## Trip Report - Cape Town Pelagics – Saturday, 31 January 2026

Trip Highlights: Four species albatross, **Spectacled Petrel**, Parasitic Jaeger, Great-winged Petrel, Manx Shearwater and Sabine's Gulls.

Shortly after 7am on 31 January, local and foreign guests departed from False Bay Yacht Club heading out to sea with high hopes for some good sea-birding. For some, it was their maiden pelagic and that meant every bird they saw would be a lifer! For others, it was about enjoying what the day had to offer. Maybe a potential rarity.

As we continued our journey from Cape Point towards the trawling grounds, things began to pick up. **Cory's Shearwater, Great Shearwater, White-chinned Petrel, Cape Gannets** and a single **Parasitic Jaeger** were among the first highlights of the day. Other species such as **Giant Petrels** soon made an appearance, with a **Manx Shearwater** adding to the day's list. **Shy** and **Black-browed Albatrosses** soon added to the mix.

There were no trawlers on the day, but two longliners came to the rescue! Stunning views of **Atlantic** and **Indian Yellow-nosed Albatrosses** were appreciated by all. At least two **Great-winged Petrels** were seen in the longliner's vicinity, with **Sooty Shearwaters** finally joining in.

The most popular birds of the day were **Storm Petrels**. Both **European** and **Wilson's** were near the boat a number of times, providing amazing views. The odd **Subantarctic** (**Brown) Skua** flashed by and many on board were pleased to see a few **Sabine's Gulls** throughout the day.

Having been spoiled by the 'regular' species, there was still something the group was hoping for, but time was ticking by. Among the **White-chinned Petrels**, one stood out. A **Spectacled Petrel**! All on board were incredibly fortunate to have spent time watching this magnificent bird from just a few metres away. The views were outstanding.

Having spent a while in awe, it was time to head back to the shelter of False Bay and check in on the **Bank Cormorant** colony at Partridge Point, as well as the **Cape Fur Seal** haul-out and a light lunch to end a successful day on the sea.

Coastal seabirds for the day included **Greater Crested**, **Sandwich** and Common Terns; Bank, Cape and White-breasted Cormorants; Kelp and Hartlaub's Gulls, African Oystercatchers and African Penguins.

**Pelagic species seen and approximate numbers:**
Albatross, Black-browed - 70
Albatross, Shy - 70
Albatross, Atlantic Yellow-nosed - 5
Albatross, Indian Yellow-nosed - 5
Petrel, Northern Giant - 3
Petrel, White-chinned - 100
Petrel, Great-winged - 2
Petrel, Spectacled - 1
Petrel, Wilson's Storm - 50
Petrel, European Storm - 50
Shearwater, Sooty - 30
Shearwater, Great - 40
Shearwater, Cory's - 40
Shearwater, Manx - 2
Jaeger Parasitic - 1
Gannet, Cape - 25
Gull, Sabine's - 3
Skua, Subantarctic (Brown) - 3

**Coastal species:**
Penguin, African - 45
Cormorant, Bank - 25
Cormorant, White-breasted - 10
Cormorant, Cape - 100
African, Oystercatcher – 3
Gull, Hartlaub's – 30

Gull, Kelp - 10
Tern, Greater Crested - 70
Tern Common - 40
Tern, Sandwich - 50

**Mammals:**
Cape Fur Seal

Trip report: Cape Town Pelagics guide: Rob Cooper

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.