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## Cape Town Pelagic Trip Report

**3 January 2009**

A Cape Town Pelagics trip left Simonstown on Saturday January 3rd guided by Cape Town Pelagics guide Meidad Goren. As our skipper suspected the holiday season would keep most of the fishing vessels in, we carried with us some smelling fish, which proved to be very helpful later on. Passing Cape Point we were welcomed by nice sea with very little seabird activity. Steaming slowly to the south west we started encounter pelagic seabirds: **Cory's** and **Sooty Shearwaters**, **White-chinned** and **Giant Petrels** and a few **Albatrosses**. Other summer visitors recorded in good numbers were **Sabine's Gulls** and **Arctic**, **Long-tailed** and **Parasitic Skuas**.

Beside giving us the possibility of taking photos and having good views of the birds, the flat sea also allowed to see in the distance and realize that we wouldn't find fishing boats today. Therefore Chris took out the fish and started to chum. Out of the blue came large numbers of birds and we managed to add other species to our list such as **Subantarctic Skuas**, **Yellow-nosed Albatross**, (immature bird, probably **Indian**), **Black-browed Albatross** and **Great Shearwater** and good views of **Northern Giant Petrel**.

It was very interesting to note the large number of **Long-tailed Skuas**, the dominant skua in this trip.

The chumming immediately attracted other marine life and for about an hour and a half we enjoyed excellent views of Blue sharks, Yellowtailed and other fish.

Steaming back towards the point we occasionally spotted the odd concentration of seabirds wherever sea surface temperatures showed dramatic change. **Sooty** and **Cory's Shearwater** alongside **Common** and **Arctic Terns** accompanied by the opportunistic Skuas are very much attracted to these spots.

We stopped to watch the **Bank**, **Cape** and **White-breasted cormorants** on Partridge Rock before heading back to the harbour.

Birds seen and approximate numbers:

Shy Albatross	15
Black-browed Albatross	1
Juvenile Yellow-nosed Albatross	1
Northern Giant Petrel	2
White-chinned Petrel	60
Great Shearwater	2
Sooty Shearwater	80
Cory's Shearwater	120
Sabine's Gull	50
Subantarctic Skua	5
Arctic Skua	4
Long-tailed Skua	15
Parasitic Skua	3
Arctic Tern	15

Coastal species included:

African Penguin  
Cape Gannet  
Kelp Gull  
Hartlaub's Gull  
Swift Tern  
Sandwich Tern  
Common Tern

White-breasted Cormorant  
Bank Cormorant  
Cape Cormorant

**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 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.

Trip report by Cape Town Pelagics guide Meidad Goren.