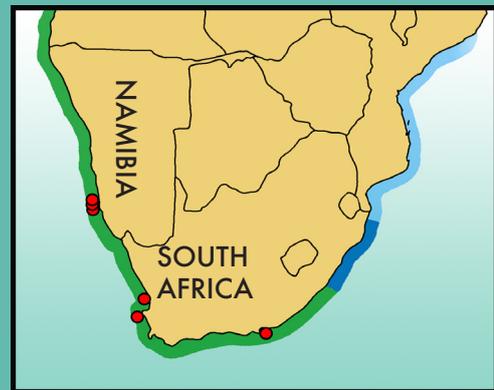


CAPE GANNET

A large seabird with impressively long wings, capable of plunge diving at high speed, up to 100 km/hr to catch fish.

TAXONOMY

KINGDOM:	Animalia
PHYLUM:	Chordata
CLASS:	Aves
ORDER:	Suliformes
FAMILY:	Sulidae
GENUS:	Morus
SPECIES:	<i>M. capensis</i>



DISTRIBUTION

Cape Gannets are resident along the coast of the southern part of Africa, feeding close to shore on their favourite diet of pelagic fish such as sardines and anchovies. They occasionally venture as far as Nigeria **foraging** for ever more elusive shoals of fish, often opportunistically **scavenging** discarded fish from fishing trawlers.

In winter they gather in their thousands, following the abundant sardine shoals up the KwaZulu-Natal coast.

ISLAND COLONIES

Cape Gannets only breed in **southern Africa**, on 6 offshore islands, making them **endemic breeders** to this region.

Three breeding **colonies** are in Namibia (Mercury, Possession and Ichaboe Islands), and three are in South Africa (Bird Island in Lamberts Bay, Malgas Island and Bird Island in Algoa Bay).

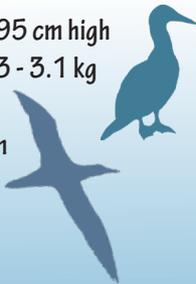
Breeding on islands protects them from **predators** that occur on the mainland, such as mongooses and cats. The large colonies of birds also provides safety in numbers.

IDENTIFICATION

Size: 84 - 95 cm high

Weight: 2.3 - 3.1 kg

Wingspan:
1.6 - 1.7 m



Juveniles are dark chocolate brown with white spots.

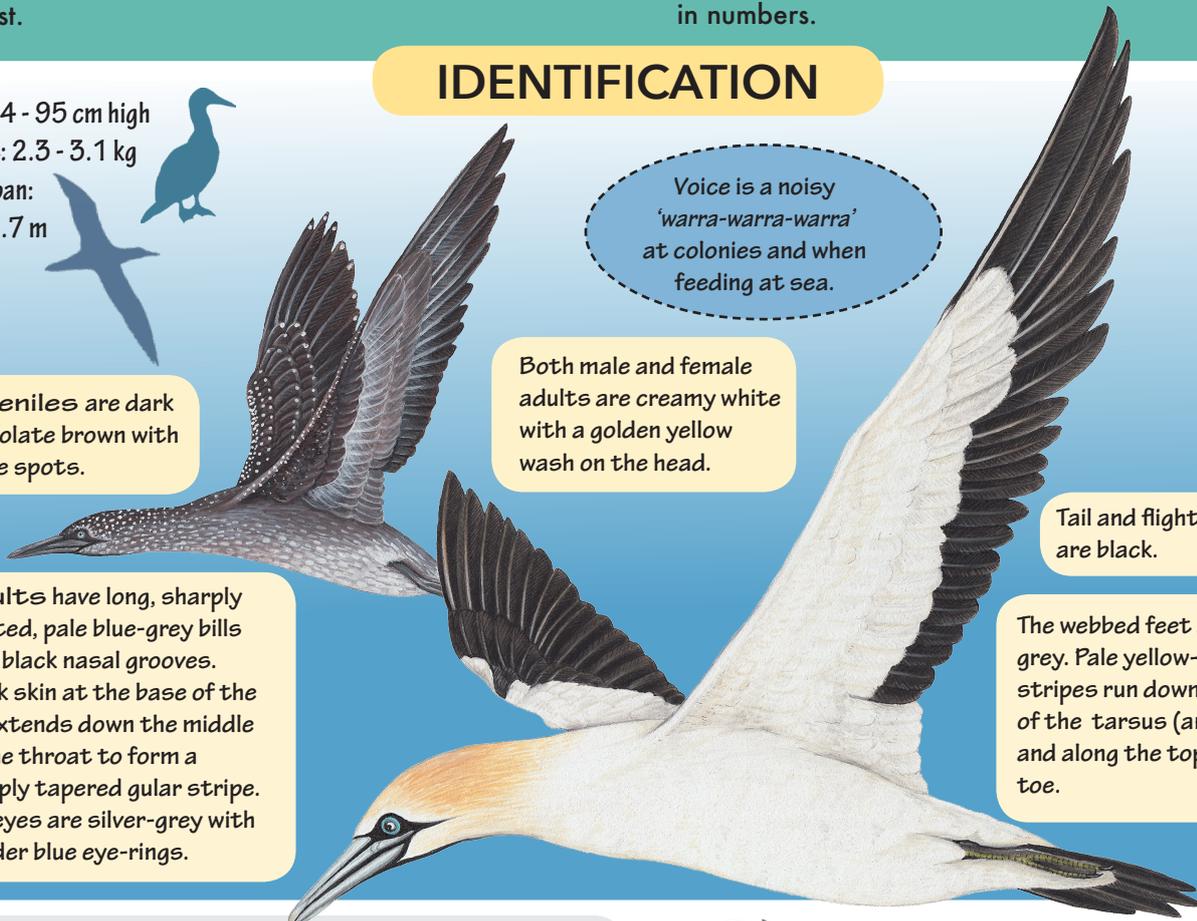
Adults have long, sharply pointed, pale blue-grey bills with black nasal grooves. Black skin at the base of the bill extends down the middle of the throat to form a sharply tapered gular stripe. The eyes are silver-grey with powder blue eye-rings.

Voice is a noisy 'warra-warra-warra' at colonies and when feeding at sea.

Both male and female adults are creamy white with a golden yellow wash on the head.

Tail and flight feathers are black.

The webbed feet are dark grey. Pale yellow-green stripes run down the front of the tarsus (anklebone) and along the top of each toe.



References:

Birdlife International (2022) Species Factsheet: *Morus capensis*. <http://www.birdlife.org>
Sinclair, I., Hockey, P., Tarboton, W., Perrins, N., Rollinson, D., Ryan, P. 2020. Sasol Birds of Southern Africa. 5th Revised Edition. Struik Nature.