

## Stare at seagulls to stop them stealing your food

19th August, 2019



Researchers have come up with a useful tactic to deter seagulls from stealing your picnic sandwiches or making a grab for your French fries. The advice is to stare at the birds to prevent any food theft. This invaluable tip comes

from a study from the University of Exeter in the UK. Researchers conducted tests at a beach on the effects of staring at the sea birds. They put a bag of fries on the ground and monitored how long it took gulls to approach and snatch the fries without a researcher looking at the birds. They then carried out the same test, but this time a researcher made eye contact as a bird approached. The birds took an extra 21 seconds to approach the food when a researcher stared at them.

The researchers concluded that the seagulls were deterred by the human gaze. Only 26 per cent of the birds made an attempt to take the researchers' food with the eye contact. Three-quarters of the birds just stood still and looked at the food or flew away. Lead researcher Madeleine Goumas said: "I noticed that gulls seemed to have a bad reputation for food-snatching, but I saw it happen quite rarely. When I did see it happen, gulls often swooped in from behind, and the people were completely oblivious. Gulls are often seen as aggressive and willing to take food from humans, so it was interesting to find that most wouldn't even come near during our tests."

Sources: [cbsnews.com](http://cbsnews.com) / [eater.com](http://eater.com) / [nbcnews.com](http://nbcnews.com)

### Writing

We should absolutely never feed birds with our lunch. Discuss.

### Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

tactic / stealing / picnic / sandwiches / fries / theft / tests / ground / researcher / human gaze / eye contact / flew away / reputation / oblivious / aggressive / tests

### True / False

- a) Scientists devised a useful tactic to prevent seagulls taking your food. T / F
- b) Researchers carried out tests on a bench to attract seagulls with fries. T / F
- c) Researchers conducted tests with seagulls with and without eye contact. T / F
- d) Seagulls in tests took 21 seconds longer to approach food when stared at. T / F
- e) Over a quarter of seagulls tried to take food despite being stared at. T / F
- f) A researcher said seagulls have a good reputation. T / F
- g) The researcher said she regularly saw gulls swooping for people's food. T / F
- h) The researcher said gulls are not seen as being aggressive. T / F

### Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- |                       |                 |
|-----------------------|-----------------|
| 1. <b>tactic</b>      | a. watched      |
| 2. <b>stealing</b>    | b. motionless   |
| 3. <b>prevent</b>     | c. hostile      |
| 4. <b>monitored</b>   | d. stop         |
| 5. <b>approach</b>    | e. unsuspecting |
| 6. <b>concluded</b>   | f. strategy     |
| 7. <b>still</b>       | g. decided      |
| 8. <b>reputation</b>  | h. thieving     |
| 9. <b>oblivious</b>   | i. good name    |
| 10. <b>aggressive</b> | j. move toward  |

### Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you know about seagulls?
- b) What do you think of picnics?
- c) Which are better - sandwiches or French fries?
- d) Do you think staring at seagulls is a good tactic?
- e) What is your tip for stopping seagulls stealing your food?
- f) What do you think of the test in the article?
- g) How would you stop seagulls from stealing food?
- h) What do you think of feeding bread to birds?

## Phrase Match

1. Researchers have come up with a useful
  2. making a grab
  3. stare at the birds to prevent
  4. a researcher made
  5. The birds took an extra 21 seconds to
  6. the seagulls were deterred
  7. Three-quarters of the birds just stood
  8. gulls seemed to have a bad
  9. gulls often swooped
  10. Gulls are often seen
- a. as aggressive
  - b. approach the food
  - c. eye contact
  - d. still
  - e. for your French fries
  - f. reputation
  - g. in from behind
  - h. tactic to deter seagulls
  - i. by the human gaze
  - j. any food theft

## Discussion – Student B

- a) What do you think about what you read?
- b) Are you surprised that the gulls were deterred by the human gaze?
- c) What other birds might take your food?
- d) What other birds are pests?
- e) What are the most helpful birds?
- f) What do you think of the sound of seagulls?
- g) Should we feed birds?
- h) What questions would you like to ask the researchers?

## Spelling

1. come up with a useful catcti
2. renvept any food theft
3. This nlaibleva tip
4. mdtineoor how long it took
5. tnchsa the fries
6. an extra 21 seconds to oparahpc the food
7. seagulls were dreedret by the human gaze
8. gulls seemed to have a bad tietnaopr
9. I saw it happen quite reyalr
10. gulls often owspode in from behind
11. people were completely uoolviibs
12. often seen as ggesivsaer

### Answers – Synonym Match

1. f	2. h	3. d	4. a	5. j
6. g	7. b	8. i	9. e	10. c

## Role Play

### Role A – Seagulls

You think seagulls are the best birds. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their birds. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): eagles, penguins or parrots.

### Role B – Eagles

You think eagles are the best birds. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their birds. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): seagulls, penguins or parrots.

### Role C – Penguins

You think penguins are the best birds. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their birds. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): parrots, seagulls or eagles.

### Role D – Parrots

You think parrots are the best birds. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their birds. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): penguins, eagles or seagulls.

## Speaking – The Best Birds

Rank these with your partner. Put the best birds at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- seagulls
- eagle
- emu
- parrot
- humming bird
- penguin
- pigeon
- peacock

### Answers – True False

a T	b F	c T	d T	e T	f F	g F	h F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.