

# Ferring



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## October 2021 Newsletter

**In this issue:** Apart from helping to reduce crime, Neighbourhood Watch can, and often does, play a wider role by fostering and helping create a strong community spirit, encouraging us to be good neighbours. By becoming a Neighbourhood Watch member you help make this area to be a better place. As one member has put it 'A good neighbourhood is founded on kindness and care for others. You may not see each other every day, but good neighbours know they can count on one another when they need to. Residents have respect for each other and their community.' With that in mind, this edition of the Newsletter focuses not on crime but on a few neighbourliness issues which have arisen in recent months.

### Give Gulls Love, Not Food



Living where we do, it's virtually impossible not to have a day without seeing what many people call 'seagulls', even though there is no such thing. There are, in fact, eleven species of gull in the UK with three species in particular which are especially well-established in our area: Herring Gulls, Great Black-backed Gulls and Lesser Black-backed Gulls. Their behaviour does divide local opinion markedly! They're bombastic,

cheeky, adaptable, opportunistic, intelligent, and if there was a prize for 'bird parent of the year', protective gull parents would surely win. Some people love them, but for others they are a nuisance, causing damage, noise, mess and health risks from their droppings.

Often, gulls nest on rooftops, drawn to the environment by an abundance of nesting habitats, ample food and a relative absence of predators. Naturally, they will defend their chicks and nests, though rarely with their beaks, instead they will swoop or hit with their feet. Their early morning territorial calls can be very noisy and searching for organic waste for example in plastic bin bags can create unsightly litter. In addition, some residents feed them, although the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) warns against this and in some parts of the country it is even an offence to feed gulls. The RSPB advises:

- Do not feed gulls – either intentionally or accidentally.
- Dispose of all rubbish, food and other organic waste properly, in gull-proof containers.
- Do not litter, and ensure any edible litter from fast food outlets is properly discarded.

Following the RSPB's advice for a happy gull-human cohabitation will keep this part of West Sussex a pleasant place - and not upset your neighbours!

(Gulls and their nests are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and it is illegal to intentionally kill, take or injure wild birds and action can only be taken against them under licence.)

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**Who Let the Fox Out?**

In a similar vein, urban foxes can be a bone of contention amongst neighbours. Here are some 'expert' views:

**Chris Packham**, well-known naturalist, nature photographer, television presenter and author and who is a fan of foxes, says: *"These animals shouldn't be hand-fed. They shouldn't be encouraged too close to people. If you're going to feed them, feed them at a great distance and watch them through binoculars. We don't want to tame a fox who could confuse someone else [who doesn't like foxes] for you."*



**Peter Crowden**, Pest Control Specialist & Chairman of the National Pest Technician's Association (NPTA): *"The problem isn't the foxes, they unfortunately have got a very bad label. The problem is the people. We have got to educate the people not to feed and encourage foxes into their homes. You can't cuddle a fox, they are very dangerous wild animals. Numbers of foxes have not increased over the last 30 years, but a fox can not tell the difference between a house that is happy to provide it with a source of food and one that is not."*

**Dr Roger Mugford**, Animal Behaviourist and founder of The Animal Behaviour Centre: *"In the country, foxes are very averse to human contact, but in towns and cities it's different. They associate humans with food. I think it's human behaviour that has to change and that means not feeding foxes. I think education is the way forward. I know foxes are beautiful creatures and they're wonderful to watch, but let them be wild. By changing their mindset and turning them into semi-domesticated animals, we endanger them."*

Foxes are a part of the urban landscape and we are lucky that we get to see them at such close quarters, but the statistics show that foxes are doing just fine and do not need extra help from us. Feeding foxes is not illegal, but perhaps think twice before putting out food for a species that doesn't need it, perhaps inadvertently upsetting neighbours by doing so? Living in an area that has foxes, you're inevitably going to see them whether you put out food or not. Is it necessary to encourage an animal that doesn't need encouragement?

## Neighbour disputes



If you've been unfortunate enough to experience neighbourhood squabbles or disputes, perhaps mediation can help. Neighbour Mediation can be an effective way of resolving disagreements quickly without involving the police or solicitors. It has proven to help with a range of issues including noise, children, harassment, boundaries, parking, pets and anti-social behaviour. The process is quite straightforward. First, the mediators meet each neighbour separately and confidentially. If both agree, a mediation session follows, when the parties are asked to agree "ground rules" to ensure safety, confidentiality and respect. At its essence, mediation is a conversation. Mediators help participants to listen to each other's point of view, and discuss the challenges of living near each other. Mediators will not take sides, make judgements, or tell the participants what to do. Instead, they act as neutral guides, helping those in conflict get the issues out in the open and develop mutually agreeable solutions. Participants work together to find new ways of living alongside each other respectfully, and they themselves are responsible for ensuring their side of the agreement is kept. To find out more, ring the West Sussex Mediation Service on 0300 200 0025 or go to their web site by clicking [here](#).



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**Finally**, one local Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator who is also on the committee of another local body reports that his Association has had great success in getting members to switch from paper to email communication. While some people prefer a hard copy, emails are more environmentally friendly, saving paper, print costs, and shoe leather. Email allows easier delivery of this newsletter to residents, so avoiding the need for more volunteers, who are increasingly difficult to recruit. Just email [nhweditorial@gmail.com](mailto:nhweditorial@gmail.com) to request a switch, or to comment on any of the above items. Thank you!

*These Newsletters are published quarterly – usually in the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of January, April, July and October.*