



Trip Report – Cape Town Pelagics – Saturday, 13 November 2021

Trip Highlights: Five species of albatross including **Southern Royal Albatross**, Parasitic Jaeger, Sabine’s Gull, Great-winged Petrel.

The first birds on our trip list were a good variety of coastal species typical of the sheltered waters of False Bay. **African Penguins** were spotted onshore at Boulders Beach, while out at sea we picked up **Crowned, Bank, Cape** and **White-breasted Cormorants, Kelp** and **Hartlaub’s Gulls**, and **Great Crested, Common** and **Sandwich Terns**.

Once past Cape Point, we picked up our first pelagics: **White-chinned Petrel, Sooty Shearwater** and **Northern Giant Petrel**. The large flocks of terns feeding just offshore caught the attention of several **Parasitic Jaegers** looking to snatch an easy meal.

As we ventured out into deeper waters, the first of the trip’s **Shy Albatrosses** made a few close passes before continuing on their way. Just north of the Cape Canyon, we found the marker buoys of a longline vessel, but the vessel itself was absent. After a visual and radar search, we located two working vessels some distance away.

Within a few minutes of positioning ourselves behind the first longliner, a call of “White-back” went up!! All eyes locked onto a stunning **Southern Royal Albatross**, a rare visitor to Cape waters. After the excitement subsided, we got back to working through the stream of birds between the boat. Our patient scanning delivered an amazing variety of seabirds including four species of albatross: **Shy, Black-browed**, and both **Indian** and **Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatrosses**. Several more **Northern Giant Petrels** were seen, as well as **White-chinned Petrels**, with a single **Pintado (Cape)**, and **Great-winged Petrel** causing some excitement. **Great** and **Sooty Shearwaters**, and a lone **Wilson’s Storm Petrel** rounded out the tube-noses for the day. Additionally, this flock of birds delivered several **Cape Gannets, Brown Skuas, Arctic Terns**, and a lone **Sabine’s Gull**.

Our return trip delivered two great **Humpback Whale** sightings between the longliners and Cape Point. Once safely back in False Bay, we stopped to enjoy a shipboard light lunch before continuing on to the **Bank Cormorant** colony at Partridge Point. We slowly passed the nearby **Cape Fur Seal** haulout before returning to Simonstown.

Pelagic species seen and approximate numbers:

Southern Royal Albatross – 1

Shy/White-capped Albatross – 20

Black-browed Albatross – 15

Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross - 2

Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross – 3

Northern Giant Petrel – 5

Sooty Shearwater – 40

Great Shearwater - 2
White-chinned Petrel – 350
Cape (Pintado) Petrel – 1
Great-winged Petrel - 1
Wilson’s Storm Petrel – 1
Cape Gannet – 2
Brown (Sub-Antarctic) Skua – 2
Parasitic Jaeger - 5
Sabine’s Gull - 1
Arctic Tern – 5 (pelagic)

Coastal species:

African Penguin – common (onshore)
White-breasted Cormorant – common (coastal)
Cape Cormorant – abundant (coastal)
Crowned Cormorant – 3
Bank Cormorant – 18 breeding pairs
Kelp Gull – common (coastal and pelagic)
Hartlaub’s Gull – Common (coastal)
Great Crested Tern – Common (coastal)
Common Tern – Common
Sandwich Tern - Common
African (Black) Oystercatcher - 2

Marine mammal

Cape Fur Seal – abundant (coastal and pelagic)
Humpback Whale – 2

Trip report and photos: Cape Town Pelagics guide [Vincent Ward](#)

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.