

Juvenile Pomarine Jaeger near Calgary

Jocelyn Hudon

Last Fall the Natural Resources Service Division of Alberta Environmental Protection turned in a juvenile Pomarine Jaeger (*Stercorarius pomarinus*) from near High River to the Provincial Museum of Alberta. The bird had been accidentally shot on November 9, 1996 with a .22 rifle by a young man shooting magpies feeding on a deer carcass.

Its overall dark appearance for a gull-like bird, two slightly projecting central rectrices, and large size in the hand for a jaeger (about the size of a Ring-billed gull; total length, 425 mm; wing length, 338 mm; bill length, 35.6 mm; tarsus, 55.2 mm) quickly

gave it away as a Pomarine Jaeger (PMA accession number Z96.22.1; male). The neat, uniformly fresh plumage, its generally dusky look with neatly arranged pale barring on the upperparts and wing coverts indicated that the bird was a yearling (juvenile) (Kaufman 1990). There have been few previous reports of Pomarine Jaeger for Alberta (Höhn 1972, Dekker 1985), and none appears to have been well documented.

Several characters support the identification of this bird as a juvenile Pomarine Jaeger. The central tail feathers were broadly squarish in shape with no points showing, and extended about 10 mm past the other rectrices. The bird also had a long and heavy bill, with a heavy hooked nail at the tip of the upper mandible and an obvious gonydeal angle on the lower mandible. The base of the bill was pale in this bird, contrasting strongly with the black tip. Plumage coloration provided additional suggestive features. The bird was very dark overall (Sepia [119]; colours according to Smithe 1992) with Ground Cinnamon [239] bars on the upperparts and wings. The head had no obvious pale area on the nape (although the head generally and particularly the back of the head were lighter than the body). There was also no pale feathering in the malar area, or signs of streaking on the head. The barring on the underparts was conspicuous and evenly spaced. The bird also had insignificant buff tips on the outer primaries, and there was a pale area at the base of the greater under primary coverts that was separate from the extensive pale base of the undersides of

the primaries. Finally, the pronounced barring (whitish Pale Pinkish Buff [121D] to Drab [27], alternating with Sepia [119]) on the upper and under tail coverts ran more or less straight across the feathers, creating a pattern of even barring.

Interestingly, a presumed juvenile Pomarine

Jaeger was reported at the Glenmore Reservoir in Calgary a few weeks prior to the bird collection, on 9 and 10 October (Ross Dickson pers. comm.). John Riddell, who first identified the bird as a Pomarine Jaeger, provided me with a detailed description of it. In all respects the bird observed by John matched

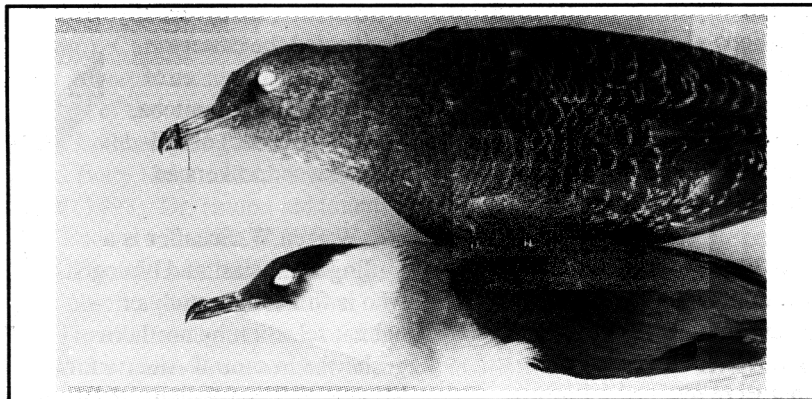


photo: Jocelyn Hudon

First Alberta Pomarine Jaeger, alongside an adult Parasitic Jaeger

exactly the bird we obtained, even down to the colour of the legs (dark grey; though John failed to see the black toe webbing of the bird). John described the bird's flight as slow and cumbersome.

The Pomarine Jaeger usually migrates at sea or off both the Pacific and Atlantic coasts to wintering areas in low latitude seas, however rare individuals wander inland (Godfrey 1986). Apparently, this is the first well documented record of Pomarine Jaeger for the province.

Literature Cited:

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