

## Stashing behaviour in a Herring Gull

At around midday on 6th June 2019, in warm, bright conditions, we were watching a small Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla* colony on the west coast of Lundy, Devon. Our attention was drawn to an adult Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* on the rocks below with a live Common Guillemot *Uria aalge* chick. We estimated that the chick was just a few days old, which fitted with data from a sample plot at a larger colony about 200 m south of our vantage point (Grant Sherman pers. comm.). The gull stabbed at the chick, grabbed it and shook it, and moved it around various ledges and banged it against the rocks. After a short period, the chick died. The gull meanwhile continued these behaviours. At first they appeared random but after a while we wondered whether this was a sequence of 'processing' the chick before consuming it. About 20–25 minutes into this event, the gull began attempts to swallow the chick whole. At each failure the chick was processed further, and we were reasonably convinced that this was designed to pulverise the chick's internal structure to make it easier to swallow. We were surprised that the gull could not swallow the chick

and wondered if the gull had fed recently.

Presently, a second Herring Gull arrived and perched above the first. This led to the first gull moving the chick and then chasing off the new arrival. Later, another Herring Gull arrived and took up the same position – we suspect it was the original interloper. This again led to the first chasing it off, but then (c. 45 minutes into the bout) the gull took the chick and stashed it in nearby rocks. Once the interloper had left, the first gull did not return for at least another 15 minutes. The stashing behaviour was very deliberate, and the chick was moved to a crevice much less obvious from the air. We are unaware of stashing behaviour in gull species and would be interested to learn more about this action. It clearly occurred under threat of kleptoparasitism, which is well documented in this species (Spencer *et al.* 2016).

### Reference

- Spencer, R., Russell, Y. I., Dickins, B. J. A., & Dickins, T. E. 2016. Kleptoparasitism in gulls (Laridae) at an urban and a coastal foraging environment: an assessment of ecological predictors. *Bird Study*. doi:10.1080/00063657.2016.1249821

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## Arctic Skuas caring for Common Eider duckling

On 29th July 2018, on a marsh just east of Longyearbyen, Svalbard, I observed a pair of pale-morph Arctic Skuas *Stercorarius parasiticus* apparently caring for a Common Eider *Somateria mollissima* duckling; plates 99 & 100. No skua chicks were present, and the Eider was approximately 2–3 weeks old (aged by several Eider biologists from photos).

The skuas were territorial, chasing away

conspecifics, and were observed long-calling and displaying, both in flight and from a nearby chimney. They also swooped at people and sledge dogs. As I approached, they swooped frequently and one hit me on the head once; during this approach, the Eider duckling ran c. 10 m away from the skuas. The skuas were ringed: they had been caught and ringed as successful breeders