

Great Otago Gull Count

Science in the School Yard

Calling all schools to count the gulls in the school yard over the course of one day.

Whether gulls are a common sight in your school yard or not, we would like you to participate, as absence is important data.

This study is designed to understand where different species of gulls are hanging out and why, so that we can reduce the negative interaction between humans and gulls.

Do gulls have the behavioural flexibility to adapt their foraging behaviour to human time schedules when beneficial?

This programme is a great way to engage students in a citizen science project without leaving the school yard. Resource material will be available to help with species identification and further study. Students are also encouraged to design a poster to educate others not to feed the gulls.

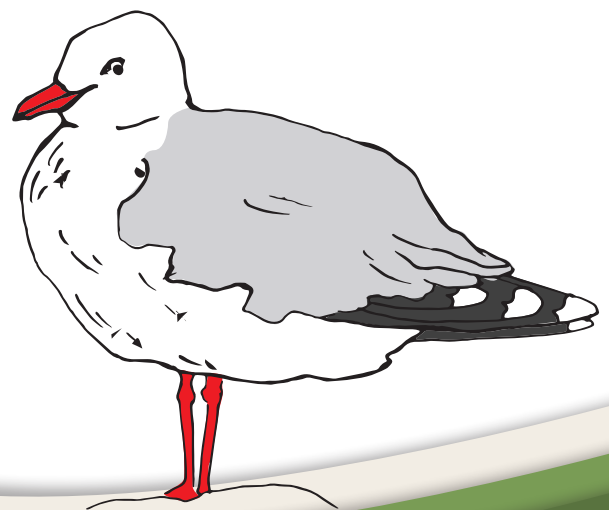
Where: Your school yard

Book: education@albatross.org.nz

Resources:

www.albatross.org.nz/education/educational-resources/

Staff support available on request



Great Otago Gull Count

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OVERVIEW

Why count gulls? This study is designed to understand where different species of gulls are hanging around and why so that we can reduce the negative interaction between humans and gulls. Do gulls have the behavioural flexibility to adapt their foraging behaviour to human time schedules when beneficial?

Who can participate? We would like to encourage all schools in Otago to participate. It is appropriate for both primary and secondary level, and resources are available to extend the learning. If multiple classes in a school participate, ensure the class is identified on the data sheets and do the counts at the same time (sites may be same or different).

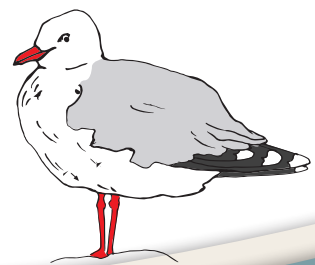
Where do we do the survey? Observe the area of your school yard where the students eat lunch or congregate and count the maximum number of each gull species seen. Remember to observe from the classroom or location where you are not disturbing the birds with your presence.

How do we identify the different gull species? There are three different gull species that you may encounter: (1) black-backed gull, (2) red-billed gull and (3) black-billed gull. It would be good to practice identifying gulls in the lead up to the study. If there is confusion, please take a photo and email to education@albatross.org.nz.

What if there are no gulls at our school? Absence of gulls is very important information, so please participate. We would like to know not only where the gulls are and when, but also where they are not hanging out.

When do we do the study? Please do your count on one day during the specified week in March. If the weather is poor (eg very windy, very wet) then please postpone your count to another day.

Challenges /Questions? Please don't hesitate to ask... Please send your results to education@albatross.org.nz



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SURVEY INSTRUCTIONS

Choose one day during Sea Week to do the survey, when the weather is not too wet or windy. The class could be divided into groups, and each group could be responsible for one of the roles outlined below.

Group 1 SITE SURVEYORS

- Determine the survey site and discuss with the class. It should be an area of your school yard where the students eat lunch or congregate during breaks.
- Identify a place to do the bird count where you can observe the site without disturbing the birds with your presence (e.g. observe from a classroom window). Don't worry if part of the site is obscured from view
- Describe the site and measure the maximum length and width (see page 3)

Group 2 GULL COUNTERS

- Assign times for each gull count at the start of the day to correspond with your school schedule (see survey sheet).
- At your designated time, observe and count all the gulls in your survey area at that point in time (note it is not an ongoing count).
- Take a photo at the same time to confirm your observations.
- Remember **that no gulls observed** is a result and record zero on the data sheet.

