

LOUISIANA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE
RARE BIRD DOCUMENTATION

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Species: Long-tailed Jaeger, *Stercorarius longicaudus*

Location: 17-21 mi SE South Pass, Plaquemines Parish, Gulf of Mexico, 28.43 °N, 88.53 °W

Date: 10 September 2016, 10:13 AM

Age and sex: Juvenile, sex unknown

Molt status: None apparent

Number of individuals: One

Original observer: Unsure.

Circumstances:

Pelagic trip on Delta Blue (Capt. John Coulon) with Chantal Correll, Terry Davis, Cathy DiSalvo, Rob Dobbs, Joan Garvey, Lynn Hathaway, Van Remsen, Christine Kooi, Marybeth Lima, Cham & Mary Mehaffey, Andre Moncrieff, David Muth, Mac Myers, Jane Patterson, Janine & Paul Robin, Ed Wallace.

The Long-tailed Jaeger was seen somewhere along this leg of our pelagic trip, but we don't have exact coordinates for this bird. It was initially seen as it was chasing a *borealis* Cory's Shearwater low over the water, which gave us the impression that it was a larger jaeger, so I believe that it was initially called out as a Pomarine. The jaeger made a close pass by the boat on at least one occasion, at which point I managed to get better photos. It wasn't until later when we were reviewing the photos that we realized it was a juvenile Long-tailed. We sent the photos around to various people who regularly see this species, and they all agreed that it was a Long-tailed.

Description: An obvious jaeger, which we initially thought was rather large and chunky, but that was only because it was in direct comparison to a Cory's Shearwater. Based on our photos, the jaeger is just slightly shorter-winged than the adjacent shearwater, but is significantly smaller in body size. When it was alone it looked smaller, thinner, and lankier. Review of the photos agreed with this impression, and also revealed that the bill was small and thin for a jaeger.

A light morph bird, with a pale belly, dusky chest, cold gray back, and somewhat contrasting pale head. The upper part feathers were edged pale, giving a barred appearance. The underwings were entirely barred dark and white, as were the undertail and uppertail coverts. On the underwing, the base of the primaries showed a single large

white patch. On the upperwing, there were TWO white primary shafts (p9 and p10). The central tail feathers were only slightly elongated and had rounded tips.

Discussion: Jaegers are always a tough identification, and although I am certainly not an expert on the group, I have seen many hundreds of all species in California. Although we initially called this bird a Pomarine based on size, I am absolutely sure that it is a Long-tailed based on many characters.

The direct size comparison with the Cory's Shearwater agrees well with wing chord measurements of specimens at LSUMZ. Our photos show the jaeger only slightly smaller than the shearwater. Pomarine Jaeger would be slightly larger than a Cory's Shearwater.

LSUMZ wing chords are as follows:

Long-tailed Jaeger: 270 - 300 mm

Parasitic Jaeger: 310 - 340 mm

Pomarine Jaeger: 340 - 365 mm

Cory's Shearwater (*borealis*): 320 - 355 mm

Cory's Shearwater (Scopoli's): 310 - 340 mm

The plumage matches a pale morph Long-tailed as well, with the overall cold tones eliminating Parasitic, and the contrasting pale head being typical of a Long-tailed. The most often used character of the number of white primary shafts is typical of Long-tailed as well (2 white shafts visible). The contrasting barring on the undertail coverts is typical of Long-tailed and Pomarine, but not Parasitic.

The blunt-tipped central tail feathers are a good mark for Long-tailed as well. All juvenile jaegers have this character, but on Long-tailed they project out further, as in our bird.

According to Brian Sullivan, 10 September is too early of a date for a juvenile Pomarine at our latitude, but is a normal date for a juvenile Long-tailed.



















