

Great-tailed Grackle  
17 May 1984  
Finn Pond, Greene Co., IA  
\*Mike Brown, \*J. Dinsmore  
IBL 54:50,86; 55:58

Record Number: 84-15  
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATIONS

Mike Brown (17 May)  
Jim Dinsmore (31 May; received after review)

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 54:50, 86  
Records Committee: IBL 55:58

VOTE: 7-III

III, (Mike took photographs).  
III, Eliminates Boat-tailed only by range, but acceptable.

84-15 (1)

Summary of Review of an Ornithologic Observation<sup>e</sup>

by the Records Committee  
of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union

SPECIES: GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE  
DATE SEEN: May 17, 1984  
SITE OF OBSERVATION: Finn Pond, Greene County  
OBSERVERS: Mike Brown  
DATE OF REVIEW: 1984  
METHOD OF REVIEW: Circulation by mail to Records Committee  
CLASSIFICATION OF RECORD: III

COMMENTS:

Apparently photographed, although the photos not seen by the Records Committee. These birds were seen by several other observers also.

The only objection raised within the Records Committee was that the birds were separated from Boat-tailed Grackle only by range. This is but a minor objection, but worth keeping in mind for several "species pairs" one of which is overwhelmingly expected in Iowa, the other not. Once in a while the unexpected bird appears. An example is the specimen of Bronzed Cowbird (!) taken at Squaw Creek NWR just a few years ago.

The opinions expressed here are based on the information available to the Committee and should not necessarily preclude an alternate interpretation by those who observed the bird firsthand.

Any action may be re-reviewed upon submission of additional evidence.

Explanation of Classification:

- I = labeled, diagnostic specimen, photograph, or recording available for review by the Committee
- II = acceptable sight record documented independently by 3 or more observers
- III = acceptable sight record documented by 1 or 2 observers
- IV = probably correct record, but not beyond doubt
- V = record with insufficient evidence to judge
- VI = probably incorrect identification, escapee, or otherwise unacceptable record

Classification is based on the highest category agreed upon by six of seven committee members.

## DOCUMENTATION FORM for extraordinary bird sightings in Iowa

Brown  
84-15What species? Great-tailed Grackle How many? 2 (♂ + ♀)Location? Finn Pond 1/2 mi west of Jefferson, Greene Co., IA T83N R31W Sec 2Type of habitat? Prairie Marsh River Bulrush DominateWhen? date(s): 17 May 1984 time: 0530 to ~0700 again at ~1600Who? your name and address: Mike Brown 1180 11th St. Apt #11 WDM, IA 50265others with you: Noneothers 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, under tail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

Male - very large, nearly crow size, about 12-14 inches. Shape similar to Common Grackle, but tail much larger both in absolute sense and relative to the body. Tail much wider, too. Light colored eye. Large bill. Nearly uniformly black. Vocalizations - squeaks and whistles. Sounds somewhat like a Minid.

Female - similar in size to male Common Grackle (10-12 inches). Large tail, but smaller than male's of same species. Slatey gray - light brown in color.

Male singing from marsh and small trees along shoreline.  
Female in River Bulrush. When flushed she sat in tree with male.

Similar species and how eliminated: Common Grackle - too small, tail shape + coloration.  
Boat-tailed Grackle - range

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? No

If yes, explain:

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

Very clear, sunny day. About 20 yards away (estimation).Previous experience with species and similar ones: Observed this species in Texas.References and persons consulted before writing description: Dr. James Dinmore, ISUHow long before field notes made? On the spot this form completed? 9 days

MAIL TO: T. H. Kent, Field Reports Editor, 211 Richards Street, Iowa City IA 52240

## DOCUMENTATION FORM for extraordinary bird sightings in Iowa

84-15  
(not reviewed)What species? Great-tailed Grackle How many? 1 male, 1 female, 4 young in nestLocation? Finn Pond (2 miles west of Jefferson, Greene Co)Type of habitat? freshwater marshWhen? date(s): 31 May 1984 time: 8:15 to 8:30 a.m.Who? your name and address: Jim Dinsmore, Dept Animal Ecol, ISU, AMesothers with you: noneothers before or after you: Mike Brown, ISU

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, under tail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

male-very large black bird, tail very long and held keel-like when the bird was sitting, basically all black in color with some iridescent purple showing; eye was yellow  
 bill appeared to be very large and heavy  
 size-when it flew next to a Common Grackle, the bird appeared to be on the order of 50% larger than the Common Grackle  
 when a redwing mobbed it, the Great-tail appeared to be about twice the size of the redwing

female-mainly brown in color, somewhat lighter in color on the underside with the color more a tan there  
 dark <sup>line</sup> eye through the eye with the eye appearing to be white to me  
 size-the bird was much smaller than the male when the two were seen together, the female perhaps 2/3s the size of the male  
 when the female flew with a male Common Grackle, the female was noticeably but not tremendously larger than the Common Grackle, perhaps 10% larger

nest-nest was larger than that of a yellow-headed blackbird and was woven into the cattails, one of the four young was much smaller than the other three, all of them had dark brown to almost black down on them

## Similar species and how eliminated:

Common Grackle-size  
 Boat-tailed Grackle- range and eye color

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? no

If yes, explain:

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

Within 50 feet of birds using 6 power binoculars

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

None with Great-tail, have seen Boat-tail in Florida

References and persons consulted before writing description:

How long before field notes made? 10 minutes this form completed? 4 days

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basic shape, etc  
 that of a large  
 grackle