

SHORT COMMUNICATIONS

**FIRST EVIDENCE OF CONSPECIFIC BROOD PARASITISM AND EGG EJECTION
IN SONG SPARROWS, WITH COMMENTS ON METHODS SUFFICIENT TO
DOCUMENT THESE BEHAVIORS**

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Abstract. Conspecific brood parasitism occurs in many songbird species but has not been reported in Song Sparrows (*Melospiza melodia*). In three separate study areas where breeding Song Sparrows experience heavy nest predation pressure and Brown-headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*) parasitism, we observed six instances in which newly laid eggs were attributable to female Song Sparrows other than the nest owners. We also recorded the ejection of a sparrow egg from each of two videotaped nests. In a fourth study area without cowbird parasitism, genetic analysis of parentage revealed no conspecific brood parasitism. Given that egg ejection can accompany conspecific parasitism in Song Sparrows, we suggest that daily nest checks are insufficient to document the frequency of this tactic in some species in the absence of egg marking, videotaping, or genetic analyses. Since standard nest monitoring techniques may fail to detect conspecific brood parasitism, this behavior could be more prevalent than currently thought.

Key words: *breeding strategies, conspecific brood parasitism, egg ejection, Melospiza melodia, nest monitoring, song sparrow, video surveillance.*