Trip Report - Cape Town Pelagics – Monday, 5 October 2026

Trip Highlights: Red Phalarope, Black-bellied Storm Petrel, Parasitic Jaeger



Our group met bright and early on a beautiful Monday morning at the Simon's Town Yacht Club before setting off on our pelagic tour. A few coastal species were present around the harbour area, including the floating boundary barriers, amongst others **Kelp Gull**, **Cape Cormorant** and a group of **Hartlaub's Gulls**, as well as a pair of **Grey Herons** who flew up to go sit on top of a tall tree. On our way to the point we encountered a large raft of **Cape Cormorants**, one or two smaller groups of **African Penguins**, a flock of G**reater Crested Terns** on a rock close to the Boulders Penguin Colony and a young **Humpback Whale** close to the point, but still just inside the bay.

After we made our customary safety check-in stop at Cape Point, we slowly headed in a south-westerly direction to deeper waters. At the point itself, there was a little bit of activity in the form of some more **Cape Cormorants**, **Kelp Gulls** and **Greater Crested Terns**, but we then went through a cold current that caused a thick fog for the next few miles. Once we got through the bank of mist, we saw one or two **Sooty Shearwaters**, a couple of **White-chinned Petrels**, a distant juvenile **Giant Petrel** and one or two **Shy Albatrosses** and **Cape Gannets**. We made a slight detour for a flock of **Common Terns** and a couple of **Great Shearwaters**, and then once we were underway again, a tiny grey bird flew up and away from us at speed - **Red Phalarope**, one of our top birds of the day.

Two longliner fishing vessels were present in the Cape Canyon area, but as there weren't many birds around them yet, we employed our back-up plan, which involved chumming with some frozen sardines and anchovy oil. This strategy paid off, and soon we had close-up views of **Brown Skua**, **White-Chinned Petrel**, **Kelp Gull** and **Great Shearwater**, while some other species, including **Shy Albatross**, both **Northern Giant Petrel** and **Southern Giant Petrel**, one or two **Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatrosses** and **Pintado Petrel** came in but kept their distance. Finally, the longliner started making its way to its buoys and began to pull in its lines, when suddenly, out of nowhere, we were surrounded by a mass of birds: familiar species reappeared alongside an **Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross**, several **Black-browed Albatrosses**, a few **Sooty Shearwaters**, **Common Tern** and **Wilson's Storm Petrels** - before our other bird of the day, the **Black-bellied Storm Petrel**, joined the frenzy**.**



After spending a few hours in the area, it eventually was time to head northwards again. Along our trip back towards the shoreline, we continued to get the odd sighting of some of the bird species encountered earlier on during the day, and then just before we got back to Cape Point, a **Parasitic Jaeger** came past.

Once back in False Bay, we made our way to Partridge point, where we could enjoy views of the resident **Bank Cormorants.** Also in attendance were one or two **Great Cormorants**, several **Cape Cormorants**, a **Crowned Cormorant** and a few **Kelp Gulls**. On another of the smaller rocks, a pair of **African Oystercatchers** were foraging for mussels, while on another some **Cape Fur Seals** were basking in the sun. We then finally returned to the Simonstown harbour after a lovely day of birding out at sea.

Pelagic species seen and approximate numbers:

Shy Albatross	80
Black-browed Albatross	20
Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross	30
Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross	1
Northern Giant Petrel	20
Southern Giant Petrel	20
Cape (Pintado) Petrel	20
White-chinned Petrel	150
Sooty Shearwater	10
Great Shearwater	150
Black-bellied Storm Petrel	1
Wilson's Storm Petrel	15
Cape Gannet	30
Parasitic Jaeger	1
Brown (Subantarctic) Skua	20

Rarities / Vagrant Species:

Red (Grey) Phalarope	1

Coastal Species:

Grey Heron	2
Hartlaub's Gull	50
Kelp Gull	200
African Oystercatcher	2
White-breasted Cormorant	10
Bank Cormorant	25
Crowned Cormorant	1
Cape Cormorant	300
African Penguin	120
Great Crested Tern	50
Common Tern	30

Marine Mammals:

Brown (Cape) Fur Seal	80
Humpback Whale	1

Trip report & photos by David Swanepoel

Gallery



Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross



Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross



Northern Giant Petrel



Great Shearwater



Cape (Pintado) Petrel



White-chinned Petrel



Northern Giant Petrel



Shy Albatross



Brown (Subantarctic) Skua



Black-bellied Storm Petrel



Black-bellied Storm Petrel



Shy Albatross

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.