

Dunnock

Prunella modularis

Bird · Resident · here all year



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Often mistaken for a house sparrow, the dunnock is slimmer, greyer about the head and breast, and has a fine, pointed insect-eater's bill rather than a seed-cracker's. It works the ground beneath hedges, feeders and shrubs with a distinctive low, shuffling creep. Common right across Dumfries gardens, allotments and hedgerows, but so unobtrusive that most people never register it as a separate bird.

BEHAVIOUR

Dunnocks have one of the most complicated breeding systems of any British bird. Territories overlap, and a female will often mate with two males, both of which then help feed the chicks — so each male has reason to stay. Feeding is almost entirely on the ground: they hop and shuffle rather than scratch, taking small insects and, in winter, tiny seeds. The song is a brief, flat, slightly squeaky warble delivered from a hedge top.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Accentors (Prunellidae)
SIZE	14 cm · sparrow-sized
UK STATUS	Amber-listed

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