

## JAEGERS IN INDONESIAN WATERS

By

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### Summary

An overview is provided of records of the three species of Jaegers in the Indonesian region, including some hitherto unpublished records of which descriptions are given. All records of Jaegers are from the months September-May. *Stercorarius parasiticus* appears to be more common than previously thought and may sometimes have been confused with *S. pomarinus*. The relative rareness of *S. longicaudus* may be due to the pelagic character of the species. It is speculated that the El Niño Southern Oscillation of 1982-83 influenced the occurrence of Jaegers in Indonesian waters.

### Ringkasan

Diberikan gambaran tentang catatan-catatan tiga jenis "Jaeger" di wilayah Indonesia, termasuk beberapa catatan yang dilengkapi pertelaan namun tidak dipublikasikan. Seluruh catatan tersebut berasal dari bulan-bulan September-Mei. *Stercorarius parasiticus* terlihat lebih umum daripada perkiraan semula dan kadang-kadang dapat tertukar dengan *S. pomarinus*. Kelangkaan relatif dari jenis *S. longicaudus* mungkin disebabkan oleh sifat pelagis dari jenis tersebut. Kehadiran arus panas El Niño pada tahun 1982-83 diperkirakan berpengaruh terhadap kehadiran "Jaeger" di perairan Indonesia.

### Introduction

The Skuas and Jaegers form a family of seabirds, Stercorariidae, closely related to the gulls and terns, which have a bipolar distribution. Three species, the Pomarine Jaeger *Stercorarius pomarinus*, the Parasitic Jaeger *S. parasiticus* and the Long-tailed Jaeger *S. longicaudus* are of northern origin and migrate in the northern winter to southern regions as far as SE Australia and Tierra del Fuego (Harrison 1983; Furness 1987). In the Indo-Australian region *S. pomarinus* is a fairly common visitor to the north coast of New Guinea (Beehler *et al.*, 1986), and records are available from throughout the other parts of the archipelago. *S. parasiticus* is much scarcer in the archipelago with until recently records only from N. Borneo (Smythies, 1981), Bali (Ash, 1984), N. Sulawesi (Andrew & Holmes, 1990) and New Guinea (Beehler *et al.*, 1986). *S. longicaudus* had only been recorded off Karkar Isl in Papua New Guinea (Coates 1985), apart from an unconfirmed sighting by

Ash (unpublished) off Bali, but has now been seen off Komodo (Roseveare & Alien, 1991) and is seen regularly on pelagic trips out of Sydney (P. Andrew, 1989, *in litt.*) and New Zealand (Melville 1985). Table 1 lists records of the three species in the Indonesian region, including records of unidentified Jaegers. Amongst these a number of unpublished new records for Java are included of which descriptions are given below. Additionally, recent sightings in Malayan waters of all three *Stercorarius* species as reported by Wells (1990) are included to support the Indonesian records.

### New Records

The occurrence of *S. pomarinus* and *S. parasiticus* in Javan waters was only suggested by MacKinnon (1988) and therefore the observations of Jaegers in recent years off Java are noteworthy.

In 1988 the author observed jaegers on four occasions off Java and Sumatra. All observations were made under fair weather conditions, using 10 x 42 binoculars, while travelling at sea. The author was accompanied by F. Smiet (27 and 31 October), B. van Helvoort (31 October) and D. Holmes (21 November).

On 27 October, at 08.15 hrs, a single jaeger was observed during a boat trip from Peucang Island (Ujung Kulon), halfway to Panaitan Island. The bird passed at approximately 30-40 m distance in a southerly direction. While approaching the boat, the bird flew low over the water, making rather sharply curving movements. No other sea-birds were seen. The bird had a dark brown upper head; a white breast with clear, dark spots; a whitish belly;

brownish upper parts with a lighter base to the primaries; a dark tail with long, central feathers, up to 1.5 - 2 times as long as the other tail feathers. This observation most probably refers to *S. longicaudus* (flight; long streamers).

During a second trip on 31 October, at 09.55 hrs, two jaegers were observed from the boat to Panaitan Island, halfway from Peucang Island. The first bird observed was completely dark brown with sharply pointed central tail feathers; upper wing with light spots to the base of the primaries. This bird was soon accompanied by a second, light phase bird with sharply pointed tail feathers. The light bird split off and was seen flying low over the sea in a southerly direction. This observation might refer to dark and light phase *S. parasiticus*.

On 21 November, at 09.40 hrs, while traveling by boat to Binuangeun (S. Banten, W. Java), from Tinjil Island, a jaeger was observed at approximately halfway distance. The bird was perched on a floating log and could be observed for several minutes from a distance of 10-15 m. Upper parts of head and body were dark brownish; the upper breast had a broad dark brown band; throat and sides of the head were lighter brownish than the breast band; belly and lower breast whitish; the robust and somewhat hooked bill was greyish brown. In flight the untidy (wet) tail did not show elongated tail feathers and was dirty light brown; the rather

broad wings were uniformly dark with light yellowish brown tips. The bird seen was most probably *S. pomarinus*, or possibly immature *S. parasiticus*, which has a dark bill as compared to the very light bill of *S. pomarinus* (J. de Korte, pers.comm.).

