

**Sea & Sage Audubon**  
**Fall Pelagic Trip from Dana Point - 9/24/11**  
**Report by Curtis Marantz**

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**Dana Point Harbor, Orange, US-CA**

Sep 24, 2011 7:15 AM - 7:45 AM

Protocol: Traveling

2.5 kilometer(s)

**Comments:** Brian Daniels, Jon Dunn, Jim Pike, Tom Benson, and I were spotters on the annual fall pelagic birding trip sponsored by the Sea and Sage Audubon Society aboard the Ocean Institute's R/V Sea Explorer. Both on our departure and on our return we cruised slowly through the Dana Point Harbor scanning the breakwaters and birds inside the harbor itself for anything unusual. We checked the main breakwater a little more carefully on our way out, but I suspect many of the same birds were present on our return (though there seemed to be more pelicans and Heermann's Gulls on our way back to port). There was a low marine layer, little wind, and temperatures in the low 60s on our departure (7:15-7:30 am), but somewhat higher clouds with some blue sky, a mild breeze, and temperatures probably in the middle to upper 60s upon our return to port (12:55-1:10 pm).

12 species

**Brandt's Cormorant** - 30

**Double-crested Cormorant** - 15

**Brown Pelican** - 200

**Snowy Egret** - 1 (I missed this one)

**Osprey** - 1 (perched atop a mast on the sailing vessel at the dock upon our return to port)

**Black Oystercatcher** - 7 (roosting together on the windward side of the main jetty as we left port)

**Willet** - 1 (I missed one on our return trip)

**Heermann's Gull** - 150 (most on the water right off the breakwater upon our return to port, no doubt a result of a fishing boat stopping and dumping fish parts just before we arrived; most appeared to be immature birds)

**Western Gull** - 450 (most appeared to be adults)

**Elegant Tern** - 95 (calling; I tried to count the birds roosting on the breakwater on our way out, but I estimated a similar number on our return)

**Rock Pigeon** - 20 (a good number standing on or flying around the breakwaters)

**American Crow** - 6 (calling; I saw only one or two but I missed others on the breakwater)

*(This report was generated automatically by eBird v3 (<http://ebird.org>))*

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**Offshore waters between Dana Point and Lausen Sea Mount, Orange, US-CA**

Sep 24, 2011 7:30 AM - 12:55 PM

Protocol: Traveling

55.0 mile(s)

**Comments:** Brian Daniels, Jim Pike, Jon Dunn, Tom Benson, and I were spotters on the annual, fall pelagic trip sponsored by the Sea and Sage Audubon Society aboard the Ocean Institute's R/V Sea Explorer. This trip left from Dana Point Harbor and headed essentially west to the Lausen Sea Mount, where we zigzagged our way south a short distance before heading back to port along a route a bit south of the one along which we arrived. Based on Steve Summers' GPS, our entire route represented a distance of about 55 miles. We found generally small numbers of birds on the trips out and back, but moderate numbers of both Sooty and Pink-footed Shearwaters, and good numbers of Pomarine Jaegers, while we cruised south along the bank. Our highlights were a subadult Long-tailed Jaeger on the sea mount, an Ashy Storm-Petrel just off Dana Point, and a Common Murre seen by only two observers just after we left port. Because we zigzagged our way down the sea mount both pushing the flocks of birds ahead of us and circling around to better examine the birds closely, it was very difficult to know how many of the birds were seen repeatedly, yet we were confident that the same Long-tailed Jaeger was seen intermittently for about an hour, meaning that multiple-counting was indeed a potential problem. The numbers here should therefore be considered minimum estimates for the two shearwaters and Pomarine Jaeger, each of which could have been represented by considerably higher numbers. We encountered several squid-fishing boats just offshore and when we were around the sea mount we saw numbers of small squid jumping out of the water. Upon our departure there was a low marine layer and quite a bit of mist, but the mist dissipated and the clouds rose to higher levels through the course of the day, and they were beginning to break up by the time we returned to port. There seemed to be little wind and temperatures ranged from the low to the mid-60s during the day. I thought the swell was in the range of 1-2 feet all day, but there was a bit of small chop that made it difficult to spot small birds on the water. We were offshore (i.e., beyond the breakwaters) from 7:30 am to 12:55 pm.

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**Marine Mammals:**

- Common Dolphin** - 15 (a single pod identified by others);
- Risso's Dolphin** - 5;
- Blue Whale** - 1 (quite a large individual that has been nicknamed "fountain" by the local boats because it blows water just as it dives);
- California Sea-Lion** - 8 (most loafing on buoys as we returned to port).

