

The Rise and Fall of a Dickcissel Colony on Maryland Eastern Shore

Douglas E. Gill^{1,4}, Daniel M. Small², Jared Parks³, and Maren E. Gimpel²



¹Department of Biology, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742

²Center for the Environment & Society, Washington College, Chestertown, MD 21620

³Lower Shore Land Trust, 100 River Street, Snow Hill, MD 21863

⁴Corresponding Author, e-mail: dgill@umd.edu

A large-scale, experimental grassland in Queen Anne's County began in 1999. In 2000 the first Dickcissels, *Spiza americanus*, arrived and bred. For the next 13 years, Dickcissel were present every year, many returned in successive years, and a maximum of 21 adults were present in 2011. A cumulative 135 adults were recorded, at least 55 females built 63 nests, laid 247 eggs and definitely fledged 99 chicks from at least 29 successful nests. A female fledgling MM-PX from 2005 returned every year through 2013 and set species records of 8yr longevity, site fidelity at four spatial scales, life fecundity of 43 eggs and 17 fledges, 13 pairings, 8 different mates, 13 nests, 5 successful. The adult numbers and nests peaked in 2011, only two nested in 2013, and despite flyovers no Dickcissels have bred since 2013. We conclude this extra-limital colony of MD Dickcissels was not self-sustaining but persisted mostly from a remarkable stream of immigrants.

