



WORLD SPARROW DAY

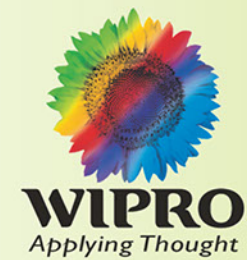
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INTRODUCTION

M E Dilawar (2011) Report on the 2nd World Sparrow Day. Nature Forever Society. Report No. 002, India

THE World Sparrow Day -- an initiative that was launched last year with the aim to raise awareness on the decline of the sparrow, a bird closely associated with humans since time immemorial -- had today gathered a mass following from the common man across the world.

This year, the day was celebrated by Nature Forever Society in collaboration with Wipro Technologies, Eco-Sys Action Foundation (France) and Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (UK) and recorded participation from Belarus (a university town in Eastern Europe) to Africa, Singapore, Hong Kong, and across the length and breadth of India. Among the events organised by participants were sparrow identification contests, photo and drawing competitions, bird walks, awareness campaigns and interaction with the media.

In India, the movement received an enormous fillip from the powerful corporate world, with software major Wipro Technologies offering long-time support to the cause. Wipro's commitment has sent a positive message of growing unity between not just the scientific community and the common man but also the corporate sector, to save the environment.

Like last year, this year too, the event was widely promoted through the website www.worldsparrowday.org which was the nerve centre of the events. Participants world over were urged to use the website for event ideas, downloading photos and logos. The website was also widely used by the media for getting information, photos and information.

In Facebook, the popularity of the World Sparrow Day group grew immensely this year -- from 180 individuals at the same time last year to as many as 844 individuals and organisations from around the world today. Regular updates and news feeds on the group kept members abreast about the various activities planned. In keeping with this year's theme, "Chirp for the sparrows, Tweet for the sparrows", the group encouraged extensive networking by members to update friends, family and acquaintances about the importance of the World Sparrow Day in boosting conservation of our immediate urban and rural flora and fauna.

The mega World Sparrow Day event in Wipro Campus, Bangalore in India as well as the several events held by nature and environment enthusiasts across the world, got extensive media coverage. We also circulated the event updates on national and international birds groups with over a thousand members.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THE World Sparrow Day has today turned into a people's movement and many individuals as well as corporate houses are now coming forward to show their solidarity to save the sparrows. We are grateful to all of them and want to apologise in advance for any omission. We want to acknowledge all the nature lovers, school and college students, home makers and working professions and every single person who took time off their busy schedule to celebrate the World Sparrow Day with gusto this year. We want them all to know that the World Sparrow Day would have remained just a dream, if not for their participation and encouragement.

I am greatly indebted to all the Trustees of Nature Forever Society and my family for supporting me through the inception and execution of the World Sparrow Day for two consecutive years now. I want to render a special thanks to Mr Christian Pilard of ECO - SYS Action Foundation without whose help and support the event would have never kicked off. I want to also thank Ms Stella Chan and the creative team of Eco - Sys, who designed and managed the World Sparrow Day website to perfection. Special thanks to Mr Oan Dilawar for helping in the upkeep of the wonderful website.

I am indebted to my mentor Dr Asad Rahmani, for his constant guidance, advice and support in my endeavour. I am honoured to have had the opportunity to be his student and work closely with him. I also thank all my teachers, especially to Dr Gudsoorkar and Dr T B Nikam for their guidance and help. I thank Ms Zainab Dilawar and Mr Pavan Patil to have designed our meaningful logo last year.

Wipro Technologies team



I want to express my deepest gratitude to Wipro Technologies for opening their doors to us and magnanimously supporting us in the World Sparrow Day celebrations. I personally thank Vice President of Facilities Management Group Mr Ram Ramakrishnan for believing in the cause and taking it to over one lakh Wiproites and making the World Sparrow Day a success. I am grateful to Mr P S Narayan, head of Eco- Eye, Wipro's Ecological Sustainability Programme, who was very encouraging, supportive and focused not only in the successful organisation of World Sparrow Day 2011, but also in his general belief to carry the cause of the common biodiversity ahead.



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I thank the Wipro core team which was operational in the successful implementation of events. At Wipro's Electronic City campus where the WSD main event was held, I thank Mr Shiv Kumar, manager of Hospitality and Mr Manoj Kumar of his team. I thank Mr Dinni Lingaraj of Eco-Eye, Ms Aditi Rai of Corporate Communications, Ms Sonia George, senior manager of Employer Branding and Mr Sudarshana Vijayasathya and Ms Sameena Ali of the Employer Branding team. In Sarjapur campus, I thank Mr Manoj R Leela, manager, Hospitality, and Col Gopinath, senior manager, FMG. I thank the Bangalore Eco Chapter members Ms Annice Joseph, Ms Veena Shivanna, Ms Daisy Rani Nath, Mr Shashank Nag, Ms Smruti Sagarika, Ms Shreya Ganguly and Mr Yateesh. I will always be indebted to Wipro for their proposal to offer us long-term help in promoting the cause. I am grateful to all those Wiproites who willingly helped us organise the World Sparrow Day events in Bangalore and volunteered to assist us during the events. I thank the one lakh plus Wipro employees, who took great interest in the events and shared their thoughts, questions and concerns.

Photo credits

I thank Atanu Mondal, Dhananjay S, José Viana, J.M. Garg, Manas Khan Mayur Polepalli, Miti Pal (all from India), Benjamin Jayin, Georges Olioso, Imad Atrash (Palestine), Jan F. Rasmussen, Joana Domingues, Nelson Khor, Nitin Srinivasamurthy, Norman Deans V. Swelm, Peter MacKenzie, Prof. Hindrik Bouwman (South Africa), Ramakrishna Shenoy, Raphaël Jordan, Rob Felix, Rubén Barone Tosco, Sarbjeet Kaur, Subhoranjan Sen, Sudipto Roy, Tom Reynolds, Umesh Mani, Yeow Chin Wee and all the people who have generously contributed their valuable photos to our website. We appreciate their kindness in giving consent for their photos to be used freely which helped media and many organisations immensely.

Friends in Media

The World Sparrow Day can best be termed as an effort by the common man to save a common bird. However, the extent of awareness and popularity this day garnered this year was possible only due to the support of our friends in the media.

I would like to personally thank Hitarth Pandya of Indian Express Gujarat, Niranjan Kaggere of Bangalore Mirror, Bindya Carmeline Thomas of Mid Day, M B Krishna of Deccan Herald, Arti Das of The Navhind Times, Goa; Rama Devi Menon, of The Weekend Leader doc.com; and to all other friends from

Nature Forever Society



At Nature Forever Society, I want to thank Esmail Dilawar, Duriya Dilawar, Oan Dilawar, Zainab Dilawar, Nitya Kaushik, Saiffudin Indorewala, Batul Vajih, Zoher Postwala, Nafisa Postwala, Murtuza Indorewala, Tasneem Indorewala, Insiya Indorewala, Rajendra Chajeed and all the other members who helped us wholeheartedly in this endeavour.

We also appreciate the interest shown by all the nest box and bird feeder adopters, without whose support we would have been able to do little to save the sparrow population.

Special thanks to Oan Dilawar who single handedly monitored the website updates, printing and setting up of banners and other actions to make the World Sparrow Day a success.

Contract Advertising

At Contract Advertising, we thank Mr Umesh Shrikhande, CEO; Mr Arjun Sen, senior vice president; Saurabh Khatri, senior account executive; Madhavi Kalra, creative director; Siddhesh Kulkarni, senior art director and Sahar Sehgaal, photographer and senior copywriter for spending their valuable time ideating with us and advising us on our creative and marketing strategy.



ECO-SYS Action Foundation



I would like to thank Christian Pilard, Stella Chan, Winnie Shum, Mike Garcia and Arnold Albarracin for their constant support and advice. Their help has meant a lot to us. Without Mr Pilard and his core team's support the World Sparrow Day would have only been an idea in my mind.

Bombay Natural History Society

I am grateful to Dr. Asad Rahmani for all his support and guidance. I also thank Atul Sathe, Public relations officer of BNHS for helping us spread the word among the media and the people.



Burhani Foundation



Our immense appreciation to the Burhani Foundation for taking efforts to save house sparrows. The Foundation helped us spread awareness about the sparrow by initiating various eco friendly activities, including distribution of 52,000 on auspicious occasion of 100th birthday celebration of His Holiness Dr Syedna Mohammed Burhanuddin Burhani across the country in the run up to the World Sparrow Day 2011.

For this we would like to convey our heartfelt appreciation to Shahzada Qaidjoher Bhaisaheb Ezzuddin, Shahzada Huzaifa Bhaisaheb Mohiyuddin, Shahzada Ammar Bhaisaheb Jamaluddin, Dr Moiz Bhaisaheb, Abdulqadir Bhaisaheb, Taikhoom Bhaisaheb, Al Aqmar Bhaisaheb, Shaikh Abdeali Bhanpurawala and Tasneem Ben Bhanpurawala.



Zaintechs

We convey our heartfelt appreciation to our online technical partners Zainul Abedin Abbasi and Zakir Gori for their constant support.



Ministry of Environment and Forest

Hon Minister of Environment and Forest Mr. Jairam Ramesh, Dr. Y.P. Singh, Dr. A.K. Srivastava, Dr. Prakriti Srivastava and Mr Muhammad Khan.

Delhi Government

We would especially like to thank the Hon. Chief Minister of Delhi Mrs. Shiela Dikshit for her support and encouragement the World Sparrow Day initiative would have never ever been possible.

We would also like to thank Shri. Sandeep Mishra (IAS), Shri. Dharmendra IAS, Secretary (Environment), Shri. Pawan Khera, Dr. Anil Kumar, Director (Environment), Dr. BC Sabata, Sr. Scientific Officer, Shri. IH Khan IFS, Additional PCCF, Shri. D M Shukla IFS, CCF, Shri. Prabhat Tyagi IFS, DCF (South), Shri. Rajesh Kumar IFS, DCF (HQ).

Other partners

We also appreciate Baha' Ishaq, Benita Sen, Jugal Kishore Tiwari, Rama Devi, AB Apanna, Sunita Joshi, and Vartika Manasvi, Tim Web and his team from RSPB, Benita Sen, Vijaya Ghose, V V R Murty and her Team at Limca Book of Records for their unflinching help since the inception of the World Sparrow Day last year.

Award winners

We thank the winners of our newly-launched Sparrow Awards: Mr Bhavin Shah of Coimbatore, Mr Narendra Singh Chaudhury of Uttarakhand, The Sparrow company of Aditi Mallya School, Bangalore and L Shyamal of Bangalore for taking time off their busy schedule to be part of our event and accept the awards.

Sparrow supporters

We thank all the sparrow supporters who participated in the World Sparrow Day and initiated events across the world. A word of appreciation to:



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BiodiverCity participants

We want to thank all those who participated in our BiodiverCity Photo Competition for flooding our inbox with their creative photographs. Our appreciation and congratulations to Vijay Dhankar, Varadharajan Gokula, Shashin Vardhave and Vikas Madhav (junior) and Ritwika Maity (junior) for their award winning pictures.

