



TreeSparrows.com

Email Newsletter March 2010

Hello,

The topical issue recently and one you can't have failed to miss was the blisteringly cold UK weather. We think we've got it rough, well spare a thought for the birds and animals which have to deal with it outside 24 hours every day and in some place it was more than -20C!

Historically extensive periods of cold have had some devastating effects on bird populations. Of course they recover but it can take years, so prepare yourself for significant shortages, amongst others, of Kingfishers, Wrens, Long-tailed Tits for several years to come. Goldcrests could suffer a huge population drop.

So how are the birds managing? Well, difficult to say. As far as Tree Sparrows are concerned regular contributors here are reporting numbers up, numbers down, new sightings where they hadn't been seen for years. Traditionally they are very sedentary and ringing recoveries indicate average movements of only 7 miles. Of course there are exceptions. A youngster ringed this year by Bishop Monkton Birders in Yorkshire was recovered several months later on the Scottish Solway coast, about 90 miles away, nothing for some birds but a marathon for our UK resident Tree Sparrows. Southerly movements of birds in autumn on the British east coast are difficult to identify – are they British birds from more northerly areas moving south for the winter, young birds dispersing just to return later in the Autumn, Scandinavian birds migrating to warmer areas of Britain or the Continent? Ringing hasn't yet seemed to find a conclusion.

What is probable is that while the snow cover is usually local, and not too long lasting, birds can move to less affected areas and survive. But the recent snow was exceptional, pretty much the whole of the UK was covered in snow, few fields or hedgerows offered much in the way of exposed feeding areas so significant stress is placed on all birds to find food.

One thing about Tree Sparrows is that in the last decade they do appear to be changing their habits and many more are coming to garden feeders on the edge of towns, and many of them are breeding if suitable boxes placed. Could Tree Sparrow become a common town bird as it is in many other countries? Time will tell.

We're getting email correspondence from far and wide, China and Japan most recently. It's interesting to see how other cultures relate to Tree Sparrows. More about this further on.

Please do feel free to forward this newsletter on to anyone you think may be interested, we'd certainly like to hear more from observers abroad, and there is plenty of scope for that as Tree Sparrow occurs from Ireland across to the Far East with populations introduced intentionally or accidentally in such places as USA and Australia, more of this in a future Newsletter.

Regards,

David Watkins
david@treesparrows.com

*** World House Sparrow day soon! See article below! ***

**Featured
Photographer**

**Michelle
Dudley**

Michelle clearly is not only a good photographer but her eye for the great chance picture and composition elevates her to being I think an excellent bird photographer. Here we have a number taken during the recent cold weather.

Keep up to date with Michelle's photos at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/22823824@N04/>

Michelle uses a Canon 40d and a Canon 100-400mm lens.



Tree Sparrows are pretty hardy birds and likely to survive well the recent hard weather, though populations have seemed to move around a lot

Photo Michelle Dudley

Unusual shot of a Goldfinch in flight



Photo Michelle Dudley



Song thrush – a favourite garden bird for many, a great songster and a welcome visitor to the bird table if the Blackbirds don't chase it off !

Photo Michelle Dudley

Blackbird close-up

Photo Michelle Dudley

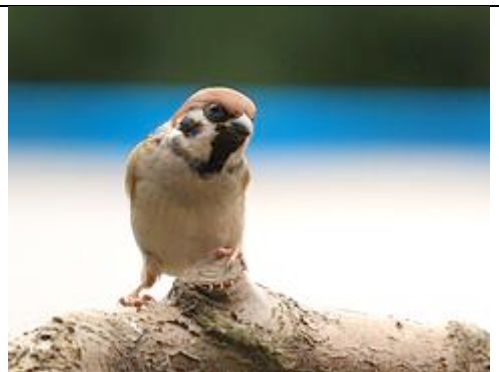


Goldfinches are noticeable by their absence in many gardens, when normally there would have been regular numbers about. Have you noticed a decline?

Photo Michelle Dudley

Tree Sparrows – Uk birds should be in or nearly in their breeding boxes and could have up to three broods. They can be surprisingly secretive when breeding so keep your eyes peeled.

Photo Michelle Dudley





Sparrowhawks will probably have fared well during the cold spell, the Snow-Watch programme reported them starting to nest early, indicative of healthy birds.

Photo Michelle Dudley

Barn Owl – the snow cover will have prevented it from hunting as efficiently, let's hope they have been able to maintain their fat levels for the breeding season which should be under way now.

Photo Michelle Dudley



There it is againthat Sparrowhawk after the Tree Sparrows !

