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Cape Town Pelagics Trip Report

13 September 2008

HIGHLIGHTS

35 Risso's Dolphins!

A Cape Town Pelagics trip left Simon's Town on Saturday **13 September 2008** guided by Cape Town Pelagics guide Alvin Cope in a flat calm sea and no wind. A single **Humpback Whale** was seen in the distance off Miller's Point, which sounded and was not seen again. The sea picked up, but only marginally as we rounded the Point and headed to the south-west. We had a good look at a pod of **Humpback Whales** at about 5 miles offshore. As expected in the windless conditions, the birds on the way out were few and far between, a small group of **Shy Albatross** and **White-chinned Petrels** with a piece of octopus left by a **Cape Fur Seal**. Also as a result of the calm clear conditions, we were fortunate to spot a pod of \pm 35 **Risso's Dolphins** at about 15 miles, an exciting sighting for all.

The skipper found a trawler at about 23 miles and we headed towards it. Luckily it had just started hauling and we hung around. We were not disappointed and spent the rest of the trip in a "cloud" of the usual selection of albatrosses and seabirds. The ride home, still in flat windless conditions, produced 2 **Common Terns** and 3 **Humpbacks** about 3 miles off the Point and a pod of **Southern Right Whales** just off the harbour. We went to the **Bank Cormorant** breeding rock and did see all 4 **Cormorants** in one binocular view there and **African Black Oystercatchers**. One Brit who was also with us on another pelagic said "my best two birding days ever"!

Birds seen, with numbers where known, excluding all the usual stuff in coastal waters:

Shy Albatross	
Black-browed Albatross	
Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross	2
Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross	2
Southern Giant Petrel	1
Northern Giant Petrel	3
Giant Petrel sp	5
White-Chinned Petrel	
Sooty Shearwater	
Great Shearwater	
Pintado Petrel	
Wilson's Storm-Petrel	
Subantarctic Skua	
Common Tern	2

Mammals
Cape Fur Seal
Southern Right Whale
Risso's Dolphin
Humpback Whale

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 Alvin Cope.