

Large gulls feeding on fungi in a suburban garden in Glasgow, Scotland

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In Britain and elsewhere in the world, lesser black-backed gulls (*Larus fuscus*) and herring gulls (*L. argentatus*) have moved steadily inland from the coast - a move which has necessarily been accompanied by a major change of diet from marine predation to general scavenging (Rock, 2005; Spelt *et al.*, 2019). Much of the scavenged foodstuffs are human-related, so it is noteworthy if these species are found eating unusual but naturally-occurring food, especially where this does not appear to have been previously documented.

In June 2022, I noticed a flock of up to ten lesser black-backed gulls and two herring gulls in a neighbouring garden in Jordanhill, Glasgow, Scotland eating fungi which had appeared on the lawn under a birch tree (*Betula* sp.). The garden is not large (14 x 7 m) and forms a highly enclosed space with a two-storey house on one long side of the rectangle, tall trees opposite, and a garage along one of the short sides; a brick wall about 2 m high forms the fourth side. The gulls visited the garden on three consecutive days (16th-18th June) to eat the fungi (Fig. 1A). They seemed extremely nervous, taking off at the slightest interruption; they were only just capable of clearing the wall. Nevertheless, they kept returning. The mushroom caps were eaten but the stalks were left (Fig. 1B,C). As new fruiting bodies emerged, I asked permission to retrieve one and this was identified by Dr Alison Moss and members of the Clyde and Argyll Fungus Group as orange grisette (*Amanita crocea*).

Orange grisette is described as having a sweet smell and a sweet, nutty taste (Jordan, 2004; Phillips, 2006), but it is not clear if it is especially attractive to large gull species. Relatively few bird species are known to eat fungi (Simpson, 1998; Elliott *et al.*, 2019). The gulls have not visited the garden on any other occasion.

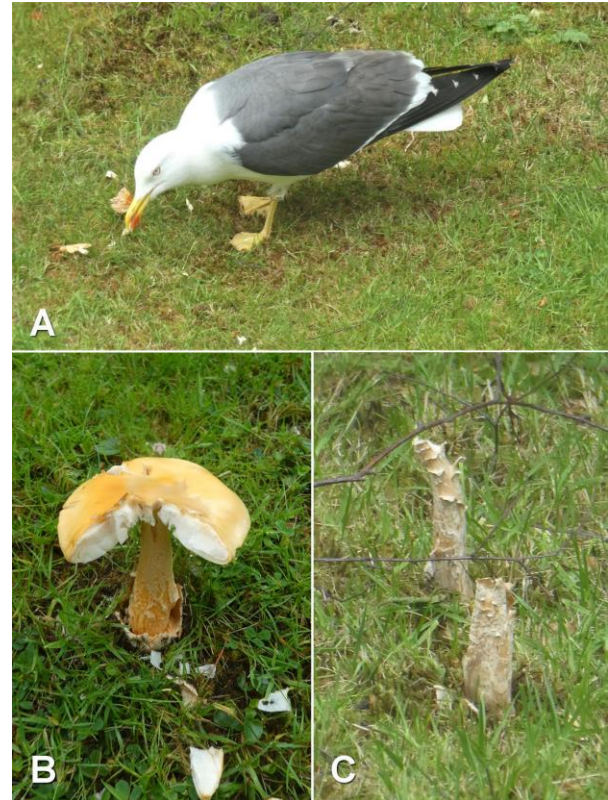


Fig. 1. Gulls eating fungi, Jordanhill, Glasgow, Scotland, June 2022. (A) Lesser black-backed gull (*Larus fuscus*) eating orange grisette (*Amanita crocea*). (B) Orange grisette with partially eaten cap. (C) Orange grisette stalks after complete consumption of caps. (Photos: A.P. Payne)

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