

Great-tailed Grackle  
19 Dec 1987  
ne. of Ames, Story Co., IA  
\*Kay Niyo, \*John Richard  
IBL 58:46, 48, 58, 75

Record Number: 87-35  
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

Kay Niyo  
John L. Richard

REFERENCES

Christmas Bird Count: IBL 58:46, 48  
Field Reports: IBL 58:58  
Records Committee: IBL 58:75

VOTE: 7-III

III, good description by Niyo.

III, Niyo has good write-up, but it would be more convincing if Dinsmore made her write it before discussing it. Why are we getting xerox copies instead of originals?

III, I believe that we have a winter record for Great-tailed Grackle from central Iowa now. The description has all marks to adequately describe this species.

III, good description.

III, Good description, "tail as long as body" diagnostic, eliminating Boat-tailed.

DOCUMENTATION FORM  
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

87-35

What species? Great-tailed Grackle How many? 1

Location? Max Bailey Farm on Dayton Rd. NE of Ames

Type of Habitat? Spruce Windbreak

When? date(s): December 19, 1987 time: 4 PM to       

Who? your name and address: Kay Niya, 1248 Wisconsin, Ames, IA 50010

Others with you: Judy Shearer & John Richard

Others before or after you: None

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, undertail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

A very large "grackle-shaped" black bird was observed ~ 25' up in a Spruce tree. Size was much larger than a Common Grackle, being estimated at about 14-16" long. The tail was ~~as~~ long as the head & body. The bill was black and shaped like a Common Grackle. Eye appeared light. All parts of the body were shaped like the Common Grackle, except the long tail was carried lower & the wing tips were slightly higher than the tail base. The long tail was frequently raised and lowered as the bird moved along the branches & from branch to branch, probably due to the amount of tail to be maneuvered in a dense tree. The tail was wedge-shaped, narrow at the base and widening towards the tip. The bird was solid black with ~~no~~ other markings. Legs & feet were dark. The bird was moving along the spruce branches & appeared to be "chirping" at the branches & frequently flicking or moving the long tail.

Similar species; how eliminated:

Common Grackle - this bird was much larger with a much longer tail.

Common Crow - this bird was not quite as large, had a much longer tail than a crow, bill was long & grackle shaped, not as a crow, & body stance was like a grackle not a crow.

Ani - bill ~~was~~ and body shape & carriage was grackle-like

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? no

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment.

Light fog & mist with lighting sufficient at the distance observed from. Bird was 20-25 feet up in tree. We were 50 feet to 10 feet from tree. Bushnell 7x35 binoculars

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

Ornithology course & avid reader. No experience with Great-tailed Grackle or Ani.

References and persons consulted before writing description:

Steve & Jim Dinsmore

How long before field notes made? 3 hrs this form completed? 3 hrs

Send completed form to Field Reports or CBC editor (address on back cover of Iowa Bird Life).

DOCUMENTATION FORM  
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

87-35

What species? Quiscalus mexicanus (Great Tailed Grackle) How many? 1  
Location? N.E. of Ames - Dayton Rd. - Max Bailey Farm yard  
Type of Habitat? Evergreen Grove - Spruce  
When? date(s): Dec. 19 time: 4:00 PM  
Who? your name and address: John L. Richard 3120 West St. - Ames  
Others with you: Kay Niyo and Judy Shearer  
Others before or after you: None

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, undertail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

Large Black bird with long tail. Approximately 14" long. Tended to "flash" its tail similar to that of a magpie. Color difficult as it had gotten very foggy as day progressed. Curvature of end of tail feathers similar to description of species. Sharp long beaked <sup>(black)</sup> bird. Did not fly except from branch to branch - seemed to be eating things from branches. No sounds.  
↳ Could have been drinking H<sub>2</sub>O from drops on branches.

Similar species; how eliminated: Eliminated boat tailed by range. Bill was not that of Tri. Too small for Crow. Too big for ~~any~~ common grackle.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? No. All 3 of us agreed.  
If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment.  
Field glasses, poor lighting due to fog. Size was major method of identity. Was about 25 ft up in tree and we stood about 20 ft from tree - approached to within 10 ft of tree.  
Previous experience with species and similar ones: Had never seen one before.

References and persons consulted before writing description: Talked to James Dinsmore and Steve Dinsmore.

How long before field notes made? 3hr. this form completed? 3hr.

Send completed form to Field Reports or CBC editor (address on back cover of Iowa Bird Life).