

RECORD OF A ROBIN FEEDING SHREWS TO ITS NESTLINGS

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During the spring of 1966, a pair of Robins (*Turdus migratorius*) nested in a small tree approximately 10 ft from the front door of our residence, 3 miles NE of Moscow, Latah County, Idaho. The nest was about 6 ft above the ground and was directly in view from our kitchen window, making observation of the nesting activities quite convenient.

On 8 May 1966, I observed one of the parent Robins returning to the nest with an unusually large object in its beak. The adult bird began poking the large object into the mouth of one of its three nestlings. I stepped outside to obtain a closer look and the parent bird flew off. The nestling was struggling in its efforts to swallow the object which I was able to lift out and examine carefully. The food item was clearly identified as a small shrew (*Sorex* sp.), dusky brown in color with a total body length of approximately 7.5 cm. I returned the

shrew to the mouth of the nestling and observed the bird from my house. As the Robin was quite small, not yet fledged, I doubted its ability to engulf such a large food item, but after 5–10 min, it swallowed the shrew.

The following morning I saw one of the adult Robins fly to our doorstep beneath the nest with what appeared to be another shrew in its beak. As I observed closely, the adult flew to the nest, presented the object to one of the nestlings, then flew off. Again I lifted the object from the mouth of the nestling, examined it closely and identified it as a shrew. I returned the shrew to the young Robin and it was subsequently swallowed with some effort.

In both cases the shrew showed no signs of life and appeared to be swallowed head first. Since there are several species of shrews in the locality, I cannot be sure which species was taken. It is not known whether the Robins found these animals dead or took them alive while foraging for food in the nearby pastures and meadows.

I wish to thank Dr. Charles H. Trost for his helpful suggestions and critical reading of the manuscript.

Accepted for publication 11 August 1972

TWO RECORDS OF WHITE-THROATED SPARROWS (*ZONOTRICHIA ALBICOLLIS*) IN ALASKA

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The first Alaskan observation of White-throated Sparrows (*Zonotrichia albicollis*) was made by John Willetts on 1 July 1968 on the campus of the University of Alaska at College. At 02:15 that day, Willetts heard a White-throated Sparrow song and, on investigation, found a male in a spruce tree on the low ridge on which the University is located. This bird was seen and heard several times in the next 5 hr, but then disappeared and was not reported again.

The second Alaskan observation occurred on 5 July 1970 when the authors heard the song of a White-throated Sparrow along Birch Creek at Mile 146.4 Steese Highway (65° 45' N, 144° 25' W), approximately 115 airline miles NE of the University. We listened to the bird sing several times, then whistled in imitation of his song. The bird flew to shrubs within 15 ft of us and sang a

number of times while in full view. No female was seen. We visited the same place on 12 July 1970. Hearing no song, we whistled the "Sam Peabody" tune and immediately drew a response, presumably from the bird first seen 5 July. The male sang approximately six times, usually only after we whistled.

The Birch Creek sighting was within a thin strip of willows, birch, alder, and young white spruce, 6–20 ft high, between the Steese Highway and Birch Creek, on level and rather wet ground. A stand of older and taller spruce replaces the shrubs on one end of the strip, about 100 ft from where the sparrow was seen first.

The observations of White-throated Sparrows in 1968 and 1970 were late in the summer, suggesting that the birds may have been solitary males, or at least members of unsuccessfully nesting pairs. The bird seen in 1968 almost certainly was not "in residence" on or very near the campus in May or June; the area is too densely populated with bird-watchers for it to have been missed for so long.

The American Ornithologists' Union Checklist of North American Birds (5th ed., 1957:621) lists Watson Lake, Yukon (60° 7' N, 128° 50' W), as the breeding record closest to Alaska. The Watson Lake locale seems to be based on a sight record on 25 June 1943, reported by Clarke (Can. Field-Natur. 59:65, 1944). Watson Lake is about 700 airline miles from the University of Alaska campus and 650 miles from the Birch Creek area.

Accepted for publication 10 January 1972