



Trip Report - Cape Town Pelagics - Saturday, 5 November 2022

Trip Highlights: Atlantic Yellow-nosed and Shy Albatross, Wilson's and European Storm Petrels, Sabine's Gull, Southern Giant Petrel and close-up views of a Bryde's Whale.



We departed from Simon's Town harbour aboard the *Destiny*, on Saturday 5 November, with our experienced pelagic skipper, Alan. We were joined by international clients from the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden, most of whom were on their first Cape pelagic trip.

The weather in False Bay harbour was windy with bumpy seas, but beyond Cape Point, we enjoyed pleasant and moderate conditions, with winds up to 13 knots but with low wave heights. At our furthest point, we were 33 nautical miles from Cape Point.

Steaming out to the point delivered the regular coastal species, including **Cape, Bank, White-breasted** and **Crowned Cormorants**, with good numbers of **Greater Crested Terns, Common Terns, Kelp Gulls** and a few **Hartlaub's Gulls**. Occasional **Sandwich Terns** were also seen.

Close to the point, we had an epic although brief encounter with a **Bryde's Whale**, surfacing briefly and offering great views, and an **Ocean Sunfish** which was seen too. Numerous **Cape Fur Seals** were present as usual.

Beyond Cape Point, the conditions were initially very misty, with quiet seas creating a calm yet ethereal atmosphere, with occasional **White-chinned Petrels** and **Sooty Shearwaters** appearing out of the grey ether for flyby encounters. Through the misty area, we had to wait for a while before seeing our first albatross (a sub-adult **Shy Albatross**), which gave excellent views and was enjoyed by everyone on board. **Cape Gannets** were also seen in small groups.

Further out to sea, we headed south in search of fishing vessels, but on this occasion it was not to be. The trawlers were working further south and west, beyond our range, and we used oil to create a slick and draw in the pelagic species. We had good views of **Shy Albatross, White-chinned Petrels** and **Sooty Shearwaters**, and at least 13 **Wilson's Storm Petrels** were drawn to the slick, accompanied by at least one summer migrant **European Storm Petrel**, with distinct bold white underwing bar.



Wilson's Storm Petrel

A single **Great Shearwater** was seen, and one adult **Southern Giant Petrel** also put it in a brief appearance.

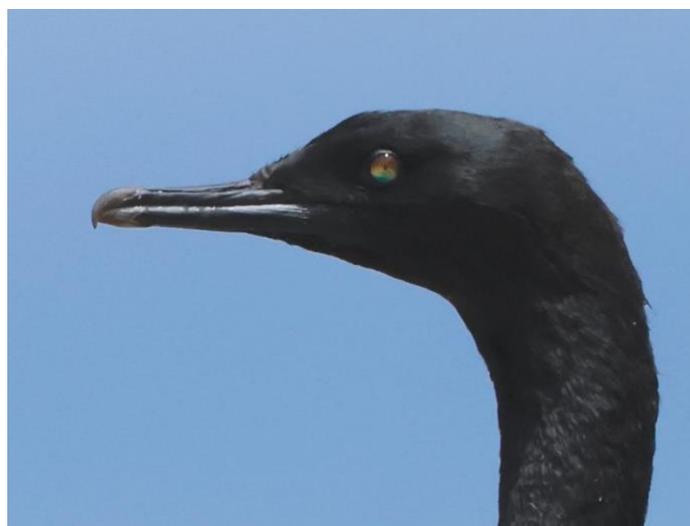


Southern Giant Petrel

Towards the end of the morning, a stunning adult **Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross** was seen well by the group. Breeding in the southern Atlantic Ocean islands of Tristan da Cunha and Gough, this species is a top priority for international visiting birders.

Common Terns were numerous throughout the day. Occasional **Subantarctic (Brown) Skuas** were also seen, as well as at least two dark morph adult **Parasitic Jaegers**. Summer visiting **Sabine's Gulls** were seen too.

We enjoyed lunch in the bay courtesy of Lynne, and then headed back via the Cormorant colonies. Excellent views of **Bank Cormorant** were enjoyed, with an adult bird showing its beautiful technicolor three-toned eye.



Bank Cormorant

Pelagic species seen and approximate numbers:

Shy Albatross	<i>Thalassarche cauta</i>	5
Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross	<i>Thalassarche chlororhynchos</i>	1
Southern Giant Petrel	<i>Macronectes giganteus</i>	1
White-chinned Petrel	<i>Procelleria aequinoctialis</i>	30
Cape Petrel	<i>Daption capense</i>	5
Sooty Shearwater	<i>Ardenna griseus</i>	30
Great Shearwater	<i>Puffinus gravis</i>	1
Wilson's Storm Petrel	<i>Oceanites oceanicus</i>	13
European Storm Petrel	<i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i>	1
Brown (Subantarctic) Skua	<i>Stercorarius antarcticus</i>	4
Parasitic Jaeger	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>	2
Sabine's Gull	<i>Xema sabini</i>	8

Coastal species seen and approximate numbers:

Cape Gannet	<i>Morus capensis</i>	20
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+
Great Crested Tern	<i>Thalasseus bergii</i>	30
Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	40
Sandwich Tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>	2

Marine mammals:

Brown (Cape) Fur Seal	<i>Arctocephalus pusillus</i>	30+
Bryde's Whale	<i>Balaenoptera brydei</i>	1

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