

~~Male sparrows show a greater tendency of philopatric behaviour than females. In at least 1 nest, the male was occupying its natal nest from the previous year. Two other males (non-breeders) were also frequently observed alighting close to their natal nest, whenever the occupant was away. Only 1 female was observed near its natal nest. This philopatric behaviour raises the possibility of inbreeding. The question, already raised by the author for Cory's Shearwaters *Calonectris diomedea* (II-Merill, this issue), is being investigated.~~

~~The Ghar Dalam colony is very tolerant to human presence and although a mass exodus occurs every time human visitors enter the cave, the birds soon return and settle down. During the breeding season non-incubating birds fly out in a highly vociferous manner.~~

#### References

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## Nocturnal Activity in Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis*

The Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis* is a diurnal species. In the past few years a colony has established itself in an underground tunnel at Malta International Airport and has been active at all times of the day or night. The tunnel runs the whole length of the airport and contains a number of offices and stores and a baggage sorting area and is used by a number of vehicles on a 24hr basis. Due to the depth of the tunnel below ground very little natural light can enter it and artificial light is constantly in use. There is open access at both ends of the tunnel.

The colony is small, not more than three pairs in the area of my observations, which is about 25% of the entire length of the tunnel. They nest in the ceiling of the tunnel, which is panelled. It is also used as a winter roost.

Some specific records are: 29 January 1994, 1 male at 00.40 and 2 males at 02.30 singing while perched on various pieces of equipment inside the tunnel. At 05.30 on the same day a male and a female were feeding together (daylight on that day was at about 06.30). On 18 March 1994, 2 males and 2 females were seen at 04.45 and the males were displaying and holding territory.

These are just 2 specific records. Nocturnal observations in the tunnel are made once every six days and night-time activity from the birds is regularly noted. The birds seem more active on nights when there is less human or mechanical activity in the tunnel. It is noteworthy that I have never seen the birds outside the tunnel during the night although the area outside the tunnel is also very brightly lit.

#### References

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