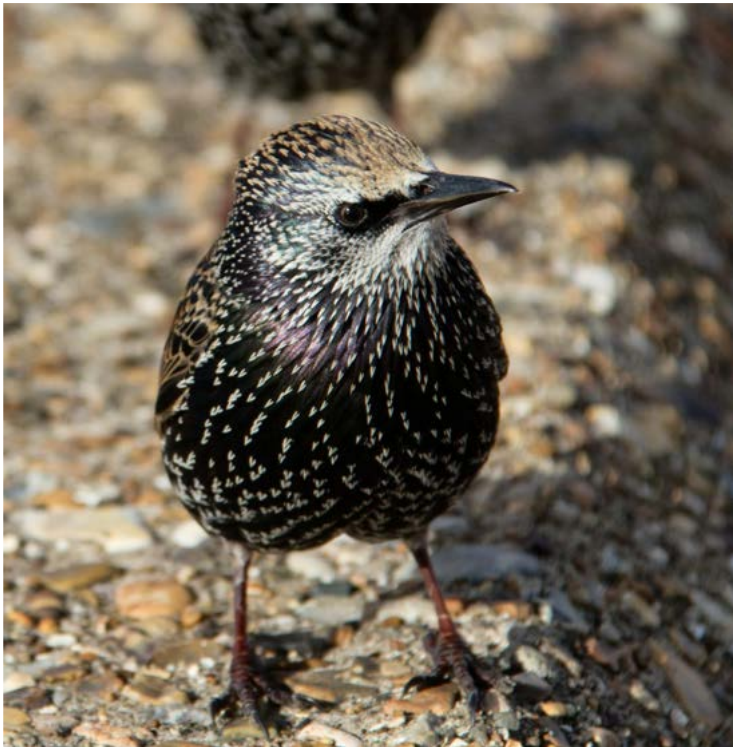


European Starling

European Starling

Appearance

This bird is chunky, short-tailed, and blackbird size. European Starlings are sexually monomorphic, which means males and females have the same coloring. Its coloring changes from black with white spots in fall and winter to a dark purple and green iridescent plumage in summer. This color change happens without loss of feathers, which is called “wear molt.” The European Starling’s thin, straight bill is bright yellow during breeding season, changing to a duller gray in fall.



Fall and winter plumage



Spring and summer plumage

European Starling Appearance

The European Starling's flight wings are short and pointed, much like a pointed star.



European Starling Sounds

From The Cornell Lab of Ornithology <https://www.birds.cornell.edu/home/>

SONGS

European Starlings have a remarkable repertoire of vocalizations, such as whistles, trills, and gurgles. They can mimic the calls of up to 20 different bird species as well as inanimate objects with sounds like mechanical squeaks and grinding.

Mozart kept a pet starling and taught it the opening bars of the the third movement of his Piano Concerto No 17 in G, K 453. Take a listen here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Mozart_-_Concerto_No.17_in_G_-_III._Allegretto.ogg

CALLS

All notes include rough chatter and soft whistles.

Listen to European Starling songs and calls at:

https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/European_Starling/sounds

European Starling

Diet

European Starlings will eat nearly anything, but they focus on insects, when available, as well as spiders, snails, earthworms, other invertebrates, and garbage. Especially in fall and winter, they eat a wide variety of fruits, berries, and seeds.



European Starling Range

European Starlings can be found year-round in DuPage County.



European Starling Habitat

European Starlings use lawns, streets, and farm fields for feeding. They need open, grassy areas to forage for food as well as a water source.



European Starling Habitat

European Starlings use trees or buildings with appropriate cavities or niches for nesting.



Photos: Mike R. (left), Rhododendrites (center),
Pilgab (right)

DuPage Birding Club, 2020

European Starling Behavior

European Starlings travel in large groups. It can be mesmerizing to watch hundreds of starlings in a perfectly synchronized murmuration. A murmuration is a group of starlings. This might be a reference to the sounds made by the very large groups that form at dusk.



Photo: Oronbb

For a very cool video of murmuration watch this National Geographic video on YouTube. Be sure to have the sound turned on while you watch!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V4f_1_r80RY

European Starling Behavior

European Starlings can be very aggressive, destroying eggs or the young of other birds. The best females mate and lay eggs early. A female may try to lay an egg in another starling's nest when she cannot get a mate early in the season. The aggressiveness of this bird has given them a reputation as pests.



Photos: Melissa McMasters (left),
Derek Bakken (right)

European Starling Behavior

Generally European Starlings are residents year-round, though some tend to move around in their territory in winter. They are commonly seen on the ground probing for food or sitting high on wires or trees, chattering with whistles, rattles, or whirrs.



European Starling

Literature/Prose

Murmuration

Murmuration the bird watchers shout
Time to look up and scan about
What you will see will amaze your eyes
Looks like a moving cloud of unbelievable size

They fly towards you all grouped together
Dividing just in time in unison as one feather
They swirl and sway like dancers on ice
They pirouette like lovers entwined, to entice

Excerpt from "Murmuration," by Paul Callus:
www.poetrysoup.com

European Starling Feeders

European Starlings will come to seed and suet at feeders.



European Starling Names

Common name European Starling

European - The bird was imported to the United States from Europe. All starlings that are here today are from a group of 100 released in the 1890s in New York city by a group who wanted to introduce all the birds of Shakespeare into the country.

Starling - The outline of the wings in flight suggest a star shape. Adding the diminutive suffix *-ling* translates *Starling* to "little star."

In parts of England and in Ireland, *stare* is still a name for this bird. In German the bird is called *star*, and in Swedish it is *stare*.

Scientific name *Sturnus vulgaris*

Sturnus vulgaris is the bird's genus and species. This is Latin for "Starling" and "common."