**Birds:** 23 species (+3 other taxa)

**Cinnamon Teal** - 3 (I missed birds seen by Tom, Jim, Brian, and a few others from the back of the boat about halfway out to the sea mount in the morning; Brian was confident that they were Cinnamon as opposed to Blue-winged Teal)

**Surf Scoter** - 1 (I missed a female just as we returned to the breakwaters)

**Eared Grebe** - 8 (a single flock not far off the breakwaters when we returned to port)

**Northern Fulmar** - 2 (molting, dark-morph birds seen about halfway back from the sea mount)

**Pink-footed Shearwater** - 100 (we saw small numbers on the trips out and back, but most were on or near the sea mount; this number could easily be low because it was difficult to be sure how many were present given that we zigzagged repeatedly through the flocks)

**Sooty Shearwater** - 150 (I thought there were a few more Sooty Shearwaters than Pink-footed, and these were also mostly around the sea mount)

**Ashy Storm-Petrel** - 1 (A lone bird seen when we were about 7.5 km WSW of Dana Point was clearly a small, black storm-petrel with a short bill, a rounded head, a medium-length tail, and relatively long, tapered wings. To me, this bird appeared almost entirely blackish, but I may have detected some indication of a carpal bar, and others thought it had some pale gray at the sides of the rump. For a storm-petrel, this bird did not appear particularly large or small, and it clearly flew with relatively shallow, choppy wing-beats as opposed to the deeper and more pronounced wing-beats of either Black or Least Storm-Petrels. Nevertheless, this bird did remain at moderate distances, it was not with anything to which we could compare directly, and it spent much of its time on the water, so the identification was made primarily on the basis of flight style. Tom recorded the coordinates for this bird as 33°26'19" N, 117°47'44" W.)

**Brandt's Cormorant** - 15 (I saw only a few cormorants offshore, but Jon saw a few more)

**Brown Pelican** - 4 (I saw amazingly few pelicans offshore)

**Red-necked Phalarope** - 6 (I saw only one identifiably and two or three more at a great distance, but I missed a few others)

**Heermann's Gull** - 20 (I did not see many offshore and most were in the large gull flock associated with the squid fishing boats just off the harbor in the morning)

**Western Gull** - 250 (most were in a concentration of birds just off the harbor in the morning that seemed to be associated with a fleet of squid-fishing boats; we saw relatively few gulls through the course of the day and we rarely had many gulls behind the boat)

**California Gull** - 10 (I saw no more than 10 California Gulls but I did not spend much time looking at the boat's wake; most were first-year birds)

**Elegant Tern** - 5 (I saw relatively few terns offshore)

**Pomarine Jaeger** - 50 (we saw large numbers over the sea mount and scattered birds elsewhere; it was difficult to be sure how many were really present, and I saw no more than about ten at one time, but Jon and Steve Summers both counted repeatedly 20 in one pass when we were over the sea mount and both estimated a minimum of 50 birds, so the total could have been 75; I saw maybe 5-6 adults with full tails and at most a very few dark-morph birds)

**Parasitic Jaeger** - 2 (I saw repeatedly what I thought was one dark-morph bird over the sea mount, but Jon thought there were two dark juveniles; I also had a light bird attacking the storm-petrel not far off Dana Point)

**Pomarine/Parasitic Jaeger** - 2 (there were at least two or three medium-sized jaegers that were either Pomarine or Parasitic, with one or two of these being dark-morph birds)

**Long-tailed Jaeger** - 1 (A subadult bird spent about an hour in association with the boat when we were off the sea mount. This bird was conspicuously small when seen in direct comparison with Pomarine Jaegers and it flew with a buoyant, tern-like flight. I further noted a small and conspicuously stubby bill and a relatively rounded head on a jaeger that appeared slim and relatively long-tailed, even though it did not have long central rectrices. The head and neck were dusky but the back and wing coverts were a relatively clean, brownish-gray color that contrasted conspicuously with a black trailing-edge to the wing. The primaries were dusky, if not blackish, and I saw the white shafts on no more than three primaries in the outer part of the wing. I cannot now recall to what degree the rump was paler, but the tail was dark.)

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The underparts were whitish with some darker clouding on the breast but no clear breast-band. The belly was whitish with some barring but the undertail coverts generally seemed dark. I thought the underwing coverts were mostly dark but they did have some fine barring of buff. I noted a bicolored bill, with the basal part gray and the tip black, but I did not really notice the color of the eyes, legs, or feet. GPS coordinates shortly after we first saw this bird were 33° 25' 21" N, 118° 02' 47" W, a point slightly south of 30 km west of Dana Point (and thus slightly closer to Newport Beach).

**Parasitic/Long-tailed Jaeger** - 2 (we saw at least two distant jaegers that appeared to be either Parasitic or Long-tailed)

**jaeger sp.** - 4 (and finally, there were a few jaegers that were so far away that we had no idea which species was involved)

**Common Murre** - 1 (I missed one that was seen by only two people from the back of the boat shortly after we left from port)

**Cassin's Auklet** - 1 (about halfway back to port I had rather mediocre views of one that took flight at some distance and flew almost directly away until I lost it)

**Barn Swallow** - 4 (three together well offshore and one when we were getting back towards port)

**Chipping Sparrow** - 1 (a streaky juvenile landed on the boat repeatedly)

**Savannah Sparrow** - 1 (calling; I had only mediocre views of this one as it circled the boat in the fog)

**Brown-headed Cowbird** - 1 (my views of this one were less than stellar but it appeared to be a juvenile)

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