

BBC PELAGIC 11.18.06

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SATURDAY, 18 NOVEMBER 2006:

PELAGIC from HYANNIS to NANTUCKET SHOALS about 25 miles East of Nantucket Island (0700-1500 hrs.)

Weather: Clear, NNW 6-10 mph, 47-52 F.

Seas: 3-5'

Visibility: Excellent, unlimited.

More than sixty-five members of the Brookline Bird Club joined the captain and crew of the "Helen H" for the third and last cruise of the 2006 season. Before we even left the dock we witnessed a very heavy early morning overland loon migration, of birds cutting across the middle of Cape Cod, from Cape Cod Bay to Nantucket Sound. In little more than a half hours time 130 Common Loons and 290 Red-thoated Loons (in tighter, larger, and higher flocks) passed overhead on a SW bearing.

We once again enjoyed favorable weather and sea conditions as we sailed across Nantucket Sound and into the open Atlantic between Monomoy Island and Great Point, Nantucket, then sailing a clockwise loop over the northern and eastern shoals waters.

Once out of the sound, Greater Shearwaters, Northern Gannets, and Black-legged Kittiwakes were in continuous view. In the early afternoon we encountered a 'nothing less than spectacular' active feeding assemblage working a rip line over some shoals near the edge of the shipping channel that included, just in that area, and all around us in view at once, some 4000-5000 Greater Shearwaters, 800 Northern Gannets, and 250 Black-legged Kittiwakes, along with Minke and lob-tailing and breaching Humpback Whales!

Common Eider (1200): Virtually all seaducks within Nantucket Sound.

Surf Scoter (800)

White-winged Scoter (500)

Black Scoter (200)

Oldsquaw (4600)

Bufflehead (8)

Common Goldeneye (6)

Red-breasted Merganser (15)

Red-throated Loon (330)

Common Loon (215): Incl. several rafts of 15-20 well out to sea.

Northern Fulmar (20): Roughly 18 light and 2 dark morphs.

Greater Shearwater (7500): Obviously all non-breeders since egg-laying takes place at Tristan, Gough, and the Falklands in November. Most or all showing variable extent dark belly patch and white collars. Can't say I notice much or any seasonal plumage variation between these November, and summer birds off New England, aside from brief summer molt. A few birds today were

apparently missing a few coverts, resulting in a small white patch at the base of the primaries, and even a flight feather or two.

Sooty Shearwater (2)

Manx Shearwater (3)

Northern Gannet (2200): All age classes.

Double-crested Cormorant (35)

Great Cormorant (1 ad.)

jaeger sp. (5): None very close. Jizz on one suggested PAJA.

Laughing Gull (5): 4 ads., 1-1W.

Bonaparte's Gull (65): All in the sound, except for one first-winter, 20-25 miles offshore.

Ring-billed Gull (10)-Hyannis.

Herring Gull (600)

Lesser Black-backed Gull (1 ad.): 20-25 miles offshore.

Great Black-backed Gull (250)

Black-legged Kittiwake (600): Estim. 20-25% 1W.

Razorbill (40)

Humbback Whale (12+): Including very active, lobtailing, rolling, mother "Dyad" and her calf.

Fin Whale (1-2)

Minke Whale (4)

Atlantic White-sided Dolphin (20)

Gray Seal (1)

Harbor Seal (12)