

records several such instances. The details provided in the above account are, however, well worth noting and may contribute to our understanding of this behavior.]

FIRST SIGHTING OF AUDUBON'S SHEARWATER IN MISSISSIPPI

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On 9 August 1988 at about 2:00 p.m., we spotted an Audubon's Shearwater (*Puffinus lherminieri*) from the south end of Long Beach harbor, Harrison Co., Mississippi. We watched for about 40 sec as the bird flew by from west to east, observing it from as close as 30 m through 7x and 8x binoculars and 22x and 30x spotting scopes. Thinning overcast provided good light. If we were at the center of an imaginary clock and the sun was at 12 o'clock, the bird was first seen at about 10 o'clock and lost at 5. Strong winds were from the south; the temperature was about 80 degrees F. Tropical storm Beryl had just moved ashore at New Orleans.

Our first impression was of a small shearwater, with cigar-shaped body, long, narrow wings, and a thin dark bill. Upperparts were a uniform dark chocolate brown. Underparts were mostly white, but for patches of brown extending down onto the sides of the breast at the shoulder, and brown undertail coverts. The upper surface of the wings may have been slightly darker than the back. The underwings showed a white central area bordered by broad brown edges on both sides and at the tip. The width of the brown seemed about the same for the leading and trailing edges. The tail appeared long. The size of the bill seemed smaller in proportion to the head than in larger species of shearwater.

The bird flew unhurriedly within a meter of the water surface. Series of rapid, shallow wingbeats were followed by long glides. The bird usually flew with wings parallel to the water, lifting to only about 45 degrees above the horizontal. No other birds were seen in direct comparison with the shearwater.

We ruled out Manx Shearwater (*P. puffinus*) due to brown undertail coverts and the width of the brown border at the leading edge of the underwing. Manx has blacker upperparts, although they can wear to brownish-black. Manx also has a more frenetic flight, with steep banking to almost vertical positions. We ruled out Little Shearwater (*P. assimilis*) due to our bird's larger size, stockier build and longer bill, and the plumage characters listed for Manx (Harrison 1983). Small shearwaters breeding in the Cape Verde Islands have been variously placed with Little and Audubon's shearwaters (Harrison 1983); they resemble Audubon's with browner upperparts and brown undertail coverts. The brown border at the leading edge of the underwing is narrower in these birds than in nominate Audubon's Shearwaters, and they are smaller, with a more hurried flight. Little Shearwater is also unlikely to occur in the Gulf of Mexico (Duncan and Havard 1980).

We were unable to photograph the bird due to its distance away and the brevity of the sighting.

Hodges has seen Audubon's Shearwater previously in the Caribbean. Toups and Hodges have experience with several other species of shearwater in both the North Atlantic and North Pacific oceans. Schiefer has seen other shearwaters in the North Atlantic.

Duncan and Havard (1980) mentioned about 26 records of Audubon's Shearwater occurring in the northern Gulf of Mexico before 1980, and considered the species to be of casual occurrence there. We found references to four other northern Gulf sightings since then, the latest in 1987 (Hamilton, 1981, Ortego 1983, Myers and Muth 1984, Muth 1987). This is the first sighting of Audubon's Shearwater for Mississippi. Only one other individual of the Procellariidae has been seen in the state, a Sooty Shearwater (*P. griseus*) on 2 September 1985 in Jackson Co., blown in by Hurricane Elena (Toups and Jackson 1987).

Literature Cited

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