

CARMARTHENSHIRE LBAP TREE SPARROW ACTION PLAN

Introduction

The tree sparrow (*Passer montanus*, Golfan-y-mynydd) is a smaller rural cousin of the more familiar house sparrow. Unlike that species, the tree sparrow's plumage is the same in both sexes and is distinguished mainly by its chocolate brown cap and a black cheek spot. It is semi-colonial, nesting in loose groups mostly in tree cavities. Pairs produce two or three broods in the course of the summer after which birds can congregate to form feeding flocks. Their preferred diet is of small-seeded weed species, which used to occur far more abundantly in arable areas than now. They also eat invertebrates. Tree sparrows readily use nest boxes and can be attracted to food put out in gardens. Populations are mainly sedentary but large-scale autumnal movements occasionally occur.



The population in Carmarthenshire appears to be the only significant one remaining in west Wales, amounting to possibly 70–80% or more of the whole Welsh population. Here tree sparrows are centred on the Tywi Valley between Llangadog and Carmarthen with outlying colonies near Pendine and possibly elsewhere. In the Tywi Valley they are virtually confined to the floodplain and are very rarely observed beyond sight of the river. This grassland habitat is an unusual one for the tree sparrow, which is usually found in areas of mixed or arable farming. The varied habitats of the Tywi Valley – the mature trees, hedgerows, shingle banks on the river and tall herbaceous and graminaceous (grass-like) vegetation found on the riverbanks and associated wetland areas – offer the required shelter and food for the sparrows.

Ditches and aquatic vegetation provide an abundance of invertebrate food – mosquitos – which is important when young birds are being fed. *Phalaris* and other tall grasses as well as low-lying seed-bearing species such as water-pepper attract adult and fledged birds, flocks of up to 50 being occasionally seen. Birds are also attracted to the increasing number of maize fields when these are harvested, although these usually only provide food for 2 or 3 weeks.

Changes in agricultural practice, which have affected a range of farmland birds; decline in numbers and productivity of weed species, more intensive grassland management, decline in insect species and abundance due to loss of wetland, continued drainage of the land and loss of nesting sites are all causes for their decline.

Vision statement and objectives

The vision for this species in Carmarthenshire is for an increased population using sympathetically managed habitat, allowing for an expansion in range. Any action will seek to meet one or more of the following objectives:

- TS1** To maintain and increase the population size and range of the tree sparrow in Carmarthenshire
- TS2** To gather data on the distribution and status of tree sparrows in Carmarthenshire.
- TS3** To raise awareness of tree sparrows in Carmarthenshire and provide advice on habitat management

Summary of action achieved by LBAP Partners (for more information contact the biodiversity officer – Biodiversity@carmarthenshire.gov.uk) or visit the national Biodiversity Action Reporting System - <http://ukbars.defra.gov.uk>:

- Nest boxes provided within their known range in the Tywi valley – TAYO*/CBC/Vols TS1
- Feeding stations provided in the Tywi Valley – 5 sites‡ – CCC/Vols TS1
- Aberdeunant Farm – RSPB nest box project for tree sparrows – RSPB/NT TS1
- Annual monitoring of Twyi valley population – CBC TS2
- Information sheet produced for landowners on TS conservation – TAYO TS3
- Press release to promote the recording of TS in Tywi valley and beyond – CCC TS3

2013

- Feeding stations provided in the Tywi Valley – 5 sites‡ – CCC/Vols TS1

2014

- Annual vol winter feeding project at five sites in the Tywi Valley – CCC/Vols TS1

Proposed future action

- Information panel on tree sparrows at Dryslwyn car park – CCC TS3
- Identify suitable sites outside Tywi valley to target future survey – CBC TS2

* TAYO – Tywi Afon yr Oesoedd Project.

‡ CCW LBAP grant funded.

Useful links

- [RSPB – tree sparrow](#)
- [Carmarthenshire Bird Club](#)
- Tree sparrow.com



Partneriaeth **Bioamrywiaeth** Sir Gaerfyrddin
Carmarthenshire **Biodiversity** Partnership

www.carmarthenshirebiodiversity.co.uk

The [Carmarthenshire Biodiversity Partnership](#) (CBP) is made up of the following organisations: [Carmarthenshire County Council](#) (CCC), [Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales](#) (WTSWW), [Natural Resources Wales](#) (NRW), [RSPB](#), [Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust](#) (WWT), [Carmarthenshire Bird Club](#) (CBC), [National Botanic Gardens Wales](#) (NBGW), [Butterfly Conservation](#) (BC), [Carmarthenshire Rivers Trust](#) (CRT), [National Trust](#) (NT), [Botanical Society of the British Isles](#) (BSBI), [Llanelli Naturalists](#) (LN), [Bat Conservation Trust](#) (BCT), [West Wales Biodiversity Information Centre](#) (WWBIC), [Amphibian and Reptile Conservation](#) (ARC)