



Trip Report - Cape Town Pelagics - Sunday, 28 January 2024

Trip Highlights: Four species Albatross, Spectacled Petrels, Manx Shearwater, Parasitic Jaeger, and Sabine's Gull.



On the morning of Sunday 28 January, the westerly winds had let up enough to allow us to board our boat at the False Bay Yacht Club, Simon's Town and set off to sea.

We picked up coastal species such as **Cape Cormorant**, **Kelp Gull** and a resident **Grey Heron**. Once out on the waters of False Bay we soon came across a group of **African Penguins** out hunting. Our trip across the bay was quiet with only an occasional view of **Swift Tern** and unusually two **Black-headed Herons** flying across the bay before we reached 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.

We passed Cape Point in cold 12 deg C water and as such the area was quiet. A few miles out we came across a few feeding **Common Tern**, **Cory's Shearwater**, **Sabine's Gull** and a lone **Parasitic Jaeger** which chased terns.

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 **White-chinned Petrel** and **European Storm-petrel**. At the 20 N Mile mark we found the “*Flame Thorn*”, a stern trawler who had just lifted her nets. She was processing her catch and we found an extensive stream of birds behind her.

There were a few hundred birds behind the trawler, and we spent the next hour and a half viewing the procession of birds which passed us by, some almost within arm’s length. We soon found **Shy** and **Black-browed Albatross**, along with **Great Shearwater** and **Wilson’s Storm-petrels**. **Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross** and **Sub-Antarctic Skua** were about and after a while we found **Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross**, while numerous Sooty Shearwater and White-chinned Petrels fed on scraps. After a while we located **Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross** and then **Manx Shearwater** made its appearance.



Shy Albatross

The viewing conditions were perfect, with a continuous streams of birds coming up to the back of the trawler where we held station. Birds came close passed us, allowing us great views of all species present. After a while a **Spectacled Petrel** was located on the water right next to our boat and over the next hour, we had five sightings of what appeared to be two separate birds, The Flame Thorn eventually lifted her nets and changed course to the South. We remained where we were, with birds around us, as there was another trawler approaching us from the South. This was the “*Forest Lily*” who was trawling her nets. There was a similar selection of species behind her but in lower numbers.

At midday we headed back toward land, and after an uneventful passage reached the calmer water of False Bay. We headed across calm waters to Buffel’s Bay where we had a leisurely lunch while watching Ostriches and Chacma Baboons on the beach.

After lunch we headed across the bay to the Castle Rock cormorant colony. Here we found **White-breasted, Cape Cormorants, Crowned Cormorant** and **Bank Cormorants** on nests. Adjacent rocks also held a colony of **Cape Fur Seals** which loafed about in the sun and dived into the surf. We 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 – 150
Black-browed Albatross – 100
Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross – 6
Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross – 2
Spectacled Petrel - 2
White-chinned Petrel – 150
Sooty Shearwater – 150
Cory's Shearwater – 50
Great Shearwater - 15
Manx Shearwater – 3
European Storm-petrel – 50
Wilson's Storm-petrel – 5
Sub-Antarctic Skua – 6
Parasitic Jaeger – 1
Arctic Tern
Sabine's Gull – 150
Cape Gannet – 20

Coastal species:

Swift Tern
Common Tern
Kelp Gull
Cape Cormorant
Bank Cormorant
Crowned Cormorant – 1
African Black Oystercatcher – 6
White-breasted Cormorant
African Penguin
Grey Heron – 1
Black-headed Heron -coastal – 2
Ostrich – 6

Mammals:

Chacma Baboon
Cape Fur Seal



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Crowned Cormorant © Helmo van der Schyff

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.



Great Shearwater © Antonie Bam



Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross © Antonie Bam



Spectacled Petrel © Helmo van der Schyff



Sabine's Gull © Helmo van der Schyff