

## Urban Pest Birds

By DoMyOwn staff

Though many common birds provide benefits such as down feather production, insect and weed population control and the sport of watching and feeding, many problems may arise when birds associate too closely with people. Common bird problems range from general nuisance and building defacement to food contamination and disease transmission.

All birds are protected by federal law except the common pigeon, the European starling, and the house sparrow. Some local or state governments may protect all birds and the methods of bird control allowed.

### Pigeons

- Identification- The pigeon is the most common pest bird and is responsible for the worst public health concerns. The adult pigeon is about 11 inches long with a short neck, small head, and short legs. Pigeons can be identified by their blue-grey color and iridescent feathers on the head and neck. Pigeons nest on small, flat areas away from the ground, such as ledges, air conditioning units, pipes, and window sills. Pigeons eat a varied diet of grains, discarded food, and livestock feed and manure, and they must have water daily to survive.
- Pigeon Problems- Besides the general nuisance of large flocks in public spaces, pigeons' feces deface structures, accelerate deterioration, and cause slipping hazards. Their crude nesting debris clogs machinery. Pigeons are known to carry numerous diseases including pigeon ornithosis, encephalitis, and histoplasmosis, as well as various ectoparasites. Pigeons adapt very easily to manmade environments and may travel up to five miles between nesting and roosting sites, making a settled flock quite challenging to move.
- Getting Rid of Pigeons- Because of their homing capabilities and habitual instincts, captured and released pigeons will simply find their way back to the original nesting site. Moved flocks quickly adapt and settle in new environments, so visual and auditory scare devices are less effective than the more established the roost.
- - Food and water sources in particular should be as inaccessible as possible.
  - A tactile repellent such as [4 The Birds Repellent Gel](#) may be applied to ledges, sills, roofs, peaks, cornices, bridges, and overpasses to deter birds from landing.
  - [4 The Birds Liquid Repellent](#) can be sprayed on beams, girders, struts, supports and other areas where birds land or roost. 4 The Birds can also be sprayed on trees, bushes, and vines (except for those that are in bloom or bearing fruit).
  - Bird netting is one of the most effective pigeon control products as it excludes the birds from possible landing, roosting, and nesting areas.

### Starlings

- Identification- The European Starling is an introduced species that causes problems in urban and rural areas. The adult starling is about 8" long (about the size of a robin) with a short tail and long bill. In winter, the starling has a dark bill and an iridescent coat speckled with white dots. In summer, the starling's bill is yellow, and the coat is duller, mostly green and purple, and less speckled. Starlings travel in flocks of up to thousands, and they nest and feed in a variety of areas. In urban areas, starlings nest in trees, exhaust vents, marquees, and hollow lamp posts, and on ledges, lighted signs, billboards, and soffits. In rural areas, starlings tend to nest on farm building ledges and in tree cavities. Starlings feed on a variety of sources, depending on the season and availability. These food sources include seeds, fruit, food scraps, insects, and crops of cereal, fruit and vegetables.
- Starling Problems- The most bothersome side effects of a starling population are intense vocalization and fecal accumulation. Starlings are also quite aggressive and may drive out other desirable bird species. Starling feces deface and deteriorate structures, cause slipping hazards, contaminate livestock feed, and even kill trees with significant buildup. Starlings leave behind nesting materials that clog machinery, cause drainage problems, and clutter structures. Starlings carry diseases including encephalitis, histoplasmosis, and ornithosis.
- Getting Rid of Starlings:
  - - A tactile repellent such as [4 The Birds Repellent Gel](#) may be applied to ledges, sills, roofs, peaks, cornices, bridges, and overpasses to deter birds from landing.
    - [4 The Birds Liquid Repellent](#) can be sprayed on beams, girders, struts, supports and other areas where birds land or roost. 4 The Birds can also be sprayed on trees, bushes, and vines (except for those that are in bloom or

bearing fruit).

## House Sparrows

- Identification- The House Sparrow is a small, stocky bird that is not a true sparrow but belongs to the family called weaver finches. The house sparrow is 5 to 6 inches long with a conical bill and brown and grey feathers. The male has a black throat and white crown, while the female has a white throat and dull eye stripe. Sparrows build messy nests of twigs, string, paper, and grass in any covered, elevated spots, typically in larger buildings such as warehouses, stadiums, and airport hangars. Sparrows primarily eat grain, but they also feed on fruit, seeds, insects, livestock feed, and discarded food scraps. House sparrows have become very dependent on humans for food and shelter, and they nest, roost, and feed in large groups within a range of one to two miles.
- Sparrow Problems- Sparrows can be difficult to control because of their rapid breeding. Sparrow flocks are aggressive enough to drive out other, more desirable bird species. Sparrows' nests in electrical areas may cause shorts and fires, and congregations in poultry and hog farm facilities pose serious feed contamination threats. House sparrows are associated with over 25 diseases and many ectoparasites.
- Getting Rid of Sparrows
  - - Food sources in particular should be as inaccessible as possible, particularly in urban areas such as commercial dumpsters and fast food parking lots.
    - Scare products have little effectiveness on sparrow populations.
    - Exclusion such as bird netting is highly effective in preventing sparrow nesting.
    - A tactile repellent such as [4 The Birds Repellent Gel](#) may be applied to ledges, sills, roofs, peaks, cornices, bridges, and overpasses to deter birds from landing.

## Bird Pest Control Products

[4 The Birds Repellent Gel](#)

[4 The Birds Liquid Repellent](#)

[View all Bird Control products](#)