

Any action taken must be humane and use of an inhumane method which could cause suffering would be illegal.

Only the owner of a building or its occupier can take action against the gulls on it and only if those gulls are of the three species mentioned.

They may however give permission to someone to act on their behalf.

Shooting is not to be encouraged unless full regard is had to the Fire Arms Act 1968 and gun licenses etc. are checked first.

The best method to prevent gulls nesting on your building is to sufficiently proof your building against the birds so that the nests are not built there in the future. The more owners of buildings that carry out effective proofing measures and maintain them, the more likely it is that the gulls will be forced away from the residential areas to nest in other areas where they will become less of a pest to the public.

Proofing materials that can be used are spikes on chimney pots, gutters, dormers etc., nets of the correct size to repel gulls, posts and spring wires etc.



Contractors and suppliers of proofing materials can be found in the Yellow Pages or the internet.

### Where to Get Further Advice?

**PUBLIC PROTECTION SERVICES  
TOWN HALL  
DUKE STREET  
BARROW-IN-FURNESS  
CUMBRIA  
LA14 2LD**

**Email: [environment@barrowbc.gov.uk](mailto:environment@barrowbc.gov.uk)  
Web: [www.barrowbc.gov.uk](http://www.barrowbc.gov.uk)**

**Tel: 01229 876543  
Fax: 01229 876411**



## ADVICE TO HOUSEHOLDERS

# SEAGULLS



**Barrow Borough Council  
Public Protection Services**

## ADVICE TO HOUSEHOLDERS

### SEAGULL CHARACTERISTICS

Seagulls are large birds and can range upto 68cm from bill to tail and have a wingspan upto 85cm. Although most refer to all gulls as being seagulls, and therefore assume that all species are 'pests', only three species are classed as pests.

These are as follows:-

- a) Herring Gulls
- b) Lesser Black-backed Gull
- c) Greater Black-backed Gull.

**The Herring Gull:-** on average is 56cm in size. It has a pale grey back and wings with black and white wing tips and a red spot on its yellow bill. It's legs are usually pink.

**The Lesser Black-backed Gull:-** on average is 53cm in size. It has a grey to dark grey back and wings. It's legs are usually yellow or orange in colour.

**The Great Black-backed Gull:-** on average is 68cm in size. It has a black back and wings and pink legs.

### BEHAVIOUR

More and more seagulls are moving into built up areas to nest. The main reason for this is that food sources are readily available both from people deliberately feeding them and the amount of takeaways and other food refuse strewn around roads and back streets.

Breeding pairs court in April and commence nest building from early May onwards. In towns the nests tend to be constructed from straw, grass, twigs, paper and any other material the gull can conveniently use. These nests can be large and if they are made of material accumulated over several years, they can become quite heavy. This means that if a breeding site is established, then the gulls will return year after year.

### LIFE CYCLE

Eggs are laid from early May onwards with two or three being the usual number. The eggs take about three weeks to hatch which means that the first chicks are seen around the beginning of June.

The chicks grow quickly and are quite active which means that they often fall from nests. In towns this often means that they are unable to return to their nests. Small chicks will die if they are not returned, but the larger chicks will be protected by their parents and fed on the ground.

The chicks generally fledge in August and then take about three years to reach maturity when they in turn will start to breed. The life expectancy for gulls can be up to 20 years.

Gulls are social creatures and once roof nesting gets a hold, other gulls will start to move into an area and nest on adjacent buildings, until there numbers build up sufficiently that a colony is established.

Significance

Many people find gulls to be a nuisance for a number of reasons.

The main reasons are listed below:-

- Noise caused by calling gulls and their heavy footsteps.
- Mess caused by their droppings fouling washing, cars, gardens, people and walkways.
- Damage to properties caused by gulls picking at roofing materials and by nests which block gutters or hold moisture against the building structure.
- Birds can dive bomb and swoop on people and animals.
- Gas flues can become blocked by nesting materials which can have serious consequences (sometimes these can be fatal) if gas fumes are prevented from escaping correctly.
- Mites and other insects can get a hold in houses from the old, abandoned nests, once the chicks have fledged.

### CONTROL

The main legislation that deals with the control of birds is the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981.

Generally speaking it is illegal to capture, injure or destroy any wild bird or interfere with its nest or eggs. The penalties from disregarding the law can be severe.

General licenses issued by the Natural England and DEFRA which allow certain measures to be taken against certain pest species of birds on grounds which include the preservation of public health or public safety.