



Trip Report - Cape Town Pelagics - Saturday, 1 October 2022

Trip Highlights: Five albatross species including a **Southern Royal Albatross**, Soft-plumaged Petrel.



Juvenile **Southern Royal Albatross**

Our group met at the False Bay Yacht Club, Simon's Town at 07:00 on the Saturday morning, before setting off on our pelagic tour. It was a beautiful sunny and relatively wind-free day. Still in False Bay heading towards Cape Point, we started encountering a few coastal seabird species such as **Cape Cormorants**, **Hartlaub's Gulls**, **Kelp Gulls** and **Greater Crested (Swift) Terns**, as well as a small raft of **African Penguins**.

The conditions appeared to be just right for fishing, and several fishing vessels appeared to be racing to get out of False Bay as early as possible. Just beyond our safety check-in stop at Cape Point, we caught up with what almost appeared to be a small fishing fleet, attended by **Cape Cormorants**, **Common Terns**, a few **Greater Crested (Swift) Terns**, the first **Cape Gannets** and **White-chinned Petrels** of the day and a **juvenile Giant Petrel**.

Heading further out into the deep, we came across a few more groups of **Cape Gannets**, some **White-Chinned Petrels**, one or two **Sooty Shearwaters** and our first **Shy Albatrosses** of the day.

There were no trawlers in the Cape Canyon area, however several Tuna Pole-fisher boats were present as well as a single long-liner, and we started seeing larger numbers of pelagic species.

While we waited for the long-liner to pull in her nets, we put out some anchovy oil and sardines which brought in several species of birds including **Cape (Pintado) Petrel**, **Black-browed Albatross**, a few **Wilson's Storm Petrels**, **Brown Skua**, **Common Tern**, a few **Great Shearwaters**, both **Southern Giant Petrels** and **Northern Giant Petrels** and a single **Soft Plumaged Petrel**.



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A mature **Southern Royal Albatross**



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Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross

Just when we thought we had a good show going, the long-liner started pulling in its haul and processing the catch, which in turn caused bird numbers to pick up dramatically. The last surprise for the day was a Royal Albatross, first identified as a Northern Royal, however subsequent scrutiny of the photographs clinched the ID as a **juvenile Southern Royal Albatross**.

After enjoying the birds around the boat for a good while, it was time to head northwards again. Between the Cape Canyon and Cape Point, we continued to come across a few of the species seen previously during the day. En-route back to Simon’s Town we enjoyed lunch and cold drinks in a relatively calm spot overlooking the Cape of Good Hope National Park. Our last stop was at Partridge Point where we visited the **Bank Cormorant** colony; which also hosted a few **White-breasted Cormorants** and **Cape Cormorants**, and the **Cape Fur Seal** hang-out, after which we returned to the harbour after a wonderful day of birding at sea.



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Great Shearwater

Pelagic species seen and approximate numbers:

Shy Albatross	200
Black-browed Albatross	50
Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross	5
Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross	5
Yellow-nosed sp. juvenile	1
Northern Giant Petrel	5
Southern Giant Petrel	15

Giant Petrel spp	2
Cape (Pintado) Petrel	30
Soft-plumaged Petrel	1
White-chinned Petrel	500
Sooty Shearwater	10
Great Shearwater	50
Wilson's Storm Petrel	10
Cape Gannet	80
Brown (Subantarctic) Skua	30

Rarities/Vagrants

Southern Royal Albatross	1
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Coastal species:

Kelp Gull	500
Hartlaub's Gull	40
African Oystercatcher	5
White-breasted Cormorant	10
Bank Cormorant	30
Cape Cormorant	500
Crowned Cormorant	2
African Penguin	200
Great Crested Tern	80
Common Tern	150
Egyptian Goose	10

Marine mammals:

Cape Fur Seal	200
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Trip report: Cape Town Pelagics guide - [David Swanepoel](#)

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.

