

on why the 2000 Long-tailed Jaeger is a juvenile. The pale-tipped feather edges to the mantle (upper back), easily seen in Figures 1 and 3, also indicate this individual is a juvenile. One other juvenile plumage trait that is often not obvious or even possible to see (especially on distant flybys on Lake Michigan) is the shape and length of the extension of the central tail feathers. In general, juvenile Long-tailed has somewhat blunt-tipped central tail feathers. Juvenile Parasitic tail feathers are usually sharply pointed. If you are close enough to see the central tail feather feature, considering whether it's a Pomarine is not necessary, since other more prominent features such as size, etc. will help identify the bird. However, note that a juvenile Pom has very short extensions of its central tail feathers. Interestingly, with the extremely close views to be had of the 2000 Lake Chautauqua Long-tailed Jaeger, the central tail feather was generally not noticed by many observers. Richmond (pers. comm.) noted he was never able to get a good look at this feature "in real life." However, when he stop-actioned some of his video footage, the "finger-like central projections ... were quite noticeable." Interestingly, Sherony and Brock (1997) relayed an incident where "a low-flying juvenile jaeger swooped directly over a group of 30 birders, all of whom made a concerted effort to discern the shape of rectrix 1 (central tail feathers). A post-sighting survey revealed that interpretations of rectrix 1 shape ranged from blunt-ended to pencil-sharp." This is just another example of why any jaeger (including Parasitics on Lake Michigan) should be closely scrutinized, documented, and photographed, if possible.

Behavioral Traits

One aspect of jaeger identification in general and Long-tailed, in particular, has to do with various behavioral traits. All three species of jaegers found in Illinois practice the behavior known as kleptoparasitism, or the stealing of food from other birds. In jaegers, that usually means stealing fish from gulls and terns, with the Parasitic possibly using this means of piracy the most, and with the most skill, compared with the other two species, especially during the breeding season when both Long-tailed and Pomarine Jaegers feed extensively on lemmings (Andersson 1973, 1976), and may have less need to steal other birds' meals. However Long-tailed behavior is similar to Parasitic's in the summer in that it seems to take a wider variety of food including many insects, birds, bird eggs, and even berries (Cramp and Simmons 1983, Wiley and Lee 1998, 1999). Away from the breeding grounds, the Long-tailed Jaeger is less piratical than the other skuas (Bell 1965).

Experts agree that almost nothing is known about the Long-tailed's behavior, including feeding habits,



Figure 5. This photo of the 2000 Lake Chautauqua Long-tailed Jaeger shows the bright white and black barring on the rump, contrasting with the dark tail and lower back. Parasitic would not show such obvious contrast. Also note the strong barring on the ventral surface of the left wing (aging the bird as a juvenile), and the two, bright-white outer primary feather shafts, virtually diagnostic to Long-tailed Jaeger. Photo taken 15 September 2000 by Eric Walters.

once it leaves its breeding grounds (Wiley and Lee 1998). The lack of knowledge may be due to the species' relative rarity, especially at inland migratory locations, as well as its highly pelagic nature during migration and winter (Murphy 1936, Olsen and Larsson 1997, Wiley and Lee 1998). Most accounts of migratory and winter behavior are widely scattered and anecdotal, if even present, in most of the literature. Here I attempt to bring together some of the anecdotal accounts of Illinois' two confirmed Long-tailed Jaegers and compare them with other "inland" accounts.

I was lucky enough to observe both of Illinois' two Long-tailed Jaegers, the 1999 bird once and the 2000 bird on three different occasions. One behavioral trait that stood out in my observations, and also in my later literature search for other inland sightings of this species, was the Long-tailed's obvious opportunistic (preferential?) use of insects as a food source. Dan Kassebaum (2001) was the first to make mention of the Carlyle Lake bird feeding extensively on midges, and in his documentation of the bird, described watching the jaeger the first evening he discovered it feeding on insects for most, if not all of the two hours it was observed.

A few days later, Kassebaum, I, and several others watched the same bird feeding low over the lake surface, apparently on swarms of midges, with thousands of swallows and hundreds of gulls at dusk. In addition, while following this jaeger for about an hour from two pontoon boats, about 15 to 20 Illinois Ornithological Society members constantly watched the bird, sometimes as close as 10 to 15 feet away. At one point, the jaeger actually began following the boat, apparently flocking (with no apparent antagonism) with a small