

Records Committee, Iowa Ornithologists' Union

Printed: 11/22/00

Jaeger species

17 Nov 1996

Spirit L., Dickinson Co., IA

*Stephen J. Dinsmore

IBL 67:22, 81

Record Number: 96-53

Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

Stephen J. Dinsmore, 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames 50014 [4/6/97]

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 67:22

Field Reports: IBL 67:81

VOTE: 7 A-D

A-D, Safe conclusion given distance from bird.

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species: jaeger sp.

Number: 1 probable intermediate phase juvenile

Location: Spirit L., Dickinson Co., IA

Habitat: large lake

Date: 17 November 1996

Time: 1:45-2:43 p.m.

Observer: Stephen J. Dinsmore 4024 Arkansas Dr. Ames, IA 50014

Others who saw bird: James J. Dinsmore

Description of bird(s): We were birding along the west side of Spirit Lake when I spotted a dark, gull-like bird resting on the water near the middle of the lake. From my experience with jaegers off North Carolina, plus my recent sightings of three Pomarine Jaegers in central Iowa, I was able to immediately recognize the bird as a jaeger. We watched the bird for the next hour, hoping it would take flight. Instead, it rested on the water, briefly raising its wings twice. On the raised wings, I saw a fairly large white patch at the base of the outer primaries, formed by white bases to the primary shafts. Structurally, the bill seemed rather large, having a similar appearance to the bills of the Pomarine Jaegers seen earlier in central Iowa. Otherwise, the bird was very dark brown overall except for paler flanks, chest, and nape. When the bird rose to the top of wave crests, I could detect some horizontal darker barring on the chest. When perched, the wingtips extended a couple of inches beyond the tip of the tail. The only size comparison was to a Red-breasted Merganser which swam beside the jaeger for a couple of minutes. The jaeger was at least the same length as the merganser and had a slightly chunkier and bigger-headed appearance. The dark brown coloration and barring on the chest indicated the bird was probably a juvenile. Because of the slightly paler nape and underparts, I concluded the bird was an intermediate phase bird. Dark phase birds are even-colored while light phase birds often show a very pale head (especially at a distance) and paler underparts. While I cannot be certain, I believe the bird was a Pomarine Jaeger for two reasons: the large size (compared to the merganser) and the large-billed appearance.

Similar species and how eliminated: The combination of size, dark coloration, and white in the primary shafts eliminated the possibility of a juvenile gull. Despite the great distance and lack of a good view of the wing pattern, I believe the bird was a Pomarine Jaeger.

Viewing conditions and equipment: Viewing conditions were fair with mostly cloudy skies and the sun to our backs. Estimated viewing distance was 750m. I used a 20-60x spotting scope.

Previous experience with species: I have seen numbers of all three jaeger species off Massachusetts and North Carolina, plus multiple Pomarine and Parasitic jaegers in Iowa.

References consulted: none

How long before field notes made: none written

How long before this form completed: written 18 November 1996