



Trip Report - Cape Town Pelagics - Saturday, 18 March 2023

Trip Highlights: Two species albatross, Manx Shearwater, Sabine's Gulls, Humpback Whale.



Our group met at 07:00 on a rainy Saturday morning at the Simon's Town Yacht Club before setting off on our pelagic tour. As we set off from Simon's Town harbour towards Cape Point, we soon started encountering a few coastal seabird species such as **Crowned-** and **Cape Cormorants**, **Hartlaub's Gulls**, **Kelp Gulls** and **Greater Crested (Swift) Terns**, as well as a big raft of **African Penguins** out on one of their first foraging outings for the day.

At our safety check-in and photo opportunity stop at Cape Point, we added **Cape Cormorants**, a few **Greater Crested (Swift) Terns** and **Common Terns**. Heading out slightly further, we encountered the first **White-chinned Petrels** of the day, and soon afterwards we started coming across good numbers of **Sooty Shearwaters**, **Cory's Shearwaters**, **Great Shearwaters** and a few **Manx Shearwaters** and **Cape Gannets**. A young **Humpback Whale** put on a bit of a show and some of us also had brief views of **Ocean Sunfish** and a **Blue Shark**.

There were no trawlers in the Cape Canyon area, however a couple of Tuna pole-fishing vessels were present, and a good cross-section of bird species were hanging around in the vessels wakes including **Shy Albatross**, **Black-browed Albatross**, both **European Storm Petrel** and **Wilson's Storm Petrel**, **Brown Skua**, **Common Tern**, **Arctic Tern**, **Great Shearwater**, **Cory's Shearwater**, **White Chinned Petrel**, **Kelp Gull** and **Cape Gannet**. A boat belonging to a shark-diving outfit came to the area where we were, and their chumming to bring in sharks was also successful in bringing a few more birds closer.



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Brown Skua

After enjoying the birds for a few hours, we started heading northwards again. We continued to see good numbers of the birds already seen earlier in the day, then found what we thought was probably the same **Humpback Whale** from the morning, and then came across large numbers of **Sabine's Gulls**.



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Sabine's Gull

En-route back to Simon's Town we enjoyed lunch and cold drinks in a relatively calm spot overlooking the Cape of Good Hope National Park. Our last stop was at Partridge Point where we visited the **Bank Cormorant** colony, which also hosted a few **White Breasted Cormorants** and **Cape Cormorants** and the **Cape Fur Seal** hang-out. We then finally returned to the Simonstown harbour after a wonderful day of birding out at sea, where our last new bird for the day was an **African Oystercatcher**.

Pelagic species seen and approximate numbers:

Shy Albatross	20
Black-browed Albatross	1
White-chinned Petrel	400
Cory's Shearwater	300
Sooty Shearwater	300
Great Shearwater	300
Manx Shearwater	3
Wilson's Storm Petrel	150
European Storm Petrel	150
Cape Gannet	50
Brown (Subantarctic) Skua	3
Sabine's Gull	300+
Arctic Tern	50

Coastal Species:

Egyptian Goose	2
Grey Heron	1
Hartlaub's Gull	30
Kelp Gull	300
African Oystercatcher	1
White-breasted Cormorant	10
Bank Cormorant	20
Crowned Cormorant	5
Cape Cormorant	300
African Penguin	150
Great Crested Tern	50
Common Tern	80
Brown (Cape) Fur Seal	100

Marine mammals:

Humpback Whale	1
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Fish:

Ocean Sunfish/Common Mola	1
Blue Shark	1

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.



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Kelp Gull