



Trip Report - Cape Town Pelagics - Sunday, 08 May 2022

Trip Highlights: Four Albatross species, Cory's and Great Shearwaters, Wilson's Storm Petrels and Long-beaked Common Dolphins.



Our group met at the Simon's Town Yacht Club at 06h45 on Sunday morning before setting off on our pelagic trip. This is slightly earlier than usual and there was still a touch of wind left from the rain front that had passed through Cape Town two days before. The winter chill is definitely starting to creep in, but the sky was clear and starting to brighten as we headed out into a choppy False Bay towards Cape Point.

It was too dark to pick up many species at first, but rows of **Cape Cormorants** were starting to stir and soon streamed out into the ocean in lines numbering hundreds of individuals. They were joined by individual **White-breasted Cormorants**, **Kelp Gulls** and **Greater Crested Terns** and a couple of **Cape Gannets**. As the sun peeked out of the sea we were briefly joined by a small pod of **Long-beaked Common Dolphins**, a good omen for a fantastic day at sea.

After a quick safety check-in stop at Cape Point, our Skipper, Alan heard news of a trawler and so we set out in search in what became increasingly calmer waters. We soon picked up **Sooty Shearwater** and **White-chinned Petrels**. Not far off Cape Point a **Northern Giant Petrel** skimmed past and we saw our first albatross, a **Shy Albatross**, wheeling in the air. Soon after we picked up the last of the summer's **Cory's Shearwaters**.

Alan found the trawler. It wasn't actively fishing, but there were still a good number of birds flying around or sitting in the wake. This included numerous **Black-browed** and **Shy Albatrosses** and a couple of **Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross**. We searched rafts of **White-chinned Petrels** for an elusive Spectacled Petrel, but without luck. However, we got excellent views of **Great Shearwaters** and had a couple of **Brown (Subantarctic) Skuas** fly overhead. It was excellent for albatross, but after a good amount of time spent, we weren't picking up any new species so when news of another trawler came through to the west, we went in search.

This proved to be a good strategy. The waves threw up a few **Wilson's Storm Petrels** and large numbers of albatross as well as an occasional **Cape Fur Seal**. As we neared the trawler a giant appeared in the air with black wings and a white back – a **Northern Royal Albatross!** We chased after it, but without any apparent effort the bird slowly disappeared over the horizon. A slight pity that it didn't give us a show, but everyone on board got a decent view.

We settled near to the second trawler and were treated to large numbers of these albatrosses, petrels and shearwaters. We enjoyed indulging in the spectacle, but eventually needed to head back to harbour for the group to catch their return flight to Johannesburg.

We stopped for a light lunch in the calm waters of False Bay where a couple of **Common Terns** fished near the cliffs just off Cape Point. We scanned the rocks at Partridge Point for **Bank** and **Crowned Cormorants** which were picked out of a group of a 100 or so **Cape Cormorants** and spattering of **White-breasted Cormorants**.

A small raft of **African Penguins** dipped under the water as we turned back into Simon's Town harbour, where an **African Oystercatcher** and **Hartlaub's Gulls** finished off the day's total.

It was another wonderful day of sea-birding enjoyed out at sea!

Pelagic species seen and approximate numbers:

Shy Albatross	<i>Thalassarche cauta</i>	200
Black-browed Albatross	<i>Thalassarche melanophris</i>	250
Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross	<i>Thalassarche carteri</i>	10
Northern Royal Albatross	<i>Diomedea sanfordi</i>	1
Northern Giant Petrel	<i>Macronectes halli</i>	2
White-chinned Petrel	<i>Procelleria aequinoctialis</i>	400
Cory's Shearwater	<i>Calonectris borealis</i>	50
Sooty Shearwater	<i>Ardenna grisea</i>	150
Great Shearwater	<i>Ardenna gravis</i>	150
Wilson's Storm Petrel	<i>Oceanites oceanicus</i>	10

Coastal species seen and approximate numbers:

Cape Gannet	<i>Morus capensis</i>	15
Kelp Gull	<i>Larus dominicanus</i>	50
Hartlaubs Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus hartlaubii</i>	2
African Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus moquini</i>	1
White-breasted Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax lucidus</i>	15
Bank Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax neglectus</i>	10
Cape Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax capensis</i>	1000
African Penguin	<i>Spheniscus demersus</i>	4
Great Crested Tern	<i>Thalasseus bergii</i>	20
Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	2

Marine mammals:

Brown (Cape) Fur Seal	<i>Arctocephalus pusillus</i>	20
Long-beaked common dolphins	<i>Delphinus capensis</i>	10

Trip report: Cape Town Pelagics guides, [Vanessa Stephen](#) and [Joel Radue](#)

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