



## Cape Town Pelagics - Trip Report - Sunday, 31 July 2022

Highlights included: Six species of albatrosses, including **Wanderer** and **Northern Royal**, **white morph Southern Giant Petrel**, **Cape (Pintado) Petrel**, **Soft-plumaged Petrel**.

Number of bird species: 24



### Wandering Albatross

We departed Simon's Town in relatively chilly conditions picking up a nice spread of coastal species while travelling south towards Cape Point. **Cape Cormorants** were abundant with smaller numbers of **African Penguins**, **Cape Gannets**, **Kelp Gulls**, **Crowned Cormorants** and **Great Crested Terns** making up the remainder of the sightings.

A pair of **Humpback Whales** made a quick appearance near southern edge of the Bay, but these were quickly forgotten as we got our first pelagic tubenoses. A fantastic mix of **Sooty Shearwaters**, **White-chinned Petrels** and both **Northern** and **Southern Giant Petrels** along with thousands of **Cape Cormorants** greeted us at Cape Point.

From here we set a course for the fishing grounds and started the trek out. This leg of the trip was dominated by the above pelagic species, with the quick addition of **White-capped/Shy** and **Black-browed Albatrosses** and **Soft-plumaged Petrels** to trip list.

A school of well over a thousand **Long-beaked Common Dolphins** put on an impressive show drawing in a good number of seabirds, including the new additions of **Brown Skua** and **Cape/Pintado Petrels**.

After a long slog we finally arrived at a working trawler 34 nautical miles offshore. Our perseverance was rewarded when we quickly picked up a **Northern Royal Albatross**. Sadly, it only made a brief fly through before disappearing in the swells. While trying to relocate this bird, a rare white-morph **Southern Giant Petrel** made a series of protracted passes, showing off it's stunning speckled plumage exceptionally well.

Our albatross species tally for the day was supplemented by views of both **Indian** and **Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatrosses** bringing the day's total to five. To our combined surprise we then found an adult **Wandering Albatross** making it a very respectable six for the day!! **Wanderers** have become increasingly rare in the Cape waters, making this sightings an especially rare and important record.

After a hugely successful morning in the deep ocean, we began the return leg with the relocation of the large pod of **Long-beaked Common Dolphins** slightly closer to land.

Once back in False Bay, we made a quick visit to the **Bank Cormorant** colony at Partridge Point. Here we also picked up both **Cape** and **White-breasted Cormorants**, plus a pair of **African Oystercatchers**. The nearby **Cape Fur Seal** haul-out was relatively empty with the rising spring tide possibly causing them to roost elsewhere. From here we returned to port ending off with a nice group of **Crowned Cormorants** roosting near the yacht club slipway.

#### **Pelagics Species and approximate numbers:**

Wandering Albatross – 1  
Northern Royal Albatross - 1  
Shy/White-capped Albatross – 200  
Black-browed Albatross – 30  
Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross – 3  
Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross – 5  
Northern Giant Petrel – 6  
Southern Giant Petrel – 6 (including 1 white morph)  
Giant Petrel sp. - 3  
Sooty Shearwater – 350  
Great Shearwater – 1  
White-chinned Petrel – 500  
Cape (Pintado) Petrel – 200  
Soft-plumaged Petrel – 7  
Wilson's Storm Petrel – 1  
Brown (Sub-Antarctic) Skua – 5

**Coastal Species:**

African Penguin – 10 at sea (plus several onshore)

Kelp Gull – common

Great Crested Tern – common

Cape Gannet – 50

White-breasted Cormorant – 10 pairs

Cape Cormorant – abundant (several thousand at Cape Point)

Crowned Cormorant – 8

Bank Cormorant – 20 pairs

African (Black) Oystercatcher - 2

**Marine mammals**

Cape Fur Seal – abundant (coastal and pelagic)

Humpback Whale – 2

Long-beaked Common Dolphin – 1000+

A Cape Town Pelagics trip report by [Vincent Ward](#)



White morph **Southern Giant Petrel**

**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