



# ersatz eggs

## HELPING PUT YOU BACK IN CONTROL

### Gloucester City Council - Quayside Dummy Egg Trial

The first trial of the eggs took place on a neighbouring council building; Quay House which has a long history of roof nesting gulls, the trial was conducted by Meyrick Brentnall, Head of Planning Services for the Council.

A total of 17 nests were present on the roof, all containing a clutch of three eggs. On the 18th May 2006, the eggs in 8 nests were oiled; while a further 8 nests had their eggs replaced with plastic ones. The final nest acted as a control and was left untreated.

Monitoring records were kept during the breeding season up until and including the 1st August. The nests which contained dummy eggs still had all the eggs present within them and the adult gulls were still incubating when the trial finished. The eggs in the nests which had been oiled produced results which had been experienced in previous years, whereby eggs were rejected and new clutches laid in four out of the eight nests. The other four nests which were treated by egg oiling were abandoned within a few weeks of the treatment being applied. As expected, the control nest produced 3 fledglings.

All dummy eggs were successful in that the gulls were duped into thinking they were real and incubated them. Furthermore, the length of time spent incubating the eggs surpassed all expectations. This has important implications for management, as when the gulls are incubating, there is less disruption and nuisance caused to the general public (Brentnall 2006).

The oiled eggs performed as expected, with relays of eggs occurring. Mr Brentnall concluded that the unsuccessful pairs could have remade nests elsewhere or just hung around causing nuisance to the remainder of the colony. The true benefit of using dummy eggs is that it causes the gulls to incubate for longer, throughout the breeding season and beyond, and as such are less of a problem. In his final conclusion, Mr Brentnall suggested that the use of dummy eggs as a full scale control method is plausible and this method could effectively replace egg oiling.

In November of 2006 Mr Brentnall reported his finding to the Gloucester Gull Action Group and from this other Councils and individuals became aware of the eggs and further trials have been completed to further prove the effectiveness of the egg as a means of controlling urban seagull populations.

