

Summary

29 recoveries of 750 ringed Eleonora's Falcons show that juvenile falcons tend to disperse during their first years. Once they have chosen their breeding colony they tend to return to the same territory for years and stable pair bonds seem to exist as well. Oldest age proven of ♂ and ♀ are at least 6 and 9 years, respectively.

References

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Addenda : The falcon pair mentioned in the text as being retrapped in their territory two years later were trapped again four years later in 1979. Both had new partners, however, and while the male occupied the nest of 1975, the female had her nest 15 m away; there were no direct sight connection between the two nests.

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Passer Species on Sardinia

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Two species of *Passer* occur on Sardinia, the Spanish Sparrow *P. hispaniolensis* and the Tree Sparrow *P. montanus*. Cody (1974) reported observations by Harimut Walter that in Cagliari, the major city of Sardinia, *P. montanus* is restricted to the downtown and port area, the more typically urban sparrow *P. hispaniolensis* being displaced to the suburbs and countryside. In April 1978 on a brief visit to Naples, which lies on the mainland Italian coast about the same latitude as Sardinia, I found the Tree Sparrow to be occupying the urban 'house sparrow' niche, whereas the Italian Sparrow, which is normally placed as a sub-species of the House Sparrow *P. domesticus*, was displaced to the suburbs. The Italian Sparrow *P. d. italiae* is a stabilised hybrid between *P. domesticus* and *P. hispaniolensis*, which at its northern limit in the Alps and its southern limit in Calabria and Sicily intergrades respectively with *P. d. domesticus* and *P. h. hispaniolensis* (Meise 1936). Previous observers have found the birds in Sardinia to be almost pure *P. hispaniolensis*, both in appearance and behaviour; in contrast, the birds of Corsica are typical *P. d. italiae* (Steinbacher 1954, 1956; Cheke 1966). *P. hispaniolensis* is very closely related to *P. domesticus* and where the latter is absent takes over the 'house sparrow' role and is to be found in completely urbanised surroundings (Summers-Smith 1977-78).

A visit was made to Sardinia in September-October 1979 to study the sparrow situation in more depth. Most parts of the island were visited and particular attention was paid to the sparrows in the villages and towns. Tree Sparrows were present in the squares, gardens, churchyards and waste places in Cagliari and, though a few Spanish Sparrows were seen, the Tree Sparrow was clearly occupying the 'house sparrow' role, visiting possible nesting sites in buildings. On the east coast at Tortoli and the neighbouring villages of Arbatax and Girasole the

Tree Sparrow was again the dominant species, but at Villagrande Strisaili and Villanova Strisaili, 15-20 km inland, although both species were present, the Spanish Sparrow was now dominant. Similarly, the Tree Sparrow disappeared as one proceeded north: it was not found at Dorgali, 5 km from the coast, but was present at Cape Comino and Olbia on the coast. In Olbia the majority of sparrows were *hispaniolensis* and *montanus* was not found further north.**

In the remainder of the island the Spanish Sparrow was a common bird, forming flocks of 50-100 birds in the cultivated land and olive groves and associating with large flocks of finches and Rock Sparrows *Petronia petronia* in open country. Although found on the outskirts of the towns and villages, Spanish Sparrows were rarely seen in built-up areas during the day in the way that one commonly finds Italian Sparrows in the towns of northern Italy, though they formed large roosts at night in trees in the squares of towns, for example in Porto Torres and Bosa, as has already been reported for Cagliari and Alghero by Steinbacher (1956), and they were also seen visiting nests and nest sites on isolated houses early in the morning and at dusk.

In the Far East, where *P. domesticus* is lacking, *P. montanus* becomes the complete house sparrow, as it does even in northern Iran, Afghanistan and Turkmenistan where it is resident and *P. domesticus* a summer visitor, breeding in open country away from towns. While, in the absence of both *domesticus* and *montanus*, *hispaniolensis* takes over the house sparrow niche, it appears to be normally sub-dominant in this respect to both the other species. The fact that *P. montanus* has displaced *P. domesticus italiae* in Naples suggests that the latter may be more related behaviourally to *hispaniolensis* than *domesticus*. Perhaps it might be better described as a sub-species of *hispaniolensis*.

A puzzling feature is the restriction of the Tree Sparrow to the east of Sardinia and its absence from the towns and villages of the north and west, though in Ireland, where it is also at the limit of its range, it is similarly restricted to the coast (Sharrock 1976).

References

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** The distribution of the Tree Sparrow is shown in the figure on page 45.

