



Trip Report - Cape Town Pelagics - 24 October 2021

Trip Highlights: Three albatross species, Humpback Whales



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Shy Albatross

Our group met at 07:00 on Sunday morning at the Simon's Town Yacht Club before setting off on our pelagic tour. It was a relatively wind-free, sunny day and the waters within False Bay were relatively calm. After we set off from Simon's Town harbour towards Cape Point, we soon began to tally up coastal seabird species such as **Great Crested (Swift) Tern**, **Cape Cormorants**, **Kelp-** and **Hartlaub's Gulls**. The highlight of this stretch was undoubtedly our encounters with 5 **Humpback Whales**.

Around Cape Point the swell had increased, and the sea became significantly rougher. We saw good numbers of **Cape Cormorants** and a few groups of **Common Terns** were present. The rest of the trip out towards the fishing grounds was relatively quiet, although we added a distant **Giant Petrel** as well as our first **Shy Albatross** and a handful of **White-chinned Petrels**.

Upon reaching the fishing grounds around the Cape Canyon no fishing vessels were found to be present, however, bird numbers had increased. We poured some fish oil out to lure the birds closer, and almost immediately the numbers picked up even further.



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Northern Giant Albatross

In addition to an increase in **Shy Albatross** and **White-chinned Petrels**, the oil attracted a good few Great Shearwaters and a single Cape (Pintado) Petrel. Both **Northern Giant Petrel** and **Southern Giant Petrels** came in, one or two **Black-browed Albatrosses** put in an appearance and a few **Wilson's Storm Petrels** entertained us all with their tap-dancing moves. A **Yellow-nosed Albatross** flew past but didn't hang around long enough for identification to species level.



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Wilson's Storm Petrel



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Shy Albatross

After enjoying the birds around the boat for a couple of hours, it was time to head northwards again. Between the Cape Canyon and Cape Point, we managed to add one new bird for the day, namely **Brown Skua** and a **Yellowfin Tuna** was briefly seen. En-route back to Simonstown we enjoyed lunch and cold drinks in a relatively wind-sheltered spot overlooking the Cape of Good Hope National Park. Our last stop was at Partridge Point where we visited the **Bank Cormorant** colony and the **Cape Fur Seal** hang-out, after which we returned to the Simonstown harbour after a wonderful day of birding out at sea.

Pelagic species seen and approximate numbers:

Shy Albatross - 50-80
Black-browed Albatross - 2
Yellow-nosed Albatross sp. - 1
Northern Giant Petrel - 2
Southern Giant Petrel - 5
Giant Petrel sp. - 1
Cape Petrel - 1
White-chinned Petrel - 300-500
Sooty Shearwater - 2
Wilson's Storm Petrel - 4
Cape Gannet - 50-80
Brown Skua - 1

Coastal species:

Hartlaub's Gull - 10
Kelp Gull - 300
African Oystercatcher - 2
White-breasted Cormorant - 10
Bank Cormorant - 20-30
Crowned Cormorant - 1
Cape Cormorant - 500-800
African Penguin - 50
Great Crested Tern - 100-200
Common Tern - 200–300
Egyptian Goose - 5

Marine mammal and other species

Cape Fur Seal - abundant
Humpback Whale - 5

Trip report and photos: Cape Town Pelagics guide [David Swanepoel](#)

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.