Trip Report - Cape Town Pelagics – Saturday, 6 September 2025

Trip Highlights: Five species of albatross including **Southern Royal Albatross**, Sabine's Gull, Humpback Whale.

Our group met at 07:00 on a beautiful and relatively wind-free Saturday morning at the False Bay Yacht Club, Simon's Town before setting off on our pelagic tour. Around the harbour itself, we were welcomed by a pair of Egyptian Geese, while a couple of **African Oystercatchers** noisily made their presence known. On our way out from the harbour, we encountered a further assortment of coastal birds, including several **Kelp Gulls**, **Cape Cormorants** and **Greater Crested Terns**, before cruising past a small raft of **African Penguins** opposite Boulders Beach.

After we made our customary safety check-in stop at Cape Point, we slowly headed in a south-westerly direction to an area the fishing vessels typically frequent for their fishing activities. Our first proper pelagic species for the day were a couple of **Sooty Shearwaters**, followed shortly by some **White-chinned Petrels**, and then a juvenile **Southern Giant Petrel** put in a brief appearance.

When we got closer to the Cape Canyon, we saw a couple of vessels popping on and off the AIS system, and then once we reached the general area, we found three trawlers and a longliner engaged in fishing activities.

At that stage, they had not yet processed any catches for the day, however good numbers of pelagic birds were dispersed between the boats. Among the birds present were **Brown Skua**, **Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross**, **Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross**, **Black-browed Albatross**, **Shy Albatross**, **Pintado Petrel**, **Southern Giant Petrel**, **Northern Giant Petrel**, **Cape Gannet**, **Common Tern**, **Arctic Tern**, **Kelp Gull**, **Sooty Shearwater**, **Great Shearwater**, **White-chinned Petrel**, **Sabine's Gull** and our species of the day, namely two young **Southern Royal Albatrosses**.

Things really picked up once the fishing vessel pulled in its nets, and suddenly there were hundreds, if not thousands of birds all around us. Birds were not the only attractions of the day – we also saw two **Humpback Whales** and several **Brown (Cape) Fur Seals**.

It finally was time to head northwards again after spending a few hours with the seabirds. Along our trip back towards the shoreline, we continued seeing some of the bird species encountered earlier on during the day.

After a brief lunch stop back in False Bay, we stopped off at Patridge point, where we could enjoy the resident colony of **Bank Cormorants**, which also hosted a few **Great (White-breasted) Cormorants**, **Cape Cormorants** and one or two **Crowned Cormorants**. We then finally returned to the Simon's Town harbour after a lovely day of birding out at sea.

Pelagic species seen and approximate numbers:

Shy Albatross	150
Black-browed Albatross	300+
Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross	2
Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross	8
Yellow-nosed sp. juvenile	1
Northern Giant Petrel	2
Southern Giant Petrel	8
Cape (Pintado) Petrel	80
White-chinned Petrel	500+
Sooty Shearwater	250
Great Shearwater	2
Cape Gannet	30
Brown (Subantarctic) Skua	15
Sabine's Gull	1
Arctic Tern	5

Rarities/Vagrants:

Southern Royal Albatross	2

Coastal Species:

Egyptian Goose	2
Kelp Gull	300
African Oystercatcher	2
White-breasted Cormorant	10
Bank Cormorant	25
Crowned Cormorant	2
Cape Cormorant	500
African Penguin	100
Great Crested Tern	80
Common Tern	20

Marine Mammals:

Brown (Cape) Fur Seal	120
Humpback Whale	2

Gallery

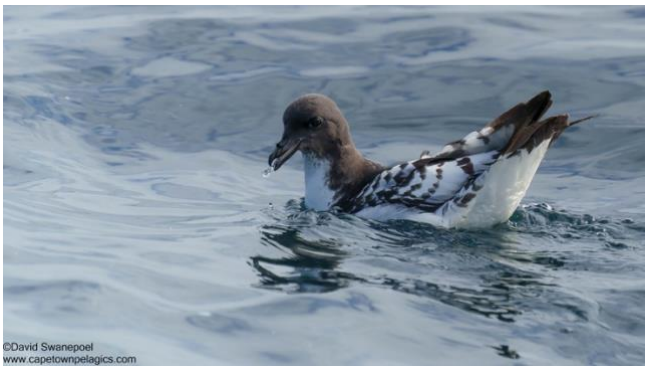
Black-browed Albatross

Northern Giant Petrel

Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross

Shy Albatross

Cape (Pintado) Petrel



Cape (Pintado) Petrel

Southern Royal Albatross

Black-browed 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 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.

Southern Royal Albatross