

Sparrows buy home in Guwahati



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Raktim Baruah 28 March 2013 Updated 28 Jan 14665 views

While rapid urbanization has taken a toll on the population of tiny sparrows in the cities all over the world, the picture in Guwahati -- the capital [city](#) of Assam-- is different. Here, thousands of sparrows are seen adapting to urbanization. Further, their numbers are also on an increase in this northeastern [city](#). Mubina Akhtar, a environment journalist and activist surveyed the birds through 2011 and the last year and said the bird has adapted to a much harsh lifestyle. She revealed that her survey, carried over a period of two years, [found community](#) roost of the bird in the residential as well as commercial hubs in the [city](#). Akhtar reported about a [community](#) roost of some thousands of sparrows in the Asomiya Pratidin last August. The roost on the busy GS road was the biggest she came across. A more recent report of Akhtar published in the 'Huffington Post' blog says that "modern life-styles notwithstanding, the house [sparrow](#) is going to stay and continue to be a "hanger-on of man, as I see the bird slowly adapting to a life in the concrete slabs! It is neither the [mud](#)-and-thatch dwelling (a rarity), nor the match box. Rather, the bird has learned the art of carving out a comfortable niche of its own in the little openings of the concrete slabs of the [city](#)'s flyovers!"

A Bombay Natural [History](#) Society's

survey titled "Citizen Sparrow",



[found](#) that the once-ubiquitous

sparrows are now seen in fewer

places than in 2005. "Where they

are still [found](#) the numbers are

lower than earlier observed and

fewer nests are seen as well. This

suggests sparrows have indeed

declined and the low number of nests might mean that they are

continuing to decline" said the report. On contrary to this report the

number and nests are increasing. Sparrows are the most widely-

distributed birds in the world. They nest in urban or rural settings

wherever they find human habitation.

Factors like dwellings, eating and living habits of the people and land-

use could be impacting the availability of shelter and food for the

sparrows. The lifestyles of people of rural and semi-urban areas seem to

be more conducive for the survival of the birds. [Chandan](#) Kumar Duarah,

a science [writer](#) and conservation expert says that the availability of

Assam type houses and trees in many areas of Guwahati make favorite

haunts for the sparrows. In Chandmari area the density of sparrows are

highest only because of trees and Assam-type houses in the area. In

Bhangagarh they are living in remaining trees and adapting in concrete

structures including multi- storied buildings, commercial and official

flats. He said that pests, worms and other insects which are main food

for sparrows are available in the [city](#) due to its tropical geographical

position but the food system is threatened due to rampant uses of

chemicals and toxic wastes exposed to the [city](#)'s soil and water.

Akhtar said that she has already undertaken an awareness campaign so that the people don't cut down the trees where the birds are taking shelter. "The deodar trees that sheltered a large roost once were cut down in the Bhangagarh area. When I enquired about the reason, the host simply replied that it was because of the droppings!" Akhtar lamented.

Photos: Mubina Akhtar

Raktim Baruah

Journalist based in Guwahati. Mobile: 9706390337. Email: raktimbaruah20@gmail.com

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