



#### BLACKBIRD FLOCKS

The Blackbirds form roosts where they congregate to spend the night. Females, with the exception of female cowbirds, do not go to these roosts during the nesting season. One such roost in Allisary (a small area on the eastern outskirts of Mount Stewart) was visited on May 29, 1967. The birds started to arrive an hour or so before sundown, in singles and pairs and small flocks. The birds approached the roost and dropped down into the lower branches, a marked contrast to their behavior at other times when they perch at the very top of trees. This is a spruce woodlot, about one acre or better, very thick and about 20 feet tall, and about 1/4 mile from habitation. Birds seen included Red-winged Blackbirds, Bronzed Grackles, some Cowbirds and one bird that looked like a Starling. Another roost was visited on June 2, 1963 in the vicinity of the heronry at Alexandra. Both Bronzed Grackles and European Starlings were seen arriving just at dusk.

Another roost just to the north of Mount Stewart North was visited on July 19, 1965. This area of alders with a few larch, poplar and spruce, had an extensive roost of Bronzed Grackles, European Starlings and Red-winged Blackbirds. The number of Grackles was impressive. The Starlings noted came in several small flocks with a dive that would do Teal justice.

On September 14, 1964, it was noted that for the past month a large mixed flock of approximately 1,000 birds flew east out of the roost in the mornings, and west into the roost in the evenings. On September 25, 1967, 7:15 A.M., 2,000+ Starlings flew south from the roost and over Mount Stewart. The author remembers seeing a large flock of Blackbirds flying over his farm from the roost. The flock was strung out for approximately 3/4 of a mile. When they were overhead, the lead birds dropped 20-30 feet in elevation; then they levelled out and continued flying in a straight line. All the birds of the flock, when they came to the same spot, lost the same amount of elevation.