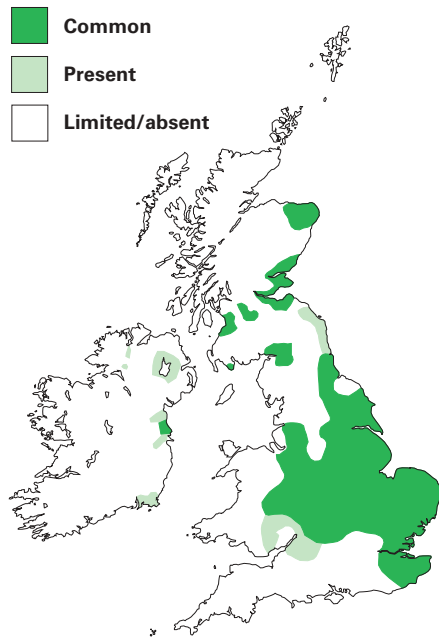




for birds
for people
for ever



Distribution map showing the relative abundance of tree sparrows in Britain and Ireland 1988-91



Andy Hay (rspb-images.com)

This scarce relative of the house sparrow is best distinguished by the chestnut crown and the black patch on its cheek.

The tree sparrow is generally found on lowland farmland with arable or mixed farming systems. The UK population of the tree sparrow declined by 94% between 1970 and 2001. This is probably because fewer seed and insect food sources are available to them on farmland.

WHAT DO TREE SPARROWS NEED?

Insects and spiders to feed to their young in spring and summer.

Tree sparrow chicks are fed on insects for the first two weeks of life. These insects come from a wide range of habitats including hedges, crops and waterside vegetation.

Lots of seeds all year round.

Adult tree sparrows feed mainly on seeds. They look for places where they can find lots of seed food. Such areas include rotational set-aside, winter stubble, root crops, wild bird cover, weeds in the crop margins or areas of spilt grain.

Holes for nesting.

Tree sparrows nest in colonies in holes in trees, farm buildings and nestboxes. Occasionally they build nests in dense bushes. It would be easy to remove or destroy vital nesting habitats inadvertently without being aware of a colony.

ANNUAL LIFECYCLE OF A TREE SPARROW

January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
Feeding on cereal grains and seeds of broad-leaved weeds, especially in stubble fields or set-aside, or seeds in wild bird seed mixtures.			Feeding on seeds and insects.	Main breeding season, nesting in holes, especially in trees or farm buildings, or in nestboxes; feeding on seeds and insects.			Post-breeding, feeding on seeds and insects.		Feeding on cereal grains and seeds of broad-leaved weeds, especially in stubble fields, set-aside or wild bird seed mixtures.		
				1st broods	2nd broods	3rd broods					

HOW CAN I ENCOURAGE TREE SPARROWS?

Nesting habitat	Summer food	Winter food
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You could ask a local bird expert or your county bird club to find the nesting area of your tree sparrow colony. This will ensure the colony is safe from accidental damage. ELS Retain any old bushes, trees or farm buildings that may contain nesting holes. Maintain tall thick hedges on the farm. HLS Continue to manage old pollard trees and re-pollard neglected trees, as these may provide nest sites. Use nestboxes to supplement the number of nest sites. Boxes should have at least 2.8 cm diameter entrance holes and an internal box depth of at least 20 cm. Tree sparrows nest in colonies, so place several boxes on each tree, close together and above head height. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SA Delay the use of broad-spectrum herbicides on rotational set-aside for as long as possible. Try to avoid using broad-spectrum insecticides after 15 March. ELS HLS Adopt conservation headlands or low-input cereal management on cereal crops. ELS Create buffer strips on cultivated land using a tussocky grass mix or uncropped cultivated margins. ELS Leave buffer strips on grassland next to thick hedges uncut, unfertilised and, if possible, ungrazed to boost insect abundance. Graze or cut in September every two or three years. HLS Create wetland features such as ponds, or sluices to maintain high summer water levels in ditches. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SA Use natural regeneration on rotational set-aside to create a seed-rich stubble. ELS Create a plot of wild bird seed mixture including crops such as kale and quinoa. ELS HLS Leave over-wintered stubble unsprayed and uncultivated for as long as possible – stubble following low-input cereals or conservation headlands are particularly beneficial. ELS Create small plots of wild bird seed mixture to provide a seed-rich habitat in pastoral areas. Introduce arable crops (except maize) on livestock farms, such as low-input cereals.

KEY

= all farms
 = arable and mixed farms
 = pastoral farms

ELS = Entry Level Stewardship
 HLS = Higher Level Stewardship
 SA = Set-aside

You can get further information on this and other ways of managing your farm for wildlife from:



Agricultural Adviser, The RSPB,
UK Headquarters, The Lodge, Sandy,
Bedfordshire SG19 2DL
Tel: 01767 680551
www.rspb.org.uk/farming



Farming and Wildlife Advisory
Group, NAC, Stoneleigh,
Kenilworth, Warwickshire
CV8 2RX Tel: 024 7669 6699
www.fwag.org.uk



The Game Conservancy Trust,
Fordingbridge, Hampshire
SP6 1EF
Tel: 01425 652381
www.gct.org.uk

PRIORITY ACTION

- Ensure there are nesting holes available in trees and farm buildings, or use nestboxes.
- Use low-input crop management, set-aside, field margins or wetland features to create insect-rich habitats.
- Use over-wintered stubble or wild bird seed mixtures to provide seed food throughout winter.

See also the RSPB advisory sheets on

- Conservation headlands
- Low-input cereals
- Buffer strips on cultivated land
- Buffer strips on grassland
- Uncropped cultivated margins
- Over-wintered stubble
- Wild bird seed mixtures
- Arable crops on livestock farms
- Rotational set-aside
- Hedgerow management
- Ditch management
- Farm buildings

For answers to all of your farm wildlife enquiries, visit www.farmwildlife.info