

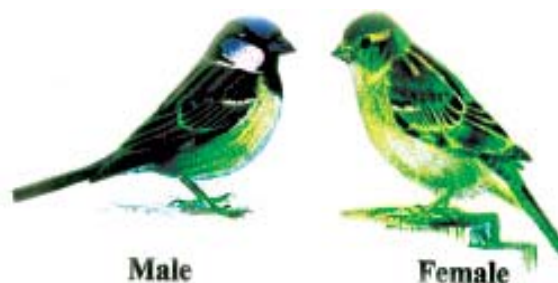
House Sparrow (*Passer Domesticus*) : The Endangered Bird

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The House Sparrow is native to all the Indian States. A non-migratory species, House Sparrows are closely tied to human activity. This sparrow is usually absent from extensive woodlands and forests and from grasslands and deserts. In the far northern parts of its range and in arid regions. House Sparrows are typically present only in the vicinity of human habitation. In agricultural areas, an average of 60 percent of its food comes from livestock feed, 36 percent from weed seeds, and 4 percent from insects. In urban areas, bird feeders provide more food for House Sparrows.

The number of House Sparrows according to Bird Survey data indicates that the population is declining. Changes in agricultural practices, in particular the shift to monoculture crop planting have been suggested as the cause.

The song of the House Sparrow consists of cheep or chirrup notes repeated over and over. The birds sing year-round, although less frequently in August and on cold and rainy days. Both sexes cheep, the females most frequently when they are without a mate. Most vocalizations are associated with the nest site. Although House Sparrows are quite gregarious and nest in looseknit colonies, they defend a small territory immediately surrounding the nest. Males defend these territories from other males, and females from



other females. Holes are preferred as nest sites, but nooks and crannies in outbuildings and open sites in trees and shrubbery are also used. The young form flocks soon after fledging, and most disperse from the natal colony. Large post breeding flocks roost in trees or brush near grain fields in agricultural areas or in cities, from which they fly to feeding areas. After arriving at the congregation site, the birds often engage in communal singing for up to an hour.

Nomenclature & Taxonomy

Passer domesticus commonly known as House Sparrow is a common bird. *Passer domesticus* belongs to -

Phylum	-	Chordata
Sub-phylum	-	Vertebrata
Class	-	Aves
Order	-	Passeriformes
Genus	-	<i>Passer</i>
Species	-	<i>Domesticus</i>
Common name	-	House Sparrow

Description

House Sparrow is a small song bird, males and females can be differentiated distinctly; the male have black throat white cheeks and black Bib while the female have brown colour with eyestripe. The average size is 14-16 cms. and weight is nearly 26-32 grams. It is a small bird and beak is thick. Legs short. Chest unstreaked. Dust-bathing in new seedbeds has been a common characteristic of this bird. House sparrows have always prefer to stay near human populations. They prefer to make nests in small holes in buildings, thatched roofs and even street lamps. The combined chirping of the occupants is very familiar. Another house sparrow feature is departure to the cornfields during August.

Status

The House sparrow has undergone a drastic decline in the last 25 years. It is included in the red list that means high conservation concern. The present decline in house sparrow numbers appears to be widespread all over the world. Many reasons have been suggested including the widespread use of garden pesticides resulting in an absence of insects needed by newborn sparrows.

Geographic Range

The House Sparrow is distributed worldwide (excluding the Poles). It is native to Eurasia and North Africa. It was introduced into S. Africa, South America, Australia, Newzealand, and America. Its introduction into North America occurred in 1851, when a group of 100 birds from England was released in Brooklyn, New York.

Habitat

House Sparrows like areas that have been modified by humans, including farms, residential and urban areas. They are absent from

uninhabited woodlands, deserts, forests, and grasslands.

Reproduction

House Sparrows form monogamous pairs for each breeding season. Nests are built between February and May. Nests are built from dried vegetation, feathers, strings and paper. Eggs are layed at any time in the nesting period. One to eight eggs can be present in a clutch, with the possibility of four clutches per nesting season. Incubation begins after all the eggs have been layed. Both males and females incubate the eggs for short periods of a few minutes each. Incubation lasts for 10 to 14 days. After the eggs are hatched, both males and females feed the young.

Lifespan - 13 years

Behaviour

House Sparrows tend to forage for food on the ground, using a hopping movement when not in flight. Their flight is direct, with continued flapping and no periods of gliding. House Sparrows aggressively protect a small territory just around their nesting site. This is believed to be strictly a protection of the nest site, and not of any feeding areas. Sparrows have been observed to threaten, and if necessary, attack 70 species of birds that have come into their nesting territory. These attacks seem to be intrasexual, males attack males and females attack only females. House Sparrows occur in and around human habitation, as well as cultivated areas and some wooded country. They usually stay in the same region all year round, but may be partially migratory in some areas.

Communication and Perception

House Sparrows use a set of postures and behaviours to communicate with others of their species. House Sparrows also have a set of

vocalizations that are used to attract mates, deter intruders and warn others.

Food Habits

House Sparrows eat various kinds of seed supplemented by some insects. Rural birds tend to eat more waste seed from animal dung and seed from fields, while urban birds tend to eat more commercial birdseed and weed seed. It is seen that house sparrow eat 60% livestock feed (corn, wheat, oats, etc.), 18% cereals (grains from storage or from fields), 17 % weed seed, and 4% insects.

Animal Foods :

Insects, terrestrial non-insect arthropods.

Plant Foods :

Seeds, grains and nuts; fruit.

Enemy :

Hawks, owls, domestic cats, domestic dogs and black rat snakes.

Ecosystem Roles

House Sparrows are abundant near human habitations. In these areas they serve as an important prey base for birds of prey and they may have an impact on plant communities because they consume large quantities of seeds.

Economic Importance for Humans: Negative

Due to its preference for human-modified habitats, the House Sparrow is considered a nuisance species, a competitor of native birds, and an agricultural pest. Large aggregations around buildings produce annoying noise and large quantities of feces.

Economic Importance for Humans: Positive

The House Sparrow has proven well-suited for studies of general biological problems, such as evolutionary mechanisms, temperature metabolism and pest control. In the chick stage

house sparrows eat insects from our kitchen garden and by this our garden become free from harmful insects. There is no need of using pesticides and insecticides. On the other hand while making nests they use our garbage such as features, strings, papers, cotton pieces, etc. In this way *Passer domesticus* is a friend to human beings.

Conservation Status

It is included in the IUCN red list. During last 25 years its population has remarkably decreased. I am an innocent Bird, save me...

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