

Documentation for the PORC

Species: Jaeger species (*Stercorarius* sp.)

332A-02-2006

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Other Observers: Dave Yeany

Location: The bird was seen flying north over the Susquehanna River from Fort Hunter, north of Harrisburg, Dauphin County. The Susquehanna River is decently wide at this region, but fortunately for us the bird was seen flying over the closer half of the river.

Date and Length of time observed: September 2, 2006. The bird was observed for a brief amount of time. I can't give a good estimate for the amount of time the bird was observed; it was only a matter of how long it took the bird flying past us to go out of sight.

Optics: The bird was seen through both my Swarovski 8.5 by 42 EL binoculars and my Swarovski ST-80 scope with a 20x-60x zoom eyepiece.

Habitat and Behavior: The jaeger was observed flying fairly high (50+ feet – at least what would be "tree-top" height). It was all by itself and didn't seem to be in any hurry. It casually, yet steadily, flapped north until it had almost disappeared in the haze when it stopped and circled twice. Unfortunately, at this point (the only time when the bird wasn't flying away from me), the bird was way too far and obscured to see any field marks.

Weather: As Saturday (2 September 2006) brought the aftermath of Ernesto to PA, the afternoon was quite dismal, being overcast and rainy. As I recall, the rain varied from light to steady at times.

Description: The field marks obtained in this brief look were limited and I do not feel comfortable assigning this bird to a species. Dave and I initially picked up on the bird about straight out (perpendicular) to where we were standing and then were able to watch the bird until it disappeared to the north, quite a distance away. Unfortunately, there were no birds present in the bird's vicinity to provide us with any kind of size comparison.

My notes on the bird were short. As I do not have much experience with jaegers (having only seen Parasitic and Pomarine on a total of three days previously) I do not feel that I am able to differentiate shape and flight style accurately to clarify which species it may have been. The bird was gull-like but with long, thin wings. The most distinctive feature that I could see from below (and mainly from behind the bird) was the conspicuous white base to the primaries. I was also able to discern thin, but noticeable, white shafts to a few of the upperwing outer primaries. If I had to pin a number on the amount of white primary shafts, I would say that there were two or three white primary shafts showing. Otherwise, the bird appeared to be a uniform brown overall. I was unable to obtain a decent view of its head, bill, or up-close plumage patterning (i.e. coverts barring, etc).

The combination of the above characteristics led me to believe that what I saw was what Sibley defines as an "Intermediate Juvenile" Parasitic Jaeger. Although I didn't have any size comparisons, I did not get the impression that the bird was particularly slender or heavy, again suggesting Parasitic. Additionally, the number of white primary shafts falls on the line between Long-tailed and Parasitic Jaeger. However, as I noted previously, due to my lack of field experience with these species, relatively poor view, and lack of knowledge about critical ID

characteristics, I feel most comfortable leaving this as "Jaeger sp." Interestingly, Deuane Hoffman saw what he described as a similar looking bird the following day (3 September 2006) from Harrisburg.

**Similar Species:**

**Subadult gull:** Although a subadult gull, such as a first-cycle Herring Gull, could show a concolorous brown plumage like the jaeger species, the distinctive white flash to the base of the underside of the primaries and white primary shafts eliminate any gull possibility.

**Skua species:** While a skua would be highly unlikely, they contain obvious white to the bases of the primaries on the upperside of the wing, unlike jaegers. Size and structure would also set a skua apart from any jaeger.

Out of any of the jaeger possibilities, I felt that juvenile Parasitic Jaeger was the best fit. However, the early date for a juvenile Parasitic was alarming as we typically think of August/early September as a time for juvenile Long-tailed Jaegers. I perused through a number of websites and pulled out the juvenile Parasitic sightings (trusting them to be accurately identified) from September as well as one from August. With this in mind, 2 September 2006, although early, would not seem to exclude the possibility of juvenile Parasitic Jaeger in Pennsylvania.

British Columbia – 2 September 2005

[http://www.birdinfo.com/A\\_images\\_P/ParasiticJaeger\\_0002.html](http://www.birdinfo.com/A_images_P/ParasiticJaeger_0002.html)

Oklahoma – 7 September 2003

<http://stevemetzphotography.com/photo%20pages/Oklahoma/Parasitic%20Jaeger.htm>

Southern California – 27 September 2003

[http://www.southwestbirders.com/socal\\_sep2003.htm](http://www.southwestbirders.com/socal_sep2003.htm)

Ontario – 17 September 2005

<http://listserv.arizona.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A2=ind0509c&L=birdeast&P=2017>

Michigan – 23 September 2006; 6 September 2006

<http://www.wpbo.org/Journals.html>

Michigan – 27 August 2005

<http://www.rarebirds.com/listing/251/>

Vermont – 1 September 2001; 14 September 2001; 26 September 2001

<http://209.85.165.104/search?q=cache:XEO9LQz7MBsJ:www.vinsweb.org/vbrc/images/vbrc2002report.pdf+juvenile+Parasitic+jaeger+september&hl=en&gl=us&ct=clnk&cd=10>

Nebraska – 16 September 2000

<http://rip.physics.unk.edu/NOU/2000RBAs/2000Sept21.html>

Utah – 10 September 2005

[http://www.utahbirds.org/BirdnetArchives/2005/2005\\_09.htm](http://www.utahbirds.org/BirdnetArchives/2005/2005_09.htm)

**Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee**

**Voting Tabulation – Round One**

Species: Jaeger species Stercorarius

Date of Sighting: 2 September 2006 to 2 September 2006

Location: FORT HUNTER

County : DAUPHIN

Observer(s): Cameron Rutt, Dave Yeany

Date of Submission: 2006

Submitted by: Cameron Rutt

Written Description: Yes

Photo: No

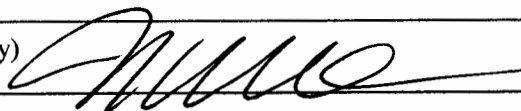
Specimen: No

Recording: No

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A	Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	Abstain
R. Wiltraut			X					
A. Guarente			X					
T. Johnson			X					
J. Stanley								
E. Witmer			X					
J. Heller			X					
G. Malosh			X					
TOTALS			6					
DECISION			X					

Comments: 6/0

Signature (Secretary)



Date:

7/30/07