BRITISH COLUMBIA GRAPEGROWERS' ASSOCIATION
"A taste of our own"

BC CHERRY ASSOCIATION

BC FRUIT GROWERS' ASSOCIATION est. 1889

BC TREE FRUITS
WAY MORE THAN DELICIOUS.

OKANAGAN SIMILKAMEEN STARLING CONTROL PROGRAM
NOVEMBER, 2015

Funding

- *Each Regional District in the Okanagan Similkameen contributes $25,000 annually to the trapping program.*
- *Funding is also received from the BC Fruit Growers' Association, BC Cherry Association, BC Tree Fruits Co-op and the BC Grapegrowers' Association.*
- *Trapping program costs average $115,000/year.*

Trapping

- *Trapping is currently carried out by a team of 4 contracted trappers – one in the RDNO, one in the RDCO and two in the RDOS.*
- *In the period January 1 – September 30, 2015 a total of 49,260 birds were captured – 12,340 in the RDSO, 13,730 in the RDCO and 23,290 in the RDNO.*

Starling Control Program
Bird Counts 2003 - 2014

	Okanagan Similkameen	Central Okanagan	North Okanagan	Totals
2003	15,369	-	-	15,369
2004	26,197	7,359	8,878	42,434
2005	22,249	17,686	7,431	47,366
2006	25,206	14,247	1,915	41,368
2007	21,930	10,591	1,510	34,031
2008	18,129	21,471	2,129	41,729
2009	19,336	16,638	17,276	53,250
2010	31,923	20,246	36,121	88,290
2011	27,713	21,366	29,281	78,360
2012	17,637	17,081	20,130	54,848
2013	16,144	13,047	17,708	46,899
2014	23,069	19,339	29,513	71,921
Totals	264,902	179,071	171,892	615,865

Program Management

- *The British Columbia Grapegrowers' Association has been providing administration & program management since 2006.*
- *A management committee made up of representatives from the funding groups oversees the program's operations.*

Research

- *A two-year Graduate Student research program carried out at UBC-Okanagan to determine the origins of starlings that make up the Okanagan-Similkameen populations and to better understand the movements & population dynamics locally to evaluate trapping effectiveness was carried out.*
- *Results showed that 25% of the birds sampled were from the Kelowna area; 10% from the South Okanagan; 20% from Quesnel and 5% from Grand Forks.*
- *About 40% were unaccounted for.*
- *A second 2-year program to continue with the research began in May 2015.*
- *Funding for research is from various sources including Mitacs - a non-profit national research organization, the Agriculture Environment Initiative, and the tree fruit and grape industries.*
- *The trappers collect data on starling numbers and population patterns, and starling samples from specific locations for analysis.*

Awareness

- *Identifying & blocking nesting sites is effective in helping to control starlings and is something that everyone can participate in.*
- *Starlings utilize urban and rural man-made structures such as building ledges & crevices, birdhouses, warehouses, open rafters on sheds, barns & other outbuildings, bathroom & dryer vents.*
- *They also use tree cavities, aggressively displacing native species.*
- *A public awareness campaign about the trapping program and particularly aimed at educating the public about the value of our program and to encourage the reduction of nesting sites on private properties in urban & rural locations was launched in the spring 2013.*
- *Education of the public, including farm workers, about the importance of the program and its value will also help to reduce vandalism to traps. It is not uncommon for the trappers to find trap doors opened or traps propped up so that the birds can escape.*
- *The program has included:*
    - *Information booths at various venues throughout the trapping region including the Interior Provincial Exhibition in Armstrong, the South Okanagan Owl Rehab Centre's annual open house in Oliver and other community based functions.*
    - *Assistance by area trappers to respond to general public enquiries on starling nest blocking/disrupting options.*

Some facts:

- *The European starling – Sturnus vulgaris – has been ranked among North America's 100 most invasive species.*
- *Starlings are intelligent and adaptable birds, aggressive and opportunistic.*
- *Starlings are ecologically destructive, forcing native birds from their nests and destroying their eggs.*
- *Starlings fly 50-60 or more kilometers from roosting to feeding sites.*
- *Starlings can have up to 3 broods a year with 4-5 eggs in a brood.*
- *The average breeding pair has 8 surviving fledglings per year.*

Control Program Successes:

- *A reduction in the use of propane cannons & other birds scaring devices.*
- *A reduction in the cost of bird control measures for farmers.*
- *A reduction in the amount of bird damage to crops.*
- *A return of native songbirds to the region.*