**Full Account for:** Sturnus vulgaris

**System:** Terrestrial

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kingdom</th>
<th>Phylum</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Order</th>
<th>Family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Animalia</td>
<td>Chordata</td>
<td>Aves</td>
<td>Passeriformes</td>
<td>Sturnidae</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Common name**
etourneau sansonnet (French, France), English starling (English), European starling (English), estornino pinto (Spanish, Spain), blackbird (English, USA), common starling (English), étourneau sansonnet (French), Europäischer Star (German)

**Synonym**

**Similar species**
Molothrus aeneus, Quiscalus quiscula, Agelaius phoeniceus, Turdus merula

**Summary**
Native to Europe, Asia and North Africa, Sturnus vulgaris (the European starling) has been introduced globally, save in neotropical regions. The starling prefers lowland habitats and is an aggressive omnivore. Sturnus vulgaris cost hundreds of millions of dollars in agricultural damage each year and contribute to the decline of local native bird species through competition for resources and nesting spaces.

**Species Description**
The European starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) is a small bird approximately 21.5cm, long and weighing around 70 to 100grms. Iridescent green glossed feathers cover the nape, breast and back of the bird, while the wings are black, sometimes with a green or purple veneer. During the winter white flecking may appear on the starling’s breast. (Chow, 2000)

**Notes**
European starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) often form huge flocks of upwards of 3,000 birds.

**Lifecycle Stages**
Eggs incubate in the nest for up to 15 days. The juvenile European starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) will stay in the nest for 21 to 23 days and may continue to beg parents for food for a few days after leaving the nest. Banding studies have shown that European starlings can live up to 21 years in the wild. (Chow, 2000, CWBO, 2004)
Uses
European starlings (Sturnus vulgaris) play an active role in the control of insect populations. Many people also consider the starling to be aesthetically pleasing, and keep them as pets. (Adeney, 2001)

Habitat Description
European starlings (Sturnus vulgaris) prefer lowland habitats to more mountainous terrain. They are secondary cavity nesters, using extant cracks, crevices, and cavities created by other species. During breeding season the European starling requires holes for nesting and vegetation fields for feeding. The rest of the year it will utilise a wider range of habitats from moorland to salt marshes. European starlings are highly adaptable when selecting nest hollows, e.g. fence posts, roof linings under guttering (there has been an observation of a starling nest in the wool of a live sheep) (John Tracey, pers.comm., 2004)

Reproduction
Reproduction is sexual; oviparous. Breeding season in the Northern Hemisphere generally begins late March and runs through to early July. The southern hemisphere breeding season runs between September and December. European starling clutches contain between 4-6 blue-green eggs. Females may lay as many as three clutches in a single breeding season. (Kern, 2003, Chow, 2000)

Nutrition
European starlings (Sturnus vulgaris) are omnivores and subsist mainly on seeds, insects, invertebrates, plants and fruit. (Chow, 2000)

General Impacts
European starlings (Sturnus vulgaris) cause damage to agricultural crops. When significant numbers are present starling flocks may descend on fruit and grain crop fields to forage, causing massive damage and can have a heavy economic effect. European starlings are extremely aggressive omnivores, and will compete with native fauna for food. Open bill probing is most commonly used for ground invertebrates, which is their preferred food. Hence this provides the European starling with an evolutionary advantage over frugivores. Fruit damage is often found to be caused by a higher proportion of juveniles, which have underdeveloped probing skills. Usurping nests by contamination (as well as physical competition) is also a major problem (e.g. native parrots use little, if any, bedding, whereas starlings will rapidly fill and contaminate tree hollows). European starlings are also a public nuisance and can damage infrastructures, roof linings, etc. and negatively effect aesthetics (Weber 1979).

Management Info
Physical: Manual methods such as exclusion, trapping, and shooting have been employed in an attempt to control European starling (Sturnus vulgaris) populations. Mechanical controls include scaring with the use of sonic devices. (Adeney, 2001; Kern, 2003).
Pathway

European starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) were introduced to New Zealand to control local insect populations. European starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) were allegedly introduced to the U.S. as part of a movement to introduce all the birds of Shakespeare to the States. People may move European starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) to new areas by taking their pet birds with them. Introduced by acclimatisation societies.