Photo Michelle Dudley

A young Starling visits the bird table, young and old they are a fantastic bird close up, the adults particularly with their iridescent plumage. Watch closely from now on into the Spring, adult females have yellow bills with a PINK base , and guess what, males have a yellow bill with a pale BLUE base!



..other news

Geoff Hall from Nidderdale in Yorkshire sent in a link to some great video footage he took of Tree Sparrows in his garden recently,

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-CJzQFvEHsA>

Well worth a look, just click on the link. Thanks Geoff.

Japan – culturally strong when it comes to Tree Sparrows. Tree Sparrows have figured regularly in traditional Japanese paintings and ceramics for hundreds of years, if not more. Clearly it's much more than a pest in Japan as in some countries.



The **Sparrow Dance**, called Suzume Odori (雀踊り), is a dance based upon the fluttering movements of the Eurasian Tree Sparrow. It was first performed, improvised, by stonemasons who were constructing Sendai Castle for the daimyo Date Masamune. The emblem of the Date clan incorporates two tree sparrows. The Sparrow dance is now performed yearly in Sendai, Miyagi prefecture at the Aoba festival in mid-May^[1].

School children in Miyagi prefecture learn and perform the Sparrow dance, especially during the Obon Festival.

(This is an extract from Wikipedia's piece on Eurasian Tree Sparrow, well worth a look)

A lot of emails from Japan recently and a link from one correspondent to this website. I think it's the equivalent of treesparrows.com in Japan. Sadly I cant read Japanese but I can click on the jpegs to reveal some cracking pictures ... have a go
<http://f34.aaa.livedoor.jp/~chunchun/up/upload.cgi>

You won't believe this?

But then maybe you will

A number of years ago Italian Customs intercepted a shipment of (apparently legal) frozen dead Tree Sparrows from China, destined for the gourmet food market.

How many in the shipment? ONE MILLION! How many more get through? This was probably the tip of the iceberg, other shipments of TWO MILLION have been known (Rotterdam 1993) and has clearly been going on for many years. A correspondent in China reports that the going rate for a Tree Sparrow at the moment is 25p, which if correct indicates that this is

BIG BUSINESS.

Buon Appetito Italy !!

**World House Sparrow Day –
an article by Mohammed Dilawar**

www.worldhousesparrowday.org

The world House Sparrow Day is an international initiative by Nature Forever Society in collaboration with Bombay Natural History Society, Cornell Lab of Ornithology (USA), Eco-Sys Action Foundation (France) Avon Wildlife Trust (UK) and numerous other national and international organisations across the world.

The World House Sparrow Day will be celebrated on 20th March 2010 and will be an annual event not only to celebrate the beauty of House Sparrows but all the common birds and biodiversity found in and around us.

Cont'd

The event will be promoted by a dedicated interactive website www.worldhousesparrowday.org which will be the nerve centre of the whole event. Organisation and individuals from across the world will be able to register their events and activities on this website.

The website is having all information related to the event like, press resources, logos, posters, images and press releases. The website will also be useful for organisation's and individuals as they will be able to download posters, logos and activity ideas which they can use to promote the event in their region or country.

The World House Sparrow Day will promote events like common bird watching trips, public discussions, exhibitions, presentations, bird rallies, art competitions, educational and public events all aimed at paying more attention to the birds in their neighborhood and their conservation.

All the events which will be carried out throughout the world will be uploaded on the website.

Apart from this regular updates in regard to the event will be circulated on national and international bird groups which have thousands of members.

What will the World House Sparrow Day achieve?

The rationale of having this day is not only to celebrate the event for a day but to use the day to bring together all the individuals and organisation working on the conservation of House Sparrows and urban biodiversity on a common platform. With the help of the website we aim to build a network which can result in better linkages of like minded people. In the long term it's an effective way to carry out advocacy, do collaborative research and form national and international linkages.

It will also help in getting the attention of government agencies and the scientific community on a whole for more conservation measures and research on the common bird species and urban biodiversity.

We request you all to please celebrate this day in your organisation, locality, school, we have uploaded a number of event ideas on the website for more information please write to us on info@worldhousesparrowday.org

To register a event that you will be carrying out please send us an email at - register@worldhousesparrowday.org

We would also like to that all the people who generously contributed photos of house Sparrows after we made a appeal. We hope the day is also celebrated with equal enthusiasm.

You can also join the World House Sparrow Day and World House Sparrow Group on Facebook to keep your self updated. You can invite your freinds to join the group share ideas, photos and celebrate this 20th March as World House Sparrow Day.

Please visit the - www.worldhousesparrowday.org for more information

Please fell free to forward this Newsletter to anyone you think may be interested and please do let me have any photos or news about your Tree Sparrow project. Thank you.