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Fla. Field Nat. 22(2): 51-52, 1994.

BANDING CONFIRMATION THAT SOME MIDDLE ATLANTIC COAST BOAT-TAILED GRACKLES VISIT FLORIDA IN THE WINTER

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The Boat-tailed Grackle (*Quiscalus major*) is thought to be composed of four breeding populations, separable on the basis of iris color and body measurements of adults (Stevenson 1978). The middle Atlantic coast population (*Q. m. torreyi*), which breeds from Long Island (Suffolk County), New York, to Duval County, Florida, has straw-colored irides. Adults in the breeding population of the Florida peninsula (*Q. m. westoni*) have dark (gray-black) irides, higher tail/wing-length ratios, and longer, narrower bills than *Q. m. torreyi*. These two breeding groups once were separated by a coastal gap of about 75 km, from Jacksonville (Duval County), Florida, to St. Augustine (St. John's County), Florida (S. A. Grimes *in litt.*, Tomkins 1963; Stevenson 1978). Data collected during the Florida breeding bird atlas project indicate that this gap may have been narrowed; by which race, however, is unknown (B. H. Anderson, pers. comm.).

The subspecific validity of *Q. m. westoni* has been questioned. Although the subspecies was described in 1934 (Sprunt 1934), it was not recognized by the American Ornithologists' Union (1957), perhaps because several conflicting reports have been published about the origin of light-eyed Boat-tailed Grackles in the Florida peninsula (Sprunt 1932, 1933). Stevenson (1978) believed that the confusion about the iris color of grackles breeding in Florida may be partially based on lack of information about the post-breeding movements of northern, light-eyed grackles. Pennock (1931) and Sprunt (1932, 1933) reported seeing light-eyed individuals in Florida as far south as Punta Gorda (Charlotte County), but none of these birds were collected, and Stevenson (1978) doubted the validity of the sight reports. An individual identified as *torreyi* was collected by William Brewster at Mellonville (Seminole County), 16 March 1877 (Museum of Comparative Zoology No. 201169; Stevenson and Anderson in press). More recently, pale-eyed males have been seen around St. Augustine, about 55 km south of the known breeding range of *torreyi* (Stevenson 1978). Finally, on 4 March 1972, H. M. Stevenson and G. Carleton collected a male *Q. m. torreyi* at St. Augustine (Tall Timbers Research Station specimen No. 3282; Stevenson 1978).

On 7 November 1987, Barbara A. Neumeyer (Kennel Supervisor, Halifax Humane Society, Inc.) received a male Boat-tailed Grackle, which had been found exhausted in the Daytona Beach (Volusia County) area. Information on precise location, habitat or name of finder is not available. Ms. Neumeyer kept the bird until it was able to fly, and released it on 9 November. This individual (USFWS band #1303-24684) had been banded as a nestling on 21 May 1986 in a cattail marsh at Magnolia Gardens, Charleston County, South Carolina. The recovery point is 413 km SSW of the banding location, and 140 km S of the nearest known breeding populations of *torreyi*.

This record confirms that some Boat-tailed Grackles from the middle Atlantic coast population (*Q. m. torreyi*) move into the Florida peninsula in the non-breeding season. Such movements may account for the confusion surrounding early reports of light-eyed birds breeding in Florida. Boat-tailed Grackles breeding from South Carolina northward start nesting, on the average, at least one month later than those in south Florida (Bancroft 1987, Post 1992). Visitants from north of the state therefore may leave Florida after the local population has started breeding. Additionally, in some years, Boat-tailed Grackles breed in the autumn in Florida (Selander and Nicholson 1962, Kale 1975). This would further increase overlap between the periods of local breeding and of non-breeding visitation.

I thank the office of Migratory Bird Population studies for forwarding recovery data and for providing bird bands. I thank Ms. Barbara Neumeyer for caring for the grackle, and for providing additional information on the circumstances of its capture in Florida. Thanks also to B. H. Anderson and H. W. Kale II for critical comments on the manuscript.

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