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Sparrow shot in domino-record challenge

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Contents

The Article	2
Warm-ups	3
Before Reading / Listening	4
While Reading / Listening	5
Listening Gap Fill	6
After Reading	7
Discussion	8
Speaking	9
Homework	10
Answers	11

17 November, 2005

THE ARTICLE

Sparrow shot in domino-record challenge

Dutch animal rights activists are up in arms over the needless and wanton slaying of an endangered sparrow. The ill-fated bird was shot and killed during a domino-toppling world record attempt in an exhibition center in a city in the north of Holland. It had inadvertently flown into one of the four million dominoes that were being put down for a TV company's attempt at entering the Guinness Book of Records for the largest number of tiles to be toppled in a row. The rare bird's errant trajectory spilled 23,000 dominoes, before safety breaks were activated and further calamity was avoided. The bird ruffled the feathers of enraged organizers sufficiently for them to corner it and call for an exterminator, who put an end to the little creature's life with an air rifle.

Niels Dorland, an animal protection spokesman, was outraged at the slaying. He told the Associated Press: "Under Dutch law, you need a permit to kill this kind of bird, and a permit can only be granted when there's a danger to public health or a crop. That was not the case." He also questioned the justification of killing a bird that "knocked over a few dominoes for a game." His agency intends to prosecute the organizers on behalf of the slain sparrow. A spokesperson from the TV company defended the killing. Jeroen van Waardenberg said 100 people had spent weeks painstakingly and meticulously setting up the dominoes to try to surpass the record of 3,992,397 consecutively fallen tiles. A local radio station is offering a \$3,500 reward to anyone who sabotages the record attempt.

WARM-UPS

1. I'M A SPARROW: You are now a sparrow. Spend one minute thinking about your life as a sparrow. Walk around the class and talk to the other "sparrows" about being a sparrow. What do you do all day? What do you worry about? What are your plans for the weekend? Do you like playing dominoes?

2. GAMES: Do you like playing games (traditional rather than computer ones)? Talk with your partner(s) about which traditional games are popular in your country. Are they more popular with old or young people? What do you think of the following?

- Dominoes
- Chess
- Checkers / Draughts
- Backgammon
- Othello
- Jenga
- Card games
- Board games
- Scrabble
- Tic tac toe / Noughts and crosses

3. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

Animal rights / sparrows / dominoes / world records / Holland / rare birds / calamities / exterminators / air rifles / public health / radio stations / sabotage

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

4. SPARROW: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with sparrows. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

5. WORLD RECORDS: Choose a world record you would like to break. Talk to your partner(s) about it. Choose a world record you would like your partner(s) to break.

6. SPARROW OPINIONS: Do you agree with these opinions on sparrows? Talk about them with your partner(s).

- a. Sparrows are the most boring birds in the world.
- b. Now that avian bird flu is around, sparrows seem a little scary.
- c. Barbecued sparrow is delicious.
- d. Sparrows are pests so it's OK to kill them.
- e. Sparrows make people happy with their singing.
- f. In many ways, people are the same as sparrows.
- g. If a sparrow knocks over some dominoes, it should be shot and killed.
- h. Sparrows have a great life.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|--|-------|
| a. Animal rights activists are up in arms over the slaying of a sparrow. | T / F |
| b. A sparrow unwittingly knocked down 4 million dominoes. | T / F |
| c. Record-attempt organizers saved 23,000 dominoes from falling. | T / F |
| d. The bird ruffled the feathers of organizers of a world record attempt. | T / F |
| e. No special permit is needed to kill the kind of sparrow in the article. | T / F |
| f. An animal rights group will prosecute the bird's killers. | T / F |
| g. Over a thousand people meticulously set up the 4 million dominoes. | T / F |
| h. There is a \$3,500 reward for sabotaging the world-record attempt. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------|
| a. up in arms | basis |
| b. wanton | wayward |
| c. inadvertently | killing |
| d. errant | wicked |
| e. calamity | angered |
| f. ruffled the feathers of | precisely |
| g. slaying | furious |
| h. justification | wrecks |
| i. meticulously | disaster |
| j. sabotages | accidentally |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| a. animal rights activists are | justification of killing a bird |
| b. the needless and wanton | to the little creature's life |
| c. safety breaks were activated and | granted when there's a danger |
| d. The bird ruffled the feathers | slaying of an endangered sparrow |
| e. put an end | up in arms |
| f. a permit can only be | the record of 3,992,397 |
| g. He also questioned the | sabotages the record attempt |
| h. prosecute the organizers | further calamity was avoided |
| i. try to surpass | of enraged organizers |
| j. a \$3,500 reward to anyone who | on behalf of the slain sparrow |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

