

Starling

Sturnus vulgaris

Bird · Resident · here all year



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A glossy, short-tailed, sharp-billed bird that looks plain black until light catches the oil-slick sheen of purple and green across it. Winter adults are spangled with pale spots. Starlings nest in roof spaces and tree holes across Dumfries and feed in busy flocks on lawns, playing fields and pasture. Like the house sparrow they remain familiar while having declined dramatically, and are red-listed.

BEHAVIOUR

Starlings feed by 'probing' — driving the closed bill into turf and forcing it open to expose leatherjackets and other grubs, which is why they favour short grass. They are outstanding mimics, weaving car alarms, phone tones and other birds' calls into a rambling song of clicks and whistles. On winter evenings flocks gather into murmurations before roosting, wheeling in dense shapes above reedbeds and buildings.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Starlings (Sturnidae)
SIZE	21 cm · smaller than a blackbird
UK STATUS	Red-listed

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