

332A-03-2001

Jaeger species

Stercorarius pomarinus or parasiticus

Location: Presque Isle State Park, Erie County, Pa.

Date: December 28, 2001

Time: 9:20 to 9:22 AM

Weather: cloudy, wind WSW to about 15 mph.

Observer: Jerry McWilliams

Optics: Kowa TSN 4 at about 30X.

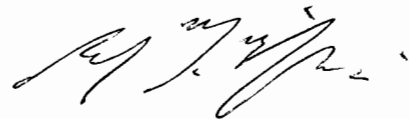
Viewing distance: as close as ¼ mile off shore.

Viewing conditions: very good

Details of sighting and description: I was conducting my waterbird count at Sunset Point when I spotted a jaeger flying head on. It was heading towards a flock of about 100 or more Bonaparte's Gulls that were feeding approximately 200 or 300 yards out from the breakwaters. When it got to the gulls it veered off to the west and gave chase to one of the Bonaparte's Gulls. The jaeger twisted and turned in pursuit of one of the gulls and then resumed its westerly direction. It repeated this behavior a few more times before flying out of sight in a westerly direction. It looked heavy bodied with broad based wings that were pointed and angled back at the bend of the wing. When it glided, its wings curved below the level of its back in an arched position similar to a falcon. The upperside of the jaeger was blackish brown showing a pale rump that was strongly barred. There was a small white patch at the base of the upper primaries. The under primaries showed a more extensive white area and at one point I could see two separate white patches. The largest white area being at the base of the primaries and the smaller one being the primary coverts. The head looked all brownish without any distinguishing characters. There was a dark breast band and the lower breast and belly appeared to be a warm brown that was heavily barred. The undertail coverts were pale and heavily barred. I had a brief underview of the spread tail but did not get a look at the shape of the central tail feathers.

I suspect the jaeger was most likely a Pomarine Jaeger based upon the heavy looking body, rather short broad-based wings, slow wing beats, and extensive white in the base of the under primaries and the white under primary coverts. Pomarine Jaegers are more likely to be seen this late in the season than Parasitic Jaegers. However, The warm brown underside is not typical of most Pomarine Jaegers. It is usually grayish brown at this age (basic I). Despite most characteristics leading towards Pomarine I am leaning on the conservative side and calling it a jaeger species. The only gulls to compare it with were Bonaparte's Gulls, which helped little because both jaegers are larger than a Bonaparte's.

Even though I am fairly familiar with separating Parasitic and Pomarine Jaegers in flight, especially at a distance, there are always a few individuals that I can't safely identify to species.



Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Tabulation Form - Round One

Species: Jaeger species (Stercorarius species)

Date of Sighting: 28 December 2001 to 28 December 2001

Location: PRESQUE ISLE STATE PARK

County: EIRE

Observer(s): Jerry McWilliams

Date of Submission: 2001

Submitted by: Jerry McWilliams

Written Description: Yes

Photo: No

Specimen: No

Recording: No

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A				Abstain
					Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	
G. Armistead			X					
D. Heathcote			X					
P. Hess			X					
J. Stanley			X					
E. Witmer			X					
R. Leberman				X				
M. Sharp						X		
TOTALS			5	1		1		
DECISION			X					

Comments: 5/2 Jaeger sp

Signature (Secretary): 

Date: 2/5/03