

# Starling



Latin: *Sturnus vulgaris* Irish: Druid

The starling, which in some parts of Ireland is also known as a stare, is a very common bird and can be seen everywhere. Many starlings live here all year round, however in the autumn they are also joined by large numbers from the continent, who come here for the winter months.

Starlings are able to mimic the songs of other birds (including chickens!) and can even copy a human whistle, a dog's bark and a phone ring. They often collect on telephone and electricity wires and on rooftops.

## Blue eggs

Starlings have pale blue eggs, usually about 5-7 per nest, which they build in trees, cliffs and in buildings.



## FACT FILE

**Colour:** Black feathers, with green and blue sheen, and many pale speckles. Yellow bill in summer, which goes darker in winter.

**Length:** 19-22 cm

**Diet:** Worms, insects, spiders, snails and berries.

**Habitat:** Most areas including gardens.

## Did Shakespeare bring Starlings to the US?



The European Starling is considered an invasive species in America. The species was introduced there in 1890 when 100 birds were released in New York City's Central Park by an industrialist. He belonged to a group that wanted to introduce all the birds mentioned in the works of William Shakespeare into the US. The European Starlings rapidly reproduced and the range of the species quickly spread. Today the species competes with native species and destroys crops.

## Safety in Numbers

A group of starlings is known as a "murmuration". Starlings have many other collective names, including a "filth", a "constellation" and a "scourge".

Starlings fly in formation, often early in the morning and in the evening. It can be an amazing sight to see hundreds or thousands of these birds flying together in a tight group, wheeling through the air with great precision.

One of the reasons why they fly in formation could be that there is safety in numbers. It would be harder for a bird of prey, such as a peregrine, to target one of the birds when so many are flying together.

Starlings also gather together for warmth and to share information, such as where food can be found.



A huge group of starlings, flying in formation.

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