



## CAPE PELAGIC TRIP – TRIP REPORT 8 AUGUST 2015

By Dylan Vasapolli



An adult **Shy Albatross** (*Thalassarche cauta*)

With an early start, we departed the Simon's Town harbor while it was still dark, bound for the deep oceanic waters south of Cape Point.

We made good progress, and still well within False Bay, just with the sun rising over the mountains, we picked up our first true pelagic species, a **White-chinned Petrel** slowly working over the swells. After rounding Cape Point we headed south towards the known trawling grounds and made good progress en route, with large numbers of **White-chinned Petrels, Sooty Shearwaters, and Cape Gannets** present. It wasn't long before we got onto our first **Albatross** – which turned out to be a **Shy**, as it came nice and close for a brilliant look. Progress was slow until the 20-mile mark from the point, where we picked up our first **Black-browed Albatross, a Wilson's Storm Petrel, and a group of three Antarctic Prions** – which wouldn't be present for much longer in our waters.

We then pulled in behind a trawler, which was in the process of reeling in the nets – with a huge mass of birds following the ship. The majority of the birds were made up of **Shy and Black-browed Albatrosses and White-chinned Petrels**. Sifting through the birds as we went along revealed a few **Cape Petrels, Brown Skuas, Wilson's Storm Petrels, Cape Gannets, Kelp Gulls, Sooty Shearwaters, and another small group of Antarctic Prions**. We were treated to a brief, but brilliant flyby view of a stunning **Spectacled Petrel** and watched as it disappeared into the mass of birds. A lone **Northern Giant Petrel** put in an appearance, as it glided in the wake of our boat for a while before moving off. After some time behind the trawler with no new species -- and an astonishing lack of any other species – we decided to head off and search for another fishing boat.

After some time of searching, without luck, we pulled in behind the same trawler for 'round 2'. After repeat views of the same species and still no further new ones, our skipper picked up another fishing vessel off in the distance. We moved towards her, and on getting closer we confirmed that it was a long-liner. A few of us were lucky to get views of an **Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross** moving through while we were still en route. A complete different selection of species awaited us here, and although we didn't quite have the same numbers, we enjoyed the variety of species. First up were good looks at various individuals of both **Northern and Southern Giant Petrels**, before a lone **Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross** flew in, allowing us ample time to view it. We enjoyed closer views of **Wilson's Storm Petrel** and a lone **Antarctic Prion**, in between the numerous **Brown Skuas** squabbling with **Black-browed Albatrosses and Kelp Gulls** over scraps, before having to call it a day and head back to shore.

The return journey was relatively uneventful, but heading through False Bay while it was still light allowed us views of **Cape and White-breasted Cormorants, African Penguin, and Greater Crested and Common Terns**.

On reflecting over the day's sightings, the very calm sea, coupled with the very calm weather for roughly a week preceding this weekend, probably resulted in the relatively 'quiet day' we had in terms of numbers of species present.

<b>CAPE PELAGIC TRIP BIRD LIST</b>		
Status: NT = Near-threatened, VU = Vulnerable, EN = Endangered		
<b>Common name (IOC 5.3)</b>	<b>Scientific name (IOC 5.3)</b>	<b>Trip</b>
	<b>SPHENISCIFORMES</b>	
<b>Penguins</b>	<b>Spheniscidae</b>	
African Penguin – EN	<i>Spheniscus demersus</i>	1
	<b>PROCELLARIIFORMES</b>	
<b>Austral Storm Petrels</b>	<b>Oceanitidae</b>	
Wilson's Storm Petrel	<i>Oceanites oceanicus</i>	1
<b>Albatrosses</b>	<b>Diomedidae</b>	
Black-browed Albatross - NT	<i>Thalassarche melanophris</i>	1
Shy Albatross	<i>Thalassarche cauta</i>	1
Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross - EN	<i>Thalassarche chlororhynchos</i>	1
Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross - EN	<i>Thalassarche carteri</i>	1
<b>Petrels, Shearwaters</b>	<b>Procellariidae</b>	
Southern Giant Petrel	<i>Macronectes giganteus</i>	1
Northern Giant Petrel	<i>Macronectes halli</i>	1
Cape Petrel	<i>Daption capense</i>	1
Antarctic Prion	<i>Pachyptila desolata</i>	1
White-chinned Petrel - VU	<i>Procellaria aequinoctialis</i>	1
Spectacled Petrel - VU	<i>Procellaria conspicillata</i>	1
Sooty Shearwater - NT	<i>Puffinus griseus</i>	1
	<b>SULIFORMES</b>	
<b>Gannets, Boobies</b>	<b>Sulidae</b>	
Cape Gannet - VU	<i>Morus capensis</i>	1
<b>Cormorants, Shags</b>	<b>Phalacrocoracidae</b>	
White-breasted Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax lucidus</i>	1
Cape Cormorant - EN	<i>Phalacrocorax capensis</i>	1
	<b>CHARADRIIFORMES</b>	

<b>Gulls, Terns and Skimmers</b>	<b>Laridae</b>	
Hartlaub's Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus hartlaubii</i>	1
Kelp Gull	<i>Larus dominicanus</i>	1
Greater Crested Tern	<i>Thalasseus bergii</i>	1
Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	1
<b>Skuas</b>	<b>Stercorariidae</b>	
Brown Skua	<i>Stercorarius antarcticus</i>	1
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>21</b>