

# Gulls



Gulls provide excellent opportunities for bird watching and help keep beaches clean by scavenging on dead fish. However, gulls often form nesting colonies on city rooftops, causing damage to HVAC systems, roofing membranes, vehicles and creating a threat to human safety. If there is a source of water nearby, you will likely encounter gulls. Gulls are protected by federal laws, but there are ways to manage gull nuisance conflicts.

## Don't Feed Wildlife

- Bread has low nutritional value for gulls and feeding leads to gulls being unafraid of human and even following humans for handouts. This can result in aggressive birds and pose human health and safety risks.
- Ensure garbage containers are covered and parking lots are cleaned often.
- Remove unnecessary water sources through filling and grading, such as shallow puddles.

## Protect Your Pet

- Keep pets leashed and under your supervision and keep cats indoors to avoid encounters with gulls.

## Discourage Gulls

- Prevent gull access and nesting by installing stainless steel wires placed parallel to each other at 15 foot spacing over the rooftop. Bird spikes, gels, repellents and other bird exclusion devices are also sold in stores and online, although they can be cost prohibitive depending on the size of the coverage required
- Gulls that gain access and attempt nest building can be harassed using various scare tactics and their nest without eggs can be removed without a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service depredation permit. If eggs are present a permit is required for removal or disturbance.
- Scare tactics can also be used prior to gull establishment. Noise and visual deterrents such as motion-activated alarms, gull distress calls, predator decoys, and inflatables. However, these items must be moved consistently, or gulls will become habituated.
- Dogs may be used to illicit the fright response in gulls when conflicts arise, however gulls cannot be harmed in the process.
- Egg oiling and addling are useful tools to curb reproduction, but do require permits. Contact USDA Wildlife Services for more information.



## Quick Facts

- There are many species of gulls that call Wisconsin home or migrate through. The most common are herring gulls and ring-billed gulls.
- Gulls are among the few animals adapted to drink saltwater. Special glands allow them to expel excess salt.
- Gulls can be quite clever and can learn (as well as teach other gulls) tricks such as stamping their feet to sound like rain to trick earthworms to come to the surface and dropping mollusks onto rocks to open them.
- Because gull species are federally protected migratory birds, lethal gull removal is allowed only through consultation with USDA Wildlife Services and permit issuance by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Contact the USDA Wildlife Services at 1-800-433-0663 (in southern Wisconsin) or 1-800-228-1368 (in northern Wisconsin).



For more information, visit our webpage:  
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WM-570 2014

Urban Wildlife Factsheet: Gulls