

House Sparrow

Description

House sparrow males have a grey crown, pale grey-white cheeks, are heavily streaked black and brown on the upper parts, uniform grey on the under parts, with an extensive black bib on the throat. Females and juveniles have a diffuse grey-buff head pattern and are less chestnut brown on the upperparts than males. Of all wild bird species, the house sparrow is perhaps the most closely associated with man. Absent only from areas where there was no human settlement, a substantial decline in numbers has been observed, going back as far as the 1920s. The initial decline coincided with the demise of horse-drawn transport, with the associated food reduction for sparrows and the rise of the motor car.



The clutch of usually 4 to 5 eggs are laid between March and August. A brood can be hatched and fledged in one month, and up to four broods in a year have been known. It is still the most commonly killed species of bird on our roads. The average lifespan is around three years, although they can live up to 12 years.

Distribution

Can be seen anywhere in Northern Ireland where there is human activity. Check roofs and guttering of buildings. Parks and gardens where birds are regularly fed are almost certainly going to hold this species. In farmland, house sparrow and tree sparrow are sometimes seen in mixed flocks.

Action

Despite the current fall in numbers of the house sparrow, there is no current action plan.

Proposed actions include:

1. Maintaining the population and range of house sparrows in Northern Ireland by ensuring no further decline in numbers below the current BBS levels.
2. In the long run, see a sustained recovery in number so that BBS index increases.

Further Information

<http://www.habitas.org.uk/priority/species.asp?item=126>

MLA Species Champion