**PROJECT SPARROW WATCH**



House sparrows (*Passer domesticus indicus*) are finch-like song birds spread across India. As the scientific name (species name - *domesticus*) suggests Sparrows have close relation with humans, and for years they co-existed with us, constructing their nests in our buildings and gardens. In the last two decades, its population has declined for various reasons such as dwindling food sources, loss of nesting sites, excessive usage of insecticides and pesticides in agricultural fields and multiplying telephone towers.

**Why should you undertake this project?**

* To generate curiosity about sparrows, other birds and ultimately towards all other organisms around us
* To refine our observation habit and realize its importance
* To appreciate nature and natural settings around us



**Why Sparrows?**

* Maintains the ecological balance
* Feeds on various insects and pests, ultimately protecting us (humans) from diseases
* Pro-active seed disperser and pollinator; plants more trees and lets us live peacefully
* Most importantly, these beautiful little birds are cool to watch and enjoy.

**This project aims at:**

1. *Recording and Monitoring the species (house sparrow) in your neighbourhood*
2. *Identifying and gathering data on their habitat*

***Duration:*** 4 months

***Time required:*** 2 to 4 hours per week

***Participants:*** Teachers, students, parents and any interested people

**Objective**

* To know and map the status of house sparrows in Puducherry
* To understand their habitat and diet

**Project details**

1. Recording and Monitoring
   1. Counting the birds near your house and school
   2. Photo documentation
   3. Observing and noting the bird calls and behaviour
2. Habitat
   1. Identifying its nesting grounds
   2. Photo documentation
   3. Observing and noting the bird calls and any peculiar behaviour during nesting

**Bird counting**

* It can be done in the streets (2-3 streets possibly) in the vicinity of your home. For instance, if you are at Mudaliarpet, select a street where your home is located and one or two nearby streets for bird counting.
* Spend at least 10 minutes near the birds and do the counting to avoid duplication. If you count the birds on the go, that is, while walking or frequently moving from one place to other or going to shops or school, etc., you may count the same bird at different locations. It may lead to duplication of data. To understand this, you must spend at least some time near the birds and observe.
* Weekly you can do it twice or more depending upon your convenience and note down the count of sparrows.
* Observations can be carried out for two weeks in one particular street and then another street could be taken to continue the same.
* Students can be involved in this activity. They can do the counting in their respective area.

Example of bird counting data sheet

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S.No:** | **Week 1** | **Week 2** | **Week 3** | **Week 4** | **Monthly average** |
| 1 |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2 |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3 |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4 |  |  |  |  |  |
| 5 |  |  |  |  |  |

**Discussion**

Meet with the participants, in any central location, for collating the data gathered about the status of the species, its food source and habitat. Additional details like peculiar behaviour, its calls and nesting selection can also be shared and discussed.

**Outcomes**

* Mapping the area-wise status of sparrows in Puducherry
* Identifying and understanding their habitat and diet preference
* Sharing the learnings with the group and discuss way forward
* Share the learnings with others and encouraging bird/animal watching

**Way Forward**

* You could construct artificial custom-made nest boxes and install it at suitable home and school locations. [Sparrows breed four times a year and it will definitely be useful.]
* You may also install bird feeders and bird baths at home and other suitable places.
* Kitchen waste can be decomposed and made into manure as it develops microbes, which could be a potential food source for these birds.
* You could identify natural conditions, native plant/tree varieties and try to develop favourable conditions for the sparrows to sustain their existence in natural setting.
* Continue the same process for other birds/animals.