

Pomarine Jaeger

28 Sep 1988

Saylorville Res., Polk Co., IA

*#S. Dinsmore, *#Kent, *#Petersen, ***

to 2 Oct; IBL 59(1) cover, 13, 77, Dinsmore 1989

Record Number: 88-24

Classification: A-P

DOCUMENTATION

Steve Dinsmore, 28 Sep-2 Oct

Bob Myers, 29 Sep

Thomas H. Kent, 29 Sep

Peter C. Petersen, 30 Sep

Beth Proescholdt, 1 Oct

Mark Proescholdt, 1 Oct

PHOTOGRAPHS

S. Dinsmore, 29 Sep, P-0266 (IBL 59:20-21, 59(1) cover)

T. H. Kent, 29 Sep, P-0264 (IBL 59:21)

P.C. Petersen, 30 Sep. P-0265

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 59:13

Photographs: IBL 59(1) cover, 59:20-21

Records Committee: IBL 59:77

Dinsmore, S. J. 1959. Pomarine Jaegers at Saylorville Reservoir. IBL 59:20-21.

VOTE: 5-A-P, 1-A-D, 1-abstain

A-D. The white second crescent at the base of the primary coverts, bulky body, jizz, and wing length (which should not be longer than Ring-billed Gull but must appear longer) eliminates Parasitic and Long-tailed Jaegers. If the picture by Kent was all I had to go on I would have to change the classification to Jaeger sp. However, 1) the heavy body, 2) the eye to base of bill to bill ratio, long compared to other jaegers, and 3) the white and buff of the uppertail coverts and rump supports Pomarine Jaeger.

A-P. Size, large bill, amount of white in wings, and heavy barring all seem to be convincing.

A-P. Comments on documentation rule out other species of Jaegers. Photos show good details of these descriptions.

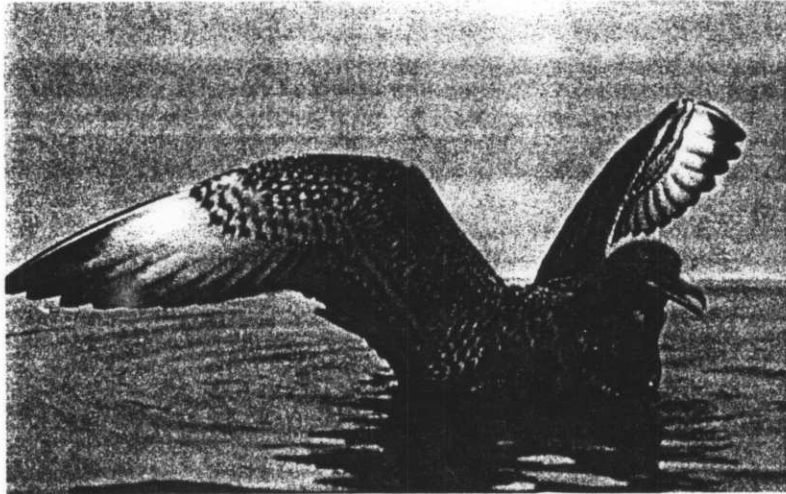
A-P. Much ID vs. Parasitic is subjective, but excellent description by Beth Prescholdt notes 2nd (inner) white crescent (also noted by Dinsmore). Extremely close looks allowed view of blunt tail streamers--pos. diagnostic in combination with other features.

