

DOCUMENTATION FORM for extraordinary bird sightings in Iowa

What species? Great-Tailed Grackle How many? 1 maleLocation? SE 1/4 of section 19, T74N, R4W, Louisa County, IowaType of habitat? Rural farmstead on edge of large timber block. In tall (15') backyard shrubs.When? date(s): 30 April 1992 time: ≈ 9:00 AM to _____Who? your name and address: Bill Ohde, RR2, Box 106, Columbus Jct., IA 52738others with you: none Wildlife Biologist, Odessa Wildlife Unitothers 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.

First heard some loud whistles (like a person whistling sharply) and sharp rattles, followed by my dogs barking and running out toward a row of autumn olive (≈ 15' tall). My first thought was a crow when I saw the large black bird, but then saw its long, thin, tapering bill and head, and the long tail, kind of fanning out at the end. I could see it had bright yellow eyes. He sat there about a minute fluffing his feathers and "chacking," rather tame I thought, in light of the dogs sniffing around below him. Then he flew off by the barn out over an open ag. field and out of sight.

Summary: Grackle-like bird, nearly crow sized, yellow eyes, long tail widening at the end, head and bill very thin and streamlined, song of loud and sharp whistles and rattles.

Similar species and how eliminated: Common grackle - this bird was nearly crow-sized, longer tailed, with the peculiar whistles and rattles. Boat-tailed grackle - song was wrong.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? _____

If yes, explain: _____

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

Full sunshine, sun at my back. 20 m. I know how far from previous measurements on back yard for planting shrubs. Just my eyes. Wasn't birding at the time, just working by my house.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Saw many great-tailed grackles last spring while on vacation near Dallas, Texas. Have never seen boat-tailed grackles. I see common grackles almost daily.

References and persons consulted before writing description:

Birds of Iowa, Dinsmore et al. and Birds of North America, Robbins et al.

How long before field notes made? none this form completed? 5 hours

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