Photo Salon

Since the mid-1990s, Bermuda Petrel has been seen almost annually off Cape Hatteras. The majority of the records have been from late May and early June, which could reflect the intense pelagic birding effort at that season or the spring dispersal of breeding adults and juveniles from the nesting grounds 900 km away. Pelagic sightings should increase as this critically endangered seabird continues its comeback. This bird, probably an adult (adults molt remiges and rectrices in spring), was found sitting on the water with a newly-fledged juvenile Bermuda Petrel and three Black-capped Petrels. *27 May 2002. J.B.P.*

Virtually unknown in North American waters prior to the 1990s, Fea's Petrels are rare but regular in the deep water of the Gulf Stream, with most records from late May to July. The species is most often observed during or just after periods of easterly or southeasterly winds. Note the heavy bill on this bird, appreciably different from that of the smaller Zino's Petrel. *27 May 2002. J.B.P.*

Black-capped Petrel is the species that sparked initial interest in North Carolina pelagic trips three decades ago. Once thought to be quite rare, it is now seldom missed on birding trips to deep Gulf Stream waters, which often tally over 100 of these handsome birds, with counts approaching 600 birds in summer. The species is still listed as Endangered by most authorities. *27 May 2002. J.B.P.*

Greater Shearwater, which bears a superficial resemblance to Black-capped Petrel, is often quite common in early June but is sometimes hard to find in even the last few days of May. Its passage into the North Atlantic is from the nesting grounds at Tristan da Cunha and vicinity, in the South Atlantic Ocean. *24 May 2002. J.B.P.*

Unlike most pelagic seabirds off Cape Hatteras in the warm months, both Greater Shearwater and Wilson's Storm-Petrel are easily attracted to chum and will often follow boats. Greater Shearwaters are particularly hungry, having crossed thousands of kilometers of comparatively sterile tropical water en route to feeding grounds in the North Atlantic. *24 May 2002. J.B.P.*

Gulf Stream Seabirds, Spring 2002

Of the three rare gadfly petrels found off Cape Hatteras, Herald Petrel is the most likely to be seen. Its appearances here do not appear to be as dependent on easterly winds as are Bermuda and Fea's Petrels'. Plumage varies considerably in the species; the dark morph is the type most often seen. This bird is in active molt of coverts as well as flight feathers. *26 May 2002. J.B.P.*

In spring, Sooty Shearwaters, most often observed within a few km of coastal beaches, also occur far out to sea, where observers sometimes mistake them for Herald Petrels. Differences in shape, flight style, bill structure, and plumage distinguish the two. Most Sooty Shearwaters pass Cape Hatteras in the last two weeks of May. By the second week of June, they are uncommon in the Gulf Stream and most likely to be seen during a northeasterly blow. *24 May 2002. J.B.P.*

Audubon's Shearwater is a common summer visitor to Gulf Stream waters but may be rather scarce in spring, particularly if its primary habitat, large rafts of gulf weed (*Sargassum* spp.), is hard to find. *1 June 2002. J.B.P.*

Wilson's Storm-Petrel is by far the commonest storm-petrel seen on spring trips to the Gulf Stream. Like Greater and Sooty Shearwaters, most of these birds are transients on their way to cooler, more productive waters in the North Atlantic, but many remain through the early autumn, and records extend into December. *24 May 2002. J.B.P.*

As is true of the rare gadfly petrels, tropicbirds are noted more frequently on days with southeasterly winds, even very light winds. The *catesbyi* subspecies of White-tailed Tropicbird is a common breeder on nearby Bermuda and in the Caribbean Sea. *2 June 2002. J.B.P.*

Photo Salon

While adult Pomarine Jaegers such as this one can be still be seen sparingly in late May, the largest numbers of adults are usually seen in late April and early May. As May progresses, the proportion of subadult birds increases steadily. *24 May 2002. J.B.P.*