Sparrow shot in domino-record challenge

Dutch animal rights activists are up in _____ over the needless and wanton _____ of an endangered sparrow. The ill-fated bird was shot and killed during a domino-toppling world record _____ in an exhibition center in a city in the north of Holland. It had inadvertently _____ into one of the four million dominoes that were being put down for a TV company's attempt at entering the Guinness Book of Records for the largest number of tiles to be _____ in a row. The rare bird's errant _____ spilled 23,000 dominoes, before safety breaks were _____ and further calamity was avoided. The bird ruffled the feathers of enraged organizers sufficiently for them to _____ it and call for an exterminator, who put an end to the little creature's life with an air rifle.

topped

slaying

corner

flown

trajectory

arms

attempt

activated

Niels Dorland, an animal protection spokesman, was _____ at the slaying. He told the Associated Press: "Under Dutch law, you need a _____ to kill this kind of bird, and a permit can only be granted when there's a danger to public health or a _____. That was not the _____." He also questioned the justification of killing a bird that "knocked over a few dominoes for a game." His agency intends to prosecute the organizers on _____ of the slain sparrow. A spokesperson from the TV company defended the killing. Jeroen van Waardenberg said 100 people had spent weeks _____ and meticulously setting up the dominoes to try to surpass the record of 3,992,397 _____ fallen tiles. A local radio station is offering a \$3,500 reward to anyone who _____ the record attempt.

painstakingly

case

permit

sabotages

behalf

outraged

consecutively

crop

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Sparrow shot in domino-record challenge

Dutch animal rights activists are up in arms over the needless and _____ slaying of an endangered sparrow. The _____ - _____ bird was shot and killed during a domino-_____ world record attempt in an exhibition center in a city in the north of Holland. It had _____ flown into one of the four million dominoes that were being put down for a TV company's attempt at entering the Guinness Book of Records for the largest number of tiles to be toppled in a row. The rare bird's _____ trajectory spilled 23,000 dominoes, before safety breaks were _____ and further calamity was avoided. The bird ruffled the feathers of enraged organizers sufficiently for them to _____ and call for an exterminator, who put an end to the little creature's life with an air rifle.

Niels Dorland, an animal protection spokesman, was _____ at the slaying. He told the Associated Press: "Under Dutch law, you need a permit to kill this kind of bird, and a permit can only be _____ when there's a danger to public health or _____. That was not the case." He also questioned the justification of killing a bird that "knocked over a few dominoes for a game." His agency _____ prosecute the organizers on _____ of the slain sparrow. A spokesperson from the TV company defended the killing. Jeroen van Waardenberg said 100 people had spent weeks painstakingly and meticulously setting up the dominoes to try to _____ the record of 3,992,397 consecutively fallen tiles. A local radio station is offering a \$3,500 reward to anyone who _____ the record attempt.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words **'record'** and **'attempt'**.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the gap fill. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "WORLD RECORDS" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about world records.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- | | |
|--------------|--------------|
| • arms | • protection |
| • ill | • case |
| • flown | • game |
| • trajectory | • defended |
| • feathers | • surpass |
| • air | • \$3,500 |

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- b. What do you think about sparrows?
- c. Do you think the sparrow in this article deserved to die?
- d. Do you think the organizers would also have killed a cat or dog that might have jeopardized the record attempt?
- e. What punishment do you think the exterminator should receive?
- f. Do you think it should be against the law for anyone to topple dominoes before the official start of a record attempt?
- g. Do you think shooting the bird was the best thing to do?
- h. What should the TV company do to make amends?
- i. Should the Guinness Book of Records refuse to recognize this record?
- j. When was the last time someone ruffled your feathers?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. Which is more important, a world record attempt at falling dominoes or the life of a sparrow?
- d. Which is more important, a 100-meter Olympic record attempt or the life of a sparrow?
- e. Do you think the world record attempt should be abandoned in memory of the sparrow?
- f. Would you sabotage the world record attempt for \$3,500?
- g. Do you think animal rights activists are over-reacting?
- h. What would you do if (a) an insect, (b) a small bird, (c) an animal or (d) your little brother upset hundreds of hours of your work?
- i. Do you think the radio station is bad for offering a reward and encouraging people to sabotage the world record attempt?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b. Was there a question you didn't like?
- c. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d. What did you like talking about?
- e. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

SLAIN SPARROW ROLE PLAY: Should the TV company be prosecuted over the barbaric slaying of the innocent little sparrow?