We thank all the other participants of the contest: Suvendu Rudra, Rohit Iyer, Reetika Monga, Pavan Pal, Gaurav Dhotre, Mandar Mote, Kasi Viswanathan, Gowthamraj. M, P.Prathibha, Anindya Bhattacharya, Halima S Sayed, Jency Samuel, Saf Fana, Anunay Ranjan, Niyyatie S Dua, Dattatray Ogale, Ashish Kolambekar, Gokul Krishnan, Shreya Dhanasekaran, Varun Vasagan, Rizwana Khambati, Rathna Varshini, Anima Mishra, Meghadeepa Maity, Bishwajit Sharma, Chit ra Menon, Aniruddha Gupte, Ruth Pinto, Nagamani, , Purvi Dixit, P.J Anantha Krishnan, Dr.Satish Ranadive, Ismail E. Divasli, Rahul Agaskar, S Rajendra Kumar, Aparna Athawale, Sayyed Dawood, Nishith Sheth, Pijush Kanti Biswas, Niranjan Dhongade, Vidya Vasu, Sangeetha Krishnamoorthy, Deepak Goswami, Abhay Sharma, Mahin Bhatt, Supriyo Ghatak, Chitra Amudhachari, Deepa Venkatraman, Devesh Bhosle, Rajan Singh Tanwar, Abhinav Ravindran, Moramee Das, Sandesh Shekhar, Pooja Gupta, Anmol Gagroo, Aravindh Ranganathan, Anand Srinivasa, Aniruddha Gupte, Rajesh Dangle, Anand Chokhani, S Balasubramaniam, Rajnikant, Vasanth Vadivel, Vrishin Bhamri, Harish Manek, Dilip P Sant, Anirban Dey, Amartuvshin.P, Kaustubh Deshpande, Kanishka raj Rathore, Tanmay Amol Thakur, Dipayan A ich, Nayan Shah, Upagupt Mohanty, Anil Mahajan, D.Akshay Ramaswamy, Vikas Nayak, Akshay Bhumkar, Vasant Bhumkar, Prasad Paranjpe, Gautam Patil, Sudipto Roy, Dr.K.M.Khaleel, Mrityunjay Bose, T.Ramesh, Rajpal Udaykumar Navalkar, Anilkumar GT, Alex Vargas and Praveen Kumar N.

We specifically thank our junior photographers: Kevin Samuel, Advay Anand, Darshan Mahajan, Vimalraj. M, M Maity., Anant Dipak, Indrajit Banerjee, Akshay Kumar and want them to know that each of their entries was priceless. Indeed, it was a tough job for us to choose the winners. We encourage these budding talents to keep up their passion for photography.

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Sparrow supporters

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APB Bird Life, Belarus



We recognise the efforts of Denis Lundyshev and Yulia Tretiak from the Baranovichy State University, Katia Tikhno from APB - BirdLife Belarus and Olga Alekseenko, director of Baranovichy Central Library for their event.



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Hong Lok Yuen International School, Hong Kong

We thank Eco-Sys Action, the children of HLYIS Eco - school committee and the children of HLYIS Year 6, the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society, HK Outdoors and Teng Hoi.



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School staff Principal Dr (Mrs) Shakuntla S Jaiman, Vice Principal RK Tyagi, teacher Smriti Bhardwaj, Head of Fine Arts Department RK Oha, Chief Coordinator Murlu Menon, Head of IT Department Ajay Rathi, Academic Coordinator Yeshi Choeden and Assembly Coordinator Madhumita Pathak.



Madras Croc Bank Trust, Chennai



Thanks to the Croc Bank team Dr Gowri Mallapur, Malika Nanda, Nariman Vazifdar, Jaysh Paniker, Jagadish Kumar, Murali Kumar, Ghintaka Arambewala and Gayathri Selvaraj.

Annai Trust, Coimbatore

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We appreciate Ms Shahla Yasmin, head of department of Zoology and vice president of ECO Task Force at Patna Women's college and her students for their participation.

Samanvya Social Welfare, Meerut

Samanvya Social Welfare director Sachin Kumar Gupta and his team for their event.

Individuals

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HIGHLIGHTS OF WORLD SPARROW DAY 2011

LAST year, when Nature Forever Society launched the World House Sparrow Day as an worldwide initiative along with several national and international organisations, our aim was to bring together people from all walks of life on one platform and set off a mass movement. This year, we were proud to observe that our concept has gathered great momentum, and saw participation world over – from Europe to South East Asia to the nooks and corners of India. As is our principle, this year too, the World Sparrow Day events were held without any financial help or assistance from any government or non-governmental agencies. However, we were thrilled to see a deep interest and involvement from the corporate sector – with software giants like Wipro Technologies and advertising kings like Contract Advertising coming forward to help us. The World Sparrow Day 2011 was celebrated in collaboration with Wipro, Eco-Sys Action Foundation (France) and RSPB, UK.

One of our main focus this year was to expand our sphere – from celebration only the house sparrows in 2010, we decided to celebrate all the 26 species of sparrows found across the globe henceforth, by addressing our initiative as the 'World Sparrow Day' (instead of 'World House Sparrow Day').

Through this small change we intend to stress on the larger context of spreading awareness about the entire gamut of common biodiversity across the world – the flora and fauna we see around us every day, but which are steadily becoming endangered today due to our general neglect and oversight. The fact that the humble sparrow is a powerful symbol of the common flora and fauna is evident from the interest the general public showed in the event – people across the world came out on the streets to do their bit on March 20.

All the organisations and individuals who celebrated the World Sparrow Day 2011 generated their own funds for their events. Our websites www.worldsparrowday.org, www.natureforever.org and our groups on the social networking site Facebook played a large role in bringing people together. The vast support received from the national and international media also helped. (Aptly enough, our theme for this year was “**Chirp for the sparrow, Tweet for the sparrow**”, stressing on communication as the prime tool to raise awareness. We asked people to pass on the message – word-of-mouth, by SMS, by emails, tweets and posts on Facebook, Orkut and other social networking sites.)

To date, the mantle of conservation has been held largely by environmentalists, scientist and experts. We aim to involve the common man in the bandwagon. The involvement of like-minded people can go a long way in forming national and international linkages, advocacy and initiating dialogues. With communication opening up, we will be equipped to offer scientists and experts a firmer ground to work on a better system of research and monitoring programmes.

HIGHLIGHTS OF WORLD SPARROW DAY 2011



FROM WORLD HOUSE SPARROW DAY TO WORLD SPARROW DAY: A JOURNEY

THE humble sparrow, found across Asia, Europe and Africa, in urban as well as rural landscapes, is a true symbol of the common biodiversity – or the immediate flora and fauna – across the world, which is fast disappearing from our vicinity today. When we decided to dedicate a day for this common bird last year, our plan was provide a single platform for the common man, the scientific community, the non-governmental organisations and the government body to come together to save this little mascot of the environment.

Initially called the World House Sparrow Day (WHSD), this international initiative was first celebrated on March 20, 2010, by Nature Forever Society, in collaboration with the Bombay Natural History Society, Cornell Lab of Ornithology (USA), Eco-Sys Action Foundation (France), Avon Wildlife Trust (UK) and a few other national and international organisations.

However, after our initial celebrations, we received a string of letters from bird enthusiasts and environmentalists across the world, requesting to expand our sphere of celebration – from the house sparrows to all the different species of sparrows. Many opined that it was only fair to include all the species of sparrows found in different parts of the world besides the House Sparrow, since they were all important and valuable indicators of the health of our immediate environment.

This year, respecting the views of this large number of enthusiasts, we decided to widen our sphere and celebrate not only the house sparrow – but the 26 species of sparrows around the world. Hence, we made a small change in our title, by deciding to address the day as World

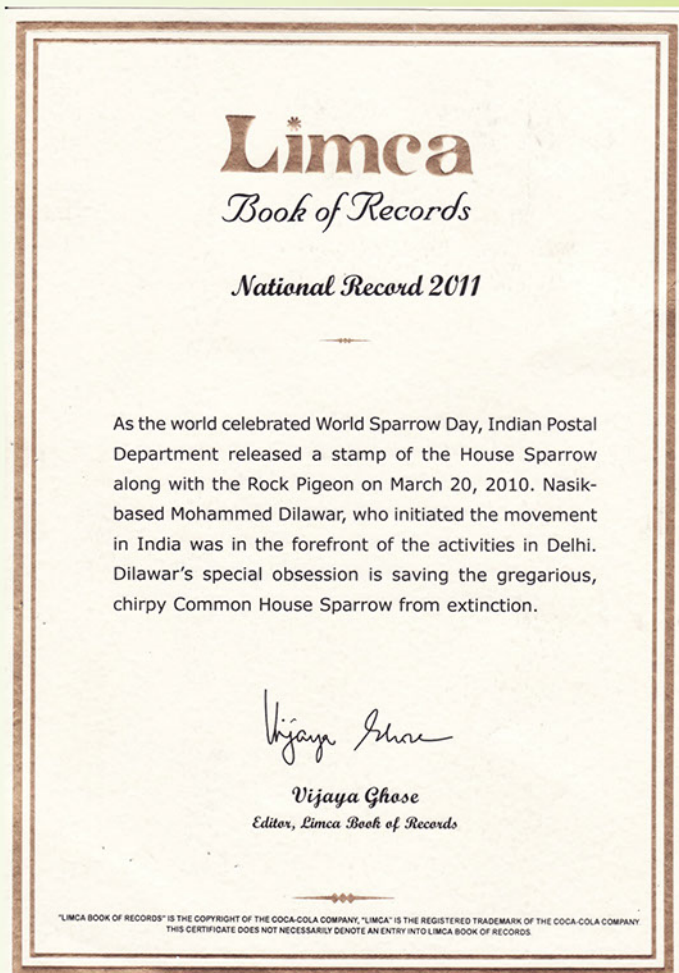
FROM WORLD HOUSE SPARROW DAY TO
WORLD SPARROW DAY: A JOURNEY



World Sparrow Day Enters Limca Book of Records 2011

The Limca Book of records has entered World Sparrow Day in its 2011 edition. The World Sparrow Day Secretariat would like to thank all the conservation partner organisations and individuals who made this possible for us.

We are thankful to Limca Book of Records Editor Dr. Vijaya Ghose and her team.



World Sparrow Day Enters Limca Book of Records 2011



SPARROWS OF THE WORLD

EVEN as we decided to expand our sphere of the World Sparrow Day celebration this year, by including not just the House Sparrows but the 26 species of sparrows found across the world, we set out on a colossal task - to gather the photographs of the 26 species and upload them on our website.

This task is a feat in itself as no other organisation in the world has ever managed to collect such a wide range of photographs of the sparrow species. The reason: other species from the Sparrow family are not as well known as the house sparrow. They are also found in area which have been in conflict from long like Somalia and certain sub sharan countries and are also less studied.

In one of its firsts, Nature Forever Society recently uploaded exclusive photographs and information on as many as 24 of the 26 species of sparrows on its websites www.natureforever.com and www.worldsparrowday.org.

That we managed to collect the species of sparrows is an achievement in itself, and we are forever obliged to all the photographers who willingly contributed to our database. In the next few pages you will see photographs of 24 of the 26 sparrow species which are found across the world including some rare species:

SPARROWS OF THE WORLD



THE ARABIAN GOLDEN SPARROW (PASSER EUCHLORUS)



The ARABIAN GOLDEN SPARROW (*Passer euchlorus*) is found in south west Arabia and also the coast of Somalia and Djibouti where it occurs in thorn savanna and scrub habitats. It is often considered as a subspecies of the Sudan Golden Sparrow (*Passer luteus*).

CHESTNUT SPARROW (PASSER EMINIBEY)



CHESTNUT SPARROW (*Passer eminibey*) is the smallest member of the genus *Passer*, and is about 11 cm (4.3 in) in length. The breeding male has deep chestnut plumage and the female and juvenile are duller in appearance. It is gregarious and found in arid areas. Ranging from the east of Africa from Darfur to Tanzania, it is found in dry savanna, papyrus swamps, and near human habitation. Adults and juveniles both feed mostly on grass seeds. It is a small, chunky songbird with a thick bill that is suited for its diet of seeds. Chestnut Sparrows are only occasionally found away from flocks. They frequently associate with queleas and other weavers. Adults feed on grass seeds, and those near human habitations will also feed on crumbs and other household scraps. Nestlings are fed mostly softer grass seeds, and small beetles are also recorded in their diet.



