

DICKCISSEL IN ALBANY COUNTY

On March 23, 1949, a strange bird appeared at one of the feeding stations Mrs. Everett C. Long maintains at her home which is located near Slingerlands Road five miles west of the city limits of Albany. Mrs. Long consulted her bird books and telephoned me several times as she was unable to identify this visitor which reappeared. I drove out on March 26 and we located the bird near the house with a flock of nine House Sparrows. After observing it we decided that it was a Dickcissel. While this individual appeared much like a sparrow in action, size and posture, it was trimmer and slimmer looking and had a black bib on the yellow breast, a yellow strip above the eye and a reddish color at the bend of the wing.

When at the feeder, the Dickcissel was belligerent and usually chased all birds away; it also seemed nervous and scattered the grain more than the other species. While it was here off and on over two weeks (it was last seen on April 8), it associated only with the House Sparrows and not with the Song and Tree Sparrows. At no time was it heard to sing.

So far as I can learn this is the first Dickcissel reported from Albany County, New York. Eaton in Birds of New York (1910-1914) gave only a few records for this western species, mainly from Long Island and western New York, but said the last state record was from Kingston on June 5, 1896. In recent years the Dickcissel has been noted more frequently (Spiker, Kingbird, I(1):6, Elliott, Kingbird I(1): 31, 1950), especially in the autumn around New York City and on Long Island (Cruickshank, Birds Around New York City: 437, 1942). As it bred commonly on Long Island until about the middle of the last century, the increasing reports of stragglers raise hopes that it may once more become of regular occurrence in our state. -- Lillian C. Stoner, Albany, New York.