

PARASITIC JAEGER

Stercorarius parasiticus

Observer: Jerry McWilliams

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

Date: November 19, 2013

Time: 8:08 AM

Weather: Cloudy, wind NW to 25 mph, temp. 35 F

Viewing distance: about 1/2 mile from shore

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

Details: While conducting the waterbird count from a high hard pan sand dune just east of Sunset Point I spotted an immature light morph jaeger flying low and moving to the west. The rapid wing beats, alternate glides, and size were reminiscent of a Peregrine Falcon, except that the wings were strongly bowed down when gliding. The jaeger was all dark above, very blackish looking, with a bit of white showing at the base of the primaries. The underwings were barred showing just a single white patch at the base of the primaries. The belly was heavily barred on a background of pale rusty brown. I could not see any tail projections. The bird moved up and down above the surface of the water, but often dipped low disappearing inside the troughs between waves as it twisted and turned against the wind. There were no gulls nearby to pursue, so the jaeger continued west pass Sunset Point without any interruptions. The wings were rather narrow and not broad as in Pomarine Jaeger. The ID was based primarily on flight behavior, shape, and size of the bird. Pomarine Jaeger is more robust with broad based wings with a relatively short broad outer arm or hand. Pomarines flight is usually slower with fewer twists and turns. Pomarines don't rapidly twist and turn as they pursue a gull. Immature Long-tailed Jaeger is more slender with long thin wings and a more graceful or tern-like behavior. Their under and uppertail coverts are strongly barred and their bellies are dusky. Long-tailed Jaeger would not be likely this late in the season, since most migrate across the continent in late August and through early September. I am fairly familiar with both Pomarine and Parasitic jaegers, since I have observed and photographed both for many years, especially during my waterbird counts that I have been conducting for over 25 years.