

## **BBC PELAGIC 6.28.08**

Richard S. Heil

SATURDAY, 28 JUNE 2008:

BBC EXTREME PELAGIC from HYANNIS, MA to the CONTINENTAL SHELF at ATLANTIS CANYON (0400-2215 hrs.)

Weather: Variably sunny and cloudy, periods of haze and fog (mostly over cooler shallow waters), S-SSW winds 5-12 mph, 64-72 F.

Water Temperature: 60-72 F (warmest over portions of Atlantis Canyon).

Seas: 3-6 feet.

Visibility: Down to zero in dense fog over cooler shallow water (including Nantucket Shoals) but mostly unlimited (although hazy) in warmer shelf and canyon waters.

Roughly 75 participants plus organizer Ida Giriunas and leaders Rick Heil, Steve Mirick, Blair Nikula, and Peter Trimble joined Capt. Joe Huckemeyer and the crew of the 100' 'Helen H' for an 18+ hour Brookline Bird Club 'Extreme Pelagic' to Atlantis Canyon and the Continental Shelf about 100-110 miles south of Muskeget Island. We departed Hyannis at 0400 and via Muskeget Channel proceeded on route to Atlantis Canyon where we had learned in advance we would find the warmest water reachable. I ran a Menhaden Oil drip for the entire cruise. We sailed to the deepest portion at the mouth of the canyon where we entered some 7000 foot deep water and chummed at several stops. The return route was across Nantucket Shoals to the east of Nantucket (but alas dense fog shrouded the shoals waters). The largest concentrations of birds on the way out were near and well north of the entrance to Atlantis. On the return we encountered an extraordinary and amazing feeding frenzy of dolphins, whales and seabirds in the shipping lane south of Nantucket Shoals. We found no rarities on THIS trip, but witnessed the acrobatics of tremendously large, curious, and friendly pods of Common (Saddleback) Dolphins, and enjoyed very high counts of shearwaters (most notably Cory's) and storm-petrels (most notably Leach's).

Cory's Shearwater (225): All individuals seen well were Atlantic *C.d.borealis* except for one possible *C.d.diomedea* or 'Scopoli's' Shearwater of the Mediterranean, seen early. Off New England Cory's are most common in the warmer waters south of Cape Cod and the islands, although numbers seem to fluctuate greatly from year to year. Greater Shearwater (1170): Some showing wing molt, missing both primaries and coverts.

Sooty Shearwater (28)

Manx Shearwater (15): Including several in deep water near and along the shelf edge, well seen and carefully identified.

Wilson's Storm-Petrel (4500): Overwhelming majority (95%+) adults in very heavy wing molt, remainder fresh crisp first-year birds.

Leach's Storm-Petrel (30): Good numbers; all in deeper waters.

Northern Gannet (1-2nd yr.)

Herring Gull (1 ad.)

Great Black-backed Gull (5 ads.)

Pomarine Jaeger (1-1st-summer): Well photographed.

jaeger sp. (1): briefly in the fog.

---

Fin Whale (2-3)

Minke Whale (3+)

Humpback Whale (2-3)

Balaenoptera sp. (3+)

Long-finned Pilot Whale (12)

Grampus (Risso's Dolphin) (5)

'beaked' whale, Mesoplodon sp. (2): Two individuals very likely of this genus surface briefly in deep water over Atlantis Canyon.

Common (Saddleback) Dolphin (1100+): Staggering number! Including two disparate pods of 400+ that turned and charged the boat to come see us and ride the bow waves and wake. Many young dolphins were in the group. The second of the two largest groups was engaged in a feeding frenzy (along with hundreds of shearwaters) somewhat south of Nantucket Shoals.

dolphin sp. (3): Three shy small appearing dolphins in deep canyon water eluded identification.

---

Leatherback Sea Turtle (1): Seen briefly and somewhat distantly at the surface.

Blue Shark (6)

flying fish, Cheilopogon sp. (6+): Seen in flight.

Dolphin, Mahi mahi (2)-jumped.

tuna sp. (1)-jumped.

Ocean Sunfish, Mola mola (9)

---

Blue Dasher, Pachydiplax longipennis (1)

Black Saddlebags, Tramea lacerata (1) : Both dragonflies at Atlantis Canyon.