

## Some Observations of the Singing Behavior of Bachman's Sparrow

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The following observations of the singing behavior of Bachman's Sparrow (*Aimophila aestivalis*) were made during the breeding seasons of 1986 and 1987 in the Croatan National Forest, Carteret County, N. C. Bachman's Sparrow is known for its outstanding primary advertising song, which has been described and analyzed by Borror (1971) and Wolf (1977).

The song period of Bachman's Sparrow begins in late February or early March in the Croatan, continues into August, and a few birds sing sporadically into early September. In early May 1987, two birds began to sing 40 min before sunrise. On 18 and 19 May 1987, four territorial males with contiguous territories had finished singing by 1830 h (EST). In another area, on 14 August 1986, a territorial male sang until 2015 h (EST), by which time it was quite dark.

The Bachman's Sparrow usually tilts its head slightly upward when singing its primary advertising song. When singing the whisper song or *soto voce*, the head usually is not tilted. I have heard the primary advertising song from as far away as 213 m (approximately 700 feet).

One male sang 99 songs from the same position on a Longleaf Pine (*Pinus palustris*) limb, from 0930 to 1010 h. This individual rested on its abdomen on the limb with its breast feathers fluffed out, an unusual singing posture. Territorial countersinging between birds was common. Two males, perched approximately 60 m apart, alternated songs for 35 min.

In one territory, singing occurred in an area of 1.2 ha during the courtship period, but was restricted to a smaller area (0.6 ha) a month later in the incubation and nestling period. In the vicinity of the nest, the male usually sang whisper songs. It seldom sang closer than 30 m from the nest; on one rare occasion he sang an abbreviated song approximately 1 m from the nest. Occasionally the male would briefly visit the nest while the female was incubating, leave and sing a twittering flight song. Mengel (1951) described the flight song of a Bachman's Sparrow in Kentucky as similar to "a much speeded-up Indigo Bunting (*Passerina cyanea*) song of wren-like quality." I had the same impression.

A male that I observed with fledged young on August 14-16, sang frequently, but most songs were incomplete or subdued during this period. From 1130 to 1330 h on 14 August, it sang at various times for 36 min. It was usually perched on the lower limbs less than 7 m in height of a Longleaf Pine when singing.

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### Literature Cited

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