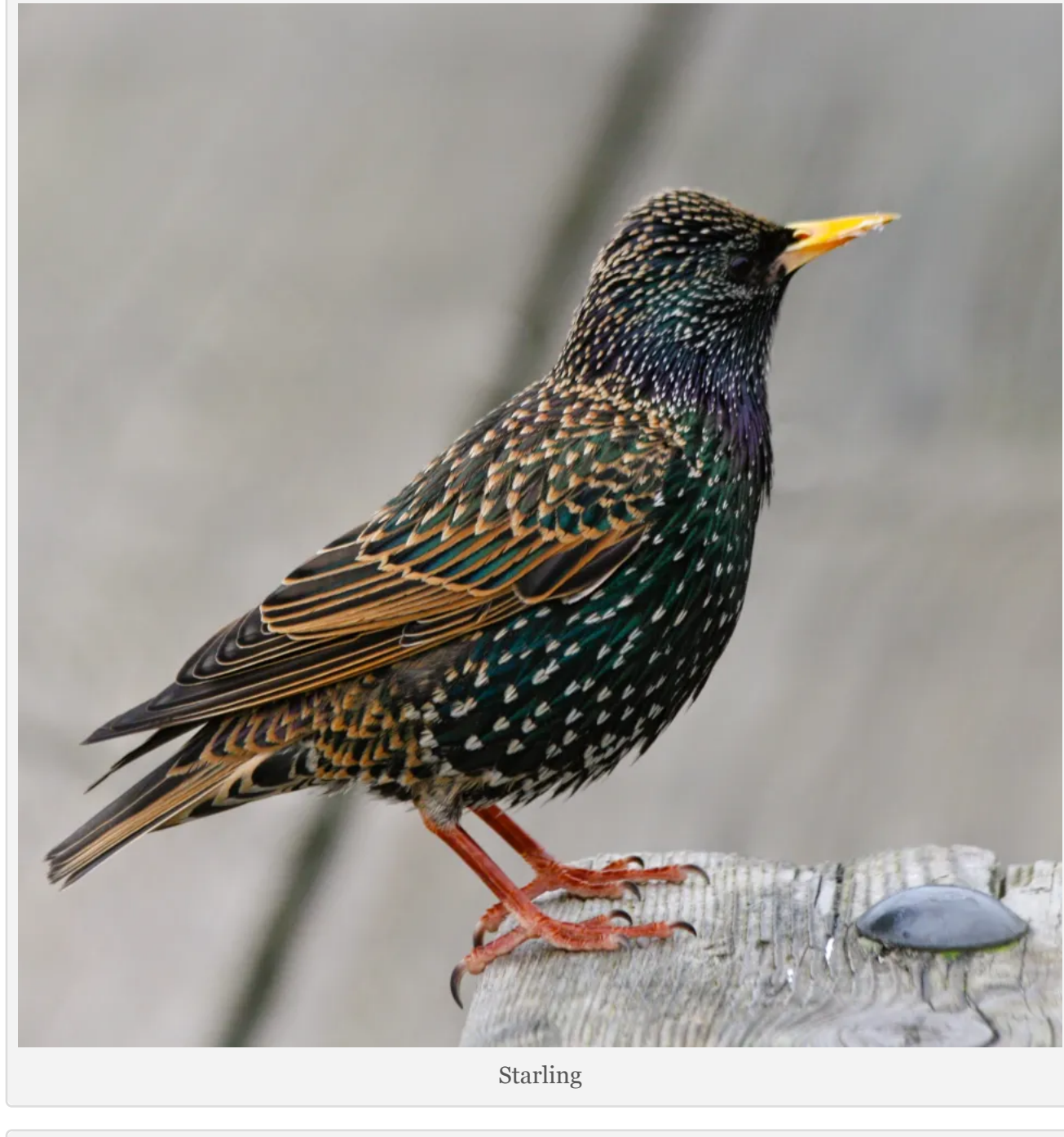


## Starlings: Metallic Rainbows

February 24, 2017



Starling



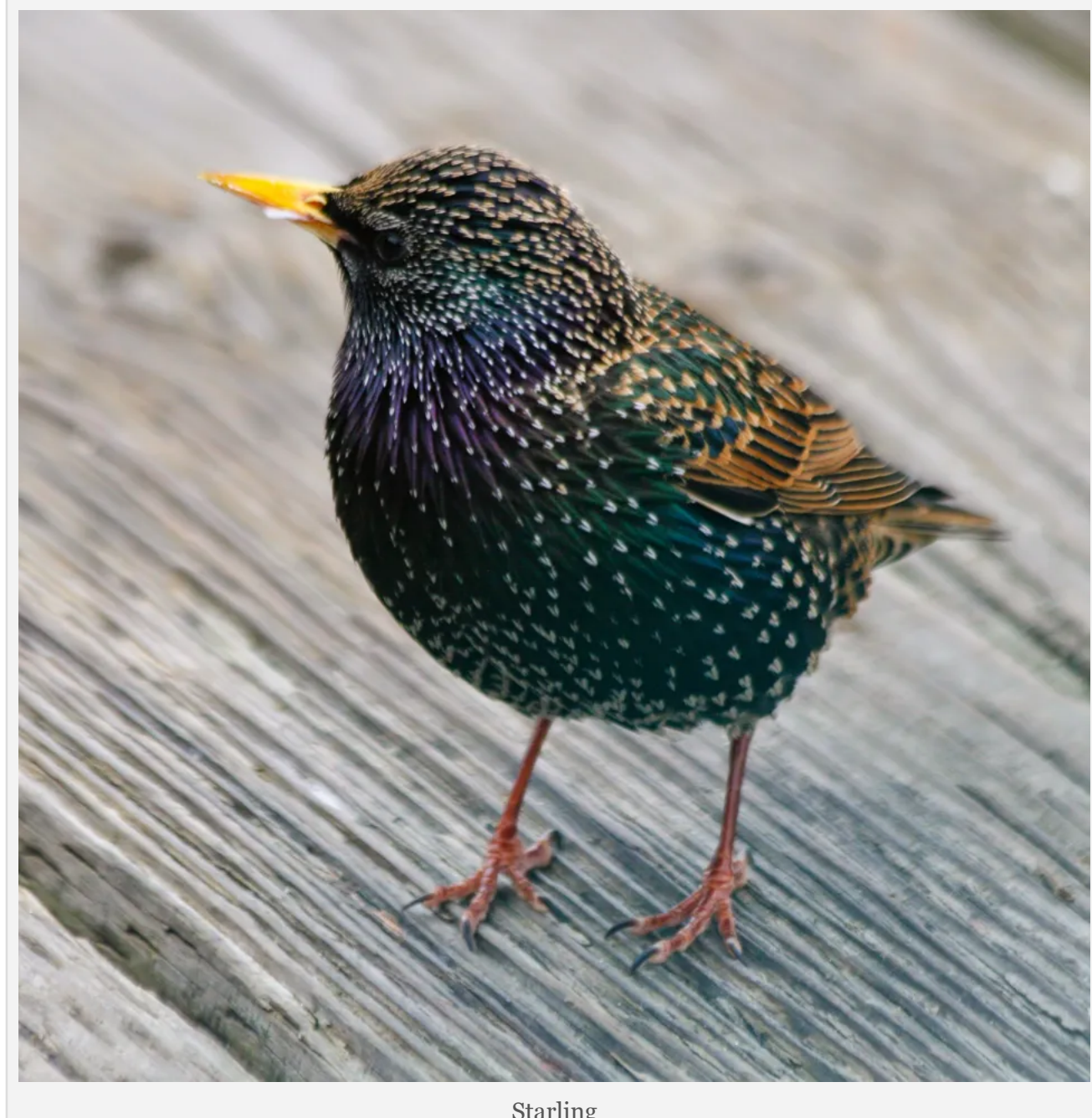
Ink sketch of starling

"From a distance he looked black, but from up close he glistened in sheens of metallic green, purple, and blue. The feathers on a starling's breast, head, and neck are purple, and those on its back are green. . . . just below the purple of his neck the feathers were tipped with light yellow, as if individually dipped in cream. . . . he looked like a metallic rainbow."

— Bernd Heinrich, *One Wild Bird at a Time*

"To be a starling is to perform airborne dances with myriad others, tracing elaborate syncopated flight patterns in the sky. We call these gatherings 'murmurations.'"

— Bernd Heinrich, *One Wild Bird at a Time*



Starling



Ink sketch of starling

"Starlings are painted like oil slicks, layered with shining purple, blue, magenta, and green. Iridescence in feathers is created through structural changes in the feather surface that makes them appear vibrant at certain angles — microscopic bumps and ridges on the barbs and barbules refract and scatter light. . . . When starlings molt in the fall, many of their fresh iridescent feathers are tipped with white, giving the birds their celestial pattern. . . . the starling's white tips wear off in winter, leaving the birds glistening black in the spring."

— Lyanda Lynn Haupt, from *Mozart's Starling*



Starling portrait, ink sketch

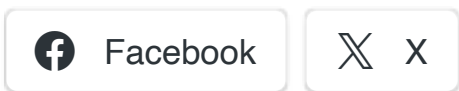
