

TEN REASONS NOT TO FEED SEAGULLS



Here is some information about the harm that can be done to both people and gulls by feeding them inappropriately. Please remember though – while some species of gull are prevalent, others are in decline and are more highly protected. It is illegal to harm any wild bird, damage their nests or destroy their eggs. We live by the sea so must expect there to be seagulls, but stopping feeding them will encourage them to remain in their natural habitat and have a natural diet which will make life more pleasant for both people and gulls.

1. **HEALTH.** Gulls are *"the new public health risk"* (the BBC, 2004). The rise in the urban gull population is increasing the risks of e-coli, salmonella and botulism. And *"..gulls could soon be more of a pest in urban Britain than rats"* – a warning given at the 2003 National Conference on problems caused by urban gulls.
2. **NUMBERS.** Gulls can live for 40 years, can breed for 25 years and they and their offspring will return to the same nesting site. In South Wales, the urban gull population is increasing at a staggering 16% annually and is set to increase four-fold over the next decade. Peter Rock (an avian expert involved in international gull research since 1980 and the author of several scientific papers on the subject) warns that once a pair gains a foothold others follow and problems will grow rapidly. **There is already a growing gull colony in Mayals – please don't be mistaken to think that you won't be affected if you are not already.**
3. **NOISE.** Noise is by far the greatest nuisance factor cited by Peter Rock. He advises that gulls' raucous calls typically begin at 4 o'clock in the morning and are impossible to sleep through. When regularly fed they also become tamed and will start to repeatedly call for food during the day too.
4. **MESS.** Mess is the second most unpleasant nuisance cited by Peter Rock. In a 2011 Commons debate, it was recognised that gulls can expel significant quantities of runny faeces on the wing, which makes it difficult for residents to enjoy their gardens. Their washing, windows, cars and property are also continually being fouled. Fouling on roofs can also increase the rate of moss growth, which can be unsightly and block drainage outlets.
5. **DAMAGE.** Damage to property is the third biggest problem cited by Peter Rock. He advises that gulls will destroy insulation, air conditioning, will pull up exposed roofing felt and will even pull away lead flashing. Other damage includes blockages to rain water gutters, down pipes and even gas flues.
6. **PROPERTY PRICE.** Gulls nesting near or on your property could affect the value and/or the saleability of your home and the cost to gull-proof your property can be significant.
7. **ATTACKS.** The Guardian reported in 2013 that *"pensioners have been hospitalised, knocked to the ground, breaking bones. Small dogs have bled to death, children's lips been sliced open, and an elderly man died of a heart attack following a particularly vicious assault in his back garden."* There have been many other reported attacks on adults, children, pets and livestock. Urban gulls also attack and will feed on garden birds; so when gulls move in, the small garden birds are driven out.
8. **FINES.** If someone refuses to stop feeding the gulls to the detriment of the quality of life of other residents, then Local Authorities have the power to issue a Community Protection Notice - Conwy Council exercised this power in 2015 and fined one resident £1,100 after they ignored an anti-social behaviour warning.
9. **HARM TO GULLS THEMSELVES.** Both the RSPB and RSPCA warn that feeding gulls will not only lead to attacks but feeding the birds an un-natural, high calorific, low nutritional diet is detrimental to their health as it can lead to long-term health problems and incurable syndromes such as "Angel Wing".

Peter Rock advises that the only way to control the number of gulls is to control their food source. So for the sake of the safety, health and well-being of our community, we must not encourage them by feeding them and please make your local Councillors or Ward Councillor aware of any cases.