On 11 December at 15.00 hrs, a light phase jaeger was observed from the ferry boat from Bakauheni (Lampung), at approximately one third distance to Merak (W. Java). The bird flew in a NE direction. The dark breast band, light upper tail coverts and light spots on the upper wing were visible; there were no elongated tail feathers. The bird was flying in a group of Crested and other terns. The observation most likely refers to *S. parasiticus* (markings on breast and wings).

Subsequently, on 9 November 1989, H. Prins (using 10 x 40 binoculars), observed a probable *S. parasiticus* over sea between Gilimanuk (West Bali) and Banyuwangi (East Java); on 11 and 12 November 1989 ca. 40 jaegers were seen at sea, 2-3 km off-shore at the eastern side of Alas Purwo nature reserve, in the Bali Straits. Amongst these birds there were at least two immature *S. pomarinus* and four *S. parasiticus*. Very likely most birds observed were *S. parasiticus* as they were slightly smaller than the *S. pomarinus*. Most jaegers chased terns and gulls that were fishing. Kleptoparasitism was seen at least three times. One jaeger sat on a floating (banana?) log, at a distance of 10 m from the boat. Fishes taken were ca. 4 cm long.

### Status

Harrison (1983) states that all mid-winter observations of Jaegers in the tropical latitudes of the Pacific might refer to *S. pomarinus*, records of *S. parasiticus* being due to confusion with this species. However, *S. parasiticus* is the least pelagic of the three jaegers (Gluts von Blotzheim 1982); e.g. *S. parasiticus* occurs in Sydney Harbour, whereas *S. pomarinus* is rarely seen in-shore (Andrew, pers.comm.); the species is therefore to be expected in the SE Asian Archipelago. The present data and those of others (e.g., Ash 1984; Wells 1990a, b) seem to render Harrison's statement doubtful. The reverse could even be equally likely, i.e. the relative scarcity until now of observations of *S. parasiticus* may be due to confusion with *S. pomarinus*, because of a certain degree of prejudice of the observers influenced by the published information hitherto: e.g. King *et al.* 1975 mention *S. pomarinus* for SE Asia, with only a note on the probable occurrence of the other species.

### El Nino Southern Oscillations

The enumeration of records in Table 1 is not exhaustive. However, it clearly shows the increased number of observations of jaegers in the archipelago. The question remains whether these observations indicate an unusual abundance of Jaegers in Indonesian waters during recent times or merely a sharp increase in sea trekking and scuba diving in the tropics.

Ainly *et al.* (1988) showed that El Niño-Southern Oscillations (ENSO) may have a major impact on the distribution (and breeding success) of seabirds throughout the world. However, it is perhaps too speculative to say that the ENSO of 1982-1983 influenced the occurrence of Jaegers in Indonesian waters. Yet, two major peaks of jaeger observations, in February 1982 - January 1983 (Ash 1984; Wells 1990a) and February-March 1985 (Cadee 1987), coincide respectively with a major ENSO event in March-April 1982, and with extended effects to late 1984 (and probably later in equatorial waters). Similarly, the ENSO of 1986/1987 may account for the records of 1988 and following years. Moreover, during a previous ENSO in 1957-1959 (Ainly *et al. op.cit.*), some of the few observations of skuas *Catharacta* spp. from the Southern Hemisphere were made in Indonesia (Van Marle & Voous 1988; Van den Berg *et al.* 1991).

### Migration

All records of Jaegers are from the months September-May, with the majority being in September and February-April, which suggests that they are mainly on passage. This is confirmed by observations of P. Andrew (*in litt.*) who saw a number of Jaegers in the Sunda Straits in September and October, but none wintering in the course of two years (1984-1985) in the Java Sea. With the accumulation of information, the migration route along the east coast of the Asian continent, through the Sunda Strait to the south, might prove to be more important than is suggested by Harrison's maps of migration routes for *S. pomarinus* and *S. parasiticus*, i.e., straight lines from the Arctic to SE Australia.

The relative rareness of *S. longicaudus* in the area may be due to the pelagic character of the species (Glutz von Blotzheim 1982) and the more eastern position of its migration route (see Harrison 1983); however, until 1982 there were no records of the species off Sydney, but it proved to be quite common in the years of El Niño, and still occurs there (A. McBride, 1989, *in litt.*). Moreover, the recent observation of a major movement of this species off Komodo in the Lesser Sundas (Roseveare & Alien, 1991) indicates the existence of a migration route through eastern Indonesia, much more to the west than suggested by Harrison.

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Table 1. Jaegers *Stercorarius* spp. observed in Indonesian and adjacent waters (M = Malaysia).