Compiler: Brandon Gehrke supervised by Dr. Deborah Rudnick University of Washington, Tacoma & IUCN/SSC Invasive Species Specialist Group (ISSG)

Updates with support from the Overseas Territories Environmental Programme (OTEP) project XOT603, a joint project with the Cayman Islands Government - Department of Environment

Review: John Tracey, NSW Department of Primary Industries, Orange New South Wales, Australia

Publication date: 2010-10-04

ALIEN RANGE


Red List assessed species 7: CR = 1; EN = 3; VU = 3;

*Cyanoramphus cookii* EN  
*Cyanoramphus novaezelandiae* VU  
*Lathamus discolor* EN  
*Neophema chrysogaster* CR  
*Polytelis swainsonii* VU  
*Tachycineta cyaneoviridis* EN  
*Tachycineta euchrysea* VU

BIBLIOGRAPHY

29 references found for *Sturnus vulgaris*

Management information


*Department of Agriculture and Food, Western Australia (WA), 2007. Starling updates*


*Summary:* Chapter on nonindigenous bird species in Florida. Contains information on Management


**Summary:** A website with basic ecology information as well as economic and health impacts of the starling. This site also details several methods of control.


**Summary:** Detailed information on the introductions of introduced birds of the world


**Summary:** Uses *Clidemia hirta* in Hawaii as an eradication case study. *Clidemia* is in the Melastomataceae and somewhat similar ecologically to miconia. Eradication case study in *Turning the tide: the eradication of invasive species*.


**Summary:** Available from: http://www.goert.ca/documents/GOEDSTreport.pdf [Accessed 13 February 2008]

The Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team (GOERT)., 2003. Annotated Bibliographies on the Ecology and Management of *Sturnus vulgaris*


**Summary:** Eradication case study in *Turning the tide: the eradication of invasive species*.


**Summary:** Notes on starlings as carriers of avian influenza virus.


**Summary:** This database compiles information on alien species from British Overseas Territories. Available from: http://www.jncc.gov.uk/page-3660 [Accessed 10 November 2009]


**Summary:** Review of the confirmed and potential human health risks of pigeons, starlings and sparrows.

WWF-Australia, Undated. Starling factsheet

**Summary:** This document seeks to inform Western Australians about the threat posed by starlings, with the hope of increasing community surveillance efforts and reporting of starling sightings. Available from: http://wwf.org.au/publications/starling-factsheet/ [Accessed 13 February 2008]

**General information**

Adeney, Jennifer Marion. 2001. Introduced Species Summary Project: European Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*).


**Summary:** This site has detailed photographs of starling morphology. Summary information on basic ecology and conservation efforts is also included. Available from: http://www.wbu.com/chipperwoods/photos/estarling.htm [Accessed August 11, 2004] 


**Summary:** This comprehensive sight reviews ecology and impacts. It contains several good images as well. Available from: http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/site/accounts/information/Sturnus_vulgaris.html [Accessed August 11, 2004] .

**Summary:**
The species list sheet for the Mexican information system on invasive species currently provides information related to Scientific names, family, group and common names, as well as habitat, status of invasion in Mexico, pathways of introduction and links to other specialised websites. Some of the higher risk species already have a direct link to the alert page. It is important to notice that these lists are constantly being updated, please refer to the main page (http://www.conabio.gob.mx/invasoras/index.php/Portada), under the section Novedades for information on updates.

**Spanish:**
La lista de especies del Sistema de información sobre especies invasoras de México cuenta actualmente con información acerca de nombre científico, familia, grupo y nombre común, así como hábitat, estado de la invasión en México, rutas de introducción y ligas a otros sitios especializados. Algunas de las especies de mayor riesgo ya tienen una liga directa a la página de alertas. Es importante resaltar que estas listas se encuentran en constante proceso de actualización, por favor consulte la portada (http://www.conabio.gob.mx/invasoras/index.php/Portada), en la sección de novedades, para conocer los cambios.

**ENature.com, 2007. European Starling: Sturnus vulgaris.**

**Summary:**


**Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (GSMFC), 2003. Sturnus vulgaris (Linnaeus).**

**Summary:**
This site has a short summary of physical description, potential impacts in the local area and basic ecology of the starling.


**ITIS (Integrated Taxonomic Information System), 2005. Online Database Sturnus vulgaris.**

**Summary:**
An online database that provides taxonomic information, common names, synonyms and geographical jurisdiction of a species. In addition links are provided to retrieve biological records and collection information from the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) Data Portal and bioscience articles from BioOne journals.


**Summary:**
Journal article of a study done to gauge the effects of European starling on the native populations of cavity nesting birds.

**Komdeur, Jan, P. Wiersma, M. Magrath, 2002. Paternal Care and male mate-attraction effort in the European starling is adjusted to clutch size. Proceedings: Biological Sciences 269(1497): 1253-1261.**

**Summary:**
Study done to determine differences in male starling mating behavior in relation to clutch size. And parental practices of male starlings when polygynous.


**Summary:**
Study done of starling behavioral aggression with numerous individuals in a confined space.

**Olsson, Ola, Mans Bruun, and Henrik G. Smith. June 2002. Starling Foraging Success In Relation to Agricultural Land Use. Ecography 25 (3) 363-**

**Summary:**
Journal article of a study done to monitor the effects of agricultural land use as a correlating factor with decline of several bird species including Sturnus vulgaris.