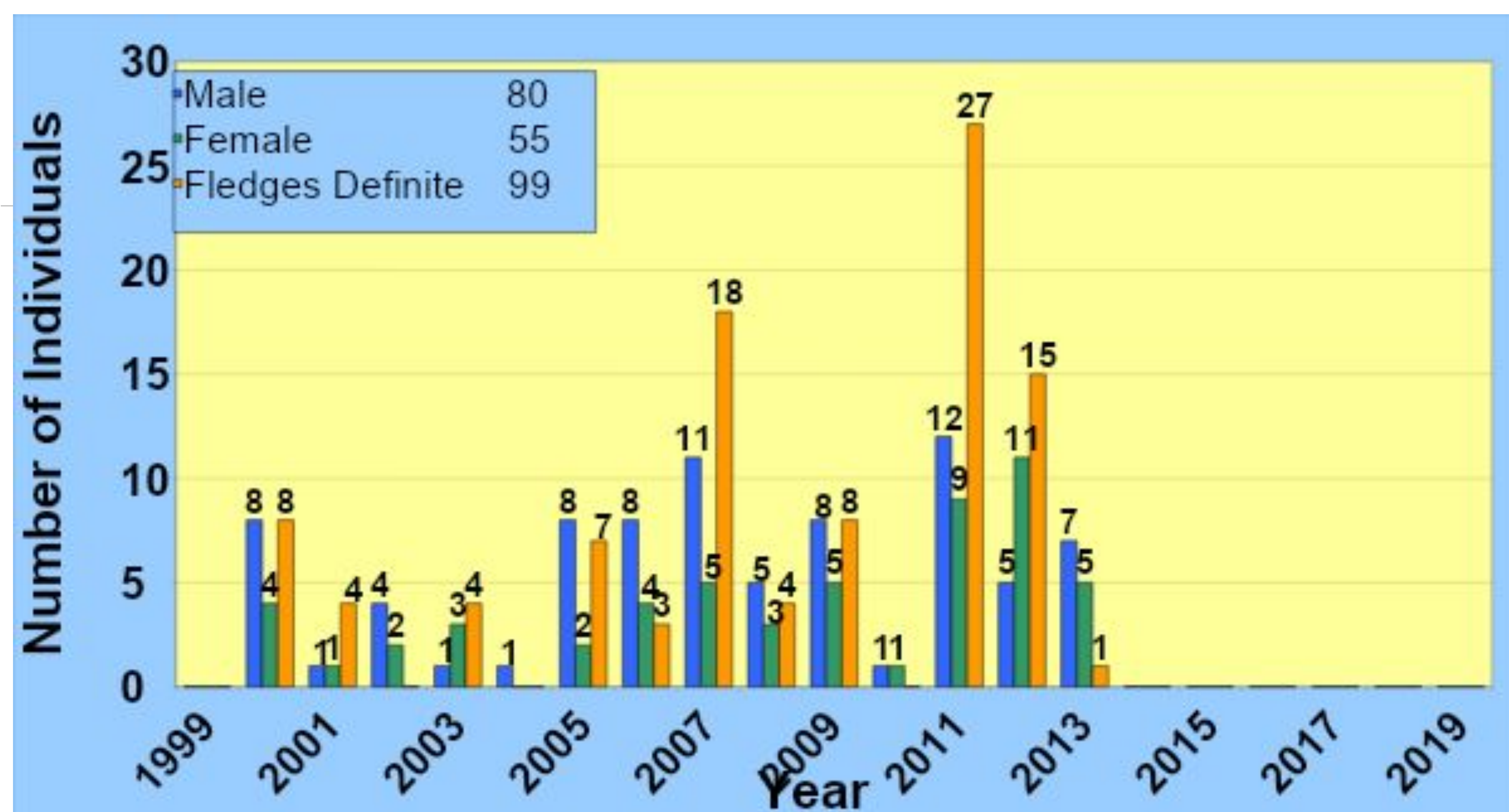


Fig. 1. Dickcissel Population Numbers on the Experimental Grassland 1999-2020

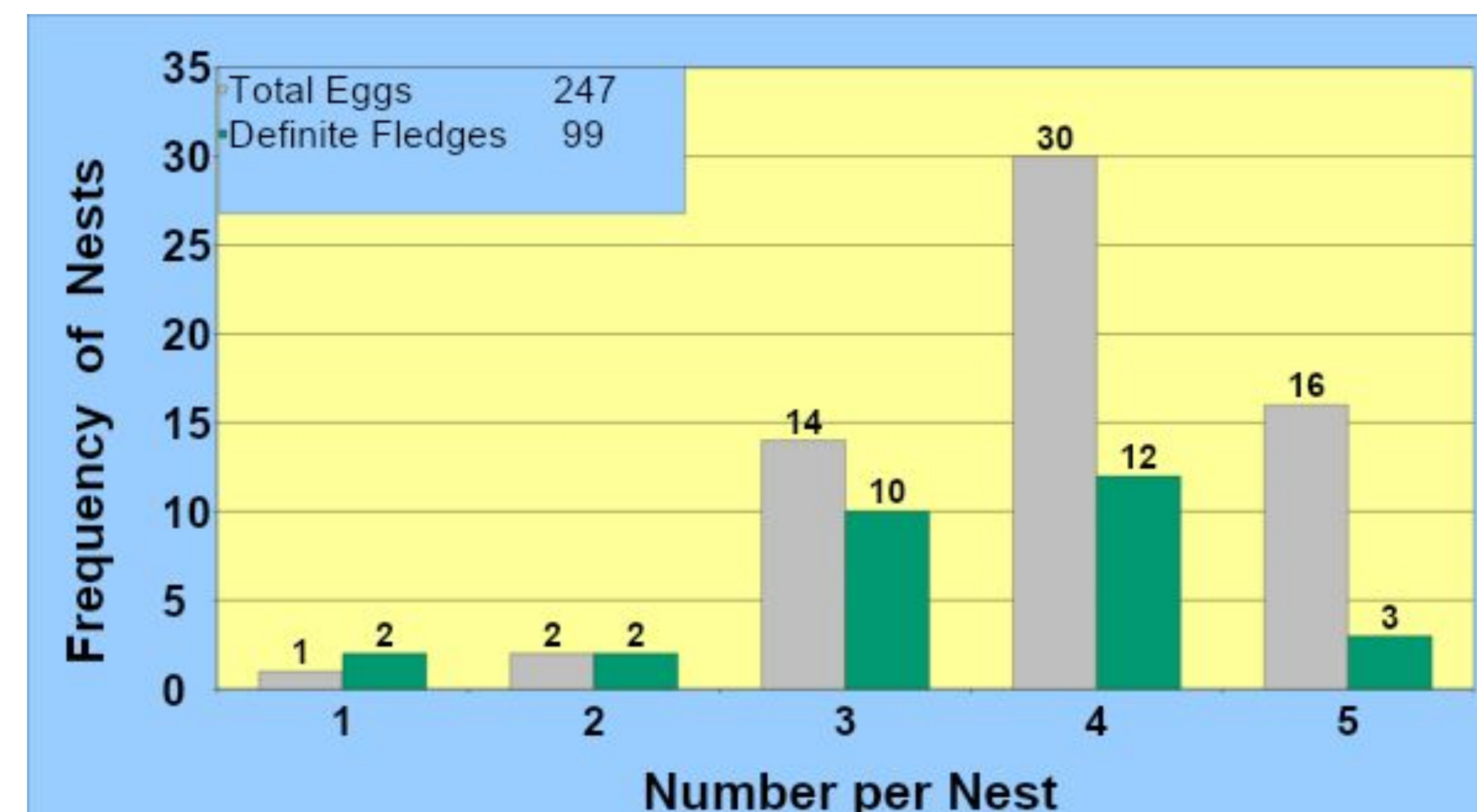


Fig. 2. Dickcissel Egg and Fledgling Production on the Experimental Grassland 2000-2013

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