

# Songbirds of Missouri

## Field Sparrow



### Vocabulary

Match the word with the definition, then write a sentence using each word. Share your sentences with the class.

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|----------------|--|
| ___ Nesting    | A. The total area that an animal lives within  |
| ___ Interwoven | B. Areas near, or within towns, cities or other developments   |
| ___ Inhabit    | C. The process of building and preparing a nest for baby birds   |
| ___ Exotic     | D. Vertebrates that live in water in larval form and develop into lung-breathing adults                |
| ___ Fledge     | E. The area that includes the natural resources an animal needs to survive                             |
| ___ Courtship  | F. Air-breathing, cold-blooded vertebrates such as snakes and lizards                                  |
| ___ Incubates  | G. To live within a particular place   |
| ___ Thrive     | H. To provide the heat necessary for hatching  |
| ___ Urban      | I. Woven together  |
| ___ Brood      | J. The ritual of behaviors engaged in to attract a mate  |
| ___ Mammals    | K. Something original to a particular place  |
| ___ Native     | L. To trim or clean with the beak  |
| ___ Range      | M. In danger of dying out  |
| ___ Endangered | N. To grow vigorously or flourish  |
| ___ Ecosystem  | O. Warm-blooded vertebrates that have hair on their bodies and milk-producing glands for feeding young |
| ___ Preen      | P. To acquire the feathers necessary to fly  |
| ___ Amphibians | Q. A family of young birds   |
| ___ Reptile    | R. A community of living organisms interacting with their environment                                  |
| ___ Habitat    | S. Foreign, or originating from another country  |

(Missouri Show-Me Standards: CA.1, CA.6, Goal 2.1)

### Classroom Activity

(Missouri Show-Me Standards: S.3, S.4, Goal 1.2)

**Objectives:** After completing this activity, students will be able to:

- Identify North America's true sparrows
- Describe the habitats and traits of these sparrows

**Materials:**

Paper, writing materials, standard size (8 X 11) copies of maps of North America (black-and-white line maps are preferred, but any type will do)

**Background:**

North America is home to a variety of native sparrows, or "true" sparrows. Many of these are either year-round residents or migratory visitors to Missouri. This activity will help students find out more about these birds.

**Procedure:**

- 1) Each student will make a notebook about a specific species of sparrow. There are more than 30 sparrows native to North America so, depending on the size of the class, there may be enough species for each student to have a specific bird. If not, more than one student can write about the same bird.
- 2) Through the school library, the Internet, Missouri Department of Conservation resources, or the nearest Audubon chapter or other local birding groups, students should gather information on their assigned sparrow for their notebooks. Each notebook will include a map of the continent showing where the bird can be found. (If possible, mark the bird's spring breeding range and winter range if it is a migratory species. If it is a year-round resident, make note of that, as well.)
- 3) List facts and characteristics of the species, including its size, weight, color, distinctive markings, and preferred habitat. Try to find a picture of the bird to include in the notebook. Each student should write a report on his or her species, discussing the various traits of the bird and its current population status. This report should include information on how humans have helped or hurt the status of the sparrow.
- 4) If possible, make arrangements with a Department of Conservation bird expert or local birding organization to take a field trip to a nearby area where there's a possibility of viewing some of these species.
- 5) When the notebooks are completed, have students discuss what they learned. Have students read their reports aloud so the class can learn about the different types of sparrows. Display the notebooks in the school so other classrooms and grades can learn about the sparrows in this region.

Grade levels: 4-8

### Math Problem:

(Missouri Show-Me Standards: Goal M.1, M.3, Goal 1.8)

Field sparrows typically lay three to five eggs and have a couple of broods, or families, per breeding season. But, bird surveys show that their population is declining due to loss of grassland habitat. Do the following math problem, then graph your results.

During one breeding season, you discover that three different field sparrows are nesting on a prairie near your home! The first sparrow has one brood of three eggs, and a second brood of five eggs. The second sparrow has three broods of three eggs each. The third sparrow has one brood of five eggs. How many baby field sparrows were born on your prairie that season?

### Short Answer Q&A

(Missouri Show-Me Standard: Goal 1.5)

1. How are weaver finches and field sparrows different from each other?
2. Why is the field sparrow difficult to spot?
3. How do male field sparrows attract a female during the breeding season?
4. What are the nesting and breeding habits of field sparrows?
5. Why is North America's field sparrow population declining?