

This concept was illustrated well by the 1980 nestings of the rare Ross' Gull,² which could easily have been overlooked had the birds not chosen nesting sites within one kilometre of the main road in Churchill. With increased coverage of the Churchill area, it will be interesting to see whether concrete evidence of breeding by Ruffs is obtained.

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¹ AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION. 1983. Check-list of North American

Birds. Sixth edition. Washington, D.C.

² CHARTIER, B. and F. COOKE. 1980. Ross' Gulls (*Rhodostethia rosea*) nesting at Churchill, Manitoba, Canada. *Amer. Birds* 34:839-841.

³ GIBSON, D.D. 1977. First North American nest and eggs of the Ruff. *Western Birds* 8:25-26.

⁴ HOGAN-WARBURG, A.J. 1966. Social behaviour of the Ruff, *Philomachus pugnax*(L.). *Ardea* 54:109-225.

⁵ PEAKALL, D.B. 1965. The status of the Ruff in North America. *Wilson Bull.* 77:294-296.

⁶ PITTAWAY, R. and R.W. NERO. 1971. Recent bird notes of interest for Churchill, Manitoba. *Blue Jay* 29(2):60-63.

⁷ RIBBLE, B.A. 1975. Ruff in Churchill, Manitoba. *Blue Jay* 33(3):178-179.

⁸ VAN RHIJN, J.G. 1973. Behavioural dimorphism in male Ruffs. *Philomachus pugnax* (L.). *Behaviour* 47:153-229.

LONG-TAILED JAEGER IN SOUTHERN MANITOBA

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The Long-tailed Jaeger is one of three species of jaegers, as the skuas of North America are known. Related to gulls and terns and best known for their predatory feeding habits, jaegers have circumpolar distribution, breeding in the Arctic and wintering in the southern hemisphere. A fourth skua species, the Great Skua, is principally found in Antarctica and the sub-antarctic islands with a separate population in the eastern North Atlantic.

The Parasitic Jaeger or Arctic Skua is the commonest of the jaegers in Manitoba and occurs in two colour phases. Light phased birds have white bodies and brown wings while dark phased birds are uniformly greyish brown. The Pomarine Jaeger is the largest of the three species and is also found in the two colour phases. The Long-tailed Jaeger, which is the smallest of the three and found almost exclusively

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in the light phase, is characterized by two finely pointed feathers which extend up to 20 cm beyond the remainder of the tail.¹

Jaegers, particularly the Parasitic, often feed by chasing gulls and terns, forcing them to regurgitate food. The Pomarine and Long-tailed Jaegers rely more heavily on rodents, principally lemmings, but will also take small birds, eggs, invertebrates and carrion.⁷

The jaegers of Manitoba and northern Canada migrate annually to the tropics and may penetrate deep into the southern hemisphere along ocean routes. The Long-tailed Jaeger is considered the most pelagic of the three species and is very rarely seen from coastlines.¹

In Manitoba the Long-tailed Jaeger is a migrant and in the north of the province occurs irregularly in varying numbers in spring, mostly during the first two weeks of June. Dates of spring sightings in the Churchill region range from 26 May to 6 July. There is one fall record from this area on 11 September.²

Godfrey reported that the species breeds on the Hudson Bay coast approximately 160 km north of Churchill.¹

Elsewhere in the province the Long-tailed Jaeger is rarely seen and its migration route is not known. There is speculation that this species may make at least part of its migration across land at high altitudes.² Johnson encountered a flock of up to 29 near Thompson between 13 June and 27 June 1969 following a late snow storm.³

One bird was reported at Clandeboyne in October 1902; another was shot at Aweme on 17 May 1903 and others reported on 10 May 1940 near Pine Falls and possibly near Winnipeg on 6 May 1980.^{6 5 4}

On 14 June 1982 a single bird was seen on the shore at Leaside Beach approximately 240 km north of Winnipeg on the western side of Lake Winnipeg between Pine Dock and Matheson Island. The bird showed little tendency to fly away and later that day was chased by a dog into the water from where it was



Long-tailed Jaeger following capture

Lori Penarsky

retrieved by boat by Gordon Penarsky of Winnipeg. The following day the bird was taken to the animal hospital of the Assiniboine Park Zoo where it was examined.

The jaeger was in very poor body condition but exhibited no evidence of injury or feather damage. A diagnosis of starvation and exhaustion was made. During the early period of captivity the jaeger was alert by extremely calm and showed little fear of humans. It walked calmly from one cage to another for cleaning. As the bird regained strength, it became increasingly nervous and would become agitated when approached, often uttering a high pitched squeal of alarm. When stressed it would also consistently regurgitate food that had been eaten recently although on most occasions it would reconsume the meal later. The diet consisted of that fed other carnivorous birds in the zoo — pieces of horsemeat, day-old chicks, smelts and mice. The jaeger showed a marked preference for the latter, consuming adult dead mice as well as small live ones. Its appetite was poor but the bird gradually gained strength and weight. Following transfer to a larger cage, the jaeger became even more nervous and would fly vigorously around the room if anyone came too close.

It enjoyed water and would regularly bathe in a small pond until its feathers were completely wet. Since it was considered that the jaeger would have a very poor chance of survival if released, the bird was transferred to an exhibit within the zoo, containing other native birds and as of 16 July 1984 is still on public display at the Assiniboine Park Zoo in Winnipeg. It is probably the only one of its species in captivity anywhere.

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- ¹ GODFREY, W.E. 1966. The Birds of Canada. Nat. Mus. Canada Bull. 203, 428 pp.
- ² JEHL, J.R. Jr. and B.A. SMITH. 1970. Birds of Churchill region, Manitoba. Manitoba Mus. of Man and Nature. Spec. Publ. No. 1 — Winnipeg. 87 pp.
- ³ JOHNSON, J.W. 1970. A bird list for Thompson, Manitoba. Blue Jay 28:14-19.
- ⁴ LAWRENCE, A.G. 1940. Chickadee notes 999. Winnipeg Free Press, Winnipeg, May 17, 1940.
- ⁵ MACOUN, J. and J.M. MACOUN. 1909. Catalogue of Canadian birds, (p.32). Geol. Surv. Canada Gov. Printing Bureau, Ottawa.
- ⁶ O'DONOGHUE, C.H. and J.N. GOWANLOCK. 1919. Notes on the Caspian Tern (*Sterna caspia*) and the Parasitic Jaeger (*Stercorarius parasiticus*) in Manitoba. Can. Field-Naturalist 33:1-6.
- ⁷ TERRES, J.K. 1980. Audubon Society Encyclopedia of North American Birds. Alfred A. Knopf, New York.



Long-tailed Jaeger at Assiniboine Park Zoo
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