



Trip Report – Cape Town Pelagics – Tuesday, 12 April 2022

Trip Highlights: Four species of albatross, five species of cormorant, Sabine’s Gull, Great-winged Petrel, Wilson’s Storm Petrel, European Storm Petrel

SPECIES NUMBER: 23

The first additions to the trip list were made as we headed down the gangway to our boat with good views of **Kelp Gull, Crowned, Cape, White-breasted** and **Reed** (a very rare marine visitor) **Cormorants, Great Crested Tern, and African Oystercatcher**. With our gear safely stowed, we cast off our mooring lines and headed out to sea.

As we passed Boulders Beach we spotted a feeding group of **African Penguins** just offshore of the famous penguin colony. The rising autumn sun lit up the mirror smooth waters of False Bay and the stunning scenery along the eastern shore of the Cape Peninsula. Our skipper stopped the boat below the towering cliffs at Cape Point for a quick photo opportunity before continuing out into open water.

The ocean was also beautifully calm as we headed to an area with recent reports of working fishing vessels. This outbound leg gave us our first look at a variety of tubenose species including our first **White-capped (Shy)** and **Black-browed Albatrosses, White-chinned Petrels** and several shearwaters: **Sooty, Great** and **Cory’s**. While stopped to watch a large **Oceanic Sunfish**, a single **Great-winged Petrel** made a quick flyby. Further out we got our first **Wilson’s** and **European Storm Petrels**, as well as a few small groups of **Common** and **Arctic Terns** and the occasional **Cape Gannet**.

At the 32 nautical mile mark, we arrived at a working hake trawler. In the wake of this vessel we quickly picked up three species of albatrosses: **White-capped (Shy), Black-browed** and **Indian Yellow-nosed**, as well as **Northern Giant Petrel, White-chinned Petrel, Sooty, Cory** and **Great Shearwaters**, both **Wilson’s** and **European Storm Petrels** and **Brown Skua**. A surprise find was a single late season **Sabine’s Gull**. The crew of the trawler hauled in their catch in the late morning, attracting huge volumes of seabirds scrambling for an easy meal. While enjoying this phenomenal experience, we managed to spot an **Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross**, our fourth albatross species for the day.

At midday we started the long return journey, which was fairly quiet apart from a few scattered sightings of some of the species mentioned above. Our open ocean sea-birding was brought to an

abrupt end as a localised upwelling of cold water generated several nautical miles of thick fog extending all the way to the coast.

After enjoying light lunch below the cliffs at Cape Point, we stopped at Partridge Point. The **Bank Cormorant** colony had 12 breeding pairs of this endangered cormorant while an adjacent rock held 15 breeding pairs of **White-breasted Cormorants**. We also made a rolling pass of the **Cape Fur Seal** haul-out before docking back in port.

Pelagic species seen and approximate numbers:

Shy/White-capped Albatross – 200
Black-browed Albatross – 50
Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross - 2
Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross – 20
Northern Giant Petrel – 5
Cory's Shearwaters - 100
Sooty Shearwater – 10
Great Shearwater – 75
White-chinned Petrel – 1000
Great-winged Petrel - 1
Wilson's Storm Petrel – 200
European Storm Petrel - 30
Cape Gannet – 20
Brown (Sub-Antarctic) Skua – 2
Sabine's Gull - 1
Arctic Tern - 5

Coastal species:

African Penguin – 20
White-breasted Cormorant – 15 pairs
Cape Cormorant – common
Crowned Cormorant – 2
Reed Cormorant - 1
Bank Cormorant – 12 pairs
Kelp Gull – common
Great Crested Tern – common
Common Tern – 30
African (Black) Oystercatcher – 3

Marine mammal

Cape Fur Seal – abundant (coastal and pelagic)

Fish

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.