THE SAXAUL SPARROW (PASSER AMMODENDRI)



The SAXAUL SPARROW (*Passer ammodendri*) is found in parts of Central Asia. It is among the larger sparrows at 14-16 cm (5½–6¼ in) and 25-27 grams (0.88–0.95 oz). It is often hidden in foliage, forages in trees and on the ground. It mostly feeds on seeds, as well as insects while breeding and as a nestling. When not breeding it forms wandering flocks, but is considered to be less social than other sparrows while breeding, often nesting in isolated pairs.

THE HOUSE SPARROW (PASSER DOMESTICUS)



The SAXAUL SPARROW (*Passer ammodendri*) is found in parts of Central Asia. It is among the larger sparrows at 14-16 cm (5½–6¼ in) and 25-27 grams (0.88–0.95 oz). It is often hidden in foliage, forages in trees and on the ground. It mostly feeds on seeds, as well as insects while breeding and as a nestling. When not breeding it forms wandering flocks, but is considered to be less social than other sparrows while breeding, often nesting in isolated pairs.



THE SIND SPARROW (PASSER PYRRHONOTUS)



The HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*) occurs naturally in most of Europe, the Mediterranean region, and much of Asia. This species has also been intentionally or accidentally introduced to many parts of the world, making it the most widely distributed wild bird. Although it is strongly associated with human habitations, it is not the only sparrow species found near houses. It is a small bird, with feathers mostly different shades of brown and grey. The House Sparrow is a very social bird and is gregarious at all seasons when feeding, often forming flocks with other types of bird. It roosts communally, its nests are usually grouped together in clumps, and it engages in a number of social activities, such as dust and water bathing, and 'social singing', in which birds call together in bushes.

THE PLAIN BACKED SPARROW (PASSER FLAVEOLUS)



The PLAIN-BACKED SPARROW (*Passer flaveolus*), also known as the Pegu Sparrow or Olive-backed Sparrow, is found in the Asian countries of Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and Malaysia



THE DEAD SEA SPARROW (PASSER MOABITICUS)



Imad Atrash

The DEAD SEA SPARROW (*Passer moabiticus*) is a breeding bird found around the River Jordan, Dead Sea, and Iraq, Iran and western Afghanistan. It is migratory or dispersive, but the regular wintering grounds of this nomadic species are largely unknown, except that the eastern race winters in Pakistan. It is a small 12–13 cm long sparrow which breeds in dry lowlands with some shrubs, including tamarisk, and access to water. It builds a nest in a tree, and lays 4-7 eggs. This species feeds principally on seeds, like other sparrows. The chirping song resembles those of House and Spanish Sparrows, but is weaker. The flight call is a high-pitched '*chi-wit*'. This species is often silent.

THE IAGO SPARROW (PASSER IAGOENSIS)



Rubén Barone Tosco

The IAGO SPARROW (*Passer iagoensis*), is also known as the Cape Verde Sparrow and the Rufous-backed Sparrow. It is endemic to the Cape Verde Islands, in the eastern Atlantic Ocean. It is 12.5–13 cm (5 in) long, with a wing length of 5.5–6.9 cm. The male has a black or greyish-black crown and eyestripe, a grey nape and a small patch of white on the lower forehead, while the female is grey-brown, with black-streaked wings and breast, and pale grey underparts. It is quite similar to the female House Sparrow but has a more apparent pale stripe over the eye. The Iago Sparrow is gregarious, usually breeding in small colonies, and forming large flocks outside the breeding season. It is not shy, allowing humans to approach it even at its nest. It is attracted to water, which is scarce in its habitat, and is often seen dust bathing in small groups.

THE GREAT SPARROW (PASSER MOTITENSIS)



Ian White

The GREAT SPARROW, also known as the Southern Rufous Sparrow or the Rufous Sparrow (*Passer motitensis*) is found in southern Africa in dry, wooded savannah and towns. It is 15–16 cm long sparrow superficially like a large House Sparrow. It has a grey crown and rear neck and rufous upperparts. The taxonomy of this species and the other 'rufous sparrows' is confusing, with some authors considering this species to be the same as the Iago Sparrow, and some recognising only some of the rufous sparrows as separate from the Great Sparrow.

THE KENYA SPARROW (PASSER RUFOCINCTUS)



Peter Usher©

The KENYA SPARROW, also known as the Kenya Rufous Sparrow (*Passer rufocinctus*), is found in Kenya and Tanzania. It tends to be found in dry wooded savanna and in towns

SHELLEY'S SPARROW (PASSER SHELLEYI)



jacqueserard@bluewin.ch

SHELLEY'S SPARROW (*Passer shelleyi*), also known as Shelley's Rufous Sparrow or the White Nile Rufous Sparrow, is found in Sudan, Ethiopia, Uganda, and Kenya. It is frequently considered a subspecies of the Kenya Sparrow, which in turn is considered a subspecies of the Great Sparrow.

THE SOCOTRA SPARROW (PASSER INSULARIS)



Copyright Rob Felix

The SOCOTRA SPARROW (*Passer insularis*) is endemic to the islands of Socotra, Samhah, and Darsah in the Indian Ocean, off the Horn of Africa. The taxonomy of this species and its relatives is complex, with some authorities, including BirdLife International, recognising it and the very similar Abd al-Kuri Sparrow, as well as several from mainland Africa, as separate, and others lumping all these species and the probably unrelated Iago Sparrow.



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THE CAPE SPARROW (PASSER MELANURUS)



The CAPE SPARROW or MOSSIE (*Passer melanurus*) is brightly coloured and distinctive. It is coloured grey, brown, and chestnut, with some black and white markings on the male. It is found in southern Africa, where it inhabits savanna, cultivated areas, and towns. The male has a white and a black wing bar below its shoulders, and flight feathers and tail streaked grey and black, while the female is plumaged like the male, but is duller and has a grey head with a different pattern from the male. The juvenile is like the female, but young males show black on the head from an early age. The Cape Sparrow is a social bird, living in flocks, and usually breeding in colonies. Away from humans it is nomadic, and forms flocks of up to 200 birds.

THE NORTHERN GREY-HEADED SPARROW (PASSER GRISEUS)



The NORTHERN GREY-HEADED SPARROW, Grey-headed Sparrow, or Common Grey-headed Sparrow (*Passer griseus*), is a resident breeding species found in much of tropical Africa. It occurs in a wide range of open habitats, including open woodlands and human habitation, and is considered to be the African equivalent of the House Sparrow. It is mainly resident in its range, but there is some seasonal movement, and flocks of up to 50 birds form outside the breeding season. It builds a cup nest in trees, thatch, or old nests of other birds; 2–4 eggs are laid. It feeds principally on seeds and grain, but will readily take insects including termites, especially when feeding young. The calls include cheeps and chirps, and the typical sparrow churring alarm call.



SWAISONS'S SPARROW (PASSER SWAINSONII)



Raphaël Jordan

SWAINSON'S SPARROW (*Passer swainsonii*) is prevalent in the highlands of Ethiopia and Somalia and is often considered a race of Grey-headed Sparrow, although it tends to be darker, especially on the head and shoulders. It has a white bar on the shoulder, but this is not always visible. Similarly, the pale chestnut tail and rump are also not always visible. It is a common sparrow found in Ethiopian towns.

THE PARROT-BILLED SPARROW (PASSER GONGONENSIS)



Peter Usher©

The PARROT-BILLED SPARROW (*Passer gongonensis*), which is found in the arid lowlands of east central Africa, is often considered a type of Grey-headed Sparrow. It is largest of the Passeridae at 18 cm and 42 grams.



THE SWAHILI SPARROW (PASSER SUAHELICUS)



The SWAHILI SPARROW (*Passer suahelicus*) lives in the savanna of southern Kenya and Tanzania and until recently, it was usually treated as a subspecies of the Northern Grey-headed Sparrow (*Passer griseus*). It is found in savanna and woodland in Angola and Zambia down to South Africa.



THE DESERT SPARROW (PASSER SIMPLEX)



The DESERT SPARROW (*Passer simplex*) is a species found in desert and sandy areas of northern and central Africa, with a distinct subspecies in areas of Iran and Russia sometimes called the Asian Desert Sparrow (*Passer simplex zarudnyi*). The Desert Sparrow lives close to human habits and sometimes builds nests in muddy walls. The Mozabite Berbers build their homes with holes in the walls to welcome these birds, which they call 'bar-rode', and if one sings all day in the house, they believe it is a sign of good news. The species is becoming scarcer



THE EURASIAN TREE SPARROW (PASSER MONTANUS)



The EURASIAN TREE SPARROW (*Passer montanus*) has a rich chestnut crown and nape, and a black patch on each pure white cheek. The sexes are similarly plumaged, but the young birds are a duller version of the adult. This sparrow breeds over most of temperate Eurasia and Southeast Asia, where it is known as the Tree Sparrow, and it has been introduced elsewhere including in the United States, where it is known as the Eurasian Tree Sparrow or German Sparrow in an effort to differentiate it from the native unrelated American Tree Sparrow. Although several subspecies are recognised, the appearance of this bird varies little across its extensive range. The Eurasian Tree Sparrow builds an untidy nest in a natural cavity, a hole in a building or the large nest of a magpie or stork. The typical clutch is five or six eggs that hatch in less than two weeks. This sparrow feeds mainly on seeds, but invertebrates are also consumed, particularly during the breeding season. The Eurasian Tree Sparrow appears widespread in the towns and cities of eastern Asia, but in Europe it is found in lightly wooded open countryside, with the House Sparrow breeding in the more urban areas.



THE SUDAN GOLDEN SPARROW



The SUDAN GOLDEN SPARROW is a smaller sparrow, 12–13 cm (4.7–5.1 in) in length, with a wingspan of 5.7–7 cm (2.2–2.8 in). Males are distinctive in their bright yellow head and underparts, deep chestnut brown wings and back, and two white wingbars. In the breeding season, the male's plumage is brighter still, and the bill changes colour from horn to shiny black. Females are pale sandy-buff with yellowish face, light brown wings, a back faintly streaked with chestnut, and pale yellow fading to whitish on the underparts. Juveniles are similar to females, but greyer. The Sudan Golden Sparrow is a highly gregarious and nomadic bird and will form mixed flocks with other seed-eating birds, such as Red-billed Quelea and other sparrows.



SPANISH SPARROW (PASSER HISPANIOLENSIS)



SPANISH SPARROW (*Passer hispaniolensis*) is found in the Mediterranean region and southwest and central Asia. It is very similar to the House Sparrow, and the two species show their close association in a “biological mix-up” of hybridisation in the Mediterranean region, which complicates the taxonomy of this species. The Spanish Sparrow is about 15–16 cm (5.9–6.3 in) in length, and 22–36 g (0.8–1.3 oz) in weight. It is slightly larger and heavier than the House Sparrow, and also has a slightly longer and stouter bill. The Spanish Sparrow is gregarious, flocking and breeding in groups. In the winter, it mostly wanders nomadically or makes regular migrations. Like other sparrows, it feeds principally on the seeds of grains and other grasses, also eating leaves, fruits, and other plant materials. Young birds feed mostly on insects, and adults also feed on insects and other animals during and before the breeding season.



THE RUSSET SPARROW (PASSER RUTILANS)



The RUSSET SPARROW (*Passer rutilans*), also known as the Cinnamon or Cinnamon Tree Sparrow, is a chunky little seed-eating bird with a thick bill. It has a body length of 14–15 cm (5.5–5.9 in). Its plumage is mainly warm rufous above and grey below and it shows sexual dimorphism, with both sexes having a pattern similar to that of the corresponding sex of House Sparrow. It has a sweet and musical chirps, which when strung together form a song. The Russet Sparrow is described as shy and wary by some observers, although J. Denis Summers-Smith found it approachable in Indian hill stations.



