Cape Town Pelagics Trip Report

28 September 2008

HIGHLIGHTS
Northern Royal Albatross

A Cape Town Pelagics trip left Simonstown on 28 September 2008 guided by Cape Town Pelagics guide, Bruce Dyer. Our destination was about 20-25 miles SW of Cape Point in the Cape Valley trawl ground region. Another Cape Town Pelagics vessel, guided by Dalton Gibbs, operated in close proximity to us.

Hartlaub’s and Kelp Gull, as well as a Swift Tern were present in the harbour area and offered good views. One Kelp Gull, recognizing that the wharf was filled with overseas birders, rather considerately dropped its Cape Urchin breakfast into a dustbin instead of the wharf! A pair of Egyptian Goose in the harbour, gave us excellent views of their 5 chicks.

En route to Cape Point, 3 African Penguins put in an appearance, as did two Southern Right Whales and a few Cape Fur Seals. Cape Cormorant were regular as they hurriedly made their way to and from their nesting cliffs.

Just after “The Bellows” we were privileged to view a large school of Common Dolphin (Long-beaked) moving eastward and shortly thereafter, a small pod of Atlantic Bottle-nosed Dolphins was seen. White-chinned Petrel, Cape Gannet and Shy Albatross put in an appearance soon afterwards, which were probably associated with the groups of dolphins. We received directions via radio to a trawler, which we duly headed for and found two operating fairly close to one another. Reasonable numbers of birds were attending. Good views of all species attending the trawler were had, other than perhaps Great Shearwater, which seemed to be quite shy of our boat (see list below). The highlight was a single Sabine’s Gull seen briefly flitting across the wake of our boat. Two fleeting glimpses of Giant Petrels were disappointing in that they provided no identifiable views.

We called it a day shortly before noon as one trawler packed up and left for Cape Town and the other steadily moved too far south.

We made a brief stop at Partridge Point Rocks to view the breeding colony of the highly endangered Bank Cormorant. One rock in the group had all four species of marine cormorant present. The rock with several dozen Cape Fur Seal was also viewed.
**Bird List**

African Penguin 3
Cape Cormorant 200
Bank Cormorant 40
White-breasted Cormorant 30
Crowned Cormorant 3
Hartlaub’s Gull 10
Kelp Gull 200
Swift Tern 20
Common Tern 3
Cape Gannet 50
Black-browed Albatross 100
Shy Albatross 200
White-chinned Petrel 500
Giant Petrel 2
Pintado Petrel 200
Great Shearwater 10
Sooty Shearwater 50
Wilson’s Storm Petrel 200
Subantarctic (Brown) Skua 2
Sabine’s Gull 1

**Mammals**

Southern Right Whale 2
Common Dolphin 500
Atlantic Bottle-nosed Dolphin 4
Cape Fur Seal 100

**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 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.

Trip Report by Cape Town Pelagics guide Bruce Dyer