



## Trip Report - Cape Town Pelagics - Sunday, 16 October 2022

**Trip Highlights:** Four Albatross species, Cape Petrels, large numbers of Great Shearwater, Sabine's Gull, close-up views of a Humpback Whale, and a friendly Cape Clawless Otter in the harbour.



This trip was scheduled for Saturday, but due to high winds and rough seas, we were only able to depart from Simon's Town at 09:00 on Sunday. We were joined by a British birder, a regular South African client, and a group of birders from Spain, who were enjoying the second day of their birding tour of South Africa.

The harbour delivered the usual suspects, with **African Black Oystercatcher**, **Cape**, **White-breasted** and **Crowned Cormorants** all showing well.

We headed down to Cape Point with good numbers of **Hartlaub's** and **Kelp Gulls** present, as well numerous **Greater Crested Terns** and a group of **African Penguins**. We made an early stop at the cormorant colony, with the group enjoying good views of the endangered **Bank Cormorant**, and the **Cape Fur Seals** also provided entertainment for the group.

Beyond Cape Point, we started to encounter **Sooty Shearwaters** and **White-chinned Petrels**, and it wasn't long thereafter that we celebrated our first albatross of the day, in the form of a **Shy Albatross** that gave us a close-up flyby view. As expected, this species would prove common throughout the day, with immature and adult birds present. Numerous groups of **Cape Gannets** were also seen.



### **Shy Albatross**

Further out, we started to encounter **Black-browed Albatrosses**, and **Great Shearwaters** were also seen in good numbers throughout the day. We headed south towards a trawler, and there was good bird activity in this area, with both **Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross** and **Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross** seen (the latter proving more challenging!). The trawler also delivered a few lingering **Cape Petrels** (typically a winter special), at least two **Northern Giant Petrels**, and one **Southern Giant Petrel**. We had brief but satisfying views of a group of **Sabine's Gulls** sitting in the water close to the boat, and occasional **Subantarctic (Brown) Skuas** also made an appearance, harassing the gulls and terns. **Common Terns** were numerous throughout the trip. Occasional **Wilson's Storm Petrels** were also seen shooting past at high speed.



**Great Shearwater**

We enjoyed a light lunch out at sea courtesy of Lynne, and then headed back in calm and pleasant conditions, with the sea swell greatly reduced from the morning. En-route home we enjoyed a close up view of two **Humpback Whales**, which were well received by the crowd, and a **Cape Clawless Otter** entertained us on return to Simon's Town harbour, which rounded off the day very nicely.

**Journey report:** At our furthest point, we were 24 nautical miles from Cape Point. We left later in the morning to counter the high winds overnight, and during our trip the winds were moderate in the morning and then dropped off completely later in the day, with a mostly east-south east direction, up to 15 knots. Midday was sunny and hot but we also had a brief period of rain en route back to harbour. The swell was moderate at 2-2.5m, and also dropped significantly towards midday. The water temperature was approximately 17-18 degrees C.

**Pelagic species seen and approximate numbers:**

Shy Albatross	<i>Thalassarche cauta</i>	500+
Black-browed Albatross	<i>Thalassarche melanophris</i>	300+
Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross	<i>Thalassarche carteri</i>	5
Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross	<i>Thalassarche chlororhynchos</i>	1
Northern Giant Petrel	<i>Macronectes halli</i>	3
Southern Giant Petrel	<i>Macronectes giganteus</i>	1
White-chinned Petrel	<i>Procelleria aequinoctialis</i>	1000+
Cape Petrel	<i>Daption capense</i>	5
Sooty Shearwater	<i>Ardena grisea</i>	100+
Great Shearwater	<i>Puffinus gravis</i>	200+
Wilson's Storm Petrel	<i>Oceanites oceanicus</i>	5
Brown (Subantarctic) Skua	<i>Stercorarius antarcticus</i>	4
Sabine's Gull	<i>Xema sabini</i>	3

**Coastal species seen and approximate numbers:**

Cape Gannet	<i>Morus capensis</i>	30
Kelp Gull	<i>Larus dominicanus</i>	50
Hartlaub's Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus hartlaubii</i>	5
White-breasted Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax lucidus</i>	5
Bank Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax neglectus</i>	15
Cape Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax capensis</i>	200+
African Penguin	<i>Spheniscus demersus</i>	20
Great Crested Tern	<i>Thalasseus bergii</i>	30
Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	40

**Marine mammals:**

Brown (Cape) Fur Seal	<i>Arctocephalus pusillus</i>	20
Humpback Whales	<i>Megaptera novaeangliae</i>	3

Trip report: Cape Town Pelagics guide, Garret Skead

**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.



**Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross**



**Cape (Pintado) Petrel**



**Shy Albatross**