



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

Trip Highlights: Four albatross species including **Southern Royal Albatross**, Great-winged Petrel, Northern & Southern Giant Petrels



Our group of birders meet on the Wharf Street pier at 7 am excited for the day ahead. Our trio of pelagic vessels departed Simon's Town and headed south towards Cape Point on a calm False Bay sea enjoying a beautiful sunrise over the mountains to the east.

It was fairly quiet heading out, but we did get the odd coastal species such as **Cape, White-breasted** and **Bank Cormorants, Kelp Gulls** and **Great Crested (Swift)** winging their way south.

Just beyond Cape Point and near the bellow reef, we briefly stopped for a radio check in with the Lighthouse lookout and to admire the coastal scenery of Cape Point and the Cape of Good Hope.

Shortly after we set off again, we spotted our first pelagic species - **White-chinned Petrel, Sooty Shearwater** and a single **Northern Giant Petrel**. A little further offshore we encountered our first **Shy (White-capped) Albatrosses**. These species kept us company along the way as several individuals made flybys to investigate our boat.

We were fortunate to find a small fishing vessel, a long liner 'Abe Shapiro' at 16 nautical miles offshore. Closer to the long liner the number of birds and species increased, as they waited in the boats wake in anticipation of their free meal when the boat would pull in its lines.

As soon as the catch started to be pulled, the number of birds and diversity increased. We were consequently able to add **Subantarctic (Brown) Skua, Arctic Tern, Southern Giant Petrel** and both **Indian Yellow-nosed** and **Black-browed Albatrosses** to the trip list.

There was a call from our one of our other boats for "White-back!!" and we enjoyed a locally rare **Southern Royal Albatross** sweeping through the massed seabirds and gliding magnificently, just past our boat. Unfortunately, it did not stay long and as quickly as it arrived it was gone. Another special seen by some was a single **Great-winged Petrel** that made a few passes through the assembled seabirds.

After an hour or two of very enjoyable sea birding, it was time to head back to shore. On the way we picked up a flock of **Cape Gannet** heading west and one of **Common Terns**, just offshore of Cape Point. We continued our journey into the bay and made our usual visit to the **Bank Cormorant** colony at Partridge Point, as well as the **Cape Fur Seal** rock. A few **White-breasted Cormorants, Cape Cormorants** and a single **African Oystercatcher** shared the space.

We made a quick detour to the Boulder Beach bay to view the **African Penguins** on the beach, and a whale blow out at sea sent us to check it out with a very brief view of a possible Humpback Whale. We arrived back to the pier at Simon's Town harbour shortly after, having enjoyed a successful day at sea.

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>on shore at Boulders</i>)	35

Great Crested Tern	35
Common Tern	25

Marine mammals

Brown (Cape) Fur Seal	abundant
-----------------------	----------

A Cape Town Pelagic Trip Report by Tour Leader [Joel Radue](#)

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.



© David Swanepoel
www.capetownpelagics.com

Southern Royal Albatross



© David Swanepoel
www.capetownpelagics.com

Southern Giant Petrel

