

In the Western world, we may be seeing the breakdown of the traditional family with dramatically increased rates of divorce and equally significant reductions in marriage rates. This pattern can be seen as an inevitable consequence of forces acting on modern life. The diminution of the influence of religion has removed taboos about childbirth outside marriage, which were constructed from those belief systems. The increased economic necessity for two incomes and improved access to education, training and job opportunities for women has led to a need for greater mobility and thus looser ties in marriage as both partners develop careers, rather than one being focused on maintaining the home. However, this trend has not affected the need for the family territory. Desmond Morris points out that this remains a constant in the spatial organization of our societies (Morris 1967):

The spatial defence of the home site of the family unit has remained with us though all our massive architectural advances. Even our largest buildings, when designed as living-quarters, are assiduously divided into repetitive units, one per family.

### **Trouble with the neighbours!**

A territory must have its boundaries, and an inevitable consequence of this is that beyond them reside the neighbours. It seems that all territorial creatures feel some sort of animosity towards their neighbours, although it rarely amounts to anything more than a petty squabble. One of the most popular themes for situation comedy programmes is that of the friendly rivalry between neighbours. The English phrase 'keeping up with the Jones's' exactly captures the spirit of this relationship. We share much with our neighbours but somehow just want to be one step ahead, or at the very least level with them, in wider society. In the animal world Ardrey shows this antagonism to be very common. I am lucky to have a large garden in a country setting on the outskirts of a large town. On a lovely English spring morning in my garden the birds sing from their favourite trees to complement the visual scene with their sound, and on such occasions it is hard to realize that much of the pretty birdsong so romanticized by us is in fact a warning to neighbouring birds of the same species to keep out. In fact most birds only sing when inside their own territorial borders. The song is a defiant message to neighbours that dreadful things will become of them if they dare to cross the invisible borders of the avian territories. It is particularly hard for us English to realize that what we view as the most friendly and English of all birds, the robin, is in reality as territorial as they come and aggressive to the point of delinquency! If we only put aside our rose-coloured spectacles we can see with more objective eyes that the male is rarely seen in company and never in the company of another male. It certainly is just as it seems. It is indeed the same bird that perches on your fence, garden shed or spade every day. No others