

FIELD NOTES

Pelagic Observations from coastal Long Island — Recent observations of large concentrations of jaegers and shearwaters have prompted interest in shore observations of the oceanic birds. The main concentration appears to be from about the third week in May, with the advent of the jaeger and Sooty Shearwater migration, through the last weekend in October, with the petering out of the concentrations of Cory's Shearwaters off the eastern end of Long Island, especially Montauk Point.

Weather conditions seem to be very important in the observation of oceanic birds from the shore. On the weekend of June 9 and 10, 1956, with SW wind and overcast conditions, a large flight of jaegers was observed off Jones Beach State Park. On the ninth, 12 Pomarine and four Parasitic Jaegers were seen, all flying in an easterly direction along the shoreline. On the tenth there were five Pomarine and 12 Parasitic. It is of interest that no immature birds were observed, the adults being in light, intermediate, and dark phases with the latter phase predominating in the Pomarine.

The first two weeks in June seem to be the height of the Sooty Shearwater migration. An observation was made on June 1, 1957, of a large concentration, estimated at 500. The birds were moving in an easterly direction from Moriches Inlet to Mecox Bay during a period of east by southeast winds. Two dead birds were found on the shore in fresh condition. As the time grew late (5:00 PM) the winds shifted to southwest and a light rain fell. Four Pomarine, two Parasitic, and two unidentified jaegers were observed moving in an easterly direction harrying terns. A week later the same observers (N. Smith, P. Buckley, R. Clermont, E. Restivo) arrived at Jones Beach and were fortunate to observe another flight. With a cold easterly wind and overcast conditions, several shearwaters were observed far out on the horizon. As the winds shifted to southeast, a flight of 26 Sooty Shearwaters and 51 Greater Shearwaters was observed moving in a southwesterly direction, feeding continuously. An unusual note was that several of the Greater Shearwaters were being harried by Common Terns and forced to disgorge their prey. A few Sooty Shearwaters lit just beyond the breakers and as a result were swept by the tide into the Fire Island Inlet amid fishing boats and Herring Gulls. During the period July 7 to 14 a mixed flock numbering approximately 100 and containing three species of shearwaters (with the Cory's being the most common) was observed sitting and feeding just beyond the outer breakers at Mecox Bay.

These and other observations that I have not pointed out seem to indicate that a study of offshore movements of shearwaters and jaegers can be made by the observer who is familiar with the right weather conditions, has at his disposal a scope of about 20X, and has the necessary patience. — Neal G. Smith, 1751 E. 29th St., Brooklyn