

Urban Gulls



The Problem

Almost every town and city in Britain has a population of roof-nesting gulls, and with a growth rate of some 13 per cent a year it won't be that long before all of the UK's towns and cities support growing gull colonies. Our neighbouring Authorities, Bristol, Bath and Gloucester all suffer from problems of Urban Gulls, living in the Cities and using the roof tops as artificial cliffs on which to nest.

Although we are not aware of the same problems with nesting, it is likely that we get gulls in our area out looking for food.

Gulls are supreme opportunists and will take advantage of whatever becomes available. If it is edible, they will eat it. Their major feeding takes place out of town and may be some distance away - principally landfills (refuse) and green fields (invertebrates). They move widely and are perfectly capable of making a round trip of 100km in search of food in only a few hours. The gulls can also flourish in cities and suburban areas as they do not have any predators and can live for between 20 and 30 years.

Gulls and the Law

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 protects all wild birds. It is an offence to kill or injure any birds or their nests or eggs unless acting under a licence and only in compliance with the conditions of that licence. A General Licence allows "authorised persons" to undertake certain actions which would otherwise be illegal under the Wildlife and Countryside Act but only to certain birds in certain circumstances.

All non-lethal methods must be considered first and only if none are thought suitable can lethal measures then be considered.

The General Licences will allow Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*), Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*) and Great Black-backed Gull (*Larus marinus*) to be killed and their eggs and nests to be damaged or destroyed, but only for the following reasons:

1. Preserving public health or public or air safety.
2. Preventing the spread of disease.
3. Preventing serious damage to livestock, foodstuffs for livestock, crops, vegetables, fruit, growing timber, fisheries or inland waters.

Noise from birds or the fact that they leave droppings or open rubbish bags are NOT reasons under the Act and, therefore, killing or injuring birds for these reasons is an offence and offenders can be prosecuted.

There are limited public health grounds for seagull control and surveys undertaken by various institutions have shown that the culling of seagulls is mainly unsuccessful and that the numbers after a cull will shortly increase back up to the original optimum number.

Unfortunately because of the above information, the Council does not provide a service for dealing with gulls, other than offering advice on proofing if they are nesting on a roof.

Free Internet access is available at all South Gloucestershire libraries

**South Gloucestershire Council
Environmental Protection
Department for Environment and Community Services
PO Box 299, Civic Centre, High Street,
Kingswood, Bristol
BS15 0DR**

Tel: 01454 868001

Email: Environmental.protection@southglos.gov.uk

Web: www.southglos.gov.uk/envpro