

# Birds Advice Sheet

## What can you do to deter them?

There are many birds who choose to share our environment and urban lifestyle, enjoying the food we provide for them in our gardens, parks and town or city centres. For many people, these birds are a delight but for those who would prefer to deter them, there are simple and effective measures for doing this humanely.

Most birds are protected by law, and killing them is not only cruel but does not offer a long-term solution. If the food supply and environment remain attractive, new birds will simply move in to replace those who have been killed. Many councils have discovered the futility of culling birds – it doesn't work and is a huge waste of public money.

While Animal Aid encourages a tolerance and respect for all birds, this factsheet advises how best to deter pigeons, gulls and geese – the most common 'problem' species likely to be living alongside us. Most problems relate to droppings, nesting and the associated noise.

### Pigeons

Pigeons thrive in our urban environment where rooftops and high buildings perfectly replicate cliff edges, where they originally nested. Pigeons breed all year round and their population is dictated by the amount of food on offer. They survive on a diet of fast food scraps and bread, often fed directly to them, and this interaction brings them into close contact with people on a daily basis. Pigeons are extremely amiable birds, and we should all try to be more tolerant of them as they struggle to survive and feed their young. Droppings from pigeons pose no greater risk to health than those of any other garden bird.

### What you can do

Stop feeding pigeons, directly or indirectly, and encourage others to do the same. Ensure you dispose of your litter responsibly, taking care to secure all wasted food in bins with lids. Don't put bread and other bird feed out in your garden, as this will attract all birds, including pigeons.

Block access to roof spaces and buildings. Netting and spikes can be effective humane deterrents but must be fitted by a professional humane deterrence company. Do not call standard 'pest controllers', as they will kill pigeons – an expensive and futile undertaking given that pigeons will quickly re-populate the area if there continues to be an adequate food supply. Conversely, numbers will decline if the food supply is cut off.

You can install special bird control kites, which are available on the internet. Different sizes and designs can be used depending on the scale of the problem.

### Gulls

Large gulls, such as Herring, Great black-backed, Lesser black-backed and the Black headed gull, are becoming more prevalent in our towns and cities due to changes in their regular food supply. The decline of fishing, as well as

increasing landfill opportunities, means they can come into contact with us more often, attracted by our endless supply of waste food. Gulls are highly intelligent and vocal, particularly in the breeding season. Like all good parents, they are very protective of their young and may swoop to ward off any perceived danger. If there is a good food supply they will nest on nearby household rooftops, as well as other buildings, in order to take advantage. It might seem amusing to feed chips to a gull on the wing but this encourages gulls to repeat this behaviour, causing a potential nuisance and an increase in numbers.



"There is no evidence to show that they (pigeons) spread disease", *Mike Everett, spokesman for the RSPB*

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## What you can do

Gulls are attracted by easy food so stop feeding birds, directly or indirectly, including those in your garden. Take extra care with waste food, particularly when out and about, as most problems with gulls are the result of people dropping fast food waste, either by accident or deliberately.

Compost food at home or utilise the waste food recycling schemes on offer by many local authorities, as this will help to reduce the amount of food at landfill sites and therefore the number of gulls.

Humane deterrents, such as blocking access to regular breeding sites, balloon-kites, gull wire to prevent landing and the oiling of eggs to reduce numbers, are available but must be deployed by a professional company to prevent any potential cruelty.

## Geese

Geese, such as Canada, Egyptian and Greylag, are most often seen in our parks and gardens, attracted to short grass and protective water such as lakes and large ponds. Loved by many, these beautiful and imposing birds are frequently fed by the public on visits to these areas. They will mate for life and sometimes form crèches to protect their young. They mostly eat grass, so their droppings are, in effect, simply reconstituted grass.



## What you can do

Stop feeding geese and other birds, or only feed where approval is given. The more food there is on offer, the more geese there will be and large flocks can cause problems. Local authorities can implement other humane measures to deter geese, such as planting vegetation at the water's edge, or erecting goose-proof fencing in order to block the birds' easy access to water. Balloon-kites have proven very effective at deterring geese, and are available on the internet.

We can learn to co-exist with all birds but we should all take more care with the food we waste. Simple ways to deter birds humanely will avoid unnecessary expense, nuisance and cruelty.

## SUMMARY

- Stop feeding the birds and encourage others to do the same
- Take care with food storage, using airtight containers where appropriate
- Dispose of all food waste responsibly
- Don't drop litter or food
- Obstruct access to ponds with fencing and plants where appropriate to deter geese
- Ground scarers, such as flapping tapes and flags can be effective, but should be moved occasionally as birds can get used to them
- Balloon-kites are also very effective deterrents

If the problem cannot be solved using the simple measures outlined above, then we would recommend a humane deterrence specialist company. We would recommend contacting **Humane Wildlife Solutions** - [www.humanewildlifesolutions.co.uk](http://www.humanewildlifesolutions.co.uk) - 07771 361226



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