

# Pigeon

The feral pigeon is the number one urban pest bird. Large numbers exist in every city across the country. Not a native bird, feral pigeons are descendants of domestic homing pigeons brought over from Europe and released here in the 1600s. They were domesticated from the wild rock doves from the sea cliffs of Europe by the Romans over two thousand years ago. Several traits have allowed them to dominate the urban landscape. Because of their history, pigeons are not afraid of people; they roost and nest readily in man made structures and they have a diverse diet. The standard pigeon has a short neck with a small head. Their short legs with the level front and hind toes allow them to perch on branches as well as walk on flat surfaces.

## Damage

Feral pigeons are responsible for untold millions of dollars of damage each year in urban areas. The uric acid in their feces is highly corrosive. Also, debris from roosting flocks can build up, backing up gutters and drains thus causing damage to roofs and other structures. Extensive damage to air conditioning units and other roof top machinery is commonplace. There are also other economic costs that can be associated from pigeon's taking up residence such as slip and fall liability and projection of an unclean, dirty company image. Besides physical damage, the bacteria, fungal agents and ectoparasites found in pigeon droppings sometimes represent a health risk.

## Control

There are a wide variety of solutions available for handling a pigeon infestation. The best solution for pigeon problems, is complete exclusion with a 2" mesh StealthNet. Many ledge problems can be solved by using products such as BirdCoil, Birdwire, Bird-Flite spikes, as well as Bird-Shock electrical track. When bird pressure is heavy in an area, exclusion work must be accompanied by flock dispersal methods like trapping or use of moving predator effigies like the Rotating Screech Owl. Flock dispersal alone is not a long term solution especially in medium-heavy pressure situations like when there are food/water/shelter sources at the site.

## Nesting

Nest building is very simple and often consists of a few stiff twigs. The male will pick the site. They prefer small flat areas away from the ground. Look for nests along building ledges,



Pigeons in droppings

bridge supports, air conditioning units, window sills and the like. In crowded flocks, pigeons will even forgo nest building and lay eggs directly on a protected ledge.

## Cycles

Pigeons are not migratory. Their natural instinct is to stay near their birth site. This trait gives the pigeon a very determined personality when it comes to roosting at a particular site, much to the dismay of the inexperienced pest control technician. The daily cycle of a pigeon is to roost at night, feed in the morning and loaf in the afternoon. The seasonal cycle is as follows; courtship in the early winter, nest building in late winter and breeding in the spring. However, in warm climates, breeding will occur year round. Pigeons molt once a year in late summer.



The feral pigeon is generally blue-gray with a white rump; has iridescent feathers on head and neck; two broad black bars across each wing and a broad dark band across the end of the tail. They also can display white, brown or gray plumage.

## QUICK FACTS

Height/Weight  
12" -15"/10oz-16oz

Life Span  
3-4 years in the wild  
up to 16 captivity

Flight Speed  
28 to 82 mph

Range  
All fifty states Urban/  
Suburban areas

Food  
Widely varied, grains,  
seeds, corn human  
food scraps

Habitat  
Protected ledges and  
roof-tops

# Goose

By definition, Canada geese are not classified as pest birds and are afforded protection by Federal & State agencies. Nonetheless, Canada Geese are increasingly becoming the scourge of suburbia as their numbers have grown in the past decade from only a few thousand to hundreds of thousands of these birds. In fact, the familiar V shaped squadron of honking geese heading south is becoming a rare sight. Country Clubs and business parks offer pristinely manicured lawns and ponds providing an ideal habitat and effectively modifying their migration cycle. Geese are very opportunistic and easily exploit the new 'easy living' conditions found in an urban environment.

## Damage

Geese can cause damage to agricultural crops year round, either by trampling or consumption. Aesthetic damage to suburban lawns, golf courses, etc., is incalculable. Geese are also a health hazard- fouling reservoirs and ponds. A larger threat is air safety. Geese are one of the main birds involved in airline bird strikes worldwide.