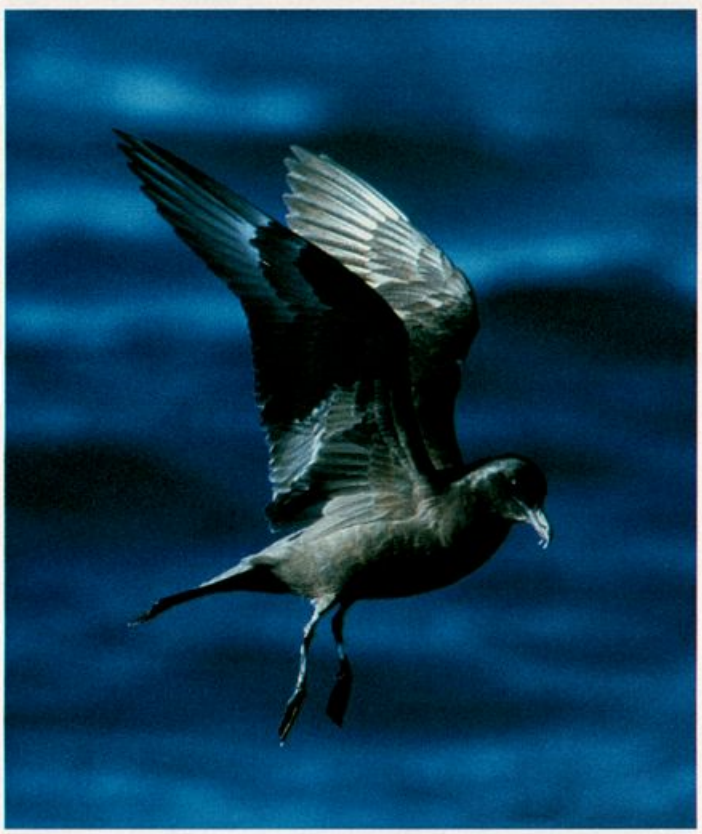
Though it may be the commonest jaeger seen from land in North Carolina on some days in May, Parasitic Jaeger is actually the least likely of the three species to be seen far offshore. This bird is an adult light morph. *24 May 2002. J.B.P.*

Encounters with adult Long-tailed Jaegers are a good possibility on May pelagic trips from Cape Hatteras, especially when the wind is blowing toward shore. With the right conditions, one even has a reasonable chance of seeing this species from shore at Buxton. The peak count from land at Cape Point is 12! *24 May 2002. J.B.P.*

The dusky breast and barred underwing and undertail coverts help to age this Long-tailed Jaeger as a bird in its third calendar year (second-summer plumage). Younger birds, without reproductive responsibilities, often outnumber adults as the migration progresses. *24 May 2002. J.B.P.*

Gulf Stream Seabirds, Spring 2002

Spring 2002 saw an unusually late heavy migration of Pomarine Jaegers off the coast of North Carolina. Peak passage of the species usually occurs from mid-April to early or mid-May, but as many as 78 were recorded on 24 May, when this bird was photographed. *24 May 2002. J.B.P.*



Dark morphs of Pomarine Jaeger are common, and though some references indicate that only ten per cent of the population is dark, the proportion registered on pelagic trips in the western North Atlantic can be higher. This bird is probably in its fourth calendar year or perhaps younger, as it is adult-like in plumage but retains some of the calico leg patterning of a subadult. Many dark morphs show reduced white in the primaries and underprimary coverts, such as this one. Some have an almost purplish sheen. *24 May 2002. J.B.P.*

Both this Pomarine Jaeger and the one to the left show fairly well developed caps and central rectrices, approaching the appearance of definitive adult plumage, but heavily barred sides and underwings, which are seen in younger plumages. Both can be tentatively aged as birds in their third calendar year (second-summer plumage), but some experts suggest fourth year for the bird above. *24 May 2002. J.B.P.*

Ageing young jaegers can be difficult, both in the field and from photographs. This bird is probably in its second calendar year, based on the somewhat indistinct cap, fully barred underparts, and undeveloped central rectrices. This could, however, be an intermediate morph in its third calendar year. *24 May 2002. J.B.P.*

This bird is difficult to age based on the dorsal view alone. Its adult-like plumage perhaps indicates an adult that has yet to shed the barred uppertail coverts of basic plumage, but the extent of white remaining in the tail (in late May) suggests a light morph in its fourth calendar year (third-summer plumage). *24 May 2002. J.B.P.*