much patterned appearance to its back as compared to the other birds present. On two occasions it stretched, turned to the side, and preened thus affording me a view of the side of the bird in addition to its bill.