

POMARINE JAEGER

*Stercorarius pomarinus*

Observer: Jerry McWilliams

Location: Sunset Point, Presque Isle S.P., Erie, Pa.

Date: November 21, 2012

Time: about 7:50 AM

Weather: clear, calm wind, calm lake temp. about 32 F

Viewing distance: about 1/4 mile offshore

Optics: Swarovski 8 X 42 Binocular and Kowa TSN 884 Prominar spotting scope from 30X to 60X

Details: It was a very tranquil morning. Not the kind of conditions where one would expect to see a jaeger. I was conducting the waterbird count at Sunset Point with Jim Flynn assisting me. At about 7:50 AM I spotted a jaeger flying west a short distance offshore. It was moving very slowly with slow wingbeats reminiscent of a Herring Gull in flight. It had broad-based wings that bent back at the wrist. The tail was short and slightly rounded with no tail projections. It was heavy-chested making the bird look rather robust. The entire upperside was dark brown with several white primary shafts showing on the upper wings. There was some pale barring on the upper tail coverts. The head appeared all dark as well as the breast with some dark barring or blotches on the pale belly. The under tail showed some white barring. The underwings were heavily barred with a prominent white patch at the base of the primaries and a distinct white crescent below the white patch (the primary coverts). Identification as an immature Pomarine Jaeger was based primarily on the robust build, slow movements, and double white patch on the underwing.

The jaeger flew past Sunset Point and made a brief chase at a Ring-billed Gull. The jaeger appeared a bit larger than the gull. Then the jaeger started heading east than turned back to the west and flew out of sight. I took several photos, but because of the distance and low light, my images are not useful for species identification.

I have seen several Pomarine Jaegers and Parasitic Jaegers over Lake Erie doing my count over the last 25 years or so.