

Jaeger species
22 Sep 1994
Saylorville Res., Polk Co., IA
*Eugene Armstrong
IBL 65:15, 81

Record Number: 94-36
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

Eugene Armstrong, Van Meter [2/23/95]

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 65:15

Records Committee: IBL 65:81

VOTE: 3 A-D, 4 NA (A-D Jaeger sp.)

A-D, I am not entirely convinced that Long-tailed Jaeger was eliminated by plumage description, but actions fit Parasitic Jaeger. Also a bird "slight larger" than Franklin's Gull is more likely a Parasitic.

NA, A-D Jaeger sp., Clearly a Jaeger, but little to support the specific ID exception of size, pale nape (according to Kaufman), and general probability. I am not a Jaeger expert, and am anxious to see the comments of those more experienced. Until then, and considering the brevity of the sighting and the evidently marginal viewing conditions, a conservative position is warranted.

A-D, The back barring eliminates juvenile gulls.

NA, Would accept as jaeger sp. This bird was probably a Parasitic, but I am willing to err on the side of caution. Immature jaegers may be the most difficult group of birds to identify. Even veteran sea-goers will argue incessantly over photos or birds flying in front of them. As Kaufman says: "It becomes difficult to find any one field mark for one species that cannot be matched by some individuals of some age group of another species." The criteria for judging this report are subjective impressions of a single bird. It bothers me to have some very specific details about barring across the back and the light nape color but no details about the extent of white in the primary shafts or the central tail feathers, the two most solid criteria for identification. I believe these two characteristics need to be described, in conjunction with the bill and body size, in order to have a record that will stand up over time. If these details become available, I would be willing to reconsider.

A-D Jaeger sp., Ken Brock, regional editor for Field Notes, wrote as follows, "I did reject the Parasitic Jaeger as the documentation was inadequate to eliminate other jaegers."

A-D, Everything given in documentation is good for Parasitic and eliminates other Gulls and Jaegers. The barring mentioned as on the back probably refers to upper and lower tail coverts, not actually the back itself.

NA, A-D as Jaeger sp. This was a juvenile bird based on overall dark coloration and absence of extended central rectrices. Description does not allow ID to species, except that Pomarine can be eliminated by size comparison with Franklin's Gulls. Pale collar and noticeable barring in plumage suggests Long-tailed, although undertail coverts were not described. I'm not sure whether many small juvenile jaegers can be identified by sight without extensive experience.

DOCUMENTATION FORM
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

94-36

What species? Parasitic Jaeger Juvenial 1st How many? 1

Location? Saylorville Lake-off Oak Grove Beach

Type of Habitat? Beach and Lake

When? date(s): Sept. 22, 1994 time: 10 AM to 10:10 AM

Who? your name and address: Eugene Armstrong

Others with you: Eloise Armstrong

Others before or after you: No one

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.

We were sitting by the beach looking at the Franklin gulls resting when out of the ~~sky~~ water fog came this rapid flying bird. It started harassing the gulls. He was slightly larger than the gulls. Didnt appear he was really attacking them, just harassing. It rose above them 10 to 15 ft. and dropped directly onto the back of a flying Franklin's with a great outcry from the gulls. Suddenly the gulls and the Jaeger disappeared out into the fog and couldn't be relocated.

An all dark gull shaped bird. Slightly larger than the Franklin Gulls. Parasitic Jaegers are the most colorful of jaegers in brown plumage. This bird had more barring than lines across the back. Other 2 have straight lines instead of uneven ones. Nape of neck was light colored while other juvenials show dark. *

Similar species; how eliminated:

Not a pomoraine because it was not large enough

Bill too long for a longtail

Bird much smaller and lighter bodied than a Pom.

* Had a light weight body - small fairly long bill with a sharp hook on the end with little gony angle.

All brown - central tail feathers not visible.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? no

~~If yes, explain:~~ Gordon Brown arrived after bird flew. He spent the rest of the morning but couldn't relocate it.

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

Bright light on the beach with fog over the water.

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

Pomarine & parasitic's at Saylorville

Nesting ones with young at Churchill

References and persons consulted before writing description:

Advanced Birding and National Geographic

How long before field notes made? mental this form completed? _____

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