

## How Can YOU Help

**DO NOT FEED GULLS or drop food scraps** as gulls are scavengers and discarded food encourages the gulls to stay within close proximity to the source.

### Things You Can Do

- Do not drop litter or food scraps as this is an offence and you may be liable to a penalty.
- Be a good neighbour and don't attract gulls to your garden by feeding them. While the wish to help wildlife is understandable, this is not in the bird's best interest. Their natural diet is based on shellfish and other small sea creatures, bird's eggs, insects and earthworms.
- Too much human food is not good for them, and when fed regularly they expect everyone to do the same, with the next step leading to attacking people and stealing food.
- Property owners can discourage gulls from nesting by erecting deterrent devices on chimney heads and flat roof areas. Deterrent methods include:
  - Fitting long spikes to places like chimney stacks
  - Fitting short spikes to dormer roofs
  - Fitting wires or nets to prevent gulls landing
  - Disturbance of nests, including removal of nests and eggs
- If gulls nest on your property, you can arrange for eggs to be pierced or oiled to prevent hatching, or have them removed and replaced with imitation eggs. The nests will then have to be checked every three weeks between early May and the end of June to ensure no new eggs have been laid.

### SAFETY FIRST

It is strongly recommended that you take advice from specialist companies before undertaking any nest removal or egg oiling or piercing. Ideally the works should be carried out by an experienced competent contractor who use fixtures specific for use on roofs which don't constitute a safety or fire risk.

# Living with Urban Gulls

## Survivors' Guide

### For More Information Contact:

[www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk](http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk)



**There is a growing number of Lesser Black-Backed and Herring gulls building nests on the roofs of houses and businesses within towns and villages in Aberdeenshire rather than on coastal cliffs.**

Due to the discarding of unwanted food and also people deliberately feeding them, life for the birds within the town has become easy. Gulls are clever and can learn from each other. The nuisance from gulls lasts mainly from April to September when young gulls fly back out to sea, though there are increasing numbers choosing to remain within our towns all year round.



## Problems Associated with Seagulls

### Noise

Gulls begin mating in April and nest from early May onwards. The raucous mating calls and squabbling can start at sunrise and continue all day.

### Damage

Birds can damage property by the disturbance of roof tiles, blocking gutters, gas flues, chimneys, clog drains and ventilation systems. Birds' nests can look unsightly and the bird droppings can accelerate the deterioration of our city buildings and statues.



### Health Effects

Gulls (and pigeons) may carry a wide number of diseases, such as salmonella and tuberculosis, which are potentially fatal to humans. The birds and their nests may also be home to a number of ticks, fleas and mites which can give rise to health problems.

### Safety

Aggression can happen at two stages. Firstly when the parents are defending the nests where the chick falls out and cannot return to safety. The parents will swoop and dive at anyone who approaches and can be very frightening. Secondly when the young gulls start to fly aggression will increase as they squabble over a shortage of food leading to attacks on people by swooping down and stealing food.

## Tackling the Nuisance

It takes four years for a gull to reach maturity and breed with many returning to the nest where they were born. Gulls like to nest in colonies and once a pair gains a foothold others follow. If they breed successfully, they will return year on year and problems will grow rapidly.

There is no quick fix to the problem of nuisance gulls, and control measures need to be kept up for several years to be effective. The key to reducing gull numbers lies in reducing the ability to breed and limiting the supply of food. Gulls pair and mate for life unless they fail to rear chicks whereby they will seek a new mate.

Action needs to be considered early in the year as once the chicks have hatched it is too late to take action.

## The Law

Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, it is illegal to capture, injure or destroy any wild bird, or interfere with its nest or eggs. Penalties can be severe. However, the law also provides a general licence system, which allows property owners to take action against gulls nesting on buildings by destroying nests or eggs. The licence system can ONLY be used for the purpose of preserving public health, public safety and preventing the spread of disease and is specifically for the control of Herring, Great Black Backed and Lesser Black-Backed gulls. If action is taken for any other reason, or if other species of gull are targeted, then an offence is committed. More information can be found on Scottish Natural Heritage's website: [www.snh.gov.uk/protecting-scotlands-nature/species-licensing/bird-licensing/general](http://www.snh.gov.uk/protecting-scotlands-nature/species-licensing/bird-licensing/general)

Environmental Health have no statutory duties or powers to take action against gulls. Only an owner or occupier can take action against gulls nesting on buildings, but owners/occupiers can give someone else permission to act on their behalf.

The use of poisons to take or kill any bird is specifically prohibited, except under very special circumstances and with a government licence. Action must be humane and should only be used where scaring and proofing is either ineffective or impracticable and the method being used should not cause suffering.