Year	Month	Day	Locality	Co-ordinates	References	Number of birds	Remarks
<i>Stercorarius pomarinus</i>							
1955	Dec	20	Weh Isl.	5.51 N, 95.18 E	Van Marle & Voous 1988	1	
1963	Apr	21	off Penang Isl. (M)	4.55 N, 100.21 E	Medway & Wells 1976	2	
1975	Apr	14	Mantanani Isl. (M)	6.45 N, 116.20 E	Smythies 1981	2	
1975	Oct	13	Brunei Bay	5.10 N, 115.15 E	Smythies 1981	1	tent.
1981	May	3	Jeram/ Selangor (M)		Wells 1990a		
1982	Mar	25	off SW. Bali	8.41 S, 115.09 E	Ash 1984	1	
1982	Sep	27	off N. Bali	8.11 S, 114.56 E	Ash 1984	4	
1982	Sep	27	off NE. Bali	8.12 S, 115.30 E	Ash 1984	3	
1980/83			off Halmahera		White & Bruce 1986	1	
1984	Oct	18	off Jambi	1.10 S, 104.10 E	Silvius & Verheugt 1986	2	
1985	Feb	9	off Ambon	3.45 S, 128.07 E	Cadec 1987	3	tent.
1985	Peb	10	off S. Ceram	3.48 S, 130.10 E	Cadec 1987	18	tent.
1985	Feb	10	off S. Ceram	3.49 S, 130.32 E	Cadec 1987	11	tent.
1985	Peb	10	off S. Ceram	4.13 S, 130.31 E	Cadec 1987	1	tent.
1985	Feb	26	off S. Ceram	4.20 S, 131.54 E	Cadec 1987	1	tent.
1985	Feb	26	off S. Ceram	3.50 S, 130.29 E	Cadec 1987	3	tent.
1985	Feb	28	off S. Ceram	3.45 S, 130.33 E	Cadec 1987	1	tent.
1985	Mar	9	off S. Ceram	3.46 S, 130.19 E	Cadec 1987	5	tent.
1989	May	18	Makassar Str.	3.20 S, 118.30 E	De Korte, pers.comm.	1	
1989	May	23	Makassar Str.	3.30 S, 118-30 E	De Korte, pers.comm.	1	
1989	Nov	11/12	off Alas Purwo	8.45 S, 114.20 E	Prins, this paper	2+	
<i>Steicorarius parasiticus</i>							
1960	Nov	5	Talang-talang Besar	1.55 N, 109.50 E	Smythies 1981	1	
1982	Apr	24	off SE. Ball	8.42 S, 115.14 E	Ash 1984	2	
1982	Apr	28	off SE. Ball	8.42 S, 115.14 E	Ash 1984	2	
1982	Apr	29	off SE. Bali	8.42 S, 115.14 E	Ash 1984	1	
1982	May	8	off SE. Bali	8.42 S, 115.14 E	Ash 1984	1	
1986	Apr	29	Tanjung Agas, Pahang (M)		Wells 1990b	1	
1988	Mar	31	off Manado		Andrew & Holmcs 1990	1	
1988	On	31	Panaitan Sir.	6.40 S, 105.14 E	this paper	2	tent.
1988	Dec	11	off Lampung	5.00 S, 104.30 E	this paper	1	tent.
1989	Nov	9	Ball Straits		Prins, pers.comm.	1	tent.
1989	Nw	11/12	off Alas Purwo	8.45 S, 114.20 E	Prins, pers.comm	4+	

Table 1. Continued

Year	Month	Day	Locality	Co-ordinates	References	Number of birds	Remarks
<i>Stercorarius longicaudus</i>							
1982	Oct	29	off SW.Bali	8.43 S, 115.10 E	Ash (unpublished)		1 tent.
1988	Oct	27	Panaitan Str.	6.40 S, 105.14 E	this paper		1 tent.
1986	May	5	Tioman Isl., Pahang (M)	2.47 N, 104.10 E	Wells, 1990b		1
1990	Sep	15	off Komodo		Roseveare & Allen, 1991		200+
<i>Stercorarius</i> sp.							
1875			off N, Sulawesi		van Musschenbroek 1875		Many
1982	Fcb	6	E of Singapore		Wells 1990a		12
1982	Oct	5	Trengganu oil fields (M)	5.25 N, 105.13 E	Wells 1990a		1
1982	Oct	19	Trengganu oil fields (M)	5.25 N, 105.13 E	Wells 1990a		1
1982	Oct	23	Trengganu oil fields (M)	5.25 N, 105.13 E	Wells 1990a		3
1983	Jan	7	Mersing, Johor (M)	2.26 N, 103.51 E	Wells 1990b		1
1983	Jan	21	Mersing, Johor (M)	2.26 N, 103.51 E	Wells 1990b		1
1984/85	Sep/Oct		Sunda Str.		P. Andrew, in litt.		Many
1987	Dec	24	NW. Bali	8.10 S, 114.26 E	this paper		
1988	Apr	26	NW. Bali	8.06 S, 114.27 E	this paper		1
1988	Nov	21	off Tinjil Isl.	6.52 S, 105.55 E	this paper		
1989	Nov		off Alas Purwo	8.45 S, 114.20 E	H. Prins & J. Wind pers.comm.		Many
1989	Nov	16	Bali Barat	8.06 S, 114.26 B	this paper		2