

PEST BIRD FACT SHEET

SPECIES PROFILE - COMMON STARLING

Common Name: Common Starling

Scientific

14

Name:

Sturnus



Distribution & habitat:

- Native to Europe, the Common Starling was introduced into Australia in the late 1850s through to 1870.
- They have become well established and have expanded their range, becoming a familiar sight around human habitation throughout east and south-east Australia.
- They are characterised by their habit of roosting in very large numbers.
- Habitats with exotic flowering plants can be preferred by starlings.
- Starlings are fringe dwellers, because they can find food and shelter easily on the fringes of areas of vegetation.
- Large trees such as pine, elm, poplar and palms provide roosts for starlings during summer.

Feeding

- Common Starlings are most often seen searching for seeds and insects on lawns and in paddocks and have been implicated in the spread of invasive weeds.
- Other food includes spiders, worms, human scraps and fruit crops.
- Starlings feed mainly on the ground and often in vast flocks.
- They compete for food resources with some native species.

Breeding

- The breeding season is mainly from August to January. At this time large flocks of Common Starlings break up into pairs or small groups.
- Nest sites are any type of hollow, such as tree hollows and house roof voids. The birds are aggressive when competing for nesting sites and readily drive out native species.
- Starlings will nest primarily in small patches of vegetation which are degraded and have little understorey.
- The nest is an untidy cup of grasses, leaves, twigs and items of rubbish. The pale blue eggs are incubated by both sexes which also raise the young birds. Often two broods are raised in a season.
- Starlings return to the same area each year to breed, and their young will also use the same habitat as their parents.

Living with humans

- The Common Starling is a prominent bird in open cultivated areas, and is a well-known pest of orchards, causing damage to fruit (particularly grapes and cherries), vegetable and cereal crops.
- Starlings are considered to be a major nuisance in urban areas. They will nest under rooves where they can infest houses with bird lice, are often unwelcome in parks and shopping areas, especially at night where the roosting flocks can be unsightly, noisy and can contaminate the area with droppings..
- Implicated in carrying and transmitting diseases to man and other animals.
- Compete with native species for nest hollows and contaminate nesting sites by coating their nest cavities with a deep lining that quickly becomes contaminated with parasites, so hollows become unsuitable for other species.

Control options

- **Habitat Management:** Reduce habitat quality, Nest destruction, Limit availability of food, Plant native vegetation , Exclusion
- **Lethal:** Trapping (during or just prior to the breeding season), Egg Oil

For further information see 'Pest Birds - Potential Control Options' fact sheet

14 http://dl.id.au/photo_birds/2007-07-31_0452.jpg

Common Starling nest



15

Common Starling at hollow



16

Myna Magnet trap



17

15 http://www.ozanimals.com/image/albums/australia/Bird/Starling_eggs_1.jpg
16 http://www.ozanimals.com/image/albums/australia/Bird/Starling_eggs_1.jpg
17 <http://www.pestit.com/images/mynaMagnetTrap.jpg>