## Control

Non-migratory Canada geese are difficult to remove. Once established, immediate corrective landscaping and behavioral modification is imperative: Remove cover shrubbery; use herbicides to eliminate aquatic vegetation; and reduce fertilizer, especially around pond area, to make grass less nutritionally attractive. Several visual scare products like the Bird Terror-Eyezer, Bird Predator, Goose Guard and Flash Tape combined with ReJeX-iT taste deterrent should be employed as soon as the birds enter the area, varying in location and type. For more established flocks audio scare devices like Zon Guns, Scare Bombs and Screammers, the Goose Chase Cassette, or the Bird-Gard or Bird Squawker units that project a variety of sounds through several speaker locations in a random pattern should be set up at strategically placed intervals. All systems require constant reinforcement and should be relocated frequently, especially the Goose Guard units to remain a convincing threat to the birds. Physical barriers such as overhead Gridwire & 4" mesh StealthNet can be extremely effective barriers but are site specific. These grids can be installed above water surface to prevent landing. Fencing made of Gridwire (.96mm) provides a discrete barrier to dissuade geese from entering property (especially from water



Bird droppings are a sign of infestation

areas) and can be electrified for increased effectiveness. Wire fencing applications should begin approximately 1' off the ground with successive strands approximately 1' above the last to a height of at least three feet. Four inch mesh StealthNet with 1/2" reflective Flash Tape hanging from it can also be utilized above and around ponds and grassy areas.

## Nesting

Nesting sites are typically near water with protective vegetation in close proximity. Planter boxes on high rise office building balconies in campus like settings are quickly becoming a nesting site of choice. Geese are extremely aggressive, posting sentinels at nesting and grazing sites. Defense of nests can many times result in injury to people or pets who venture too close.

## Cycles

Non-migratory or residential geese, once established, prefer feeding at the nesting site, but will often fly long distances to and from favorite feeding grounds. Some feeding may occur during moonlit nights.



There are at least 10 or 11 subspecies of Canada geese, all similar in color pattern with long black neck and head with large white cheek patches meeting under the throat. The birds' brown-gray body has a pale to dark breast and underparts while the black tail has white upper and undertail coverts. The bill and feet are also black. The bird varies in size from 22 to 48 inches long and weighing in from 3-4 lbs. all the way up to 24 pounds.

## QUICK FACTS

Height/Weight  
22" to 48"  
3-4 lbs. to 24lbs.

Life Span  
Generally 10-25 yrs.  
some instances 40+

Flight Speed  
20 to 55mph

Range  
All 50 states rural to urban areas

Food  
Graze on marsh grass, pond weeds, new grain and corn

Habitat  
Grassy fields near water

# Cliff & Barn Swallows

These slender, sleek birds are well known for their long migration and nesting habits. Cliff and barn swallows spend their winters in South America and summers in North America. They arrive around March in the southern part of the country, reaching the northern states in April. They are very territorial and will always come back to the same nesting site. These swallows have made a very successful switch from cliffs and caves to man made structures for placement of their mud pellet nests. Increased insect populations from modern agriculture and shelter created by man made structures are two reasons given for this transition. Unfortunately, this success has often been at the expense of a frustrated homeowner. The swallow now faces strong competition from the introduced house sparrow for food and shelter. This may be why their numbers appear to be dwindling. Swallows are a protected species and their arrival is a sign of spring for many. The return of the swallows to San Juan Capistrano in California is a well-noted annual festival.



Cliff swallows and barn swallows both have brownish red faces and throats plus a steel blue coat and a light colored belly. Squared off tails identify cliff swallows (pictured) while barn swallows have deep forked tails. Juveniles have similar coloring but a duller finish.

## Damage

Swallows can be a nuisance in suburban areas due to their nesting habits. The mud nests damage and deface the outer walls and eaves of residences and office buildings. Building sides often end up smeared with feces from the bird colony along with collecting on the ground. Homeowners have also reported problems with parasites entering the house through building cracks next to the nests which poses a potential health risk to humans and animals.

