2.5 million seagulls needed to hoist Dahl's giant peach

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A girl feeds some seagulls in Cuxhaven, northwestern Germany, on December 23, 2012. Physics students at Britain's University of Leicester say 2.5 million seagulls would have been needed to fly the over-sized fruit in Roald Dahl's "James and the Giant Peach" across the Atlantic.

Physicists have taken a close look at Roald Dahl's children's book, "James and the Giant Peach," in which a flock of gulls fly an outsize fruit and its occupants across the Atlantic.

In Dahl's tale, it took 501 gulls to haul the peach to New York from the mid-Atlantic, where it had drifted with a lad and his magical chums onboard.

But students at Britain's University of Leicester say the real number would be close to two and a half million birds.

In a tongue-in-cheek study in the *Journal of Physics Special Topics*, four students calculated the force lift required to pick up a peach of 1.025 tonnes and a radius of six metres (19.5 feet).

"Although James could have successfully sailed his peach in the manner described by Roald Dahl, for a peach of the dimensions calculated, it would not be possible to fly such a heavy object with the assistance of such a diminutive number of birds," says their "paper."

"He would have to harness 2,425,907 seagulls in order to fly to America."

The authors add a touch of scientific caution, though.

"Whether the Silkworm and Mrs. Spider could have managed this is unknown," they say, referring to the two companions who lure the gulls into lifting the peach.

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