

## **Eastern Meadowlark Carries Chick**

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At approximately 0900 h on 21 June 1991, I observed an adult Eastern Meadowlark (*Sturnella magna*) carrying a chick in its bill. I made this observation while working on a breeding bird atlas block approximately 4 km NE of Lancaster, Lancaster County, South Carolina.

The adult was first seen leaving a fallow field carrying something in its bill. As the bird crossed the road about 6 m in front and 2 m off the ground from where I stood, I could see it was holding a young meadowlark. The young bird appeared to be half grown. Its eyes were opened, and it had begun feathering out. I especially noticed the yellow breast feathers. The young bird did not appear to be stressed, as I observed no struggling and heard no vocalizations. The adult carried the young about 70 m into another field of similar habitat.

This behavior could have been caused by the fact that the field the meadowlark was leaving was being plowed at the time. The tractor was about 50-70 m from where I first saw the bird fly. I viewed the bird under excellent conditions with 7.5 x 42 Swift binoculars.

Many species of birds have been documented carrying their young to protect them against threats to their safety. Waterfowl, gallinules, harriers, and chickadees have been reported holding their young with their bill in flight (Terres 1980, Welty and Baptista 1988).

### **Literature Cited**

- Terres, J. K. 1980. *The Audubon Society's Encyclopedia of North American Birds*. A. A. Knopf Inc, New York.
- Welty, J. C. and L. Baptista. 1988. *The Life of Birds* 4th ed. Saunders College Publ. Co., New York.