

HERRING GULL NUISANCE

Due to their increasing habit of roof top nesting, herring gulls are causing Considerable nuisance – particularly during the breeding season –in coastal communities throughout Aberdeenshire.

The noise they make often disturbs people while they are asleep. Their droppings and aggressive behaviour with the tendency to “dive bomb” people who approach their chicks are causing annoyance.

Because of these problems, owners and occupiers of buildings where gulls nest are being encouraged to take preventative action.

The assistance and co-operation of property owners and the general public are sought by Aberdeenshire Council during the herring gull nesting/breeding season by taking the following action:-

1. Owners or occupiers checking roofs of their premises for signs of nest building.
2. Taking preventative action to discourage gulls nesting, e.g. by erecting appropriate netting or other devices on chimneyheads, flat roof areas, etc.

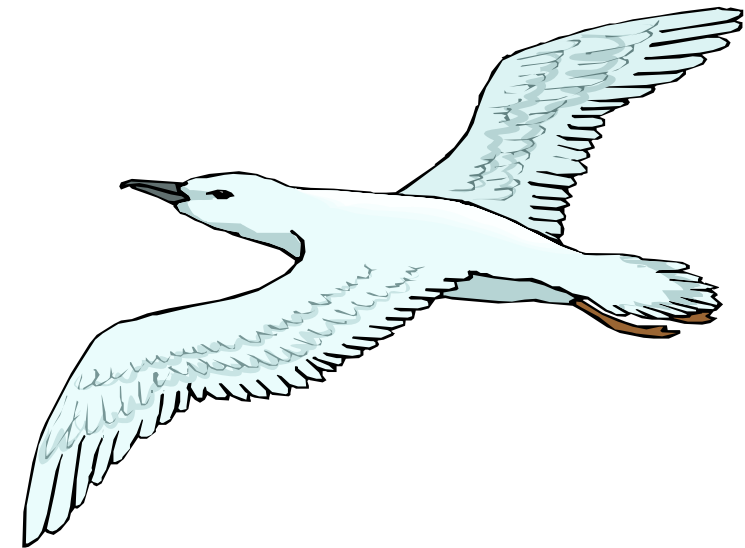
A common and effective method of deterring nesting gulls is to use a simple wire system made on a frame that fits into the area the birds are using, for example, between the chimney pots. Wires on the frame should be at a height of 30cm (1ft) to prevent the gulls from landing and folding their wings correctly. On flat roofs, wires can be stretched across and held in place with brackets, again at a height of 30cm.

SAFETY FIRST

Any work on roofs should only be carried out by a competent person who is aware of safety requirements. It is recommended that all roof fixtures be checked with your local Fire Brigade to make sure they do not contravene the Fire Regulations or constitute a fire risk from lightning strikes.

3. By removing nests, eggs or by piercing eggs which may have been laid. The piercing of eggs is possibly the best method after nests have been built as removal of nests may merely result in another nest being built and more eggs laid.

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4. By advising the local Planning & Environmental Services Environmental Health Section of locations of rooftop nesting sites. This Service will contact property owners and request they action as necessary.

As a property owner, Aberdeenshire Council will take action in respect of its own property.

5. DO NOT FEED HERRING GULLS or drop food scraps as this encourages them to remain in residential areas. Make sure refuse is put in secure containers as these birds are scavengers and will feed amongst discarded litter and waste.

The dropping of litter or food scraps is an **offence** and you may be liable to a **penalty**.

6. Aberdeenshire Council have appointed, after a tendering exercise, a preferred contractor to deal with the problem of seagulls nesting on rooftops of all domestic, commercial and industrial buildings. Agreed rates have been negotiated for all property owners/occupiers. For details, please contact your nearest Environmental Health office as listed in the last page of this leaflet.

DESCRIPTION OF HERRING GULLS

Herring gulls are white with grey backs and black wing tips which have white spots. The yellow bill has a red spot towards the lower tip which is very bright in the breeding season and the legs and feet are flesh coloured. Young birds are a mottled grey and brown and are difficult to distinguish from other immature gull species. The grey back is apparent after the first year but full mature plumage is only acquired after 3-4 years.

BREEDING

Herring gulls generally lay their clutch of 2-4 eggs in May; both sexes incubate (28-30 days) and feed the hatched young which fly when five to six weeks old. Only a single brood is raised per year. Adult gulls are most aggressive during June/July once chicks have hatched. It is not possible to take action at this late stage, hence the need for **early** preventative measures.

LEGAL ASPECTS

General Licences have been issued under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 which make it legal for an owner or occupier of land or a person acting on their behalf to destroy or take the nest or eggs of herring gulls. It is also permissible to kill herring gulls but these actions are allowed only to preserve public health, prevent serious damage to agriculture or to conserve wild birds.

PLANNING & ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH OFFICES

55 Low Street, Banff, AB54 1AY	Tel 01261 813277
5 Back Path, Banff, AB45 1AR	Tel 01261 813280
1 Kirk Brae, Fraserburgh, AB43 9BY	Tel 01346 586321
60 Broad Street, Peterhead, AB42 1BX	Tel 01779 483254
45 Bridge Street, Ellon, AB41 9AA	Tel 01358 726435
Viewmount, Arduthie Road, Stonehaven, AB39 2DQ	Tel 01569 768233

