

PHOTOGRAPHS OF NEW YORK STATE RARITIES

15. *Boat-tailed Grackle*



Boat-tailed Grackle with Common Grackle
Photograph by Joanne Trimble
Lawrence, Nassau Co., 11 May 1968

The range of the Boat-tailed Grackle, *Cassidex major*, extends along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts of the United States from southern New Jersey to Texas (various sources). Until recently this form was considered conspecific with its sibling species, the Great-tailed Grackle, *C. mexicanus*, which breeds from Texas and Arizona to northern South America (Selander & Giller, *Condor*, 63(1):29-86, 1961).

In the past few decades the Boat-tailed Grackle has extended its range northward and now breeds in Cape May and Cumberland counties, New Jersey (*First supplement to the annotated list of New Jersey birds*, Urner Ornithological Club, 1959:11). In the northern part of its range the species is restricted to coastal lowlands and tidal marshes. Much apparently suitable habitat of this type is found north of Cape May in the coastal marshes of both New Jersey and Long Island, New York, but the species is still strictly accidental in this area.

The sighting of an adult female Boat-tailed Grackle, after hurricane Carol, at Brookhaven, Suffolk Co., by Dennis Puleston, on 1 September 1954, earned the species a place on the New York State hypothetical list (Bull, *Birds of the New York City Area*, Harper & Row, N.Y., 1964: 477).

The only other record for the state is an adult male, shown in the above photograph, which appeared at the feeder of Dr. Robert A. Berman, in Lawrence, Nassau Co., during early April 1967. This location is adjacent to the locally well known Lawrence Marsh area, an extensive tidal wetland. The bird was studied at leisure by numerous observers, including John Bull, who was the first to verify the identification. During its stay it was frequently seen in direct comparison with Common Grackles, *Quisculus quiscula*; on May 11 photographs were obtained, several of which show both species side by side. The call notes of the Boat-tailed, which included the diagnostic long drawn-out whistle, were heard on many occasions. The bird, present through the summer and fall until at least Nov. 3, also fed regularly in several other backyards in the area. Apparently the same individual reappeared at the same place March 10, 1968 and remained at least through May 31 [*Kingbird* 18(2): 118 May 1968 and 18(3): 179, July 1968].

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1969 ANNUAL MEETING

The 22nd Annual Meeting of the Federation will be held on May 23, 24, 25 at Cortland, New York.

General Chairman—Mrs. David Siedenburgh of the Cortland County Bird Club.

Members who wish to present a paper during the Saturday afternoon paper session should write to Dr. John Gustafson, Department of Biology, SUNY College at Cortland, Cortland, New York 13045.

Field trips are being planned to the Laboratory of Ornithology at Cornell (Sapsucker Woods), to McLean Bog, Bluebird Ridge, and other interesting bird areas.

1969 WATERFOWL COUNT

The annual Federation Waterfowl Count will be held from Saturday, January 11 to Sunday, January 19, 1969. Target date is Sunday, January 12. Send your count results to John L. Mitchell, 345 Conrad Drive, Rochester, N.Y. 14616 as soon as possible after the count period.