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Cape Town Pelagics Trip Report

6 September 2008

A Cape Town Pelagics trip departed Simonstown in calm conditions on Saturday 6 September led by Cape Town Pelagics guide, Bruce Dyer. Our destination was about 20-25 miles SW of Cape Point in the Cape Valley trawl ground region.

“Simon”, the resident bull **Cape Fur Seal**, gave our group close-up views for those who had not previously seen this endemic marine mammal! **Kelp Gull** were common around the Wharf. A single **Hartlaub’s Gull** foraging around the wharf was gratefully added to the days list. **Cape** and **Crowned Cormorant** were roosting and foraging in the harbour area as were small numbers of **Swift (Crested) Terns**. Small parties of **African Penguin** were seen in the vicinity of their breeding colony at Boulders. Several whale blows were near Cape Point, one of which was identified as a **Bryde’s Whale**.

We had barely passed the breathtaking views of Cape Point before we started sighting several **White-chinned Petrel**, **Shy Albatross** and **Cape Gannet**. We headed directly out to about 20 miles with a stiff easterly wind causing a bit of spray and bumps. Birds were encountered all the time but the bouncy sea made observations in passage difficult. Two **Common Terns** flew past en route out.

We sadly did not find any trawler activity, but at least the wind dropped which made viewing the birds pleasant. We set a chum slick and before long had several **Sub-antarctic Skua**, **Sooty Shearwater**, **Wilson’s Storm Petrel**, **Pintado Petrel** and **Great Shearwater** in attendance. Probably the highlight was an adult **Black-browed Albatross**, only because very few were seen and the others did not stay with the vessel. A few sightings of immature **Southern Giant Petrel** were also added. After saturation views of most species, we called it a day and headed back to Simonstown. We stopped briefly at Partridge Point Rocks to view the breeding colony of the highly endangered **Bank Cormorant**, as well as breeding **White-breasted Cormorant**. Small numbers of Cape Fur Seals were also loafing on a nearby rock. Two **Southern Right Whales** were seen off Boulders, as was a pair of **African Black Oystercatchers** inside the harbour.

The boat was alongside at 14h00 and a good time was had by all – many thanks to our skipper for a great day out!

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 Bruce Dyer.