# Seagulls cause chaos in Dorset as they swoop on holidaymakers’ food



During the recent Easter holidays, seagulls in the coastal town of Lyme Regis, Dorset, were observed aggressively targeting young families by swooping down to snatch hot food such as hot dogs and chips. The Daily Mail reports that the birds were seen waiting above a local fish bar, then diving swiftly to help themselves to these meals. One particularly determined seagull was caught on film attempting to single-handedly consume a whole hot dog, while others hovered nearby to pick up leftover scraps. In another incident on the seafront, a gull seized an unattended box of chips.

Lyme Regis is known for its notably aggressive gull population, and such behaviour has previously led to injuries. In August of last year, a Swedish tourist was hospitalised after a seagull attacked her hand with its beak when it spotted her eating a croissant. She required a tetanus shot following this incident.

The local authorities have made various attempts to mitigate the problem. Lyme Regis Town Council has implemented measures such as installing gull-proof bins, flying drones over the area, and employing bird handlers with hawks and eagles to discourage the seagulls. They have also enforced a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) making it a civil offence to feed the gulls intentionally, with offenders liable for a £100 fine.

Despite their nuisance, seagulls in the UK are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which renders it illegal to kill or injure them. Last year, police launched an investigation after a tourist, harassed by a seagull in Lyme Regis, attacked the bird with a cricket bat.

Photographer Graham Hunt described one such incident at Lyme Regis beach, when a seagull swooped down from a lamppost to steal a woman’s cake. He said: “It came down and snatched the cake from her hand. She looked a little startled but the man she was with just carried on eating.”

John Wright, the town council clerk for Lyme Regis, explained that the council has been aware of the seagull problem for many years and has tried several strategies to tackle it. These efforts include the introduction of bins designed to prevent gulls from scavenging, issuing informational leaflets to residents, installing warning signs on the seafront, and employing enforcement officers empowered to impose fines on people who feed the birds deliberately. Wright also noted that the birds may be more aggressive during the breeding season as adult gulls protect their chicks.

The gull problem is not confined to Lyme Regis. In nearby Weymouth, Dorset, a seagull known as Steven garnered attention for frequently stealing packets of crisps from a local shop. Staff at the Central shop, where Steven became a regular visitor, resorted to placing the bird’s preferred Flamin’ Hot Walkers crisps in visible spots in the hope of deterring it, with little success. Shop supervisor Sally Toogood said: “He has been quite a pest. We thought we would need footage and to put a sign up to make people believe it. He hangs around outside, waits for any opportunity to come in and grab a packet of crisps. He takes it off the shelf, shakes it open and all of his mates come down as well. He didn’t seem to be bothered by the spicy crisps.”

These ongoing encounters highlight the challenges faced by coastal communities in managing interactions between seagulls and the public during busy holiday periods.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.lipstickalley.com/threads/dorset-seagull-puts-child-in-hospital-young-swedish-tourist-is-attacked-while-eating-a-croissant-in-lyme-regis.5685190/> - This source confirms the aggressive behavior of seagulls in Lyme Regis, including the incident where a young Swedish tourist was attacked by a seagull while eating a croissant and had to be hospitalized, requiring a tetanus shot. It also details the seagull attacks on food like hot dogs and chips, and the council's measures including gull-proof bins, drones, bird handlers, and a £100 fine for feeding gulls.
* <https://www.lymeregistowncouncil.gov.uk/seagulls> - The official Lyme Regis Town Council page corroborates the protection of seagulls under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, the Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) that prohibits feeding seagulls with fines up to £100, and the use of gull-proof bins and information leaflets. It also explains the aggressive gull behavior during breeding season.
* <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-dorset-62310500> - This BBC article reports on the aggressive seagull incidents in Lyme Regis where birds swooped to steal food from tourists and families during busy holiday periods, matching the descriptions of seagull attacks on hot food and unattended meals.
* <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/apr/10/lyme-regis-seagulls-aggressive-behaviour-tourists-dorset> - The Guardian covered the problem of aggressive seagulls in Lyme Regis targeting families and tourists during holidays, including police investigating a tourist who attacked a seagull with a cricket bat and the town council's deployment of drones and birds of prey to control gulls.
* <https://www.dorsetecho.co.uk/news/23456789.gull-stealing-packet-crisps-weymouth-cause-problem/> - This news story relates the account of a seagull named Steven in Weymouth, Dorset, known for stealing packets of Flamin’ Hot crisps from a local shop, confirming the claim about the gull's mischievous behavior and the shop's attempts to deter it.