



Trip Report - Cape Town Pelagics - Saturday, 04 June 2022

Trip Highlights: Northern Royal Albatross, Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross, Antarctic Prion, Wilson's Storm and Cape (Pintado) Petrels.



Northern Royal Albatross

The 4th June was a beautifully calm winter morning as eight keen birders boarded a Cape Town Pelagics trip from Simon's Town. After a short safety briefing we were on our way, quickly picking up coastal species such as **Hartlaub's Gulls**, **Cape** and **Crowned Cormorant**. Out in False Bay we passed a flock of **African Penguins** heading out to sea, shrouded in a pink sunrise on the calm water.

Our trip across False Bay was quiet with only **Common Tern** and **Swift Tern** on the wing. We soon reached Cape Point and paused to take in the magnificent view in the soft morning light while checking in with radio stations. We headed out to the deep, soon finding **Sooty Shearwaters**, **Cape Gannets** and lines of **Cape Cormorant**. Heading further out we came across our first albatross, a **Shy**.

We picked up on the radar a trawler far out at the 30 nautical mile mark and we headed for her. On the way we encountered small groups of **Antarctic Prions**, while a **Sub-Antarctic Skua** followed us for a while thinking there was a meal to be had. Heading toward the trawler a few **Cory's Shearwater** appeared, followed by a young **Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross**.



Antarctic Prion

The trawler was the “Umlobi” out of Cape Town but just before we got to her, we started to come across large numbers of birds which included our first **Cape (Pintado) Petrel** and **Wilson’s Storm Petrels** dancing on the calm water. We got within a few hundred metres from the trawler when amongst the large number of **Shy** and **Black-Browed Albatross** there was a call of “White-backed” and we quickly saw a **Northern Royal Albatross** come past us. This huge bird circled us a few times and gave good views before disappearing amongst the mass of birds behind the trawler. We were to see what appeared to be this individual three times while out in the deep.

We remained behind the trawler for some two hours, picking up good views of all the species including several **Southern** and **Northern Giant Petrels**. Large flocks of albatross mixed with **White-chinned** and **Pintado Petrels**, while **Antarctic Prions**, **Sooty Shearwaters** and **Wilson’s Storm Petrels** drifted through.

A dozen or so **Sub-Antarctic (Brown) Skuas** hung in the air off the side of the trawler as they used the lift generated by the boat to get a free ride and scan the area for food. After midday, as we were about to leave the trawler and head for home two whales blew close to us. We had views of their dorsal fins showing us that these were either **Sei Whales** or the deep sea population of **Bryde’s Whales**.

The trip home was quiet and soon we were in the sheltered waters of False Bay and had lunch under the Cape Point cliffs. After lunch we travelled across False Bay, coming to the Castle Rock cormorant colony. Here we found **White-breasted, Cape Cormorants**, and **Bank Cormorants**, whilst the adjacent rocks held an **African Black Oystercatcher**. The rocks also held a colony of **Cape Fur Seals** which loafed about in the sun and dived into the surf. We made our way back to Simon's Town Harbour, being greeted by flocks of **Cape** and **White-breasted Cormorants** on the buoy lines in the harbour.

Bird species seen and approximate numbers:

Northern Royal Albatross - 1
Shy Albatross – 70
Black-browed Albatross – 150
Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross – 3
Sub-Antarctic (Brown) Skua – 12
White-chinned Petrel – 100
Antarctic Prion – 10
Cape (Pintado) Petrel – 50
Northern Giant Petrel – 6
Southern Giant Petrel - 6
Wilson's Storm-Petrel – 150
Sooty Shearwater – 100
Cory's Shearwater – 8
Cape Gannet – 20

Coastal Species:

Swift Tern
Common Tern
Hartlaub's Gull
Kelp Gull
Cape Cormorant
Bank Cormorant
Crowned Cormorant – 1
White-breasted Cormorant
African Penguin – 80
African Black Oystercatcher – 1

Mammals:

Cape Fur Seal
Sei or Bryde's Whale (deep water population) - 2

Trip report: Cape Town Pelagics guide - [Dalton Gibbs](#)

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.



Black-browed Albatross