



A nationwide survey finds that the common house sparrow is not so common any more.

Last year the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) conducted a survey that was endearingly named Citizen Sparrow.

The survey, using inputs from amateur naturalists, was conducted online and through hard-copy questionnaires

in English and eight Indian languages. It reached out to rural and urban India, with 5,730 participants contributing information on the sparrow.

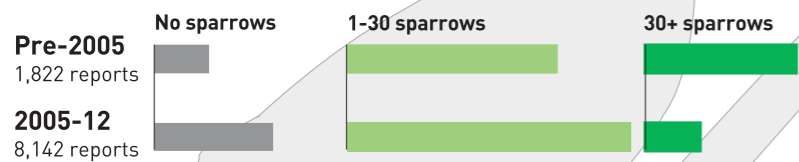
Over 25 per cent of the participants were from towns and villages and the rest from large cities.

According to the findings, sparrows are seen in fewer places now than they were before 2005. Where they are still found, the numbers are lower than earlier and fewer nests are seen as well. This suggests sparrows have indeed declined, and the low number of nests

Past vs present

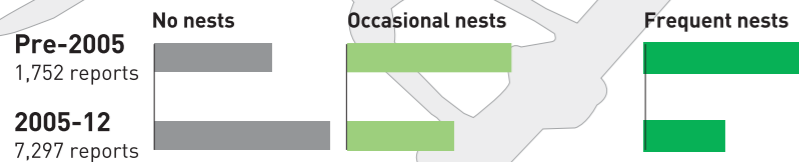
How are sparrows doing today compared with the past?

Number of locations with



How many sparrow nests are seen today compared with the past?

Number of locations with



About the survey

The goal of Citizen Sparrow was to gather information about House Sparrow populations across India, and to understand how they have changed in recent times.

REPORTS
10,666

PARTICIPANTS
5,655

LOCATIONS
8,425

could indicate a continuing decline.

Sparrow populations through the country vary according to regions. A regional comparison showed that many reports of large sparrow flocks came from north-western areas such as Gujarat. Sparrows also seem to be doing comparatively better in north-eastern areas such as Assam and central India, including Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh. These regions reported greater sparrow presence than other parts of India.

Among cities, Mumbai came out on top of the sparrow charts, with many more people reporting the presence of the bird than they did from Bangalore and Chennai, where a much higher percentage of participants said the bird was not found at all in their localities.

On an average, rural areas seemed to be doing a little better, with more people reporting sparrows in towns and villages than in big cities. Moreover, there were twice as many reports of large flocks of sparrows being seen in towns and villages as in cities.

Thus, the lifestyles of people from rural and semi-urban areas seem to be more conducive to the bird's survival. The BNHS surmised that there were certain aspects such as the type of human dwellings, eating and buying habits of people and land use that could be affecting the availability of shelter and food for the sparrow.

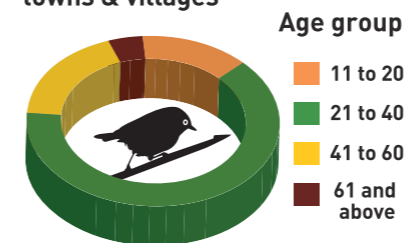
Who participated?



62.3% from cities



37.7% towns & villages



Sparrows today

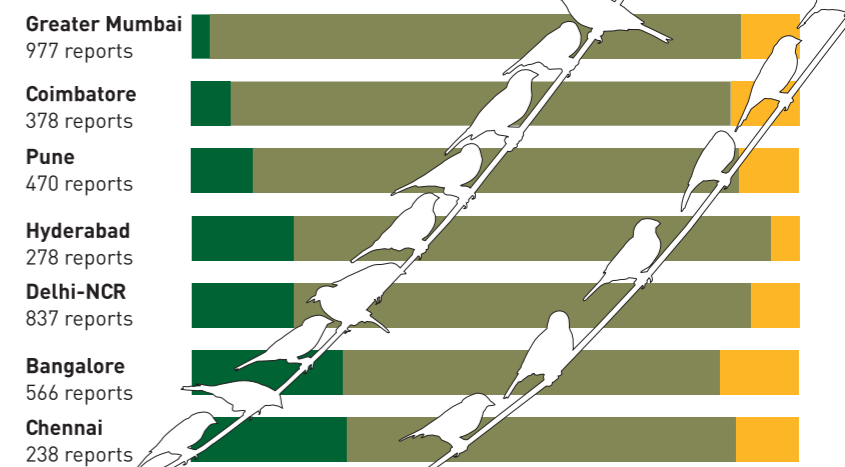
Is there an urban-rural divide?

■ No sparrows ■ 1-30 sparrows ■ 30+ sparrows

There are nearly twice as many reports of large flocks of sparrows from rural areas as from cities. Sparrows are also more likely to be absent in cities than in towns and villages.



How are sparrows doing across our cities?



Mumbai and Coimbatore have the fewest reports of absence of sparrows, while many more reports from Bangalore and Chennai show sparrows as absent. Hyderabad reports very few large flocks.

How are sparrows doing in different regions of the country?



A note of caution from BNHS:

The results presented here are based entirely on the contributions of members of the public from different parts of India, and the summaries shown here must be interpreted with caution. The number of responses varied widely across regions and cities.

Reporting was much higher from cities than from towns and villages (clubbed here as "rural"). Results based on small sample sizes

should be treated with appropriate caution. It is possible that there was an unconscious bias towards reporting information about locations where sparrows were present. This would lead to an under-reporting of sparrow absence. For this reason, we caution readers not to evaluate the frequencies (for example, of "no sparrows") by themselves but only with respect to the appropriate comparison.