

## GENERAL NOTES

**An Eight-Year-Old Purple Grackle.**—An adult Purple Grackle was banded at Ardmore, Pa., on June 7, 1938, and was shot seven years later, on May 23, 1945, at Overbrook, Pa., about two miles from the place of banding.

This Purple Grackle never returned or repeated after banding, and was at least eight years old when killed. Horace Groskin, 210 Glenn Road, Ardmore, Pa.

**Strange Behavior of a Bronzed Grackle.**—On the cool, sunny afternoon of July 3, 1945, the extraordinary behavior of an adult male Bronzed Grackle (*Quiscalus quiscula aeneus* Ridgway) on our back lawn attracted my attention. He seemed to be preening his feathers with unusual industry. Tail and wing feathers as well as body, breast and neck were all receiving energetic attention. There was much scratching of head and neck, too, first with one foot and then with the other. Frequently he stopped preening and scratching long enough to peck at something which he seemed to be holding with his feet.

With binoculars I watched him through an open window for more than twenty minutes at a distance which I measured later and found to be nine yards. The object which he was holding with his feet proved to be one of the many fallen green fruits from the large cucumber tree (*Magnolia acuminata* Linn.) which shades the back lawn.

As I watched the bird I discovered that he was pecking the "cucumber" and then passing feathers through his bill. It seemed apparent that he might be using the juice of the fruit as an ointment. This fact became particularly evident when the bird was seen to take pieces of the fruit, and, frequently, entire "cucumbers" in his bill and rub them vigorously against his own breast and body feathers.

For more than an hour the bird continued this activity. During this time he moved about in an area of not more than twenty-five or thirty square feet. This area was thickly strewn with the green fruits.

Startled by the approach of a neighbor the Grackle flew to a bird-bath some hundred feet away, and, shortly, to a peanut-baited Chardonneret trap where he was captured. While banding him (42-359004) I noted the normal condition of his flesh and the brilliant iridescence of his feathers. No parasites were found.

Less than half an hour after this banded bird had been released two other unbanded adult males of the same species alighted beneath the cucumber tree and proceeded at once to copy precisely the behavior which has just been described. They continued for more than a half-hour before they were scared away.

After five years during which I have observed birds on this lawn without having seen any semblance of this unique behavior these three birds have given duplicate performances on the very same afternoon. G. Hapgood Parks, 99 Warrenton Ave., Hartford 5, Connecticut.

**Banded Song Sparrow Nestlings Removed by Parent.**—It is not my custom to band young birds until they are nearly ready to leave the nest. However, when making detailed studies of the development of a brood, early banding is such a convenient method of identification, that it has been employed in several instances quite successfully.

On July 24th, 1944, we banded three Mississippi Song Sparrows (*Melospiza melodia beata*) five days old, from a nest in a low privet hedge. The nestlings were about half grown weighing 10, 9.9, and 9.5 grams. Their pteryxae were beginning to show and the wing primaries were 7 mm. long although still enclosed in sheaths. The bands fitted snugly and showed no tendency to slip over the feet. A parent was observed to return to the nest and to remove one of the nestlings. It was dragged along the top of the closely clipped hedge a foot or two at a time, the parent dropping it frequently. When ten feet away, the nestling fell to the ground. The young bird, only slightly scratched on the banded leg.

was returned to its nest. In a few minutes the parent returned and dragged out the same nestling. It fell halfway through the hedge and caught in some twigs. The parent flew down and pecked at the band so vigorously that I immediately rescued it. The banded leg was badly scratched and the tarsus was broken about one-third the way from the distal end. This time the band was removed before the injured bird was returned to the nest. In a few minutes the adult returned and dragged out another of the banded nestlings. The injured one (now unbanded) was not again molested, proving that it was the band and not the bird which was objectionable to the parent. The other two bands were now removed and all three nestlings were accepted by their parents.

It seems evident that the shiny bands appeared as foreign objects to the adults and that they were instinctively removed from the nest. The fact that a young bird was dragged with the band was insufficient to nullify this strong instinct. Keeping a nest clean of shell fragments and light-colored feces undoubtedly has survival value, since their presence would tend to render the nest site more conspicuous to predators. After the nestlings had become well feathered, they were rebanded on the eighth day. This time the adults paid no attention to the bands which were fairly well hidden under the light colored feathers of the breast.

The injuries on the first bird healed rapidly. For two days it grew very slowly, but by the third day it had caught up in weight and was as far advanced in behavior and feather development as the others. The injured tarsus bone seemed to be healing and the foot was gradually regaining its motility. The bone had healed at a 15 degree angle.

The present episode with Song Sparrows seems to verify the conclusions that I made in regard to a Prairie Horned Lark (*Auk*, vol. 61, pp. 648-650, 1944). A nestling banded on the sixth day was found dead ten feet from the nest. Here too it is probable that a too zealous parent, while trying to remove the shiny band from the nest, dragged the bird to its death from hunger and exposure.—Harvey B. Lovell, Biol. Dept., University of Louisville, Louisville, Ky.

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## RECENT LITERATURE

Reviews by Donald S. Farner and others

### BANDING

**1. Records of Recoveries in Belgium of Birds Banded in Other Countries.** (Oiseaux bagués à l'étranger et retrouvés en Belgique.) Ch. Dupond. 1940. *Le Gerfaut*, 30(2): 81-86. Of particular interest among these records are those seven Starlings banded in the Baltic states and 17 banded in Germany and recovered in fall in Belgium and presumed to be in migration southward; there are single recoveries during the same season of birds from Denmark and Sweden. Winter recoveries in Belgium were made of seven Starlings banded in Germany and one each from Poland, Sweden, and the Netherlands; a Belgian Starling was recovered in winter in England.—D. S. FARNER.

**2. Records of Recoveries in Belgium of Birds Banded in Other Countries.** (Oiseaux bagués à l'étranger et retrouvés en Belgique.) Ch. Dupond. 1940. *Le Gerfaut*, 30(1): 30. Nine records (1938 and 1939) of birds banded in other countries and recovered in Belgium.—D. S. FARNER.

**3. Records of Recoveries in Belgium of Birds Banded in Other Countries.** (Oiseaux bagués à l'étranger et retrouvés en Belgique.) Ch. Dupond. 1940. *Le Gerfaut*, 30(3): 135-139. This is a list of 66 birds banded in other countries and recovered in Belgium as migrants or winter residents.—D. S. FARNER.