
Getting to Know Roosting Birds



The most common roosting birds in our area are Rock doves (pigeons), Mourning doves, European starlings, and English house sparrows. All are highly adaptable and capable of finding shelter on and in buildings. They can also find food in garbage cans, bird feeders, and in parks.

Pigeons and Doves

- ✦ Rock doves (pigeons) and Mourning doves nest under bridges, inside barns, and on building ledges and rafters.
- ✦ They lay eggs throughout the year and can raise several broods of one to two young, which can fly about 35 days after hatching.
- ✦ Rock doves were first raised for meat and later as message carriers. Although wild, the pigeons common to urban areas today are accustomed to people.

Starlings

- ✦ The European starling changes its colors twice a year. In spring, its plumage is black with iridescent tints of green and purple and its bill is yellow; in winter, its bill is dark and its plumage is lighter and speckled.

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Give wildlife a helping hand.

The goal of the Mercer County Wildlife Center is to protect the future of native wildlife species through education, rehabilitation, and release.

You can help the Center meet this goal by donating your time or resources.

Volunteer opportunities:

- ✦ Animal technicians - Dependable, compassionate people to help feed and administer medications to the animals in our care.
- ✦ Community outreach volunteers - Enthusiastic people to greet the public at community events, raise funds by selling merchandise, and educate others about wildlife by distributing literature.
- ✦ Publications - Writers, copy editors, and layout people to help develop our newsletters, brochures, and handouts.
- ✦ Publicity - Volunteers to write press releases that help spread the word about the Center.
- ✦ Flea market - People to help run our flea market fund raisers. We also gratefully accept certain donated items.

For more information about these volunteer positions, call the Volunteer Coordinator at (609) 397-8435.

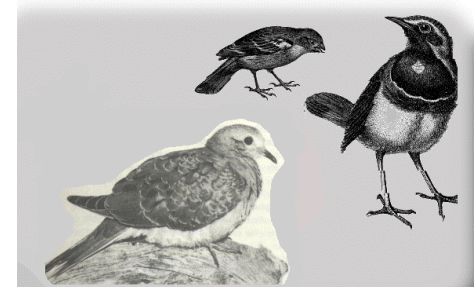
Wish list items:

Caring for the injured, ill, or displaced animals that come through our door involves various supplies, many of which you probably use in your own home. Visit our web site to see our wish list.

Mercer County Wildlife Center



Coexisting with Roosting Birds (Pigeons, Starlings, Doves, and Sparrows)



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www.mercercounty.org/mcwc/mcwc.htm



Getting to Know Roosting Birds

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Starlings (continued)

- Starlings often roost in large numbers and are often seen flying in big flocks to and from their communal night roosts.
- They nest in cavities wherever they find them, including holes in sign posts over freeways, and compete aggressively for nest holds with native birds such as flickers. Starlings raise two to three broods per season.
- Known for their diverse vocalizations, starlings can imitate the sounds of other animals.

House Sparrows

- The English house sparrow is always found close to humans and is frequently seen in large flocks in city trees and hedges or under the eaves of buildings, where they build their nests.
- They raise two to three broods during the spring and summer, with three to seven young who leave the nest about 17 days after hatching.

Coexisting with Roosting Birds

Roosting birds rarely cause damage, but their accumulated droppings can be annoying to people when the birds congregate in large numbers. You can modify their habitat to discourage them from roosting, nesting, and feeding in areas where they are not welcome. Here are some ideas:

- Use bird netting** – Made of weather-resistant material and available in a variety of sizes, bird netting is a versatile tool for bird-proofing. To prevent birds from roosting on window ledges, anchor netting to the roofline, stretch it across the front of the building, and secure it at the bottom and sides. Hang overlapping panels in front of large doors or windows that must be left open. You can also use the netting inside buildings to prevent perching on rafters and other horizontal surfaces.
- Modify flat surfaces** – To prevent pigeons from perching on flat surfaces, make a false ledge by fastening wood, stone, or metal at an angle of at least 60 degrees over the surface so that

birds will slide off when they land. You can also construct a barrier with parallel lines of monofilament line or stainless-steel wire strung through eyelet screws a few inches above the roosting surface.

- Seal holes** – To prevent birds from finding nesting sites in buildings, seal holes under eaves and in outside walls and replace loose shingles and siding. If the birds have already nested and are caring for nestlings, wait until the young have fledged and can fly out of the nest. Then, remove all nesting materials and close the openings.
- Choose smaller nesting boxes** – If you put up nesting boxes in your yard for other birds, choose ones with small openings that are designed for birds such as chickadees, nuthatches, and wrens. Boxes with holes larger than 1" in diameter accommodate starlings and house sparrows and should be avoided if you do not want to attract these species.
- Do not feed** – Do not feed birds if you do not want to attract pigeons, starlings, and house sparrows.

Thanks to the HOWL Wildlife Rehabilitation Center in Washington state for providing the information in this pamphlet.