

## SPECIES ACTION PLAN : Tree Sparrow (*Passer montanus*)

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Associated Species Action Plans</b></p> <p>Brown hare</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Grey partridge</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Skylark</p> <p>Song thrush</p>	<p><b>1. Current Status</b></p> <p>In Great Britain, the habitat favoured by the tree sparrow is mixed farmland with hedges and hedgerow trees, and also, at times, light woodland. Data accumulated from long-term census and survey work indicates that over the past 25 years this species has declined nationally by 87%. In 1965, the breeding population in Britain and Ireland was estimated to be about 900,000 pairs, falling to 130,000 - 140,000 pairs by 1989. This decline was the largest for any common bird species during these years.</p> <p>Research by the West Midlands Bird Club appears to confirm that this decline has also taken place in the West Midlands and that the decline in Birmingham and the Black Country may be even worse.</p>
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<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Associated Habitat Action Plans</b></p> <p>Arable fields</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Arable field margins and beetle banks</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Hedgerows</p> <p>Woodland</p>	<p><b>2. Current factors affecting species</b></p> <p>The recent decline of the tree sparrow as with other farmland seed-eaters, notably Skylark, Linnet, Reed Bunting and Corn Bunting, has, coincided with an intensification in farming methods. This has meant, amongst other factors, the removal of hedgerows and hedgerow trees, which provide valuable feeding and breeding opportunities for this hole-nesting species. The change from spring-sown to autumn-sown crops has resulted in very little seed-rich over-winter stubble being available for farmland birds to exploit.</p>
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The mosaics of mixed farmland, that once offered a wide diversity of important feeding and nesting habitats, are being replaced by more specialised arable and livestock regimes. Another major factor considered to be causing the decline of the tree sparrow is the more widespread use of herbicides for controlling weeds on farmland. Also, increased use of pesticides has resulted in fewer invertebrates, which are typically fed to young. Other factors include habitat loss due to urban development and the fragmentation of population s.

Agri-environmental schemes, such as Countryside Stewardship, Arable Area Payments Scheme and Set-aside and Spring-Sowing should favour tree sparrow breeding success.

### 3. Current Action

#### 3.1 Legal status

The tree sparrow is protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the European Birds Directive.

#### 3.2 Management, research and guidance

A National Action Plan has been produced for the tree sparrow and a number of nest box schemes are now in operation in certain areas. Within the Birmingham and Black Country region, a successful nest box scheme at Pedmore in Dudley produced 54 fledglings from 16 broods in 9 boxes during the 1997 breeding season - when the first 20 boxes were erected. Strictly comparable figures are not available for 1998 and 1999, but last year a further five boxes were erected and a total of 16 were used by tree sparrows. This year, a damaged box was removed, but at least 18 boxes were used by the species. This may be interpreted as a 100% increase in breeding population in two years, assuming that first, second and occasional third broods are all reared in the same nest box and not in another, previously unused box.

It is hoped to erect nest boxes in the Lutley area (where a small population of tree sparrows survives) this winter. Walsall Countryside Services will be targeting tree sparrows with the erection of 30 nest boxes on a local farmland site during 1999, in addition to a smaller scheme already in place. Walsall Countryside Services also have 17 Countryside Stewardship Schemes currently in operation. These schemes target the planting of new hedgerows and restoration of old hedgerows on farmland, in addition to providing winter stubble.

### 4. Action Plan Objectives and targets

Objective	Target
1. Establish population trends	2003
2. Halt the decline in tree sparrows	2004
3. Increase numbers by a minimum of 50%	2011
4. Increase awareness amongst the general public and landowners as to the decline of the tree sparrow	Ongoing

## 5. Proposed action with partners to meet objectives

ACTION	POTENTIAL DELIVERERS		YEAR							Meets objective number
	Lead	Partner	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2011	
<b>5.1 Policy and Legislation</b>										
Seek inclusion of effective measures protecting tree sparrows and their habitats in UDPs and/ or other policy documents.	LA's	EN, WT	As UDPs and other policy documents are prepared.							2
<b>5.2 Site / Species Management and Protection</b>										
Establish hedgerow tree planting schemes, ultimately to provide natural nesting sites, but also as replacement trees for nest boxes.	FWAG	LA's LO's BTCV	•	•	•	•				2, 3
Establish at least one nest box scheme within each population of tree sparrows	EN	RSPB LO's LA's LCG's	•	•	•	•				2, 3
<b>5.3 Advisory</b>										
Produce management guidelines for landowners for the conservation of the tree sparrow in conjunction with other farmland birds	EN	LO's LA's FWAG RSPB	•	•						2, 3, 4
<b>5.4 Future Research and Monitoring</b>										
Establish survey schemes to identify population changes and monitor conservation actions	EN	LCG's WT, ER RSPB	•	•	•					1

ACTION	POTENTIAL DELIVERERS		YEAR							Meets objective number
	Lead	Partner	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2011	
<b>5.5 Communication and Publicity.</b>										
Prepare and publish leaflet on the tree sparrow in Birmingham & the Black Country.	<b>LAs WMBC</b>	<b>WT LCG RSPB EN</b>		•						4
<b>5.6 Links to other Action Plans.</b>										
Arable fields; Arable field margins and beetle banks; Hedgerows; Woodland										

## **6. Co-ordination and Review**

This Biodiversity Action Plan will be implemented over 10 years with a first review after 5 years. A group will be set up to co-ordinate implementation and to report to the Biodiversity Action Plan Steering Group. This group will meet at a minimum on a yearly basis.

Review will be carried out in conjunction with related Habitat and Species Action Plans as appropriate and will consist of measuring achievement of targets. The group will, with the support of the Steering Group, develop and implement appropriate monitoring methods, which will inform the review process.

The Action Plan will be revised and updated in the light of review results and any relevant changes in circumstances and / or additional information which becomes available during the review period.

In line with national guidance, the Steering Group will report to the UK Biodiversity Steering Group.