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PARASITIC JEAGER

Stercorarius parasiticus

Location: Presque Isle State Park

Date: November 23, 1994

Time: 3:30 to 5:00 PM

Weather: Mostly cloudy, wind northwesterly to 40 mph with wind gusts to 55 mph (used wind speed indicator). Visibility good to fair.

Observer: Jerry McWilliams

Optics: Kowa TSN 4 Spotting Scope from 25X to 40X and Zeiss Dialyt 10 X 40 Binocular.

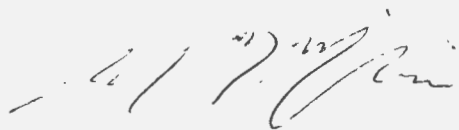
Details of sighting and description of birds: When Presque Isle is hit with wind speeds reaching 35 or 45 mph from the northwest, usually the best best place to go to look for gull concentrations is off the tip of the park. At 3:15 PM I arrived at the channel and began sifting through thousands of Bonaparte's Gulls (*Larus philadelphia*) that were were actively feeding off the tip of the north pier. In a few minutes I found a Little Gull (*Larus minutus*) in basic I plumage. Directly behind this immature bird was an adult in basic plumage. A scan a couple of hundred yards to the left yielded another adult Little Gull in basic plumage. After watching these birds awhile I noticed a very dark bird flying towards me that I suspected was a jaeger. The dark bird quickly banked to the left giving me a side view confirming my suspicion. The jaeger immediately pursued a Bonaparte's Gull and chased it high in the air at which time the gull dropped a fish that the jaeger immediately caught. At this point the jaeger was only about 150 yards away from me. I had turned my camera on and put the camera on manual focus in preparation of a photograph if the bird approached close enough. Unfortunately it quickly turned away before it was in camera range. The jaeger flew towards Gull Point and disappeared. The following details were observed; The jaeger was larger than the Bonaparte's Gull, but perhaps the size of or slightly smaller than a Ring-billed Gull (*Larus delawarensis*). I never saw the jaeger chase or even come close to a Ring-billed Gull, so it is difficult to make an accurate comparison with this species. The jaeger was dark brown across the mantle and upper wings. An indistinct white patch was seen at the base of the upper primaries, but this could not be clearly seen all of the time. The rump was lighter brown than the back. The tail was entirely dark brown and wedge shaped with the central rectrices extending past the other rectrices an inch or less as a single point. The entire underside of the body and the wing linings were buff colored and heavily barred. There was a prominent single white crescent at the base of the

underside of the primaries. The shape and behavior of the jaeger were very similar to a Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*). The wings were pointed and angled sharply back when flying low over the water. When soaring the wings were angled back and arched down giving the bird a hunched back appearance. At 4:00 PM I saw the jaeger or another one about 300 yards north of the north pier and seconds later a second bird joined it. At one point I saw 2 birds in the same scope field no more than 100 feet from each other. Both birds looked identical in plumage and size to the original bird. I studied 2 birds from 4:00 PM until dark (5:00 PM). Both birds fed the same way, they would begin by flying rapidly through the flock of Bonaparte's at about 3 or 4 feet above the water. When the jaegers got to the head of the flock they would quickly ascend to about 100 feet or so, and then they would let the wind carry them back over the feeding flock of gulls. After the jaegers would spot a gull with a fish, they would rapidly descend upon the gull and approach them from behind. The jaegers would then force the gull with the fish into the air and would continue to chase the gull until it dropped the fish at which time the jaegers would take the fish.

It was difficult to determine the exact number of jaegers that may have been in this large concentration of gulls that stretched about 3/4 of a mile in both directions. I can say for certain that there were at least 2 individuals.

This is about the ninth Parasitic Jaeger I have seen on Presque Isle State park since 1985.

Looking from Sunset Point on November 24 at approximately 4:00 PM I saw perhaps a different jaeger chasing Bonaparte's Gulls. Other than the buffy nape seen on this jaeger, I did not notice any other differences in plumage or size between this bird and the ones seen yesterday.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "A. J. [unclear]".

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round # 1 of

Species: **Parasitic Jaeger (Stercorarius parasiticus)**Date of Sighting: **23 November 1994 to 23 November 1994**Location: **PRESQUE ISLE STATE PARK**County: **ERIE**Observer(s): **Jerry McWilliams**Date of Submission: **1995**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):

J C Haas

Date:

9-19-95