THE SOMALI SPARROW (PASSER CASTANOPTERUS)



(c) Gailan Cohen & Michael Mills www.birdingafrica.com

The SOMALI SPARROW (*Passer castanopterus*) is found in northern Somalia, Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya

Below are the two sparrow species for which we still haven't managed to acquire photographs. We urge all our sparrow friends around the world to help us find the pictures and fulfill our feat of having a database of all the sparrow species:.

THE ITALIAN SPARROW

The ITALIAN SPARROW is a small chunky bird, with grey and brown plumage with the sexes differing in their plumage pattern, and slightly in length. The male has a head pattern like that of the Spanish Sparrow, with a chestnut crown, nape and sides of head, and white cheeks. It is about the same size as the House Sparrow at 14-16 cm (5½-6 in) in length and is found in northern and central Italy, Corsica, and small parts of France, Switzerland, Austria, and Slovenia. The Italian Sparrow's behaviour is similar to that of the House Sparrow. It is a social bird, which feeds mostly on seeds and insects.

THE KORDOFAN SPARROW (PASSER CORDOFANICUS)

The KORDOFAN SPARROW, also known as the Kordofan Rufous Sparrow, (*Passer cordofanicus*) is a sparrow found only in northwestern Sudan and eastern Chad. It is frequently considered a subspecies of the Kenya Sparrow, which in turn is considered a subspecies of the Great Sparrow



WAY FORWARD

ENTHUSED by the recognition the concept of the World Sparrow Day has gained worldwide in just two years, we are already looking forward to raise our bar to a different level and initiate a string of scientific projects and conservation work before the next year's celebration.

Aside from the plan to reach out to more and more conservation related offices

and bring them under a single umbrella for the 2012 celebrations.

Our lead partners are also brainstorming ideas on how the World Sparrow Day

website can be made more resourceful, facilitating communications between various conservation partners which will help in bringing about meaningful conservation of species. Our idea is to make our websites, www.natureforever.org and www.worldsparrowday.org a knowledge hub for all birds and wildlife enthusiasts. Over the coming months we plan to add several sections to the websites.

We also plan to strengthen and intensify our Second Hand Bioncular scheme by making it more visible and also personally boosting the drive through publicity. This is a novel scheme wherein we urge people to donate their old, unwanted optical equipments and guidebooks to Nature Forever Society. After thorough testing and minor repairs and tweaking, these equipment would then be handed over to organisations, schools, institutes and individual to facilitate bird watching and conservation work in the field.

We at Nature Forever Society aim to bring all the people and individuals working on the conservation of common birds, animals and plants on a common platform. We are glad to note that the dream of involving the common

man into conservations is showing great prospects.

WAY FORWARD

ONLINE SPARROW NETWORK

Our website: www.worldsparrowday.org

LIKE last year, this time too, our website www.worldsparrowday.org played a pivotal role in raising awareness about the World Sparrow Day celebrations - constantly generation updates on plans, ideas, events and awareness tips in the run up to the WSD.

The website formed the nerve centre for all the WSD events across the world, effectively assimilating and disseminating information as well as important resources to participants and event organisers. Right from ideas on how to celebrate the WSD and how to organise events, the website listed information on how people in different parts of the world are celebrating the day, how to register, how to download photos and why to celebrate.

The media section, which was open for the media, people as well as organisations and which was stocked well with up-to-date press releases and high resolution downloadable photographs, helped the media to a great extent in easy and quick access of information whenever needed. Logos and the official World Sparrow Day poster were also kept accessible for the visitors to facilitate easy and unhindered downloads.

Individuals, organisations and the media could easily communicate with the World Sparrow Day secretariat through the website, and receive event updates, conduct interviews as well as get information on who is celebrating World Sparrow Day at local, national and international levels.

Web links of news covered by news agencies were regularly updated on the website. It was thanks to the efficient running of the website, that we could spread the word to a great extent and make the day a success.

One of the most important functions of the website, however, was to lead people to join the World Sparrow Day and Nature Forever Society groups on the social networking site, Facebook.

These Facebook groups became an important communication medium for the WSD, generating interesting inputs and information from hundreds of enthusiasts and encouraging the growth of an online sparrow supports' community.

ONLINE SPARROW NETWORK



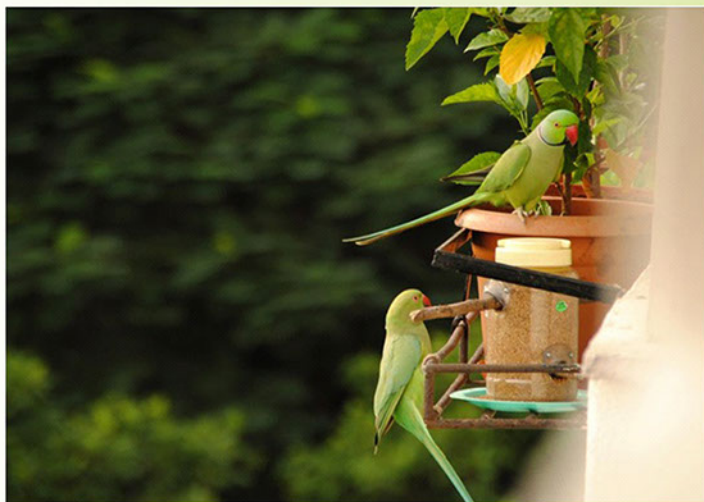
Our Facebook communities

OUR World Sparrow Day and Nature Forever Society groups on Facebook saw a drastic growth from across the world this year with members actively participating in discussions, spreading awareness and even bringing out their creativity on the Facebook platform. It was thanks to these communities and the informal networking it encouraged, that the World Sparrow Day got a great push ahead with hundreds of common people participating in events.

At last count, the WSD group had registered 886 members while the NFS boasted of around 720 members from varied background.

In the run up to the World Sparrow Day in March, it was exciting to notice the number of budding poets, writers, artists and photographers who had joined the community. As a result, the WSD and the NFS pages on the social networking site saw an array of original verses, paintings and photographs being posted impromptu by enthusiast everyday.

In an attempt to encourage their interest, we have showcased some of their contributions here:



Rajashri Khalap, a member of our Nature Forever Society FB group posted this picture of Rose-ringed Parakeets crowding a bird feeder at her window in Mumbai. She says, at least two pairs of parakeets visit her regularly.

Shradha P Rox, a member of the World Sparrow Day group posted this note on March20: We (my family) do our bit to help the sparrows. It has been a year now since we have been keeping rice, bits of chappatis, and water in our terrace. about 14 sparrows come in the morning, afternoon and evening. It feels good to see a father sparrow feeding his baby with its beak. Other breeds like bulbul and one whose name I don't know also come. All of them eat their part in harmony and without dominating as there is enough for everyone.



Nature Forever group member Aniket Dumbare posted this on August 2010. He captioned them "Enjoying food and cool winds."

Gauresh Mehra posted this on the WSD wall on March 19:

क्या बनाने आये थे क्या बना बैठे कहीं मंदिर कहीं मस्जिद बना बैठे. हम से अच्छी तो है जात चिड़ियों की कभी मंदिर पर जा बैठे , कभी मस्जिद पर जा बैठे।



Vikram Manda posted this on the WSD wall on March 19:

MY ODE TO THE SPARROW

Your morning chirps started my day
Everyday where I silently lay
Before the sun could smile on me
For those mornings I so long...
Wish you could again sing that song
Perched you were on the mango tree
Up so close where I could see
Tales of your lore you would tell
All day long till the school rang its bell
For those tales I so long...
Haven't heard them all along
You look for worms and bits of grain
In the hot sun or wet in rain
For your loved with no refrain
You do this all with no disdain
For such love I so long...
I still sing your chirpy song
Now when I think of you
Wonder if all that were true
To me they seem a distant world
Good old days as granny told
Oh for those days I so long
That is where I truly belong...!

Govind Nair sent this on March 17

Sparrows go to and fro
With their wings, we all know
Singing and chirping in the air
As we know in their glare
Dancing and prancing by our side
With their colours, it's very bright
Fruits, leaves and nuts they eat,
Very tasty very sweet
Sweet, cute and lovely they are,
Oh yes, I do, I do agree
So many wonders, yet to explore
Trapped in a cage? Not anymore
Come sparrow, go sparrow
We all love you sparrow

THE 2ND WORLD SPARROW DAY FUNCTION AT WIPRO TECHNOLOGIES CAMPUS, ELECTRONIC CITY, BANGALORE

AFTER a grand inauguration at New Delhi Chief Minister Dr Sheila Dikshit's residence last year, the second World Sparrow Day function was organised at an equally impressive venue: the sprawling campus of software major Wipro Technologies, Electronic City, Bangalore, a city of self-proclaimed sparrow lovers.

The event was attended by forest officials, Non Governmental Organisations, several leading environmentalists, researchers, nature lovers, common man and many students. Top Wipro representatives also graced the event.



The World Sparrow Day posters at the venue



The event began with a precise welcome speech by Nature Forever Society founder, Mohammed Dilawar who welcomed the panel presided by Mr Ram Ramakrishnan, Vice President of Wipro Facilities Management Group; Mr P S Narayan, Wipro General Manager and Head of eco-eye sustainability programme; Mr Christian Pilard, founder of French conservation organization Eco-Sys Action Foundation and Dr Asad Rahmani, director of the Bombay Natural History Society.

The event saw the participation of some of the very best conservationists, including legends like Dr Asad Rahmani, director of the Bombay Natural History Society and Mr Narendra Singh Chaudhury, the divisional forest officer of Lansdowne Division, Uttarakhand. Wipro Vice President of Facilities Management Group Mr Ram Ramakrishnan and General Manager and Head of Eco-eye sustainability programme, Wipro, Mr P S Narayan also graced the event with their esteemed presence.



Mr Ram Ramakrishnan, Wipro Vice President of Facilities Management Group, and Mr P S Narayan, GM and Head of Eco-eye sustainability programme chat with Mr Christian Pilard of French conservation group Eco-Sys Action Foundation before the event

The welcome speech was followed by an inspiring speech by Mr Ramakrishnan on Wipro's commitment to make its campuses rich in biodiversity and the enthusiasm of over 1 lakh Wiproites to support this. Talking about the disintegration of urban environment today, how our lakes have disappeared, and the effects of climate change, Mr Ramakrishnan said, "Given that kind of situation, having a World Sparrow Day is unique." He said the message to save the common biodiversity has today gone to 1,20,000 employees of Wipro.



On the dias: (l-r) Mr P S Narayan (Wipro), Mr Christian Pilard (Eco-Sys), Mr Mohammed Dilawar (NFS), Mr Ram Ramakrishnan (Wipro) and Dr Asad Rahmani (BNHS)



"We are facing disintegration of urban environment today. Climate change is upon us. Given the situation, the World Sparrow Day is unique."

Mr Ram Ramakrishnan



Taking over from Mr Ramakrishnan, Mr Dilawar, spoke about how the World Sparrow Day began last year as a small initiative and has today grown as a movement. "People around the world - in cities, towns, villages - have joined hands to conserve the common biodiversity," he said. "For the past 60 years, the common man has remained out of the conservation movement. Our aim is to involve people from all walks of life - from homemakers to engineers and professionals - into conservation."

"Our aim is to involve people from all walks of life - from homemakers to engineers and software professionals into conservation"

Mr Mohammed Dilawar



"We need to understand that if we have a problem, our children will have a bigger problem. Would we want that?"

