

During the 2004 surveys, all nests were counted; no exceptions. For the purposes of this study, a nest was defined as any free-standing nest clump built by Monk Parakeets. The nests ranged from massive stick constructions with multiple openings, tunnels, and chambers to small clusters of sticks that were probably nests in the early stages of construction. I made no specific effort to determine if every nest found was active during 2004 (although many of the nest sites were clearly very active). My only criteria for inclusion in Table 1 was that a nest was present at a particular location during 2004. My main goal was in showing the footprint of where Monk Parakeets had actively constructed nests in recent history (Figure 1), as even the tiniest clump of sticks indicates recent activity by at least one Monk Parakeet.

For the purposes of this study, a location is defined as a nest or cluster of nests within a few city blocks of one another surrounded by a larger nest-free area (anywhere from several blocks to several miles). A good illustration of this concept is Washington Park, a city park within the Hyde Park area of Chicago. In Washington Park, I found one group of 51 nests clustered around the National Guard Armory between 52nd and 54th Streets at Cottage Grove Avenue and four nests clustered around the DuSable Museum at 57th Street just a little farther south on Cottage Grove. I found a third and final group of 14 nests at the southwest corner of Washington Park near 59th Street and King Drive. Based on our working definition, the Washington Park nests count as three separate locations (51, 4, and 14 nests). With a total of 69

nests, Washington Park is the epicenter of Chicago-area Monk Parakeet activity.

First foothold

The first foothold established by Monk Parakeets in the Chicago area was in the Hyde Park area, and the Monks' presence clearly remains solid there. The total number of Hyde Park area nests (52nd Street through 63rd Street in Table 1) was approximately 95 in 2004, compared with a total of 48 Hyde Park nests in 1998 (South 1999).

There were six known non-Hyde Park Monk Parakeet nest locations in Illinois in 1998 (South 1999) compared with 43 known non-Hyde Park Illinois nest locations in 2004 (Table 1). The largest of the suburban nest locations in 2004 was the active Burnham (Cook Co.) colony with 36 nests. Relatively large active colonies (6-10 nest range) were also located in Burbank (Cook Co.), Elmhurst (DuPage Co.), and at two locations in Addison (DuPage Co.) (Table 1, Figure 1).

Thirty-two of the nest locations listed in Table 1 were noted for the first time in 2004. Twenty-six total locations included nests on cell towers. Twenty-four of the nest locations first noted in 2004 included cell tower nests (a total of 53 new cell tower nests).

Mixed blessing that they are, cellular phones are here to stay. And for better or for worse, their supporting infrastructure of cell towers has provided numerous ideal new locations on which Monk Parakeets may build their nests. In effect, Monk Parakeets appear to be using cell towers as stepping-stones in their continued expansion across Chicagoland.

Monk Parakeets were definitely observed at 34 of the 53 total nest locations during 2004 (Table 1). The remaining 19 locations, however, were not necessarily inactive sites in 2004. Nine of these 19 nest locations were visited by an observer on only one date in 2004, so parakeets could easily have been missed even if present at the colony. Other nest locations where birds were not observed were cell

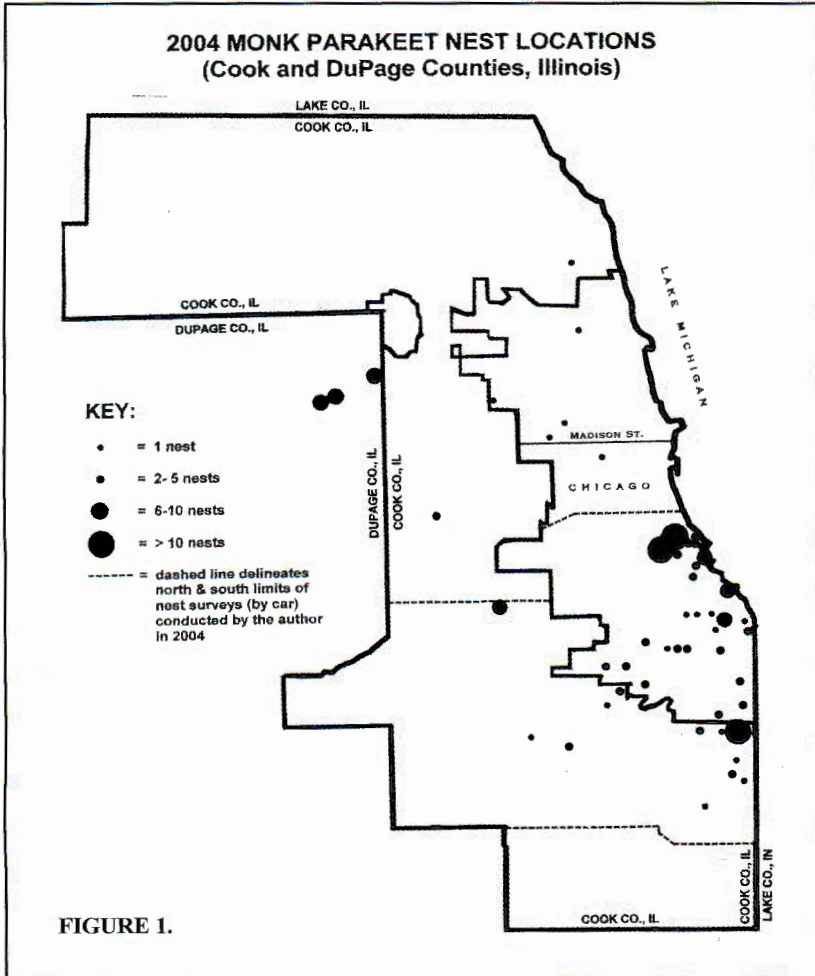


FIGURE 1.