







333-01-1990

POPC

Parasitic Jaeger in Erie County

Ed Kwater

On Saturday September 22nd 1990 I was birding at Gull Point on Presque Isle State Park with Jerry and Linda McWilliams and a small group from Erie Audubon Society. At approximately 9:30 a.m. Eric Hall and Dave Darney arrived and informed us that they had just seen a jaeger (Stercorarius sp.) to the west at Sunset Point. Eric, Dave and I then left the rest of the group and headed back towards Sunset Point in an attempt to relocate the bird. The jaeger was still present, chasing gulls (Larus spp.) over the beach and frequently alighting on the sand. Over the next one or a half hours we were able to approach to within fifty yards of the bird, obtaining excellent views and a series of photographs (see enclosed). Eventually, Jerry arrived with his group and was also able to observe the bird at length.

The jaeger was present until after midday, spending long periods of time preening on the sand, but also frequently flying up to a mile offshore to chase gulls, mostly Ring-billed Gulls (L. delawarensis). After one such period of parasitism it disappeared and was not relocated. At the time of the sighting a cool twenty-five mile per hour north-westerly wind was blowing, perfect conditions for ~~blowing~~ pushing a migrant jaeger close inshore in Erie County.

Due to exceptionally close and prolonged view identification of the bird as a pale-phase juvenile

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Parasitic Jaeger (S. parasiticus) was made relatively straightforward. The following description was taken:

The bird was very slightly smaller than a Ring-billed Gull in flight, but more streamlined in shape. The wings were fairly broad-based but narrow at the tips and generally narrower ~~generally~~ across the "hand" than in the accompanying gulls. The tail was quite long and distinctly wedge-shaped, especially when spread - and the projecting ~~pos~~ central pair of rectrices could be easily seen. The body appeared about as heavy or perhaps slightly heavier than that of a Ring-billed Gull, but more elongated at the hind end due to the length of the tail. The flight was very powerful and falcon-like, rather reminiscent of a Peregrine (Falco peregrinus). At one stage it flew to within ten feet of us. The jaeger accelerated very rapidly to chase gulls and easily overtook them.

The head was tawny yellow, particularly pale on the nape and very finely streaked. The pale nape could be picked out at a great distance when the bird was in flight. The mantle, coverts and scapulars were chocolate brown with prominent tawny-yellow edges to all the feathers. The flight feathers were very dark brown above with conspicuous white wing patches formed by the pale bases to the outer primaries. These white crescent-shaped



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markings could be seen even at a distance of 800 yards. The underwing coverts were whitish, heavily barred with black. The undersides of the primaries were largely white with black tips, forming conspicuous pale patches in flight. The rump was cinnamon and the uppertail coverts were white creating a marked contrast with the dark mantle and tail.

The tail was black and wedge-shaped, the central pair of rectrices projecting about an inch beyond the rest of the tail. The tips of these central rectrices were noticeably pointed, not rounded as in Long-tailed Jaeger (S. longicaudus) or blunt as in Pomarine (S. pomarinus).

The chin and throat were whitish buff. The breast band was rather indistinct and mottled gray. The belly was whitish, heavily mottled with gray and only slightly paler than the breast. The undertail coverts were heavily barred with cinnamon brown and black. This character was very obvious when the bird was preening on the sand, and also in flight.

The bill was blue-gray with a black tip. It was about as long as a Ring-billed Gull's bill but slimmer, and more hooked at the tip. The legs were blue-gray with a slight fleshy-pink tinge.

The bird was observed through x10 binocular and x20 spotting scope. This was the 11<sup>th</sup> reported sighting of Parasitic Jaeger for Erie County. There are fewer than records for Pennsylvania as a whole. I have had a substantial amount of experience with this species in Britain, involving at least 700

individuals. I have also seen small numbers in California and Alaska.

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PS:

One very good character for Parasitic Jaeger which was not noticed in the field, and hence is not included in the above description, but which is evident in the photographs, is the pale fringes to the primary tips.

This character is present to a much lesser extent on Long-tailed Jaeger and is absent on Pomarine.]

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round # 1 of 1

Species: **Parasitic Jaeger**

Date of Sighting: **September 22, 1990**

Observer(s): **Ed Kwater**

Date of Submission: **1990**

Submitted by: **Ed Kwater**

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV	Class V		
					A	B	C
E. Kwater	X						
B. Haas	X						
F. Haas	X						
R. Leberman	X						
G. McWilliams	X						
S. Santner	X						
P. Schwalbe	X						
<b>TOTALS</b>	7						
<b>DECISION</b>	X						

Comments:

Signature (Secretary):

*B. Haas*

Date:

*3-24-91*