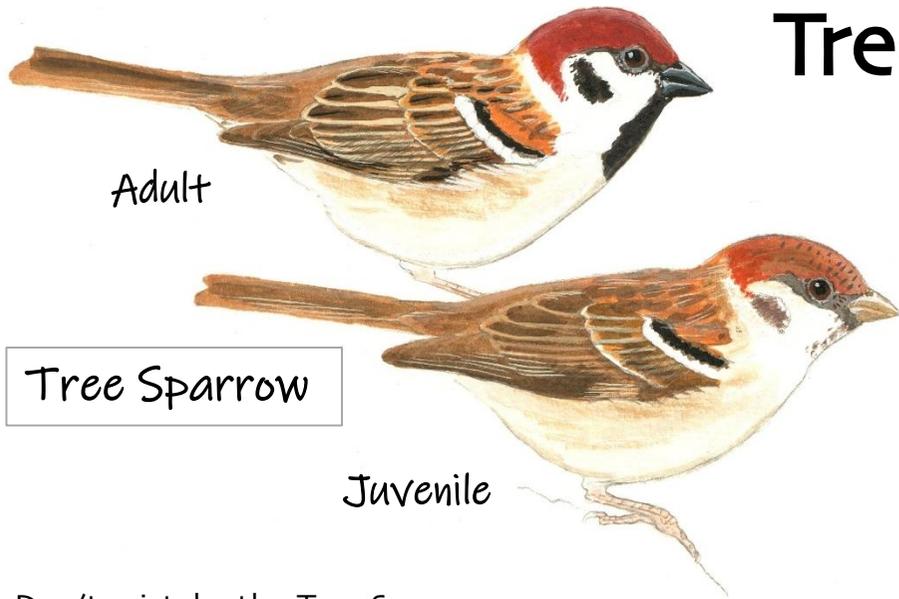




Tree Sparrow Project



Adult

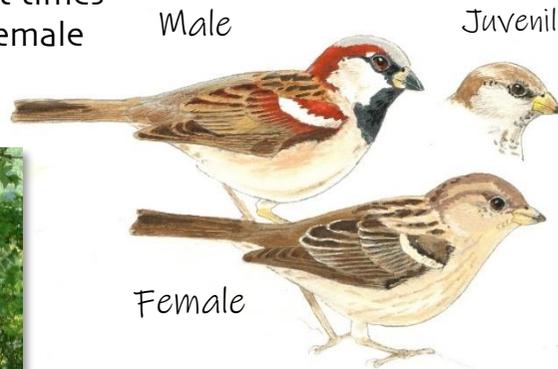
Tree Sparrow

Juvenile

Don't mistake the Tree Sparrow for the House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*). House Sparrows are about 15% larger. Note the grey cap, broader black bib and larger bill, at times with a dirty yellow tinge at the base. The female has no chestnut colouring at all.

Tree Sparrows (*Passer montanus*) are on the **Red List** for endangered birds in Britain. Their population suffered a cataclysmic 93% decline between 1970 and 2008. Reasons for this collapse are what we might expect: the rural environment has changed, with fewer hedgerows, increased use of chemicals, and far more development.

IDENTIFICATION: note the rich chestnut brown head and nape, white cheeks with a black spot, neat black bib at the throat and small black bill. Male and female adults are similar. The juveniles have weaker colouring, the black bib emerging slowly.



Male

Juvenile

House Sparrow

Female

You'll seldom see Tree and House Sparrows together, but at Sun Rising, House Sparrows come up to our mixed seed feeders from the neighbouring farms.

Being larger, less shy and more willing to adapt to change, House Sparrows evolved with human habitation. They're more confident in open spaces, such as gardens, parks and fields while the Tree Sparrow prefers hedgerows and copses. Increased development has meant drastic loss of habitat for the more timid Tree Sparrow.



We have 18 nest boxes specifically for Tree Sparrows at Sun Rising. As a slightly smaller bird, they favour boxes with smaller entrance holes: ours are around 28 mm. House Sparrows and Great Tits, for instance, will need 32 mm holes. They will also prefer if the boxes are close to the hedgerow, yet have a fairly open access.

Tree Sparrows will come to our large feeders: these we fill with a mixed seed to attract a range of birds. Our new 'farmland birds' feeders are filled with a seed that we hope will specifically attract the tree sparrows. We may find other small hedgerow birds, such as Goldfinches and Yellowhammers, also come to these feeders.



Millet Feeder

Nest Boxes

Red millet is said to be a favourite seed for Tree Sparrows. During times of plenty, both sparrows will take the same seed, but when food is scarce the differences between species become more pronounced. Tree Sparrows have adapted to take the smaller seeds, like red millet.



All photographs taken at Sun Rising



If you'd like to help our project, please get in touch.