Trip Report - Cape Town Pelagics - Saturday, 2 August 2025

Trip Highlights: Four albatross species including **Northern Royal Albatross**, Soft-plumaged Petrels, Southern & Northern Giant Petrels, Humpback Whales, Common Dolphin & a Loggerhead Turtle.

We left Hout Bay as the sun rose and headed toward the fishing grounds. As we left the bay, we were greeted by a breaching juvenile **Humpback Whale**. Not long after, we came across a large pod of hundreds of **Common Dolphins**, quickly followed by our first tubenoses for the day: **Sooty Shearwaters** and **White-chinned Petrels.**

We headed west in search of fishing vessels. On the way to the fishing grounds, we came across a returning long-liner with some birds in its wake. We had several **Shy** and **Black-browed Albatrosses**, as well as a few **Cape (Pintado) Petrel**. We then headed on in search of more birds. As we travelled, we saw **Antarctic Prion** and had excellent views of a **Soft-plumaged Petrel** right over the boat, one of which showed very well as it flew past the boat.

There was only one long-liner active in the area, but this boat was followed by many birds. There were good numbers of **Shy** and **Black-browed Albatrosses**, with a few **Indian Yellow-nosed Albatrosses** in between. Both **Southern** and **Northern Giant Petrels** were feeding in the wake, alongside **Brown Skua** and numerous **Cape** and **White-chinned Petrels**. A lone **Wilson's Storm Petrel** passed by the boat multiple time, allowing for good views.

Northern *(left – pinkish beak)* **& Southern** *(right – pale greenish beak)* **Giant Petrels**

The highlight bird was a gorgeous **Northern Royal Albatross** that hung around for several minutes, giving a few close fly-bys.

Northern Royal Albatross © Vanessa Stephen

Northern Royal Albatross © Vanessa Stephen

As we were preparing to start heading back to Hout Bay, a **Loggerhead Turtle** made a brief appearance. It swam just under the surface of the water, but occasionally broke the surface to breathe. While traveling back to the harbour, we saw several **Cape Gannets** flying out to feed. We were greeted in the harbour by **Cape Cormorants** and **Cape Fur Seals**.

Pelagic species seen and approximate numbers:

Northern Royal Albatross	1
Shy/White-capped Albatross	50
Black-browed Albatross	40
Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross	2
Northern Giant Petrel	2
Southern Giant Petrel	3
Sooty Shearwater	100
White-chinned Petrel	150
Pintado (Cape) Petrel	50
Soft-plumaged Petrel	2
Wilson's Storm Petrel	1
Antarctic Prion	2
Cape Gannet	20
Brown (Sub-Antarctic) Skua	2

Coastal species

Cape Cormorant	±750
Hartlaub's Gull	10
Great Crested Tern	10
Common Tern	2
Kelp Gull	50

Marine mammals & reptiles:

Cape Fur Seal	abundant
Humpback Whale	3
Common Dolphin	500
Loggerhead Turtle	1

A Cape Town Pelagic Trip Report by Tour Leader Joel Radue

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 organised 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 guestswith a world-class birding experience. Cape Town Pelagics donates all it 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.

Black-browed Albatross

Shy Albatross