



Trip Report - Cape Town Pelagics - Wednesday, 7 August 2024

Trip Highlights: **Southern Royal Albatross**, Manx Shearwater, Great Shearwater, Soft-plumaged Petrel, Cape (Pintado) Petrel



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 **Cape Cormorant**, **Great Crested (Swift) Tern**, and **Hartlaub's** and **Kelp Gulls**.

After a brief stop at Cape Point, we were greeted by our first mixed flocks of **Cape Gannets**, **White-chinned Petrels** and **Sooty Shearwaters**. We also had nice views of **Northern Giant Petrel** and **Manx Shearwater**. 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 the Cape Canyon, to intercept the 'Casablanca' a working hake trawler. En route we encounter a small pod of **Long-beaked Common Dolphins** and a jumping **Oceanic Sunfish/Mola**.

As we approached the ship, the number and diversity of seabirds increased rapidly. In short order, we added both **Black-browed Albatross**, **Cape (Pintado) Petrel**, both **Northern** and **Southern Giant Petrel**, **Wilson's Storm Petrel**, and **Brown Skua**. The shout of "White-backed Albatross" went out as a magnificent **Southern Royal Albatross** took off and flew by our boat.

We spent the rest of the morning working through the thousands of roosting seabirds getting a brief view of **Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross** and an unusual overwintering **Great Shearwater**.

After a fantastic few hours out in the deep ocean, we headed back to the coast picking up a **Soft-plumaged Petrel** and pair of **Africans Penguins** near Cape Point.

An unexpected **Southern Giant Petrel** was seen roosting on the sea near Buffelsbaai. We worked our way up to 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** and **White-breasted Cormorants**.

After steaming past the nearby **Cape Fur Seal** haulout, we headed back to port, picking up an adult **Crowned Cormorant** and a pair of **Hartlaub's Gull** in the harbour.

Bird species seen and approximate numbers:

Southern Royal Albatross – 1
Shy/White-capped Albatross – 150
Black-browed Albatross – 300
Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross – 1
Northern Giant Petrel – 2
Southern Giant Petrel – 2
Sooty Shearwater – 800
Great Shearwater - 1
Manx Shearwater – 1
White-chinned Petrel – 500
Pintado (Cape) Petrel – 350
Soft-plumaged Petrel – 1
Wilson's Storm Petrel - 1
Cape Gannet – 50
White-breasted Cormorant – 15 (1 active nests)
Cape Cormorant – c. 500
Bank Cormorant – 35 (22 active nests)
Crowned Cormorant - 1
Brown (Sub-Antarctic) Skua – 10
Kelp Gull – 100
Hartlaub's Gull - 3
Great Crested Tern – 20
Common Tern - 1
African (Black) Oystercatcher – 2

Coastal species:

African Penguin – 2 (more onshore at Boulders)
White-breasted Cormorant – 15 (1 active nests)
Cape Cormorant – c. 500

Bank Cormorant – 35 (22 active nests)
Crowned Cormorant - 1
Kelp Gull – 100
Hartlaub's Gull - 3
Great Crested Tern – 20
Common Tern - 1
African (Black) Oystercatcher - 2

Marine mammal:

Cape Fur Seal – abundant (coastal and pelagic)
Long-beaked Common Dolphins – c.50

Other species:

Oceanic Sunfish/Mola - 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.