

they were seeing, the Parasitic from the weekend or the Long-tailed from Wednesday's hotline. Those who got there later that day were unable to locate the jaeger.

I returned to Carlyle on Friday afternoon, 24 September, and found the jaeger well out over the lake. It was chasing gulls and acting like a jaeger and so was assumed to be the Parasitic. Frank Bennett was there earlier that same day and shot some video. He, too, assumed the bird to be the Parasitic. For the time being, it was reported that two jaegers were present at the lake, with the Parasitic being the easier of the two to locate. Although all the jaeger reports since Saturday, 18 September, were roughly from the same location, two birds were never positively seen at the same time. Given the difficulty of identifying jaegers, coupled with the misinformation of the presence of two birds, Saturday's field trip was headed for a birding minefield.

Looking east into the morning sun, observers again located the jaeger that Saturday and identified it as the Parasitic. The field trip included rented pontoon boats, and allowed those on board excellent views of the jaeger. Fortunately, the bird was photographed and later revealed to the surprise of many its true identity. Michael Retter posted an excellent overhead shot taken by Rhonda Monroe on his Web site (see opposite page). On seeing the photo, I e-mailed Michael and expressed my opinion as to the identification of the bird. He agreed it had to be a Long-tailed Jaeger, and with the help of Wes Serafin via the Internet, we set out to unravel the mystery. Retter was able to gather and post other photos from that day and solicited opinions as to the identity of the bird. Had Retter not been so diligent in this task, this record would most likely have gotten tossed as merely an unidentified jaeger.

Two Become One

So how can two birds conveniently become one? The most confusing issues of this sighting can best be explained with the series of photographs taken from the pontoon boat the day of the field trip. Nearly everyone involved agrees that the jaeger seen the weekend of 18-19 September was the same bird as seen the day of the IOS field trip. Depending on the angle of the light, the bird can look quite dark brown or very gray. The photos were all taken from the same boat within minutes if not seconds of each other. These photographs produced various results, so much, that one might assume they are of two different birds. In the overhead photos the jaeger appears dark brown. Photos of the jaeger low over the water produce an appearance that is quite gray. The suggestion that this sighting consisted of two separate birds is partially a result of this effect. The observations on the weekend of 18-19 September were of the bird well out on the lake. As to be expected the bird

appeared quite dark brown. My observations on Wednesday evening, 22 September, were from above and very close to the shoreline, which explains the lighter gray tones that I described in my documentation submitted to the Illinois Ornithological Records Committee. The weekend of the IOS field trip, viewing conditions from shore were much like the previous weekend with long views well out over the lake hampered by refraction or heat waves over the water. The consistent field marks evident at all practical distances throughout the three weekends of this sighting are the striking white belly patch and lack of obvious white flash at the base of the primaries.

The photos also reveal another piece of supportive evidence that in retrospect seems obvious. This was a small jaeger. A single photograph may provide an argument that the two birds depicted aren't within the same vertical plane, meaning one of the birds is much nearer the camera than the other. However, three photos from three different photographers all reveal a consistently smaller bird compared with a Ring-billed Gull (*Larus delawarensis*).

The jaeger in the photos is chasing the Ring-billed Gull, an image that any birder/photographer would want to capture. The jaeger is clearly smaller than the gull, indicating a Long-tailed Jaeger, despite its Parasitic-like behavior. See Olsen and Larsson (1997) for size references and other identification factors for the Long-tailed Jaeger.

Another interesting aspect of this record is the association of the Long-tailed Jaeger with the enormous swarms of midges and Tree Swallows (*Tachycineta bicolor*) present at the lake at the same time. When the jaeger was seen at midday it flew and fed in typical jaeger fashion chasing the numerous Ring-billed and Franklin's Gulls (*L. pipixcan*). Conspicuous in their midday absence were the thousands of swallows that appeared over the lake at dusk. During the hottest parts of the day I noticed hundreds of gulls riding thermals. With the aid of binoculars it was apparent that the gulls were hawking insects along side the swallows. At dusk as the thermals subsided, the insect swarms gathered over the lake followed by the swallows, it was at this time of day that the jaeger began to feed in typical Long-tailed fashion. This is the behavior I observed when I made my initial identification on Wednesday, 22 September, and again on the evening of the IOS field trip.

On their northern Arctic breeding grounds, Long-tailed Jaegers feed heavily on lemmings, but also on insects and small birds such as Lapland Longspurs (Olsen and Larsson 1997). Can the huge fall flights of migrant Tree Swallows and their association with lake habitats be part of the overland Long-tailed Jaeger migration? With a large concentration of prey, one can