



Director Callan Cohen: callan@birdingafrica.com

mobile: +27 83 256 0491

Pelagic enquiries: info@capetownpelagics.com

office: +27 21 531 9148

fax: +27 21 531 8289

4 Crassula Way, 7405 Pinelands, Cape Town, South Africa

Cape Town Pelagics Trip Report

13 December 2008

A Cape Town Pelagics trip left Simonstown on 13 December 2008 guided by Cape Town Pelagics guide, Dalton Gibbs. A fresh southerly wind was blowing which had been preceded by several days of strong south-easterly winds.

In Simonstown harbour were the usual **Cape** and **Hartlaub's Gull**, **Swift Tern** as well **Sandwich Terns** and a single **African Black Oystercatcher** on the floating buoys. Near the Boulders penguin colony a group of **African Penguin** showed above the water surface as well as **Cape Gannet** and **Cape Cormorant** flying out for fishing. Half way to Cape Point we came across a Bryde's Whale, which surfaced several times within a few meters of the boat as we drifted along. This gave us excellent views of the distinguishing features of this inshore whale species. A brief stop at Cape Point had us checking out with the radio operator as we took in the scenery. As we headed for the deep, we passed the occasional mixed flock of **Swift** and **Sandwich Terns** working shoals of fish near Bellow's Rock.

Within a few miles we came across a few **Sooty Shearwaters**, which took their time before they approached the boat close enough for visual views; these were soon followed by **Cory's Shearwaters**. About 15 miles off Cape Point we came across the first few **White-chinned Petrels** who were mixed with **Cory's Shearwater**. We headed out to the 20 mile mark before getting news of trawlers and long liners at 25 miles and headed for these co-ordinates; passing a lone **Southern Giant Petrel** on the way. Before making radar contact with these vessels we came across a wayward floating buoy that had a small **mako shark** swimming beneath it. These beautiful open ocean sharks have a long tail, which this specimen showed off in the clear oceanic water.

At 25 miles off Cape Point we came across four long liner vessels and a stern trawler that was steaming westwards. There were relatively low numbers of birds behind these boats, but we soon found both **Shy Albatross** and **Black-browed Albatross**. Small flocks of **Sabine's gull** dotted the area as well as **Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross** that gave several excellent fly by views. Several **Southern Giant Petrels** were present, with only one **Northern Giant Petrel** being picked up. Searching through the albatross that came past we eventually found a single **Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross**, but we were only allowed distant views.

Cape fur seal were present, appearing on the surface to pick up discarded scraps from the vessels. Several **Great Shearwaters** and small number of **European** and **Wilson's storm petrels** made an appearance in time to disrupt lunch that was being served.

Our trip back was relatively quiet; the low numbers of birds on the trawling grounds were attributed to the large shoals of fish that had recently been reported off Hermanus and may have drawn the birds eastwards. Off Cape Point were again found flocks of **Sabine's Gull**, **Cory's Shearwater** and **White-chinned Petrels**. Near Cape Point a lone **Parasitic Jaeger** chased **Swift Terns** for food.

Back in inside False Bay we moved across to Castle Rock colony to obtain views of the nesting **Bank Cormorants**. These rocks provided good comparison views of **Cape**, **Bank** and **White-breasted Cormorants**. The adjacent rocks held large numbers of Cape Fur Seals, with another nearby rock giving close up views of **Crowned Cormorant**. Back in Simonstown harbour a single Grey Heron made an unusual addition to our pelagic trip list!

Bird species seen and approximate numbers:

Swift Tern	coastal
Hartlaub's Gull	coastal
Cape Gull	coastal
Cape Cormorant	coastal
Bank Cormorant	coastal
White-Breasted Cormorant	coastal
Crowned Cormorant	coastal, 3
African Penguin	coastal
Cape Gannet	coastal & pelagic, 100
Africa Black Oystercatcher	coastal, 1
White-chinned Petrel	100
Southern Giant Petrel	8
Northern Giant Petrel	1
Sooty Shearwater	100
Great Shearwater	100
Cory's Shearwater	50
Shy Albatross	20
Black-browed Albatross	20
Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross	6
Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross	1
Wilson's Storm Petrel	10
European Storm Petrel	20
Sabine's Gull	50
Parasitic Jaeger	1

Mammals:

Cape fur seal
Bryde's 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 Dalton Gibbs.