

Massachusetts Wildlife Officials transport injured Gannett found tangling in hooks, fishing lures

“Brewster Animal Control received a call from a caring person about a Gannet she had seen on the Brewster flats. She noticed the bird did not appear to be moving and she was concerned about it. She provided great landmarks, and even sent photos, to make locating the bird a little easier.

Brewster ACO found the Northern Gannet and noticed it had a lure and hook attached to it. It was captured and transported to the Cape Wildlife Center in Barnstable for treatment. We are very fortunate to have the Cape Wildlife Center as a resource on Cape Cod to help sick and injured wildlife.” - Brewster Animal Control.

“It was all hands on deck this week to triage this Northern Gannet that was rescued by Brewster Animal Control after it was found entangled in a fishing lure with multiple hooks. The hooks had embedded in both the wing and the leg of the bird completely immobilizing it. In order to fully assess the injury our veterinary team sedated the gannet for radiographs and hook removal.



Brewster Animal Control photo.

Fortunately none of the hooks had perforated deep enough to damage any joints, however one section had punctured part of the patagium of the wing. The patagium is a membraneous tissue that extends the length of the wing and aids in flight and in this species diving. If it is damaged it can contract and effect range of motion. To reduce inflammation and infection in the wing we started him on anti-inflammatories and

antibiotics.

Northern gannets are a pelagic species of seabird that are quite unique. There are a few anatomical differences we have to take into account when treating these birds. As plunge divers they can dive to great depths at high speeds so to protect their organs they have air sacs that are more superficial than in other species. These subcutaneous air sacs act almost as deployed airbags as they impact the water. These air sacs connect to their lungs like in other birds so we can not rehydrate them by giving subcutaneous fluids because that could potentially drown them.

Instead all fluids and most medications are given by mouth. Another adaptation to prevent them from ending up with a nose and mouth full of water during diving is that they lack nares which are usually located on their upper beak. This is important to note for our restraint technique because typically with birds that have sharp pointy beaks we restrain them by gently holding their mouth shut to prevent them from stabbing or biting us. However without nares gannets would suffocate if we held them this way so to prevent this we have them bite down on a towel to ensure there is enough space between their upper and lower beak for air flow.

These differences certainly make them more challenging to treat but we are always up for a challenge! We hope we got to this one in time before the lure caused any permanent damage to the wing. We'll keep you posted on his progress!" -New England Wildlife Center.



Brewster Animal Control photo.