

Carl Sargeant AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Cyfoeth Naturiol
Minister for Natural Resources



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Alun Ffred Jones AM
National Assembly for Wales

30 October 2015

Dear Alun Ffred

At Assembly Questions on Wednesday 7 October I said I would write to you in response to your question regarding increases in the numbers of protected species of birds in Wales. The question was in the context of the concerns regarding urban gull species.

There are many species of gull resident in the Wales and all are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Gulls naturally nest on rocky sea cliffs and feed in the adjacent waters. Some species, the herring gull and lesser black-backed gull in particular, are increasingly becoming resident in the urban environment. It is these two species that are considered by some to be the 'nuisance' species.

The following information has been provided by Natural Resources Wales. There has been a decline across the UK of approximately 50% in herring gull and lesser black-backed gulls since the early 1970s. In recent decades gull numbers in Wales on their natural breeding sites have declined significantly. It seems likely that this is due to a decline in their natural food sources and to the decline in availability of discards and waste from the fishing industry.

In contrast to the steep decline of both species in their traditional coastal colonies, there has been an observed increase in urban-nesting populations. An increase of approximately 14% in urban herring gulls was recorded for the UK between the early 1970s and early 2000s. Similarly, across the UK, urban lesser black-backed gulls increased from 325 nests in 1976 to 10,583 nests by 2002. Recent counts now estimate there to be 640 pairs of herring gull and 3,300 pairs of lesser black-backed gull in Cardiff alone.

Yours sincerely

Carl Sargeant AC / AM
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