

ITALIAN SPARROW *PASSER DOMESTICUS ITALIAE* KLEPTOPARASITIZED GREAT TIT *PARUS MAJOR*

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On the 11th of February 1984 at 9.00 a.m. in the WWF Natural Oasis "Bosco di Palo" 40 km North of Rome, I watched a single Great tit *Parus major* which, after catching a sunflower seed from an artificial manger near a building, perched on a near by tree, and holding the seed with its claws, pecked it in order to open it. A female Italian Sparrow *Passer domesticus italiae*, having observed everything, attacked the Great Tit, frightened it away and made off the already opened seed.

This behaviour may be described, using Brockman & Barnard's words (cf. their study of the categories of parasitic behaviours, 1979), as: "parasitic bird dives at host from above and picks up food dropped by host". *Passer domesticus* is a species with remarkably aggressive tendencies particularly in the female (Johnston 1969). Brockman & Barnard (1979) described cases of kleptoparasitism against other species (even arthropods) but not against the Great Tit.

On several subsequent occasions, I watched the Great Tit and the Italian Sparrow eating together on the same manger without signs of aggression; moreover the Italian Sparrow knows how to open sunflower seeds skillfully, though using a different technique from that of the Great Tit. So my observation has to be considered as an exception.

RIASSUNTO

UNA PASSERA D'ITALIA *PASSER DOMESTICUS ITALIAE* CLEPTOPARASSITIZZA UNA CINCIALLEGRA *PARUS MAJOR*.

Viene descritto un caso eccezionale di cleptoparassitismo tra Passera d'Italia e Cinciallegra.

RESUME'

UN MOINEAU CISALPIN *PASSER DOMESTICUS ITALIAE* CLEPTOPARASSITIZE UNE MESANGE CHARBONNIERE.

On décrit un cas exceptionnel de cléptoparassitisme d'un Moineau cisalpin à l'égard d'une Mésange charbonnière.

BIBLIOGRAFIA

Brockman, H.J. & Barnard, C.J. 1979. Kleptoparasitism in Birds. *Anim. Behav.* 27: 487-514.

Johnston, R.F. 1969. Aggressive foraging behaviour in House Sparrows. *Auk* 86: 558-559.

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