

## Dickcissels Breed In Darlington County, South Carolina

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I confirmed breeding of Dickcissels (*Spiza americana*) at one locality beside SR-398 near the Darlington County Airport, South Carolina, in 1989. The locality is on the gently sloping Upper Coastal Plain, 60 m above sea level, outside the Sandhills Province.

I visited the locality five times, for a total of 5 h from 7 May to 18 June. I found two pairs present on 7 May. One pair had a territory centered on a "briar" hedge and motte, separated by the road, hereafter called the roadside pair. The other pair had a territory centered on a scrubby hedge away from the road, hereafter called the non-roadside pair. Both pairs inhabited a large and very dense old field containing a variety of grasses and forbs, though with few *Lespedeza*, and with scattered taller shrubs. The vegetation of the old field averaged 1-1.2 m high (new growth 0.7-1 m; old growth 1-2 m).

I confirmed breeding on 18 June. At 1700 h, I located an alarmed pair and shortly thereafter flushed the four juveniles together, all with short tails, within the activity space of this non-roadside pair. Earlier, on 9 and 11 June, the female of this pair was bringing grasshopper nymphs to nestlings at a presumed nest-site in a hedge, containing *Rubus* and forbs, which bordered a deep ditch and adjacent hayfield. Otherwise, the pair was very agitated, both calling constantly. Earlier, on 7 and 11 May, the territory of this pair was centered along the same hedge, but 100 m away, near the site where the family was flushed. After the pair moved, the new territory was no longer contiguous with the territory of the roadside pair. The male of this roadside pair successfully intruded on the territory of the other pair on 11 May, continuing to sing constantly, and may have expelled the other male from its original territory.

The male of the roadside pair spent the majority of his time patrolling its territory and singing (song easily distinguished from the song of the other male; recordings archived at FMNH), while occasionally consorting with the female in the briar patch, where she was apparently incubating eggs. The fate of this nesting attempt is unknown.

Both sexes of the roadside pair expelled an intruding female Blue Grosbeak (*Guiraca caerulea*) several times from the Dickcissel's specific spot in the briar patch, where both species nested. This male Dickcissel frequently sang on the nearby telephone wire close to a singing male Indigo Bunting (*Passerina cyanea*), but the male Blue Grosbeak and this Dickcissel almost always sang far apart on the wire. The non-roadside pair never behaved aggressively toward a pair of Indigo Buntings, which nested in the hedge within 5 m of the Dickcissel's nest.

Associated probable, presumed, or confirmed breeding species within the territories of both Dickcissel pairs are Northern Bobwhite (*Colinus virginianus*), Blue Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, Field (*Spizella pusilla*) and Grasshopper (*Ammodramus savannarum*) sparrows, Red-winged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*), and Eastern Meadowlark (*Sturnella magna*). One pair of Common Yellowthroat (*Geothlypis trichas*) and Northern Cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) also nested in the hedge and

motte within the territory of the roadside pair. Mourning Dove (*Zenaida macroura*) may have nested within the territories of both pairs.

My observations of the breeding behavior of these two pairs of Dickcissels agree with my earlier observations in Marlboro County, South Carolina (McNair, 1989).

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#### LITERATURE CITED

McNair, D. B. 1990. Dickcissels Breed in Marlboro County, South Carolina. Chat 54:37

### Dickcissels Breed In Marlboro County, S. C.

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I confirmed breeding of Dickcissels (*Spiza americana*) at two locations in Marlboro County, S. C. in 1988. Possible breeding was noted at two other localities in the county.

Localities - The two confirmed locations are 2.5 km apart. The first is on the Dean property beside SR-113, 2 km below the North Carolina state line. The second is on the Wallace property, beside US Route 1, 4 km below the state line. Both localities, as is the case with the two possible breeding sites, are on the level to gently sloping Upper Coastal Plain at 65 m above sea level, outside the Sandhills Province. The two possible breeding sites are on the grounds of Victory Christian Center, on SR-47, Bennettsville, and beside SR-482 near the Bethel Church, 1 km N of SC Route 9, 9.5 km NW of Bennettsville.

I visited the two confirmed breeding locations five times each for a total of 7.5 h from 10 to 23 June, and 20 July at the Dean property, and for a total of 6 h on 11 and 23 June and 20-29 July at the Wallace property. I found two pairs and an unmated male at each locality. I watched an unmated male sing for 45 min on 16 June at the Victory Christian Center and another unmated male sing for 50 min on 24 June at the Bethel Church locality.

Habitat - The two pairs at the Dean property inhabited a 2.5 ha rectangular, very dense, 4-5 year-old *Lespedeza* pasture. The vegetation was 1.2 to 1.7 m high in June. The unmated male at this site occupied a larger pasture with younger, less dense *Lespedeza* mixed with grasses and forbs. The two pairs at the Wallace property inhabited separate *Lespedeza* pastures, of varying height and density, mixed with some grasses. Some *Lespedeza* patches on both territories were over 2 m high in June. The unmated male at this locality frequented a habitat similar to that frequented by the unmated male at the Dean property. The unmated male at the Victory Christian Center also occupied habitat similar to those of unmated males at both confirmed breeding localities. The Bethel Church unmated male occupied a