

## ***Animal Concern Advice Line***

c/o Animal Concern,  
**PO Box 5178, DUMBARTON G82 5YJ.**

**TEL: 01389-84-11-11.**

**FAX: 01389-841-639**

**e-mail:**

**acal@jfrobins.force9.co.uk**

**Secretary: John F. Robins**

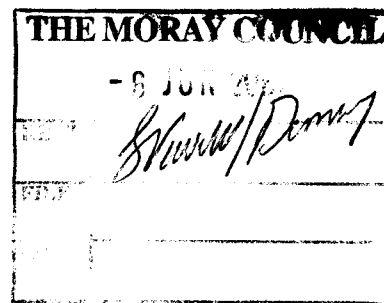
Helping  
people  
help  
animals.



**Animal Concern Advice Line is recognised as a Scottish Charity. Reg. No. SC030982**

Tuesday, 4 June 2002

Director of Environmental Services,  
Moray Council,  
District Headquarters  
High Street  
Elgin  
IV30 1BX



Dear Sir,

I understand your Council has had reports of gull attacks on pedestrians in Lossiemouth and that you are considering action on this issue. I would be grateful if this letter could be brought to the attention of all Councillors involved in deciding what action to take.

We have monitored bird control operations for many years and I hope the following information will be of use. Please note that no control operations should be considered during the nestling season but should be put in place over winter or, in the case of egg oiling/pricking/removal, undertaken very early in the nesting season. Scaring operations when unfledged birds are present will result in abandonment of young birds which will then starve to death. They may also become trapped in vents resulting in damage to ventilation and extractor equipment resulting in costly repairs and hygiene risks.

Not only is it illegal and extremely dangerous to discharge firearms (including air weapons) in a built-up area it is also a useless control measure. For every gull killed several will move in to dispute vacant nest sites and roosts. It is also possible that protected species of gull could be killed leaving any marksman responsible open to criminal prosecution.

Use of poison baits to kill or stun gulls for collection and destruction is both very cruel and dangerous. I have watched drugged gulls fall from the sky and wound themselves. If they landed on someone they could cause serious injury. This type of operation is also very expensive. Some years ago it cost one Scottish local authority over £120 for every gull culled.

It should be noted that the often-used methods of laying gel on ledges and fitting net exclusion screens can be inhumane and may constitute a public health and safety risk. Badly installed gel and nets trap birds causing a slow death. Entrapped, rotting carcasses cause a nuisance and a public health risk.

The use of tethered live birds such as eagle owls is currently legal but, in our opinion, extremely inhumane and should not be considered. Any tethered birds will be mobbed by gulls causing extreme distress and possible injury. The commotion caused will also attract other birds to the building.

The use of free-flying birds of prey to scare gulls has proved very successful and you may wish to take advice from your colleagues at Dumfries where this method has proved very useful.

A very important measure in bird deterrence is to discourage people from inadvertently providing food for the birds. Provision of wheely bins on domestic property, lidded rubbish bins in the streets and enclosed skips for restaurants and other food outlets will deter pigeons, gulls and rodents.

Using a deterrent measure such as a Pinmaster sprung wire will stop birds roosting and nesting on roofs without trapping them. Placing (and occasionally moving from site to site) inexpensive bird of prey decoys will also deter birds. It is a good idea to install these out of public view to deter Friday night mountaineers from scaling buildings and bridges.

Where possible it is best to install ridged wire fencing to exclude birds though, as with all exclusion methods, it is vital to ensure all birds have been driven out before blocking access to roosts. All such systems should be checked for at least two or three days after installation to ensure no birds are trapped.

Pricking or oiling new laid eggs or replacing them with placebos might also be considered. In the future it might also be possible to feed birds contraceptive baits or vaccines.

Details of the Pinmaster system can be obtained from National Britannia (Tel. 01222-852000 fax 01222-867738). Signs & Labels Ltd., (Tel. 0161-494-6125 fax 0161-430-8514) also carry a range of bird deterrents in their mail order catalogue. One importer of bird of prey decoys is Field Sports Scotland, Unit4, Primrose Industrial Estate, Fife (Tel. 01383-419996).

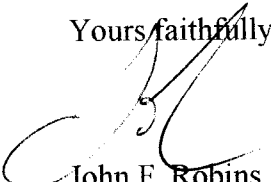
One supplier of lidded wheelie bins is: Plastic Omnium Urban Systems Ltd., Plastic Omnium House, Tweedale Industrial Estate, Madley, Telford, Shropshire TF7 4JR (Tel: 01952-582583).

**AberPest, Mill Lade Wynd, Persley, Aberdeen AB22 8AQ (01224-662211p, 01224-680989f, [aberpest@btinternet.com](mailto:aberpest@btinternet.com) offer a bird deterrence service throughout the U.K..**

You may also wish to contact PICAS (Pigeon Control Advisory Service), 29 Victoria Green Witchford, Nr Ely, Cambs CB6 2XB (tel 01353 667230) for advice. Of particular interest may be their information on the use of dovecotes which can be used to humanely control pigeon numbers, location of pigeons and the habits of persistent pigeon feeders.

I would be grateful if you would inform me in due course of any decision taken regarding gulls in Lossiemouth.

Yours faithfully,



John F. Robins,  
Secretary