

documentation of all jaegers from all locations in Illinois.

Given the difficulty in separating juvenile jaegers, especially Long-tailed and Parasitic, Long-taileds are undoubtedly going undetected by birders in Illinois, and as Lee (1989) so aptly shows, even with specimen in hand, this species has repeatedly been misidentified. Like Illinois, many states have documented their first Long-tailed Jaeger just within the last 10 years or less. Many jaeger aficionados are wondering if Long-tailed Jaeger numbers are increasing, or if birders are improving their identification skills. As Leukering (2001) notes, it is time the old dogma, which insisted Parasitic Jaeger was the default jaeger away from the ocean, be rejected. This is certainly the case in Illinois (Bailey in press), as Parasitic is not the most common jaeger away from the Great Lakes, given the numbers of jaeger records definitely identified to species. Long-tailed will certainly be found to be more common both along Lake Michigan and downstate in Illinois and at other "inland" locations.

### Daily Routine

The most consistent habit of the Lake Chautauqua Long-tailed Jaeger, observed by almost, if not, everyone of the dozens (more?) of birders who saw the bird, was its daily routine of walking up and down the approximately one-mile strip of gravel road (and parking lot) atop a shallow dike between the north and south sections of the lake. If observers stood still, the bird would more often than not, either walk right by the observer, sometimes as close as three to six feet, or simply fly out and around the person and land back on the dike.

There are narrow strips (roughly five meters wide) of weedy, grassy areas just to the north and south of the road, and the taller vegetation of the dried-up lake bed to the south. All along this strip of road were good numbers of small- to medium-sized grasshoppers and crickets (*Orthoptera sp.*). The bird was so intent on hunting these insects that it paid little attention to birders watching it. The bird was seen feeding on these insects virtually every day of its stay by most if not all observers, including the author, and hundreds of these insects were likely eaten during its 15-day stay (see Figure 2). The bird ate dead individuals as well, if they were not desiccated or otherwise mostly intact. It "tested" these dead individuals by picking them up with its beak, discarding those that were not "satisfactory." Dennis Oehmke and Kevin Richmond noted the bird would often remove the legs of these insects before swallowing them, likely due to the spiny projections on the lower half of the leg (K. Richmond pers. comm.).

It was rather comical to watch the jaeger as it chased the live grasshoppers and crickets back and forth from one side of the gravel road to the other, and it was actually photographed by D. Johnson in yet



**Figure 1.** This portrait, obviously taken under optimal lighting conditions, shows characteristics typical of juvenile Long-tailed Jaeger, including rounded head, large percentage of black in bill, whitish head and nape, darker breast band, whitish upper breast contrasting with the rest of the underbody (including the variable darker barring on flanks and underbelly), the strong and evenly barred white and black undertail coverts, and uniform dark primary tips. Photo taken at Lake Chautauqua (Mason County) 15 September 2000 by Eric Walters.



**Figure 2.** The most distinctive behavioral feature of the 2000 Lake Chautauqua Long-tailed Jaeger — feeding along the cross-dike on a grasshopper. Photo by Peter Weber.

another unusual behavior, that of flipping upside down in the air in pursuit of these insects. The bird was also seen by the author, to turn around on a dime and snap up some of the many small, flying insects hovering just off the ground and around the jaeger as it walked down the road. Interestingly, this is not the first time a Long-tailed Jaeger has been noted feeding on grasshoppers during migration at an inland location. Leukering (2001) writes, "If you're watching a juvenile jaeger walking around catching grasshoppers in the weedy fringe of a lake that holds hundreds or thousands of gulls, you are looking at a long-tail." Although this statement was only based on one Colorado bird, both he and I consider this type of feeding behavior significant.