

~~leading line effect increases in importance with increasing strength of the southerly (contrary) component of the surface wind, thereby accounting for the observed correlation for the observed correlation with southerlies at low level.~~

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Sparrows on Crete

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The Sparrows on Crete are generally considered to belong to the sub-species *italiae* of *Passer domesticus*, though there is some variability in the plumage of the males. Meise^r (1934, 1936) on the basis of 7 museum specimens considered that the birds were indistinguishable from *P.d.italiae*, the birds scoring 40, 45, 50(4) and 60, mean 49, in his index (0 = *domesticus*, 50 = *italiae*, 100 = *hispaniolensis*). Johnston (1969) examined 74 museum specimens (48 taken in 1925, 16 in 1942 and 10 in 1960) and found variations in his hybrid index from 3 to 12 (0 = *domesticus*, 17 = *hispaniolensis*), viz. 18 to 71%, with a mean value of 7.3 (43%).

During a visit to Crete from 8th to 22nd October 1980 particular attention was paid to the Sparrows. Almost all the birds seen were close to *italiae* or showed some *domesticus* characters, viz. grey flecking of the crown to almost completely grey crown, with the exception of one bird associating with *italiae*-type birds at Limin Hersonissos on 11th October, which was close to an autumn-plumaged *hispaniolensis* with chestnut crown and extensive flank streaking.

In addition to these birds, however, a flock of ca. 100 *P.hispaniolensis* was seen in cultivated land at Cape Hersonissos from 13th to 31st October. The males in this flock had

chestnut crowns, extensive flank streaking and the well marked black and cream streaked upper back typical of *hispaniolensis*. The females showed light breast and flank streaking. They stayed as a compact flock, feeding together on the ground in vineyards and melon fields, and did not associate with *P.d.italiae*, though the latter were also present in the same area. It seems probable that they were an immigrant flock, either on passage or possibly resident for the winter.

Odd *italiae* males had black bills; all the male *P.hispaniolensis* had horn-coloured bills.

P.d.italiae were common in all towns and villages, even quite remote villages in the hills and along the coasts. In Malia, Hersonissos and Limin Hersonissos, they roosted communally in thick trees in the built-up areas. During the day, and more particularly in the early morning and evenings, the birds spent much time at possible nesting sites, where some depositing of nesting material was taking place. In Limin Hersonissos, where there was a considerable amount of building construction going on, the holes in the breeze block walls of the uncompleted buildings were particularly favoured. In the villages nesting sites under the tiled roofs were used, but in Limin Hersonissos few such sites were available and, as the holes in breeze block walls are only a transient feature, being covered with a concrete rendering when the buildings are completed, it is difficult to see where the large population in the town can breed unless there is so much building going on that a large number of holes is available at all times, including the breeding season. The only 'open' nest seen was one among the insulators on an electricity pylon. (Building was going on at a similar site in Elounda on 15th October). No evidence could be seen of open tree nests, which are very frequently used by *P.domesticus* in Majorca, or of extensive use of electricity pylons, a site frequently used by *P.hispaniolensis* in Malta. A very large population at the Minoan site at Knossos was occupying nest sites in the hollow box girders supporting the plastic roofs over part of the excavations. Fair numbers were also occupying holes in the sides of the Turkish aqueduct near Spilia, apparently in competition with Jackdaws *Corvus monedula*.

During the day the birds moved out to feed in the cultivated land on the outskirts of the built-up areas, taking cover from the heat of the sun at mid-day and early afternoon in olives and other dense trees, where they kept up a loud chirruping chorus.

A flock of about 10 *P.montanus* flew into a vineyard on the coast near Limin Hersonissos at 07.30 on 11th October, where they joined some *P.d.italiae* already feeding there. They were not seen again though regular observations were made in this area until 22nd October. The species does not appear to have been recorded from Crete (Lambert 1957) and it seems most likely that they were on migration, though to where is a puzzle as the Tree Sparrow is 'quite exceptional' in Africa (Etchecopar & Hue 1967).

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