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# Waterbirds around the world

A global overview of the conservation,  
management and research of the  
world's waterbird flyways

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*Cover photography:* Whooper Swans *Cygnus cygnus* arriving at Martin Mere, England. Photo: Paul Marshall.  
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## Cape Gannet *Morus capensis* movements in Africa

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Cape Gannets *Morus capensis* breed at only six coastal islands off Namibia and South Africa (Table 1, Fig. 1). They are the third most-ringed birds in southern Africa, with some 140 000 ringed since 1950 (Oschadleus & Underhill 1999). Most ringing records since 1975 have been captured electronically.

After breeding, gannets disperse around the African coast, to West Africa on the west coast and to the Gulf of Guinea and Mozambique on the east coast. However, there have been some unusual recoveries. On 18 October 1986, a ringed Cape Gannet was entangled with fishing line in Western Australia, and was released unharmed. It had been ringed on Bird Island, Algoa Bay, 7 860 km away. In October 1989 this individual was seen on an unoccupied Yellow-nosed Albatross *Diomedea chlorohynchos* nest on Amsterdam Island, in the southern Indian Ocean halfway between South Africa and Australia. It was seen again on several dates in the same season, and in the following season, on Amsterdam Island.

Two other unusual Cape Gannet recoveries have been reported to SAFRING. One was found in a rubbish dump in Murmansk, NW Russia, but the gannet was probably caught on a Russian trawler and the ring and leg later discarded. Similarly, a South African ringed bird was reported from the Philippine Islands, without further details, but presumably this ring was also dropped off by a trawler. Cape Gannets often forage around trawlers and may become entangled in their nets.

A total of 2 516 gannets have been recovered sick or dead (0.6%), and 21 700 have been recaptured (5.4%). Adults usually remain within 540 km of their breeding site but may move up to 3 300 km, while immature birds of under two years old migrate as far as 6 800 km (Table 2).

The Cape Gannet is a regular winter visitor as far as the Gulf of Guinea. Outside of South Africa and Namibia, there have been 103 recoveries from Angola, 14 from Congo, 11 from Gabon, 17 from Equatorial Guinea, 10 from Cameroon, two from Nigeria, and one from Western Sahara. The last record is of a fledgling ringed at Lambert's Bay in 1966 that had moved to Western (former Spanish) Sahara after only 51 days. On the east coast of Africa, it is a regular winter visitor to Kwazulu-Natal

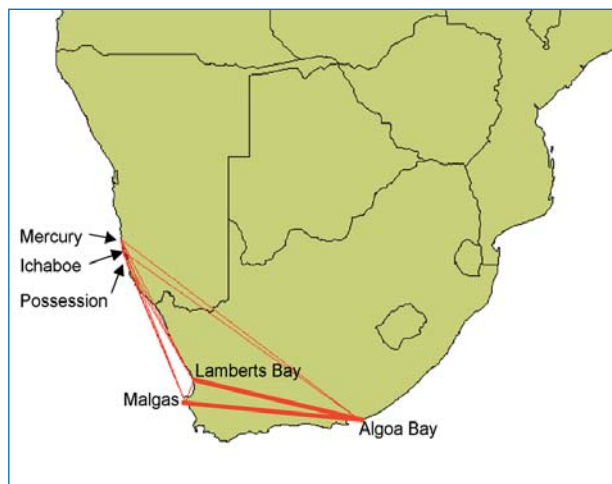


Fig. 1. The six breeding colonies of Cape Gannets *Morus capensis* in South Africa and Namibia, and known movements between the colonies.

Table 2. Number of Cape Gannet *Morus capensis* recoveries by ringing age.

Area of recovery	Juv	Adult	Total
Angola	33	68	103
Gulf of Guinea	12	44	56
Mozambique	20	17	37

Table 3. Number of Cape Gannet *Morus capensis* recoveries by decade and area of recovery.

	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s
Angola	64	19	0	6	14
Gulf of Guinea	50	4	0	0	2
Mozambique	13	7	0	9	8
Totals	127	30	0	15	24

Table 1. Numbers of pulli and adult Cape Gannets *Morus capensis* ringed at breeding colonies 1975-2002, and all recoveries 1950-2004. Colonies are sorted in decreasing size (no. of pairs in 1995 from Rob Crawford *in litt.*).

Breeding site	Pulli	Adults	Recovered	No. of pairs in 1995
Algoa Bay, Eastern Cape	29 317	1 847	2 441	68 000
Malgas, Western Cape	21 480	3 827	5 483	58 000
Ichaboe, Namibia	7 621	742	471	28 000
Lamberts Bay, Western Cape	11 838	1 586	3 766	10 000
Mercury, Namibia	4 012	135	367	2 100
Possession, Namibia	2 300	215	186	800
Total	76 568	8 352	12 714	166 900

**Table 4.** Number of Cape Gannet *Morus capensis* resighted or retrapped between breeding colonies.

Ringed at:	Colony moved to:						
	Mercury	Ichaboe	Possession	Lamberts	Malgas	Algoa	Other*
Mercury		10		8	11		
Ichaboe	7		3	31	22		
Possession	3	18		16	16		
Lamberts Bay	1	6			291	5	6
Malgas	2	2	1	260		3	6
Algoa	1	1		34	56		1

\* birds resighted or retrapped at non-breeding locations

and Delagoa Bay, Mozambique. Recoveries along the east coast of Africa include 37 from Mozambique and one from Madagascar.

The number of recoveries reported declined after the 1950s (Table 3), indicating a possibly altered pattern of dispersal (Oatley 1988, Klages 1994). This cannot be explained by a decrease in ringing effort.

Most inter-colony movement occurred between the closest colonies: Malgas and Lambert's Bay (Table 4, Fig. 1). Some movement occurred between South African and Namibian colonies. The most isolated colony seems to be at Algoa Bay.

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Cape Gannets *Morus capensis* at Lamberts Bay, western Cape. Photo: Dieter Oschadleus.

Inset: Displaying Cape Gannets *Morus capensis* at Lamberts Bay, western Cape. Photo: Dieter Oschadleus.



Seeing the world through duck eyes. Photo: The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust.



Education and awareness raising is a crucial element of any conservation programme. Talking to schoolchildren at Shuangtaizi Hekou National Nature Reserve, Liaoning Province, China (Yellow Sea). Photo: Mark Barter.