



Living with Gulls

Gulls are intelligent birds and have learned how to adapt to living in our towns. Our buildings offer them a safe nesting space free from predators and they can readily find food in our towns. It takes four years for a herring gull to reach maturity and breed and they can live up to 30 years. Many gulls return to the nest where they were born and as gulls like to nest in colonies, once a pair gains a foothold others follow. If they breed successfully, they will return year on year and the size of the colony can grow rapidly.

The term “Seagull” is used for a variety of different types of gulls. Here are the ones you are most likely to see in Aberdeenshire.

The gulls you are most likely to see are:-

*Herring Gull - UK has 43% of the global population and Scotland has half of those.

*Common Gull - Scotland has 89% of UK population.

*Black headed Gull

*Lesser black backed gull

*Great black backed gull - Scotland has 48% of UK population



Herring Gull



Common Gull



Black Headed Gull



Lesser Black Backed Gull



Greater Black Backed Gull

Source and photos: NatureScot

It may seem that we have a lot of gulls in Aberdeenshire but the overall number of gulls has been decreasing and avian flu has impacted on them in the last few years. The number of gulls has reduced between 44% and 75% during 2019 and 2023. This is why they are either on the RED or AMBER bird conservation list [Birds of Conservation Concern | BTO - British Trust for Ornithology](https://www.bto.org/our-science/publications/birds-conservation-concern). (<https://www.bto.org/our-science/publications/birds-conservation-concern>).

It is ILLEGAL to harm a gull, move a nest whilst it is being used, destroy eggs or move chicks without a licence from NatureScot as per The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Aberdeenshire Council does not have any legal powers to deal with gulls or the feeding of gulls. It can only offer advice and work with communities to try and solve any issues that arise. It is the owners /occupiers of properties, or someone acting on their behalf, who can take action to prevent gulls nesting on their buildings. See [Guidance - gull management | NatureScot](#)

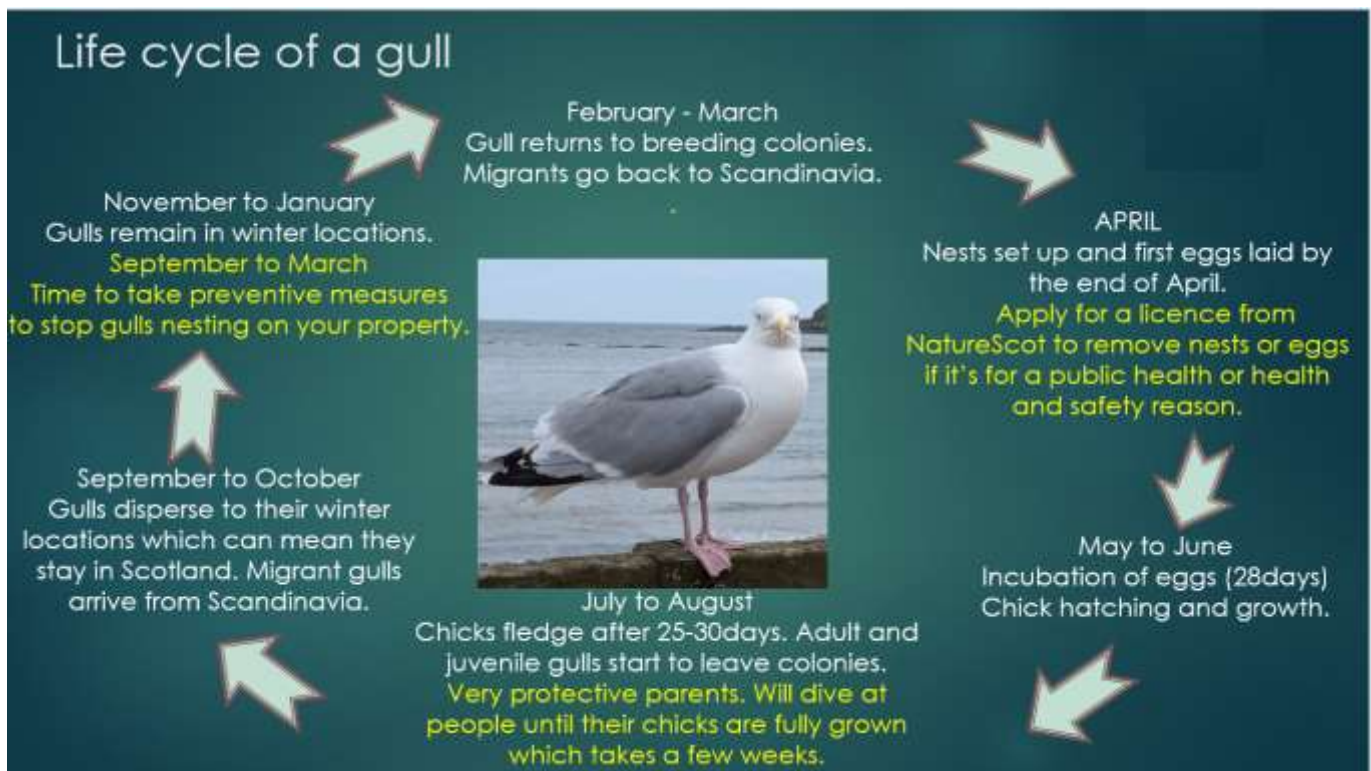
WHAT CAN YOU DO?

There are a few things you can do to help.

1. **Don't feed gulls** - There are no laws against feeding birds. However, if it is not done correctly, it can encourage gulls into your neighbourhood and can cause annoyance and potential for conflict between neighbours. Feeding birds should also be done in a way that it is not excessive and no food is left lying about easily accessible to mice and rats. Using the correct type of bird feeders can minimise this. See [How and When to Feed Birds in Your Garden](https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/helping-birds-and-wildlife) <https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/helping-birds-and-wildlife>
2. **Dispose of litter and food correctly** - Make sure it is disposed of in a bin with a lid on it where gulls cannot access it.

3. Understand gulls and their life cycle

The time to protect your home is before gulls start nesting in April. There are links to websites mentioned at the end of this leaflet for advice on how to stop gulls nesting on your property. As **gulls are legally protected**, if a nest has been formed and being used the only option you have is to contact NatureScot and apply for a licence, which will only be granted if the gulls are causing a public health or health and safety reason. Details on how to apply using the online application can be found on their website: <https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/protected-areas-and-species/licensing/species-licensing-z-guide/birds/birds-licences-public-health-and-safety-and-air-safety>. Alternatively once the breeding season is well over and the nest is not being used you can remove it prior to the next breeding season. NatureScot advise that a professional pest controller should be used to help develop an effective gull management plan.



For more specific advice regarding gulls see the following websites:

NatureScot website [Top tips for tackling gull issues now – Scotland's Nature Guidance - gull management | NatureScot](#) (<https://www.nature.scot/doc/guidance-gull-management>)

RSPB website [Gulls Nesting on Roof? Tips for Living Alongside Urban Gulls](#)