

Home to sparrows



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House [Sparrow](#) used to be one of the common birds in India and in many countries in the world. This well-known bird, which would fill our home gardens for foraging on insects and kitchen scraps or build nests on our roof and cavities of our house, but in recent days there has been a rapid decline in [sparrow](#) population in many parts of the world including India. A number of hypotheses have been put forward as possible causes of decline of House Sparrows in urban and suburban area. These include changing architecture of human habitation that has deprived House Sparrows of nesting sites, loss of tree cover, excessive use of pesticides, lack of traditional granaries, grocery shops and storehouses that permit gleaning of grains by birds, air pollution and electromagnetic radiation.

In Assam House [Sparrow](#) is still common in many urban and rural areas. From people's perception it appears that there is a decreasing [trend](#) in the population of House [Sparrow](#) in the last few decades in Assam as well though we do not have authentic data. Modern cities and towns are no longer suited to the [sparrow](#). [Urban](#) buildings (box type) are not attractive to the [sparrow](#) as these provide little opportunity to nest within. Finding food in and around nesting sites is a bigger problem in urban spaces where topsoil is covered with debris, roads and pavement. In earlier days sparrows were dependent on the extra grains thrown to them after people had cleaned their grains. This habit has ceased in urban areas as everyone is getting pre-cleaned grains from the bigger general stores and shopping malls and there was nothing to be thrown for the sparrows to feed on. This shows a shortage of food grains in urban areas of developed localities.

Therefore, this is the time of a common [city](#) dweller to come forward and to take some small and easy steps that could help sparrows to feed on and get their nesting substrates. There are few common things one can try to bring back sparrows in their houses - encouraging local shrubs and herbs rather than exotic plants in his garden and avenues to grow, letting few places of bare ground to be remained for dust bath and by adopting a nest box. World [Sparrow](#) Day is [celebrated](#) annually on March 20th to raise awareness across the globe about the decline of the House Sparrow and its impacts on our environment.

In Guwahati [City](#) sparrows are often [found](#) to nest on rolling shutters in shops. This is an indication that they could do well if they are provided with nest site alternative in the form of nest box. In Guwahati [city](#) the urban habitat is changing rapidly. With this idea, though not new, Anukul Nath, a Ph.D research scholar of Assam University, Silchar under the Department of Ecology & Environmental Science has taken an initiative under the supervision Dr. Hilloljyoti Singha of the same university and of [Aaranyak](#) and Dr. Bibhuti Prasad Lahkar of [Aaranyak](#) to assess the [sparrow](#) population in Guwahati [city](#) and to put nest boxes to understand the response of House Sparrow. The project is supported by the [Aaranyak](#) Small Grants for [Nature](#) Conservation in [Northeast India](#) in association with the Rufford Small Grants Foundation. It could be mentioned that there has not been such scientific research about House Sparrow in the capital [city](#) of Assam. Anukul is also looking for nests of sparrows and their requirements besides monitoring the population periodically. Later in his study, he will also be investigating the effect of electromagnetic radiation on the breeding of sparrows.

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BY DR M FIROZ AHMED

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