

COLORADO RARE BIRD REPORT

22-94-29  
accepted

POMARINE JAEGER  
Stercorarius pomarinus

Location: Lake Henry; Ordway; Crowley County, Colorado

Date: November 5, 1994

Setting:

We (myself, Joe Roller, Brandon Percival) saw this bird off and on between 9:30-11:45 a.m. We observed it for the first time as it flew across the lake. It flew with a quick powerful flight that lacked any real acrobatics. It approached target birds by flying quite low across the water for a good distance (1/4-1/2 mile) then swooping up in a broad, soaring curve to approach and hassle a large gull. We saw it attack a Herring Gull at one point and it was nearly as large as the gull. It also landed and floated on the lake. We observed the bird at long distance, never closer than 250 yards, with binoculars and scope (Kowa TSN4 20-60X). Viewing conditions were excellent: clear sun and no wind.

Description:

The bird was a large, all dark, gull-like, or falcon-like bird. I couldn't see finer plumage or color details at the distance at which we observed it. It was a big bird, perhaps 18-24" long. It compared reasonably with a slightly larger Herring Gull that it attacked and shadowed in flight. In color it was a uniform, dark chocolate brown. The upper wing was uniform dark brown. In flight there was an inconspicuous white primary flash in the upper wing and a dramatic white primary flash in the lower wing. The bases of about two thirds of the primaries were whitish on the upper wing. The bird was powerfully built and had a deep barrel chest. The dark wings were very broad at the base where they met the body. The tail was dark and slightly wedge-shaped but I could not detect any clearly longer feathers in the center of the tail, which indicates a juvenile. The bill was two-toned: pinkish with a dark tip.

Similar Species:

The large size, dark color, falcon-like attacking flight and white flash in the wing indicate a jaeger. The Long-tailed Jaeger would be smaller, clearly much smaller than a Herring Gull; would have darker secondaries and primaries; would have less white in the primaries; would have narrower based wings and a less chesty look; would have less direct and more acrobatic flight; and would likely show some longer central tail feathers. The Parasitic Jaeger would not be quite so large compared to the Herring Gull; would have less of a barrel chest and narrower-based wings; and would show less white in the primaries.

Experience with Species:

I have seen many jaegers of all three species in the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. I saw two dark phase juvenile Pomarine Jaegers on many occasions and at close range in November 1991 on Pueblo Reservoir. I have seen other Pomarine Jaegers in 1989, 1990, 1991 and 1993 in the Pacific Ocean off California and Washington.

This report was prepared from notes made after observation.

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