

## LBRC Report Form

1. English and Scientific names: South Polar Skua - *Stercorarius maccormicki*
2. Number of individuals, sexes, ages, general plumage (e.g., 2 in alternate plumage):  
1 presumed adult
3. Parish:  
Plaquemines
4. Specific Locality:  
approximately 30 miles southeast of South Pass
5. Date(s) when observed: 8/17/24
6. Time(s) of day when observed: around 1 pm
7. Reporting observer: Esme Rosen
8. Other observers accompanying reporter who also identified the bird(s):  
I believe Vinay K.L. first spotted this bird from the back of the boat. Me, David Vander Pluym, and others were calling out skua by the time it reached the front of the boat. I think most people on the boat saw it, see eBird for full list; I know I discussed the identification with Van Remsen, David Vander Pluym, David Muth, Mac Myers, and Vinay K.L.
9. Other observers who independently identified the bird(s):
10. Light conditions (position of bird in relation to shade and to direction and amount of light): good mid day light, not especially backlit
11. Optical equipment (type, power, condition): Zeiss binoculars
12. Distance to bird(s): it flew above the boat, maybe 100 meters up (?)
13. Duration of observation: approximately 20 seconds
14. Habitat: blue water, open ocean, no other notable features immediately obvious

15. Behavior of bird / circumstances of observation (flying, feeding, resting; include and stress habits used in identification; relate events surrounding observation): flew over boat

16. Description (include only what was actually seen, not what "should" have been seen; include if possible: total length/relative size compared to other familiar species, body bulk, shape, proportions, bill, eye, leg, and plumage characteristics. Stress features that separate it from similar species):

This was a huge bulky gull-like bird with a massive chest and belly, broad round wings, and a thick all dark hooked bill. The head was fairly small compared to the body, and there were visible webbed feet. The tail was fairly short and square. The bird was heavily worn and in heavy molt; the coverts seemed to partially molted, as well as the primaries; the outer three primaries were old, while the rest were new. The secondaries seemed completely unmolted. The tail also appeared to be in molt, and there may have been some body molt. The coloration on the body was overall a tan color, with some mottling perhaps in part due to molt. Even compared to the mottling, the wings were noticeably darker brown, with a contrasting line between the body and the wing. This makes the bird a light morph adult, or at least nearly an adult. There was a distinctive white flash through the middle of the primaries, as is characteristic of the species.

17. Voice: not heard

18. Similar species (include how they were eliminated by your observation):

Any other species of gull and the other species of Jaeger are easily separated by the bulky, broad-winged structure and the white flash on the wings. The other skuas are extraordinarily unlikely, but I believe can be eliminated because of the coloration as a light morph. Brown Skua does not have a light morph as far as I'm aware, and even the lightest Great Skuas have a base dark brown coloration with light flecks, and so appear substantially darker than this bird, which had a base tan color with some darker mottling; in particular, the contrast between the wing and the belly is not nearly as sharp as on this bird. I'd like to thank David Vander Pluym for bringing this field mark to my attention.

19. Photographs or tape recordings obtained? (by whom? attached?):

many mediocre photos, I attached all of mine, also see the photos by others at <https://ebird.org/checklist/S191979650>, some of which may be submitted here as well

20. Previous experience with this species: none

21. Identification aids: (list books, illustrations, other birders, etc. used in identification):

I consulted with other birders on the boat and referred to Macaulay for some comparison images with other species while typing up the similar species section

22. Identification aids used when?

23. Are you positive of your identification? If not, explain:

yes

24. Date report completed:

8/18/24

25. May the LBRC have permission to display in whole or in part this report and accompanying photos on the LOS-LBRC website and LBRC Facebook page?

Yes

26. If yes, may we include your name with the report?

Yes











