



## Trip Report - Cape Town Pelagics - Monday, 15 January 2024

Trip Highlights: Four species Albatross, Spectacled Petrel.



Our group met at 07:00 on an uncharacteristically beautiful, sunny and wind-free Monday morning at the Simon's Town Yacht Club before setting off on our pelagic tour. As we set off from harbour towards Cape Point, we soon started encountering a few coastal seabird species such as **Crowned Cormorant**, **Cape Cormorant**, **White-breasted Cormorant**, **Kelp Gull**, **Sandwich Terns** and **Greater Crested (Swift) Tern**.

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. A kilometre or two beyond Cape Point, the first **Sooty Shearwaters** came past, followed by a single **Cape Gannet**. A bit further on, we found a handful of **Cory's Shearwaters**, and then soon afterwards we encountered another group sitting on the water, which allowed us beautiful close-up

views. One or two **White-chinned Petrels** came in to inspect our boat a bit closer, and then a bit further along we saw a single **Shy Albatross** resting on the water.

There were two trawlers when we got to the Cape Canyon, and even though neither had processed a catch recently, a few birds were milling around in the wake of the first vessel we encountered, including our first **Black-browed Albatross**, an **Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross** and brief views of a **Southern Giant Petrel**. As we made our way to the other vessel, we also picked up a **Sabine's Gull** and a **Brown Skua**. While we kept on working the area between the two fishing vessels, it seemed that the position of the first trawler had shifted, an indication that they had just started pulling in their nets.

On our way back to this boat, we saw hundreds of birds behind it. In the flock were **Great Shearwater**, **European Storm Petrel**, **Wilson's Storm Petrel**, **Spectacled Petrel**, **Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross**, **Arctic Tern** and **Common Tern**; amongst good numbers of other species already seen earlier in the day. A nice bonus was a close view of an **Ocean Sunfish** and we also saw a distant white-backed albatross that was unfortunately just too far away to ID to species level.

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.

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 **Cape Cormorants**. Near Boulders Beach, we found two **African Penguins** in the water while the rest of the group were standing around on the beach and a pair of **African Oystercatchers** were foraging on the rocks nearby. We then finally returned to Simon's Town harbour after a lovely day of birding out at sea.



© David Swanepoel  
[www.capetownpelagics.com](http://www.capetownpelagics.com)

**African Penguins**

**Pelagic species seen & approximate numbers:**

|                                 |       |
|---------------------------------|-------|
| Shy Albatross                   | 150   |
| Black-browed Albatross          | 20    |
| Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross | 30    |
| Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross   | 5     |
| Yellow-nosed sp. juvenile       | 1     |
| Southern Giant Petrel           | 2     |
| Giant Petrel spp                | 1     |
| White-chinned Petrel            | 500+  |
| Spectacled Petrel               | 1     |
| Cory's Shearwater               | 50-80 |
| Sooty Shearwater                | 500+  |
| Great Shearwater                | 50-80 |
| Wilson's Storm Petrel           | 10    |
| European Storm Petrel           | 30-50 |
| Cape Gannet                     | 50-80 |
| Brown (Subantarctic) Skua       | 5     |
| Sabine's Gull                   | 2     |
| Arctic Tern                     | 10    |

**Coastal species:**

|                          |      |
|--------------------------|------|
| Egyptian Goose           | 3    |
| Grey Heron               | 1    |
| Hartlaub's Gull          | 50   |
| Kelp Gull                | 500+ |
| African Oystercatcher    | 5    |
| White-breasted Cormorant | 2    |
| Bank Cormorant           | 10   |
| Crowned Cormorant        | 5    |
| Cape Cormorant           | 500+ |
| African Penguin          | 200  |
| Sandwich Tern            | 10   |
| Great Crested Tern       | 100  |
| Common Tern              | 10   |

**Marine mammals:**

|                       |     |
|-----------------------|-----|
| Brown (Cape) Fur Seal | 150 |
|-----------------------|-----|

**Fish:**

|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| Ocean Sunfish/Common Mola | 1 |
|---------------------------|---|

Trip report & photos: Cape Town Pelagics guide: [David Swanepoel](#)



**Atlantic Yellow-nosed albatross**



**Cory's Shearwater**





©David Swanepoel  
www.capetownpelagics.com

**European Storm Petrel**



©David Swanepoel  
www.capetownpelagics.com

**Spectacled Petrel**



© David Swanepoel  
www.capetownpelagics.com

**Great Shearwater**



©David Swanepoel  
www.capetownpelagics.com

**Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross**



© David Swanepoel  
www.capetownpelagics.com

**Shy Albatross**



©David Swanepoel  
www.capetownpelagics.com

**Sabine's Gull**



© David Swanepoel  
www.capetownpelagics.com

**Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross**



©David Swanepoel  
www.capetownpelagics.com

**White-chinned Petrel**



**Sooty 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.