



Trip Report - Cape Town Pelagics - 2 May 2021

Trip Highlights: Black-bellied Storm Petrel, Cape (Pintado) Petrel, Antarctic Prion



Cape (Pintado) Petrel

We departed Simon's Town early on Sunday morning and charted a course to Cape Point. Our seabirding within the bay yielded a good variety of coastal species such as **African Penguin, Cape Gannet, Kelp** and **Hartlaub's Gulls, Great Crested (Swift) Tern**, and all four of the local marine cormorant species - **Cape, Bank, Crowned** and **White-breasted Cormorants**.

During our usual photo stop at the point, we encountered first true pelagic species. **White-chinned** were very common, with smaller numbers of **Great, Sooty** and **Cory's Shearwaters**, and a single juvenile **Giant Petrel** in the mix. Sadly the latter was too distant to confidently identify to species level.

As we headed into deeper oceanic waters, **White-chinned Petrels** and **Great Shearwaters** became abundant. Even further out, we picked up our first **Shy Albatrosses**, the first ever albatross for all our guests. The diminutive **Wilson's Storm Petrel** were still very common, with good numbers still

on passage past the South African coast. A real treat was the first **Antarctic Prions** of the winter season. They were surprising abundant, and we got several close views of this distinctive species.



Wilson's Storm Petrel



Antarctic Prion

We found a long-line fishing vessel 22 nautical miles from the coast. Although not actively fishing, it still attracted a respectable numbers of seabirds. The morning's birding around the boat saw us add **Black-browed Albatross**, **Northern Giant Petrel**, **Black-bellied Storm Petrel** and **Brown Skua**, to our trip list.



Cape (Pintado) Petrel

The stars of the show for all on board were the very striking **Cape (Pintado) Petrels**. These attractive black and white seabirds are a common winter visitor and a fitting mascot for Cape Town Pelagics. We were treated to some very close views, especially of several small flocks resting on the sea. At midday we began our return trip, and we picked up a good selection of pelagic species all the way back to the coast.

After a fantastic light lunch, we made a quick stop at some of the dramatic sea caves near Cape Point, before continuing onto the nearby Partridge Point **Bank Cormorant** colony. Despite their breeding being done, the rocks held good numbers of this endangered seabird. They were joined by large numbers of **Cape** and a few **White-breasted Cormorants**. A **Crowned Cormorant** was found roosting on the nearby **Cape Fur Seal** haul-out. An **African Oystercatcher** was spotted feeding on the exposed mussel beds on the backside of this outcrop. For a second week in a row, a solitary juvenile **African Penguin** was seen roosting amongst the sleeping seals.

With a fantastic trip under our belts, we returned safely to port.

Pelagic species seen and approximate numbers:

African Penguin - 30
Shy/White-capped Albatross - 30
Black-browed Albatross - 3
Northern Giant Petrel - 1
Giant-petrel spp - 1
Sooty Shearwater - 10
Cory's Shearwater - 5
Great Shearwater - 150
White-chinned Petrel - 350
Cape (Pintado) Petrel - 50
Antarctic Prion - 100
Wilson's Storm Petrel - 50
Black-bellied Storm Petrel - 2
Brown (Sub-Antarctic) Skua - 4

Coastal species:

African Penguin - 30
Cape Gannet - Common
White-breasted Cormorant - 20 breeding pairs
Cape Cormorant - abundant
Crowned Cormorant - 1
Bank Cormorant - 20 birds
Kelp Gull - common
Hartlaub's Gull - 1
Great Crested Tern - common
African (Black) Oystercatcher - 1

Marine mammal

Cape Fur Seal - abundant

Trip report: Cape Town Pelagics guide [Vincent Ward](#)

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.