

**HOUSE SPARROW (*PASSER DOMESTICUS*) TRENDS IN COASTAL
NORTHWEST FLORIDA - ALABAMA BASED ON
CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT DATA**

Robert A. Duncan

In recent years, several observers, including the author, have noted an apparent decline in the number of House Sparrows being found on Audubon Christmas Bird Counts and other bird censuses in Northwest Florida and coastal Alabama.

In order to learn more about this phenomenon, I examined data published in the National Audubon Society Field Notes, (formerly American Birds) Christmas Bird Counts, published by the National Audubon Society, New York, for the five year period of 1980- 1984 and compared the results with the latest five year period, 1990- 1994, by noting a percent increase or decrease.

Four Christmas Bird Counts (CBC's) were chosen, Gulf Shores, Al., Perdido Bay, Fl.-Al., Pensacola and Marianna, Fl. These counts were chosen because they were extant for the 15 year period examined. The results are contained in Table 1.

TABLE 1. NUMBERS OF AVERAGE HOUSE SPARROWS NOTED PER PARTY HOURS			
	1980 - 1984	1990 - 1994	% increase/decrease
GULF SHORES	2.15	0.59	-73.6
PERDIDO BAY	1.52	0.83	-45.4
PENSACOLA	3.11	3.85	+ 23.7
MARIANNA	1.48	0.26	-82.5

ALABAMA BIRDLIFE

The statistics show that there were declines in three of the four counts examined. Only one count showed an increase, Pensacola, the most urbanized of the four. The cause of decline in the three counts is not apparent, although it has been suggested that the House Finch (*Carpodacus mexicanus*), a recent invader into the region, is out-competing the House Sparrow for food and nesting resources. Indeed, the first House Finches did not occur on a CBC until 1989 when 14 were reported on the Pensacola CBC. Since then they have been reported with increasing frequency and have exceeded House Sparrow numbers on some counts in some years (i.e. Gulf Shores, 1993, 292 House Finches, 27 House Sparrows). I speculate that greater numbers of House Sparrows on the Pensacola CBC in recent years may be attributed to increased urbanization of the count circle, or that this species is leaving the countryside to find haven within the inner city. In the future, House Sparrows may become "Rara avis" if this cursory analysis indicates a permanent region-wide trend.

Robert A. Duncan, 614 Fairpoint Dr., Gulf Breeze, Fl. 32561.

BUFF-BELLIED HUMMINGBIRD (*AMAZILIA YUCATANENSIS*)

FIRST BANDING IN ALABAMA

Robert R. Sargent and Martha B. Sargent

The Buff-bellied hummingbird is a native of Eastern Mexico and the northern part of Belize. As described by Johnsgard (1983, *The Hummingbirds of North America*, Smithsonian Institution Press) it is found in a variety of habitats from dense thickets, overrun with vines and tangles at lower elevations