



Fledgling Boat-tailed Grackle on Nest at Pearsall's Hassock.
June 1982 *John Zarudsky*

NESTING BOAT-TAILED GRACKLES ON PEARSALL'S HASSECK

J. D. ZARUDSKY and R. MILLER

Although Boat-tailed Grackles (*Quiscalus major*) have periodically been observed in wetlands in the Town of Hempstead since the early 1970's, more regular sightings have been made since 1979. Both adults and immatures have been observed during the nesting season, indicating local breeding. One of the earlier sightings was of a male recorded at Jones Beach on 12 May 1973 (Bull, 1976). On Pearsall's Hassock during the summer of 1979, two males and three females were observed on two separate occasions. On 28 June a female was reported, and on 29 June a full-grown immature was observed. In 1980, further individuals were seen at Cow Meadow, Freeport—although not during the nesting season—two females from 13 October to 30 November, and three females on 30 November. On 23 June, 1981, a female and three juvenals were observed on North Black Banks (Gochfeld, 1981). On a field trip to Pearsall's Hassock on 31 May 1982, J. Zarudsky, R. Miller, and E. Rowan saw a male and three females. On the same day, two nests were subsequently located in the vicinity of the female sightings.

Pearsall's Hassock is a Town of Hempstead designated Wildlife Refuge, approximately 153 acres in area, situated about one mile south of Bay County Park and southeast of Hewlett Bay. It was covered by dredged material during the 1950's; and vegetation consists primarily of *Phragmites*, Northern Bayberry, birches, and poplars. Colonies of herons, including Black-crowned Night-Herons, Little Blue and Green-backed Herons, Snowy and Great Egrets, Glossy Ibises, and Herring and Great Black-backed Gulls regularly use the area for nesting.

The Boat-tailed Grackle nests were located in a plant association of Northern Bayberry (*Myrica pensylvanica*) and Reed Grass (*Phragmites australis*) on the edge of a heron colony in the southwest corner of the island. During weekly visits to the island by J. Zarudsky to observe nest development and success, two other nests were located (Table 1). Nest No. 1 was approximately 30-40 feet away from nests Nos. 2, 3 and 4, located in the same bayberry thicket, and they were spaced about 6-7 feet apart from one another. Nest No. 4 was not used for egg laying.

To further identify nesting species, egg diameter and length were measured by calipers on eggs in nests Nos. 1 and 2. These eggs fall

within the range given by Harrison (1975) and are listed below.

Egg sizes from nests Nos. 1 and 2.

Nest No. 1 — 32.7 x 22.0 mm

33.0 x 22.0 mm

32.4 x 22.2 mm

Nest No. 2 — 32.9 x 23.2 mm

33.5 x 23.6 mm

Dimensions of Nest No. 1 were approximately 7" x 7" outside diameter, 3-3/4" x 4-3/4" inside diameter, and 4" inside cup depth. During visits to the nesting area, the distinct call of the male could be heard on nearly every occasion.

Earliest juvenals were observed during the week of 3 June. The latest fledgling remaining was one in Nest No. 2 during the week of 1 July (Fig. 1).

With these recent observations and those made in 1981 by Gochfeld on North Black Banks, breeding is confirmed for Breeding Bird Atlas Block 6049B.

REFERENCES

- Bull, J. 1976. *Supplement to Birds of New York State*. Fed. N.Y.S. Bird Clubs, Inc.
- Davis, T. H. 1981. Boat-tailed Grackles Breeding at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge. *Kingbird*, 31: 214.
- Gochfeld, M. and J. Burger. 1981. Boat-tailed Grackles in Hewlett Bay, Long Island. *Kingbird*, 31: 214.
- Harrison, H. H. 1975. *A Field Guide to Birds' Nests*. Peterson Field Guide Series. 257 pp.
- John D. Zarudsky—Town of Hempstead Department of Conservation and Waterways, 1 Parkside Drive, P.O. Box J, Point Lookout, New York 11569
- Richard F. Miller—460 Old Town Road, Port Jefferson Station, New York 11776

TABLE 1
OBSERVATIONS ON NEST DEVELOPMENT AND ADULT SIGHTINGS

Date	Nest #	Vegetation	No. Eggs or Juvenals	Hgt. of Nest Above ground**	Date	Adults Observed	
5/31	1	Elder	3 eggs	4.5 feet		M	F
6/3		Bayberry	3 eggs		5/31	1	3
6/9			3 juv. newly hatched		6/3	1	
6/15			2 juvenals		6/9	1	
6/22			1 juv. (left nest)		6/15	2	3*
7/1			0		6/22		
5/31	2	Bayberry	0	4.2 feet	7/1	1	1
6/3		<i>Phragmites</i>	2 eggs				
6/9			3 eggs				
6/15			3 eggs (one egg unsuccessful)				
6/22			1 egg, 1 juv. newly hatched				
7/11			1 juvenal				
6/3	3	Bayberry	2 juvenals	4.8 feet			
6/9			2 juvenals				
6/15			2 juvenals				
6/22			0				
7/1			0				
6/3	4	Bayberry	0	4.5 feet			
6/9			0				
6/15			0				
6/22			0				
7/1			0				

** To inside bottom of nest cup

* Also observed feeding in the marsh

(Data for nests numbered 1, 2, & 3 recorded for the North American Nest Record Program)