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Cape Town Pelagics Trip Report

28 September 2008

HIGHLIGHTS

Northern Royal Albatross

A Cape Town Pelagics trip left Simonstown on 28 September 2008 guided 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. Another Cape Town Pelagics vessel, guided by Dalton Gibbs, operated in close proximity to us.

Hartlaub's and **Kelp Gull**, as well as a **Swift Tern** were present in the harbour area and offered good views. One **Kelp Gull**, recognizing that the wharf was filled with overseas birders, rather considerably dropped its Cape Urchin breakfast into a dustbin instead of the wharf! A pair of **Egyptian Goose** in the harbour, gave us excellent views of their 5 chicks.

En route to Cape Point, 3 **African Penguins** put in an appearance, as did two **Southern Right Whales** and a few **Cape Fur Seals**. **Cape Cormorant** were regular as they hurriedly made their way to and from their nesting cliffs.

Just after "The Bellows" we were privileged to view a large school of **Common Dolphin (Long-beaked)** moving eastward and shortly thereafter, a small pod of **Atlantic Bottle-nosed Dolphins** was seen. **White-chinned Petrel**, **Cape Gannet** and **Shy Albatross** put in an appearance soon afterwards, which were probably associated with the groups of dolphins. We received directions via radio to a trawler, which we duly headed for and found two operating fairly close to one another. Reasonable numbers of birds were attending. Good views of all species attending the trawler were had, other than perhaps **Great Shearwater**, which seemed to be quite shy of our boat (see list below). The highlight was a single **Sabine's Gull** seen briefly flitting across the wake of our boat. Two fleeting glimpses of **Giant Petrels** were disappointing in that they provided no identifiable views.

We called it a day shortly before noon as one trawler packed up and left for Cape Town and the other steadily moved too far south.

We made a brief stop at Partridge Point Rocks to view the breeding colony of the highly endangered **Bank Cormorant**. One rock in the group had all four species of marine cormorant present. The rock with several dozen Cape Fur Seal was also viewed.

Bird List

African Penguin	3
Cape Cormorant	200
Bank Cormorant	40
White-breasted Cormorant	30
Crowned Cormorant	3
Hartlaub's Gull	10
Kelp Gull	200
Swift Tern	20
Common Tern	3
Cape Gannet	50
Black-browed Albatross	100
Shy Albatross	200
White-chinned Petrel	500
Giant Petrel	2
Pintado Petrel	200
Great Shearwater	10
Sooty Shearwater	50
Wilson's Storm Petrel	200
Subantarctic (Brown) Skua	2
Sabine's Gull	1

Mammals

Southern Right Whale	2
Common Dolphin	500
Atlantic Bottle-nosed Dolphin	4
Cape Fur Seal	100

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