## Control

*All swallows enjoy special protection under the law. You cannot disturb them once they lay their egg in the nest.* The only way to eliminate cliff and barn swallow problems is to take down the nests in the winter after they are gone and exclude them from returning by using 3/4" StealthNet. The netting needs to be angled across the eaves to prevent access to any sharp building angles. Several strands of Birdwire can also be run under eaves in strategic patterns at angles to prevent nest build up as well. Please call our office at (800) 503-5444 (West Coast) or (800) NO BIRDS (662-4737 - East Coast) for detailed instructions.

## Nesting

They build elaborate nests out of mud pellets. They look for sites near a river with dirt embankments. Both cliff and barn swallows pack mud pellets in the upper eaves of a building. The resulting nest will resemble a wine carafe or flask with the opening on the side. They line the nest with grass and feathers.



Swallows in a nest

Nests are packed together in close knit colonies. The colonies range in size from a few to several thousand.

## Breeding

Cliff and barn swallows have two broods per year with each brood containing four to five eggs. Egg coloration will be white, cream or pale pink with brown spots on some of the eggs. The eggs take 12 to 14 days to hatch. Fledglings leave the nest after 25 days.

## Cycles

They migrate each year between North and South America. They winter in South America and summer in North America.

## Quick Facts

Height/Weight  
5"-6"/1 oz

Life Span  
4-6 years in the wild  
up to 12 captivity

Flight Speed  
15-45 mph

Range  
Across country rural to  
urban areas

Food  
Well noted insect eater

Habitat  
Suburban areas  
adjacent to open fields  
and water

# Sparrow

The House Sparrow is the number two urban pest bird. Introduced as a species to North America, the house sparrow quickly spread across the country due to its lack of natural enemies and its adaptive traits. Its ability to nest in urban structures, eat urban scraps and a large breeding capacity are some of these adaptive traits. The House Sparrow is actually a member of the weaverbird family and not a true Sparrow. Weaverbirds create intricate nests and relative to their size, the largest nests in the bird world. Their legs and toes are favored for branch perching and their short conical bills are ideal for seed cracking. Their diet consists of seeds and grain, as well as fruits, vegetables, human table scraps and insects. They are boisterous, intelligent birds who roost in noisy flocks on branches of city trees, ivy covered walls and under eaves of houses.



Male House Sparrows have black throats and chest patches, light cheeks and brown nape. The female has a plain brownish chest and dull eye-stripe.

## Damage

House Sparrows are often a nuisance in urban areas like manufacturing and food processing plants. Gutters and drainage pipes clogged with sparrow nests can backup and cause extensive water damage and fires have been attributed to electrical shorts caused by machinery housing sparrow nests. Lastly, feces buildup can lead to structural damage from the uric acid in droppings, plus the bacteria, fungal agents and parasites in the feces also pose a health risk.

## Control

The most effective method of control is to exclude sparrows from the area with 3/4" StealthNet, making sure there are no gaps or crevices for the birds to pass through. The only ledge deterrent systems that are truly effective against sparrows are electrified ledge systems that use an intermittent pulse like Bird-Shock. New 2-chambered Sparrow Traps are quite effective at trapping small quantities of sparrows. The best trap has an elevated second chamber that keeps the birds happy and so content that they actually sing, attracting others to the trap. When practical, the trapping program should be combined with a nest removal program that will greatly reduce the population over time. Along with trapping, mist nets can be installed in the flight paths by certified personnel to capture these birds in enclosed areas. A new technique that has found some success for moving populations is to fog problem areas with ReJeX-iT. This method is most commonly applied when sparrows gather in flocks. Sparrows generally do not react to audio and visual products except occasionally in areas to which they are



Bird in nesting materials and droppings

not very committed (new to area).

## Nesting

They build large nests relative to size which function as the center of all activity. They prefer small enclosed places such as house shutters, drainage piping, building rafters and corrugated metal siding. They will build a spherical nest in a tree or another exposed place if they have no other option. The building material will be sticks, with an inside lining of grass, string, fabrics or straw. The nest will often hold several families.

