

AN INTRASPECIFIC ATTACK IN HOUSE SPARROWS

The following instance of a male House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) attacking an injured male of its own species is unusual. An injured male Sparrow (band B-4666 — first banded as a adult on 18 June 1960) was found lying on the ground in a Christchurch back yard on 25 June 1966 at 1200 hrs. There were no feathers on the top or sides of the head where raw flesh was showing; one eye was closed. At 1210 hrs., after examination, it was released where it had been found. A short time later squawks were heard and several sparrows flew up as I approached the injured bird.

The bird was watched from a window, and at 1225 hrs., several male and female Sparrows went up and hopped round it. Then a colour-banded male arrived and attacked it repeatedly between 1230 and 1330 hrs. Each attack lasted about five minutes and the banded male fed or rested nearby for about the same time between attacks. When attacking, the aggressor stood beside or on the injured bird and pecked at its head (particularly the eyes and the edge of the injured area), wing tips and cloaca, extending the previous injuries to the eyes and enlarging the bare area down the nape.

The injured bird frequently squawked and limped or fluttered away, but seemed incapable of retaliation and was even at times rolled on to its back. A number of sparrows of both sexes showed transient interest in these encounters.

At 1330 I killed the now badly injured bird and left it lying on its back in the same place. The colour-banded male returned and, without touching the body, examined it for five minutes before flying away. The dead bird was put the right way up. The colour-banded male again returned and attacked the body till it rolled on to its back, when it again lost interest. The cause of the initial injuries is unknown.

— DAVID G. DAWSON



PREDATORY BEHAVIOUR OF WHITE-BACKED MAGPIE

In June, while visiting the dairy farm of Mr. S. G. R. Middlemas of Matakana, I saw a White-backed Magpie (*G. hypoleuca*) in a grass paddock pecking vigorously at something on the ground.

As Mr. Middlemas and I approached the spot, the Magpie flew off leaving a hen Blackbird (*T. merula*) unconscious on the ground with feathers scattered around her. One eye had been pecked out and part of the neck and upper breast denuded of feathers.

While I was examining the Blackbird in my hand, she regained consciousness and flew off rather laboriously.

It is unlikely that the Blackbird was previously stunned by flying into wire, as there were no power or telephone lines nearby and the nearest fence was 40 yards away.

— G. J. H. MOON