

## THE COMMON GRACKLE IN ARIZONA: FIRST SPECIMEN RECORD AND NOTES ON OCCURRENCE

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The range expansion of the Common Grackle (*Quiscalus quiscula*) into the western United States has been chronicled in recent issues of *American Birds*. Prior to this expansion, the species, while common in the eastern states (Dolbeer and Stehn 1979), was considered rare or local in the states surrounding Arizona. Sclater (1912) described the Common Grackle as locally common in summer in the plains and foothills of eastern Colorado. By 1940, the species had been reported twice in the Rocky Mountains (Bailey and Niedrach 1965). It subsequently spread into western Colorado (Kingery and Graul 1978, Chase et al. 1982), and increased rapidly there in the mid-1980s (Kingery 1986). In Utah, Hayward et al. (1976) considered it to be an accidental visitor, but in 1979 M. Perry saw four individuals near Altonah, Duchesne County (C. S. Robbins pers. comm.). By 1984, Behle et al. (1985) listed the Common Grackle as a rare summer resident, nesting at Vernal and possibly at Green River and Utah Lake. Kingery (1987a) reported nesting at Moab, Utah. Ryser (1985) considered the species rare in the Great Basin, but Kingery (1987a, b) reported it breeding at Dyer and Stillwater, Nevada. Vagrants are also known from Oregon, Washington, California, and even Alaska (Roberson 1980).

Bailey (1928) made no mention of the Common Grackle's occurrence in New Mexico; however, Ligon (1961) found a small nesting colony near Folsom, northeastern New Mexico, in 1951. By 1970, the species had spread locally throughout the eastern two-thirds of the state (Hubbard 1970). Sightings from western New Mexico are reported frequently in *American Birds*. Phillips et al. (1964) made no mention of the Common Grackle in Arizona, but by 1980, Monson and Phillips (1981) noted the species nesting in New Mexico near Farmington (about 80 km from Arizona) and a sighting at Blackrock (24 km).

On 20 June 1980, we salvaged some feathers from an adult male Common Grackle at about 2500 m elevation, 10 km west of Blue River, Greenlee County, in extreme eastern Arizona. The remains of this grackle, consisting of three primaries and five rectrices (University of Arizona 16204), were found below a raptor's plucking perch (tree). In addition to providing the first specimen record of the Common Grackle in Arizona, these feathers represent the earliest known occurrence of the species in the state. The second substantiated record for Arizona is supported by a diagnostic photograph by B. Schaughency and R. Morse of a bird at Portal, Cochise County, from 25 to 27 November 1988 (Rosenberg and Stejskal 1989).

Sight records from Kayenta, Navajo County, northeastern Arizona, include our observations of a pair on 30 July 1983 and single birds on 22 September 1983, 13 May 1984, 15 July 1984, 6 October 1984, 9 May 1986, 20 April 1988, 25 November 1988, and from 15 to 21 December 1989. The latter bird was first located by Rob Johnson.

Additional unsubstantiated observations from Arizona are of single birds at Muleshoe Ranch, Cochise County, from 16 to 19 April 1983 (E. Fisk; G. Monson pers. comm.), Lake Pleasant, Maricopa County, from 18 December 1984 to 23 January 1985 (T. Corman et al.; Witzeman and Stejskal 1985), Tanque Verde Guest Ranch, Pima County, from 23 December 1984 to 7 January 1985 (L. Dombrowski et al.; Witzeman and Stejskal 1985), Willcox, Cochise County, on 18 May 1988 (M.

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and J. Price; Stejskal and Witzeman 1988), Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge, Pima County, on 24 November 1988 (J. Kingery; Rosenberg and Stejskal 1989), and St. David, Cochise County, from 29 December 1989 to 23 January 1990 (R. Ferguson and R. Norton; Stejskal and Rosenberg 1990).

These records indicate that the appearance of the Common Grackle in eastern Arizona during the early 1980s coincided with the species' expansion in other states west of the Rocky Mountains. So far, all observations are of transient or wintering birds, but the two summer records suggest that present or future breeding is likely in Arizona.

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