

The bird was accommodated in a large outside pen, and was fed killifish (*Fundulus heteroclitus*) and squid. We gave it a large dishpan of salty bay water, and several times it took live killies from the pan. But in order to fatten it up, we generally force-fed it. Once the food was in its bill it swallowed readily, and took an average of 15 large killies or three squid a day. In walking, it shuffled and did not stand upright like a gull, and used its wings to aid its progress. After eight days the bird became more listless, and following a rain shower we noticed that the plumage had lost its water repellent property. We gave it cod liver oil and Vitamin B₁ (thiamine), but it continued to decline, and on 3 November began rejecting food. On 4 November it succumbed. I can only conclude that some vital but unknown ingredient of its natural diet was lacking. Several times we had noticed it pecking at soil and apparently eating it, perhaps in an attempt to remedy this deficiency.

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A possible New York State Dickcissel breeding colony: Dickcissels (*Spiza americana*) are presently rare as a breeding species in New York State. In western New York, Beardslee and Mitchell (1965, *Birds of the Niagara Frontier Region*, p. 604) noted the species as an "occasional rare visitant, recorded each season of the year." Bull (1974, *Birds of New York State*, p. 552) records breeding records for single pairs of Dickcissels at Meridian, Cayuga Co., in 1937 (reported by Benton, 1949) and at Victor, Ontario Co., in 1955 (Genesee Ornith. Soc.). This note reports on a Dickcissel colony in western New York. If breeding can be confirmed in the future, the colony would apparently represent the third breeding record during this century. The authors could find no records for a New York State colony, breeding or non-breeding, in the last one hundred years.

Dickcissels were first noted in the vicinity of our research area in the Town of Pomfret, Chautauqua Co., on June 2, 1975. From three to five males were noted during the first week of June. Only one male remained in the area for more than a few days. This bird began to display territorial behavior in a 4-year-old abandoned field which has been previously described (*American Birds* 29: 1138-1139, Dec., 1975). A female was seen on several occasions but no breeding was confirmed.

The first indication of possible breeding and the establishment of a colony occurred on June 14, 1976. In the open field where the 1975 male had been consistently found, a male Dickcissel was found singing at 0640 hours. By 1400 hours the same day, two males were singing and two or three females were also

present in the field. On the following day, Slack found two males and a female still present and from 0914 to 0929 hours he twice observed copulation between one pair of birds. By 1900 hours on that day, a third male was discovered singing in a field approximately 100 meters west of the location of the other males. At 2015 hours Baumgartner observed copulation, possibly between the pair observed copulating earlier. Three males were present until June 20, at which time the field and the immediate vicinity were "invaded" by Dickcissels. At 2030 hours on this day, both observers counted seven to nine singing males, three of which were accompanied by one or more females. Eight to ten males were observed in the area throughout the remainder of June and as many as five females were seen.

On June 28 Slack banded two females, both of which showed distinct incubation patches. On the following day a male with a distended cloacal protuberance was banded. A female bird was also observed carrying nesting material on this date, but no nest could be located.

From July 1 to July 20, three or four males were still present at the original location, while the remainder apparently moved onto open fields approximately 0.8 kilometers west. On July 5, Baumgartner counted four to six males at this second location. Singing males were still present in this new location on July 22. The authors were not present in the area again until late August, at which time no birds could be located. Such abandonment of an area by late July or August would not necessarily be indicative of non-breeding birds or an unsuccessful breeding attempt, as Fretwell (*Chat* 31: 85-88) recorded pairs of Dickcissels arriving on June 13 and June 15 at a North Carolina breeding site, and these birds were not seen later than July 17.

The territorial behavior displayed by the males at the first location for a period of over one month and the observation of copulation on three occasions indicate that breeding may well have occurred in the area. The breeding condition of the banded birds and the fact that a female was seen carrying nesting material serve as further evidence, although the discovery of nests or young is necessary to establish proof of breeding. The authors hope that the information presented here will encourage others to investigate known former breeding areas and other suitable habitat in western New York during the 1977 breeding season for possible breeding Dickcissels.

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