

House Sparrow

House Sparrow

Appearance

House Sparrows measure about 6 inches long. They are sexually dimorphic, which means the males look different from the females.



The female shows pale buff eyebrows, a plain gray chest, and a brown back with black and buff stripes.



In the male look for a black bib, light gray cheek, gray crown, chestnut nape, and a white wing bar.

House Sparrow Sounds

From The Cornell Lab of Ornithology <https://www.birds.cornell.edu/home/>

SONGS

House Sparrows have a rather simple song of one or a series of *cheep* or *chirrup* notes. It's mainly given by males, who repeat it incessantly during much of the year to announce that they possess a nest and to attract females. Females only rarely use this song, typically to attract a new mate after losing one.

CALLS

Male and female House Sparrows make single *cheep* notes to indicate submissiveness in flocks, or between pairs as part of courting or copulation. Females make a short chattering sound when chasing off other females, or when her mate approaches.

Listen to the songs and calls at: https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/House_Sparrow/sounds

House Sparrow

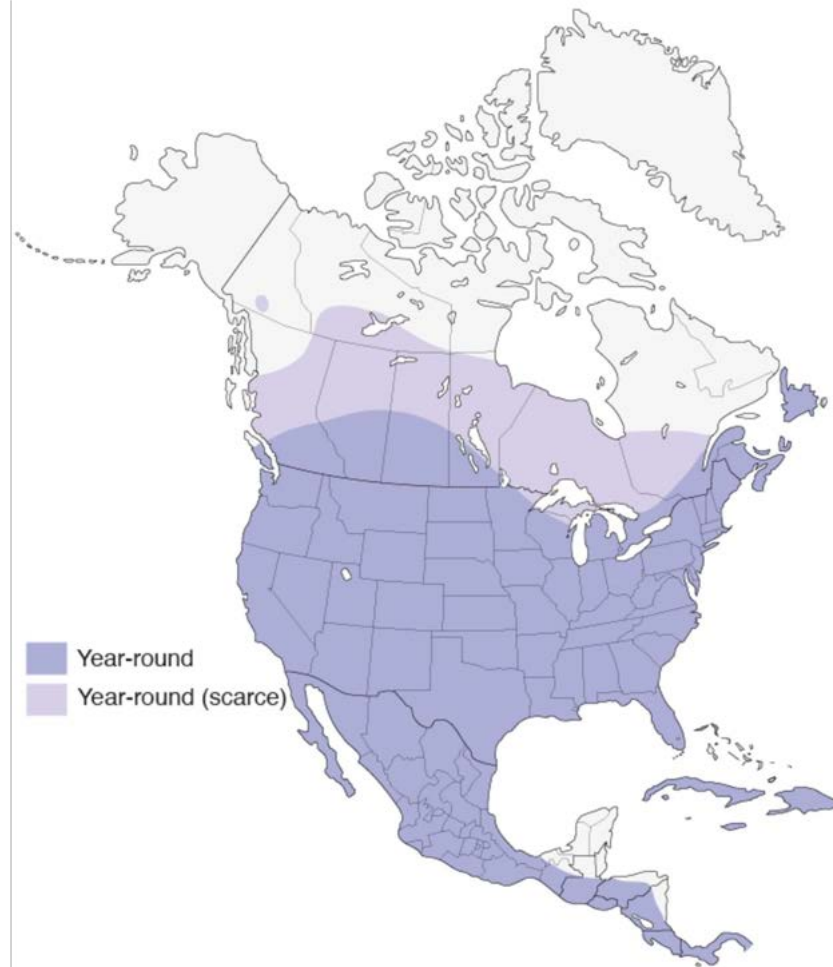
Diet

A House Sparrow's diet consists of mostly seeds, livestock feed, crops such as corn, oats, wheat, and sorghum, as well as wild foods such as ragweed, various grasses, and buckwheat. They also eat insects and feed them to their young. House Sparrows will catch insects in the air by pouncing on them, by visiting lights at dusk, or even following lawnmowers that stir up insects.



House Sparrow Range

House Sparrows are native to Eurasia and northern Africa but have spread across the world. They are not native to North America but were released in New York in 1851 and now can be found everywhere in North America. House Sparrows can be found year-round in DuPage County.



Map: The Cornell Lab of Ornithology

https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/House_Sparrow/maps-range

DuPage Birding Club, 2020

House Sparrow

Habitat

As the name implies, the House Sparrow is found where there are people and buildings. It thrives in suburbs, farms, and even in large cities where there are few other birds. They are the birds you see in McDonald's parking lots, tussling in your neighbors' hedges, and, occasionally in the rafters of your favorite home supply store.



