

Pomarine Jaeger *Stercorarius pomarinus*



Folk Name: Jiddy Hawk

Status: Migrant

Abundance: Casual

Habitat: Open water

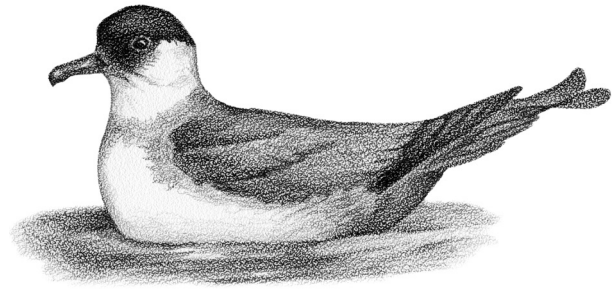
At 21 inches in length, the Pomarine Jaeger is the largest of the three jaegers seen in the Central Carolinas. It is a big, bulky, heavy-chested bird that is well known as a fierce combatant. Most migrate in Atlantic waters well off shore, but some are found along the coast. They are very rarely seen inland. A Pomarine Jaeger was killed on Lake Moultrie in Berkeley County, SC, on October 8, 1950. This was the first specimen for the state and it provided a very surprising inland record for the Carolinas. The account, later published in the “Burton Supplement” in *South Carolina Bird Life* (1970), provided this description:

It was making an attack on a Laughing Gull and had knocked the latter out of the air three times and was in the process of drowning it when Whaley came upon them in his boat. The jaeger was so intent upon drowning its victim that it did not notice his approach and Whaley killed it with his paddle.

A Pomarine Jaeger was not documented in inland North Carolina until 1984. On 13 July, three were sighted on Lake Townsend in Guilford County, just outside of



Pomarine Jaeger over Lake Norman. (Jeff Lemons)



Greensboro, about 50 miles northeast of Salisbury. In the published summary of the account, Herb Hendrickson, a professor of biology at UNC Greensboro, noted that young, non-breeding jaegers are “notorious wanderers” that don’t normally return to their breeding grounds (the northern Arctic tundra), until they are between two and four years old. These three jaegers lingered in the general area until 6 August. They were well photographed, covered by the local media, and seen by many birders. Since this initial sighting, the Pomarine Jaeger has been seen only four other times in inland North Carolina.

There are three records of this ocean predator wandering into the Central Carolinas. The first bird was encountered on November 26, 1988, by David Wright, Taylor Piephoff, and the author, on Lake Wylie in York County, SC, immediately below the Mecklenburg County line. This was the second published record of a Pomarine Jaeger for inland South Carolina. The bird remained on the lake into early December. The second sighting was of an immature Pomarine Jaeger seen by multiple observers at Moss Lake in Cleveland County on September 23, 1989, just after Hurricane Hugo passed through the area. The most recent record provided the first material evidence of this species in the region. Jeff Lemons and Chris Talkington photographed a second-year Pomarine Jaeger on Lake Norman in Mecklenburg County on July 28, 2013. The bird remained on the lake until at least 4 August. This sighting was recognized as the fifth record of this species found in the Piedmont of North Carolina and was very unusual as it did not appear to be associated with any tropical storm disturbance.