

House Sparrows, as for many other species, tends to increase with latitude (Murphy 1978a, Summers-Smith 1988), a fact that would confound any effort to make "good" habitat - "bad" habitat comparisons. Similarly, length of the breeding season of more northern sites tends to be shorter than that of southern locations (Murphy 1978a). Nesting success (young produced per egg) seems remarkably similar for almost all studies. Pitt's (1979) low value for suburban sparrows, based on limited data from a single year, may just represent a "bad" year, similar to the low productivity value for 1993 and 1995 in this present study. Other measures of productiv-

suburban birds of this study produced only 1 or 2 clutches. Within the Kansas study, differences between farms with high and low values of sparrow productivity were caused by differences in the number of broods reared (Lowther 1983). This factor — number of broods — is likely the major cause of differences between rural and urban sparrow populations.

All 25 nestboxes are located within a 4 m diameter circle; such a nesting density is not unusually high (McGillivray 1980, pers. obs.). I knew of an additional 11 sparrow nest sites located in or on nearby neighborhood buildings. Together this assemblage of nests comprised a loose colony (Summers-Smith 1963) distributed within an area less than 1 block in size. The concentration of nesting at the garage was due, in part, to an abundance of safe nest sites provided by nestboxes. Acceptance of nest-

boxes was somewhat gradual. Total nestings increased over the 8 years along with increasing number of nestboxes, but nesting activity (= clutches/nestbox) showed a big jump between the first 3 years (1.2 - 1.3 clutches/nestbox) and the last 5 years (1.7 - 2.0 clutches/nestbox; see Table 1).

Not all nestboxes were equally successful. Crude groupings of nestboxes into "front" (n = 10 nestbox sites), "side" (n = 6 sites), and "back" of garage (n = 7 sites, excluding 2 with European Starling interference), reflect increasing degrees of exposure of human disturbance in the form of "normal" daily activity in and near the back yard and garage. Front boxes were east- or south-facing boxes facing the house and driveway; side boxes were south-facing; and back boxes were not visible from the house and were placed on the west side of garage with west- or south-facing entrance holes (some of these boxes had entrance holes on side of box). Back nestboxes produced 1.86 young/nesting, front nestboxes produced 1.37 young/nesting, and side nestboxes were intermediate (1.58 young/nesting). The hot spot of sparrow nesting activity was located on the southwest corner of the garage, including the 2 far boxes on the side and 3 on the back.



*A mirror's view of nest contents. Photo by Peter Lowther.*

ity such as eggs/box or young/box might better describe a female's annual productivity; for Kansas these values are 13.09 eggs/box and 5.28 young/box; in this study, these values are lower, 7.95 eggs/box and 3.24 young/box. Nesting success is the same (about 40%), but greater nesting activity in rural Kansas produces more young birds: Kansas sparrows would have 3 or 4 clutches per year, the



*The author's daughter, Gloria Lowther, uses a mirror to check the nest contents of a House Sparrow nest box on 6 May 1995 in Homewood, IL. Photo by Peter Lowther.*

*View of Homewood, IL study site showing 14 of 26 nest boxes available in 1995. Photo by Peter Lowther.*

