



giving
nature
a home

Name:

Sparrowhawk



History

In the past, sparrowhawk numbers suffered because their woodland homes were cut down and some people killed them.

Pesticides, which were used in farming, also entered the sparrowhawk's food chain through the prey they caught, causing their eggs to have very thin and fragile shells that broke far too early. Fortunately, these chemicals were eventually banned and sparrowhawks are now protected, so their population has recovered.

General info

Scientific name: *Accipiter nisus*

Size: Up to 33cm long with a wingspan of up to 62cm (the average armspan of a 9-year-old child is 1.3 m).

Weight: Males can weigh up to 180g; females are much heavier at up to 345g.

Where they live: The whole of the UK apart from the most northerly Scottish Highlands and islands. If you watch carefully, you might see sparrowhawks in your garden or school grounds.

How long they live: The average lifespan for a sparrowhawk is four years, but the oldest known wild sparrowhawk lived for 17 years.

What they eat: Mainly small birds and pigeons. Sparrowhawks ambush their prey from hiding and have learned that gardens are great places to find lunch.

Conservation status: Because there are currently no concerns about sparrowhawks, they are on our Green List.

What is special about this bird?

Sparrowhawks are one of the most nimble birds of prey and can twist and turn to dodge trees as they chase their prey through woodland, reaching speeds of up to 50km per hour.

Fascinating fact

Female sparrowhawks are up to 25% bigger than males, which means they can tackle larger prey, while males are more agile and better at hunting smaller birds. This means that males and females don't compete for food.