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Syntopy of Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus* and House Sparrow *P. domesticus* in Inner Mongolia, China

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Both Eurasian Tree and House Sparrows (*Passer montanus* and *P. domesticus*) were found apparently breeding in the small village of Bao Dong, eastern Inner Mongolia (approx. 48°28'N 117°15'E) on 26 June 1992. The species occurred in about equal numbers in the village. During a brief visit to the village in the afternoon one Eurasian Tree Sparrow was seen carrying nest material into a space under a roof tile on one of the houses. House Sparrows were not seen carrying nest material or entering potential nest sites, but were 'singing'. The village is comprised mostly of mud houses, only a few having tiled roofs. The village is situated in grass steppe, with livestock rearing the only agricultural activity, with just a few houses having tiny vegetable plots. Trees are virtually absent from the area. It is some 20 km from Bao Dong to the nearest village.

We also visited many other hamlets, villages and towns from Manzouli (49°35'N 117°25'E), along the western side of Hulun Nur (Dalai Hu), and south to Wulun Nur (48°20'N 117°30'E), in the period 23 to 27 June 1992. At all other sites we saw only Eurasian Tree Sparrows.

Observations by DSM in the semi-desert Ordos highlands area of central Inner Mongolia from 17 to 21 June 1996 in the area Dongsheng (39°50'N 110°0'E), Juntuliang (Taolimiao-Alashan Nur) (39°51'N 109°25'E), and Hongjian Nur (39°5'N 109°55'E) revealed only Eurasian Tree Sparrows. In the Ordos area visited, the higher land was almost devoid of vegetation, being heavily overgrazed and lacking in trees, but in the lower areas trees (e.g. *Salix*, *Ulmus* and *Populus*) were far more numerous than in eastern Inner Mongolia, many being planted to control sand movement.

Details of the distribution of the two species in the Far East are still poorly known. Summers-Smith (1988) notes

there has been an eastwards spread of House Sparrows across Siberia, although it is uncertain whether the species is continuing to expand its range in this area. Cheng (1987) records House Sparrows of the race *domesticus*, and Eurasian Tree Sparrows of the race *montanus* as resident in northeast Inner Mongolia, around Hailar (49°12'N 119°45'E) and further east, suggesting probable sympatry (overlap of geographical range) - this being the southernmost location for nominate *domesticus* in China. It is not possible, however, to determine from Cheng's records whether the species are syntopic (occurring in the same habitat) in this region. Cheng (1987) only records Eurasian Tree Sparrows of the race *saturatus* from the Ordos.

Usually, where the two species are sympatric, the larger House Sparrow occurs in urban areas, the smaller Eurasian Tree Sparrow being in the countryside (Summers-Smith 1988, 1995). The general lack of trees in the steppes of eastern Inner Mongolia would, however, restrict both species to nesting in man-made structures and thus force syntopy.

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