

LETTER — EUROPEAN STARLINGS ON LOWER HUDSON CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

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For years, the Lower Hudson Christmas Bird Count reported large numbers of European Starlings due to the location of a substantial roost in Manhattan. Beginning with the 95th Count, the reported number plummeted as follows:

<u>CBC</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>European Starlings</u>
94th	19 Dec 93	250,000
95th	18 Dec 94	75
96th	17 Dec 95	521
97th	22 Dec 96	1,217

An unexpected change in personnel and compilers led to a situation where no one knew the location of the roost. In 1996, a search was conducted in areas where it had been reputed to be, without success. In addition, it has been difficult to convince long-time participants to count starlings since they are conditioned to ignore them.

I honestly do not know if the roost still exists; starlings continue to be ubiquitous in the city and I would expect that reported numbers will continue to rise as people grow accustomed to including starlings in the count. Meanwhile, they do well, perhaps too well, in the city.