

PARASITIC JAEGER

Stercorarius parasiticus

Observer: Jerry McWilliams

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

Date: November 25, 2012

Time: 8:20, 8:45, & 8:55 AM

Weather: Cloudy, wind WSW to 20 mph, temp. 28 F

Viewing distance: about 250 yards to 3/4 mile from shore

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

Details: As I did on yesterday's jaeger documentation, I will summarize all three birds in just one documentation form.

I was joined by Dave Wilton, Shannon Thompson, and Geoff Malosh on my waterbird count. At 8:20 AM a light/intermediate morph Parasitic Jaeger zoomed past going west. The entire upperside of the gull was dark, except its pale rump that was finely barred. There was a trace of white showing at the base of the upper primaries. The head appeared dark as well as the breast. The belly and undertail was light brown with relatively heavy barring. The underwings were buffy-white and barred. There was a single white patch at the base of the primaries. The primary coverts appeared to be dark and not white. The flight was rapid as was the wing beats. The wings were not particularly broad and bent back sharply at the wrists. When it was on a glide, it held its wings in a downward arch. The jaeger was about the size of a Ring-billed Gull, as was noted when it briefly pursued this gull. It was rather sleek looking, lacking the bulkiness of a Pomarine Jaeger. On one occasion when it banked I could see the pointed central tail feathers. The second bird at 8:45 AM was mostly dark brown overall, though I could see some pale barring on the underwings and on the uppertail coverts. The shape, size, and behavior of the second bird were like that of the first jaeger, though the plumage was much darker. It also flew west, but made a few chases after Ring-billed Gulls. It landed on the water a couple of times making it difficult to keep track of between the waves. The third bird was also a dark bird that appeared at 8:55 AM. It matched the same size, profile, behavior, and plumage like the second bird. It spent a couple of minutes just sitting on the water, though it occasionally would lift its wings like it was feeding on something on the water. The bill appeared to be on the small size, not thick looking like a Pomarine Jaeger. After chasing a couple of Ring-billed Gulls, it too headed west. I was not able to see the tail projections on the last two birds, but I feel confident because of the shape, size, and behavior as the first bird, that they were Parasitic Jaegers as well.