## Cycles

House Sparrows are not migratory, but in cold climates can show movement between rural/suburban breeding sites and warmer winter roosting sites in the city. House Sparrows are aggressive birds and will often force out other birds from their territories. They are flocking birds and will gather in the thousands to take over feeding and roosting areas.

## QUICK FACTS

Height/Weight  
5" -6" /1oz

Life Span  
1-2 years in the wild  
up to 10 captivity

Flight Speed  
5 to 39 mph

Range  
Across country rural to  
urban areas

Food  
Seeds, grains insects  
and fruits

Habitat  
Trees and building  
structures

# Woodpecker



Woodpeckers are 7 to 15 inches in length, and usually have brightly contrasting coloration. Most males have some red on the head, and many species have some black and white marks. The woodpeckers have short legs with two sharp-clawed, backward-pointed toes and stiff tail feathers, which serve as a supportive prop.

There are over 200 different species of woodpeckers worldwide, 23 of which can be found in the United States. The woodpecker is most commonly found in wooded regions of the country, where they can cause damage to the exterior of wooden buildings and houses. The Woodpecker's unique body is designed to easily cling to tree trunks, branches, wood siding, or utility poles while pecking for food. Pecking or "drumming" against trees or buildings is the characteristic most associated with Woodpeckers. They do this to establish territories and to attract or signal mates. Woodpeckers primarily feed on tree living or wood-boring insects using their strong beak and long tongue to dislodge food. Some members of the Woodpecker family (Flickers) feed on insects of the ground, while others prefer native berries, fruit and nuts.

## Damage

Woodpeckers can be a nuisance in wooded regions of the country, primarily from the drumming sound they produce when pecking at the sides of homes and businesses. This can be quite annoying, especially in the early morning when the occupants are trying to sleep. They can also cause significant damage to the sides of buildings, telephone poles, eaves, fences, etc., by pecking holes into the surface. The holes are usually caused by 1 or 2 birds during the spring time mating season.

## Control

All Woodpeckers are protected by the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The most effective control method is 3/4" StealthNet that can be installed in a semi-permanent configuration until nesting behavior has been permanently modified. Alternatively, taste deterrents like the Protective Coating Spray, Hole Filler or Paint Additive combined with audio/visual scare tactics such as Bird-Gard distress call units, Scare Eye Balloons, Octopus, and Flash Tape have been effective, especially if used when the problem first arises.

## Nesting

They select their homes near wooded regions because of their dependence on trees for food and shelter. Woodpeckers use their strong beak to bore holes into tree limbs or trunks when carving out a place to live. They prefer to live in dead trees and show a tendency to build on the side of the structure that receives the early morning light and warmth from the rising sun. They can also be found living in man made structures, such as wooden fence posts, utility poles, and buildings. The loss of old growth



StealthNet protects HVAC equipment — StealthNet is an effective solution for Woodpecker problems

trees has accelerated their use of man made structures for homes.

## Breeding

Woodpeckers breed in the spring, commonly laying 2 to 8 dull white or glossy eggs. The incubation period lasts from 11 to 14 days and maybe longer for larger Woodpeckers. They typically have 2 broods per year with some species bearing eggs 3 times per year. Eggs are watched over by both parents during incubation.

## Cycles

Very few species of Woodpeckers are migratory, although some species show movement southward in winter or from higher mountains to warmer lower valleys. In general, cold weather is not a problem because of the availability of their food supply under bark or in dead or rotted wood where it is out of reach of most birds.

## QUICK FACTS

Height/Weight  
7" to 15"  
1-1/2oz to 16oz

Life Span  
5 to 12 years  
depending on species

Flight Speed  
20 to 44mph

Range  
All 50 states  
mostly suburban areas

Food  
Insects, fruit, nuts,  
seeds, tree sap

Habitat  
Trees, wood siding,  
telephone poles,  
fences

# Crow

There are two main species of Crows, the large common crow found across the country and the smaller fish crow found in the Southeast. The Common Crow is a big black colored bird approximately 17 to 20 inches long with a strong stout build and a compressed bill. The Fishing Crow is a smaller darker version of the Common Crow. Both have a scavenger's diet and will eat a wide variety of things. Such food items include insects, frogs, small snakes, eggs, mice and dead animal carcasses. Crows will also eat newly planted crops such as corn. Crows are well known for their intelligence. They are social birds and the flock is in constant communication making hunting or capture of the bird very difficult. The Crow's native history along with its helpful bug eating habits have insured its Federally protected status.



