

Denis Summers-Smith first took up the study of the House Sparrow in 1947, thinking that the difficulties of travel in post-war Britain would best suit the study of a species always close at hand. The humble House Sparrow, common everywhere, was surprisingly poorly researched and his work soon provided interesting insights into this successful and adaptable little bird. As new opportunities to travel opened up, his interest blossomed to take in the genus *Passer* as a whole. His travels would ultimately lead to his study of all but one group, found only in the deepest Turkestan, and to the publication of his authoritative monograph on sparrows in 1988. While that book presented his knowledge of sparrow biology, this volume tells the other, human, side of the tale. His wry descriptions of the tribulations and unexpected pleasures of a traveller on four continents, from the Himalayas and Thailand, to Africa and the Americas (with a good few islands in between) are interspersed with observations and speculations on the biology of sparrows in a wide variety of habitats. Everywhere local officials and birdwatchers warmed to the eccentric Scot in pursuit of the little birds that nobody notices but which so often make their homes beside us. The authors own photographs and delightful cartoons by Euan Dunn further paint the picture of this lifelong search.

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