

FIRST RECORD OF HOUSE SPARROW (*PASSER DOMESTICUS*) IN  
NEVIS, WEST INDIES

IAN HART<sup>1</sup> and MARK MICHAEL LUDLOW<sup>2,3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Resident of Nevis and owner of Hart of Nevis Villa Rentals, Tanglewood, Golden Rock, Gingerland, Nevis, West Indies; e-mail - hartofnevis@sisterisles.kn and/or hartofnevis@hotmail.com. <sup>2</sup>PhD Candidate, Ornitho-Archaeology, University of Wales – Trinity Saint David, Lampeter, United Kingdom; e-mail MMLBird@aol.com; <sup>3</sup>Current address: 501 Slaters Lane #1022, Alexandria, Virginia 22314, USA; & Blue Roofed House (Blue Monkey), Oualie Lane South, Oualie Bay, St. James Parish, Nevis, West Indies

*Abstract.* --- Ian Hart first identified the vocalizations of this species in March 2012 and thereafter, on 14 April 2012, Professor Robert Ricklefs, Dr. Steven Latta, and Mark Michael Ludlow confirmed through observation a small flock of circa nine (males and females were both represented) of House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) in the proximity of the horse stables of the Turf & Jockey Club (the horse race track), on the south coast of the island Nevis, West Indies, adjacent to the Caribbean Sea (IHO 1953: 14-15), within St. George Gingerland Parish, Nevis, The Federation of St. Christopher and Nevis, West Indies.

*Key words.* --- Caribbean, House Sparrow, Nevis, *Passer domesticus*

HOUSE SPARROW (*PASSER DOMESTICUS*)

AOU (1998: 679), Dickinson (2003: 716), and Clements (2000: 613) either do not show House Sparrow occurring on the island of Nevis or are silent or acknowledge that the species is introduced to The Americas. Raffaele *et al* (1998: 445) acknowledge that this species is an introduced species to the West Indies but they do not show it present or noted to have occurred on the island of Nevis and it is not noted to have occurred on the island of Nevis in their “Locality Checklist” (Raffaele *et al* 1998: 445 & 493).

NEVIS

Nevis is a compact oceanic island of volcanic origin with an area of circa 93 km<sup>2</sup> (circa 36 square miles), situated in the northern Lesser Antilles. Politically it is a portion of the two island country, The Federation of St. Christopher and Nevis. The island rises gradually from the shore to a central peak of circa 985 meters (circa 3232 feet) and exhibits a range of natural and secondary habitats which include: elfin woodland, montane forest, palm brake, grassland, coastal scrub, dry woodland, and farmland (Robinson and Lowery 2000).

THE RECORDED SIGHTING

A number were first heard and recognized vocally by Ian Hart of Nevis, West Indies, in March of 2012 and in response to that report at circa mid-day on 14 April 2012 three (3) individuals (a single male and two females), were initially observed by Professor Richard Ricklefs, University of Missouri – St. Louis, Member of the National Academy of Science, Dr. Steven Latta, Director of Conservation & Field Research, National Aviary, Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, and Mark Michael Ludlow, the author (during a National Geographic Society funded research

expedition to the islands of Nevis and St. Kitts): Observations occurred in the presence of Maria W. Pil, and Leticia Soares, both of Brazil and PhD students in the laboratory of Professor Ricklefs. A slightly wider search of the immediate area resulted in the location of a total of a combined nine (9) males and females. These individuals were congregating within and around the horse stables at the dilapidated Nevis Turf & Jockey Club (locally known as the horse racetrack) in St. George Gingerland Parish, Nevis, located in the south southeastern area of the island of Nevis (17°06'54.40"N, 62°33'00.03"W). The location elevation was c. 13.72 m. above sea level and was c. 175.7 m. from the Caribbean Sea (IHO 1953: 14-15). All individuals were observed with binoculars and no photographs were taken (Sibley 2000). The auditory and confirming visual recognition of these nine individual birds collectively constitute a First Record for House Sparrow occurring on the island of Nevis.

In light of the male and female composition of the observed flock, further efforts will be made to document the presence of successful breeding of the species on the island of Nevis.

This observation was part of the efforts of the newly formed Nevis Ornithological Society to document all of the species of birds to be found solely on the island of Nevis (and proximal Booby Island). Historically bird species listings have artificially conjoined the two geologically and ecologically separate and distinct islands (the island of St. Christopher (St. Kitts) and the island of Nevis): An example would be the 'Locality Checklist' within Raffaele *et al* (1998: 453-495). The Nevis Ornithological Society is also attempting to: 1) systematically review and evaluate reported bird sightings on the island of Nevis, as well as Booby Island, with a high degree of academic rigor; and 2) provide a central repository for those accepted reports that are solely for the island of Nevis.

A fuller significance of this sighting remains undetermined. Combined with past and future records, fuller patterns may become clearer. As in this case, and in the future, increasing numbers of bird watchers and researchers in the field, on comparatively remote and under frequented islands, for sustained periods of time, may account for increasing numbers of documented reports.

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