The Crow is black from bill to tip of wing and claws with a metallic violet gloss on body and a blue-violet/green-blue gloss on wings. Adults have black eyes while juveniles have blue eyes.



StealthNet used to exclude birds from the roof of a home

## Damage

Crows are frequently a big agricultural pest bird due to their fondness for corn and other farm crops, but they are a minor urban pest compared to the pigeon, starling or house sparrow. These birds can overwhelm trees, creating a lot of noise and harassing people and animals in the vicinity which can be a nuisance to the suburban resident. Furthermore, like any pest bird, dropping buildup can lead to structural damage from the uric acid while also posing a health risk due to the harborage of disease.

## Control

It is possible to drive away large flocks of Crows and other blackbirds with audio/visual scare devices such as the Bird-Gard unit combined with visual scare devices like Scare Eye Balloons, Octopus and Flash Tape. To maximize effectiveness, hang visual products in trees before commencing noise campaign.

They can be kept off ledges using 5" Bird Coil, Birdwire, Bird-Flite spikes or Bird-Shock electrical track. Two inch mesh StealthNet will exclude crows completely from most areas. Advanced predator kites like the Avikite and fogging with ReJeX-iT are new effective deterrent methods that can be effective against crows.

## Nesting

Crows are committed nest builders. They typically build nests in trees, twenty to sixty feet off the ground. The nest consists of sticks and twigs with shredded bark, grass or a similar material lining it.

## Breeding

Crows have one or two broods a year, averaging four to seven eggs per brood. Incubation takes eighteen days with a four to five week fledgling period before the young leave the nest. The eggs range from pale bluish-green to olive green or greenish-brown with splotches of brown and olive-gray.

## Cycles

Migratory in upper parts of the country. Northern birds will fly thousands of miles south during the winter, while southern birds stay put year round. One notable characteristic about Crows is their flocking behavior. In fall and winter they will move to better feeding areas where they will coalesce into massive feeding flocks. These feeding flocks in turn, join up with other flocks at night to form enormous communal roosts numbering from a couple thousand to tens of thousands.

## QUICK FACTS

Height/Weight  
18" -21"/15oz-22oz

Life Span  
6-7 years in the wild; up to 20 captivity

Flight Speed  
25-32 mph

Range  
Continental U.S.  
Suburban/ Rural areas near water

Food  
Scavenger, eats almost anything: insects, snakes, dead animals, human food scraps, eggs, & garbage

Habitat  
Tall trees and buildings 20 to 100 feet up

# Starling



The starling is a dark chunky, muscular bird. It is distinguished from other blackbirds by its short tail and its longer, slender bill. Starling plumage varies depending on the season. In winter, the bird displays a highly speckled iridescent coat and a dark bill. In summer, the bird's coat dulls and has far fewer speckles.

Like the house sparrow, the starling was introduced from Europe in the 19th century. It did not spread as fast and only reached the western coast within the last few decades. Starlings are well adapted to urban life which offer it an abundance of food and nesting sites. It is a muscular bird about eight inches long with long wings and a short squared tail. Starlings are very aggressive and will drive native birds out of their territory, much to the dismay of local bird watchers. Starlings are well noted for their flocking habits. They often gather in the tens of thousands, creating a nuisance when roosting in populated areas.



Roof and rain gutter damaged by bird droppings

**Damage**  
Starlings rank just behind pigeons and sparrows as an urban bird pest. Starlings can be a nuisance in both urban and rural areas due to their nesting, eating and living habits. When the bird is in its flocking phase, thousands of starlings often overwhelm buildings and trees. Large scale buildup of feces from these flocks can lead to structural damage. The uric acid in the feces can corrode stone, metal and masonry. Gutters and drainage pipes clogged with starling nests often backup, causing extensive water damage. The bacteria, fungal agents and parasites in the feces also pose a health risk.

