

# Birding Ecotours



## SOUTH AFRICA: 1-DAY CAPE PELAGIC TRIP REPORT

By Dominic Rollinson



*Southern Royal Albatross was one of the highlights of the day.*

We all met early at Hout Bay harbor on this August morning with the good news of a moderate swell and very little wind expected out at sea today. After our briefing we headed out of the harbor with some playful **Cape Fur Seals** accompanying us alongside the boat and close-up views of **Crowned** and **Cape Cormorants**.

Soon after leaving the harbor we enjoyed our first ‘true pelagic’ species with a couple of **White-chinned Petrels** and the sleeker, more direct-flying **Sooty Shearwaters** shooting by. As we pressed on farther south we enjoyed a few good views of **Cape Gannet** and our first of many albatrosses for the day, a juvenile **Shy Albatross**. We then had two fairly unexpected *Pterodroma* petrel sightings in the form of **Soft-plumaged** and **Great-winged Petrels**.



*Cape Gannet was seen close to the coast as well as around the trawler.*

It was a long ride south until the news came that a trawler had been picked up on the horizon, and with excitement brewing we headed toward the seabird frenzy. As we got closer to the trawler seabird numbers started to pick up, and we soon had our first of many **Cape (Pintado) Petrels**, **Black-browed Albatross**, **Antarctic Prion**, and **Brown (Subantarctic) Skua**. We spent the next hour or so keeping up with the trawler and looking for anything unusual among the thousands of **White-chinned Petrels** and albatrosses. We eventually managed a few **Indian Yellow-nosed Albatrosses**, and then a massive **Southern Royal Albatross** flew by, dwarfing the other albatrosses around it! Surprisingly we did not have a single sighting of a storm petrel today.



*We had large numbers of the **Black-browed Albatross** attending the trawler.*

We eventually had to leave the trawler and make our way back to Hout Bay. However, we still had another surprise for the day in the form of two **Southern Fulmars**, a very rare species in the waters off the Cape. As we came close to Hout Bay harbor we saw a few distant blows of **Humpback Whale** and a few **African Penguins** feeding before we ended a long but productive day at sea.

**Approximate seabird numbers:**

African Penguin: 5  
 Shy Albatross: 350  
 Black-browed Albatross: 600  
 Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross: 5  
 Southern Royal Albatross: 1  
 Giant Petrel sp.: 2  
 White-chinned Petrel: 1000  
 Cape (Pintado) Petrel: 25  
 Soft-plumaged Petrel: 1  
 Great-winged Petrel: 1  
 Sooty Shearwater: 250  
 Antarctic Prion: 30  
 Brown (Subantarctic) Skua: 10  
 Cape Gannet: 150  
 Kelp Gull: 100  
 Hartlaub's Gull: 50  
 Greater Crested (Swift) Tern: 15