Mr Christian Pilard

Chief guest Mr Chrisitan Pilard of the French conservation organization Eco-Sys Action Foundation, explained why sparrows are a better symbols of nature for the common man stating, "Sparrows go into the cities while tigers and elephants don't." The main objective of the WSD he said was to inspire people: "you know something, you tell others" and to make people understand that "if we have a problem, our children will have a bigger problem" and questioned the crowd if they would want that. Dr Rahmani, Mr Dilawar's mentor at BNHS where he began his work on sparrow conservation, while being a part of the Important Bird Areas (IBA) team, brought a light moment to the session by talking about "Mr Sparrow's" (Dilawar's nickname at BNHS), younger days and his obsession with sparrows. "At first I would be irate because he would only talk about sparrows. But we scientists are a passionate lot, and at some point I started liking his interest." Dr Rahmani said that it was good to see Wipro coming forward to support the cause and urged more corporate to take up conservation with such commitment. "If corporates like Wipro come into the conservation movement, then two lakh people join in the bandwagon. If all the people get involved, it's good. Conservation can't just be a concern, we have to actually see what we can do."



Dr Asad Rahmani of BNHS speaks on the World Sparrow Day





"We need to look at the sparrow's disappearance and learn about the principles of ecology. We must use the sparrow as a tool to expand our view of the world."

L Shyamal

L Shyamal, the largest contributor of natural history related topics in Wikipedia

Mr L Shyamal, one of the largest contributors of Indian natural history related issues to Wikipedia, spoke about the need to democratise science and make it accessible to everyone.

"Conservation in our country has remained an elitist issue so far. The term 'ist' is a divisive force which separates the common man from the experts. We need to bridge this separation, and open up the doors for debate between experts and the people. For this to happen, the people have to know. The internet can be an effective means of bringing together communities and people," Shyamal said.

Shyamal pointed out that the sparrow's decline is an indicator of our "incorrect way of living" by saying, "It's not that we have hunted sparrows or we don't want sparrows. They have disappeared because the way we live has changed." He added, "We need to look at the bird's disappearance and learn about the principles of ecology. We must use the sparrow as a tool to expand our view of the world."



LAUNCH OF SPARROW AWARDS

Nature Forever Society also launched its Sparrow Awards, a special awards to honour the heroes who have silently made a difference to the environment over the years. Four awards were conferred to people from varied fields and backgrounds.

Our sentiments behind the awards

We have often noticed in the conservation field that while the best known conservationists consistently receive accolades for their good work, there are many other organizations and individuals with great conviction and little desire for fame, who make an Herculean effort in their own right to save the environment. Our sentiment behind launching the Sparrow Awards is to honour such people and show them our gratitude for their silently effort.

With this criteria in mind, we chose the award winners this year with utmost care, scanning across the country for the best four 'Sparrow heroes'. In the coming year, we aspire to make the Sparrow Awards one of the most prestigious awards on could hold, very tough to attain and inspirational to keep.



The newly launched Sparrow awards were bestowed upon three individuals and one business initiative for their work in conservation



The newly-launched Sparrow Awards were bestowed upon three individuals and one business initiative for their exemplary work in saving the environment and wildlife.

The Sparrow Awards winners were:



Interview

How does it feel to be the first recipient of the Sparrow Award?

It is a great motivation. When I came across Nature Forever Society on the internet, my childhood interest in sparrows was rekindled and as a member of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), I started urging other industries to set up nest boxes and bird feeders around their factories. Today, as I hold the Sparrow certificate, I am feel honoured that my efforts has been recognised.

Did you expect to receive the Sparrow Award?

Not at all. In fact, earlier, I had plans to be in Mumbai around the time of March 20 to watch the ICC Cricket World Cup finals this year. I cancelled my tickets when I was informed about the awards.

BHAVIN SHAH

(left) A wholesaler of FMCG goods from Coimbatore, Shah has aided nearly 25 Coimbatore-based industries to adopt nest boxes and make their premises sparrow-friendly.



Interview

You are one of our first four esteemed Sparrow Award recipients. How does it feel to receive the award?

Awards are always good. They acknowledge people's efforts and encourage them to continue the good work with renewed interest. It's always a joy – even though a trifle embarrassing -- to receive an award.

What do you think of our first Sparrow Awards Certificate?

I liked the design and particularly loved the photograph of the flying sparrow on it. I want to congratulate the photographer for the image.

L SHYAMAL

(left):

A bio-medical statistical analyst by profession, he is today the largest contributor of Indian natural history in Wikipedia. He has prepared a software, Birdspot, with a database of 50,000 birds, which one can search by simply feeding in the bird description.





Interview

Did you expect to receive the Sparrow Award?

In my 30 years of career as a forest official, I have fought several battles to save the forest cover and especially protect the tiger habitat. Today, I am honoured to know that my work in the field has been noticed and I am a proud recipient of this award.

How do you feel to have received this award?

I felt honoured and happy as I went up to the stage to receive the award on the World Sparrow Day. It feels good to be identified as a Sparrow Hero.

**NARENDRA SINGH
CHAUDHARY**
Divisional Forest Officer of
Lansdowne Division,
Uttarakhand, he has been
responsible for many
remarkable changes in and
around the Corbett National
Park



Interview

What is it like to win an award for your first business venture?

Our business started as a small experiment, selling merchandise within the school premises. However, slowly, we realised that our idea was catching up and corporate involvement grew. Today, as we hold this award, we feel we have reached the peak of your achievement! It is really nice to be recognised

What are your future plans for 'The Sparrow'?

The Sparrow Award has encouraged us and renewed our enthusiasm to work towards bringing the sparrows back into our city (Bangalore). We will continue promoting awareness with our existing merchandise which include Sparrow tees, coffee mugs etc. The nesting boxes will remain our prime product.

THE SPARROW: A business venture by 28 students of the Aditi Mallya International School, Bangalore, to spread awareness about the exodus of the sparrows from cities.



BIODIVERCITY PHOTO COMPETITION

A PART from the Sparrow Awards, Nature Forever Society also organised the BiodiverCity Photo Competition, an unique contest to the common man, in association with the Bangalore Photography Workshops, this year.

We have noticed that often, a lot of people from varied backgrounds, have a penchant for nature photography. However, not everyone can be a professional photographer. Bearing this in mind, we devised an exceptionally simple, open-for-all photo competition, wherein anyone from any part of the world could simply click photographs of birds in their neighbourhood and email it to us with their names and captions. Participants were allowed to use any camera – be it a professional SLR or a basic family camera, a digital camera or even a mobile camera. The idea was to offer people a platform to display their talent and express their love for the nature around them.

As anticipated the response to the competition was overwhelming – we received over a 100 entries in just a month's time – and each picture was spectacular in its own way. The panel, consisting of photography experts from the Bangalore Photography Workshops and wildlife experts from Nature Forever Society, had a tough time shortlist the final winners.

Entry rules

We aimed at keeping the rules and regulations for this competition minimal for the convenience of the participants. All we specified for was that the photo size should not exceed 200 KBs and 800 pixels and that the pictures should be captioned in detail.

Our primary focus was to encourage all amateur photographers to show off their creativity – aspiring shutterbugs, homemakers, birdwatchers, school and college students and simply anyone with a love for their neighbourhood winged friends were urged to enter the competition.

Entries were split into two categories: Adult and Junior (below 18 years of age) and the winners were conferred special Sparrow certificates. The first prize winner was also gifted a two-day stay for two at the biodiversity and birdlife-rich Manali in Himachal Pradesh, sponsored by Nikhil Devasar.

The BiodiverCity Photo Competition winners were: (Adult category)



FIRST PRIZE

Mr Vijay Dhankhar's picture of a sparrow roosting tree decorated with lighting wires, aptly showcased the plight of the sparrows in the midst of human festivities.





SECOND PRIZE

Mr Varadharajan Gokula's image of two Pelicans in a swampy cityscape, showed how wildlife finds its place even in a polluted urban setting.



THIRD PRIZE

Mr Shashin V Vardhave's picture of sea gulls perched comfortably against the backdrop of Mumbai's high-rises again stressed on the wildlife in the concrete jungle..



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(Junior category)



FIRST PRIZE

Vikas Madhav's image of an African lovebird kept in a cage being visited by a rose ring parakeet exhibited aptly the plight of caged birds.



SECOND PRIZE

Ritwika Maity's picture of parakeets perched on the ledge of Akbar's tomb.

While Junior First Prize winner Vikas Madhav's mother Dr Prassana personally attended the function to receive the prize, the rest of the awards for the BiodiverCity Photo Contest were mailed to the winners.



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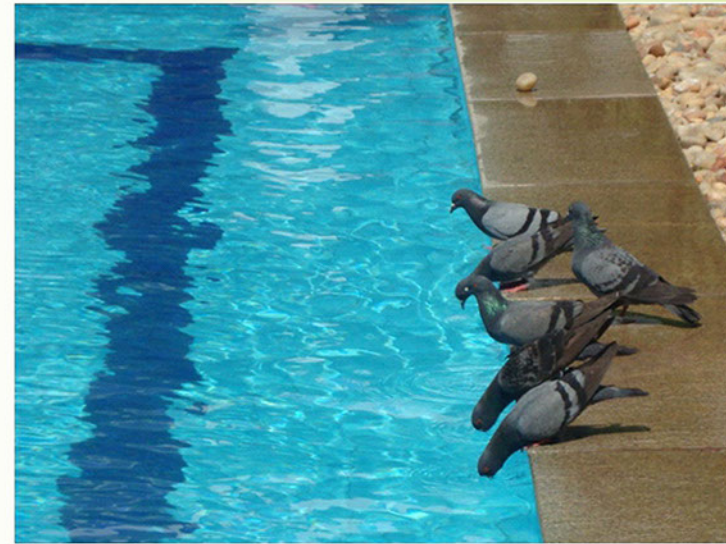
BiodiverCity: Some close competitors

As we mentioned earlier, the Biodiversity Photo Competition attracted over 100 entries from across India in a span of just one month. And with so many stunning photographs in both the adult and junior sections, the competition was close. Our panel spent days of thought and discussion, shortlisting the winners. The final winners were picked primarily for their concept, creativity and the story their picture told. We list below a few other interesting entries, which gave close competition to the winning photographs.



We have read about how the cuckoo lays her eggs in the crow's nest and dupes the otherwise clever crow to play surrogate to her chick. Vasant Bhumkar's amazing picture offers a rare glimpse into this brilliant con of the natural world, also called parasitism

Gautam Patil's picture of a house sparrow pair perched on the thin ledge of a mirror, again highlights the level of comfort these tiny birds share with humans.



Nagamani's photograph of pigeons quenching their thirst at a swimming pool, is an interesting portrayal of symbiosis between man and common birds.

Vikas Nayak's picture of crows and mynahs on a thatched roof of a Mumbai wadi has a stark composition, capturing the peculiarity of an overcrowded city.





Among the junior category, Kevin Samuel's picture of a cuckoo on a neem tree, shot from his balcony, caught out eyes



Junior M Vimalraj's photograph of chicks at a neighbour's chicken coop portrays not just an interesting play of light and shadows, but also the inter-dependent relationship between man and animals.

WORLD SPARROW DAY

2011



CELEBRATIONS AROUND THE GLOBE



BELARUS, EUROPE

Origami making, contests by APB BirdLife



IN Belarus, the World Sparrow Day 2011 was celebrated in the city of Baranovichy, where APB BirdLife had erected a monument for the sparrows and made it the 'Bird of the Year' in 2003. The WSD event this year was attended by local government representations, the sculptor of the monument, students of the Baranovichy State University and several enthusiastic locals. Visitors learnt about the importance of the sparrow and made origami sparrows



People gather around the sparrow monument to mark World Sparrow Day in Belarus

The celebration this year included a photography exhibition in the Central Library displaying photographs of sparrows shot by Belarussian photographers. APB BirdLife noted that "almost half of the photos were shot by a man with the surname Sparrow". As part of the celebration, a small contest of identifying sparrow species from pictures was held. A young boy who learned to identify different species of sparrow during the exhibition was picked the winner.