**Control**  
Starlings roosting habits can be modified permanently using 1-1/8" mesh StealthNet and/or electrical systems like Bird-Shock. For large flocks or agricultural applications, these birds can be moved with a well-timed, organized scare campaign using strategically placed sophisticated audio systems like the Bird Wailer, Squawker, or the Bird-Gard units depending on the size of the area. These products combine natural and electronic

sounds like species specific distress calls, predator hunting/attack sequences and canon or shotgun sounds. Other noisemakers such as Zon Guns and Bird Bombs & Screammers often have success in relocating these bird when combined with lights and visual frightening devices that flash such as FlashTape, Scare Eye Balloons or Octopus. A new technique that has found some success for moving populations from trees is to fog problem areas with ReJeX-IT.

**Nesting**  
The Starling is a nesting bird. Their nests are in enclosed areas with at least a 1-1/2 inch opening. Look for their nests in old trees, church steeples and other holes and crevices. Due to their bullying nature they will take any suitable site, evicting any previous owner. They sometimes watch other birds build a complete nest before forcing them to leave.

**Breeding**  
Starlings have two broods a year with four to five eggs a brood. They average eight offspring a year. The eggs are white, pale blue or green-white. Incubation of the eggs takes twelve days. The fledglings leave the nest after 25 days. The young leave to join other juveniles and form huge flocks that move on to other territories.

**Cycles**  
Not a true migrating bird, starlings may move from rural trees to warm city buildings in winter. The daily cycle is one of leaving the nest at sunrise to travel up to sixty miles to feeding areas before returning for the evening. They disperse to mate in the spring. After mating season, they will often coalesce into huge flocks with defined feeding and roosting areas.

## QUICK FACTS

Height/Weight  
7.5" -8.5"/2-3oz

Life Span  
5 to 7 yrs  
in the wild  
up to 13 captivity

Flight Speed  
18 to 40 mph

Range  
Across country  
rural to urban areas in  
increasing numbers

Food  
Insects, wild fruit  
seeds and grain

Habitat  
Trees and building  
structures

# Turkey Vulture

The Turkey Vulture won't win any beauty contests. The birds' shape and head look similar to a Turkey, with a red head and dark body feathers. This large bird lives all across the U.S. The small featherless head is ideal for foraging inside of dead animals, like alligators, raccoons, and opossums. They generally hunt their prey by hovering about 200 feet above the ground. Although the turkey vulture generally migrates, it may stay put during mild winters. They generally live over open plains, desert or forest. Groups of up to 70 or more may roost in trees and towers, and leave when the warm, rising air makes it easier to fly.



The turkey vulture features a bald head with reddish skin similar to that of a turkey. They are large birds weighing up to six pounds, with a wingspan up to 32 inches. Their long, slim tail and long wings enable it to soar on wind currents with little effort. Surprisingly, when taken in as young birds, they can be loyal and charming pets.



Vultures often attack roofs causing extensive damage

## Damage

The damage caused by these birds can be impressive. They are known to attack roofs, caulking and other exterior surfaces causing extensive damage, and leave bones and carcasses in unpleasant places. Being a large bird, their dropping is significant and can build up quickly if a large flock is present creating a serious health risk. They also have a reputation of being a noisy bird, especially when fighting over food or hanging out in a large group.

## Control

*All members of the vulture family are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty.* This is a heavy, aggressive bird that can literally destroy many standard control products. The most effective methods of control are electrified heavy duty wire systems like BirdFence (call our offices for more details on this product) or Bird-Shock electrical track products. In some instances heavy duty .96 mm wire tensioned 8" high similar to Birdwire will protect against vultures roosting on roof parapets or girders. Ridge brackets and adjustable clamps are specifically designed to serve as a passive deterrent system at the appropriate architectural detail.

