



## Species List - Cape Town Pelagics - Saturday, 5 October 2024

Trip Highlights: Four species albatross including both Indian & Atlantic Yellow-nosed, Sabine's Gull, Northern Giant Petrel, Cape Petrel, Humpback Whales



A Cape Town Pelagics seabird trip departed from Simon's Town harbour on Saturday 5 October, guided by John Graham. Conditions were favourable, with predictions of a mild, long-period swell and light south-easterly winds and clear skies.

After a quick cruise southward through False Bay, during which we saw some sizeable rafts of **African Penguins** off Boulders Beach and three **Humpback Whales** at quite close quarters, we rounded the Point into surprisingly dense mist. Notwithstanding the weather predictions, this mist stayed with us for the day, severely limiting visibility and our ability to perceive any tubenose gatherings that might have been in our vicinity.

Undaunted, the skipper navigated us to no fewer than 4 trawlers, each time surprising us as the vessels suddenly loomed a mere 100m or two from us. Bird numbers were relatively low, due no doubt in part to the mist that clung obstinately to the sea-surface, but we nevertheless enjoyed two reasonably sized trawler flocks in the wake of MV Flame Thorn and MV Harvest Mzansi.

Aided and abetted by the mist, the frustration of the day was an albatross of great interest that approached up our wake and crossed the bow before heading off to the port side, becoming ever more indistinct in the fog and then disappearing altogether. From what could be seen the bird was not any of the regular mollymawks and appeared to be a good call for **Buller's Albatross**, but sadly no photographs and insufficient visible detail in the murky light to categorically claim it as such.

After leaving the trawlers our cruise northward was uneventful, and we docked amid the general hubbub on the SA Navy Festival after a short stop at Partridge Point for **Bank Cormorants**.

The full list for the day was as follows, with numbers being approximations only:

**Pelagic species seen and approximate numbers:**

Shy Albatross: c100

Black-browed Albatross: c50

Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross: 5

Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross: 3

Buller's Albatross – suspected, but not seen long enough to confirm

Northern Giant Petrel: 5

Cape (Pintado) Petrel: c75

White-chinned Petrel: c750

Sooty Shearwater: c75

Great Shearwater: c10

Wilson's Storm Petrel: 5

Subantarctic Skua: 2

Sabine's Gull: 1

Cape Gannet: c50

**Coastal species:**

Kelp Gull: 30+ at trawlers

Arctic Tern: 1

Common Tern: c50

Greater Crested Tern: 25++ seen foraging in coastal waters

Bank Cormorant: 20+

White-breasted Cormorant: 1

Cape Cormorant: 100s, coastal

Crowned Cormorant; 3 in harbour

African Penguin: 25+

African Oystercatcher: 2

**Marine mammals:**

Cape Fur Seal: common around trawlers

Humpback Whale: 3

Trip report: Cape Town Pelagics guide: John Graham

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.