



Trip Report - Cape Town Pelagics - Saturday, 21 January 2023

Trip Highlights: Three (potentially four) species albatross, Manx Shearwater, and a large flock of Sabine's Gulls.



Our group met up at 07:00 at Simon's Town Yacht Club with much anticipation for the pelagic trip ahead. It was a wind-free morning, the water in False Bay was mirror-like and although the day started overcast, it cleared up beautifully later on. As we set off from Simon's town harbour towards Cape Point, we soon started encountering a few coastal seabird species such as **Cape Cormorants**, **Hartlaub's Gulls**, **Kelp Gulls** and **Greater Crested (Swift) Terns**, as well as a small raft of **African Penguins**.

The conditions appeared to be just right for fishing, and several small fishing vessels were dotted across False Bay. Just beyond our safety check-in stop at Cape Point, we picked up some **Cape Cormorants**, a few **Sandwich Terns** and **Greater Crested (Swift) Terns**. Heading out slightly further,

we came across the first **Sooty Shearwaters** of the day, and soon afterwards we came across a large raft of around 300+ **Sooty Shearwaters** and a group of 10 **Manx Shearwaters**.

There was only one trawler in the Cape Canyon area, and although it hadn't pulled in a catch yet, several birds of a good cross-section of species were in attendance including **Shy Albatross, Black-browed Albatross, Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross**, one or two juvenile **Yellow-nosed Albatrosses**, both **European Storm Petrel** and **Wilson's Storm Petrel, Brown Skua, Common Tern, Arctic Tern, Great Shearwater, Cory's Shearwater, Sabine's Gull, White-chinned Petrel, Kelp Gull, Cape Gannet** and a single **Southern Giant Petrel**. Once the trawler finally pulled in its haul, the bird numbers picked up, but it appeared to be a small catch and the trawler left without processing its catch.

After enjoying the birds for a while longer, it was time to head northwards again. Between the Cape Canyon and Cape Point, we continued to come across a one or two of the species seen previously during the day, but the real treat on the way back was encountering a flock of around 500 to 700 **Sabines Gulls**.

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, which also produced **African Oystercatcher** and **Crowned Cormorant**. We then finally returned to harbour after a wonderful day of birding at sea.

Pelagic species seen and approximate numbers:

Shy Albatross	80
Black-browed Albatross	20
Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross	2
Yellow-nosed sp. juvenile	2
Southern Giant Petrel	1
White-chinned Petrel	250
Cory's Shearwater	300
Sooty Shearwater	350
Great Shearwater	50
Manx Shearwater	12
Wilson's Storm Petrel	2
European Storm Petrel	50
Cape Gannet	50
Parasitic Jaeger	10
Pomarine Jaeger	1
Brown (Subantarctic) Skua	3
Sabine's Gull	500+
Arctic Tern	5

Coastal Species:

Egyptian Goose	2
Hartlaub's Gull	50
Kelp Gull	300
African Oystercatcher	3
White-breasted Cormorant	10
Bank Cormorant	20
Crowned Cormorant	10
Cape Cormorant	200
African Penguin	100
Sandwich Tern	5
Great Crested Tern	200
Common Tern	30

Marine mammals:

Brown (Cape) Fur Seal	100
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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.