This Birdwire system can also be easily electrified to increase effectiveness. Overhead Gridwire systems 5' on center or horizontal nets can dissuade these birds from flat roofs. Specifically designed sound systems employing electronic noises emanating from different speakers at varying intervals like the Bird Wailer or Squawker should be used in conjunction with other control methods. Fogging agents that assault the birds' nasal and oral cavities like ReJeX-iT must also be used on a random basis.

## Nesting

They do not build traditional nests like other birds, simply laying their eggs on the bare floor of a cave or other protected enclosure. Sometimes they even lay their eggs inside rotten trees, trunks, logs, on the ground inside dense shrubbery, or even on the floors of abandoned buildings. After laying the eggs, both adults may roost in the nesting cavity and, if surprised in the nest, may regurgitate decomposing food or play dead.

## Cycles

Turkey Vultures migrate as far south as South America for the winter, and as far north as Canada for the summer. They are also found in the Bahamas and the West Indies. As indicated above, they may not migrate if the weather is pleasant, and they have an hospitable environment.

## QUICK FACTS

Height/Weight  
26" -32" (wingspread=  
68" -72") / 3-6 lbs.

Life Span  
Approx. 20 years

Flight Speed  
15 to 34mph

Range  
All 50 states but  
mostly in southern  
half of U.S.

Food  
Carrion, fresh to putrid

Habitat  
Caves, cliffs, hollow  
logs

# Gull

Gulls and other related sea birds exist in great numbers along coastal areas, large lakes and rivers. A subset of long winged swimming birds, there are 45 species of Gulls. Twenty species are resident (nesting) in North America and four are visitors (non-nesting). An intelligent bird, they will carry mussels and clams high in the air and drop them on hard surfaces to get to the soft meat inside. Gulls have the ability to drink saltwater and freshwater, thanks to a pair of salt removing glands above their nostrils. They are good swimmers who can walk or run agilely on land. Gulls are scavenging birds; they will eat everything from dead fish and garbage to field mice and insects. Gulls enjoy protection at the federal, state and local levels.

## Damage

Gulls can be a nuisance in coastal areas, particularly at dump sites, piers and harbors. Flocks of gulls often create hazardous conditions to low flying aircraft. Large buildup of droppings will lead to structural damage from the uric acid. Boats, streetlights and buildings are just a few of the items damaged from excessive gull droppings. Furthermore, their droppings can also pose a health risk.

## Control

Gridwire systems and large 4" mesh StealthNet will deny access to large open areas. Bird-Flite spikes, 5" Bird Coil, and Bird-Shock electrical track are very effective on ledges depending on the level of bird pressure. The Daddi Long Legs is a great product to dissuade gulls from landing on silos, street lights, A/C units & large flat rooftops. For feeding sites such as dumps, a wide variety of audio/visual products like the Avikite or Flying Osprey and noisemakers like Zon Guns, Bird Bombs and Screammers, or high tech multiple and random sound distress call units like the BirdGuard, Squawker or BirdWailer units should be combined with exclusionary products such as Gridwire systems or 4" StealthNet.

## Nesting

Gulls build basic nests on the ground in safe open areas. The nest often consists of grass, seaweed and some sticks. They nest in colonies on sandy or gravelly areas near the shore.

## Breeding

These birds have one brood a year with an average of three eggs. Incubation takes 20 to 24 days with a six week fledgling period before the young leave the nest. The eggs are brown,



The typical Gull has a light colored body with black wing tips and a dark mantle that can range from deep black to light gray. Their coloring can change between seasons. Juveniles are usually brown with a dark band on the tail.



This light fixture could be protected with Daddi Long Legs

green or blue with blotches of black, brown or gray.

## Cycles

Some species are migratory. Gulls need open water and secluded breeding areas. Because of this, Northern Gulls will fly south away from frozen lakes and rivers in the winter, while southern gulls stay put year round. They have a distinct springtime breeding season. The young take two years to mature and display adult plumage.

