

CHAMBERS, S. 2009.

Birds of New Zealand - Locality Guide. 3rd edn.

Arun Books, Orewa, New Zealand.

Starling: pp 265-266.



## STARLING

**Family** Sturnidae

**Species** *Sturnus vulgaris*

**Common name** Starling

**Status** Introduced for pest control reasons and has become very plentiful.

**Abundance** Common

**Size** 210 mm (cf sparrow 145 mm)

**Habitat** A bird of towns, cities and open pastureland.

**Worldwide range** Europe to Asia and introduced to much of the world.

**New Zealand range** Found throughout New Zealand away from forests and alpine areas.

**Discussion** Some farmers have provided them with nesting boxes to breed in.

**Description**

**Note** Three plumage changes should be noted for this bird.

**Description – immature bird**

**Upperparts** Greyish-brown with some darker wing striping. **Underparts** Greyish.

**Eye** Black with a dark brown area in front of it and behind. **Bill** Brown.

**Description – winter bird (above)**

**Upperparts** Black with buff coloured head and white overall spotting to the neck. **Wings** Black feathers edged with light brown. **Underparts** Blackish with very conspicuous white spotting. Note that the female is more spotted than the male bird. **Bill** Brown.

**Description – breeding bird**

**Upperparts and underparts** Glossy black with a purple sheen. Some faint remnant whitish spotting on flanks. **Wings** Black with a greenish sheen and feathers edged with brown. **Bill** Yellow.

**Conspicuous features**

- Yellow bill in the breeding season.
- White speckling on birds not in full breeding plumage.
- Dark eye on juvenile birds.

**Conspicuous characteristics**

- Outside of the breeding season Starlings flock by night in large communal roosts gathering in groups before dusk before flying off.
- Birds feed on paddocks in large groups outside of the breeding season. If disturbed these flocks look spectacular as they take to the air.
- Birds fly constantly backwards and forwards to nests in breeding season.

**Call** The Starling is a recognised mimic of such birds as the California Quail, Shining Cuckoo and the alarm calls of the Blackbird. Its own song is a warble of a variety of thin notes uttered from a high perch. Wings are clapped when the bird is singing.

**Nest** A bundle of straw and sticks in holes or under the eaves of buildings. Egg laying starts in the first week in October. Up to 6 pale blue eggs are laid.

**Where to find**

Common everywhere.