



## Trip Report - Cape Town Pelagics - Saturday, 6 May 2023

Trip Highlights: Four albatross species, Northern & Southern Giant Petrel, Great Shearwater



On the morning of Saturday, 6 May a cold front was predicted to be approaching Cape Town; but there was a window of opportunity to get out to sea before it made landfall. In calm weather, a group of keen birders boarded the Cape Town Pelagic's trip launching from Simon's Town. After a short safety briefing, we were on our way, quickly picking up coastal species such as **Hartlaub's Gulls**, **Cape Cormorant**; and a playful group of **Chacma Baboons** which were in the harbour. We headed out into False Bay on calm waters, passing off-shore rock stacks packed full of cormorants.

Our trip across False Bay was quiet with only the occasional **Swift Tern** and **Cape Gannet** about. Reaching Cape Point we paused to take in the magnificent view in the soft morning light, took some scenic photos and checked in with radio stations. While stationary at the point we soon started seeing **Sooty Shearwater** and **White-chinned Petrel** while further out, long lines of **Cape Cormorant** were moving out to sea. We travelled further on and soon came across our first Shy **Albatross** close inshore, accompanied by a few **Cory's Shearwater**.

Traveling further out we passed groups of these birds and the occasional **Shy Albatross** that curiously came up to see us. At 15 N mile we found a trawler on radar and moved toward her, finding a few **Great Shearwater, Northern Giant Petrel** and a juvenile **Black-browed Albatross en-route**. Birds increased as we came closer to the trawler which was the “*Freesia*” out of Cape Town.

Here we found **Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross**, a few **Pintado Petrel, European Storm-petrel** and **Sub-Antarctic Skua**. A small flock of **Wilson’s Storm-petrels** appeared amongst the gathering birds and a few **Northern Giant Petrels** were about. The trawler had recently reset her nets so there were a few hundred birds circling our area, giving us good views of the various species about. We stayed with the trawler for the next hour until a short rain squall closed in our view and we moved to another nearby trawler, the “*Flame Thorn*”. Here we found a similar mixture of the ten pelagic species and the odd **Cape Fur Seal** hanging around. With a break in the weather, the sun came out and we had lunch out in the deep before turning for home.

With the wind picking up a bit our trip home was slow, but we were rewarded with an old **Southern Giant Petrel** and a single **Manx Shearwater** amongst a group of roosting **White-chinned Petrels** near Cape Point. When we entered the calmer waters of False Bay we headed across to the Castle Rock cormorant colony. Here we found **White-breasted, Cape Cormorants**, and **Bank Cormorants** on nests. Adjacent rocks also held a colony of **Cape Fur Seals** which loafed about in the sun and dived into the surf. While we watched the antics of the seals a **Crowned Cormorant** hauled out of the surf and on to the rocks giving us a good views. We made our way back to Simon’s Town harbour, finding a long line of Cape Cormorants on the mooring lines to greet us.

**Pelagic species seen and approximate numbers:**

Cape Gannet	50
White-chinned Petrel	300+
Pintado Petrel	6
Northern Giant Petrel	6
Southern Giant Petrel	1
Wilson’s Storm-Petrel	2
European Storm-Petrel	6
Sooty Shearwater	150
Great Shearwater	150
Cory’s Shearwater	70
Shy Albatross	150
Black-browed Albatross	120
Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross	12
Sub-Antarctic Skua	6

**Coastal Species:**

Swift Tern	
Hartlaub's Gull	
Kelp Gull	
Cape Cormorant	
Bank Cormorant	
Crowned Cormorant	1
White-breasted Cormorant	
African Penguin	

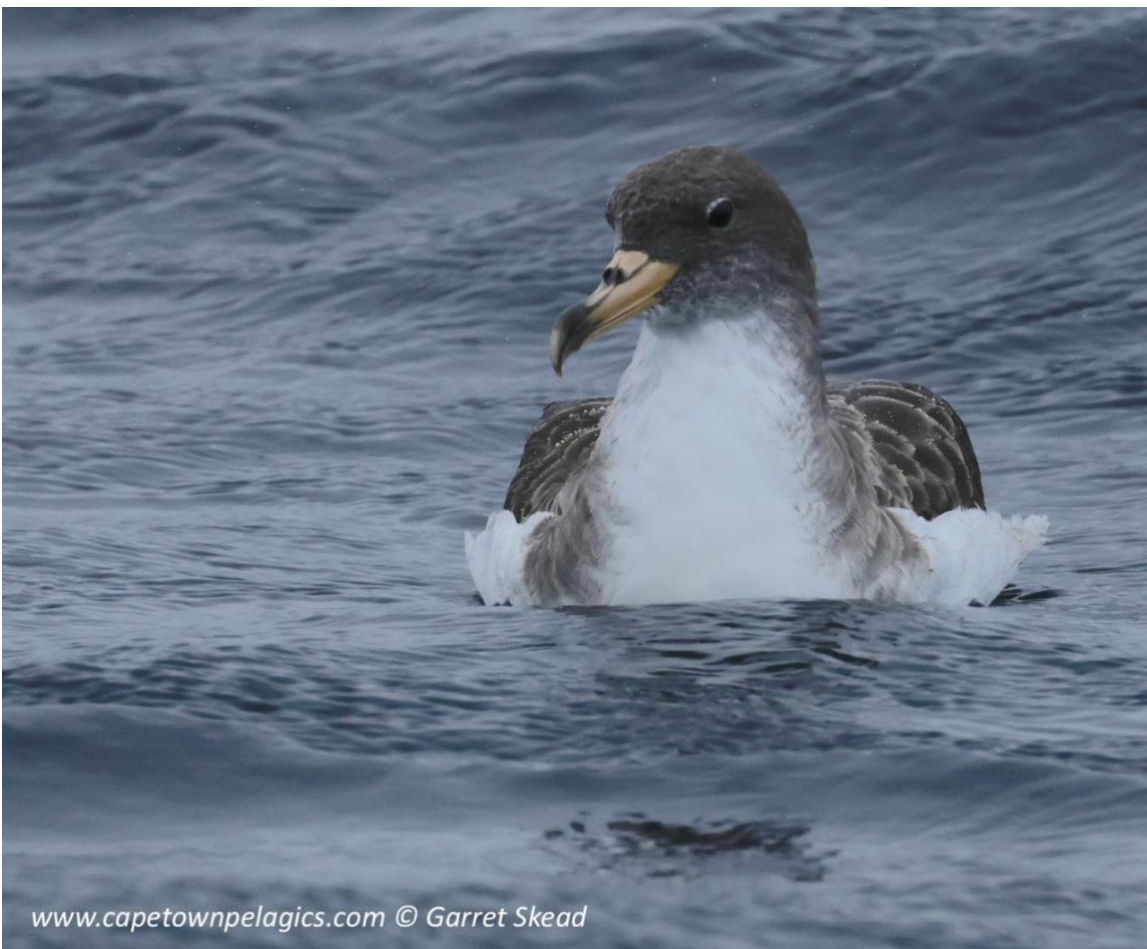
**Mammals:**

Cape Fur Seal	
Chacma Baboon	

**GALLERY****Shy Albatross**



**Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross**



**Cory's Shearwater**



**White-chinned Petrel**



**Great Shearwater**



**Black-browed Albatross**

Trip report: Cape Town Pelagics guide – [Dalton Gibbs](#)

Photos: Cape Town Pelagics guide – Garret Skead & Peter Hall (pelagic participant)

**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.