Lynda Lynn Haupt's new book, *Mozart's Starling*, will be released April 4th. It is true that Mozart lived with a pet starling, and this became the idea for Haupt's book. She adopted a 6-day-old starling orphan and lived with it as part of her household in order to better understand what it meant for Mozart to live with this particular bird.

Starlings are almost universally reviled by birders and ecologists, as they are non-native to the United States and are an invasive species. And yet, the possibilities of kinship and love do happen at the individual level, as Haupt discovered when her starling became a beloved pet. She said, "Starlings are shimmering, plain, despised, charming, collectively devastating, individually fascinating." Her story and discoveries show that "these individuals are not ends in themselves but a kind of window onto the totality of existence."







Starling in watercolor and ink

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### 7 Responses to "Starlings: Metallic Rainbows"

Choral Eddie Says:

February 24, 2017 at 6:18 pm

Beautiful work!

Reply

Irene Says:

February 25, 2017 at 8:17 am

These birds are beautiful. Did you take these photos?

Reply

Rosemary Says:

February 25, 2017 at 5:39 pm

Yes, those are my photos.

Reply

Irene Says:

February 26, 2017 at 6:24 am

Amazing!!

Diana Studer Says:

February 26, 2017 at 3:02 pm

and that last one – every detail on the feathers!!

Reply

Margaret Says:

March 1, 2017 at 3:41 pm

I haven't checked in lately so I was checking up on past entries. I think our starlings are more black and plain, but perhaps I've never viewed them from a close-up perspective. Their coloration is amazing!

Reply

Andrew Petcher Says:

February 8, 2018 at 7:35 am

One of my favourite garden birds!

Reply

Leave a comment