

360 - -1996

332 - -1996

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Parasitic Jaeger

SAT 07 SEP 1996: 1845-1930 hrs at Lake Arthur, Moraine State Park; SSE winds 25-35 mph; steady light rain, driving at times. After receiving a phone call from Paul Hess at 1820 hrs, I drove via West Liberty to the north shore of Lake Arthur. Spotted many terns (Black Tern 17, Common Tern 75) near the dam along with Horned Grebe (1). Drove to south shore, checked carefully Ring-billed Gull (150+) in the day use/swimming beach area, drove slowly to locked gate into Crescent Bay Boat Ramp arriving about 1855 hrs under constant driving rain. Walked onto the boat ramp protruding E into the lake and could see a raft of gulls perhaps 300 yds NE of the ramp. To my surprise, most of the Ring-billed Gulls seen in the swimming beach area earlier were landing on the water and joining the already floating raft. I estimated perhaps 250+ gulls - mostly Ring-bills - when suddenly I spotted three Sabine Gulls flying from the Route 528 bridge area to the raft of gulls. I was using a Bushnell 22X spotting scope on a firm tripod but the light was poor and fading by the minute. The size of the three gulls was SMALLER than the surrounding Ring-bills in the air and the tri-colored wing pattern (dark primaries, almost white secondaries and gray-brown shoulders) with a dark tail band readily identified them as juvenile birds. (I did not see any adult Sabine Gull nor did I see any Bonaparte's Gull at this time). The three Sabine's Gulls landed in the middle of the strung-out raft of gulls and next to two large gull-like birds floating on the water. Probably the two birds had been in the middle of the raft all along but hidden by the many Ring-bills until now. I immediately knew that I had the earlier reported jaegers but it was difficult telling species apart. BOTH BIRDS were larger than accompanying Ring-bills and I could see dark crowns and light cheeks with faint darkish breast bands and dark backs but nothing else. Then suddenly, some incoming Ring-bills for some reason scared the ENTIRE RAFT OF GULLS and the birds took quickly to the air, wheeled from right to left and gradually returned to floating on the water. Now I could detect light underparts (breast and belly), broad dark tails and pale underwing patch at the base of the primary coverts - even under the poor light conditions. Size difference between the two jaegers was now also noticeable: the one bird was plumpier and had longer wings than the other but otherwise similar in overall plumage. I could not see tail streamers on either bird but ruled out Long-tailed jaeger for the smaller bird because of the breast band and light underwing patch. Further, the Long-tailed Jaeger is a slimmer-bodied bird than the Pomarine and Parasitic Jaegers. I concluded that I had indeed recorded an adult Pomarine and an adult Parasitic Jaeger. I left the roosting raft of gulls in falling darkness, wind and rain at 1930 hrs.

SUN 08 SEP 1996: 0600-0745 hrs at Lake Arthur, Moraine State Park; SW wind 0-5 mph; mostly clear, water calm. I walked one mile from hilltop down to Crescent Bay Boat Ramp on the south shore, arriving at 0630 hrs just as the raft of gulls was breaking up and birds were flying in all directions. The Pomarine and Parasitic Jaegers were spotted immediately by their larger size (relative to Ring-bills), two-tone body colors (dark upper back, wings and tail; lighter throat, breast and belly) and deeper, regular wingbeats. I only saw the two jaegers in the air for three minutes as they flew SE toward the day use/swimming beach area. Just as they were flying SE above the lake, Ed Kwater came but Ed missed the jaegers by two minutes. The three Sabine's Gulls flew toward the Route 528 bridge and five Bonaparte's

Gulls, all juveniles or in winter plumage, flew W towards the dam.

SUN 08 SEP 1996: 1840-2000 hrs I returned to Crescent Bay Boat Ramp and there met Bonnie and Jim and Ed Kwater. Bonnie and Jim had seen one jaeger (species?) before I arrived. All four of us spotted 1 imm. Laughing Gull, 1 imm. Sabine's Gull and 5 Bonaparte's Gulls. We waited until dusk when again the Ring-bills, Laughing Gull, Sabine's Gull and Bonaparte's Gulls formed their roosting raft for the night. Unfortunately, we did NOT see any jaeger(s) come into the raft as darkness fell at 2000 hrs when we departed the lake site.

Note: I am familiar with all three species of jaegers in the field, especially in Alaska where I observed all three species nesting on the tundra at Point Barrow through a whole summer.

Notes above were taken from my field note book and field calendar.

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Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round # 1 of

Species: Parasitic Jaeger (*Stercorarius parasiticus*)

Date of Sighting: 7 September 1996 to 8 September 1996

Location: MORAINE STATE PARK

County: BUTLER

Observer(s): Gene Wilhelm

Date of Submission: 1996

Submitted by: Gene Wilhelm

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			1	2		3		1
DECISION				X				

Comments:

Signature (Secretary): *F. C. Haas*

Date: *8-16-97*