

**AFRICAN PENGUINS *SPHENISCUS DEMERSUS* KILL A KELP GULL  
*LARUS DOMINICANUS***

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The Kelp Gull *Larus dominicanus* is a known predator of the chicks and eggs of African Penguins *Spheniscus demersus* and other species of seabird breeding along the southern African coast (Brooke & Cooper 1979). On Bird Island, Algoa Bay (33°51'S, 26°17'E), Eastern Cape Province, South Africa groups of two to three Kelp Gulls frequently try to seize eggs or chicks from surface nesting penguins, especially when only a single adult is present.

On 7 July 1996, I observed an adult Kelp Gull being killed by a pair of breeding African Penguins on Bird Island. The gull was attacked after unsuccessfully trying to seize the pair's downy chick. Both penguins repeatedly struck at the gull with their bills and flippers, until it was dead. The entire incident lasted for approximately five minutes.

This record appears to be the first documentation of a fatal attack by an African Penguin on a terrestrial predator. It also appears that this is not an isolated incident. Eight dead adult Kelp Gulls had been discovered next to penguin nests during the preceding 13 months, all with injuries similar to those of the bird killed in July 1996 (S. Röhm pers. comm.).

Elements of the agonistic behaviour seen in this attack, i.e. flipper strikes and beck pecks, have been previously recorded in African Penguins, both intra- and inter-specifically, but in a non-lethal context (Eggleton & Siegfried 1979). Interspecies aggression in African Penguins also includes the pecking of human handlers (pers. obs.).

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