

## **BBC PELAGIC 08.27.05**

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SATURDAY, 27 AUGUST 2005:

BBC BOAT TRIP to NANTUCKET SHOALS, HYDROGRAPHER and VEATCH'S CANYON.

Weather: Mostly clear, fog in the A.M. over Nantucket Shoals, otherwise excellent visibility, S-SE 5-10 mph, seas 1-3'.

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, and fog) en route to the warm deep waters at Hydrographer Canyon. We cruised the length of Hydrographer into water more than 4000 feet deep and 79 degrees F for a couple of hours before working WSW along the continental shelf edge to Veatch's Canyon, then back N across the shoals to Nantucket Sound, arriving back in port around 2120 hrs.

Shearwater numbers were exceptionally low, and we found no great rarities. Numerous flocks of phalaropes of both pelagic species were encountered during the A.M. transit of the northern shoals. The avian highlight was undoubtedly the several fresh and beautifully plumaged juvenile Long-tailed Jaegers, expected at this season in these shelf waters, which performed very well for us, as did the several equally anticipated Audubon's Shearwaters. A frustratingly distant, seemingly small whitish Sulid with blackish primaries and secondaries over Nantucket Shoals, was troubling. In trouble was a juvenile Tree Swallow that briefly circled the boat at the shelf edge.

Perhaps the real story was the non-avian marine natural history show: Amazing performances by several hundred of three species of dolphins, including frolicking and bow riding Offshore Bottlenosed and Saddlebacks; large pods of Gray Grampus (Risso's Dolphin) almost omnipresent along the shelf, including many very whitish and scarred older males; breaching Humpback Whales; Mako and Blue Sharks, Mahi-mahi, schools(!) of Ocean Sunfish (*Mola mola*), Skipjacks, Bluefin Tuna; Several likely Loggerhead Sea Turtles, and nice looks at three or more massive (1200 lb. ?) and truly awesome Leatherbacks!

Common Loon (1)-Nantucket Shoals.

Cory's Shearwater (5)-Nantucket Shoals.

Greater Shearwater (35)

Sooty Shearwater (1)

Audubon's Shearwater (3+)-canyons.

Wilson's Storm-Petrel (3000): Concentration of 2500 over Hydrographer.

Leach's Storm-Petrel (9)-low.

Sulid sp. (1): Ad. or near ad., s. edge Nantucket Shoals.

shorebird sp. (1): probable Red Knot, btn. Veatch and shoals.

Red-necked Phalarope (200+)  
Red Phalarope (15+)  
phalarope sp. (50+)  
Long-tailed Jaeger (3 juvs.): All s. of shoals waters: 2  
darkish/intermediate, one paler individual.  
jaeger sp. (1 juv. or 1S): possibly also LTJA.  
Herring Gull (4)-shoals.  
Great Black-backed Gull (1)-shoals.  
Sterna sp. (4): 'Comic' types, shoals.  
Tree Swallow (1 juv.)-far offshore at sheld edge.

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Most of the whale and all of the dolphin activity was in the warm waters  
near or in the canyons or along the shelf edge:

Finback Whale (12)  
Humpback Whale (5)  
Gray Grampus (150+)  
Offshore Bottlenosed Dolphin (60+)  
Saddleback Dolphin (70+)  
seal sp. (3)

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All in warm waters south of shoals:  
prob. Loggerhead Sea Turtle (4)  
Leatherback Sea Turtle (4)

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Blue Shark (2)  
Mako Shark (1)  
shark sp. (5+)  
Ocean Sunfish (23): Including 'schools of 4, 3, and 3.; at least two with  
apparent remora's in attendance.  
Bluefin Tuna: several schools breaching.  
Skipjack Tuna: several schools breaching.  
Dolphin Fish or Mahi mahi (5+)  
flying fish sp. (5+)

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Monarch (2)  
sulpher sp. (1)  
butterfly sp. (2)  
moth sp. (2)