House Sparrow Habitat

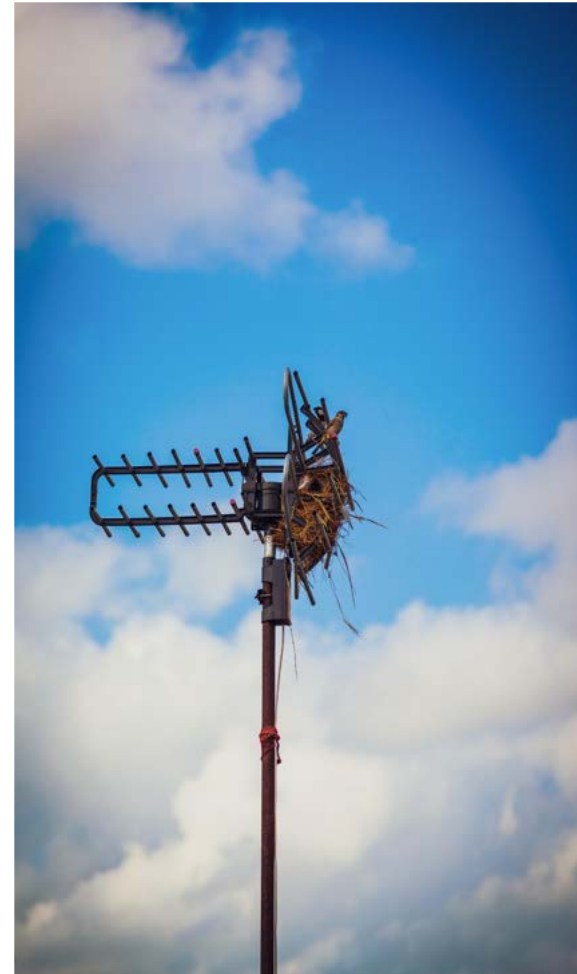
You can find House Sparrows most places where there are houses (or other buildings), and a few places where there aren't.



Female House Sparrow in a prairie.

House Sparrow Nesting

House Sparrows will nest in a variety of places, such as in cavities of buildings, on roofs, in traffic and streetlight fixtures, and in nest boxes. They don't generally nest in tree holes.



House Sparrow Nesting

The House Sparrow can be a fierce competitor for nest boxes, sometimes taking over a box or cavity that is already occupied. Often the nest is reused.



House Sparrow Behavior

The House Sparrow is a ground forager that hops rather than walks. These are social birds that feed in flocks.



House Sparrow Behavior

House Sparrows are common at bird feeders, birdbaths, or puddles.
They can also be seen taking a dust bath by throwing soil and dust over themselves as if it were water.



House Sparrow

Behavior

These birds are found wherever there are people.
Some people see the House Sparrow as a menace, perhaps because of their abundance or because they are not native birds.



House Sparrow History



The House Sparrow was first introduced to New York from Europe around 1850. By 1910, House Sparrows were established all the way to California.

Lacking natural predators in North America, living where humans build structures with suitable nesting niches, and having a generalist diet were some factors in the successful reproduction of the species.

The House Sparrow is now one of North America's most abundant birds.

House Sparrow

Literature/Prose

The Sparrow

By Paul Laurence Dunbar - 1872 - 1906

A little bird, with plumage brown,
Beside my window flutters down,
A moment chirps its little strain,
Ten taps upon my window-pane,
And chirps again, and hops along,
To call my notice to its song;
But I work on, nor heed its lay,
Till, in neglect, it flies away.

So birds of peace and hope and love
Come fluttering earthward from above,
To settle on life's window-sills,
And ease our load of earthly ills;
But we, in traffic's rush and din
Too deep engaged to let them in,
With deadened heart and sense plod on,
Nor know our loss till they are gone.

This poem is in the public domain.

House Sparrow Feeders

Commercial birdseed such as sunflower, millet, and milo will readily attract House Sparrows.



Male House Sparrow feeding juveniles.

House Sparrow Feeders

Commercial birdseed such as sunflower, millet, and milo will readily attract House Sparrows.



Three House Sparrows and a Black-capped Chickadee at a feeder.



Three House Sparrows and a Downy Woodpecker at a feeder.

House Sparrow Feeders

House sparrows will come to feeders all year round.



House Sparrow Feeders

House Sparrows will come to drink and bathe in your birdbath all year round.



House Sparrow Names

Common Name House Sparrow

House derives from the Anglo-Saxon *hus* meaning “house,” a reference to the bird’s association with human dwellings.

Sparrow is from the Anglo-Saxon *spearwa* meaning “flutterer.”



Scientific Name *Passer domesticus*

Passer domesticus translates to House Sparrow.

Passer is Latin for “sparrow.”

domesticus is Latin for “house.”



House Sparrow Collective Names

There are a variety of terms that describe a group of House Sparrows besides a flock.

A ubiquity of sparrows certainly describes the fact that House Sparrows seem to be everywhere.

Other collective terms for this bird are a knot, flutter, host, quarrel, or crew.

