



Trip Report - Cape Town Pelagics – Monday 08 August 2022

Trip Highlights: Five albatross species including Northern Royal, Cape Petrels, Northern and Southern Giant Petrels, Wilson’s Storm Petrels, Dusky Dolphins.

Number of Bird Species: 21



We headed out of Hout Bay Harbour on a cold, breezy morning, in between two weather systems that we hoped would blow a few good birds into our patch of ocean.

We left at first light, a trio of **Cape Wagtails** trilling at us from the gangway while **White-breasted Cormorants** decorated the rigging of nearby boats and **Cape Cormorants** perched in between sleeping **Cape fur Seals**.

It was a little bit choppy going out of the spectacular bay but **Kelp** and **Hartlaub's Gulls** kept us company on the way out; a couple of **Common Terns** skimmed low on the water near to Chapman's Peak and **Greater Crested Terns** headed out to sea to forage.

The good thing about a trip from Hout Bay means that the pelagic species are not far away, and we soon picked up the rapid fluttering of **Sooty Shearwaters** and the wheeling of **White-chinned Petrels**. The first of the day's **Shy Albatrosses** and **Cape Gannets** appeared at distance, but we knew we'd get better views of these gorgeous birds.

A single **African Penguin** with a fat fish in its beak dived away from us and a **Brown (Sub-Antarctic) Skua** hovered over the boat, just above our heads, giving the best possible views.

And then it was quiet for a while as we headed further out in search of a trawler. We stopped for a while and put out some bait which brought in several **Brown Skuas**, **White-Chinned Petrels** and our first **Black-Browed Albatross**. Eventually we got news of a trawler and headed further west where we were soon joined by the wonderfully patterned **Cape Petrels**. These birds always bring a smile to those who see them.

It was a long way out, but worth it. As we approached the trawler, we started picking up more and more birds. A **Southern Giant Petrel** skimmed past, dwarfing a group of white-chinned petrels and soon after, **tiny Wilson's Storm Petrels** could be seen in increasing regularity, dancing on the waves around our boat.

The trawler was unfortunately not processing or pulling nets, so the scene was not as wild as it could be, but there were numerous birds all round and we settled in to see what would turn up. We soon picked up the elusive **Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross** in amongst the **Shy** and **Black-browed Albatrosses** and not long after **the Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross** also did a fly past.

Just when things seemed to be quietening down, a giant appeared in the air with black wings and a white back – a **Northern Royal Albatross**! It obligingly flew relatively close and languidly across our bow before disappearing suddenly – as they do.

We indulged in the spectacle of birds for a good while longer and were rewarded with a **Northern Giant Petrel**, a far away glimpse of an **Antarctic Prion** and another **Northern Royal** with a mottled back. Eventually we needed to head back to Hout Bay before predicted stronger winds started to kick in, and we had a good number of miles to cover.

And so, finally to shore, happy and overwhelmed with the wonders that we'd seen. Just to top it all off, a third **Northern Royal Albatross** came to see us off. But we had one last treat in store. Not far out of Hout Bay we came across a huge group of **Dusky Dolphins**, These dolphins are certainly not an everyday occurrence and being in the midst of hundreds is just the perfect way to end off another wonderful day a sea.



Cape (Pintado) Petrel



Northern Royal Albatross



Shy Albatross



Brown (Subantarctic) Skua

Pelagic species seen and approximate numbers:

Shy Albatross	<i>Thalassarche cauta</i>	100
Black-browed Albatross	<i>Thalassarche melanophris</i>	100
Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross	<i>Thalassarche carteri</i>	8
Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross	<i>Thalassarche chlororhynchos</i>	10
Northern Royal Albatross	<i>Diomedea sanfordi</i>	2
Northern Giant Petrel	<i>Macronectes halli</i>	2
Southern Giant Petrel	<i>Macronectes giganteus</i>	3
White-chinned Petrel	<i>Procelleria aequinoctialis</i>	450
Cape Petrel	<i>Daption capense</i>	400
Sooty Shearwater	<i>Ardenna grisea</i>	150
Wilson's Storm Petrel	<i>Oceanites oceanicus</i>	20
Antarctic Prion	<i>Pachyptila desolata</i>	1
Brown (Subantarctic) Skua	<i>Stercorarius antarcticus</i>	25

Coastal species seen and approximate numbers:

Cape Gannet	<i>Morus capensis</i>	100
Kelp Gull	<i>Larus dominicanus</i>	50
Hartlaub's Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus hartlaubii</i>	20
White-breasted Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax lucidus</i>	20
Cape Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax capensis</i>	30
African Penguin	<i>Spheniscus demersus</i>	1
Great Crested Tern	<i>Thalasseus bergii</i>	25
Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	2

Marine mammals:

Brown (Cape) Fur Seal	<i>Arctocephalus pusillus</i>	20
Dusky Dolphins	<i>Lagenorhynchus obscurus</i>	250
Humpback Whales	<i>Megaptera novaeangliae</i>	2

Trip report: Cape Town Pelagics guide: [Vanessa Stephen](#)

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.



White-chinned Petrel