

BBC PELAGIC 11.13.10

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This past Saturday (November 13), 60 hearty souls participated in yet another EXTREMELY successful Brookline Bird Club EXTREME Pelagic trip.

Offshore forecasts were not favorable with 10+ foot seas and winds forecasted to be gusting to 20 knots, but after consultation with the crew of the Helen H, the trip was confirmed. I think that everyone on board would agree that it was worth it! While the seas did hold high, Captain Joe deftly manipulated our course to make it as comfortable as possible. We had a drip of Menhaden Oil going for most of the time and were constantly chumming which brought thousands of birds into the back of the boat, providing excellent views and excellent photographic opportunities! (See the links below). The whale show, with 33 Humpback Whales feeding mostly in one small area, was spectacular!

Steve Mirick has already posted a few links to the track of our journey and I include his links here:

<http://home.comcast.net/~smirick//BBCPelagic111310.jpg>

or for those who use Google Earth:

<http://home.comcast.net/~smirick//BBCPelagic111310.kmz>

As can be seen from these links, the trip took us across Nantucket Sound to the south tip of South Monomoy. We then proceeded around the east side of the Monomoy and well east of Chatham to the productive fishing areas east of Pollock Rip. We looped around and came back into Nantucket Sound around 230pm.

The avian highlights were numerous. The most exciting find of the day was a Great Skua. This is only the third time we have recorded this species on the BBC Extreme Pelagics. The bird was in view for sometime and almost all on board were able to see the bird. Excellent images of this bird were obtained including the following:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/ryser915/5173083289/>

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/ryser915/5173688064/in/photostream/>

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/51533299@N05/5175684387/>

A first winter Little Gull was another exciting find and a first for many people on board! This bird was spotted just off the south tip of

South Monomoy. Great views were had by all.

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/jrtrimble/5178622467/in/set-72157625272344735/lightbox/>

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/51533299@N05/5175641505/>

Our successful chumming led to a constant group of up to several hundred large gulls (and tubenoses) following the vessel. Amongst these birds were at least 6 Lesser Black-backed Gulls, 5 Iceland Gulls and one presumed hybrid Herring X Lesser Black-backed Gull! All of these gave amazing views and presented excellent photographic opportunities.

Iceland Gull:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/jrtrimble/5179229230/in/set-72157625272344735/>

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/jrtrimble/5178622395/in/set-72157625272344735/>

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/ryser915/5173683018/>

Lesser Black-backed Gull:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/jrtrimble/5178623721/in/set-72157625272344735/>

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/51533299@N05/5175918339/in/set-72157625386405274/>

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/51533299@N05/5175799667/in/set-72157625386405274/>

Herring X Lesser Black-backed Gull:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/jrtrimble/sets/72157625273236865/detail/>

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/51533299@N05/5176527838/in/set-72157625386405274/>

The most amazing SIGHT of the day was the massive congregations of sea ducks in the waters surrounding South Monomoy. These flocks were mostly made up of Common Eider but included large numbers of scoters, particularly White-winged Scoters. Counting from sea level was just

impossible, however, we tried to come up with reasonable, conservative estimates based on photographs of the larger congregations. This effort led to the following estimates:

Common Eider: 350,000+
White-winged Scoter: 16750
Surf Scoter: 3200
scoter sp.: 10,000

Although our encounters with tubenoses took some time to get started, in the end, we were treated to spectacle of Great Shearwaters and Northern Fulmar. As well, we saw at least 3 Manx Shearwaters (It is getting a bit late for this species). Squadrons of Great Shearwaters were visible much of time we were at the eastern edge of our track (east of Pollack Rip). Northern Fulmar were constantly in view in this area as well. Of the 45 Northern Fulmar that we had, only two of these were dark-morph birds (as is typical in the North Atlantic).

Tubenoses:
Great Shearwater: 2800+

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/51533299@N05/5176358954/in/set-72157625386405274/>

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/51533299@N05/5175742343/in/set-72157625386405274/>

Manx Shearwater: 3+

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/jrtrimble/5179667172/in/set-72157625272344735/>

Northern Fulmar: 45

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/jrtrimble/5178623179/in/set-72157625272344735/>

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/51533299@N05/5175859291/in/set-72157625386405274/>

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/jrtrimble/5179227850/in/set-72157625272344735/>

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/jrtrimble/5179227384/in/set-72157625272344735/>

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/ryser915/5173686850/>

One of our major hopes on these late season trips is getting good views of alcids. Unfortunately, conditions were just about as bad as they could have been for observing these tiny birds at sea. The huge waves made detecting them very tough. STILL, we were able to get excellent views of a flock of 4 Dovekies both sitting on the water and flying! We also saw 27 Razorbills.

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/jrtrimble/5179226954/in/photostream/>

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/ryser915/5173083205/lightbox/>

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/51533299@N05/5176390366/in/set-72157625386405274/>

For those interested in more images here are a few sites from photographers on board. I am sure that there are many more photographers who will be posting images (I hope!):

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/51533299@N05/sets/72157625386405274/with/5176527838/>

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/jrtrimble/sets/72157625272344735/detail/>

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/ryser915/sets/72157625260070467/detail/>

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/photobee1/>

I am including here a complete list of birds seen during the trip. For those on board (or others interested), we have broken down the day's trip into several legs and posted them to eBird. If participants want me to share these lists with them, please email me your eBird USERNAME! There are 4 separate lists.

BBC Extreme Pelagic totals - 13 November 2010:

Canada Goose (25)

Brant (26)

American Black Duck (3)

Mallard (32)

Common Eider (350,000+)

Surf Scoter (4500)

Surf/Black Scoter (1500)

White-winged Scoter (16750)

Black Scoter (600)
Scoter sp (10000+)
Long-tailed Duck (4500)
Bufflehead (15)
Red-breasted Merganser (250)
Red-throated Loon (5)
Common Loon (32)
Northern Fulmar (45)
Great Shearwater (2800)
Manx Shearwater (3+)
Double-crested Cormorant (3)
Great Cormorant (2)
Northern Gannet (~300)
Great Blue Heron (1)
Northern Harrier (2)
Large falcon sp. (1)
Phalarope sp. (1)
Black-legged Kittiwake (275)
Bonaparte's Gull (35)
Little Gull (1)
Ring-billed Gull (1)
Herring Gull (1400+)
Iceland Gull (1 ad., 2 1w)
Lesser Black-backed Gull (3 ad., 1 3w, 2-3 1w)
Great Black-backed Gull (350+)
Common Tern (15)
Great Skua (1)
Dovekie (4)
Razorbill (27)
Rock Pigeon
Belted Kingfisher (1)
American Crow (14)

Mammals:

Humpback Whale - 33 - An incredible show of Humpback Whales well east of Chatham, most congregated in one small area! Some were bubble feeding right near the boat and lunge feeding!

Minke Whale - 3+

Gray Seals - huge haul out on the south tip of South Monomoy.