

DICKCISSEL NESTING IN CAYUGA COUNTY, NEW YORK

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The Dickcissel, *Spiza americana*, was formerly a breeding bird in New York, the most recent nest record, as reported by Eaton, (Birds of New York Vol. 2, p. 335, 1914) being from Junius, Seneca county, in 1875. Two birds of this species, possibly the same ones, returned to Junius the following year, and were collected by Mr. C. Hampton. The last known specimens from Cayuga county were taken by Frank Wright near Cayuga in May 1879. Both were males, and were reported by Frank Rathbun in the Ornithologist and Oologist IX, 3:132-133, 1882. There are numerous records of the occurrence of this species in New York since that time, mostly near New York City. Charles Spiker has reported one from Steuben county (Kingbird I, 1:6, 1950), and other records are summarized by Lillian Stoner (Kingbird I, 2:12, 1951). There is a nesting record from Plainfield, New Jersey, in 1904, (W. D. Miller, Auk XXI 487), but there have been no other nesting records in the northeast for three-quarters of a century, so far as we have been able to determine.

In May 1937 a nest of this species was taken by Tabor, one mile south of the village of Meridian, Cayuga county, New York. The nest was located in a clump of orchard grass, and was broken up by the owner of the land when he cut the grass with a scythe. Recognizing the bird as unusual, he called Tabor, who identified the nest as that of a Dickcissel. Later in the season two adult Dickcissels and four young were seen nearby by Tabor and Roy Bradley, indicating that the pair were successful in a second nesting.

In 1949, this nest was reported by Benton in his hypothetical list, (A. H. Benton, Breeding Birds of Cayuga County, Unpublished Essay, Cornell University, 1949) the nest having not yet been authenticated. Later the nest was sent, without mention of its suspected identity, to Mr. James Gillin, Ambler, Pennsylvania, a recognized authority on nests and eggs of American birds. Mr. Gillin writes as follows:

"This is undoubtedly the nest and eggs of the Dickcissel The nesting material, location of the nest . . . and the rather pale blue eggs of the correct size . . . leave no room for doubt."

The Dickcissel is therefore removed from the hypothetical list of breeding birds of Cayuga county. The nest and eggs on which the record is based are now in the possession of Tabor at Meridian.