

P R E S S R E L E A S E

World Sparrow Day: March 20, 2011

The common sparrow -- found across Asia, Europe and Africa, in urban as well as rural landscapes -- is a true blue symbol of the 'beauty of the ordinary' and we have been celebrating this diminutive bird with a string of awareness and conservation activities, culminating into the World Sparrow Day on March 20, since last year.

This year, our annual World Sparrow Day event will reinstate the significance not only of the sparrow, but all the common birds and biodiversity which are often overlooked and abused by virtue of being too commonplace.

Initially called the World House Sparrow Day, this international initiative was launched in 2010, by Nature Forever Society, in collaboration with the Eco-Sys Action Foundation (France), Avon Wildlife Trust (UK) and some other national and international organisations.

In 2011, respecting the views of a large number of bird lovers and environment enthusiasts who wrote to us, we decided to expand our sphere to celebrate not only the house sparrow – but the 26 species of sparrows found across the globe.

Interestingly, in one of its firsts, Nature Forever Society will soon showcase exclusive photographs and information on as many as 22 of the 26 species of sparrows on its website www.natureforever.com and the dedicated interactive website www.worldsparrowday.org. We are among the first organisations in the world to have collected such a wide range of photographs of the sparrow species – many of which are elusive and not as conspicuous as the house sparrow. We believe that this effort, in itself, is a feat worth celebration.

Like last year, www.worldsparrowday.org will form the nerve centre of the entire celebration and will have information related to the event like press resources, logos, posters, images and press releases. Organisations and individuals will also be able to download posters, logos and activity ideas which they can use to promote the event in their region or country. To make the event user-friendly, we have formatted a special online page where members and participants can register their events and activities effortlessly.

Among the attractions of the World Sparrow Day, are events including an **open-for-all photography contest in association with the Bangalore Photography Workshops** and other common bird watching trips, public discussions, exhibitions, presentations, bird rallies, art competitions, educational and public events, all aimed at paying more attention to conservation of birds in people's neighborhoods. Photographs of events carried out around the world would later be uploaded on the website.

In order to boost the general interest among the people to conserve these much-cherished birds, which are seeing a steep decline due to loss of habitat and food, we are hoping extensive media coverage of this event. To facilitate wider coverage, regular updates in regard to the event will be circulated on national and international bird groups which have thousands of members.

What will the World Sparrow Day achieve?

The rationale of having this day is not simply to celebrate the event for a single day, but to use it to bring together all the individuals and organisations working for conservation of sparrows and urban biodiversity on a common platform. With the help of the website, we aim to build a network which can result in better linkages of like-minded people. In the long term, it's an effective way to carry out advocacy, do collaborative research and form national and international linkages.

It will also help in getting the attention of government agencies and the scientific community on a whole, for more conservation measures and research on common bird species and urban biodiversity.

House sparrows and other common birds are declining across the globe.

On March 20, 2011, thousands of people around the world will take part in the World Sparrow Day (WSD) events, to draw attention to the decline of house sparrows and other common birds.

The central theme for the introductory year of World Sparrow Day will be “**Chirp for the sparrow, Tweet for the sparrow**” and will aim at calling on enthusiasts from varied backgrounds – individuals, organisations, institutes and experts – to spread awareness about the decline and the need for conservation of the sparrows and all other commonplace flora and fauna worldwide.

Common birds like the sparrow are bio-indicators of the ecosystem and their decline is a grim reminder of the polluted environment we live in.

Change in building architecture in India

With increasing number of **match-box type** buildings (buildings which have areas like ducts etc, for larger birds like pigeons to nest) being built in India, the sparrows have a bleak chance of nesting.

Urban green desert

Today, gardens are full of exotic species of plants which have of no ecological role to play and are of no use to native birds and insects. These exotic plants are a stress on the vital resources like water and require large quantities of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. There is an urgent need to create awareness among people to replace these species with native species.

Changing attitude and life styles

Changing attitude of people towards birds and biodiversity is one of the most important reasons why conservation becomes difficult. People today are too busy in their everyday humdrum and have little time to think about birds.

Years ago, people shared a symbiotic relationship with animals and often wouldn't mind seeing sparrows building nests in their houses. On the contrary, they would welcome the birds by regularly feeding them and providing clean water.

Today, with changing lifestyle sparrows are often not welcome to nest in homes. Traditional feeding grounds of house sparrows like open grain markets have disappeared and packaged and pre-cleaned food products have brought an end to an ago-old tradition of cleaning sorting food grains in homes and balconies.

Mobile towers and cell phones

The advent of manmade threats like the rising numbers of mobile phone towers and microwave pollution is silent killer of sparrows.

For more information on the cause of decline of sparrows and what can be done to help them, please visit the below mentioned web-link

<http://natureforever.org/node/6>

So far, little attention has been given to research and practical conservation measures for sparrows and common birds. We aim to change this with the World Sparrow Day, and bring about a notion that conservation of common species of flora and fauna is as important as the conservation of threatened species.

Our philosophy rests on the understanding that **today's common species are tomorrow threatened and endangered species, if timely conservation is not initiated.** The best example in this regard is the case of the Indian vultures, which till a decade ago, were one of the most common raptor in the world. Today the vultures are on the brink of extinction!

Dedicated individuals and organisations around the world will be using WSD this March 20, to conduct events, which will help draw attention to the impact of man-made changes on sparrows as well as common birds and the environment we live in.

Notes to Editors

World Sparrow Day

World Sparrow Day (WSD), initiated last year as the World House Sparrow Day, is a global initiative by Nature Forever Society aiming to celebrate sparrows and all common species of flora fauna and promote their conservation worldwide. WSD will take place on March 20 every year, and will have a central theme. This year's theme for WSD is 'Chirp for the sparrows, Tweet for the sparrows!' and will focus on **awareness building**.

WSD is global initiative by Nature Forever Society in Collaboration with Bombay Natural History Society, Ecosys Foundation (France), Cornell Lab of Ornithology (USA), Avon Wildlife Trust (UK) and other partners. People and dedicated organisations around the world will be using the event to draw attention to decline of the sparrows, other common species of birds and urban biodiversity.

Activities to mark WSD will include free-for-all photography competitions, bird watching trips, public discussions, exhibitions, presentations, bird rallies, art competitions and other educational and public events.

What does WSD aims to achieve?

The main aim of WSD is to bring together all the organisations and individuals working in different parts of the world on a common platform which will help in better networking, sharing ideas and resources. In the long run, the platform can be used to facilitate better advocacy for devising a better conservation strategy.

Why and how to register your Event?

Registering your event will also help us keep in touch with you and send further resources like posters, photos, press releases and notifications. It also help people from the region or city in participating the event organised by you.

Please join World Sparrow Group on Facebook to have an up-to-date information on WSD events and meet sparrow lovers from across the world and to share ideas.

For more information on the decline of sparrows and how you can help, visit www.natureforever.org

*Note – We have attached the Logo of the World Sparrow Day as well as photos of the sparrows which can be used for publication. Kindly **do give photo credit** as all our photographs are generously donated by amateur and professional photographers from across the globe.