

Bordering States

In June of 2004, Carolyn Marsh, along with John and Connie Wachala, watched four Monk Parakeets build four partial nests around electrical insulators at an electrical substation in Highland, Indiana. All four nests were gone 30 July 2004, perhaps blown down by thunderstorms or removed by electricians. Highland is in northern Lake County, Indiana, approximately three miles east of the Illinois state line. Given the relatively large number of Monk Parakeet nest locations in southeast Cook County adjacent to the Indiana border, it seems very likely that other nesting attempts by Monk Parakeets have already occurred in Indiana.

During the 1990s, a pair of Monk Parakeets nested on stadium lights on Sheridan Road in Kenosha (Kenosha Co.), Wisconsin (E. Engle, personal communication). I have been unable to obtain any more recent information on this location, but the nest may very well still be active.

Other Illinois Monk Parakeet Sites

An active Monk Parakeet nest was noted at Carlyle Lake (Clinton Co.), Illinois during the 2002 and 2003 breeding seasons (Kleen 2003, Kleen 2004). The Carlyle birds are believed to be local escapees which have begun nesting in the area, and not related to the Chicago-area population (Keith McMullen, pers. comm.). The nest that this colony of more than a dozen birds have been using was destroyed in January 2005 by the employees of the grain elevator that the nest was built on. No birds have been seen in the area since (S. Bailey, fide D. Kassebaum, pers. comm.)

Conclusions

I stress emphatically that the list of Chicago-area Monk parakeet nests I have compiled here is clearly incomplete. During my 2004 surveys by car, I was only looking for the most obvious nests (on cell towers), and there is no doubt that I missed many nests hidden in trees on quiet suburban streets. My survey area was also limited, and it is very likely that I also missed

many nests that were outside of my survey area. Take my total number of nests at face value, but also definitely accept that many more Chicago-area Monk Parakeet nests exist than have been recorded here.

Secondly, in my efforts to document the current number of Chicago-area Monk Parakeet nests, I have made no actual attempt to estimate the number of Monk Parakeets currently existing in the Chicago-area. A 1996 study analyzing Christmas Count data found that Monk Parakeets in the U.S. increased from 33 reported birds in 1975-76 to 1,186 reported birds in 1994-95. These data fit the standard equation of exponential growth (Van Bael and Pruett-Jones 1996). The findings of that study certainly reflect the expansion of the Chicago-area Monk Parakeet population in recent years.

Barring unforeseen disease outbreaks, renewed governmental eradication efforts, or competition from new alien invasive species, it seems clear that the Chicago-area Monk Parakeet population will continue to increase dramatically in future years.

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— Walter Marcisz
13416 S. Mackinaw Avenue
Chicago, IL 60633-1513
WJMarcisz@aol.com