



Trip Report - Cape Town Pelagics - Saturday, 8 June 2024

Trip Highlights: Four albatross species, Soft-plumaged Petrel



Our group met at 07:00 on a beautiful, wind-free Sunday morning at the Simon's Town Yacht Club before setting off on our pelagic tour. As we set off from the harbour towards Cape Point, we mainly picked up a one or two coastal seabird species including **Cape Cormorant**, **Kelp Gull** 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. Around the point itself, a few **Kelp Gulls**, **Cape Cormorants** and **Greater Crested Terns** were milling about, and then a kilometre or two beyond Cape Point, we saw our first **Sooty Shearwaters**, **White-chinned Petrels**, a couple of **Cape Gannets**, and then a bit further along a **Shy Albatross** and a **Black-browed Albatross** came flying past.

Throughout the trip towards the trawling grounds, we kept on seeing good numbers of the same species, but then a smallish petrel with a dark collar came flying straight towards us and then banked away, never to be seen again. The bird's identity caused quite a stir, and in our excitement, we did try to turn it into a much rarer bird, but fortunately one of our guests managed to get a few record shots, which confirmed the ID of **Soft-plumaged Petrel** the following day.

Once we got to the Cape Canyon, we found good numbers of birds around. Since it was a wind-still day, the birds were mostly sitting on the water in large groups, so while we waited for some action behind the single trawler present, we made our way from one raft of birds to the next, picking up one or two new species for the day as we went along.

Amongst these, we encountered **Cape Petrel, Wilson's Storm Petrel, Antarctic Prion, Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross, Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross, Brown Skua, Northern Giant Petrel, Southern Giant Petrel** and a **Manx Shearwater**. When the trawler started pulling in its nets, the magic really kicked in – **Cape Fur Seals** trying to get to the nets, hundreds of birds squabbling over bits of offal, even the lack of wind couldn't stop the action.

After spending a few hours with the seabirds, it finally was time to head northwards again. 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** and **White-breasted (Great) Cormorants**. We then finally returned to the Simonstown harbour after a lovely day of birding out at sea.

Pelagic species seen and approximate numbers:

Shy Albatross	300+
Black-browed Albatross	300+
Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross	1
Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross	5
Northern Giant Petrel	3
Southern Giant Petrel	1
Giant Petrel spp	1
Cape (Pintado) Petrel	150
Soft-plumaged Petrel	1
Antarctic Prion	2
White-chinned Petrel	500+
Sooty Shearwater	500+
Manx Shearwater	1
Wilson's Storm Petrel	1
Cape Gannet	80
Brown (Subantarctic) Skua	20

Coastal species:

Egyptian Goose	2
Kelp Gull	100
White-breasted Cormorant	10
Bank Cormorant	25
Cape Cormorant	500+
African Penguin	20
Great Crested Tern	20

Marine mammals:

Brown (Cape) Fur Seal	100
-----------------------	-----

GALLERY



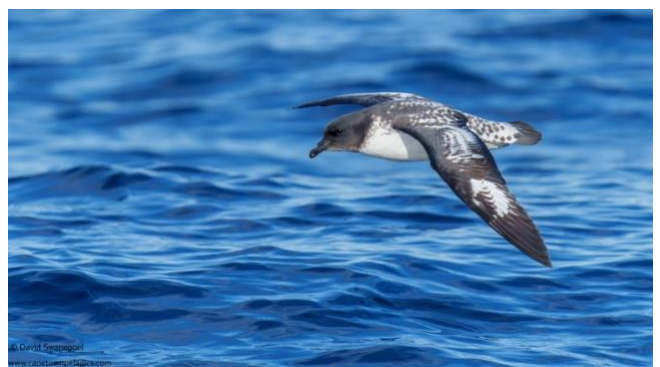
Black-browed Albatross



Shy Albatross



Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross



Cape (Pintado) Petrel



Northern Giant Petrel



Southern Giant Petrel



Sooty Shearwater



Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross

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

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.