SENT TO: Steve Dinsmore, 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50010; Bob Myers, RR 2, Box 153, Perry, IA 50220; Beth and Mark Prescholdt, Box 65, Liscomb, IA [3/29/89]

88-27

IOWA BIRD LIFE

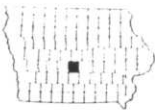
Winter 1989 Volume 59 Number 1



IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION

POMARINE JAEGERS AT SAYLORVILLE RESERVOIR

STEPHEN J. DINSMORE

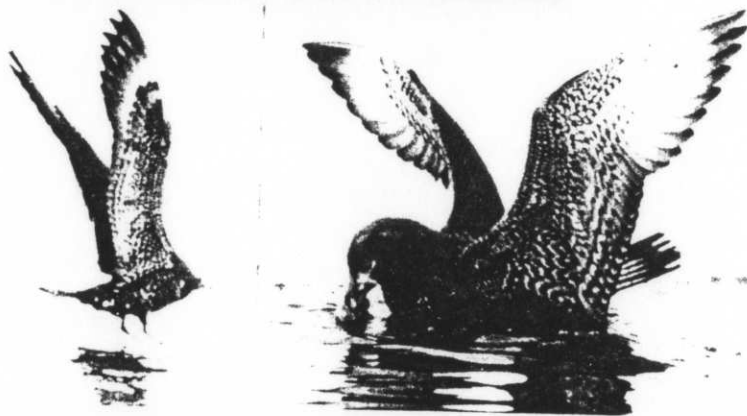


At 12:24 p.m. on 28 September 1988, I noticed a dark gull-like bird resting with Double-crested Cormorants above the dam at Saylorville Reservoir in Polk County. I quickly recognized the bird as a jaeger, but which one? During my initial observation of the bird, several things seemed to indicate that it was a Pomarine Jaeger. The bird's large size, heavy-bodied appearance, large head and bill, and prominent amount of white on the wing were consistent with Pomarine Jaeger. I watched the jaeger intermittently from 12:24 to 2:46 p.m. from Lakeview, Sandpiper Beach, and Cherry Glen recreation areas and noted the following. The bird was quite heavy-bodied and larger than nearby Ring-billed Gulls. It was mostly dark brown, except for a lighter crescent on each wing. The crescents were located at the base of the primaries and were visible on both upper and under sides of the wing. They were very prominent and visible even with the naked eye. The rump was slightly paler than the rest of the upperparts, and the tail had a hint of rufous near the tip. I went home that afternoon convinced that I had seen a juvenile Pomarine Jaeger.

On September 29, I returned to the reservoir in hopes of finding the jaeger again. At 2:25 p.m., I located a jaeger off Cherry Glen. With the aid of my boat, I approached within 10 feet of the bird and took photos. I was impressed with the bird's bulky, large-headed appearance and the fact that the bird looked lighter than the jaeger seen the day before. The large size, combined with the large-headed appearance, prominent white wing crescents, and deep steady wing beats, convinced me that I was looking at another Pomarine Jaeger. Additional features noted included a heavy, hooked bill with distal third dark and basal portion gray, dark eye, dark legs, and smaller white crescent at the base of the under primary covers.

At least two juvenile Pomarine Jaegers, and possibly three, were present at the reservoir through 2 October. Single unidentified jaegers were seen at the reservoir on 8 October and 9 November.

This is the first record of Pomarine Jaeger in Iowa. Pomarine Jaegers are rare vagrants to the interior of North America, and are most often reported around the Great Lakes. In the last five years, there are records from Arkansas, Colorado (3), Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan (2), Ohio, Nevada, New York, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.



Pomarine Jaeger, Saylorville Reservoir, 30 September 1988. Photo by S. J. Dinsmore.

Pomarine Jaegers, Saylorville Reservoir. Top: 29 September by S. J. Dinsmore. Middle: 29 September by T. H. Kent. Bottom: 30 September by S. J. Dinsmore.

88-24

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species? Pomarine Jaeger

How many? 2 juv.

Location? Saylorville Reservoir, Polk Co.--south end of lake

Habitat? resting and feeding on large reservoir

Date? 28 Sep-2 Oct 1988

Time? 12:24-2:46 p.m. on 28 Sep; various times on later dates

Observers Name and address: Steve Dinsmore 4024 Arkansas Dr. Ames, IA 50010

Others who saw bird: m.ob.

Description of bird: On 28 Sep 1988, while birding near the Saylorville dam, I noticed a dark, gull-like bird resting on the water with a small flock of Double-crested Cormorants. I watched the bird for several minutes, during which time it raised its wings and I could see the white patches at the base of the primaries. I then concluded that the bird was a jaeger, but which one?

