

Starlings

- The **European starling** (*Sturnus vulgaris*) is a common resident throughout BC and is listed as Schedule C (non-protected) under the *BC Wildlife Act*



Understanding Starlings

European starlings are found in both urban and rural environments. They are common throughout BC in spring, summer and fall, and in southern BC in the winter. Empty nests and nests with eggs can legally be destroyed, while nests with young may be moved (or a false replacement nest provided) from the site.

Starlings...

- European starlings lay 4-5 eggs, 2-3 times per year, and can nest all year round
- babies rely on parents to feed them until they learn to fly at 3-4 weeks old
- primarily eat grains, fruit, seeds, and suet

Humane Choices

The BC SPCA does not support killing starlings for nuisance reasons.

Killing is rarely necessary and control methods should be selected to cause the least harm to the animal's welfare. If attractants have not been removed, more starlings may arrive, so follow-up monitoring is needed.

The BC SPCA strongly encourages non-lethal, non-contact methods. Prevention and exclusion comes first, followed by deterrence, and if necessary, eviction. Eviction should be done carefully to avoid potentially orphaning young.



Did you know?

Starlings are valuable for their role in consuming "pest" insects. Starlings themselves are valuable sources of food for birds of prey.

Common Conflicts

Starlings come into conflict when they nest in urban structures and/or roost in large noisy groups. They are attracted to crops like corn, blueberries, grapes, apples, and cherries. As cavity-nesters, they may use structures such as oven or dryer vents as nesting sites. Buildup of droppings below a vent, or dry grasses visible in a vent hole, are signs of their presence.

Conflict Resolution

Intentional feeding is highly discouraged. Starlings may be taken to a wildlife rehabilitator for treatment and release if needed. If starling is in critical distress, a veterinarian or wildlife rehabilitator may euthanize. For more information on managing starlings, *flip page over*.



Careful, it's easy to confuse baby starlings (left) with other baby birds, like robins (right)



Recommended Actions & Methods

Prevention & Exclusion
Before any conflict, and to prevent future issues

Remove potential food sources

- ✓ Secure garbage bins and compost
- ✓ Ripe fruit is harvested and stored quickly
- ✓ Bird feeders filled only in winter (if at all)
- ✓ No pet food outside

Maintain urban and residential structures

- ✓ Block access to vents, soffits, chimneys, and rafters
- ✓ Use door curtains to prevent birds flying into buildings
- ✓ Use netting to prevent access to specific areas
- ✓ Prune tree branches to help reduce attractive roost sites

Deterrence
If babies can fly (3-4 weeks), or no babies present

Use mild humane harassment techniques

- ✓ Use devices like bird wires, bird spikes, predator decoys (e.g. owls, hawks), reflective strings, lights, balloons, sound deterrents, or wires that deliver a small electric shock
- ✓ Adde eggs to prevent development and limit reproduction
- ✓ Hazing with specially-trained raptors may also be used

Eviction

Evict the animal

- ✓ Use a one-way door or funnel cone so birds can leave the structure or net barrier, but not re-enter
- ✓ Do not install these devices when birds are nesting
- ✓ Permanently seal any openings once nest or structure is undisturbed for several nights
- ✓ Follow all prevention and exclusion steps above

These are legal, regulated methods - but they are **not recommended*** as they can cause animal suffering, may be high risk to non-targets, and/or are difficult to administer; legality must also be confirmed according to local bylaws and/or regulations

- Live traps with food, water, bedding, checked at least every 24-48 hours
- Carbon dioxide or carbon monoxide - using pure gas cylinder into sealed chamber with regulator
- Shot to brain of trapped or free-ranging bird
- Repellent gels or sticky substances
- Cervical dislocation
- Manually applied blunt trauma that induces immediate unconsciousness
- Penetrating captive bolt
- Immobilization with alpha-chloralose followed by hand capture
- Avicides, permit required

*email wildlifecontrol@spca.bc.ca for information on these methods

It is **illegal** to use...

- Bait poisons or chloroform
- Maceration
- Thoracic compression
- Drowning or suffocation
- Carbon monoxide by vehicle exhaust
- Glue traps
- Freezing (including dry ice)