

Questioning the collector regarding the capture of this unusual migrant, the writer was informed that the bird was uttering notes not unlike those of *Icterus bullocki bullocki*, which it was believed to be, and that its position in the sycamore tree and manner of perching were typical of that Oriole.

The writer is indebted to H. S. Swarth, of the California Academy of Sciences, for positive identification. The specimen is now No. 14521, collection of the San Diego Society of Natural History.—LAURENCE M. HUEY, *San Diego Society of Natural History, San Diego, California.*

Nesting of a pair of Red-winged Blackbirds on a Hilltop.—Red-winged Blackbirds usually nest in bushes or reeds near water, very often over it in swamps. A nest of this bird at a distance of "fully half a mile from open water," and in a wild cherry tree twenty-one feet from the ground, is a curious exception recorded by I. E. Hess (*Osprey*, 1897, vol. 7, p. 13). H. Nehring (*Bull. Nuttall Ornithological Club*, 1882, vol. 7, p. 166) recorded a nest "in a blackberry bush on the edge of a thicket; there was no swamp within a mile." In May, 1931, a nest of the Red-winged Blackbird was built near my house at Ipswich in a raspberry bush on a dry glacial hilltop, sixty feet above the level of the salt marsh, some two hundred yards away.

My feeding station at the house had been visited by a male Red-winged Blackbird from the first of May, and, by the 14th, two males frequented it, usually picking up seeds that had been dropped from the table, but later alighting to feed on the table itself. Soon after this the female appeared, the nest was built, but, in the stormy weather, only one egg hatched and the young successfully reared. Several other pairs nested as usual in bushes close to the salt marsh.

It is a natural inference that the abundance of food at the feeding station induced the birds to nest in this unusual place, the male, which alone had fed there, choosing the nesting territory. A similar instance is reported by H. B. Bailey (*Bulletin Nuttall Ornithological Club*, 1876, vol. 1, p. 25) where a pair at Cobb's Island, Va., "raised a brood in a grapevine arbor near the house and picked up crumbs from the piazza."—CHARLES W. TOWNSEND, *Ipswich, Mass.*

On the Color of the Iris and other characteristics of the Boat-tailed Grackle.—I have read Mr. Sprunt's most pertinent article on *Megaquiscalus* in 'The Auk' for July 1931 and also Major Brooks' article in 'The Auk' for October 1928. I am wondering if the latter's remarks, wherein he compares the two forms of these Grackles with the idea they should be considered full species, have been based on observations taken at similar seasons of the year. That is to say were *M. m. major* and *M. m. macrourus* in mating condition when observed? During the midwinter season and usually until late February the old males of *M. m. major* are frequently, not always, in flocks of greatly varying size separate from the flocks of females and immature males as my notes show.

Compare C. J. Maynard in 'The Birds of Eastern North America,' pp. 152-153, wherein he states: "Throughout the winter these Blackbirds assemble in large flocks, some of which are wholly made up of males while others are composed mainly of females, but by the first of March these large assemblies break up into smaller companies and both sexes come together."

Mr. Maynard also states that the iris of the adult male is "reddish brown" and of the female "iris, as in the male."

Certainly an intimate acquaintance with the adult male of this form will show that it has yellow or yellowish irides.

In Nuttall's 'Manual of the Ornithology of the United States and Canada,' we find "tail wedge-shaped and like that of the common species is capable of assuming a boat-shaped appearance. Iris pale yellow. . . . The young at first resemble the female but have the iris brown and gradually acquire their appropriate plumage." In Audubon's 'Ornithological Biography' vol. II, 1834, p. 509 he states: ". . . tail very long, graduated, broadly rounded at the end. . . . Iris pale yellow." Of the female he says ". . . the tail is graduated as in the male but much shorter . . ." and gives no reference to the color of the iris of the female. In Baird, Brewer and Ridgway's 'A History of North American Birds,' Vol. II, 1874, pp. 222-223 the following occurs: "Sp. char. . . . tail long, graduated . . . , adult male, Iris yellow. . . ." No reference to the color of the irides of females. In this same volume, p. 224, it is stated that with the commencement of incubation the males "desert their mates and joining one another in flocks keep apart from the females, feeding by themselves until they are joined by the young broods and their mothers in the fall," which is quite at variance with my observations as stated above and confirmed by Mr. C. J. Maynard (*antea*). Quoting from my notes from Charlotte County, Florida, 75 to 100 miles down the Gulf coast from Tampa:

January 15, 1922. Thirty or more males together at the Glover place. On this lawn are many palms and other exotics and later these birds nest there.

January 23, 1922. Shot four from a bunch of fifteen or more. These and all I could recognize were males.

February 23, 1922. Males are getting very noisy.

March 4, 1922. Eleven females in one group feeding in the street.

March 5, 1922. Four males, no females, on mud-flats, but some flocks now are of mixed sexes.

January 11, 1923. Thirty or more flying, mixed sexes.

February 6, 1925. Eleven, all males, feeding along ditch.

March 9, 1926. Shot four from flock of fifty or more all males and all of the flock appeared to be males; none in bright mature plumage. I have noted them already building elsewhere in Punta Gorda, am wondering if they do not mate until in second year. These four were in molt.

January 11, 1925. Thirty or more flying. Mixed sexes.

March 27, 1926. A male skinned today was not in bright plumage and testes not enlarged. Some have eggs now.

March 7, 1926. A female gathering and carrying food, must have young in nest.

April 4, 1925. Shot four from a bunch of about twenty, all males.

Other notes from the same source confirm the fact that the older males consort after the nesting season has ended but I have never noted a mated male other than in high brilliant plumage and while I cannot state positively that the less brilliant males do not mate such would seem to be the case.

During the school term, in Punta Gorda, Charlotte County, Florida, these birds frequent the playgrounds and drop down from nearby trees to obtain discarded pickings from lunches while the children may be close about, and throughout the little city flocks of these birds are a common sight on vacant lots and along the grassplots adjacent to sidewalks and street ways. They nest throughout the city usually in trees of dense foliage, mangos and palms preferably, and commence their building activities in March. On April 1, 1926 I took three fresh eggs from a nest in a mango tree which grew by the sidewalk in a much built-up part of the city. One cannot argue a point without full data on both sides but as I have observed *M. m. major*, in Florida, the adult male has the irides yellowish; while in the immature males and females they are brown. It would therefore seem to me possible that Major Brooks and earlier writers may, in part at least, have made their observations on females and immature males, which have brown or brownish irides. I would also emphasize the fact that the bird, in country, village and city, is abundant, confiding and garrulous to an extreme degree.

The behavior of *M. m. major*, in mating and nesting seasons is so different from its actions and vocal performances at other times that one must see it from March to July to learn its most interesting characteristics. Observe a glistening old male atop a buttonbush, in a saw-grass marsh, his seraglio close under his view and let a rival or almost any unusual intruder appear and his protests are sent forth in no unmistakable terms, mostly in high, strident notes but varying greatly in pitch and volume.—C. J. PENNOCK, *Kennett Square, Chester Co., Pa.*

On the Color of the Iris in the Boat-tailed Grackle.—Mr. Sprunt in the July, 1931, *Auk*, pp. 431-432, states that the iris of the Boat-tailed Grackle (*Megaquiscalus major major*) is always yellow in which he differs with Major Brooks (*Auk*, 1928, vol. 45, pp. 506, 507) who states that the iris is always dark brown. Each ends his note with an appeal for the observations of others.

In February, 1926, I studied the Boat-tailed Grackle in Florida, often near at hand, and noted at Punta Gorda on February 8, and again on February 11, that the irides of the males were "dark brown, not white."