

DUTCH STARLINGS:

No, this isn't a plague of locusts. They're starlings - at a rough count, about a hundred thousand of them, looking for a few Dutch trees to settle on. The parking problem arises from an odd arrangement in the starling world; Dutch starlings spend the winter in the South of France, and Scandinavian starlings spend it in Holland. When the spring comes, there's a certain amount of congestion at changeover time.

It's not so bad while they're all airborne, but at sunset the competition for perching space gets positively murderous. You don't know whether the chap next to you is Dutch or Scandinavian - just just hang on like grim death and shove him off - if you can.

One day, perhaps some starling genius will work out a plan for staggering the migration dates. The trouble is, they'll still be in such a hurry they'll all leave the other lot to stagger theirs. Just like humans, aren't they?