



Trip Report - Cape Town Pelagics - Sunday, 17 December 2023

Trip Highlights: Three species Albatross, Spectacled Petrel.



Our group met at 07:00 at the Simon's Town Yacht Club on a beautiful Sunday morning 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, 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. We encountered, at first, a handful of Cory's Shearwaters, but in the end, they turned out to be quite numerous along the way out. One or two **White-chinned Petrels** came in to inspect our boat a bit closer, slightly further out, we saw a couple of **Sooty Shearwater** and the only **Cape Gannet** of the day flew right past us without even pausing for a sideways glance.

At first, when we got to the Cape Canyon, even though several tuna pole boats, one or two long-liners and a few ski-boats were present, and some of them chumming, there weren't too many birds in attendance, although we did pick up a few **Shy Albatrosses** and the first **Wilson's Storm Petrels** came past. We then got news of a trawler a few miles further and decided to go check what was hanging around in its wake.

When we arrived, it was clear that they had processed their catch some time ago and were just leaving the area, however quite a few birds were still milling around and feeding off the scraps left behind. Amongst others, we got **Brown Skua, Sabine's Gulls, Black-browed Albatross, Sooty Shearwater, Great Shearwater, Cory's Shearwater, White-chinned Petrel, European Storm Petrel, Wilson's Storm Petrel, Kelp Gull** and **Spectacled Petrel**.



Two **Spectacled Petrel** seen during the trip.

As the bird numbers started thinning again, we made our way back to the first spot, where the long-liners were busy pulling in their catches. Besides a few more of the birds already seen, we also added **Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross** to the day list.



Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross

It finally was 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 to stop for a lunch break, while enjoying all the coastal seabirds around the boat and 'pelagic' **Common Ostriches** along the shore.

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**, while a pair of **African Oystercatchers** were foraging on a smaller rock nearby. We then finally returned to harbour after a beautiful day of birding out at sea.

Pelagic species seen and approximate numbers:

Shy Albatross	50
Black-browed Albatross	10
Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross	2
Giant Petrel spp	1
White-chinned Petrel	200
Spectacled Petrel	2
Cory's Shearwater	200
Sooty Shearwater	20
Great Shearwater	5
Wilson's Storm Petrel	150
European Storm Petrel	30
Cape Gannet	1
Brown (Subantarctic) Skua	2
Sabine's Gull	5
Arctic Tern	10

Coastal species:

Kelp Gull	250
African Oystercatcher	3
White-breasted Cormorant	2
Bank Cormorant	20
Cape Cormorant	300
African Penguin	200
Sandwich Tern	2
Great Crested Tern	150
Common Tern	250

Marine mammals:

Brown (Cape) Fur Seal	100
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GALLERY



Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross



Sabine's Gull



Black-browed Albatross



Spectacled Petrel



Shy Albatross



Great Shearwater



Sooty Shearwater



Wilson's Storm Petrel



White-chinned Petrel

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.