

I had also heard it on a few other occasions without tracing the source, and now at last I knew the author to be a Crow—one of the group on the tree top which attracted my casual attention when I first sat down."—CHARLES W. TOWNSEND, *Ipswich, Mass.*

**The Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) in western North Carolina.**—On August 16, 1928 at Boone, county seat of Watauga County, N. C., a flock of 55 Starlings was seen, and watched for some time, in a wide meadow, on the outskirts of the town. The birds were feeding upon grain, and were very shy, leaving sentinels on top of haystacks, while the rest of the flock was feeding below on the ground. By approaching behind other stacks, a close view was obtained of the birds, both with the unaided eye, and through 6 and 8x glasses. The elevation at this point is 3332 ft.

I was in company with Dr. J. J. Murray, of Lexington, Va., who is thoroughly familiar with the birds, seeing them daily about his home, and for some years, hundreds have roosted in the trees of his yard. We took no birds but our knowledge, was sufficient to identify the birds while at some distance and closer views were unmistakable. On August 17, Dr. Murray saw four Starlings in the town of Blowing Rock, Watauga County, ten miles from Boone, the elevation here being 4090 ft. We returned to Boone on the same afternoon, and again saw the flock in the meadow in which they were first noted. So far as the writer is aware, the Starling has not been reported at this altitude, and locality in western North Carolina. ALEXANDER SPRUNT JR., *Charleston, S. C.*

**Are the Boat-tailed and Great-tailed Grackles Specifically Distinct?**—The two forms of the Boat-tailed Grackle occurring in the United States, *Megaquiscalus major major* and *Megaquiscalus major macrourus*, are universally regarded as only subspecifically distinct and slight color and dimensional differences are recorded for their separation.

A winter spent in Florida a few years ago gave me the opportunity to study the Boat-tailed Grackle in life and I was considerably surprised on meeting the Great-tailed form during the past winter to find what a very different bird it was.

Two equally striking distinctions are the color of the iris and the shape of the tail.

In *major* the former is always dark brown and the latter is an ordinary strongly graduated tail.

In *macrourus* the iris is pale straw color in both sexes and the much longer tail is strongly plicated or folded at all times in life as in Blackbirds of the genus *Quiscalus*, in fact the bird looks like an enormous Purple or Bronzed Grackle.

The outline of the ends of the tail feathers is very different when unworn examples of each are compared.

Also *macrourus* seems to me to be a much noisier and more vivacious bird than *major* with a far larger repertoire of notes and it may be found

in the heart of the towns exhibiting all the familiarity and assertiveness of a House Sparrow. *Major* seems to be of a more retiring disposition and in eastern Florida not so much in evidence in the vicinity of human habitations. However, I do not wish to emphasize these distinctions as they may be more apparent than real.

But the differences of the color of the iris and the shape of the tail are so outstanding that I should consider them sufficient to entitle the birds to be regarded as full species.

Many other observers must have noticed these differences but I cannot find any published record of them. Ridgway in 'Bulletin 50' gives the iris as brown in *major* and records no difference in any of the four subspecies afterwards described. The tail he gives as plicate in form for the whole genus.

Mr. R. D. Camp tells me that where the ranges of the two birds overlap in the region of Aransas Pass they each retain their own characteristics.

Will someone, with a wider knowledge of both birds in life than I possess, come forward with further evidence on this interesting question?—ALLAN BROOKS, *Okanagan Landing, B. C.*

**Baltimore Oriole Feeding on Larvae of Needle Miner.**—On May 13, 1928, I found a pair of Baltimore Orioles (*Icterus galbula*) feeding on the larvae of a needle miner, probably *Paralechia pinifoliella*, in a pitch pine (*Pinus rigida*). The tree could be observed closely from my study window and the Orioles were seen feeding there each day until the twenty-second of the month. Both birds worked alike; resting on one foot, the bird would pull down a needle with the other foot, tuck it under the supporting foot with the bill, remove the larva and continue to feed in this manner until the five or six needles within reach were opened and held under the foot, then a new position would be taken. The larvae were to be found about half way down the needle, invisible from the outside. The operation of removing the larva from a needle was done with such skill that in no case did I find a needle broken or permanently bent. The female was silent, but the male kept up his characteristic whistling, mostly on one note. The tree was covered with brown tipped needles from the ravages of the miners the previous year. These needles the Orioles were not observed to touch.—GORDON BOIT WELLMAN, *Wellesley, Mass.*

**Dickcissel (*Spiza americana*) in Delaware Co., Pennsylvania.**—On May 26, 1928, Miss Mary Wood Daley, of Darling, Delaware Co., Pa., while on a bird walk was attracted by a strange loud note *dick-cis-cis* with strong accent on the first syllable and upon locating the singer found it to be a male Dickcissel in full breeding plumage. It was not at all shy and was very conspicuous. It did not stray far from a hedge by the roadside, flying from one side to the other and singing constantly, its favorite perches being a wild cherry bush and some dead brush nearby.