



PLEASE - DO NOT FEED THE GULLS

Information and Guidance for Householders



Please note - Gulls have basic legal protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and it is illegal to intentionally kill any bird, damage, destroy an active nest or its contents.

It is recognised that feeding and observing wild birds in our gardens and parks is a popular and educative pastime and is to be encouraged. **But GULLS ARE NOT GARDEN BIRDS.** The natural habitat for a Herring gull (the species most commonly seen in urban parks and gardens) is marine and coastal. But in recent decades increasing numbers have been enticed inland by the ready availability of waste food from human sources. Wrongly, such waste food is being supplemented by a few householders, no doubt well-meaning, who put out additional food on the ground. This is usually bread - **WHICH IS UNNATURAL AND HARMFUL TO GULLS, ESPECIALLY THEIR YOUNG.**

The RSPB and RSPCA both advise **NOT** to feed gulls - they do not need to be fed and problems arise when people feed them. They naturally feed on fish, insects, smaller sea birds and even the eggs and young of other gulls – not human food. And the RSPB advises “We must all stop feeding gulls both inland and in seaside towns and in our gardens if we want to recondition their current behaviour”.

Mumbles Community Council strongly urges people not to feed gulls, whether in your private garden or in public spaces. If you wish to feed garden birds (not gulls!), please use a purpose-made hanging feeder. Swansea Council also takes the matter of nuisance gulls very seriously and where evidence exists against individuals who are deliberately creating a nuisance, they will not hesitate to take any necessary action and they advise people to report problems via their website at <https://www.swansea.gov.uk/reportpollution>.

If gulls are fed regularly, it will create an artificially high population and encourage further breeding pairs to nest in the area. Peter Rock (an avian expert involved in international gull research since 1980) warns that **once a pair gains a foothold others follow and problems will grow rapidly.**

Problems can include:

- **Noise** – their territorial call is extremely loud, starts from the early hours and can lead to sleep deprivation, which the NHS advises can have profound detrimental impacts on a person’s physical health. If regularly fed, they will also repeatedly call throughout the day, which can also significantly impact people’s mental health and well-being.
- **Faecal waste** – on people’s property, vehicles, windows, washing etc.
- **Impact on garden birds** – gulls will attack and eat garden birds and drive them out of their habitat.
- **Public health** – an increase in the risks of e-coli, salmonella and botulism.
- **Litter** – an increase in litter from ripped open bin bags.
- **Damage to property** – including insulation, air conditioning, roofing felt, lead flashing, blockages to gutters and gas flues etc. It is far better to prevent them from nesting in the first instance.
- **Aggression** - with an open wingspan of up to 148 cm, and body length of up to 60cm, an adult gull can cause serious injury when protecting their young or nest site (and can attack small pets too).
- **Vermin** – feeding gulls will inevitably lead to an increase in vermin – such as rats.

For the sake of the safety, health and well-being of your community, please DO NOT FEED GULLS