



## Trip Report - Cape Town Pelagics - Tuesday, 24 October 2023

**Trip Highlights:** Shy Albatross, Black-browed Albatross, Northern and Southern Giant Petrel, Great Shearwater, Sabine's Gull, Brown Skua.



The trip out of the False Bay Yacht Club and into the bay netted us a good variety of typical coastal species including **Crowned, Cape and White-breasted Cormorants, Kelp and Hartlaub's Gulls, and African Oystercatcher**. We managed distant views of **African Penguins** roosting onshore at Boulder Beach. The rest of this southbound leg netted us our first views of **Cape Gannet, Common and Great Crested (Swift) Terns** and plenty of **Cape Fur Seals**.

At Cape Point we enjoyed close views of a juvenile **Humpback Whale**, and two pairs of **Southern Right Whales**. The shallow waters around the point delivered good views of **Common and Great Crested Terns**, and plenty of **Cape Cormorants**. In a short time, we picked up our first **White-chinned Petrels**, both **Sooty and Great Shearwaters**, and a single **Southern Giant Petrel**. As we

moved into deeper water, we picked up a few **Arctic Terns**.

Our skipper located a very distant trawler fishing and working its way towards the coast. We made our way towards the vessel picking more **Cape Gannets, Shy Albatrosses, White-chinned Petrels,** terns and shearwaters on the outward trip.



The calm seas helped shorten journey out to the ‘*Harvest Mzansi*’ - a hake trawler fishing along the northern rim of the canyon. The volumes of birds were initially small, but as the vessel lifted its nets in the late morning, the seabirds streamed in. These included species like **Shy (White-capped)** and **Black-browed Albatrosses**, both **Northern** and **Southern Giant Petrels, Pintado Petrel, Wilson’s Storm Petrel, Sabine’s Gull** and **Arctic Terns**. A single **Brown Skua** hovering over our boat before disappearing in the mass of birds. The trawler turned away from the coast and into deeper water. At this point we started our trip back to the coast, stopping for a small mixed flock of **Great** and **Sooty Shearwaters**. A nearby juvenile **Shy Albatross** caught our attention as it showed traits of a possible *Salvin’s Albatross*.

Back at the coast, we slipped back into False Bay for a quick lunch and visit to **Bank Cormorant** colony at Partridge Point. From here we retraced our steps back into Simon’s Town.

BIRD SPECIES NUMBER: 24

**Pelagic species seen and approximate numbers:**

Shy/White-capped Albatross	20
Black-browed Albatross	2
Northern Giant Petrel	5

Southern Giant Petrel	1
Giant Petrel spp.	1
White-chinned Petrel	150
Sooty Shearwater	25
Great Shearwater	15
Pintado (Cape) Petrel	5
Wilson's Storm Petrel	5
Cape Gannet	25
Brown (Subantarctic) Skua	1
Arctic Tern	10
Sabine's Gull	2

**Coastal species:**

Kelp Gull	c.80
Hartlaub's Gull	1
African Oystercatcher	4
White-breasted Cormorant ( <i>7 breeding pairs</i> )	15
Bank Cormorant ( <i>23 active nests</i> )	43
Crowned Cormorant	1
Cape Cormorant	c.900
African Penguin ( <i>more on shore at Boulders</i> )	1
Great Crested Tern	16
Common Tern	42
Sandwich Tern	1

**Marine mammals:**

Brown (Cape) Fur Seal	abundant
Humpback Whale	1
Southern Right Whale	4

A Cape Town Pelagic Trip Report by Tour Leader [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.