I decided to drive to the Lakeview Recreation Area to get a closer look at the bird. I watched the bird from there until 12:46 p.m., when the bird flew up the lake. At Lakeview, I studied the bird for about 8 min. as it rested on the water about 150 yards from me. I took the following notes while watching the bird. The bird seemed rather large, noticeably larger than the Ring-billed Gulls scattered across the lake. The bird was entirely dark chocolate brown, except for the lighter wing patches. The bill was short, fairly stout, and bicolored (dark at tip). As I was watching the bird, it suddenly took flight and chased a Ring-billed Gull. In flight, the bird was larger and bulkier than the gull and the wings seemed longer and more pointed than the wings of the gull. The most obvious feature of the bird was the prominent white patches on the wings. Each patch was located at the base of the primaries, and was visible on the underside and upperside of the wing. Some white appeared to extend almost to the wingtip on the underwing. Otherwise, the bird looked dark brown in flight, except for a slightly paler rump. I watched the bird fly north across the lake with steady, slow wingbeats, low over the water. I did not see any tail streamers.

For the next hour, I searched for the bird near the marina and finally relocated it off Sandpiper Beach. From the beach, the light was better and the bird was in closer to shore, so I got a better look. I noted the following additional features: one, possibly two, very short stubs visible beyond end of tail, underparts appeared barred, and bill mostly pale with the distal one third darker. While at the beach, the jaeger attacked a coot for 2-3 minutes, but the coot got away.

Over the next four days I saw at least three different jaegers at the lake (three seen at one time on 29 Sep). On 29 Sep, 30 Sep, and 1 Oct I used my boat to approach the birds closer. On each of these dates, I approached two jaegers resting together on the lake. Both of the birds were Pomarine Jaegers. I had no problem getting within 40 yards of both birds, and one bird allowed me to approach within 5 feet on several occasions. I took many photos of both birds, and several additional features were noticeable in those slides.

On the water, both birds were relatively large-headed compared to a Ring-billed Gull. One of the birds, which appeared to be sick and allowed very close approach with the boat, had most of its feathers ruffled out, making it appear larger than the bird with it. However, despite the apparent size difference of the two birds in my slides, I believe they were both Pomarine Jaegers. Both birds were bulky and heavy-bodied, and both had large heads and heavy, thick bills. In flight, both birds had identical wing patterns, and both birds flew with slow, methodical wingbeats. Both birds were juveniles.

Other features of the birds visible in my slides include; eye large and dark, head and nape light gray/brown, bill blue-gray with dark tip, back and wings black with lighter white and brown speckling, breast and underparts grayish with darker bars and blotchy areas, undertail white with black barring, underwings very white, particularly on one bird, rump rusty brown with darker barring, and some white near the base of the tail feathers. One of the birds had very noticeable tail streamers projecting out 1-2", but the other bird had no visible streamers. I last saw these two birds resting together on the evening of 2 Oct. Other birders saw one jaeger at the lake on 8 Oct, and Andy Fix saw a jaeger in mid-november at Saylorville.

Similar species and how eliminated: The gull-like shape, dark color, and white wing patches eliminate all birds except jaegers. The large size compared to Ring-billed Gulls, heavy build, large, thick bill, prominent white patches on the upper and under surface on the wings, and the presence of a second white "crescent" on the underwing at the base of the primary coverts eliminate both Parasitic and Long-tailed jaegers.

Viewing conditions and equipment: Viewing conditions were rather poor on 28 Sep with rain and fog severely limiting visibility. Viewing conditions were excellent on later dates. Estimated viewing distance was as close as 4-5 feet for one bird. I used a Buschnell 20-45x spotting scope and Bausch and Lomb 8x40 binoculars.

Previous experience with species: I have seen many Pomarine and Parasitic Jaegers off the East coast, as well as a Parasitic Jaeger in Iowa.

