

General Field Notes

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First Inland Record of Pomarine Jaeger from the Carolinas

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Potter, Parnell, and Teulings in *Birds of the Carolinas* (Univ. N.C. Press, 1980) said that jaegers (genus *Stercorarius*) are "birds of the ocean and rarely come ashore except at their Arctic or Antarctic breeding grounds." Their summarization of the occurrence of the Pomarine Jaeger (*Stercorarius pomarinus*) in the Carolinas is that it "probably occurs off the Carolina coast throughout the year except for a brief absence at midsummer. Although it is generally uncommon, the species is seen regularly in fall and early winter from the shore along the Outer Banks and occasionally elsewhere along the coast." A review of back issues of *The Chat* from 1968 to the present suggests that the species can now be found regularly in the spring as well. We have been able to find only three summer records of this species: a dark-phase bird found at Shackleford Banks on 7 July 1981 (*Chat* 45:22); one seen off Oregon Inlet on 8 July 1982 (*Chat* 46:23); and one found on land at Morehead City on 5 June 1983 (*Chat* 48:22). None of the reports found can be considered inland sightings.

On 13 July 1984 we discovered three Pomarine Jaegers feeding on a dead Common Carp (*Cyprinus carpio*) approximately 75 yards from the boat launching area at Lake Townsend near Greensboro, Guilford County, N.C. One of the birds appeared to be a subadult in that its blunt-tipped central rectrices extended only about 1 inch beyond the rest of the tail. The other two birds clearly appeared to be adults with the central rectrices extending approximately 4 inches beyond the tail and twisted into the vertical plane, and with the white of the neck heavily suffused with straw yellow. All birds were in the light color phase. Observations through 7X binoculars were sufficient to identify the birds as jaegers; specific identifications were made using a 25X Bauscope.

On 15 July, we rented a boat from the marina to get into the middle of the lake where we obtained photographic evidence of the sighting. This photo (see front cover) shows one of the three birds. (Note the band on the left leg.) We never managed to get

more than two birds in any one photograph. Numerous other people saw and photographed the birds as well. On 27 July a story and color photograph of one of the birds appeared in the local newspaper (Greensboro News & Record 94(209):1). The birds were seen daily through 6 August.

On several occasions the jaegers were seen feeding on dead Gizzard Shad (*Dorosoma cepedianum*) as well as carp. Although a small number of gulls and terns appeared on the lake during late July, we saw no instances of the kind of piratic chasing for which jaegers are famous. On 27 July, one of the apparently adult birds made one swoop at a flying Great Egret (*Casmerodius albus*) with no further efforts at harassment. On 1 August, Hendrickson observed one of the jaegers being attacked by a tern in much the same way that swallows attack buteonine hawks.

The appearance of the band on the left leg of at least one of the birds prompted a telephone call to the Bird Banding Laboratory at Pautuxent, Maryland. George Jonkel told Hendrickson that the last Pomarine Jaeger receiving a USF&WS band, for which they have a record, was one bird banded in 1975 in the Northwest Territories of Canada. However, the Greensboro bird may have been banded in Europe or Asia, as nonbreeding jaegers are notorious wanderers. Pomarine Jaegers normally do not return to their birthplace until they are 2 to 4 years old and may not breed for the first time until even older.

First South Carolina Specimen of the Iceland Gull

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On 14 January 1985 we secured an Iceland Gull (*Larus glaucooides*) in Charleston Harbor on Crab Bank, a spoil island about 0.5 km S of the outlet of Shem Creek, Mount Pleasant, Charleston County, S.C. This individual (ChM 1985.7.5) is a female in first-winter plumage.

The bird's weight was 837 g; chord of wing, 377 mm; total length, 509 mm; culmen from base, 41.4 mm; tail, 149 mm; tarsus, 56 mm. Distal bill color was drab (color 27 of Smithe 1974), shading to sepia (color 119, Smithe 1981) proximally. The legs were vinaceous pink (color 221c, Smithe 1981). The irides were dark brown.

We first saw this bird on 14 December 1984 as it flew over the mouth of Shem Creek. When we again found the bird on 14 January, it was resting on a sand beach about 1 m from the water. It was associating with about 15 Ring-billed Gulls (*L. delawarensis*). On one occasion it supplanted a Ring-billed Gull.

We were about 25 m from the bird when we collected it. At this distance we were able to identify it as an Iceland Gull before collecting. Salient characteristics were: small size (intermediate between Ring-billed Gull and Herring Gull, *L. argentatus*), all-white plumage, short and narrow all-dark bill. The closed wings of this specimen extend beyond the tail, although we did not use this as a field characteristic. When we saw the bird fly over our boat on 14 December, the main features noted were: all-dark bill and lack of dark wing and tail markings.