Team up with classmates who have been assigned the same role to develop your roles and discuss ideas and “strategies” before the role play begins. Introduce yourself to the other role players.

Role A – BIRD RIGHTS ACTIVIST

You are up in arms over this slaying. It wasn't necessary to kill this bird. This sparrow was on the endangered species list. The exterminator and those who requested him should go to prison. No one cares about domino records. The record attempt should be abandoned. Birds have rights too.

THINK OF MORE REASONS WHY SOMEONE SHOULD BE PROSECUTED.

Role B – TV COMPANY EXECUTIVE

This killing is unfortunate. You understand it has ruffled feathers. A public apology is enough. Killing the bird was a natural human reaction. It was a split-second decision to save thousands of hours of extremely detailed work. Setting up dominoes is a high-pressure activity. No one knew the small brown bird was endangered.

THINK OF MORE REASONS WHY NO ONE SHOULD BE PROSECUTED.

Role C – THE EXECUTIONER

You are extremely sorry you killed the bird. You had no idea it was endangered. Now you cannot sleep at night and want to sue the TV company for emotional stress. You are furious the TV company executives asked you to shoot the bird. You think the head of the domino team and the TV company CEO should go to prison.

THINK OF MORE REASONS WHY SOMEONE SHOULD BE PROSECUTED.

Role D – PUBLIC HEALTH WORKER

You think the killing of the sparrow is a blessing in disguise. It has alerted more attention to the danger of avian bird flu. It highlights how easy it is for wild birds to get inside areas where people work. This could be extremely dangerous. No one should be prosecuted for this accident. There are still half a million other such sparrows in Holland.

THINK OF MORE REASONS WHY NO ONE SHOULD BE PROSECUTED.

Change roles and repeat the role play. Comment in groups about the differences between the two role plays.

Discuss whether anyone should be prosecuted over the sparrow's slaying.

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information sparrows. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson. Did you all find out similar things?

3. EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT: You were at the scene of the shooting. Describe what happened in the events leading up to the slaying. What was the atmosphere like in the exhibition center before and after the slaying? What did people say about it? Explain what you wrote to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

4. LETTER: Write a letter to the organizers of the domino world record attempt. Tell them what you think about the shooting of the sparrow. Show what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. T b. F c. F d. T e. F f. T g. F h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------|
| a. up in arms | furious |
| b. wanton | wicked |
| c. inadvertently | accidentally |
| d. errant | wayward |
| e. calamity | disaster |
| f. ruffled the feathers of | angered |
| g. slaying | killing |
| h. justification | basis |
| i. meticulously | precisely |
| j. sabotages | wrecks |

PHRASE MATCH:

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| a. animal rights activists are | up in arms |
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| e. put an end | to the little creature's life |
| f. a permit can only be | granted when there's a danger |
| g. He also questioned the | justification of killing a bird |
| h. prosecute the organizers | on behalf of the slain sparrow |
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GAP FILL:

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Niels Dorland, an animal protection spokesman, was **outraged** at the slaying. He told the Associated Press: "Under Dutch law, you need a **permit** to kill this kind of bird, and a permit can only be granted when there's a danger to public health or a **crop**. That was not the **case**." He also questioned the justification of killing a bird that "knocked over a few dominoes for a game." His agency intends to prosecute the organizers on **behalf** of the slain sparrow. A spokesperson from the TV company defended the killing. Jeroen van Waardenberg said 100 people had spent weeks **painstakingly** and meticulously setting up the dominoes to try to surpass the record of 3,992,397 **consecutively** fallen tiles. A local radio station is offering a \$3,500 reward to anyone who **sabotages** the record attempt.