References consulted: NGS Field Guide to the Birds of North America, Harrison Seabirds, Peterson Field Guide to the Birds of Eastern North America

How long before field notes were made? notes written during initial observation and additional notes were written after later sightings

How long before this form was completed?

Jaeger Sighting - Saylorville Res.

Date - 29 Sept. 1988

Place - Saylorville Res. - Polk Co.

Time - 9:15 am to 9:45 am -

Viewing - cloudy but bright - shower just stopped and sun started to peak thru

Distance - a long way - 150 to 200 yds (more at first sighting)

Optics - 10X40 Lietz binocs. + 22X scope

Situation -

I made a second trip to Saylorville Res. on this date to locate a jaeger Steve Dinsmore had found 28 Sept. From Prairie Flower Rec. Area I scanned over the beach and noted two dark birds sitting side by side in the water about 50 yd. off the beach. Both were the same size & shape, however one was very dark brown to black and the second appeared very slightly lighter (but still dark brown). Both were basically gull shaped and about the size of nearby ring-billed gulls. Both had an unusual projection sticking up ~~into~~ the rear of the body similar to that seen on a jaeger at Saylorville about 2 years ago. I believe this projection is caused by their long wingtips meeting or overlapping.

As I approached, a flock of gulls and terns took flight and the dark bird followed them. It was very

gull-like but with somewhat longer appearing wings. There was one very apparent field mark seen while the bird flew. The primaries feathers on both top and bottom of each wing had a lot of white in them. The white patch started just inside the edge and continued to primary base. The white patch was more obvious than that on the jaeger of 2 years ago. The bird flew with the same (approx.) wing beat as the ring-billed gulls. I turned from the flying bird and noted that the second ~~the~~ bird was still sitting on the water. The flying bird moved down the lake out of my sight so I tried to get closer to this lighter ^{colored} resting bird to confirm that it was indeed a second jaeger.

I stopped briefly to look at some water pipits and when I next checked the second bird I found both to be on the water again.

I did not see them ^{again} fly and could not stay longer so I never actually saw the second bird in the air but I believe there were two jaegers.

If I had to put a species to the one I saw fly I ~~at~~ would lean toward Semipalmare because they

are supposed to show more white in the primaries than parasites. I could not see any tail projections to help confirm matters, but the birds were probably juv. dark phase and tail projections would not be expected. From my distance and vantage point size, bill shape & size, etc. were just too subjective to be of use.

Bob Myers

R.R. 2, Box 153

Perry, Iowa

50220

DOCUMENTATION OF EXTRAORDINARY BIRD SIGHTING

Pomarine Jaeger, 1 juvenile, 29 Sept. 1988, Saylorville Res., Polk Co. IA

Observer: Thomas H. Kent, 211 Richards St., Iowa City, IA 52240

Other observers: seen before by Steve Dinsmore, Jim Dinsmore, and others

Time: 10:10 to 10:20 a.m.; 10:45 to 10:50; 11:40 to 12:30

Habitat: Large reservoir

Description: I first saw the bird at the Cherry Glen Area on the water about 1/4 mile away. It was a dark bird.

