

332-02-1996

POMARINE JAEGER

Stercorarius parasiticus

Location: Presque Isle State Park, Erie County, Pa

Date: Decemeber 5, 1996

Time: 9:30 to 11:30 AM

Weather: Cloudy (altostratus), wind easterly to less than 10 mph. Visibility good.

Observer: Jerry McWilliams

Optics: Zeiss 10 X 40 Binocular and Kowa TSN 4 Spotting Scope at 30X

Viewing distance: as close as 25 yards and as far away as several hundred yards

Details of sighting & description: I was scanning the south end of Gull Point from Beach 11 when suddenly all of the gulls flew up and away. Within a minute or two, a large jaeger appeared and landed on the beach at the south end of the point. The jaeger was perched at an angle so that I was unable to get any identifiable marks as to what species this bird belonged, but I suspected that this was a good candidate for a Pomarine Jaeger. It flew and disappeared to my disappointment because I was still unable to identify it. Within five minutes it reappeared, but still was seen flying at a bad angle for me to be certain of what it was. It landed again much further away and then a walker and a dog came along and frightened it off. When it flew, it stayed very low and seemed as if it was not going to fly far when it disappeared behind a sand bar.

I decided to walk back out to the point hoping that the bird had just flown down the beach to perch at a safer site away from the intruding walker and dog. Upon reaching the easternmost portion of the point twenty minutes later, I discovered the bird sitting on the beach along the edge of the water. It allowed me to approach it to within about 75 feet. At this point I felt fairly confident that it was a Pomarine Jaeger, but I wanted to see all of the characteristics to be sure.

Before taking the time to study the bird, I took several quick photographs in case the bird decided to fly before I was satisfied as to what it was. The following characteristics I made careful note of. The bird, though it was by itself most of the time, looked large and heavy and rather dark and somber looking with no outstanding bright markings. From a distance it resembled a basic I Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*), except that this bird was more gray-brown. The head seemed proportionately small for the size of the body: in Parasitic Jaeger (*S. parasiticus*), the head seems proportionately large for the size of the body. The bill seemed rather long and thick and was pale to medium bluish gray except the tip which was black contrasting sharply with the rest of the bill. The tip or the nail was heavy and strongly hooked with the hook extending down below the lower mandible. The entire head

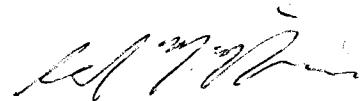
and neck were an even brownish-buff with the cheek or face being slightly paler than the rest of the head and neck. There was no spotting or streaking on the face head or nape, it was very plain and unmarked. The upper breast was a dull grayish brown with faint barring on the lower breast and when the bird was standing the gray appeared to extend down onto the belly where the barring became heavier. The barring was strongest on the undertail coverts where the barring was broad and straight. The pale ground color on the undertail coverts was a dull creamy color. The entire upperside was dark brownish gray with narrow creamy or dull buff edges to the mantle feathers and wing coverts. All of the feathers including the primaries showed very little wear if any. The folded primaries were dark brown and were not especially long, extending only slightly past the tip of the tail. There was no scalloping on the tips of the primaries which is typical in Parasitic Jaeger. The primaries appeared to be no markings on the primaries, however, on close inspection under good light I could see a faint pale spot at the tip of each primary. When the bird flew, the neck seemed to be drawn straight back into the chest which seemed to accentuate the bulk of the chest. The wing beats were slow, very much like a Herring Gull or Great Black-backed Gull (*Larus marinus*). The bases of the wings were broader than near the bend of the wing. The underside of the outer half of the wing showed two distinct white patches. The largest white area covered about the bottom half of all of the primaries. A smaller white crescent patch was below the bases of the primaries formed by the white bases of the otherwise dark primary coverts. The remainder of the underwings were dull buff with dingy barring. The upper primaries showed seven white primary shafts that were only clearly seen when the bird was close and in good light. The uppertail coverts were light brown with broad broken dark bars. The tail was short, wedge-shaped and broad and was entirely dark grayish-brown. The central rectrices were broad, rounded-off at the tips, and extended only slightly past the rest of the tail. The legs were pale pinkish-gray.

The jaeger would sit on the beach until a gull flew past and then it would take-off in hot pursuit of the gull. Most of the gulls it chased were Ring-billed Gull. The Pomarine Jaeger appeared to be about the same size as the Ring-billed Gulls it chased except that the jaeger had a heavier and slightly longer body.

I took about 35 photographs of the jaeger in flight and on the ground as close as 25 yards from me. See enclosed photographs.

I have seen only one other Pomarine Jaeger in Pennsylvania which was a juvenile on 20 December 1980. I have seen Pomarine Jaeger in sub-adult and adult plumages off the coast of North Carolina. This is only the fourth record of this species in Erie County.

See photographs.



Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round # 1 of

Species: Pomarine Jaeger (*Stercorarius pomarinus*)

Date of Sighting: 5 December 1996 to 5 December 1996

Location: PRESQUE ISLE STATE PARK

County: ERIE

Observer(s): Jerry McWilliams

Date of Submission: 1996

Submitted by: Jerry McWilliams

Written Description: YES

Photo: NO

Specimen: NO

Recording: NONE

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV	Class V			Abstain
					A	B	C	
F. Haas	X							
N. Pulcinella	X							
E. Kwater	X							
R. Ickes	X							
G. McWilliams	X							
P. Schwalbe	X							
S. Feldstein	X							
TOTALS	7							
DECISION	X							

Comments:

Signature (Secretary):

L. C. Haas

Date:

8-16-97