



Director Callan Cohen: callan@birdingafrica.com

mobile: +27 83 256 0491

Pelagic enquiries: info@capetownpelagics.com

office: +27 21 531 9148

fax: +27 21 531 8289

4 Crassula Way, 7405 Pinelands, Cape Town, South Africa

Cape Town Pelagics Trip Report

15 November 2008

HIGHLIGHTS

Buller's Albatross – only the 4th Southern African record!



Buller's Albatross off the Cape, photo by Meidad Goren

A Cape Town Pelagic trip left Simon's Town on Saturday November 15th guided by Cape Town Pelagics guide Meidad Goren.

Steaming towards Cape Point we faced some choppy sea, but as predicted by the skipper crossing the point we enjoyed relatively calm waters. The first pelagic bird encountered was a **Southern Giant Petrel** followed by **Sabine's Gulls**, **Arctic Skua** and very small numbers of **Sooty Shearwaters**. It was very interesting to notice that the sea was almost empty of albatrosses and petrels. It was only when we got close to the trawling grounds, some 25 miles south-west of Cape Point when albatrosses, both **Atlantic** and **Indian Yellow-nosed**, **Black-browed** and **Shy**, **White-chinned Petrels**, **Great Shearwaters** and **Giant Petrels** started to show in nice numbers. We found a group of three trawlers, and at once we were rewarded with an amazing variety of seabirds. All four relatively common **albatrosses** showed in good numbers and few **European Storm Petrels** accompanied by **Wilson's Storm Petrels**.

But by no doubt the highlight of the trip occurred when we received a radio call from the boat "Zest II" who was drifting a few hundreds meters from us saying "We have a **BULLER'S ALBATROSS** next to our boat" – thanks guys! We steamed there quickly and were lucky to have a few minutes with this beautiful bird before it took off. This is only the fourth record of this bird in South African waters, and in fact, in Africa!!

After a tasty lunch prepared by Alan's wife, we encountered and enjoyed close views of a single **FLESH-FOOTED SHEARWATER** which is quite rare in Western cape waters. And so with all these exciting events we headed back to Simon's Town, adding a third skua species, **Pomarine Jaeger**, and a **Bryde's Whale** to our day list.

The full list for the day was as follows, with numbers being approximations only:

BULLER'S ALBATROSS	1
Shy Albatross	150
Black-browed Albatross	100
Atlantic Yellowed-nosed Albatross	30
Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross	5
Northern Giant Petrel	2
Southern Giant Petrel	40
White-chinned Petrel	450
Pintado Petrel	20

Sooty Shearwater	200
Great Shearwater	30
Flesh-footed Shearwater	1
Wilson's Storm-Petrel	5
European Storm-Petrel	3
Subantarctic Skua	10
Pomarine Skua	1
Arctic Skua	2
Arctic Tern	30
Common Tern	60
Sabine's Gull	50

Coastal species included:

Common Tern
African Penguin
Cape Gannet
Kelp Gull
Hartlaub's Gull
Swift Tern
White breasted Cormorant
Bank Cormorant
Cape Cormorant

Mammals :

Bryde's Whale 1

A message from Cape Town Pelagics: A huge thank you to our experienced skippers who are able to safely lead us to the best birding areas and skillfully manoeuvre the boat into just the best position while all on board are busy concentrating on the birds! Coordinating a pelagic trip over a year in advance with guests from all across South Africa and different countries around the world requires an organised office team. We thank them for their special eye for detail - and for the sometimes last-minute rearrangements and frustration if the weather delays the trip to another day! Our biggest thank-you is to our Cape Town Pelagics guides who take time out of their work, often involving seabirds and conservation, and time away from their families, to provide our guests with a world-class birding experience. Cape Town Pelagics donates all its profits to seabirds, and so all the participants who join the trip make a contribution towards bird research and conservation – a big thank you from all of us.

Trip report by Cape Town Pelagics guide Meidad Goren.