

~~Xenophobia, provided that it is sufficiently mobile for the choice to be meaningful. The phenomena are most easily observed in birds but might also be found in other animals.~~

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#### **References**

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## **Male Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis* run over by a car while fighting**

Fights among Spanish Sparrows are common in February in Malta. The fighting birds flutter close together and push, grasp or scratch at one another with their feet. The fighting birds inevitably lose height, and sometimes fall to the ground, still locked in combat.

On 14 Feb 1989, I was seated in a moving car on my way to work when two sparrows locked in combat appeared ahead of the car in a side road at Msida, a built-up area. They floated down to the ground just ahead of the car, and looking back through the rear window, I could see that one of the sparrows had been run over and lay crushed on the road surface. Later in the day, I returned to the scene of the incident on foot, and I could ascertain that the crushed bird was a male Spanish Sparrow.

This observation shows just how absorbed the birds were as they fought. The near approach of a bright red car passed unnoticed long enough for one of the fighting birds to be crushed by the wheels.

Clearly, models of fighting behaviour which ignore the risk of predation on the combatants by an alert predator, are simplistic when applied to fighting among prey species.

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## **~~Interspecific territorial behaviour among three species of *Turdidae* wintering in Malta~~**

~~This note reports the results of several years of casual observations, and two winters in which observations were carried out more carefully. The behaviour of wintering Robins *Erithacus rubecula*, Stonechats *Saxicola torquata*, and Black Redstarts *Phoenicurus ochruros* has been observed in Malta for several years.~~

~~Their niches are largely separate because these species occupy different habitats. The habitats they occupy while they winter in Malta are listed in Table 1. The Maltese countryside is very varied topographically and severely disturbed by agriculture and urban development. As a result, many areas occur which *prima facie* might seem suitable for more than one of these species.~~