

Roosting Birds

Understanding the habits and habitats of wildlife, and taking appropriate measures to prevent unwanted encounters, will help everyone to continue to enjoy the wonderful wild resources that still exist in New Jersey.

Coexisting with Roosting Birds

Pigeons and Doves

Rock doves (*Zenaidura macroura*) commonly known as pigeons, and mourning doves (*Columba livia*) 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 (*Sturnis vulgaris*) 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. 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 (*Passer domesticus*) 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.



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About Mercer County Wildlife Center

The Mercer County Wildlife Center is a state and federally licensed facility that cares for injured, ill and displaced wildlife. The Center provides these animals with the medical treatment and a temporary refuge before releasing them back into an appropriate wild habitat.

For more information regarding the work we do and the animals who share our environment, including a series of printable brochures that provide tips for coexisting peacefully with those animals, visit us online at: www.mercercounty.org/departments/mercer-county-park-commission/wildlife-center

For information on protecting bee hives and livestock, contact the Division of Fish and Wildlife Wildlife Control Unit at (908) 735-8793.



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.



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Dan Benson, *County Executive*

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Wildlife Center Friends is a 501(C)(3) non-profit organization formed to support the activities of the Mercer County Wildlife Center. • www.wildlifecenterfriends.org