

BE AWARE OF OYSTERCATCHERS!

Like gulls, oystercatchers will sometimes nest on roofs, particularly flat roofs. If you're managing gulls on a roof, and oystercatchers are present, you might accidentally take their eggs and possibly even chicks. **This is illegal, but can be easily avoided if you know what to look out for!** In urban areas in Scotland you are most likely to encounter lesser black-backed gull (particularly in the west) or herring gulls (more so in the east).

Things to look out for

1. PRESENCE OF ADULT BIRDS

Oystercatchers are **smaller than gulls with a distinct black head, and a long, thin bright red/orange beak and legs** (see picture).

Gulls are **larger, with blunt, broad yellow beaks (they have a red spot on the bottom of their beak)**. Most roofers will know what a gull looks like.

2. TIMING OF EGG LAYING

Oystercatchers lay their first eggs between **late March and mid-April**.

Gulls lay their first eggs between **late-April and early May**.

3. SIZE OF EGGS

Oystercatcher eggs are usually less than **6cm long, and weigh about 45g each**.

Gull eggs are usually **6cm or more in length, and weigh about 80g each**.

4. CHICKS LOOK DIFFERENT & OYSTERCATCHERS HATCH EARLIER

Oystercatcher chicks have very **distinctive white bellies**. **First chicks hatch early to mid-April**.

Gull chicks are cream or light brown all over with spots; these **spots are very clear on their heads**. **First chicks hatch mid-May**. **Gull chicks do not have the snowy white tummies**.

5. ALARM CALLS - oystercatchers with young make a distinct alarm call as you approach.

The oystercatcher call is a **single, loud, (shrill) high pitched 'peep' sound, which is continuously repeated by the bird while you are close to their nest/chicks**.

You can see the birds and hear their call if you go to this website:

<http://www.arkive.org/oystercatcher/haematopus-ostralegus/video-09b.html>

The gull alarm call **sounds deeper with a 'wark' sound**. Most roofers will know this call.

Adult oystercatcher

Oystercatcher chick



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Please note that oystercatcher and gull 'nests' are similar, consisting of a scrape, surrounded by small amounts of debris or local material, although oystercatchers use even less nesting material than gulls!. Both species lay about 3 eggs in the first clutch of eggs. Both species lay eggs that vary in colour, but are typically covered in spots.