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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

Animal rights campaigners in Holland are furious over the unnecessary killing of an endangered sparrow. The unfortunate bird was shot and killed when it innocently flew into some dominoes. A TV company was trying to enter the Guinness Book of Records for the largest number of tiles to be toppled in a row. The bird knocked over 23,000 of the four million dominoes that were standing. Special safety breaks protected the rest of the tiles from falling over. The bird's action upset the organizers enough for them to corner it. They called for a hunter, who ended the little creature's life with an air rifle.

Niels Dorland, an animal protection spokesman, was outraged at the killing. He told the Associated Press: "Under Dutch law, you need a permit to kill this kind of bird, and a permit can only be [given] when there's a danger to public health or a crop. That was not the case." He questioned why the organizers killed a bird that simply "knocked over a few dominoes for a game". A spokesman from the TV company defended the killing. He said 100 people had spent weeks carefully setting up the dominoes. 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 a sparrow. Think 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 these games?

- 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 / safety / permits / cases / public health / TV companies / 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 here, sparrows are 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 angry over the killing of a sparrow. | T / F |
| b. A sparrow accidentally knocked down 4 million dominoes. | T / F |
| c. Record-attempt organizers saved 23,000 dominoes from falling. | T / F |
| d. The bird angered the 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. A TV spokesman defended the killing. | T / F |
| g. Over a thousand people carefully 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. furious | arranging |
| b. endangered | knocked down |
| c. unfortunate | granted |
| d. toppled | poor |
| e. corner | harvest |
| f. outraged | threatened |
| g. given | infuriated |
| h. crop | wrecks |
| i. setting up | angry |
| j. sabotages | trap |

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

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| a. animal rights | at the killing |
| b. trying to enter the | with an air rifle |
| c. the largest number of tiles to be | to public health |
| d. special safety breaks | who sabotages the record attempt |
| e. ended the little creature's life | Guinness Book of Records |
| f. outraged | carefully setting up the dominoes |
| g. you need a permit | protected the rest of the tiles |
| h. a danger | to kill this kind of bird |
| i. people had spent weeks | campaigners |
| j. a \$3,500 reward to anyone | toppled in a row |

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

Animal rights campaigners in Holland are _____ over the unnecessary killing of an endangered sparrow. The unfortunate bird was _____ and killed when it innocently _____ into some dominoes. A TV company was trying to _____ the Guinness Book of Records for the largest number of tiles to be toppled in a _____. The bird knocked over 23,000 of the four million dominoes that were _____. Special safety breaks protected the rest of the tiles from _____ over. The bird's action upset the organizers enough for them to _____ it. They called for a hunter, who ended the little creature's life with an air rifle.

Niels Dorland, an animal _____ spokesman, was outraged at the killing. He told the Associated Press: "_____ Dutch law, you need a permit to kill this kind of bird, and a _____ can only be [given] when there's a danger to public health or a _____. That was not the case." He questioned why the organizers killed a bird that _____ "knocked over a few dominoes for a game". A spokesman from the TV company defended the killing. He said 100 people had _____ weeks carefully setting up the dominoes. A local radio station is offering a \$3,500 _____ to anyone who sabotages the record _____.

standing

enter

shot

corner

furious

falling

row

flew

crop

reward

under

attempt

permit

simply

protection

spent

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Sparrow shot in domino-record challenge

Animal rights campaigners in Holland are _____ over the unnecessary killing of an endangered sparrow. The _____ bird was shot and killed when it innocently _____ into some dominoes. A TV company was trying to enter the Guinness Book of Records for the largest number of tiles to be toppled _____ . The bird knocked over 23,000 of the four million dominoes that were standing. Special safety breaks protected the rest of the _____ from falling over. The bird's action upset the organizers enough for them to _____ it. They called for a hunter, who _____ the little creature's life with an air rifle. Niels Dorland, an animal protection spokesman, was outraged at the _____. He told the Associated Press: "Under Dutch law, you need a _____ to kill this kind of bird, and a permit can only be [given] when there's a danger to public _____ or a crop. That was not the case." He questioned why the organizers killed a bird that _____ "knocked over a few dominoes for a game". A spokesman from the TV company _____ the killing. He said 100 people had spent weeks carefully _____ up the dominoes. A local radio station is offering a \$3,500 reward to anyone who sabotages the record _____ .

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:

- | | |
|---------------|--------------|
| • campaigners | • protection |
| • flew | • case |
| • enter | • game |
| • standing | • defended |
| • corner | • 100 |
| • 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 organizers needed to kill the sparrow?
- d. Do you think it's OK for the organizers to kill a cat or dog that might have put the record attempt in danger?
- e. What punishment do you think the hunter should get?
- f. Do you think it should be against the law to topple dominoes before the 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?
- i. Do you think the Guinness Book of Records should refuse to recognize this record?
- j. When was the last time someone upset you?

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 organizers should cancel the world record attempt to respect the dead 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

KILLED SPARROW ROLE PLAY: Should the TV company be prosecuted over the terrible killing of the poor little sparrow?

Team up with classmates who have the same roles. 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 furious over this killing. It wasn't necessary to kill this bird. This sparrow was on the endangered species list. The hunter and those who requested him should go to prison. No one cares about domino records. They should cancel the record attempt. 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 angered people. 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 very 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 HUNTER

You are very, very, very 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 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 good thing. 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 very 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 killing.

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 killing. What was the atmosphere like in the exhibition center before and after the killing? 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. furious | angry |
| b. endangered | threatened |
| c. unfortunate | poor |
| d. toppled | knocked down |
| e. corner | trap |
| f. outraged | infuriated |
| g. given | granted |
| h. crop | harvest |
| i. setting up | arranging |
| j. sabotages | wrecks |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| a. animal rights | campaigners |
| b. trying to enter the | Guinness Book of Records |
| c. the largest number of tiles to be | toppled in a row |
| d. special safety breaks | protected the rest of the tiles |
| e. ended the little creature's life | with an air rifle |
| f. outraged | at the killing |
| g. you need a permit | to kill this kind of bird |
| h. a danger | to public health |
| i. people had spent weeks | carefully setting up the dominoes |
| j. a \$3,500 reward to anyone | who sabotages the record attempt |

GAP FILL:

Sparrow shot in domino-record challenge

Animal rights campaigners in Holland are **furious** over the unnecessary killing of an endangered sparrow. The unfortunate bird was **shot** and killed when it innocently **flew** into some dominoes. A TV company was trying to **enter** the Guinness Book of Records for the largest number of tiles to be toppled in a **row**. The bird knocked over 23,000 of the four million dominoes that were **standing**. Special safety breaks protected the rest of the tiles from **falling** over. The bird's action upset the organizers enough for them to **corner** it. They called for a hunter, who ended the little creature's life with an air rifle.

Niels Dorland, an animal **protection** spokesman, was outraged at the killing. He told the Associated Press: "**Under** Dutch law, you need a permit to kill this kind of bird, and a **permit** can only be [given] when there's a danger to public health or a **crop**. That was not the case." He questioned why the organizers killed a bird that **simply** "knocked over a few dominoes for a game". A spokesman from the TV company defended the killing. He said 100 people had **spent** weeks carefully setting up the dominoes. A local radio station is offering a \$3,500 **reward** to anyone who sabotages the record **attempt**.