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Birds of the Great Plains: Family Ploceidae (Old World Sparrows and Weaver Finches)

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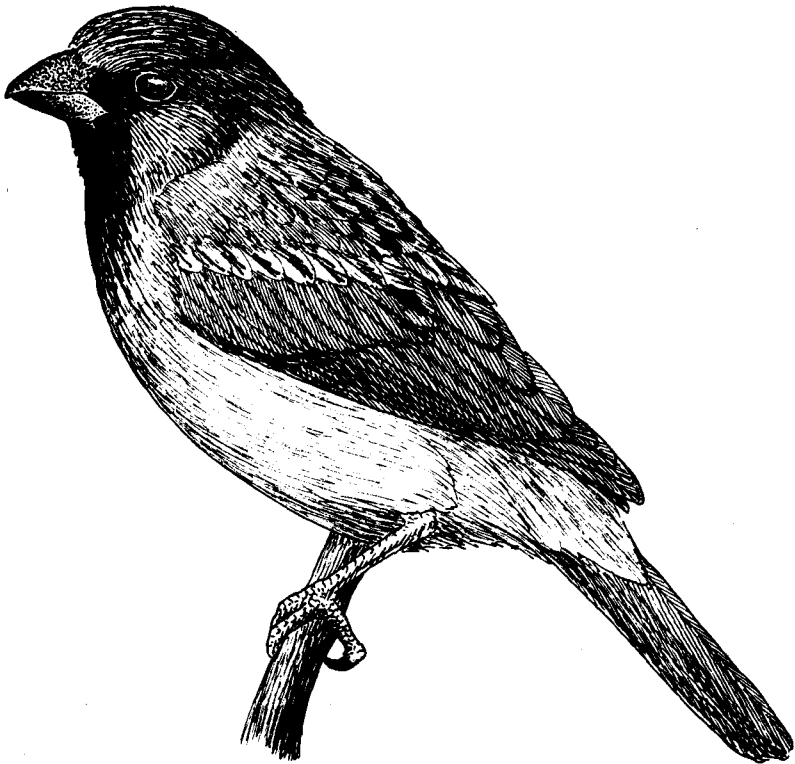


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**FAMILY PLOCEIDAE (OLD
WORLD SPARROWS AND
WEAVER FINCHES)**



House Sparrow

House Sparrow (English Sparrow)

Passer domesticus

Breeding Status: Introduced and now pandemic, breeding throughout the region.

Breeding Habitat: The species is associated everywhere with humans, breeding in cities, suburbs, and around farm buildings.

Nest Location: Nests are placed in almost any kind of cavity or crevice, including those provided by buildings, dense vines growing against walls, old nests of barn swallows and cliff swallows, billboard braces, and tree cavities. The size of the nest varies with the size of the cavity, which is haphazardly filled with grasses and weeds and lined with feathers, hair, or other soft materials that happen to be available.

Clutch Size and Incubation Period: From 3 to 7 eggs, usually 4 or 5 in our region. The eggs are white with gray and brown spots and dots. The incubation period is usually 11-13 days, averaging 12.2. Normally multiple-brooded in our region.

Time of Nesting: In North Dakota the principal breeding period is from early April to mid-September. Kansas egg dates are from March 20 to August 7, with first and second clutches usually laid in early April and early May. In Texas, breeding occurs throughout the year but mainly extends from early February to late July.

Breeding Biology: Although it has been reported on the basis of European studies that mated house sparrows remain permanently faithful to their nest site and to each other, recent studies in Mississippi do not support this view and indicate that mate-changing by males is rather prevalent, even between broods during a single breeding season. In this study there was also little indication of return to a previous year's nest site by adults, particularly among females. Both sexes participate in nest-building, and although males do not develop brood patches they sometimes relieve females for as long as 20 minutes. Both sexes feed the young, and there may also be a high incidence (63 percent of 254 nests in Mississippi) of feeding by "helper" birds. The posthatching nest period varies greatly, from 12-24 days, and usually averages about 14-18 days, depending on the region. Nests are usually reused about twice in a season, and up to 4 nesting cycles have been noted in a small percentage of birds.

Suggested Reading: Sappington 1977; Summers-Smith 1963.

