

## Bloedel Bird of the Month - The Sudan Golden Sparrow



The Sudan Golden Sparrow lives across Africa in the dry, partially wooded Sahel band that lies south of the Sahara desert. It breeds from Sudan and Ethiopia in the east, to Senegal and the Canary Islands in the west.

Sparrows are small birds native to the Old World. They have thick bills for eating seeds and are mostly grey or brown. The Sudan Golden Sparrow male has a yellow head and under parts, brown wings and back, with white wing bars. Females are a pale sandy brown colour that hides them better on a nest.

The name of the wild birds is 'Sudan Golden Sparrow'. The Latin name is *Passer luteus* where the genus name *Passer* is the Latin for sparrow and the species name *luteus* means 'saffron yellow'. The name often used for birds bred in captivity (aviculture), is 'Golden Song Sparrow'.

There are sizeable populations of Sudan Golden Sparrows across the width of Africa and so the survival status of the bird in the wild is 'Least concern'.<sup>1</sup>

As with many birds, males differ in colour from the females (They are sexually dimorphic) and both differ from juveniles. The general rule is that young birds of both sexes tend to look more like females at first; as they have better camouflage. As well as this, there are often changes in and out of the breeding season. The beaks of males become black as the breeding season approaches. The first sign that a chick is male may be the beak becoming darker. The only tinge of yellow on the female is around the face and above the eyes but it is nowhere near the intensity of the male's colour. Some females develop a dull yellow throat patch as they age.<sup>2</sup> Photographs of mature males and females are on the website of Project Noah.<sup>3</sup>

There are online videos of Sudan Golden Sparrows with mature birds; these have the great advantage that you can hear the sound of the birdsong! Examples are<sup>4,5,6,7</sup> the last link is to a still photograph with an audio recording.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/22718276/0>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.cliftonfinchaviaries.org/cfa/goldss/gss.htm>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.projectnoah.org/spottings/1555626012>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gixbRjaFT4A>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GHWp6OU-s4>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FMzosWifc40>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=265IWW6KFgM>



The beak of the male above is slightly darker than that of the female below. The female has faint yellow patches above her eyes. Both of these birds are young and have not reached their full adult breeding colours.



### **Update March 2018**

This article was written in January 2018. By March 2018 the beaks of the males turned black to show they were ready to breed..