

333-03-1996

PARASITIC JAEGER

Stercorarius parasiticus

Location: Presque Isle State Park, Erie County, Pa

Date: September 8, 1996

Time: About 10:00 AM and about 11:00 AM (I had no watch with me)

Weather: Cloudy (stratus), moderate rain showers, 35+ mph west-northwest wind
(passage of Hurricane Fran)

Observer: Jerry McWilliams

Optics: Kowa TSN 4 Spotting Scope at 30X

Viewing distance: several hundred yards

Details of sighting & description: While trying to keep count of the numerous Common Tern and Black Tern that were migrating past Gull Point I was distracted by a fast flying blackish gull-like bird. I immediately trained my spotting scope on the bird and recognized it as a jaeger. As is typical of most jaegers that I have seen on Presque Isle, they fly in almost touching the water and then dart upwards to an altitude of 50 feet or more, make a couple of turns and then drop back down low over the water in a rather direct flight. This flight characteristic continues until they are out of sight or until they approach a passing gull at which time they are in hot pursuit. I identified the jaeger as a Parasitic by the following field marks. The general shape of the bird was gull-like. It appeared to be about the size of a Ring-billed Gull (*Larus delawarensis*), a judgment that I made based on the size of the passing Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*). The body was not bulky like that of a Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*), but the body was rather light much like the body of a Ring-billed Gull. The wings were narrow and only slightly broadening at the base and were angled slightly back at the wrists. When gliding the jaegers wings were strongly arched down below the horizontal plane. The jaegers flight was fast with rapid falcon like wing beats. The entire upperside was very dark brown, looking more blackish than immature gulls. A pale white patch was evident at the base of the primaries on the upperside of the wings, but was not as diagnostic as it was on the underside of the wings. The rump was slightly paler than the rest of the upperside and the tail was solid dark brown and wedge shaped. I could not see any central rectrice extensions. The underside of the body was pale and barred warm brown, being darkest or heaviest across the breast. The head appeared all dark. The undersides of the wings were dusky with heavily barred wing linings. There was a distinctive single white patch in the shape of an arch at the base of the primaries. This bird was in view for less than five minutes. At about 11:00 AM, I spotted another jaeger flying west past the north end of Gull Point. This bird looked identical to

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the other Parasitic Jaeger in shape size and behavior except that it was a little paler on the belly and showed central pointed rectrices that extended beyond the tail by about one inch. At about 1:00 PM I saw yet another jaeger flying west further out over the water than the previous two birds. I identified the bird as a jaeger by size, overall darkness of the bird, flight behavior and the white patch at the base of the primaries. It was soon joined by three other jaegers of the same size, so at one time I had all three jaegers in the same field of view. Thirty minutes later I saw a seventh jaeger identified by the same criteria as the four birds above. It was very likely that all five of these distant birds were Parasitic, because their flight pattern and behavior was identical to the two birds that were in closer that I was able to identify as Parasitics. Unfortunately, they were so far away from me, it probably would not be save to identify them to species.

Red myrtle

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round # 1 of

Species: Parasitic Jaeger (*Stercorarius parasiticus*)

Date of Sighting: 8 September 1996 to 8 September 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