



## Trip Report - Cape Town Pelagics - Saturday, 6 January 2024

Trip Highlights: Four species Albatross, Manx Shearwater, all four species of coastal cormorant.



On the morning of the 6 January 2024 the recent south-easterly winds had let up enough to allow us to a brief window of opportunity to get offshore from the continent. We boarded our boat at Simon's Town harbour and headed out to sea.

We picked up coastal species such as **Hartlaubs Gulls**, **African Black Oystercatcher** and **Cape Cormorant** while traveling across False Bay. Our trip across the bay was quiet with only an occasional view of **Swift Tern** before reaching Cape Point. Here we paused to take in the magnificent view in the soft morning light, took some scenic photos and checked out with radio stations. The water at Cape Point was cold; at 11 deg C and as such the area was quiet.

A few miles out we came across extensive feeding flocks of Common Tern, **African Penguin** and a lone **Bryde's Whale**. We headed out to the deep and after a few miles the water warmed up and we found our first **Sooty Shearwater** soon followed by **Cory's Shearwater** and **White-chinned Petrel**.

We travelled further on, finding **Wilson's Storm-petrel** and **Shy Albatross** while looking for a trawler to the west. We eventually found the '*Forest Lily*' a stern trawler some 25 nautical miles off Cape Point; she had hauled in her nets and was processing catch and as a result had a stream of birds behind her.

Behind the trawler we found Shy and **Black-browed Albatross**, along with **European Storm-petrels**. **Sub-Antarctic Skua** and a few **Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross** showed up, while numerous **Sooty Shearwater** and **White-chinned Petrels** fed on scraps. After a while we located **Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross** while flocks of Common and **Arctic Terns** fed alongside **Kelp Gulls**. The '*Forest Lily*' then changed her course and headed southwards, beyond our range. We stayed behind and dropped some fish oil on the water and watched as some **Storm Petrel** and **Cory's Shearwaters** circled the water.

At midday we headed back toward land, finding a pod of **Dusky Dolphins** that circled our boat near Cape Point. We also found three **Manx Shearwaters** amongst a flock of **Sooty Shearwaters** which allowed good views. Once we were back in the calmer waters of False Bay we headed across to Buffel's Bay for lunch while we watched Ostriches walk on the hillside.

After lunch we headed across the bay to the Castle Rock cormorant colony. Here we found **White-breasted, Cape Cormorants**, and **Bank Cormorants** on nests. Adjacent rocks also held a lone **Crowned Cormorant** and a colony of **Cape Fur Seals** which loafed about in the sun and dived into the surf. We finally made our way back to Simon's Town harbour, passing the Boulders Beach penguin colony on calm seas.

#### **Bird species seen and approximate numbers:**

Shy Albatross – 100  
Black-browed Albatross – 3  
Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross – 2  
Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross – 4  
White-chinned Petrel – 150  
Sooty Shearwater – 150  
Cory's Shearwater – 50  
Manx Shearwater – 3  
European Storm-petrel – 50  
Wilson's Storm-petrel – 5  
Sub-Antarctic Skua – 4  
Arctic Tern  
Cape Gannet

#### **Coastal species:**

Swift Tern  
Common Tern  
Hartlaub's Gull  
Kelp Gull  
Cape Cormorant  
Bank Cormorant  
Crowned Cormorant – 1  
African Black Oystercatcher – 4  
White-breasted Cormorant  
African Penguin

**Mammals:**

Cape Fur Seal  
Bryde's Whale  
Dusky Dolphin

Trip report: Cape Town Pelagics guide: [Dalton Gibbs](#)

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.