



Gannet Fact Sheet 4

Distribution

The Northern Gannet's breeding range is the North Atlantic and is strongly influenced by the Gulf Stream. They nest in large colonies (the largest is Bass Rock with 75,000 pairs) in cliffs overlooking the sea or rocky offshore islands. The waters near to the islands have an average summer water temperature of between 10 and 15

degrees Celsius. This is important as it determines the distribution of some of their main food sources such as the mackerel and herring. Despite the strong connection between distribution of fish and nesting sites, Gannets can also be found far north in cold



stormy regions. They are able to survive these conditions due to a strong beak and impressive diving capabilities that allow them to catch strong muscly fish. They also have extensive fat reserves that enable them to withstand long periods without eating.

The Northern limit of the Gannet is determined by areas of water that are free some sea ice during the breeding season. This means that whilst Greenland may appear to have suitable breeding sites, the arctic summers are too short to allow a pair of Gannets to successfully incubate and raise a chick. The Southern limit is determined by food availability.