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Birds of New Zealand - Locality Guide. 3rd edn.

Arun Books, Orewa, New Zealand.

Hedge sparrow: pp 231-232.



HEDGE SPARROW

Family Prunellidae

Species *Prunella modularis*

Common names Hedge Sparrow, Dunnock

Status Introduced

Abundance Common

Size 140 mm (cf sparrow 145 mm)

Habitat Low vegetation and second growth. Also found in pine forests, well established suburban gardens, but only on the verges of native forested areas.

Worldwide range Europe and western Asia.

New Zealand range Found throughout New Zealand although seldom seen in Auckland.

Discussion Was introduced from England in the second half of the 19th century. Its spread was generally slow but by 1940 it had colonised most parts of New Zealand.

Description

Head and upperparts Grey, streaked with brown. **Face, throat and collar and underparts** Soft grey. **Wings** Brown, streaked with dark brown.

Conspicuous features

- Has fine bill as opposed to a House Sparrow's blunt bill.
- Appears similar to a female House Sparrow but finer and smaller.

Conspicuous characteristics

- Sings from a regular and conspicuous place, often from a roadside verge.
- Regularly feeds low down in shrubs and often on the ground.
- It will venture out on to lawns sometimes in the company of House Sparrows.

Call Its song, uttered by the male bird, is a fragile warble of "sweedle sweedle swee swee" notes. It is the first of the introduced songsters to commence singing in the autumn and birds are in full song by mid-April in the north. Because of the general silence of other songsters at this time, the Hedge Sparrow's song can be learnt. The song period extends to the end of January.

Nest A cup of twigs lined with moss, wool or feathers, usually deep among foliage but near the ground. Up to 4 blue eggs are laid.

Where to find – North Island

North Auckland – Waiwera at Wenderholm Park. P. 291.

North Auckland – Whangaparaoa in Shakespear Park. P. 294.

Waikato – Common in rough roadside verges.

Bay of Plenty – Matata. P. 320.

Wellington – Common throughout the suburbs.

Where to find – South Island

Canterbury – Lake Tekapo. Large numbers throughout this area. P. 354.

Dunedin – Common in the Dunedin Botanic Garden.

Southland – Invercargill in the town park.

Fiordland – Lake Te Anau and Lake Manapouri. P. 369.

Where to find – Stewart Island

Oban – Common around the town. P. 367.