



**Darwin and Evolution**  
*Sparrows and breeding*

**VOICE OVER**

Tring in Hertfordshire in the South of England. The Natural History museum is home to one of the world's great collections of birds. Behind the scenes is an internationally important collection of bird specimens, studied extensively to help understand ecological and evolutionary processes.

As with many bird species, there are clear visual differences between the male and the female house sparrow.

The male is streaked brown and black, and is much more chocolatey than the female. The male also has a black throat patch that widens out across the breast against a white breast and belly.

The size of the male's throat patch varies significantly between individuals.

The patch is missing in juveniles, and is most conspicuous in the winter and springtime breeding season.

The size of the badge is important. For example, in a feeding flock of males the individuals with the biggest badges are most successful in obtaining food. Equally individuals with large badges have greater breeding success.

The house sparrow is widely distributed and is especially associated with permanent human habitation. It has spread out of its native range across many parts of the world.

Nesting in buildings is common, both parents preparing a dome shaped nest. Male and female play a full part in raising their broods. If you look very closely you can see how different the throat patches are!