

East Point at dawn to start observations. Observation conditions were quite good, cloudy bright to medium dark sky with a brisk wind and periodic light rain showers.

Shortly after our arrival at 6:30 am, Dan caught a fleeting glimpse of a storm petrel and a Dovekie was picked up by Eric. The birds disappeared before the other two scopes could be brought to bear. Binoculars and telescopes were used to scan the waters in search of resting, diving, and flying birds. The waters and air above were alive with birds including Surf (25), Black (20), and a few White-winged Scoter, Common Eider (60), Herring (50) and Great Black-backed Gulls (40), scattered Ring-billed and Bonaparte's Gulls, Common Terns (30), a few Red-throated Loons, Double-crested Cormorants (40), Red-breasted Mergansers, a small number of Great Cormorants, and many mature and small numbers of immature Northern Gannets (400+) diving into the waters, flying west to east, or a few resting on the waves. During the several hours we spent birding at the point, we also seen 10 American Crows, 4 Ruddy Turnstones, 8 Semi-palmated Sandpipers, 3 Sanderlings, and a number of unidentified shorebirds in rapidly moving flocks.



Just west of the point, Ray spotted a group of phalaropes fishing the surface waters and then moving to new points to fish just west of the point. Close observation revealed a group of eight Red-necked Phalaropes. A short time later, Ray picked up a alcid flying west to east. The difficulty of birding over water is trying to pick out the bird and this time Ray was the only one to see the bird which he identified as a Thick-billed Murre. Amidst the scattered gulls that swung by the lighthouse, the presence of a small black-backed gull was noted. It was the size of nearby Herring Gulls and distinctly smaller than Great Black-backed Gulls that were at a further distance. Its back was more slate coloured than black and it was identified as a Lesser Black-backed Gull. The next rare bird was picked out by Ray. It was a Northern Fulmar.

Ray was also the first to spot the silhouette of a small shearwater passing from west to east. All three scopes focused on the bird and the team called off its features. The back and top of the head were a uniform dark colour. The underside of the wings and belly were white and the white extended well up the side of the head. The underside of the tail appeared dark. The white underside of the wing was banded on both the front and the back edges by black. After consultation with various bird books, the conclusion was that it was an Audubon's Shearwater, a new record for Prince Edward Island.

The presence of so many adult gannets diving was broken by an occasional immature gannet. Because of the storm, we tried to check out each of these in the advent that we might pick up a booby. Such was not the case but the sharply hooked wings, falcon like flight low over the water, white belly with a basal neck bar, and projecting central tail feathers, marked the fly past of a light phase Pomarine Jaeger.

Far out, past the bell buoy, a larger, brownish, heavy bird was seen by Dan flying at an angle toward shore. All scopes swung to watch the bird's approach. The only distinct features visible through the 20X telescope at this distance were the overall colour, a gull like body form with wide "V" shaped wings, and crescents of white on the upper surface of the wings observed during the down stroke of the wing. As the bird passed inside the bell buoy, the distinct shape of a skua was observed. The bird was uniformly dark brown through the head, back, tail, sides, underwings, and belly. The tail was "V" shaped and the crescent shaped wing patches were clearly present only on the upper surface of the wings and appeared to be at the base of the primary feathers on the outermost segment of the wings. The lack of light colouring in the head or other colours led the team to conclude that it was a Great Skua, a second first record for the Island on this great pelagic birding day and confirmed by all three persons.

At this time of year, the dawn arrival of tired passerines usually coincides with the presence of hawks and falcons looking for an easy meal. This trip did not bring these anticipated sightings although a single Merlin did fly by us at a very close range. It landed on overhead wires and allowed a wonderful view of the facial markings. Very few woodland birds were seen other than a small number of Blue Jays and a single Song Sparrow.

On the return trip home around 1 p.m., a large flock of gulls in a field near South Lake caused us to pull