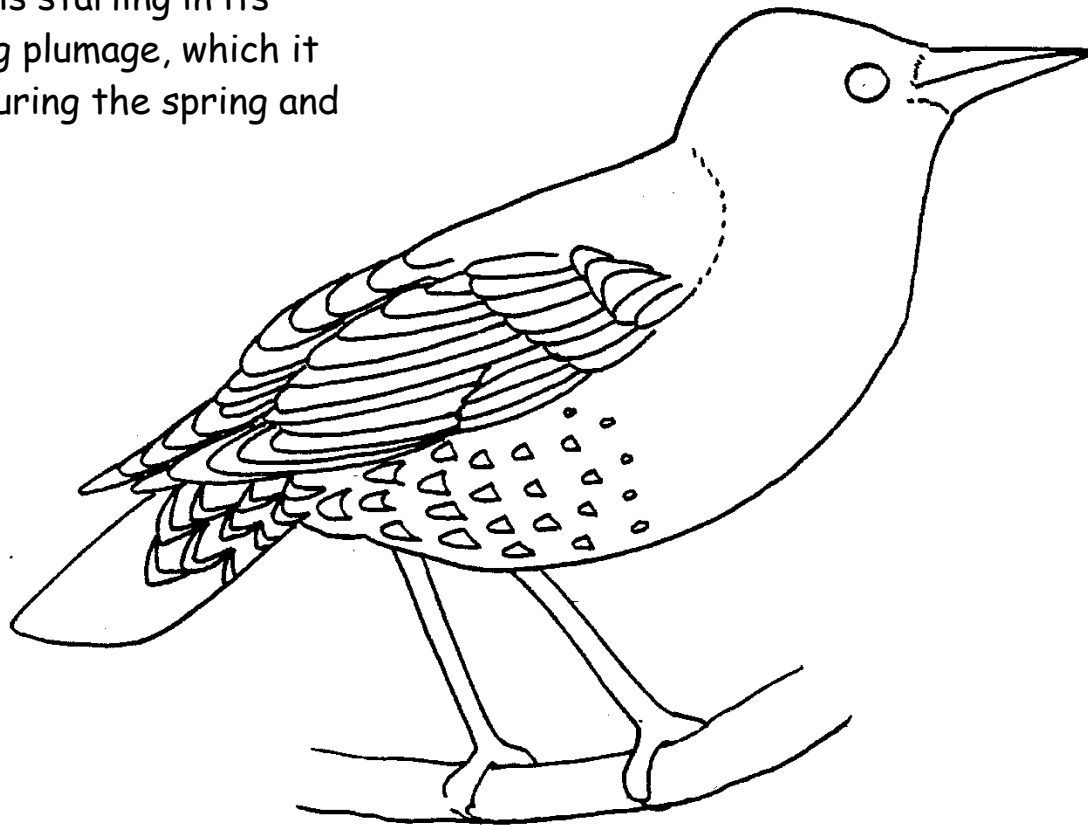


Color this starling in its breeding plumage, which it wears during the spring and summer.



European Starling

Coloring instructions:

Yellow - the bill

Black - the eyes

Black with purple and green iridescence - the head, breast and back

Black with white spots - the belly

Brown - the wings and tail

Yellowish brown - the legs

European Starling

Length: 6"

Habitat: Resident in woodlands, urban areas, and farms.

Field marks: Dark, black bird with short tail and fat body. The wings look triangular in flight.

The European Starling is not a **native** bird. It was not in the United States hundreds of years ago. In 1890, some people thought that it would be wonderful to have every bird mentioned in the plays of William Shakespeare flying around in New York City's Central Park. They released 60 starlings brought over from England in the park.

This **introduction** of the nonnative starlings succeeded. Some of the birds survived and had babies. Over one hundred and thirty years later, there are now an estimated 200,000,000 starlings in the United States!

One reason European Starlings are so successful is that they have a unique set of jaw muscles. Most animals have strong muscles to close the mouth. The starling has strong muscles to open its bill. It forages

in lawns and pastures where the grasses grow so thickly together that they form an impenetrable thatch beneath which many insects live their lives. A starling pokes its bill through the thatch and uses its muscles to pry open a gap through which it can see and hunt the insects.

The size of a population changes depending on the relative number of births and deaths. Many of the predators and diseases that killed starlings in England aren't in the United States. Being able to hunt the insects beneath the thatch allows the starling to find enough food to raise many babies. The population exploded.

European Starlings are often considered a nuisance bird due to their abundance and aggressiveness. They nest in cavities, and they may drive other species, like native bluebirds and swallows, from nest sites they want to use.

European Starling Challenges

Put a check mark in the box when you have completed the challenge.

- Identify a starling in its summer plumage when it is iridescent black with a yellow bill.
- Identify a starling in its winter plumage when it is brown with white spots and has a dark bill. These colors will eventually wear off and reveal the summer plumage underneath.
- See starlings sticking their bill into lawns.
- See a starling fly in and out of a hole in a tree or building where it is roosting or nesting.

Find more educational materials at www.wintuaudbon.org/education

