

BBC PELAGIC 7.21.07

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SATURDAY, 21 JULY 2007:

BROOKLINE BIRD CLUB 'Extreme Pelagic' from HYANNIS, MASSACHUSETTS to VEATCH'S & HYDROGRAPHER CANYON

Weather: Mostly overcast, N-NNW winds 5-10 knots, a few showers, 59-65 F.

Seas: 3-6 feet in AM, subsiding to 2-4 feet in PM.

Visibility: Generally good to excellent.

Every trip to these waters is an adventure into the last true frontier of New England ornithology.

Roughly seventy-seven participants plus the captain and crew of the "Helen H" departed Hyannis at 0400 hrs., crossing Nantucket Shoals (sea surface temperatures of 58 F) en route to the warm deep waters around Veatch's and Hydrographer Canyons. We cruised the east side of Veatch's and continued southeast well off the shelf edge into water more than 5000 feet deep and 75 degrees F for a couple of hours before working northeast recrossing the continental shelf edge to Hydrographer Canyon, then back NNW across Nantucket Shoals to Nantucket Sound, arriving back in port around 2115 hrs.

Try as we might we did not come up with a Pterodroma or any rare storm-petrels ... this time, but we did encounter many of the expected warm water seabirds species, highlighted by three (!) Bridled Terns, tying the state single day high count for the species (from Martha's Vineyard during Hurricane Bob in 1991). We also enjoyed an outstanding cetacean show with no less than six species of whales and dolphins encountered.

Common Loon (9): Nantucket Shoals.

Cory's Shearwater (30): Southern Nantucket Shoals.

'SCOPOLI'S SHEARWATER', *C. d. diomedea* (2-3): Southern edge Nantucket Shoals; smaller Mediterranean race of Cory's; mixed in roosting flocks of bulkier, bigger billed borealis Cory's; probably not rare in these waters as we are coming to realize. Smaller size, shorter and more slender bill, and white projecting onto underside of primaries (noted on at least one individual).

Greater Shearwater (110): Shoals and deep shelf/canyon waters.

Sooty Shearwater (28): All Nantucket Shoals.

Manx Shearwater (4+): Nantucket Shoals.

Puffinus sp. (Manx/Audubon's) (2-3): A couple sitting (and flying) with Cory's on the southern shoals left some observers

(including me) uncertain, while other observers thought them rather obvious Manx.

AUDUBON'S SHEARWATER (3+): Shelf waters, vicinity Hydrographer Canyon; not at all rare here but is a specialty of these warm New England shelf waters.

Wilson's Storm-Petrel (850): Roughly 90% molting adults, 10% 'clean' first-winter birds.

Leach's Storm-Petrel (1): Noted astern by a few experienced observers. Otherwise curiously absent; likely more numerous here in August.

Northern Gannet (2 sub-ads.): N. Nantucket Shoals.

Least Sandpiper (2): Nantucket Shoals.

Laughing Gull (15+): Nantucket Shoals.

Common Tern (20+): Nantucket Shoals.

BRIDLED TERN (3): One 1st-year west of Hydrographer Canyon at 40 09 N, 69 11 W, then later two (one adult or near adult, one 1st-yr.) together much farther north at the southern edge of Nantucket Shoals at 40 31 N, 69 18 W.

The latter two were located roosting on a floating log and we were able to approach very closely for some great views and hopefully some nice photographs by those with cameras. The young bird appeared momentarily to be food begging from the adult. We last encountered this species here in August of 2004 and it probably occurs regularly in these waters in late summer and early fall, July through September.

LONG-TAILED JAEGER (1-1S): Southern Nantucket Shoals. Also not rare here and seems to be the default jaeger in late summer far offshore from the mid-shoals south.

Brown-headed Cowbird (1): One flew along with us for a time early morning near the exit of Nantucket Sound.

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Most all of the marine mammals were in warmer waters from the southern edge of the shoals south:

Fin Whale (4)

Humpback Whale (4)

Long-finned Pilot Whale (15)

Gray Grampus (6)

Common (Saddleback) Dolphin (50)

Bottlenose Dolphin (110)

dolphin sp. (20+)

seal sp. (1): southern Nantucket Shoals.

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Loggerhead Sea Turtle (1): Great views alongside the boat.

sea turtle sp. (1)

Ocean Sunfish, *Mola mola* (6)

tuna sp. (6+): Seen jumping.

Mako Shark (2)

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We encountered two inflated, drifting rubber/plastic rafts off the continental shelf edge, and recovered both - no bodies. One had a 'perfect'

cut-out from a shark bite out of the floor.

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Thanks as always to Ida Giriunas who does the real work in organizing these trips, and to Steve Mirick, who despite a serious bought of 'mal de mer' man'd up and did the usual yeomans job on the microphone.