

STARLINGS

Behaviour

Most Starlings roost communally from late summer until the following breeding season (March-April). During this time the British population is joined by a large number of migrant birds from continental Europe. The birds commonly roost in trees; the number of birds in a single roost can be many thousand individuals. The continental birds return to the continent to breed.

When they are ready to breed, Starlings build nests in trees and buildings. They also commonly nest within the roofs of buildings. Usually around 4 eggs are laid and incubated by the female for 12-13 days. While breeding, the parents roost in or close to their nest-site. Fledging takes place after 21-23 days.

Nuisance

Starlings have a reputation for being one of the noisiest and most gregarious garden birds. Their roosts mainly cause a nuisance through noise, especially during dusk and dawn, and from their faeces. Large amounts of bird faeces can accumulate under areas where the birds are roosting, they can also soil cars and buildings surrounding the area of their roosts.

Control

Starlings, their eggs and nests are fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981; under this Act the birds cannot be taken or killed, nor their eggs or nests (when in use or being built) be taken or destroyed except under licence.

An individual licence can be granted by Natural England to approved named individuals to tackle a specific problem within a specific period of time and in an agreed manner. Natural England assesses applications on a case by case basis. Without an individual licence it is illegal to kill Starlings or prevent them from accessing their nests whilst still active.

If you have birds which are actively building a nest, using the nest, have laid eggs, or are rearing young, there is no action which you can legally take. You must wait until the nest is no longer in use or apply to Natural England for an individual licence.

What can you do once Starlings have gone?

Once the birds have stopped using their nests, the nests can be removed and disposed of, please be careful when dealing with disused nests as they can contain harmful bacterial and parasites. They are also often located in hard to reach places, so care must be taken when trying to access the nests. The council does not provide a service for removal of disused nests; however, there are companies who will provide this service for a fee.

Once Starlings have stopped using areas in buildings to nest, they can be proofed to stop the birds re-entering the structure. Correctly installed proofing can offer long lasting protection. It is also advisable to proof other areas where they may nest as returning birds may look for areas close to their previous years nest for suitable sites.

If you require further information on how to control Starlings or how to obtain an individual licence, please contact Natural England or visit their web site.

<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/>