

PEST BIRD FACT SHEET

HOUSE SPARROW

Common Name: House Sparrow

Scientific Name: *Passer domesticus*



31

Distribution & habitat

- Introduced from Britain between 1863 and 1870, firstly in Victoria, but later into other areas including Sydney, Brisbane and Hobart. It quickly established itself in urban areas throughout eastern Australia.
- House Sparrows occur in and around human habitation, as well as cultivated areas and some wooded country.
- Usually stay in the same region all year round, but may be partially migratory in some areas.

Feeding

- One reason for the successful establishment of the House Sparrow is its ability to feed on a wide range of foodstuffs including insects, spiders, berries, seeds, flower buds and scraps of food discarded by humans.
- There are many reports of birds entering canteens in buildings to feed, with birds even learning to activate automatic doors in order to gain entry.

Breeding

- They breed all year round, but breeding may be more concentrated in spring and summer.
- Male and female House Sparrows form permanent pair bonds. Both sexes build the nest and care for the young.
- The nest is a large, untidy ball of grass, wool and feathers, lined with feathers and finer plant material. It is usually located in suitable areas in buildings, such as roof voids and crevices in walls, but may be placed under bridges, in thick bushes or in tree hollows. House sparrows use the same nest from year to year, which results in a build-up of nest debris and insects associated with their nest.
- Several broods may be produced in the extended breeding season.
- Living for up to four to seven years, the House Sparrow can have up to five breeding seasons, during which time up to three broods of 4-6 eggs may be laid.
- Sparrow populations will continue to increase if nests are allowed to remain.

Living with humans

- Although the introduction of the House Sparrow was deliberate it quickly became a major pest. Today, the species is so well established in the east that no amount of effort will exterminate the ever-expanding population.
- House Sparrows cause damage to fruit, vegetable, grain and oilseed crops, and compete with native species for nest hollows.
- They can destroy insulation and cause fire hazards with nesting material.
- They also pose human health issues associated with the spread of parasites (e.g. bird mites).

Control Options

- **Habitat Management:** Reduce nest site availability, Nest destruction, Limit availability of food, Plant native vegetation, Exclusion
- **Lethal:** Trapping, Egg Oil

For further information see 'Pest Birds - Potential Control Options' fact sheet

³¹ http://papagano-ken.blogspot.com.au/2010_07_01_archive.html

House Sparrow at nest



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House Sparrow nest in building



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House Sparrow eggs



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32 <http://my.opera.com/RobinL/blog/california-house-sparrows>

33 <http://houstongardens.blogspot.com.au/2010/04/house-sparrow-nest.html>

34 <http://www.sialis.org/images/hospegs051707005.jpg>