

CAPTURE OF A RINGED CAPE GANNET *SULA CAPENSIS* OFF AUSTRALIA

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On 18 October 1986 a Cape Gannet *Sula capensis*, bearing ring no. 9-41489, became entangled in a fishing line set by a vessel a few kilometres south east of Cape Leuwin, Western Australia (34 30S, 115 0E). Subsequently it was released unharmed. This bird was ringed as a fledgling on 17 February 1985 at Bird Island, Algoa Bay, South Africa (33 50S, 26 17E), some 7 860 km to the west. This appears to be the second record of this species from Australian waters (Venn 1982), and the first record substantiated on data other than plumage features alone.

The great distance travelled by this bird exceeds by a generous margin the previous record by 6 888 km for a fledgling recovered off Western Sahara (Crawford *et al.* 1983). Of particular interest are the increasing number of Cape Gannets reported in the southern Indian Ocean far from southern Africa, in view of the preference of this species for inshore coastal waters (Crawford *et al.* 1983). In addition to the present record, Segonzac (1972) observed an unidentified gannet at Amsterdam Island (37 50S, 77 35E) in March 1970, and Roux & Martinez (1987) reported sightings of Cape Gannets there between October and February for 1979, 1980, 1981, 1984 and 1985. The coincidence of the months of sightings with the breeding season suggests that these birds were prebreeding birds. The frequency of sightings may indicate a small but persistent loss of prebreeding gannets into the southern Indian Ocean, probably assisted by the easterly movement of weather systems passing

southern Africa. The possibility that these birds could establish themselves elsewhere has been shown by a breeding Cape Gannet paired with an Australasian Gannet *S. serrator* in Port Phillip Bay, Victoria, Australia (Venn 1982).

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