

FIRST RECORD OF BOAT-TAILED GRACKLES NESTING IN NEW JERSEY.

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On the afternoon of March 29th, 1952, near Gandy's Beach, on Delaware Bay, Cumberland County, Doris McLaughlin and the writer saw four male and four female Boat-tailed Grackles (*Cassidix mexicanus*) feeding in the salt marsh. As we were enjoying the sight of the colorful, clove-brown females and iridescent males, Dr. John H. Arnett Jr., and a party joined us in our observations.

It occurred to me that this bayside salt marsh, in which four tree covered hummocks are located, would provide an excellent habitat for this species. With this thought in mind I decided to make a study of the area.

On April 6 we examined all of the hummocks carefully and found no signs of nests for the current year or remains of any which might have been there the previous year. We did see six male and three female birds. We visited the area again on April 22 and found seven males and five females, and on May 11, which was a very rainy day, we saw five males and four females without leaving the car. The first nests were found on May 15.

Listed below are the fifteen nests found, with data pertaining to each.

Number	Located on hummock	Date of trip and nest data for the day.				
		May 15	May 28	June 6	June 17	July 1
1	A	4e	3y	*	E	
2	A	2e	4e	3y	E	
3	A	1e	4e	3y	E	
4	A	U	4e	3y	E	
5	A	U	4e	4y	E	
6	A	U	4e	3y	E	
7	A	U	4e	3y	E	
8	D	U	4e	3y	3y	E
9	D	U	4e	4e	E	
10	D	U	4e	3y	E	
11	A		3e	4e	3y	E
12	A		3e	4e	3y	E
13	A				4e	3y
14	A				x	
15	A				x	

Explanation of symbols.

U—Nest under construction.

e—Eggs in nest.

y—Young in nest.

E—Nest empty.

x—Contents unknown as nest was inaccessible.

*—Three young out of this nest were found in a tree nearby.

It seems desirable that the locations of the four hummocks be given in order that future development of the colony may be traced.

Designation	Distance and direction from Gandy's Beach Road	Size	Number of Nests
A	200 yards northeast	100 x 200 yards	12
B	800 yards northeast	200 x 400 yards	-
C	200 yards east northeast	150 x 300 yards	-
D	200 yards southwest	200 x 400 yards	3

The three nests on Hummock D were on the edge of a nesting colony of the Black-crowned Night Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*). This colony was intact on May 15, but on May 28 the heron nests had been completely destroyed, and broken eggs littered the ground. It was our conclusion that the destruction was the work of human beings. We were delighted to find that, in spite of the destruction among the heron nests, our grackles had been undisturbed and were carrying on their activities.

The grackle nests varied from five feet six inches to twenty-six feet above the ground. The trees used for nesting purposes were as follows:

Red Cedar	(<i>Juniperus virginiana</i>)	2 nests
Bayberry	(<i>Myrica carolinensis</i>)	5 nests
Sassafras	(<i>Sassafras varifolium</i>)	3 nests
Wild Cherry	(<i>Prunus serotina</i>)	2 nests
Dwarf Sumach	(<i>Rhus copallina</i>)	3 nests
Groundsel	(<i>Baccharis halimifolia</i>)	1 nest

It is worthy of note that the grackles suffered little from predators, so far as I could ascertain, although Fish Crows (*Corvus ossifragus*) were numerous on all of my visits.

On July 11 accompanied by Julian K. Potter, I watched eighteen immature birds being fed by adults in the trees of hummocks B and C, and in subsequent weeks loose flocks were seen in the salt marsh between Gandy's Beach and Fortescue.

I have searched through the notes and bulletins available to me, but failed to find a nesting record for the species in New Jersey. I did find the following two references to sight records: One pair, Beach Haven on May 10, 1936, observed by C. A. Urner (Bird Lore, Vol. 38 p. 305); and this quotation: "Philip Laurent states (Ornithologist and Oologist, 1892 p. 88) that 'Two birds of this species made their appearance on Two Mile Beach in company with a number of Purple Grackles; one was shot by Samuel Ludlam who had it mounted.'" (Stone, Bird Studies at Old Cape May, Vol. II p. 869.).

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