

V4/3

Long-tailed Jaeger in Erie County. Ed Kwater

On Sunday September 2nd 1990 I was watching shorebirds at Gull Point, Presque Isle State Park, with Joyce Hoffman, Walt Schaeffer and Mike Fialkovich. At around 10.00 a.m. Joyce drew my attention to a fairly dark bird flying diagonally away from us over Lake Erie. When first spotted the bird was approximately 200 yards away. I identified it as a jaeger, ^{♂ Stercorarius sp.} and my initial impressions were confirmed when the bird increased its speed dramatically and banked steeply upwards to overtake and chase a Bonaparte's Gull, Larus philadelphia. The pursuit lasted for about a minute, then the jaeger gave up and flew west just a few feet above the water surface. After flying for several hundred yards it again increased its speed dramatically and began to chase a Ring-billed Gull, L. delawarensis. Eventually the jaeger flew off to the north-west, disappearing into the lake mist about 500 yards from shore. The whole observation lasted for approximately ten minutes. After piecing together all the evidence I am absolutely certain that the bird was a Long-tailed Jaeger, S. longicaudus, on the following characters:

In direct comparison the jaeger was noticeably smaller than a Ring-billed Gull but slightly larger than a Bonaparte's. It was slim-bodied, lacking the deep chested appearance of the two larger jaeger species. The wings were long and narrow at the base, looking proportionately slimmer than those of a Ring-billed Gull.

This character tended to accentuate the length of the body and the tail behind the wings giving the bird a much slimmer and streamlined profile than in Parasitic or Pomarine Jaegers.

Jaegers in anything but adult plumage can be notoriously difficult to age but my impression was that this bird was a juvenile. The head, mantle, upper wings and tail were a fairly dark uniform gray brown. There was also a gray brown breast band. The belly was almost pure white with dusky flanks. I could not make out any barring on the undertail coverts. The undersurface of the primaries was white, the rest of the underwing gray brown. When the jaeger began to chase the Bonaparte's Gull it banked steeply upward, spreading its tail about as wide as it could go. The central pair of rectrices projected noticeably beyond the rest of the tail. The tips of these feathers were noticeably rounded, not pointed as in a juvenile Parasitic Jaeger or square-tipped as in a juvenile Pomarine. No white shafts were visible to the outer primaries on the upperwing, a typical situation in Long-tailed.

The birds flight was very buoyant and graceful, reminiscent of a small gull or a tern. It was the shape of the bird and its flight action that clinched the identification as much as any plumage characters, although the shape of the central rectrices was an extremely good clue.

I have had extensive previous experience of Parasitic Jaegers involving many hundreds of individuals on both sides

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of the Atlantic and also several dozen Pomarine Jaegers.
I have seen approximately 10 other Long-tailed Jaegers, mostly
on the Pacific coast of North America.

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round # 2 of 2

Species: Long-tailed Jaeger

Date of Sighting: September 2, 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				
TOTALS			5	2			
DECISION				X			

Comments:

~~Send for second round~~

Signature (Secretary):

B. Haas

Date:

8-15-91

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round # 1 of 2

Species: Long-tailed Jaeger

Date of Sighting: September 2, 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			
TOTALS			5	2			
DECISION							

Comments:

Send for Round 2

Signature (Secretary):

B. Haas

Date:

3-24-91