It would raise its wings so that I could see extensive white at the base of the primaries above and below. It flew a bit so that I could see that it was larger than nearby Caspian Terns with longer wing span. It had a heavy body and flew with slow flaps that were much more shallow than Ring-billed Gulls in the area. I estimated that the wing beats covered about 30 degrees. I could also make out a long hooked bill. I noted that it did not fly when a fishing boat went by at close range and the fishermen stopped to look at it. I next went to the Sandoz Recreation Area and found the bird in the water somewhat closer. It flew off down the lake without my seeing any additional field marks, except that the tail was long and broad, slightly rounded, square cornered and lacked any streamers. I went to the marina and rented a boat. After motoring down to the dam and back, I found the bird on the water about where it had been originally. I was able to run the boat right up to the bird and take photos. When I got very close, it would fly down lake 50 yards or so and I could then motor up close again. This was repeated about eight times until I got tired of looking at it. I made the following notes at 12:50 p.m. after returning the boat: "Large head and body, long heavy hooked bill and white at base of primaries seen at a great distance. Flight slow with about 30 degree flap, but sailed most of time when in the air. At close range, bill was heavy and hooked, black at tip, pale bluish on rest of bill. Head tan-brown with black front of face including eye. Gray-white flecks on sides of face and neck (cheek and posterolateral neck). Primaries extended about 1 inch beyond tail. Primaries had very slight buff at tips; other wing feathers were prominently tipped with buff-brown on dark feathers. Flanks were heavily barred with black on gray-white. There was dark barring on the lower edge of the wing near the water line, but this barring was on a darker brown background. I wasn't sure whether these were wing coverts or the side of the body. In flight, the distal 1/3 of tail was black and the proximal tail and tail coverts extending as a V up the back were scalloped buff-brown. The upper wing surface was dark with very prominent white base to primaries. On the undersides of the wing the white area was more extensive at the base of the primaries and there was more white at the base of the greater primary coverts. The area between the white areas appeared scalloped buff-brown. The wings were pointed and held above the body in a mild arc. Legs were not seen. At one point, the bird made several soft chirps while sitting on the water. Photos were taken with a 420 mm zoom lens. In some cases I had to zoom down to get the entire bird in the frame."

Conditions: The sky was overcast with a few sprinkles at one time. The bird was as close as 15 feet and viewed with 10x binoculars and 420 mm lens. Earlier I used a 20x scope.

Similar species: Features that favor Pomarine over Parasitic Jaeger include size (as big or bigger than Caspian Tern), large body and head, slow heavy flight, amount of white in primaries, white in greater underwing coverts, heavy barring on flanks (and probably on underparts), and long heavy bill.

Agreement: Reported to me as possible Pomarine. I am not aware of what others decided at the time of this writing.

Previous experience: I have seen all three species on West Coast and in Alaska, but my experience is limited, although I saw many of all three species at close range in Alaska.

References/time used: Looked at National Geographic Guide after second observation and after making notes.

Time of notes/typed: Notes 20 minutes after last sighting, typed 4 hours later.

DOCUMENTATION FORM
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

88-24

What species? Pomarine Jaeger How many? 1

Location? near dam, Saylorville Reservoir, Polk Co, Iowa

Type of Habitat? Saylorville Lake

When? date(s): 30 Sep. 1988 time: 10:45 to 11:15 AM CDT

Who? your name and address: Peter C. Petersen, 235 McClellan Blvd, Davenport, IA 52801

Others with you: Brian Blevins

Others before or after you: Jim + Steve Dinsmore, Jim Fuller, m.o.b.

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, undertail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.
Large, husky jaeger, gull shape. Bill light grey with dark tip, eye dark. Basic color dark grey brown with white feather tips showing on back wings when at rest. Tail dark, rump mottled pale tan + grey brown. Noticeable white "windows" on wings, from above & below. See photos.

Similar species; how eliminated: Parasitic eliminated by chunky build, deep wing beats, bill a bit too large, the wing windows too extensive, central tail feathers not pointed.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? no
If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment.
Closest obs. from 3-4 meters, thin overcast, light from various angles as we were in a boat, 10x40 Zeiss binocs, photos with 200mm lens.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Have seen all three Jaegers in Washington + Canada on many occasions.

References and persons consulted before writing description: Geo. Guide, Master Guide, The Shores by Fairness.

How long before field notes made? 10 min this form completed? 2 days

Send completed form to Field Reports or CBC editor (address on back cover of Iowa Bird Life).

