



**NOAA
FISHERIES**



© Ron LeValley

Seabird Protection

DO

- Scan the surrounding sky, land, and water before casting to keep seabirds from crossing your line or stealing your bait.
- Use barbless fishing hooks, artificial lures and weighted fishing lines to avoid hooking seabirds.
- Recycle or dispose of fishing hooks and line in the trash and keep water and surrounding areas free of debris. Learn more about the Monofilament Recovery & Recycle program (MRRP) effort at <http://www.fishinglinerecycling.org>
- Avoid disturbing resting or feeding seabirds by steering your boat around the flock rather than through them.
- Observe posted regulations intended to protect nesting birds.

DON'T

- Feed seabirds or other wildlife.
- Begin chumming the water if seabirds are near your fishing boat.
- Leave fishing poles unattended with bait dangling from the hook.

Seabird Protection & Avoidance Tips



Photo: China Eckler

Seabirds live in a variety of habitats in and around shallow water and coastal environments. They represent an important part of the marine environment or food web and are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Depending on the geographic region, and how far offshore you are fishing, fishermen in the United States can see species of pelicans, gulls, terns, cormorants, loons, shearwaters, storm-petrels, gannets, puffins, and albatross, among others.

Be Aware of Seabird Behavior

Seabirds feed on smaller fish which many anglers use for bait. While they typically won't challenge a fisherman for his catch, their hunting methods often do put them at risk of becoming hooked or entangled in a fisherman's line.

Many seabirds feed on krill, small fish, squid, or other prey items at the ocean's surface. Others, such as cormorants, murres, and puffins are known to dive to depths of more than 100 feet to catch a fish. Others such as brown pelicans, terns and gannets dive into water in pursuit of fish.

What If I Accidentally Hook a Seabird?

In the unfortunate event of a hooked seabird, don't cut or break the line. If the bird is injured or severely tangled, the bird could easily drown, die of starvation or succumb to a predator attack. If you do accidentally hook a seabird while fishing, do the following to avoid further injury to the bird or yourself:

- Reel the bird in slowly and gently. Don't lift the bird by the line; instead use a dip net if available.
- Get control of the bird's bill before taking it from the net to prevent being pecked. Cover its head and eyes with a cloth to calm it (do not obstruct breathing), and keep the wings folded in their normal closed position. Always maintain control of the bird's head and body.
- When removing the hook from a seabird, never simply grab the hook and yank it out! Grasp the hook and carefully snip off the barb. You can back the hook out without causing further injury. Cut off and remove any tangled fishing line, and carefully release the seabird.
- If the bird has swallowed the hook, untangle the bird while removing as much line as possible. Cut the fishing line as close to the hook as you can, and leave the hook in place.
- Call the local game warden if the bird is seriously injured, is deeply hooked, or a hook has been swallowed. Keep the bird calm and restrained until assistance arrives.

How Can I Help Seabirds?

There are numerous threats to seabirds and the need for protection continues. People often unwittingly disturb seabirds in their nesting or roosting sites through the introduction of loud noises, toxic chemicals, excessive light, and other stresses. For information about seabird protection visit NOAA's National Seabird Program at <https://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/protectedresources/seabirds/national.htm>