



Trip Report - Cape Town Pelagics - 6 November 2021

Trip Highlights: Three species of albatrosses, Great Shearwater, Pomarine Jaeger, Sabine's Gull



Great Shearwater

Our fantastic day of sea-birding started with a very good selection of coastal seabirds within Simonstown Harbour. We got good close views of **Crowned, Cape and White-breasted Cormorants, Kelp and Hartlaub's Gulls, and Great Crested Terns.** The landing beach at Boulders was crowded with **African Penguins.** The run down to Cape Point was very quick with additional good views of many of the coastal species mentioned above, as well as new species like **Common and Sandwich terns, and Cape Gannets.**

Our skipper made a stop below the dramatic cliffs at Cape Point, where we were treated to very close views of a curious **Northern Giant Petrel.**



Cape Point looking splendid in the morning light

We set course for the fishing grounds around the Cape Canyon, and headed out in a calm open ocean. En-route we had the first many views of **White-chinned Petrels**, and both **Great** and **Sooty Shearwaters**. A large **Oceanic Sunfish** added a bit of excitement a few miles from the Canyon, as did a few brief **Humpback Whale** sightings, and a possible **Bryde's Whale**.

The best sightings of this leg of our journey was a pair of breeding plumage **Pomarine Jaegers** complete with full tail spoons streamers.

At a distance of 25 nautical miles offshore we arrived at the Nicolette, a small hake longliner. It was surrounded by good numbers of **White-chinned Petrels**, and **Great Shearwaters**, and a **Shy Albatrosses**. While we waited for the crew to start hauling up their lines, we added a nice variety of additional species for the trip list, including **Black-browed** and **Indian Yellow-nosed Albatrosses**, **Sabine's Gull**, and **Arctic Tern**.

At midday the crew started to work their catch, and this brought in a mass of pelagic seabirds. After repeatedly working through and enjoying these accumulations of birds, we chart a course back to the coast.

After another photo opportunity at Cape Point, we found a sheltered spot below its towering cliffs for a light lunch.

The nearby granite outcrops at Partridge Point delivered fantastic views of breeding **Bank Cormorants**. The neighbouring **Cape Fur Seal** haul-out was crowded with a good number of

animals resting and warming themselves in the afternoon sun. We completed the run to port, finishing off a fantastic summer pelagic.



Partridge Point

Pelagic species seen and approximate numbers:

- African Penguin – common (Boulders)
- Shy/White-capped Albatross – 20
- Black-browed Albatross – 5
- Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross – 1
- Northern Giant Petrel – 5
- Sooty Shearwater – 30
- Great Shearwater - 300
- White-chinned Petrel – 200
- Cape Gannet – Common
- Pomarine Jaeger – 2
- Sabine’s Gull - 5
- Arctic Tern – 10

Coastal species:

- African Penguin – common
- White-breasted Cormorant – 50
- Cape Cormorant – abundant
- Crowned Cormorant – 1
- Bank Cormorant – 18 breeding pairs
- Kelp Gull – common

Hartlaub's Gull – 2
Great Crested Tern – common
Common Tern – common
Sandwich Tern – common

Marine mammals:

Cape Fur Seal – abundant
Bryde's Whale – 1
Humpback Whale – 2
Oceanic Sunfish – 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 [Vincent Ward](#)

