

DOCUMENTATION FORM for extraordinary bird sightings in Iowa

What species? Great-tailed Grackle How many? 1 male, 1 female, 4 young in nest

Location? Finn Pond (2 miles west of Jefferson, Greene Co)

Type of habitat? freshwater marsh

When? date(s): 31 May 1984 time: 8:15 to 8:30 a.m.

Who? your name and address: Jim Dinsmore, Dept Animal Ecol, ISU, AMes

others with you: none

others 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

brown shape, etc
that of a large
grackle

female-mainly brown in color, somewhat lighter in color on the underside with the color more a tan there
dark 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:

Robbins et al but this written from notes taken immediately after seeing bird

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

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