

# Dunnock

As our climate changes, gardens are becoming even more vital to wildlife and people. They can provide shade, absorb carbon, soak up flood water and help to cool buildings. A well managed network of gardens stretching across the Sussex would also help wildlife to move more freely and adapt to climate change enabling us to create a living landscape

## Wildcall

Tel: 01273 494777  
email: wildcall@sussexwt.org.uk



Sussex Wildlife Trust  
Woods Mill  
Henfield  
West Sussex  
BN5 9SD

Tel: 01273 492630  
email: enquiries@sussexwt.org.uk  
Web: www.sussexwt.org.uk

## Nest-site necessities

The Dunnock likes to nest mostly low down in a dense bush, but sometimes in



Dunnock / Dave Kilbey

a bank, and may use the old nest of other species as a base. In a formal garden, the manicured box hedges round the vegetable plot are a good place. Across Southern England, Dunnocks are a favoured foster parents for Cuckoos.

## Building materials

Natural twigs, leaves, roots, moss and grasses are used to build a neat cup – the birds may take wool for lining if you put some out.

## Chick care

Chicks are fed mostly garden creepy-crawlies, though old ones of late broods may be fed small seeds. Social life is complex, with 'pairs' often containing more than two birds – much of the food being provided by the third bird.

## Special dietary requirements

This insectivore takes a very wide range of natural food such as beetles,



spiders



and ants



(Images by  
Graeme  
Lyons)

which it can find from rooting around in leaf litter. Dunnocks can be tempted by really nutritious supplementary foods, such as cheese, peanuts and nyjer seeds. This ground feeder can benefit from food placed where they usually forage – on the edge of cover. Great clumps of cheese would attract a flock of Starlings and would be gone in a trice. A little finely grated Cheddar will be found and appreciated by garden birds, such as Dunnocks, Wrens and Robins.

## Night shelter

The Dunnock will roost alone except during the breeding season, when adults may roost together. Favoured spots include sites at about head-height in a prickly bush, such as Hawthorn or Holly.

## The ideal territory

Lots of cover at ground level. Brambles or shrubberies are ideal. Gardens that are too open may miss out on Dunnocks.

## When it's all happening

First clutch will be laid in March, and there may be chicks still in the nest in September.



Dunnock / Dave Kilbey

**Breeding Starts:** April

**Number of Clutches:** 2-3

**Number of Eggs:** 4-6

**Incubation Days:** 12-13

**Fledge Days:** 11-12

Copyright Sussex Wildlife Trust December 2009

WildCall Factsheet disclaimer: All information contained within Sussex Wildlife Trust WildCall factsheets is to the best of our knowledge true and accurate at the time of printing. The Sussex Wildlife Trust will not accept any responsibility or liability for any losses or damage resulting from following the advice given. Registered Charity No. 207005. Registered in England. Company Number 698851