

**Color of the Iris in the Great-tailed Grackle.**—In connection with discussion as to the color of the iris of the Boat-tailed and Great-tailed Grackles, the following seems pertinent.

A pair of Great-tailed Grackles in my aviary recently received from the San Antonio Zoo are now in adult plumage and both birds show a yellow iris; that of the male a light yellow similar to the eye of the Bronzed Grackle and that of the female somewhat duller. The color does not at all incline to brown. I am not familiar with this bird in nature so do not know whether its eyes undergo a change of color but it seems strange that Fuertes who usually depicted his birds in their brightest or breeding plumage should err in this case, and he has painted both races with reddish brown eyes (Bird-Lore, July-August, 1922).—KARL PLATH, 2847 Giddings St., Chicago, Illinois.

**The Color of the Iris in the Boat-tailed Grackle.**—Here in South Carolina, the iris of the adult male is pale yellow or straw and the eye of the female is likewise often the same color. It is probable that females with brown eyes are immature birds. Young males have dark eyes, i. e., pale brown or buffy brown, and this color seems to persist even after the birds are in apparently adult plumage. Only a few days ago (Feb. 18, 1932), the writer saw six male Boat-tails perched near the highway in the outskirts of Charleston. They all had brown eyes, and seemed in fine plumage, but their comparatively small size and short, unfolded tails showed them to be immature birds.

Major Brooks has said (Auk, XLV, p. 506) that the tail of *major* is not folded or plicated, but the adult males of South Carolina have the tails strongly plicated; this is not only a feature of the breeding season, but is present at all times and anyone who has seen them in flight must be impressed by the characteristic appearance of the tail. It has given the bird its common name. In the immature males, however, this character is either absent or scarcely noticeable, and the tail is shorter, as stated above.

The writer can confirm Mr. C. J. Pennock's observations on the sex-flocking habit of *major* (Auk, Oct. 1931). On this plantation (Middleburg) the writer has seen bands of adult males from time to time during the present winter, but no young male or female until February 23, last, when one female was seen with fifteen adult males. The latter were quiet; they took no notice of the female, and she finally flew away. The sexes do not begin to associate until in March. The males in this group were all large, glossy fellows with very long, folded tails.

Red-winged Blackbirds (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) also have this habit very strongly developed and no females have been observed in the marshes and old rice fields of this plantation during the present winter, although hundreds of males could be seen daily. The writer has often stood on the rice field banks and watched the Red-wings passing over in the afternoon, going to roost. Flock after flock, travelling in company front, would

sweep low overhead, and not one female could be detected. Thus, it appears, in the light of these observations and those of others, that one sex can commonly occur in a restricted locality during the winter months and the other be entirely absent. Might not this have been the experience of Major Brooks with the Boat-tailed Grackle?

It would be hard to imagine a more noisy bird than the male Boat-tail, and one with a greater variety of notes, but one must see it in the breeding season to appreciate this; in winter the bird is much more quiet. Besides the great number of sounds that issue from its throat, one frequently hears a curious rolling noise, made by the wings when the bird is perching, but occasionally during flight.—E. VON S. DINGLE, *Huger, S. C.*

**Distribution of Yellow and Brown-eyed Males of Boat-tailed Grackle in Florida.**—While on a motor trip through the greater part of Florida during late February and early March, 1932, the writer was interested in making as many observations as possible on the adult males of *C. m. major*, with regard to ascertaining further information on the color of the iris. Ample opportunities were afforded, as the birds were abundant in many sections and careful records were kept as to localities and variations of the eye color. A most peculiar state of affairs resulted.

Broadly speaking, the supporters of each color (yellow and brown) are vindicated in peninsula Florida, the yellow-eyed males seeming to frequent the coastal sections, and the brown-eyed males, the interior. No mixture of the two was noticed except that, at Punta Gorda in Charlotte County, two or three brown-eyed males were noted in the great majority of yellow-eyed birds. From Jacksonville down to Titusville, as had been the experience of the writer on former trips, the males all had the yellow eye, as did those further down the coastal strip, at West Palm Beach, Pompano and Hollywood. No birds were seen south of Miami, or on the Keys, although the route did not extend below the first ferry at the southern tip of Lower Matecumbe Key. At Naples, on the west coast, the yellow-eyed birds were plainly in evidence, and also at Punta Gorda.

In the region about Orlando, south to Kissimmee, and from thence over to the east coast near Melbourne, the adult males had the brown iris. There were hundreds in evidence, feeding in the canals and ditches which bordered the road and careful study was made of many flocks at exceedingly close range. About the marshes of the upper St. John's River in Brevard Co., the same condition prevailed. About the northern and eastern shoreline of Lake Okeechobee and extending eastward to within a few miles of West Palm Beach, the brown iris was universal. Across the entire length of the Tamiami Trail until the west coast was reached, the brown iris held good. Invariably, however, the coastal strips east and west, exhibited yellow-eyed birds.

It is a most interesting and perplexing condition for which no one seems to have an explanation.—ALEXANDER SPRUNT, JR., *92 South Battery, Charleston, S. C.*