

cars and on sidewalks" (Andrle 1974). Birds in the 1973 nesting were first noted on 28 July, with one of the juveniles last noted on 13 August.

When comparing the three nestings and other summering records for attributes that might be common to all of the Buffalo and Chicago sites, there seems to be little to suggest why this species is choosing sites so far away from its normal breeding range and in such seemingly dissimilar habitat and in rather bizarre locations. The Gleacher Center site is very similar to the New York breeding areas (E. Walters, pers. comm.). Indeed, the normal breeding habitat of this species is given as mixed deciduous/coniferous forest (Falls and Kopachena 1994) including areas described as "the glades of coniferous woods, preferring northern firs and spruces in areas of the eastern U.S. and Canada and toward the southern limit of their range in Ontario." Bent (1968) states the bird breeds "in isolated patches of conifers, particularly cedar swamps and spruce bogs." In Pennsylvania, the species' breeding habitat is described as "at edges and clearings in moist, brushy, upland forests of northern hardwoods and conifers, often associated with wetlands ... including by beaver dams, ponds, swamps and bogs" (Brauning 1992), in high mountain bogs (G. Hall, pers. comm.), and in similar such habitats in New York (Levine 1998), and in Vermont (Laughlin and Kibbe 1985).

The Buffalo nesting locations were said to be 50 km (31 miles) from the nearest known breeding areas in that state. The Chicago (downtown) breeding location is 100 (+/- 2 mi.) from the nearest confirmed nesting locations in southeastern Wisconsin (Ozaukee County). Robbins (1991) states, "the bird becomes progressively rare farther south (in Wisconsin), but can be found in small numbers in pockets as far south as Polk, Chippewa, Jackson, Wood, Portage, Fond du Lac, and Ozaukee Counties. Formerly a few birds remained to nest in some (more) southern counties, but these populations have now disappeared."

Why In The Big City?

In many areas, (including the nearest Wisconsin breeding sites), micro-habitats, or small areas of often, disjunct habitat surrounded by inappropriate nesting habitat can entice some species to nest much farther south than they normally would. In Illinois, this has happened in many areas of the state with a number of species. In many of these situations, evergreens planted by man in what was formally deciduous forest (or other habitats) have induced several species to breed in Illinois that otherwise would not have. Pine Warblers are now a common breeder in extreme southern Illinois in pine

plantations with large, mature, non-native pines, in areas where they historically did not breed. Ornithologists, both professional and amateur, have documented a number of species breeding in Illinois that are more typically found in northern mixed coniferous/deciduous boreal forest commonly encountered only as close as northern Wisconsin. Species such as Blue-headed Vireo; Black-throated Green, Mourning, Canada, and Golden-winged Warbler; Least Flycatcher; Yellow-bellied Sapsucker; Winter Wren; and Golden-crowned Kinglet were all found at Lowden-Miller State Forest (a large plantation of various pines and spruces intermixed with deciduous trees), in Ogle County the summer of 1994 (see Robinson 1995). Andy Sigler (see Sigler 1992) found Red Crossbills building a nest in large, mature 80-year-old Austrian and Scotch pines at Illinois Beach State Park in Lake County in 1991, and Jeff Sanders documented Red-breasted Nuthatches feeding young in the same stand of pines in 1992 (see Sanders 1993). The only Golden-crowned Kinglet nest found in Illinois was in a spruce tree at Morton Arboretum in DuPage County (see Walters and Brown 1989) in the summer of 1988.

With the above examples in mind, one might expect that the area where the White-throated Sparrows nested might be characterized by a stand of conifers. This was not the case, either in the Chicago breeding areas, or in the two Buffalo breeding areas. However, both Buffalo nest sites did contain plantings of yews (an evergreen) and ornamental shrubbery and small trees.

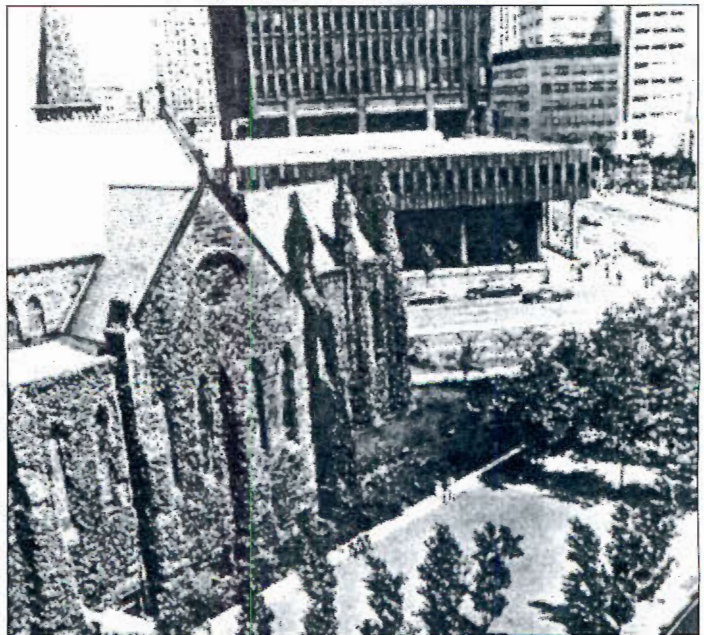


Figure 2. Church nesting site of White-throated Sparrow in downtown Buffalo, New York, summer 1973. Photo courtesy of the Auk (Volume 91, page 838).