

I have not been able to find reports of this type of nest location for either of these species.

Beyond being an apparently new nesting substrate for these species, I believe there may be significance in their choosing this type of nest location. The sand areas in the coastal regions near the metropolitan centers are receiving increasingly heavy human use. On the islands in use by the skimmers which contained both sand and salt marsh, the sand areas received constant intrusion by boating parties. If these birds can successfully use the less visited salt-marsh islands to nest, it could have significant survival value. For the oystercatcher, it might aid its continued recapturing of range.—ROBERT C. FROHLING, *Belle Mead, New Jersey, 29 April 1964.*

Additional records of Brown Thrashers parasitized by the Brown-headed Cowbird.—Friedmann (*in Bent 1948. U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull.* 195:370) states that the Brown Thrasher (*Toxostoma rufum*) is the largest passerine bird parasitized by the Brown-headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*), and “a decidedly uncommon victim” of the parasite. The observation in 1868 by J. A. Allen on a Brown Thrasher feeding a cowbird in western Iowa remained unique until recent years. In 1943, Moore (1956. *Auk*, 73:558) saw a thrasher feeding three young fledged cowbirds. Nickell (1955. *Auk*, 72:88-92) found three pairs of Brown Thrasher nests which had young cowbirds. One nest contained three thrasher eggs and one cowbird, and another nest held two thrashers and two cowbirds. The third nest contained four young Brown Thrashers and one young cowbird. More recently, Friedmann (1963. *U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull.* 233) gives 31 records of cowbird parasitism on the Brown Thrasher; reports that range from certain parts of Canada, to Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Illinois, Michigan, and Iowa to Minnesota, Wisconsin, Kansas, North Dakota, Nebraska, Missouri, Tennessee, and Oklahoma.

While conducting research on the avian fauna around Ruston, Louisiana, three incidents of Brown Thrasher parasitism by the Brown-headed Cowbird have been recorded. To our knowledge, these are the first records of cowbirds parasitizing the Brown Thrasher in the state of Louisiana. The first nest, containing two Brown Thrasher eggs and one egg of the cowbird was located on 18 April 1964. The following day three eggs of the host and the one egg of the parasite were in the nest. The third observation of the nest was on 23 April 1964. There were four eggs (the completed clutch) of the thrasher and no cowbird egg. In this particular observation, apparently after the clutch of the thrashers had been completed, or shortly thereafter, the adult thrasher may have disposed of the cowbird's egg.

The second nest was in the vicinity of the first. When this nest was found (18 April 1964), it contained one thrasher egg. On 26 April 1964, an examination of the nest revealed three Brown Thrasher eggs and two eggs of the Brown-headed Cowbird. Three days later, three eggs of the host and the two eggs of the parasite were in the nest. By 2 May 1964, the two cowbird eggs had hatched, along with the two eggs of the Brown Thrashers. The third thrasher egg was pipped. The young cowbirds were not more than 1 day old. Further observations of the nest were made on 3 May 1964. The nest contained the two young cowbirds and three young of the Brown Thrashers. The next day, the young cowbirds were gone, but the young thrashers remained in the nest. In that the nest was not destroyed and contained the young thrashers, it is suspected that the adult thrashers removed the two cowbirds. How the nestling cowbirds were removed is unknown.

The third record of parasitism was found when a vacated nest of the Brown Thrasher was located containing one cowbird egg, which had been covered over with grasses and other vegetation to the extent that a new nest had been built over the old one. We have

not read or heard of the Brown Thrasher placing material over a cowbird egg as recorded for some of the warblers.

From these observations, the Brown Thrashers coped with the parasitic cowbird in three ways: by covering over the egg, by disposing of the egg, and by eliminating the young.—WALTER K. TAYLOR AND JOHN W. GOERTZ, *Department of Zoology, Louisiana Polytechnic Institute, Ruston, Louisiana, 25 May 1964.*

Common Grackle attacks Dickcissel.—On 22 April 1964, in Weston, Middlesex County, Massachusetts, Mr. Elliott W. Hall witnessed a Common Grackle (*Quiscalus quiscula*) attacking a Dickcissel (*Spiza americana*) in his yard.

When first seen, the Dickcissel was feeding with House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) on the ground. The sparrows scattered when four grackles flew in, but the Dickcissel remained and was immediately attacked by one of the grackles. The action was swift but Mr. Hall believes that the grackle struck at the Dickcissel with its bill and at the same time grabbed it with its feet. Although pecked on the head several times, the Dickcissel escaped and half-hopped-half-fluttered to a nearby small cedar, all the while being harried by the grackle. The grackle was finally chased away by Mr. Hall's daughter and the Dickcissel was lost to sight.

Later that afternoon the Dickcissel was found dead in the yard and taken to the Drumlin Farm Wildlife Sanctuary of the Massachusetts Audubon Society in Lincoln, where the bird was examined and prepared as a study skin. There were no lacerations on the body of the bird but the skin was contused and feathers were missing from the area just above and behind the left eye. There was a small hole in the interorbital region of the skull. The bird was thin, with the pectoral muscles moderately eroded. It had just completed its prenuptial molt and was a male with enlarged testes. It weighed 21.8 gms and had a wing length (chord) of 80 mm. The skull was completely ossified.

The carcass was examined by Dr. George P. Faddoul at the Avian Diagnostic Laboratory of the University of Massachusetts' Waltham Field Station and was found to be free of internal parasites and bacteriological tests were negative for bacterial pathogens.

Although the grackle's fondness for eggs and nestlings is well known, it is less clear to what extent they prey upon free-flying birds. There are several published accounts of grackles attacking and killing fully fledged and adult House Sparrows (Forbush, 1927. *Birds of Massachusetts and other New England States*. Vol. II:459; Taylor, 1958. *Auk*, 75:222-223; inter alia), and we have been told of several instances of attacks on House Sparrows. But in only one of these reports are there details of the actions of the birds *prior* to the attack.

In view of the improbability of a grackle successfully pursuing and capturing a healthy small bird, it seems to us most likely that grackle attacks are largely limited to newly fledged young, or to birds that are sick, disabled, or *appear to be disabled*. It is this latter point that would seem to account for the apparently frequent attacks on House Sparrows, since (1) House Sparrows and grackles are common associates. (2) the sparrows are frequent bathers (dust and water), and (3) the fluttering action of the wings while bathing would make it appear that the bird was disabled and thus "release" an attack by the grackle.

In the case of the Dickcissel, the attack may have been motivated by the fact that the Dickcissel did not fly when the sparrows did, and therefore appeared "sick." And in view of its somewhat emaciated condition, it may have actually been sick.—JAMES BAIRD, *Massachusetts Audubon Society, Lincoln, Massachusetts*, AND CHARLOTTE E. SMITH, 75 *Westland Road, Weston, Massachusetts, 20 May 1964.*