



Trip Report - Cape Town Pelagics - Sunday, 9 April 2023

Trip Highlights: Four Albatross species, Dusky Dolphins, Ocean Sunfish.



Our group met at 07:00 at the False Bay Yacht Club, Simon's Town on a beautiful sunny and relatively wind-still Sunday morning before setting off on our pelagic tour. As we set off from Simon's Town's harbour towards Cape Point, we soon started encountering a few coastal seabird species such as **Cape Cormorants**, **Kelp Gulls** and **Greater Crested (Swift) Terns**, as well as a one or two small rafts of **African Penguins** out on their first foraging outings for the day.

At our safety check-in and photo opportunity stop at Cape Point, we only had a few of the bird species seen earlier, however soon afterwards we encountered the first **White-chinned Petrels** of the day, as well as a few **Cory's Shearwaters**, **Great Shearwaters** and **Cape Gannets**. Our mammalian highlight along this stretch was a large pod of **Dusky Dolphins**.

There were many small boats that were fishing for tuna, and every so often we saw a **Yellowfin Tuna** jump. Around 15 miles out from Cape Point, we came across a Tuna pole-fishing vessel, with a good cross-section of bird species hanging around in the vessel's wake including **Shy Albatross**, along with larger numbers of the birds seen previously.



As we looked around, we saw a large, breaching **Ocean Sunfish** splash back into the water. Further along, we picked up first one, then a second trawler, both with masses of birds, including **Black-browed Albatross, Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross, Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross, Southern Giant Petrel**, both **European Storm Petrel** and **Wilson's Storm Petrel** and **Brown Skua**.

Black-browed Albatross

After enjoying the birds for a few hours, we started heading northwards again where we continued to see good numbers of the birds already seen earlier in the day. 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 and the **Cape Fur Seal** rock, which also hosted a few **White Breasted Cormorants, Cape Cormorants, a Crowned Cormorant** and a couple of **African Oystercatchers**. We finally had to return to harbour after a wonderful day of birding out at sea.



Bank Cormorant

Pelagic species seen and approximate numbers:

| | |
|---------------------------------|------|
| Shy Albatross | 300+ |
| Black-browed Albatross | 500+ |
| Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross | 2 |
| Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross | 3 |
| Southern Giant Petrel | 1 |
| White-chinned Petrel | 500 |
| Cory's Shearwater | 30 |
| Sooty Shearwater | 20 |
| Great Shearwater | 300 |
| Wilson's Storm Petrel | 300 |
| European Storm Petrel | 80 |
| Cape Gannet | 20 |
| Brown (Subantarctic) Skua | 3 |

Coastal species:

| | |
|--------------------------|-----|
| Kelp Gull | 50 |
| African Oystercatcher | 2 |
| White-breasted Cormorant | 10 |
| Bank Cormorant | 25 |
| Crowned Cormorant | 2 |
| Cape Cormorant | 100 |
| African Penguin | 50 |
| Great Crested Tern | 100 |

Marine mammals:

| | |
|-----------------------|------|
| Brown (Cape) Fur Seal | 50 |
| Dusky Dolphin | 500+ |

Fish:

| | |
|---------------------------|----|
| Ocean Sunfish/Common Mola | 1 |
| Yellow-finned Tuna | 30 |

Trip report: Cape Town Pelagics guide - [David Swanepoel](#)

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.