Photo exhibition at Central Library, Belarus

Later the participants moved towards the sparrow monument and distributed a mini-guide of Belarussian sparrows to passers-by. The monument was decorated with the origami sparrows made by participants.

APB BirdLife Belarus is a public organisation working to preserve the diversity of species and ecosystems in Belarus by familiarising the population to active conservation.





(above) Children and APB Birdlife representatives decorate the sparrow monument with Origami sparrows

(left) Images of various species of sparrows shot by local photographers displayed at the Central Library



Media cutting of WSD event in Belarus

Тыдзень вераб'ёў у Баранавічах

Алесь ПЗУН

Выстава фотаздымкаў беларускіх фатографу-натуралістаў «Пра што спявае верабей» была адкрыта ў Цэнтральнай гарадской бібліятэцы да Міжнароднага дня вераб'я, які ў Баранавічах, як і ва ўсім свеце, адзначылі 20 сакавіка.

• 20 сакавіка ў Баранавічах упершыню адзначылі Міжнародны дзень вераб'я



Адкрыццё фотавыставы «Пра што спявае верабей», падрыхтаванай грамадскай арганізацыяй «Ахова птушак Бацькаўшчыны» (АПБ) да Міжнароднага дня вераб'я, стала галоўнай культурнай падзеяй мінулай нядзелі ў Баранавічах.

Экспазіцыю складалі 13 фотаработ розных беларускіх фатографу з выявамі сідзі жыціці або двух навіх у Беларусі відаў вераб'ёў – дамавога і палявога. На

выставе можна пабачыць, як вераб'і бавяць час на самоце, як збіраюцца ў хайрус і як высвятляюць адносіны... На выставе экспануюцца і ўнікальныя здымкі беларускіх фатографу-натуралістаў, якія адлілі з фатографу вынажкава сфатографуваў у Мінску.

Падчас урачыстага адкрыцця выставы сябры АПБ распавялі пра сваю дзейнасць і запарасі ўсіх ахвотных далучацца да сямроў арганізацыі.

Баранавіцкі сябра арганізацыі Дзмітрый Лундзішэў распавёў пра адну з глабальных праблем сучаснасці – скарачэнне біялагічнай разнастайнасці на зямлі, а таксама пра экалагічную і эстэтычную функцыю вераб'ёў і важнасць захавання гэтага віду пташкі.

«Гэта невялікая шэрая птушка не толькі ратуе нашым падлеткі ад мноства шкоднікаў, але і дадае непаўторнага характара і дынамічнасці гарадзкім пейзажам», – падсумаваў Дзмітрый Лундзішэў.

Пасля адкрыцця выставы сябры АПБ наладзілі майстар-клас па вырабе вераб'ёў з каліровай паперы. Кожны мог сваімі рукамі паспрабаваць зрабіць папярэвага вераб'я. Сваю птушку пасля можна было або пакінуць сабе на памяць, або ўпрыгожыць ёю помнік вераб'ю ў цэнтры горада, куды ўсе ахвотныя рушылі пасля ўрачыстасцей у бібліятэцы.

Тыя, хто не наведаў прысвечаную вераб'ю фотавыставу ў мінулую нядзелю, могуць паспець гэта зрабіць да 28 сакавіка.



HONG KONG

Bird exhibit, badge & magnet workshops at Hong Lok Yuen International School



THE Hong Lok Yuen International School in Tai Po, Hong Kong, celebrated WSD 2011 by installing an informative exhibit on sparrows as well as other birds, their ecosystems and their conservation.

Children were taught to prepare sparrow badges and the classes were promoted to watch the exhibits with their teachers. Some students also researched on the various birds' physical features.



Geoffrey Rudsdale, one of the two Year VI teachers, who was involved in organising the event said, "Our special thanks to Christian Pilard and Stella Chan of Eco-Sys Action Foundation for arranging the wonderful posters and for displaying them. In addition we could mention the children of our Eco-school committee and the children of Year VI who made sparrow badges and fridge magnets to sell. The sale returned a profit that will go to purchasing materials to build nesting boxes for our environmental areas."



(above) The informative bird exhibit at Hong Lok Yuen International School

(left) Sparrow fridge magnets and badges prepared by the students





(top) The sparrow display prepared and installed by French conservation organisation Eco-Sys Action and (above) children engrossed in the badge making



SHIMLA

Five-day exhibition on birds of HP by Himachal Birds



In Shimla, Himachal Birds organised a five-day exhibition of birds of Himachal Pradesh to coincide with the second World Sparrow Day. The exhibition was held in the Gaiety Theatre, The Mall, Shimla from 19-23 March, 2011.

The exhibition was inaugurated by the Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh Prof. Prem Kumar Dhumal. He also holds the portfolio for Wildlife and Forests.



Shimla Chief Minister Prof Prem Kumar Dhumal after the inauguration



Over 5000 people including school children visited the exhibition which was initially planned for 3 days but had to be extended by two more days due to popular demand. Eco Clubs of all the schools in Shimla associated with the event.



School children through the exhibition on birds of Himachal Pradesh



(left) some posters

The school children were sensitised about issues like need for avian conservation loss of habitat due to urbanisation. Threats from microwave towers were also discussed. The organisations also installed 40 wooden nest boxes around Shimla.



(above) Children assembled at the Mall area on their way to the birds of Himachal Pradesh exhibition



(left) Shimla Chief Minister Prof Prem Kumar Dhumal lighting the lamp

MUMBAI

Children's competitions, tree plantations by Holy Family Church



ECO PALS, the environmental club of the Holy Family Church, Chakala, Mumbai, along with the sisters of Divya Jyoti Convent and a welfare organisation called United Ways organised a string of activities to create awareness about the World Sparrow Day. About 120 children participated in activities related to saving the sparrow over a span of three Sundays.



(top left) drawing and colouring done by children displayed at the Holy Family Church, Chakala
(Top right) Members of the Holy Family Church prepare for the World Sparrow Day celebrations
(left) Kids show of a nest box made by them

On March 6, the students discussed the need for protecting sparrows, and learnt to make bird feeders and shelters. On March 13, a drawing and colouring competition was held for junior kids and bird feeder and nest box making competition for senior kids. On March 20, 2011, Fr Leo Soares and other prominent church members spoke to students about the environment. A tree plantation drive was launched and bird shelters made by the kids were setup in appropriate locations within the church. Prizes were given to kids winning the competitions



(top) Children at the nest box and feeder making workshop

(left) nest boxes and feeders made by kids on display





(above) Bird watchers arrive at Sirukinaru on World Sparrow Day

(left) Annai Trust organised a post event rally for school kids on March 21

The next day, March 21, Annai Trust conducted a World Sparrow Day rally and educational and public events in Thudiyalur (Coimbatore District), More than 1,000 students from different schools -- including the Government Higher Secondary School, Appanayakanpalayam, Government High School, Vellakinar, Govt Higher Secondary School, N.G.G.O Colony -- gathered to learn about sparrow conservation and the importance of World Sparrow Day.



School students learned about sparrow conservation and the importance of World Sparrow Day on March 21



(Above) In Thudiyalur, school children hold a pamphlet on the importance of the World Sparrow Day

(left) An outdoor classroom in Thudiyalur on March 21

CHENNAI

Bird watching by Madras Crocodile Bank Trust



In Chennai, the Madras Crocodile Bank Trust organised a bird watching event in Vadanameli Village to commemorate World Sparrow Day. Participants set out at 6 am eager to catch sight of some amazing feathered creatures. The group sighted White Throated Kingfisher, Common Kingfisher, Paddy Field Pipit, Bee-eaters, Egrets, Pond Herons, Night Heron, Eurasian Golden Orioles and Mynahs.



In Chennai, the Madras Crocodile Bank Trust organised an early morning bird watching event to Vadanameli village to celebrate WSD





Bird watchers at Vadanameli village sighted Common Kingfisher, Paddy Field Pipit, Bee-eaters, Egrets, Pond Herons, Night Heron, Eurasian Golden Orioles and several other birds



CHENNAI

Bird watching, Individual event

A GROUP of 15 individuals from Kodambakkam in Chennai went on a bird watching trek to Chembarabakkam about 40 km from Chennai city. The group including Mr Samuel R, Jency Samuel, Kevin Samuel, Betsy Selvakumar, Karthikeyan, Serina Karthikeyan, Rohini Narendran, Yadhunandhan, Sujitha Raju and others started their birding trip from the heart of the city where a White-Breasted Kingfisher posed for them from their compound wall. They also saw a Small Blue Kingfisher, Pied Kingfisher, Pied Crested Cuckoo, Blue-Tailed Bee-eaters, Indian Robin, Herons, Coots, Terns, Open-Billed Storks among other birds. The group specified that they observed a horde of sparrows in a by-lane near their residence in Kodambakkam.



Kevin Samuel, Jency Samuel (extreme right) and friends bird watching at Chembarabakkam

PATNA

Human chain by Patna Women's College



KEEPING with its last year's tradition, the Patna Women's College organised a nature walk and a human chain on March 18, 2011, to commemorate the World Sparrow Day. The students were also taught to identify common plants and birds during the nature walk. In the run up to the World Sparrow Day, during the last week of February 2011, the college students also organised an exhibition on medicinal plants.



Students of the Patna Women's College organise a human chain in the run up to WSD



Students of Patna Women's College take out a rally to save the sparrows



NEW DELHI

Awareness programme, drawing competition by CSKM Public School



IN NEW Delhi, the boarding students of CSKM Public School, Satbari, Chhattarpur, celebrated World Sparrow Day in their school campus. Class VIII teacher Smriti Bhardwaj interacted with the children and gave them a lesson on sparrows, their habitat and why WSD is being celebrated. Participating children also browsed on WSD in the computer lab to learn more. The school's Fine Arts Department organised a drawing competition to create awareness on the importance of sparrow in our life and to save the earth. Our theme for the competition was "Chirp for the sparrow! Tweet for the sparrow!" Students from Class IV to VIII participated. Principal, Dr (Mrs) Shakuntla S Jaiman, in her message, said, "Sparrow is now a disappearing specie and youth will take the responsibility to protect it from declining".



Media cutting of WSD event in New Delhi

Hindustan Times – New Delhi



School celebrates Sparrow Day

NEW DELHI: The boarding students of CSKM Public School in Chhattarpur here celebrated World Sparrow Day on Sunday along with Nature Forever Society. The theme this year was "Chirp for the sparrow! Tweet for the sparrow!" and students from Class IV to Class VIII participated in various events. The fine arts department also organised a drawing competition for students. "The sparrow is now a disappearing species and the youth should take responsibility for protecting it," said Principal Dr. Shakuntala S. Jaiman.

The Hindu –New Delhi



NEW DELHI

Awareness Campaign, individual event

DR SURYA Prakash of the Jawaharlal Nehru University sent SMSes to students and friends and discussed the causes for the plummeting of house sparrows in urban areas with them. Dr Prakash also took a group of students to his home to show them how he feeds sparrows and helps them to breed by providing them nesting boxes and planting indigenous lawn with organic natural manure. He explained how this activity provides a breeding platform to the native insects which the sparrows feed to their chicks as a protein supplement in the early age of life.



Dr Surya Prakash of JNU sends pictures of sparrows in his garden

MEERUT

Sparrow Meet by Samanvya Social Welfare

IN MEERUT, the non-governmental organisation Samanvya Social Welfare Society arranged a meeting at Shastrinagar on March 19, the eve of the World Sparrow Day, where experts spoke to a crowd of enthusiasts on the serious implications of the dwindling of sparrows from cities and villages and why it is happening. The meeting was headed by the Samanvya Society director Sachin Kumar Gupta and presided by Dr Ashish Bindal, Ravi Prakash and many others from the society. The experts conducted a long session explaining to people how the sparrows die in summer due to extreme heat. With the summer months upon us, and the temperatures already soaring, the experts appealed to the people to put out a bowl of clean water in their balcony or the upper side of the roof of their house everyday at least during summer. They also urged them keep grains in their balcony for the birds. Around 5,000 awareness SMSes were sent by Sachin Kumar Gupta and his colleagues to the locals of Meerut. The NGO also explained to the people the need for planting native trees in their town instead of exotic plants. They urged the locals to plant native plants and trees to attract sparrow to their neighbourhood.



