



Trip Report - Cape Town Pelagics - Monday, 2 October 2023

Trip Highlights: Shy & Black-browed Albatross, Risso's Dolphins, Sei Whale, Humpback Whales.



Our group met at 07:00 on a beautiful Monday morning at the Simon's Town Yacht Club before setting off on our pelagic tour. Once we'd set off from harbour towards Cape Point, we soon started encountering a few coastal seabird species such as **Cape Cormorants**, **Kelp Gulls** and **Greater Crested (Swift) Terns** and in the vicinity of the Boulders penguin colony, we came across one or two small rafts of **African Penguins**.

We stopped off briefly at Cape Point for a safety check-in with the lookout tower, and then started making our way to the fishing grounds. A kilometre or two beyond Cape Point, we came across one or two **Sooty Shearwater**, followed by **White-chinned Petrel** and a couple of **Common Terns** and **Arctic Terns**. A little further along, our skipper thought he caught a glimpse of a strange albino whale. When we pulled up closer, we were all excited to find a pod of **Risso's Dolphins**. They would

briefly come up for a breath of air, and then dive and disappear for a while, then pop up again some distance away from us just to dive again.

Even though the marine traffic website in the morning showed that one fishing vessel was present in the Cape Canyon area, unfortunately none was present by the time we got there. To make up for the lack of fish processing usually associated with trawlers and longline boats, we put out some anchovy oil and sardines. This enticed a few **Kelp Gulls**, **White-chinned Petrels**, **Shy Albatrosses**, **Cape Gannets**, a **Black-browed Albatross** as well as a few **Arctic Terns** and **Common Terns**.

We then noticed some bird activity in the distance, and, upon closer inspection found a shoal of **Yellowfin Tuna**, actively hunting and jumping clear out of the water. In attendance were also several **Swift (Greater Crested) Terns**, **Cape Gannets**, and one or two **Great Shearwaters**. After leaving this shoal, we came across another foraging tuna shoal, joined by a **Sei Whale** and two **Humpback Whales**, all seemingly busy foraging on bait fish. This second tuna shoal also produced the only **Pintado (Cape) Petrel** of the day.

It was finally time to head northwards again after spending a few hours with the seabirds. Along our trip back towards the shoreline, we continued seeing small numbers of some of the bird species encountered earlier on during the day, as well as a couple more whale blows, presumably **Humpback Whales**.

After a quick lunch stop just off Buffels Bay in the Cape of Good Hope section of the Table Mountain National Park, we made a last stop at Partridge Point where we visited the **Bank Cormorant** colony and the **Cape Fur Seal** rock, which also hosted one or two **White-breasted Cormorants**, several **Cape Cormorants** and an **African Oystercatcher**. We then finally returned to the Simon's Town harbour after a beautiful day of birding out at sea.

Pelagic species seen and approximate numbers:

Shy Albatross	<i>Thalassarche cauta</i>	20-30
Black-browed Albatross	<i>Thalassarche melanophris</i>	1
White-chinned Petrel	<i>Procelleria aequinoctialis</i>	120-150
Sooty Shearwater	<i>Ardenna grisea</i>	30-50
Great Shearwater	<i>Ardenna gravis</i>	2
Cape Gannet	<i>Morus capensis</i>	50
Arctic Tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	30

Coastal species:

Egyptian Goose	<i>Alopochen aegypticus</i>	1
Kelp Gull	<i>Larus dominicanus</i>	150
African Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus moquini</i>	1
White-breasted Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax lucidus</i>	2
Bank Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax neglectus</i>	20
Cape Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax capensis</i>	200
African Penguin	<i>Spheniscus demersus</i>	60
Sandwich Tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>	2
Great Crested Tern	<i>Thalasseus bergii</i>	60
Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	20

Marine Mammals:

Brown (Cape) Fur Seal	<i>Arctocephalus pusillus</i>	80
Sei Whale	<i>Balaenoptera borealis</i>	1
Humpback Whale	<i>Megaptera novaeangliae</i>	4
Risso's Dolphin	<i>Grampus griseus</i>	5

Fish species:

Yellow-finned Tuna	<i>Thunnus albacares</i>	2 shoals
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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.

