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Stare at seagulls to stop them stealing your food – 19th August, 2019

Level 4

Researchers know how to stop seagulls from stealing your French fries - stare at the birds. This tip comes from a UK university. Researchers tested this. They put some fries on the ground and checked how long it took gulls to snatch them without anyone looking at them. They did the same test, but with someone making eye contact. The birds took an extra 21 seconds to approach the food when a researcher stared at them.

The researchers said the staring deterred the gulls. Only 26 per cent of the birds tried to take the food with the eye contact. Three-quarters of the birds stood still or flew away. Gulls have a bad reputation for food-snatching. A researcher said: "Gulls often swoop in from behind and people are completely oblivious. Gulls are often seen as aggressive and...take food from humans. It was interesting to find that most wouldn't even come near during our tests."

Level 5

Researchers have a useful tactic to deter seagulls from stealing your picnic sandwiches or fries - to stare at the birds to prevent any food theft. This valuable tip comes from the University of Exeter in the UK. Researchers tested the effects of staring at the sea birds. They put some fries on the ground and checked how long it took gulls to snatch the fries without a researcher looking at them. They then did the same test, but with a researcher making eye contact. The birds took an extra 21 seconds to approach the food when a researcher stared at them.

The researchers concluded that the human gaze deterred the gulls. Only 26 per cent of the birds tried to take the food with the eye contact. Three-quarters of the birds stood still and looked at the food or flew away. A researcher said: "Gulls seemed to have a bad reputation for food-snatching, but I saw it happen quite rarely. When I did see it...gulls often swooped in from behind and 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."

Level 6

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."