## QUICK FACTS

Height/Weight  
18" -26" /25oz-38oz

Life Span  
8-10 years in the wild  
and up to 30 years in  
captivity

Flight Speed  
15 to 38 mph

Range  
Near large waterways

Food  
Scavenger – eats fish,  
crab, insects, forages  
at dumps, harbors and  
waste sites

Habitat  
On the ground along  
safe, secluded areas

# Grackle

Grackles are boisterous, abundant members of the Troupial Family. Also members of this family are the blackbirds, cowbirds and orioles. Common grackles are found all across the mid-west and east coast. Boat-tailed grackles live along the eastern and southern seacoasts while great-tailed grackles are found mostly in Texas and the south-west. Grackles are aggressive birds who will colonize in large numbers. These birds are very noisy, their gregarious nature is very apparent when observing their roosting and nesting sites.



Dropping covered restaurant counter becomes a health hazard and a bad image

## Damage

Grackles can cause several types of damage. As they are scavenging birds, large numbers can be found at dumpsites, food courts and other human areas where food is present. The resulting amount of fecal matter creates unsanitary conditions and can result in physical damage from the uric acid. They are also an agricultural pest bird because they will eat small seedlings and damage crops.

## Control

There are numerous products and techniques available to combat nuisance grackles. Like fellow members of the blackbird family, noisemaker units such as the Bird-Gard, Bird Squawker and Bird Wailer units projecting natural distress calls and frightening sounds (selection of units depends on size of area to deter birds as well as severity of problem) plus visual scare products like Scare Eye Balloons, Octopus, Flash Tape and the Avikite can be used to move them from a site. If they are too entrenched to be scared away, exclusion using 1-1/8" Stealth Net or Bird-Shock electrical track on ledges will be necessary. Grackles are too

nimble for traditional mechanical ledge products. Fogging a roosting winter flock with ReJeX-iT irritant has also shown some success.

## Nesting

Grackles build a bulky yet dense nest of twigs, grasses or weeds lined with feathers, rags or dried grass. The nest may be held in place with a foundation of mud or cow dung. Grackles will nest in a variety of places from willow swamps, dense brush to tall trees with trees being the most common. Boat tail grackle nests will seldom be seen more than twenty miles from the coast.

## Breeding

Grackles breed during the spring. They usually lay four to five eggs in a single brood for the year. Common grackle eggs are a pale green to light brown with purple and dark brown streaks and blotches. Boat tailed grackles have lighter blue to grayish eggs with dark streaks and blotches. The eggs take 14 days to incubate with the young being able to fly about three weeks later.

## Cycles

Grackles have a definitive seasonal behavior. They nest and breed as one pair or in small groups in the spring time. In the fall, the birds will fall to form large colonies with the juveniles first forming the groups and later joined by the adults. These large colonies can number in the thousands. In colder, northern climates the flock will migrate south, while southern birds will stay put or move into a more urban location. These flocks will usually take over several trees or urban dwellings for their evening roosting. In the winter, their feeding site may be quite far from their roosting spot, making trapping or baiting difficult.



The common grackle has a green/blue or purple iridescent tinted black plumage with a glossy purplish head, neck and breast with the female of the species, slightly smaller and duller colored. Boat-tailed and great-tailed grackles have very long "v" shaped tails which crease in flight, hence the name "boat-tailed". They are similar in color to the common grackle but are larger birds (16 inches long versus 12" long). Female great-tails resemble the males while female boat tails are dark brown in color Great tails differ from boat tail grackles with their bright yellow eyes and more uniform color.

## QUICK FACTS

Height/Weight

12"/6oz common

16"/7oz Boat-Tailed

Life span 8 to 12 years  
in the wild

Flight Speed

20 to 35 mph

Range

Common Grackle:

Across U.S., east of

Rockies Boat-Tailed

Grackle: Along Atlantic

coast and gulf of Texas  
seaboard

Food

Scavenger. Eats

grains, seeds, corn,

insects, food scraps

Habitat

Prefer suburban areas

with access to open

areas. Roost in large

trees during the

winter.