

European starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Passeriformes

Family: Sturnidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, nonnative

FEATURES

The European starling averages seven and one-half to eight and one-half inches in length (tail tip to bill tip in preserved specimen). In the spring and summer, this bird's black feathers are iridescent, and the large, pointed bill is yellow. In the fall and winter, the bird appears to be spotted, and the bill is dark. The young bird is gray-brown with no speckles.

BEHAVIORS

The European starling is a permanent resident in all Illinois habitats except heavily forested areas. This bird was introduced into North America in 1890-91 at New York City. The first starling was seen in Illinois in 1922. It is considered a pest because it competes with native animals for nest sites and food, damages buildings and crops and can carry diseases. The starling is a very adaptable and aggressive bird. It may mimic the sounds of other birds or make a series of whistles, clicks and rattles. Starlings form huge roosts that are known for their noise and amount of waste products produced. The breeding season occurs from April through June. This bird nests in cavities or holes, competing with native species for nest sites. The nest is a mass of plant and other materials, which is built to fill the cavity. The female deposits five to seven, light-blue eggs. The male and female share incubation duties over the 11- to 13-day incubation period. Two broods are produced each year. The starling feeds on insects, berries and seeds.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests; marshes; peatlands; swamps; wet prairies and fens

Woodland Habitats

bottomland forests; coniferous forests; southern Illinois lowlands

Prairie and Edge Habitats

black soil prairie; dolomite prairie; edge; gravel prairie; hill prairie; sand prairie; shrub prairie

© Illinois Department of Natural Resources. 2016. Biodiversity of Illinois.