

European Starling

Sturnus vulgaris

First brought to North America by Shakespeare enthusiasts in the nineteenth century, European Starlings are now among the continent's most numerous songbirds. They are stocky black birds with short tails, triangular wings, and long, pointed bills. Though they're sometimes resented for their abundance and aggressiveness, they're still dazzling birds when you get a good look. Covered in white spots during winter, they turn dark and glossy in summer. For much of the year, they wheel through the sky and mob lawns in big, noisy flocks.

Keys to Identification

Size and Shape

Starlings are chunky and blackbird-sized, but with short tails and long, slender beaks. In flight their wings are short and pointed, making them look rather like small, four-pointed stars (and giving them their name).

Color Pattern

At a distance, starlings look black. In summer they are purplish-green iridescent with yellow beaks; in fresh winter plumage they are brown, covered in brilliant white spots.

Behavior

Starlings are boisterous, loud, and they travel in large groups (often with blackbirds and grackles). They race across fields, beak down and probing the grass for food; or they sit high on wires or trees making a constant stream of rattles, whirrs, and whistles.

Habitat

Starlings are common in towns, suburbs, and countryside near human settlements. They feed on the ground on lawns, fields, sidewalks, and parking lots. They perch and roost high on wires, trees, and buildings.

Cool Facts

- Starlings are strong fliers that can get up to speeds of 48 mph.
- The oldest recorded wild European Starling was 15 years 9 months old.

Measurements

Both Sexes

- Length - 7.9 - 9.1 inches
- Wingspan - 12.2 - 15.7 inches
- Weight - 2.1 - 3.4 ounces

