

General Field Notes

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Scarlet Tanager Nest in Richland County, S.C.

BOB WOOD

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On 14 June 1992, as I was driving home I spotted an adult male Scarlet Tanager (*Piranga olivacea*) that was flying down a driveway in my neighborhood of the Lake Ashely subdivision of northern Richland County, South Carolina. This subdivision, less than 1 km from the Fairfield County line, is about 4 km north of the Fall Line and within 1 km of the northern edge of the Sandhills. The area is a mixed hardwood-pine forest with most lots in a natural state and some shrubs. I returned to the area 10 minutes later and played a tape recording of a Scarlet Tanager song. A female Scarlet Tanager appeared within seconds, but the male did not respond.

An hour later, I went onto my neighbor's property (110 Michael Rd., Blythewood, SC) and found the nest. The nest was 10–15 m high in a 1.3 m dbh Post Oak (*Quercus stellata*), about 1 m from the end of the branch and 5 m from the trunk. While the nest was largely obscured by leaves and branches at the time, observations in January 1993, showed that it was 8–10 cm in diameter, made from very small twigs woven in a rough circle. My angle of view prevented me from discerning its depth. The nest was about 10 m from the house, and there was a 3 m taller White Oak (*Q. alba*) 7 m from the nest tree and 10 m farther from the house. The male and female visited the nest singly and together over the next hour, feeding two downy young. I was unable to photograph the young in the nest, but they were clearly visible with binoculars.

The male was in full alternate plumage but seemed to have a small indistinct wing bar, a feature not shown in any of my field guides. The bill appeared to be smaller and less yellow than that of a Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra*). The tail and wings of the female appeared darker than those of a female Summer Tanager.

According to Post and Gauthreaux (1989, Contr. Charleston Museum XVIII), this is the first documented nesting record of Scarlet Tanager in the Lower Piedmont of South Carolina. They consider this species to be fairly common during the breeding season in the Upper Piedmont and Mountains, although few nesting records exist. This tanager is probably a more common breeder in the Lower Piedmont than this single record indicates as there are at least 8 records of singing males in appropriate habitat and season during 1984–92. A more comprehensive search during summer should provide additional information on the breeding status and distribution of this species in the Lower Piedmont of South Carolina.

Pine Siskin Nesting in the Southern Blue Ridge Mountain Province

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The Pine Siskin (*Carduelis pinus*) is an erratic resident in the Blue Ridge Mountain Province of the southern Appalachians (Simpson 1992), where the species has been reported intermittently since the late 19th Century. In June 1885, Brewster (1886) noted singing birds in forests of Fraser fir (*Abies fraseri*) and red spruce (*Picea rubens*) in the high elevations of North Carolina's Black Mountains, where Cairns (1889) later recorded the species as resident but gave no details to document breeding.

Subsequently, a number of observers have presented data suggestive of nesting at various localities within the southern Blue Ridge Province. From a series in the United States National Museum, Wetmore (1939) described a "young female barely grown" that was taken at 823 m (2,700 ft.) on 2 July 1932 near Cosby, Tenn., in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Stupka (1963) observed 3 siskins that he believed were recently fledged birds at Indian Gap, el. 1605 m (5266 ft.), in the Great Smoky Mountains on 13 June 1938. Williams (1987) reported what was believed to be a flightless Pine Siskin chick at Asheville, el. 670 m (2,200 ft.) in Buncombe County, N.C., on 7 June 1982, but gave few details.

McNair (1988) observed courtship behavior by several pairs in the Black Mountains, Yancey County, N.C. and described nest construction by a female siskin on the NE slope of Mt. Mitchell, just below the summit at 1962 m (6,438 ft.) elevation, on 2 June 1986, in an open forest of Fraser fir. This nest was abandoned within 6 days, however, and McNair did not observe evidence of