

Autumnal Breeding of Boat-tailed Grackles at Gainesville, Florida

The Boat-tailed Grackle (*Cassidix major*) is an abundant resident in and around Gainesville, Alachua County, where they are often seen feeding in small groups on the University of Florida campus. Although several local ornithologists suspected autumnal breeding here, such activity until now was unknown.

On 30 November 1975 at about 0930 I was observing a feeding group in a street at the edge of a freshwater marsh west of Shand's Teaching Hospital when my attention was drawn to a female Boat-tailed Grackle feeding a bob-tailed fledgling. I then noted another female with two other fledglings at the edge of the marsh that contained Cattails (*Typha* sp.), Sweet Gum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*), Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*), and willows (*Salix* sp.). These young had markings similar to the females, but the hues were not as intense. They could fly only short distances and could not hold their balance when they tried to perch in swaying vegetation. The females left their young on the ground under cover, foraged with other adult grackles, and returned with food. The young were fed approximately five times per hour.

On 1 December between 0800 and 0900 I observed a female with one young about 200 yards north of the marsh. This fledgling was fed once on the ground. It later flew to a branch of a nearby tree, was fed again, and then flew to another tree top where it waited for the female to return.

On 2 December at about 1330 I searched the area with David Johnston, but we did not see any young. No nests were located, but we suspected the young were hatched in the marsh as they were all found nearby and the vegetation afforded excellent cover.

Assuming total incubation time and nest-life to be approximately 25-28 days, the eggs were probably laid in the first week of November, a date comparable to that reported by Kale (1975, *Fla. Field Nat.*, 3: 5-8) for localities in south Florida. The present observations extend the known autumnal breeding sites of this species northward by some 100 miles. — *Kim Riddell, Department of Zoology, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida 32611.*