



## Trip Report - Cape Town Pelagics - Saturday, 25 November 2023

**Trip Highlights:** Four species Albatross, Great-winged Petrel



Our group met at 07:00 on a beautiful Saturday morning at the Simon's Town Yacht Club before setting off on our pelagic tour. 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, Kelp Gulls, Hartlaub's Gulls, Common Terns, Greater Crested (Swift) Terns** and a small raft of **African Penguins**.

After we made our customary safety check-in stop at Cape Point, which also allowed everyone to take photos of the point, we slowly headed in a south-westerly direction towards the Cape Canyon area. Along the way, we picked up a few **White-chinned Petrels**, a **Sooty Shearwater** or two, **Cory's Shearwater**, a couple of **Cape Gannets** and hundreds of **Common Terns** and **Swift Terns**. Further along, we also encountered our first albatross species of the day, namely **Shy Albatross**.

Our AIS system indicated that there might be a few fishing vessels about, and when we got to the spot, we found four long-line boats. Soon afterwards, we picked up two new species for the day, namely **Black-Browed Albatross** and **Northern Giant Petrel**. The trawlers had set out their lines, however, since no active fishing has taken place yet, the bird numbers were still relatively low and we decided to put out a bit of chum, in the form of anchovy oil, which drew in slightly larger numbers of the species that were already around, as well as one or two **Wilson's Storm Petrels**.



**Northern Giant Petrel**



**Black-browed Albatross**

Eventually, the crew of one of the fishing vessels indicated that they were about to pull in their lines, and as soon as they did so, the bird numbers also immediately picked up. Fighting over the fish that came off the hooks and the offal that the crew threw overboard, were both **Indian Yellow-nosed** and **Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross**, **Northern** and **Southern Giant Petrel**, **White-chinned Petrel**, **Sooty Shearwater**, **Cory's Shearwater**, **Great Shearwater**, **Kelp Gull**, **Common Tern**, **Shy Albatross** and **Black-browed Albatross**. A **Great-winged Petrel** came flying past through the melee, but unfortunately kept flying. Just before we left, we also saw a small group of **Sabine's Gulls**.



**Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross**



**Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross**

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 good numbers of some of the bird species encountered earlier on during the day. We then found a nice, quiet spot just inside False Bay to stop for a lunch break, while enjoying all the coastal seabirds around the boat.

En-route back to Simon's Town, we made a last stop at Partridge Point where we visited the **Bank Cormorant** colony and the **Cape Fur Seal** rock, which also hosted a few **White-breasted Cormorants** and **Cape Cormorants**. We finally returned to harbour after a beautiful day of birding out at sea.

**Pelagic species seen and approximate numbers:**

|                                 |     |
|---------------------------------|-----|
| Shy Albatross                   | 30  |
| Black-browed Albatross          | 5   |
| Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross | 5   |
| Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross   | 2   |
| Yellow-nosed sp. juvenile       | 1   |
| Northern Giant Petrel           | 1   |
| Southern Giant Petrel           | 2   |
| Great-winged Petrel             | 1   |
| White-chinned Petrel            | 250 |
| Cory's Shearwater               | 10  |
| Sooty Shearwater                | 20  |
| Great Shearwater                | 1   |
| Wilson's Storm Petrel           | 2   |
| Cape Gannet                     | 30  |
| Sabine's Gull                   | 5   |



© David Swanepoel  
www.capetownpelagics.com  
**Shy Albatross**

**Coastal Species:**

|                          |      |
|--------------------------|------|
| Hartlaub's Gull          | 50   |
| Kelp Gull                | 300  |
| African Oystercatcher    | 2    |
| White-breasted Cormorant | 10   |
| Bank Cormorant           | 20   |
| Cape Cormorant           | 500+ |
| African Penguin          | 200  |
| Sandwich Tern            | 1    |
| Great Crested Tern       | 200  |
| Common Tern              | 500+ |



©David Swanepoel  
www.capetownpelagics.com  
**Bank Cormorant**

**Marine Mammals:**

|                       |     |
|-----------------------|-----|
| Brown (Cape) Fur Seal | 100 |
| Bryde's Whale         | 1   |

**Fish:**

|               |       |
|---------------|-------|
| Skipjack Tuna | Shoal |
|---------------|-------|

Trip report & photos: Cape Town Pelagics guide - [David Swanepoel](http://www.capetownpelagics.com)



**White-chinned Petrel**



**Sandwich tern**



**Swift Tern**



**Juvenile Yellow-nosed Albatross**



**Shy Albatross**



**Cory's Shearwater**

**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 organized 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.