

ROOSTING HABITS OF STARLINGS.

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The roosting habits of *Sturnus vulgaris* studied at Karori, Wellington, in the winter of 1946, show that behaviour is similar to that noticed by English observers. Observations of an hour's duration were discontinued in September.

Birds were watched on July 20 as they assembled in trees scattered about built-up areas where they sang until 1655, when all departed in an easterly direction. On July 28 there were two crescendos of song at 1640 and 1650 and a gradual decline till 1700; after 1650, restlessness was evident. A group of six birds when quitting this area at 1700 headed for open country, scattering widely until some emotion made them bunch again and turn east; smaller flocks left at 1705 and 1710; this tendency to lag is because some individuals are more advanced sexually—but would this explain their behaviour in June when birds a few hundred yards from a main roost are seen singly from 1700 to 1715?

Roosts were possible at Karori Park. On August 3, between 1645 and 1730, a single bird left the plantation at 1700 but wavered over a cypress clump three hundred meters distant and alighted on it. Other groups of three to nine birds left between 1715 and 1722, though at 1724 many remained singing. At 1725 and 1726 two more small groups disappeared; a few birds were left sitting on the leading shoots of the pine trees and no more departed.

There was a tendency to follow the contours of hills on the south side of the Karori Valley, one pair veered down the Karori Stream until they approached the crest of the ridge, when they turned eastward. This was probably an urge towards a breeding area, for sexual chases were seen after 1700 in the plantation.

The effect of declining light was illustrated on August 24; two birds set out at the same time, one with purposeful flight but the second appeared surreptitiously, made a brief sally and glided back to the trees; it took off again in an easterly direction but returned three times without perching and uttering a call "Tchirek, tchirek" until the urge to reach the main roost was predominant. This behaviour was caused by the breeding urge and fading light after the sun had left nearby hills.

Birds forage as far afield as the Makara Valley, but the writer is uncertain of their roosting areas; one gathering exists behind Victoria University College, and Karori birds probably go there.

Perhaps available nesting areas are selected early by the more sexually advanced birds; if nesting sites for this species were limited an explanation is possible for large numbers feeding in open country during December; alternatively these birds have finished breeding or attempting to breed. "N.Z. Bird Notes," Vol. 1, May, 1946, mentions activities of this sort in March and May and June. By early January large parties inhabit pasture.

REFERENCES.

Bulletins of the Ornithological Society of N.Z.
Handbook of British Birds (Willoughby, Tucker, Ticehurst, Jourdain).