

to be yellowlegs either roosting or walking on the small mudflat next to the road within the saltmarsh. On my initial scan with my binoculars it was clear that there were three groups of birds present – 5 Greater Yellowlegs (active in the mudflat); 6 roosting Lesser Yellowlegs and 2 Pectoral Sandpipers. While counting the Lesser Yellowlegs, one of the birds with them lifted its head from the roosting position where the bill was initially hidden. I was immediately struck by the fact that the bill on this bird was much longer than its companions' bills, and that it was slightly up-curved in configuration and two-toned in colour. My initial reaction was that this was a Godwit but I admit to some confusion for two reasons: 1) While the bird was larger than its companions, it was not of the size I would expect to see for a Hudsonian Godwit (or even close to the size of the Marbled Godwit we had followed earlier in the season at Tracadie harbour); 2) This was a saltmarsh with few open muddy areas and the habitat just seemed wrong for a Hudsonian Godwit. At this time most of the bird was not visible as it was "roosting" on the back side of a small ridge in the marsh – at least initially. I then proceeded to set up my scope and take notes while observing the bird at powers ranging from 20X to 60X, but due to the close proximity of the bird only a magnification of 30X was required to observe feather details.

Details of Soft Parts

Bill: Approximately forty percent of the tip end bill was black. The base of the bill was orange / red in colour. The top of the bill did have a noticeable dark line from near the tip to the base of the bill. The bill was noticeably longer (2.5 – 3 Xs head length) than that of the nearby Greater Yellowlegs and it was up-turned.

Legs: They were dark grey – similar in colour to those of a Black-bellied Plover.

Body Detail: In size the bird was slightly larger (taller / longer) than the Greater Yellowlegs which were present. This was readily apparent when it moved off its roosting spot to wade amongst and around the Greater Yellowlegs and Pectoral Sandpipers. In general the upper body was light to medium grey and there was no evidence of heavy patterning in the grey areas.

Head and Neck: The top of the head was light grey and this extended down to the top of the base of the top of the bill. There was a modest eye-ring around the eye and a slightly darker grey line from the base of the bill to the eye was present. Higher up than this line, a lighter / whitish line was present which extended from the top of the eye to the top of the bill. A slightly pronounced "eye-line" was also present behind the eye. When the eyes were closed the eyelids were white.

The grey of the head and neck was slightly lighter than that of the mantle and scapulars. The light medium grey of the neck demonstrated a "reddish or warm" tinge when the feathers were ruffled or the bird turned its head and neck. This colouration was still evident during the period of "flat lighting" that occurred which suggests that the tinge of colour was most likely real. The upper breast and neck were light medium grey right up to the base of the lower bill.

Undersides: The belly and under-tail coverts were white with a few notable exceptions on the upper side of the belly (5 or 6 alternate plumaged feathers not yet molted). These 5 or 6 striking salmon pink / black barred feathers were on the upper side of the belly just below the wings in front of the legs. The white on the underside extended up to the lower breast and "melded" into the light grey upper breast with a smooth but rapid transition in colour.

Mantle: The mantle was a medium grey and the individual feathers were edged in a slightly lighter shade of grey (as compared to the body of the feather) giving a scaly appearance to the mantle at high power.

Scapulars: Overall the scapulars were medium grey in colour. The lower scapulars were darker brownish grey and appeared worn. The individual feathers of the upper scapulars appeared a little rough on their edges.

Tertials: Darker in colour.

Primaries: Tips were dark (brownish / black) and appeared worn to some extent. One primary had a small amount of white edging on its tip.

Other: When the bird flew from its roosting spot to "wade" 5 observations were immediately made:

1. The bird had a white rump;
2. The bird had a very noticeable black colouration of its tail;
3. On landing it raised its wings above its body revealing white under wings;
4. White strips along the length of the dorsum of the wing were noticeable;