What species? Pomarine Jaeger How many? 2Location? Saylorville Reservoir, Des MoinesType of habitat? dammed area on Des Moines River, above dam,When? date(s): October 1, 1988 time: 8:10 AM to 8:40 AM deep water?Who? your name and address: Beth Proescholdt, Liscomb, Iowaothers with you: Steve Dinsmore, Mark Proescholdtothers before or after you: Armstrongs Tom Kent, Babs & Loren Padel for

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, under tail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

Steve Dinsmore took us out in his boat so that we were often within 15 or 20 feet of the two jaegers in the 1/2 hour that we observed them, with an almost calm lake & good visibility.

These jaegers were larger than a Ring-billed Gull, barrel-chested, thick-necked, big-headed, with a thick bill with dark tip, strongly hooked. They were dark brown overall, with buffy feather tips, showing distinct white crescents on upper wings, & large white areas on underwings at base of primaries. There was a second inner white crescent, & the entire underwing of one jaeger was whitish, less on the other.

They had a lumbering, powerful flight, slow take-off, & a steady even flight, not dipping as a Parasitic would have, & not as bouyant or as fast as a Parasitic.

One showed the beginning of tail streamers, about one inch long, flat & stubby & not pointed as a Parasitic. Tails were broad & wedge-shaped, cinnamon-colored with darker terminal band & a faint lighter sub-terminal band. One had a dark smudge in the eye area, other did not.

Twice one gave a call - almost a nasal grunt - as it took off.
Similar species and how eliminated: Parasitic Jaeger - the flight of these was slower not bouyant, & held steady - not dipping as a Parasitic, & the beginning tail streamers were that of a Pomarine

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? no

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:

Partly cloudy, within 15 or 20 feet of boat, twice one flew 10' over our heads - 8x40 Nikon binocs.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: I've never seen a Pomarine, but I saw Parasitic once, long-tailed twice.References and persons consulted before writing description: I studied all guides, before I saw birds, but wrote description without reference at first.How long before field notes made? at once this form completed? Oct. 4, 1988

What species? Pomarine Jaeger How many? 2Location? Saylorville Reservoir - Polk Co.Type of habitat? Large water area near Cherry Glen AreaWhen? date(s): Oct. 1, 1988 time: 8:10 a.m. to 8:40 a.m.Who? your name and address: Mark Proescholdt, Box 65, Liscomb, Iowaothers with you: Steve Dinsmore, Beth Proescholdtothers before or after you: Babs and Loren Padelford, Jim Sinclair, other

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, under tail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

We met Steve Dinsmore at Cherry Glen Area and saw the jaegers with our scopes from a distance. Then Steve took us out in his boat for some marvelous, close looks at the jaegers. The jaegers were large dark, bulky birds with big heads, big bills, and thick necks. They flew with slow, powerful wingbeats and a steady flight and did not rise and fall with each wingbeat. They were dark birds with a black terminal tail band and a rusty rump color. One jaeger had great flashes of white at the base of its primaries and most of its underwing was very white. It had inner white crescent areas in its primary area as well. One jaeger circled the boat and put down again and again within 20 feet or so and we had excellent looks. The other jaeger was more wary. The close jaeger had a dark smudge by its dark eye, a big bill with a dark tip, and a pronounced hook on the end of the bill. The other jaeger did not show as much white in primaries. They had about 1 inch ^{rounded} tail streamers. They had a barrel-chested look. They had different shades

Similar species and how eliminated: Parasitic Jaegers have less white in primaries than Pomarines, are more buoyant in flight, and have narrower wings. of brown on their backs. Twice heard a jaeger call or squawk "enk". Big birds - showed up from far away with scopes. Both had broad, powerful wings. Both had large flashes of white at base of primaries.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? NO

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:

Cloudy morning. Distances estimated - 20 feet to 50 feet on water.8x30 Binoculars.

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

My first Pomarines. Have seen one Parasitic at Saylorville and many at Churchill.

References and persons consulted before writing description:

Natl. Geog. guide, Audubon Master guide, Robbins' guide, R.T. Peterson guide.How long before field notes made? Right away this form completed? Oct. 8, 1988

MAIL TO: T. H. Kent, Field Reports Editor, 211 Richards Street, Iowa City IA 52240