



Trip Report – Cape Town Pelagics – Sunday, 23 January 2022

Trip Highlights: Three species of albatross, Parasitic Jaeger, Spectacled Petrel and Sabine’s Gull

We were happy to set out into the relatively cool temperatures in False Bay, escaping the current heat wave. Our trip down to Cape Point netted us a nice variety of coastal species including **African Penguins, Crowned, White-breasted and Cape Cormorants**, both **Hartlaub’s and Kelp Gulls**, **African Oystercatcher** and **Great Crested Terns**.

Just before reaching Cape Point we came across a juvenile **Southern Giant Petrel** resting on the water. After a brief stop at the point itself, we set a course for a cluster of trawlers fishing in the deep ocean.

Our course took us through some good patches of seabirds resting on the water in the prevailing calm conditions. Most common were **White-chinned Petrels** and **Cory’s** and **Sooty Shearwaters**, with the moderately sized groups of **Common** and **Arctic Terns**, as well as the occasional **Cape Gannet, Northern Giant Petrel, Sabine’s Gull, Great** and **Manx Shearwater**.

We found the trawlers at 30 nautical miles offshore but sadly the first one we visited ‘*Forest Lily*’ only had a small number of trailing birds. We did however add our first **Shy** and **Black-browed Albatrosses**, as well as both **Wilson’s** and **European Storm Petrels**. A **Brown Skua** and an **Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross** made a fly-by before disappearing.

The other nearby trawler proved to be a better option as it had significantly more birds. Our time there got us most of the pelagic species seen already, but closer and in larger volumes. The standout was a stunning **Spectacled Petrel** hiding in the flocks of **White-chinned Petrel**. Another hidden gem was a single **Leach’s Storm Petrel** that made a very quick pass. We also added a fish lifer for most in the form of an **Oceanic Sunfish**.

With a long return leg ahead of us, we started back to harbour just before midday. This leg netted us large numbers of **Arctic Terns** roosting on floating rafts of kelp. These birds drew in several **Arctic** and **Pomarine Jaegers**.

Once back in the bay, we had a quick lunch before heading to the Partridge Point **Bank Cormorant** colony and the nearby **Cape Fur Seal** haul-out. From here we headed back into port capping off a fantastic day at sea.

Pelagic species seen and approximate numbers:

Shy/White-capped Albatross – 20
Black-browed Albatross – 5
Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross – 1
Northern Giant Petrel – 1
Southern Giant Petrel – 1
Giant petrel sp - 3
Sooty Shearwater – 20
Cory's Shearwater – 40
Manx Shearwater - 1
Great Shearwater - 5
White-chinned Petrel – 200
Spectacled Petrel - 1
Wilson's Storm Petrel – 5
European Storm Petrel - 300
Leach's Storm Petrel – 1
Cape Gannet – 5 (coastal and pelagic)
Brown (Sub-Antarctic) Skua – 1
Parasitic Jaeger - 2
Pomarine Jaeger - 2
Sabine's Gull - 10
Arctic Tern – 150 (pelagic)

Coastal species:

African Penguin – 30
White-breasted Cormorant – common
Cape Cormorant – abundant
Crowned Cormorant – 3
Bank Cormorant – 8 breeding pairs
Kelp Gull – common
Hartlaub's Gull – 3
Great Crested Tern – Common
Common Tern – 5
African (Black) Oystercatcher - 3

Marine mammal

Cape Fur Seal – abundant

Fish

Oceanic Sunfish – 1

Trip report and photos: Cape Town Pelagics guide [Vincent Ward](#)

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.