Media cutting of WSD event in Meerut



PRESS COVERAGE ACROSS INDIA

DNA Bangalore

Can we bring the sparrow back?

Vaishalli Chandra

Bird nests aren't enough to get the sparrow back. These work only if there is a small sparrow population in the vicinity, pointed out Nashik-based Mohammed Dilawar, who is in town to speak about common bird conservation, at Wipro's Electronic city campus.

It is World Sparrow Day, but if you look out of your window, there is a remote chance of you spotting one. But, there are still some localities that can boast of a small sparrow population, namely, Bangalore International Airport, Devanahalli and City market.

This gutsy bird is considered a bio-indicator and its decline is raising concern among environmentalists. "Sparrow is an umbrella species, through it we want to create awareness of flora and fauna in urban centres," said Dilawar, who runs a bird conservation centre in Nashik.



The gutsy bird is a bio-indicator and its decline is raising concerns among environmentalists

way – to not just attract the sparrows – but other birds too. With approaching summer, it is a good idea to have a water bowl as many birds die in summers due to dehydration.

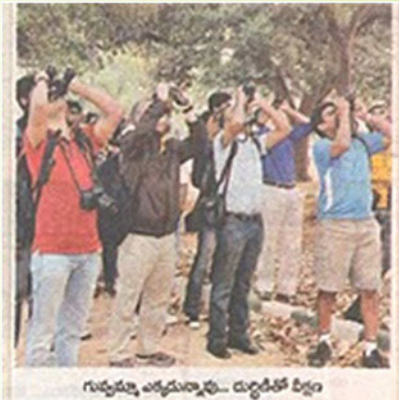
"Wipro is hosting the World Sparrow Day as part of its sustainability vision. Bio-diversity is one of the four themes we support. The other being energy, water and waste," said PS Narayan, head, Eco-Eye. Wipro. The one-day programme at their Electronic City campus will include a talk by Dilawar, sale of bird boxes as well as a binocular donation for sparrow conservationists, where people can donate second-hand binoculars. If you would like to help, log on to www.natureforever.com



"It is a bird that has an instant connect with the urbanites, who may have grown up seeing the bird," he said. The young ones of a sparrow feed on insects, so conservationists also advise that people plant more native species, providing food for the birds. Dilawar says helping the bird will "offset the imbalance and the common man can participate – starting with having bird bowls or nests to help them."

Swanky buildings hardly





గుప్పల కోసం...

నూత్న పంచన విప్రో ఉద్యోగులు

బెంగళూరు, మార్చి 21 (నాచర్ ఫోర్వేర్) - నగరీకరణ, పెరుగుతున్న కాంక్రీటు కట్టడాలు, తమిళనాడు ప్రభుత్వం, నెట్ వర్క్ లేకపోవడం వల్ల తరచుగా అనేక కారణాలతో నగరం నుండి కడుమురుగు నీరు సులభంగా తీసికొనిపోయేందుకు విప్రో సంస్థ ఉద్యోగులు నడుం కట్టారు. నగరంలోని అయా ప్రాంతంలో అవిహారం, గోడలు వారం నుండి రెండు గంటల నాళ్లకు కొత్తగామలను రుద్దిపెట్టారు. గుప్పలను ఆకర్షించేందుకు అందువల్లా వీరు చేసిన పాల్గొన్న శ్రమ, తాటికి వేయాలన్న ఆసక్తి

తాత్పర్యం వల్ల నేడుకలలు, దివ్య జ్వాల వివరించారు. చల్లవరకు వరదల్లో పులిగొస్తారన్న అందు కున్న ముహూర్త చింతన వల్ల త్వరలో విప్రో సంస్థ సిబ్బంది హార్వరుకు వెళ్లి అప్పుడు పట్టిన వివరాలు ఉపయోగం లేకపోయే అంశాలను పరిశీలించారు. నగర కివారు ప్రాంతంలోని అక్కడ వెళ్లి గుప్పలను కాపాడమనిన అమెరికన్ లాస్ట్ లైఫ్ లింగులను గుప్పలను కాపాడే మృత్యులను అక్కడ పోలీసు అధికారులు సహజంగా వున్న పువ్వులను అందజేస్తామని విప్రో సంస్థ ప్రకటించింది.



Do your bit for the house sparrow

Several initiatives were taken in the run-up to World Sparrow Day

Staff Reporter

BANGALORE: World Sparrow Day was observed on Sunday to create awareness on the steady decline in the number of house sparrows and to take steps to ensure that this gregarious bird does not become extinct.

Several initiatives were taken in the city over the week to save the fast-disappearing bird.

At Wipro

Information Technology (IT) giant Wipro decided to do its bit for the house sparrow in the run-up to World Sparrow Day.

Mohammed Dilawar, one of the winners of Time magazine's Heroes of the Environment-2008, was invited to speak on the topic on the Wipro campus.

An online sale of bird-houses was organised.

Employees of Wipro have been encouraged to donate unused or extra pairs of binoculars and other equipment to aid sparrow conservationists.

Earlier, BCIL, a leading builder of eco-friendly zero-energy design homes, along with the Zoo Authority of Karnataka, launched the 'Gubbi Goodu' campaign. Under the programme, 10,000 sparrow houses will be distributed to the public for free.

An e-book will be made available to persons who take these bird houses in order to help them understand how to nurture sparrows.

The sparrow houses can be



WELCOME THEM: BCIL launched the 'Gubbi Goodu' campaign in Bangalore on Sunday. - PHOTO: V. SREENIVASA MURTHY

set up in balconies, verandahs, pergolas, or a tree and a bowl of water can be placed in them. Call the BCIL helpline at 84318 48224 for more in-

formation. Last month, on the eve of 'Milad Mubarak', the 100th birthday celebrations of Dr. Syedna Mohammed Burhanuddin, the

Burhani Foundation, in collaboration with Nature Forever Society, initiated a mass conservation project called Save Our Sparrows (SOS).

Under the project, 52,000 bird feeders were distributed worldwide and about 500 were distributed in Bangalore.



A chirp for the sparrow

We examine the dangers lurking in new corners for the little bird as poachers hunt them for petty gains, on World Sparrow Day

Niranjana Kaggave

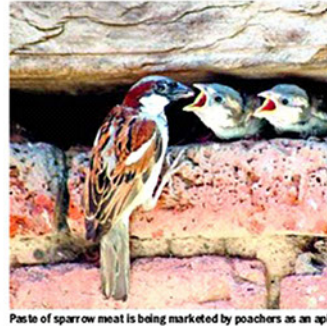
There is a threat looming large over the House Sparrow population in Southern India. Even as the clamour for conservation of these sparrows is fast reaching a crescendo, a new danger could jeopardise the population of this bird which has been trending on the path of recovery in recent times. It is not the radiation from mobile towers

that endangers their lives but poachers across South India, who have been marketing them as aphrodisiac and a permanent cure for sexual ailments. While the number of sparrows has dropped considerably, the increased awareness and conservation efforts in recent times seem to have made these poachers focus on sparrows. Sending shocks to the conservation movement, Andhra Pradesh police on Friday busted a major racket producing 'Tichhuka

Lehyam' (Sparrow Paste) as ultimate cure for sexual diseases with a well established network in Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, West Bengal and certain parts of Uttar Pradesh.

According to the police, the culprits used the brains of sparrows, especially the male ones, to prepare powder and paste to be used as aphrodisiac apart from the meat of the birds.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10 »



Paste of sparrow meat is being marketed by poachers as an aph



Threatened by poachers

Conservationist Mohammed Esmail Dilawar who is widely known as the 'sparrow man' says, "Though I was aware about sparrows being the target of poachers for various treatments, preparation of paste and powder from the brains of male sparrows is disgusting. Keeping in mind these practices, I had held talks with the forest departments of various states. But so far we haven't really got any feedback on this."

The culprits justify their heinous crime saying there is a demand. "Not just in AP but there is a demand in neighbouring states as well. It cures cough, asthma, acidity problems and ulcers. If one uses this paste continuously for the 21 days it will increase one's sexual appetite," is the bizarre claim made by one of the arrested. Each kilogram of paste made out of the sparrow's meat costs Rs 1,000. "Though there are references to treatments using meat in Ayurveda, particular reference to sparrows is rarely illustrated. Under the category of aharavarga (types of foods) mamsavarga (meat) is also one type of treatment. We generally prescribe ajamamsa lehya (goatmeat paste) for some diseases and for vadhikarana (aphrodisiac) purpose practitioners can use the meat of animals and birds. But a few quacks have been misleading people by taking the names of endangered species," explains Dr Shobha Rani, an ayurvedic practitioner from Bangalore. "Our efforts should not go waste. While we are striving hard to bring them back, incidents like these are causing major setback to

our efforts. Government must look into these issues. Sparrows have been listed under the schedule IV of the Indian Wildlife Act and department concerned must take adequate measures to ensure suitable ambience for these species to live in," opined Dilawar who is also the president and founder of Nature Forever, which is working towards sparrow conservation at the national level. Citizens hasten, officials slacken

While the newfound threats are jeopardising the conservation movement, apathetic officials are also a concern. According to biodiversity experts, Bangalore is leading at the national level on sparrow conservation front. "Bangalore has been the leader in this regard. People have shown more interest in bringing these birds back. Last year when I was in city to create awareness I had sold more than 100 nesting boxes and got orders for a few hundred as well. Moved by the response, this year we decided to have the celebrations of World Sparrow day in Bangalore itself," explains Dilawar.

Harish Bhat, a biodiversity expert and a scientist at the Indian Institute of Science says, "People's perception is gradually changing. In spite of their hectic schedules they find time to feed these birds. People feed sparrows, mynas and robins in their balconies through artificial nests. Their efforts have succeeded in bringing back these birds in very small numbers in Bangalore. Today 10 to 15 areas are home to a growing sparrow population. In Yeshwantpur alone, there are close to 50-60 sparrows."

But officials at BBMP are yet to make a mark. Last year special awareness programmes were conducted for RFOs and ACFs for sparrow conservation by roping in the sparrow man Dilawar. However, the technical sessions seemed to have no impact on the BBMP officials as there was no programme subsequently. "I was hopeful of hearing from them and anxious to know about the results. But I did not hear anything from BBMP officials afterwards. I hope they are carrying on the message among the urbanites," says Dilawar.

Chirping for sparrows

Published on: March 18, 2011 - 22:49



As we get ready to celebrate World House Sparrow Day on March 20, The Navhind Times encourages the public to spare a thought for this once-abundantly-found homely bird

BY ARTI DAS | NT NETWORK

What's that one name that comes to your mind when I say birds? Yes, it is the sparrow, as most of us grew up surrounded by them. They were there everywhere in our gardens, verandas. There were nests in the corners of our homes.

But, as the years passed, these little feathered friends gradually stopped greeting us in the mornings. Like many other species these birds are also under threat as their food and nesting habitat is under danger. Nasik based Mohammed Dilawar, from last year, has initiated March 20 as the World House Sparrow Day in order to make people aware that the sparrow population is diminishing. "The aim of this year's WSD is to spread awareness by conducting various activities and making more and more people aware about the decline of house sparrows and other common birds. We are requesting today's internet savvy generation to Tweet and Chirp for Sparrows," says Dilawar.

