



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

Trip Highlights: Five species of albatrosses including a **Southern Royal Albatross**, a Southern Fulmar, white morph Southern Giant Petrel, Great Shearwater, Cape/Pintado Petrel and Antarctic Prion.



We departed Simon's Town just before dawn and headed out into False Bay. Our route south towards Cape Point gave us plenty of opportunities to enjoy a fantastic variety of typical coastal species like **African Penguin**, **Cape Cormorant**, **Great Crested (Swift) Tern**, and **Hartlaub's** and **Kelp Gulls**. A quick view of a diving **Humpback Whale** was had just off of Millers Point. Our first **Cape Gannets** came into view a bit farther south.

After a brief stop at Cape Point, we were greeted by our first mixed flocks of **White-chinned Petrels** and **Sooty Shearwaters**, with a single **Manx Shearwater** darting through. This mix of species continued as we ventured out into the open ocean, where we quickly got our first of many **Shy Albatrosses**.

We continued out towards an area known as the Cape Canyon, an area popular with fishing vessels. Here we spotted a working hake trawler - the '*Harvest Mzansi*' - about to pull in its net. As we approached the ship, the number and diversity of seabirds increased rapidly. In short order, we added both **Black-browed** and **Indian Yellow-nosed Albatrosses, Cape (Pintado) Petrel, Southern Giant Petrel, Wilson's Storm Petrel, and Brown Skua**. The shout of "White-backed Albatross" went out as a magnificent **Southern Royal Albatross** made a fast flyby. This sighting was followed by an equally stunning and rare white morph **Southern Giant Petrel**.

In the late morning, the vessel hauled in its net, bringing in hundreds of hungry seabirds. As we worked through the masses of birds over the next while we added several more fantastic birds to the list including **Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross, Antarctic Prion, Southern Fulmar, Northern Giant Petrel** and an unusual overwintering **Great Shearwater**. Another unexpected highlight was a lone turtle possibly a **Loggerhead**, swimming through the latter edge of the assembled birds.

After a fantastic few hours out in the deep ocean, we headed back to the coast and into the relative calm of False Bay. We enjoyed a light lunch just offshore of Buffel's Bay near Cape Point, picking up an **African Oystercatcher** along the shoreline.

Our final birding stop was at Partridge Point, where we made a brief stop near the **Bank Cormorant** colony. The rocks in this area also held a nice mix of **Cape, Crowned** and **White-breasted Cormorants**. After steaming past the nearby **Cape Fur Seal** haul-out, we headed back to port, picking up another **Humpback Whale** along the way.

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

African Penguin – 37 (more onshore at Boulders)  
Southern Royal Albatross – 1  
Shy/White-capped Albatross – 150  
Black-browed Albatross – 750  
Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross – 1  
Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross – 2  
Northern Giant Petrel – 3  
Southern Giant Petrel – 7 (including 1 white morph individual)  
Sooty Shearwater – 350  
Great Shearwater - 1  
Manx Shearwater – 5  
White-chinned Petrel – 450  
Pintado (Cape) Petrel – 350  
Southern Fulmar – 1  
Antarctic Prion - 5  
Wilson's Storm Petrel - 3  
Cape Gannet – 55  
White-breasted Cormorant – 8 (3 active nests)  
Cape Cormorant – c.750  
Bank Cormorant – 33 (19 active nests)  
Crowned Cormorant - 3  
Brown (Sub-Antarctic) Skua – 35  
Kelp Gull – 125  
Hartlaub's Gull - 8  
Great Crested Tern – 35

**Coastal species:**

African Penguin – 37 (more onshore at Boulders)  
White-breasted Cormorant – 8 (3 active nests)  
Cape Cormorant – c.750  
Bank Cormorant – 33 (19 active nests)  
Crowned Cormorant - 3  
Kelp Gull – 125  
Hartlaub's Gull - 8  
Great Crested Tern – 35  
African (Black) Oystercatcher - 1

**Marine mammal:**

Cape Fur Seal – abundant (coastal and pelagic)  
Humpback Whale – 2

**Other species:**

Turtle (possibly a Loggerhead) - 1

Trip report: Cape Town Pelagics guide: [Vince Ward](#)

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.