

THE OCCURRENCE OF THE STARLING AT WEST LAFAYETTE, INDIANA.

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The starling, *Sturnus vulgaris*, was first successfully introduced into the United States in 1890, when 80 birds were released in Central Park, New York. Since that time they have spread rapidly over the eastern states and are gradually extending their range westward. Cooke stated that the breeding range in 1922 extended as far west as eastern Ohio. In 1925 birds had been reported at Ann Arbor, Mich.; Milwaukee, Wis.; and Urbana, Ill. While this range would seem to include Indiana, no starlings had been reported from this state at that time.

Some time during the winter of 1925-26, Dr. Stanley Coulter received a letter from Mr. Amos W. Butler stating that he had been informed by the U. S. Biological Survey that the starling had been reported from West Lafayette. This letter was handed to us with the request that we investigate the report. Diligent inquiry failed to show any grounds for such a report. However, Cooke's bulletin issued in 1925 stated that the first occurrence of the starling west of the Alleghany Mountains was at West Lafayette, Ohio, and it is possible that this town was confused with West Lafayette, Indiana.

On the early morning of May 12, 1926, two starlings were seen by us in a partially dead elm in the yard at 629 Russell Street, West Lafayette, and were watched for some minutes. As far as we are able to learn, this is the first report for this vicinity. These two birds seemed to be disputing the right of a pair of red-headed woodpeckers to certain holes in the tree.

No more were seen until October 31, 1926, when another was seen in the same tree at 629 Russell Street, and again two more on November 2, which suggested the possibility that the birds may have nested there.

January 1, 1927, two starlings were seen at the Opp farm, one mile south of town on the River Road. About the same time Mr. Scipio, living six miles south of West Lafayette on the same road, reported to Dean M. L. Fisher that a flock of about 20 blackbirds had been roosting in his barn for some time. Investigation on January 4, 1927, proved the birds to be starlings and skins were made from two specimens which had been picked up dead that morning. The birds remained at the Scipio farm all spring and summer and in May were found nesting in the oaks near the house, where at least one nest with eggs was found. Red-headed woodpeckers were nesting in the same tree.

Some starlings are usually seen whenever the Scipio or Opp farms are visited. The birds usually are absent most of the day, leaving in

the early morning to return to the farms at evening. They were seen by us as late as October 30, 1927, and Mr. Scipio has since stated that every morning and evening they gather in the oaks near his house.

On March 9 and again on March 30, 1927, starlings were seen in our yard at 511 Russell Street, two birds being seen each time.

While the starlings have not been reported from other parts of the county, they seem to have established themselves in this locality and will no doubt soon spread over much of this section. It will be interesting to note what effect they have upon the native wild birds. They have not been observed flocking with any other species and when seen have usually been single or in small groups and appeared quite shy. So far, they seem to be confined to the open country and to avoid the town. Russell Street is at the western edge of West Lafayette, with open country beyond.