It is being observed that the lack of habitats as far as nesting and feeding is concerned is a major threat as modern buildings have little or no place for the sparrows to make their nests. "The new style of architecture does not allow for nests. Also feeding centres for these sparrows have reduced. They were commonly sighted at the old grocery stores feeding on grains. Now these shops are hardly there," says Parag Rangnekar, avid bird watcher. "Also the increasing use of exotic plants in gardening is leading to lack of habitats and insect food for the sparrows," adds Dilawar.

There are also reports that radiations from the cell phone towers are affecting the lives of sparrows. "There are such reports but still there is no confirmation on it," elaborates Parag. He further mentions, "Unlike crows sparrows don't scavenge. They mainly feed on grains and insects. One could find many sparrows early morning at the Panaji bus stand when the marigold flowers are brought in. They come there to feed on caterpillars."

He also opined that saving of urban species is of utmost important. "Any changes happening in our environment is more clearly visible in common species like sparrows. But we take them for granted. We need to provide nesting and feeding centres for them," concludes Parag.

What you can do

"Provide water baths to the birds as summer approaches

"Plant native trees and prevent the use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides in there gardens.

"They can be helped by feeding them on a regular basis and also providing them with nesting sites.



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Posted: Tue Mar 16 2010, 02:44 hrs Vadodara: A

Dwindling population of the bird has stirred activists into actionA

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Animal activists across Gujarat have decided to celebrate March 20 as the World House Sparrow Day in a bid to create awareness about these birds that are gradually disappearing. The movement was initiated by a Nasik-based group and activists in Gujarat will lend their support to the cause. A

In Vadodara, activists have ordered as many as 2,500 nests made of cardboard, while in Surat, as many earthen pots will be distributed among the residents. In Velavadar, activists have taken the help of potters to make special nests for the house sparrow. The local activists plan to carry out several awareness programmes on March 20. A

Mishal Thakur of Canine Group said: "We were happy when we came to know about the World House Sparrow Day. We will inform the people to create a conducive environment for the house sparrows so that they can build their nests." A

The activists have decided to manufacture nests specifically designed for the small birds. "Along with these nests, we will also keep track of all the people to whom we have given the nests. At the end of the year, we will conduct a survey to know what exactly happened to the nests, which birds nested in the boxes, and what was the success ratio. This will help us carry forward the campaign next year too," Thakur added. A

Nasik-based Mohammed Dilawar, who initiated the movement, said: "Our intention is not to celebrate the day just for the sake of celebration. That is why we have chalked out a plan of action and decided small steps that could easily be taken by the common man. Unless there is awareness among the common people, the house sparrow numbers will continue to dwindle. One can celebrate this day by going out on a picnic and doing some bird watching. A

Activist Shrenik Shah from Velavadar has taken the help of a potter to design a nest for the sparrows. "I have asked the potters to use the traditional potter's wheel to make the nest. It will be the sort of a box with a small lid and the entry will be kept small to allow only a bird of the size of a sparrow. This is because sparrows prefer a safe place to build their nests," he said. A

The Surat-based NGO, Prayaas, has decided to weave in the house sparrow concept in their mega campaign to save the birds during the summers. "We will distribute as many as 5,000 pots for the birds. As part of that campaign, we will also convince the people to take steps to provide a protective environment to the sparrows," Darshan Desai of Prayas said. A

Chennai Plus

First Weekly Tabloid in Chennai



20th March Is World Sparrow Day 2011

Posted on March 20, 2011 by Chennai Plus

The second World Sparrow Day is on 20th March 2011. Join in this fun celebration by taking your friends on an educative bird walk to a nearby garden, organizing a bird quiz or crossword for colleagues, arranging essay/art/eloquence competition at your kid's school, or involving your online friends in a tweeting activity on Twitter, dedicating your status message and profile picture to the sparrows on Facebook or simply texting sparrow SMSes to each other.

The sparrow found around human habitation in Asia, Europe and Africa is an important symbol of the dwindling common biodiversity of the world. The World Sparrow Day aims at raising awareness about them, with a string of conservation activities.

Organise your own fun-filled events in your society, work place or institutes. Register your events with at www.worldsparrowday.org. You can also download posters, logos and activity ideas from the site and use it to promote your event.

And yes, send your participation details. Among a variety of bright ideas we have already received from participants are a blog-writing event from Singapore, a bird watching event from Africa, a poster campaign from Manipur and a leaflet distribution event from Chennai.



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This year celebrate 'Sparrow Holi'

New Delhi | Sunday, 2011 10:35:06 AM IST

They were ubiquitous once, chirruping and flapping their wings at the window sill, filling nooks on top of cupboards and fans with their well-cushioned nests, and eagerly pecking at the rice or bread grains you let scatter on the floor. Where have all the little sparrows gone?

For generations, house sparrows have added child-like freshness to households with their presence. Scientists and experts say that severe changes in the urban ecosystem in recent times have had tremendous impact on the population of house sparrows whose numbers are declining constantly.

Scientists believe that the birds may never return unless some concrete steps are taken now.

"They used to build their nests below tiled roofs of houses. However, changing architectural designs in urban settlements leaves no such place for them to nest," Arun Sharma, a scientist associated with Delhi governments' forest department, told IANS.

Mobile tower radiation and excessive use of chemical fertilizers are aggravating the problem and have been identified as potent sparrow killers.

"Excessive use of fertilizers by the farmers kills insects on which house sparrows feed," said Sharma.

So, in a bid to stabilize their dwindling population and to increase awareness about sparrows, scientists and activists have called upon people to celebrate this year's second World Sparrow Day Sunday, which coincides with the Holi festival, as 'Sparrow Holi'.

"We want people to celebrate this Holi for house sparrows by using non-toxic vegetable colours or as a colourful festival with flower and leaves," a scientist and the brain behind the World Sparrow Day movement Mohammad E. Dilawar told IANS from Mumbai.

According to Dilawar, in a country where people have campaigned for the conservation of animals like tigers and elephants, house sparrows have been a neglected lot despite their visible disappearance from urban as well as rural localities.

"This is reflected in the fact that no proper countrywide study has been carried out to count the number of house sparrows," said Dilawar.

The only dependable study in the country conducted by Andhra University recently highlighted that population of house sparrows fell by over 60 percent even in rural areas of the southern coast, he added.

However, studies in Western countries have shown the alarming rate of decline in sparrow population in the urban and suburban localities.

A survey conducted by British Trust for Ornithology has shown that house sparrow population in Britain declined by about 58 percent since 1970 in gardens during winter, of which suburban gardens have shown a greater decline - 60 percent, than rural gardens - 48 percent.

"House sparrows have never been an issue of concern for us with their diminutive presence in our households. Perhaps, it is this diminutive presence because of which even their gradual disappearance has gone unnoticed," said a bird lover Rohan Srivastava.

And the fact that sparrows don't feature prominently in environment surveys published by the government reminds one of their silent journey into oblivion, he added.

According to scientists, house sparrows and pigeons were in competition for nesting space in Delhi and the smaller bird was obviously beaten by 2008.

"This is the reason why house sparrows are hardly visible in cities like Delhi these days," added Dilawar.

Though it is true that house sparrows are small in size but their disappearance may cause havoc to the entire ecosystem.

Dilawar said, "If we continue losing them at this pace then someday the entire system may collapse."

The reason being that house sparrows are important bio-indicators and their decline is a grim reminder of degradation of the urban environment and the danger from it to the humans in long run, he said.

--Indo-Asian News Service Rajeev-rl/rn



Sparrows refuse to come home!

Though the World House Sparrow Day was celebrated yesterday, hardly any birds have returned to the city despite some measures taken to increase the dwindling numbers

By: Bindiya Carmeline Thomas

Date: 2011-03-21

Place: Bangalore

While the world celebrated World House Sparrow Day yesterday, ornithologists and activists in the city lament that despite efforts to bring the birds back into the city, hardly any have returned. Only certain pockets of North Bangalore like Yeshwantpur, Hebbal and Yelahanka have seen sparrows making a comeback.



However, to make matters worse, other species of birds have followed suit leaving many to wonder if the birds would ever return to the city. M B Krishna, a noted ornithologist, said, "Sub zone birds are beginning to disappear as well.

Change in their habitat but to rampant construction work is affecting their population in the city."

Birds like copper-smith barbets, small green barbets, bulbuls, red-whiskered bulbuls and tailor birds are among the canopy birds that are in decline. Speaking to MiD DAY, Mohammed Dilawar of Nature Forever Organisation, a group that introduced nest boxes in the city to bring sparrows back, said, "Apart from sparrows, other species too are on the verge of extinction. Every possible measure should be adopted to ensure their survival."

Unlike European nations that have a monitoring system to research bird activity, there is no such system in place in India. Krishna said, "If there is a state regulated system, our government would not be so ignorant or dependent on researchers to collect data." When contacted, B K Singh, principal chief conservator of wildlife refused to comment.



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Sparrow heroes identified, and honoured in Bangalore

By Rama Devi Menon
Hyderabad



The efforts of 'unsung heroes' silently working for conservation of sparrows and other birds were recognized at the recently concluded World Sparrow Day Celebrations organized by Nature Forever Society at the sprawling campus of Wipro Technologies Ltd in Bangalore on March 20.

The recipients of this year's Sparrow Awards – instituted to recognize the efforts of the common man towards environmental conservation. Included Coimbatore-based Bhavin Shah, a wholesale dealer of fast moving consumer goods, who has assisted nearly 25 industries in the city to adopt nest boxes and make their premises sparrow friendly.

Narendra Singh Chaudhary, Divisional Forest Officer of Lansdowne Division, Uttarakhand, was honored for his initiative to bring about remarkable changes in and around the Corbett National Park, which included his recent efforts to demand a buffer zone status for the reserved forests of Lansdowne that has a high density of tigers. A

A Shyamal, a bio-medical statistical analyst, who is the largest contributor of Indian Natural History in Wikipedia, and the creator of a software called Birdspot with a database of 50,000 birds, was the other recipient of the Sparrow Award.

The Green Initiatives Award was conferred on 'Sparrow', a business venture launched by 28 dynamic students from Malviya Aditi International School, Bangalore, who have been selling select merchandise such as wooden sparrow nesting boxes, tees, flipflops and coffee mugs, all embossed with unique sparrow themes.

Dr Asad Rahmani, director of Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), conferred the awards to the recipients.

The Nature Forever Society also announced the winners of the BiodiverCity Photo Competition, where amateur photographers clicked the common flora and fauna in their areas using digital cameras, SLRs or mobile phones.

The winners in the adult category were: Vijay Dhanekar, who clicked the picture of a sparrow roosting on a tree decorated with lighting wires, which aptly showcased the plight of the sparrow in the midst of human festivities; Varadharajan Gokula, whose image of two Pelicans in a swampy cityscape, showed how wildlife finds a place even in a polluted urban setting; and Shashin V Vardhane, whose picture of sea gulls perched comfortably against the backdrop of Mumbai's high rises again emphasized the importance of wildlife in a concrete jungle.

The winners in the junior category were 11-year-old Vikas Madhav, who sent an image of a caged African lovebird being visited by a rose ring parakeet, which highlighted the plight of caged birds; and Ritwik Maity for her picture of parakeets sitting on the balcony of an old style Indian house.

Speaking on the occasion, Mohammed Dilawar, founder president of the Nature Forever Society said, "For the last 60 years, the common man has remained out of the conservation movement. With World Sparrow Day, our aim is to involve people from all walks of life – housewives, engineers and software professionals in the movement for conservation of sparrows." A Christian Pilard, founder of France-based Eco-Sys Action Foundation, was the chief guest at the event.



In limelight: Nature Forever Society recognized the silent work of ordinary people in caring for nature by conferring on few of them Sparrow Awards



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