



ILLINOIS ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

President's Message

Dear Members:

It's late July as I write this message. The volume of posts on IBET is down to a trickle. Posters are down to a few birders who are out every weekend no matter the weather, sun, rain, hail or thunder storms. Quite a few of my birding circle are off to distant locales often mixing birding with other activities.

That is the great thing about birding. No matter where you go and whatever the primary reason for the trip, there are usually birding opportunities. In my case I have just returned from a trip to the Jersey Shore for a business meeting. On the last afternoon we headed out to sea on a fishing excursion. A little reluctantly I was persuaded to take up a fishing rod. There were a few Laughing Gulls and Great Blackbacks hanging round, but nothing else. So I accepted a rod. Imagine my delight sometime later when a small black bird danced over the waves in the wake of our boat just as I fought to land a sizable Bluefish. It was a Wilson's Storm-petrel, supposedly the world's most numerous species yet one I had not seen before. Before the end of the day nine more Wilson's passed by.

It is not easy balancing a fishing rod and binoculars in a pitching sea, but it was worth it even in the face of the vociferous displeasure of the boat's mate who wanted the focus on fish. Two Band-Rumped Stormies briefly joined the Wilson's as did a small flock of Cory's Shearwaters.

The excursion took me back to my teenage years and trips to and from the offshore island sanctuaries in northern New Zealand waters. On a typical trip we would see up to five species of shearwater, a pterodroma or two, Giant Petrel, Cape Pigeon, Diving Petrel, White-faced Storm-Petrel and, if we were lucky, an albatross.

Watching tubenoses effortlessly handle stormy weather is one of the great birding experiences. They skim first low over the water disappearing down a trough behind a wave and moments later emerging in soaring arcs high over the wave crests before disappearing once again into a sea of whitecaps. Some soar, some skim down the waves and yet others skip from crest to crest. Each species has its characteristic flight pattern.

I trust you all are getting much pleasure out of your birding activities this summer and look forward to seeing many of you on one or other of our upcoming field trips – the Carlyle Lake Pelagic on Sept. 20 and the Sprague's Pipit Walk on Oct. 25.

Good birding.

Michael Hogg

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