

Seagulls

Legislation

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.

"Authorised person" means the owner or occupier or any person authorised by the owner or occupier of the land on which the action authorised takes place.

Prevention

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

A General Licence allows Herring Gulls (*Larus argentatus*), Lesser Black-backed Gulls (*Larus fuscus*) and Great Black-backed Gulls (*Larus marinus*) to be killed and their eggs and nests to be damaged or destroyed, but only for the following reasons:

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

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

What next?

There are limited public health grounds for seagull control. Surveys¹ 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 with younger birds taking up territories previously occupied by adults.

If gulls have built a nest on your roof, they may return year after year. As they live up to 30 years, the problem could persist for a considerable time. We recommend that you erect deterrent devices to prevent the birds building their nests i.e. bird proofing measures. Preferably, this work should be done outside the nesting season, as interfering with their nests may be considered illegal. Because the gulls are powerful and determined, proofing can be a difficult and dangerous operation. It is best undertaken by a responsible, specialised Pest Control Company.

Who can I contact?

Before undertaking any action, except proofing outside of the nesting season, we recommend you seek expert advice on current legislation from [Natural England](#), Tel: 0300 060 6000

¹ Coulson, JC (1991) "The population dynamics of culling Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus* and Lesser Black-backed Gulls *L.fuscus*". In Perrins CM, JP Lebreton and GM Hirons (eds), Bird population studies. Relevance to conservation and management. Oxford University Press, Oxford