

American Tree Sparrow

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

Often called the "Winter Chippy" because of its similarity in looks to the Chipping Sparrow, the American Tree Sparrow is a small brown bird with a wonderful personality. American Tree Sparrows begin arriving in late October, and soon after Chipping Sparrows depart. The reverse is true in spring. Because of this, it is a rare occasion to see American Tree Sparrows and Chipping Sparrows in the same location. Photo courtesy of Jerry Kumery

The American Tree Sparrow is a larger sparrow with a long tail and a reddish cap. They have an unmistakable dark spot in the center of their breast, and frosty edges to their wings and tail. It is very difficult to differentiate between the sexes.

Interesting Facts:

Family: Emberizidae

Scientific Name: *Spizella arborea*

Location: Summer months are spent in Alaska and northern Canada with winters spent in southern Canada to central United States. These sweet little birds are often found in flocks around weedy fields, marshes, woodland edges, Arctic tundra and suburban area feeders.

Nesting: Females build nests in brushy habitat on the ground, in low-lying grassy areas, shallow depressions or at the base of shrubs. These cup-shaped nests are constructed of grasses, mosses, bark, and roots and are lined with feathers and fur. Females lay 3-7 pale blue or greenish white eggs with dark brown markings. Eggs are incubated for approximately 12-13 days by the female only. Fledging takes from 8-10 days and young birds are raised by both male and females.

Diet: American Tree Sparrows love [millet](#) and will flock to feeders that provide it. They will also forage for seeds from grasses, sedges, buds, insects and some spiders, or berries. Sparrows forage by cleaning food from the ground and foliage.

Size and Color: These sparrows grow to approximately 6" to 6-1/2". Male and female look the same. Both have a single dark spot on their breast and a solid reddish-brown cap. Bill is dark above and yellow below. Wings have two white arm bars.

Song: Begins with several clear notes and ends in a sweet high warble with a buzzing sound at the end. Note: *tseet* or *teelwit*.

**Special
Characteristics:**

- Although called the Tree Sparrow, the American Tree spends most of its time on the ground.
- Their call is reminiscent of sleigh bells.
- Often confused with the Chipping Sparrow.

Attracting:

American Tree Sparrows are attracted to shrubbery, ground cover, brush piles, and [ground feeders](#). They will also pick at the seeds that other birds have strewn off of hanging feeders.

[Red Millet](#)

[Compact Ground Feeder Tray](#)

[White Proso Millet](#)