

# House Sparrow

*Passer domesticus*

You can find House Sparrows most places where there are houses (or other buildings), and few places where there aren't. Along with two other introduced species, the European Starling and the Rock Pigeon, these are some of our most common birds. Their constant presence outside our doors makes them easy to overlook, and their tendency to displace native birds from nest boxes causes some people to resent them. But House Sparrows, with their capacity to live so intimately with us, are just beneficiaries of our own success.

## Keys to Identification

### Size and Shape

House Sparrows aren't related to other North American sparrows, and they're differently shaped. House Sparrows are chunkier, fuller in the chest, with a larger, rounded head, shorter tail, and stouter bill than most American sparrows.

### Color Pattern

Male House Sparrows are brightly colored birds with gray heads, white cheeks, a black bib, and rufous neck – although in cities you may see some that are dull and grubby. Females are a plain buffy-brown overall with dingy gray-brown underparts. Their backs are noticeably striped with buff, black, and brown.

### Behavior

House Sparrows are noisy sparrows that flutter down from eaves and fencerows to hop and peck at crumbs or birdseed. Look for them flying in and out of nest holes hidden behind shop signs or in traffic lights, or hanging around parking lots waiting for crumbs and picking insects off car grills.

### Habitat

House Sparrows have lived around humans for centuries. Look for them on city streets, taking handouts in parks and zoos, or cheeping from a perch on your roof or trees in your yard. House Sparrows are absent from undisturbed forests and grasslands, but they're common in countryside around farmsteads.

## Cool Facts

- The House Sparrow was introduced into Brooklyn, New York, in 1851. By 1900 it had spread to the Rocky Mountains. Two more introductions in the early 1870s, in San Francisco and Salt Lake City, aided the bird's spread throughout the West. House Sparrows are now common across all of North America except Alaska and far northern Canada.

## Measurements

### Both Sexes

- Length - 5.9 - 6.7 inches
- Wingspan - 7.5 - 9.8 inches
- Weight - 1.0 - 1.1 ounces