Group 3 IDENTIFICATION EXPERTS

- Do some research on the 3 gull species and outline the differences to the class.
- Review the photos taken by the gull counters.
 - Black-backed gulls are twice the size of red-billed or black-billed gulls. The adults are black and white but the youngsters are totally brown.
 - Red-billed gulls and black-billed gulls do not mix. If you see a gull with a black-bill amongst red-billed gulls, it will be a juvenile red-billed gull.
- Count the gulls of each species in the photograph and compare with the results collected.
- If in doubt, email the photo of the gulls for verification (include a group shot if more than one) to education@albatross.org.nz.

Group 4 RESEARCHERS

Complete the background information survey (page 5) and think about how this information relates to the presence or absence of gull in your school yard. What are your next steps?



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**SURVEY
SITE**

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Identify an area of your school yard where the students eat lunch or congregate to do the survey.

- Draw a map of the site.
- Note is does not need to be a square or oblong area.
- Measure maximum length and width of the site.
- Label key features of the site including rubbish bins, compost bins and other items that might attract the birds.
- Mark the location where the bird counts are being done with an X.

NAME OF SCHOOL: _____



maximum length of the site:

maximum width of the site:



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SURVEY SHEET

School: _____ Class Level: _____

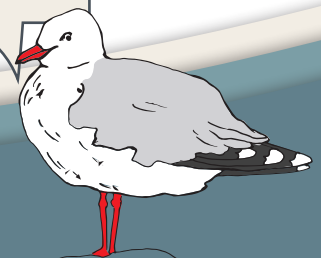
School Address: _____

Teacher Name: _____ email: _____

Date of Survey: _____

	Sampling period	Actual Time	Number of gulls observed			Notes
			Red -billed	Black -backed	Black -billed	
1	Early morning (just after 9 am)					
2	Mid morning tea (when children eating)					
3	Late morning (between morning tea and lunch)					
4	Mid Lunch (when children eating)					
5	Mid afternoon (just before 3 pm)					
6	Late afternoon (after children gone home)					

Try to take photos of any observations that you make!



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SURVEY QUESTIONS

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NAME OF SCHOOL:

① Do the students eat morning tea outside?

Do the juniors and seniors have the same morning tea time / or different?

② Do the students eat lunch outside?

③ Is there a dairy / fish & chip shop / or area where the gulls have access to food / rubbish nearby?

How do you think it has an influence on the number of gulls you see in the school yard?

④ School rubbish bins

Are the rubbish bins outside? _____

Are they located in or near to the survey site? _____

Are they covered? _____

How often are they emptied? _____

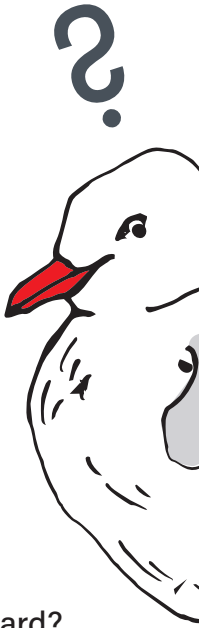
Is there an open compost area? _____

⑤ Is rubbish often dropped in the school yard?

⑥ Do the students feed the gulls?

⑦ Any other reasons why you think the gulls may or may not be present in your school yard?

⑧ What questions are the students interested in investigating further?



'Don't Feed the Gulls' Campaign

Poster Competition

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Poster Competition

You could have a school competition for the best designs. The winning designs could then be laminated and posted around the school and local community for other students and their families to see and act on.

Students are encouraged to design a poster to discourage people from feeding the gulls.

Students would need to think about:

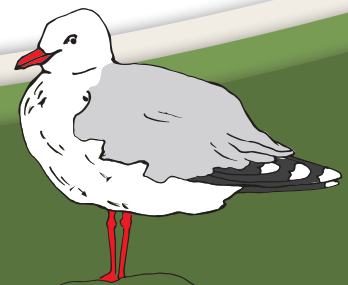
Catchy title or slogan

Key message

Design that will capture peoples attention

Students should also think about how the posters could be best used? And they should put together plans to display them in their local community eg. school, local shops, library etc.

Share your design with the Albatross Colony Education Team by emailing education@albatross.org.nz



Royal Albatross Centre Education



'Don't Feed the Gulls' CampaignPoster
Review

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Activity: Is this an effective poster?

Designing an effective poster is tricky and there are many things the students need to consider.

- What is the purpose of the poster? (What message does it need to tell?)
- Who is the audience? (school students? Cafe visitors?)
- How will the poster grab people's attention? (colour? image?)

Review the poster below (from Coromandel Peninsula) that was displayed at a cafe.

- What aspects of the poster you think are effective?
- What aspects would you change?

Encourage your students to plan the design elements that they want to use in their own poster.



Is this me on the poster? !

