

Letter from the Editor

Anyone who has ditched work to see a rare bird, raise your hand. Yes, that's what I thought. So I'll confess, when the Long-tailed and Parasitic Jaegers had claimed Lake Chautauqua for their home several weeks last September, Steve Bailey and I left Mundelein on a work day (actually he was off, so he's not in trouble, I am) to drive the 3-to-4-hour trip to see the jaegers. We first found the Parasitic and Long-tailed in the water, both on the same side of the dike, but keeping their distance. The Long-tailed later caught grasshoppers on the gravel road and even walked up the road with us following it.

Birders are always looking for something to add to the excitement of their avocation — playing hooky from work to see a rare bird, for example. Another exciting part of birding is observing the behavior of common and rare birds. It's exciting, for example, to watch a Cooper's Hawk sneak into a huge Norway spruce in my front yard, snatch a bird as the rest of the chickadees, finches, and sparrows scatter, then fly to a nearby conifer to pluck the feathers and partake of its dinner — all within easy view from my picture window.

Dan Kassebaum, Steve Bailey, Kevin Richmond, and many other Illinois birders observed the state's first accepted Long-tailed Jaeger at Carlyle Lake in 1999 and the state's second accepted Long-tailed at Chautauqua in 2000 for many hours. They wrote notes and are sharing them with us in this issue of *Meadowlark*. Photographers, too, are sharing their photos here to support the words written by the authors.

In our next issue, we'll feature another jaeger article, an intriguing one about their status and notes on how much birders and ornithologists do and don't know about these species' behavior. Hopefully another exciting part of birding for you is to read an account of a bird you added to your Illinois list, and then relive the experience in *Meadowlark*. Enjoy, and thanks for reading.

— Sheryl De Vore, sdevore@voyager.net

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Articles

- Illinois' First Confirmed Long-tailed Jaeger
(*Stercorarius longicaudus*)
— Dan Kassebaum 82
- Illinois' Second Confirmed Long-tailed Jaeger with Notes on the Species' Identification, Behavior, Status, and Inland Migration
— Steven D. Bailey 84
- The Status of Gray Partridge In Illinois: An Update
— Daniel Williams 93
- Who Knew? A Smew!
(*Mergellus albellus*)
— Robert Chapel 95
- The 2000/2001 Illinois Christmas Bird Count
— David B. Johnson 97

Departments

- Photo Quiz
— Steven D. Bailey 96
- Field Notes: The 2000/2001 Winter Season
— Kelly J. McKay 109

About our cover

Michael L.P. Retter created the cover drawing of the Long-tailed Jaeger, a species documented for the first time in the state the summer of 1999. See page 82 for details.

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