

English house sparrow

Passer domesticus

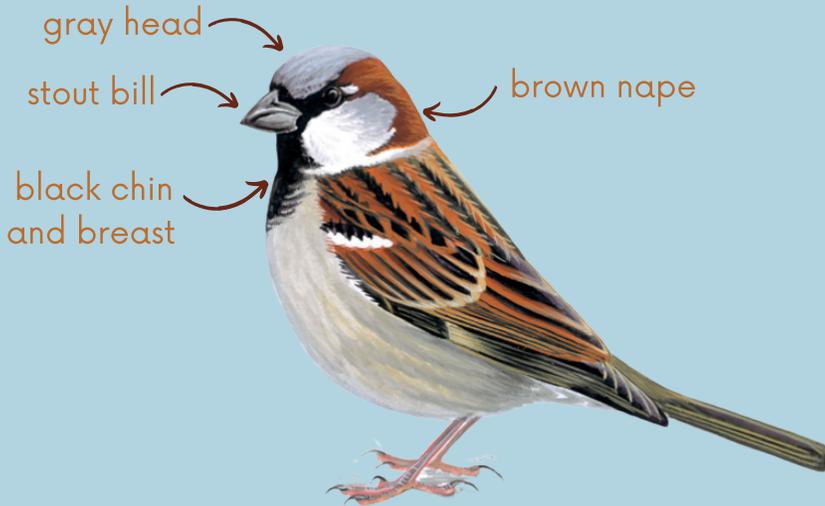
House sparrows are a non-native species that has become very common in Pennsylvania. Sparrows aggressively defend potential nest sites and often destroy the eggs and young of native cavity nesters. They regularly displace nesting bluebirds and tree swallows.



Habitat
suburbs, cities, towns,
farms



← 7.5 - 9 inches →



Vocalizations

House sparrows have a rather simple song of one or a series of cheep or chirrup notes. It's mainly given by males, who repeat it incessantly during much of the year to announce that they possess a nest and to attract females. Females only rarely use this song, typically to attract a new mate after losing one.



Diet

House sparrows eat primarily grains and seeds including weed and grass seeds, crop and waste grains and livestock feed. They also consume bird seed, food litter and garbage. In summer, they will eat insects and spiders (about 10 percent of the diet), fruit tree buds and flowers.



Reproduction

House sparrows nest in protected places, such as holes in trees and buildings, porch and barn rafters, behind shutters, in bluebird houses, and in thick growth of ivy on the sides of buildings. They use their nests for shelter during most of the year, an advantage in spring when competition for nest sites begins. Both sexes work at lining the cavity with grass, weeds, feathers and trash. Pairs are monogamous and prolific breeders; they produce 1-4 broods of 3-7 eggs each. Eggs are light white to greenish white or bluish white, usually spotted with gray or brown.



? Scrub-a-dub-dub, Sparrow in a tub

The house Sparrow takes frequent dust baths. It throws soil and dust over its body feathers, just as if it were bathing with water. In doing so, a sparrow may make a small depression in the ground, and sometimes defends this spot against other sparrows.



Visit www.pgc.pa.gov for more information on English house sparrows in Pennsylvania