



Trip Report - Cape Town Pelagics - Monday, 4 September 2023

Trip Highlights: Southern Royal Albatross, Great-winged Petrel, Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross, Brown Skua, Arctic Tern.



Our flotilla of three vessels departed Simon's Town and into a beautifully calm False Bay. We enjoyed a stunning late winter sunrise as we worked our way down to Cape Point. En-route we ticked off a nice variety of coastal species including **Cape, White-breasted** and **Bank Cormorants**, numerous **Kelp Gulls**, **Great Crested (Swift) Terns** and a few **Cape Gannets**. A few **Cape Fur Seals** were also spotted sleeping on the water on the trip south.

At Cape Point we picked up our first pelagic species: **White-chinned Petrel, Sooty Shearwater** and a single **Northern Giant Petrel**. We had a few brief views of a pair of **Long-beaked Common Dolphins** on the way out. Further offshore we encountered our first **White-capped/Shy Albatrosses**. These species then became more common as approached the Abe Shapiro a long lining vessel at 16 nautical miles offshore.

As the catch was brought in, the number of birds and more importantly the diversity increased. We were consequently able to add **Brown Skua, Arctic Tern, Southern Giant Petrel** and both **Indian Yellow-nosed** and **Black-browed Albatrosses** to the trip list. Very quickly the call of “White-back!!” went out and we enjoyed a locally rare **Southern Royal Albatross** fly through the massed seabirds. Another special seen by some was a single **Great-winged Petrel** that made a few passes through the assembled seabirds.

After several hours of very enjoyable seabirding, we returned to False Bay, picking up a few flocks of **Common Terns**, immediately offshore of the Point. We continued in the shelter of Buffels Bay to enjoy a light lunch. This allowed us to include a few unusual species for a pelagic trip, most notably **Common Ostrich, Bontebok** and **Cape Mountain Zebras**, all of which were seen onshore.

Our trip continued with a brief stop at the **Bank Cormorant** colony at Partridge Point, before again heading north. A pair of **African Penguins** seen well offshore of Boulders Beach rounded off the sightings on a very successful trip.

Pelagic species seen and approximate numbers:

Southern Royal Albatross	1
Shy/White-capped Albatross	75
Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross	1
Black-browed Albatross	5
Northern Giant Petrel	5
Southern Giant Petrel	2
White-chinned Petrel	400-500
Sooty Shearwater	150-200
Great-winged Petrel	1
Cape Gannet	25
Brown (Subantarctic) Skua	1
Arctic Tern	7

Coastal species

Kelp Gull	150-200
African Oystercatcher	1
White-breasted Cormorant (<i>7 breeding pairs</i>)	15
Bank Cormorant (<i>18 breeding pairs</i>)	35
Cape Cormorant	250-500
African Penguin (<i>more on shore at Boulders</i>)	2
Great Crested Tern	35
Common Tern	25

Marine mammals

Brown (Cape) Fur Seal	abundant
Long-beaked Common Dolphin	2

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.

GALLERY - photos from David Swanepoel, leader on board 2nd boat.



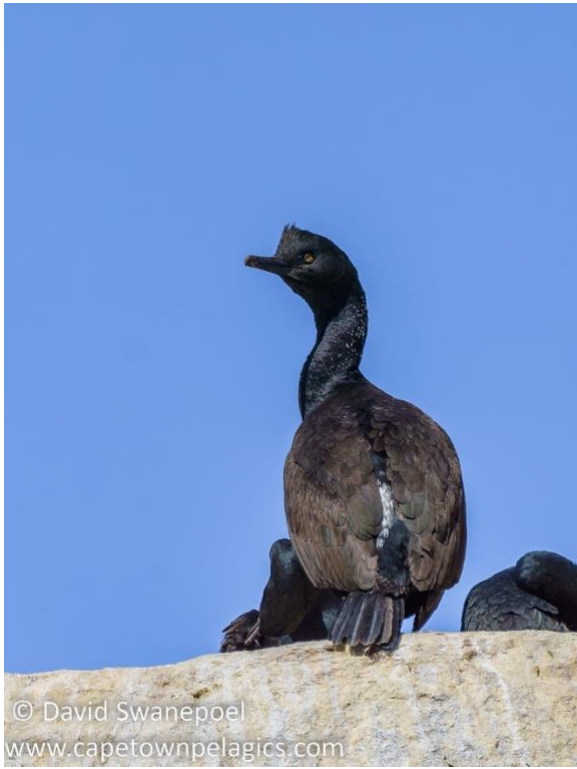
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Southern Royal Albatross



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Southern Giant Petrel



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