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Kale, H. W., II, B. Pranty, B. M. Stith, and C. W. Biggs. 1992. The atlas of the breeding birds of Florida. Final Report. Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, Tallahassee, Florida.

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## Boat-tailed Grackle *Quiscalus major*

Boat-tailed Grackles are resident along the eastern and Gulf coasts of the United States, from New York to southeastern Texas, and throughout much of Florida (Howell 1932, AOU 1983). Two, or possibly 3, races of this gaudy, dark-plumaged bird are found in the state.

**Habitat.** Although the Boat-Tailed Grackle is primarily a coastal species of the salt and brackish marsh, in Florida it is also found near lakes, rivers, and freshwater marshes. It is commonly found in urban environments.

Most nests are built in marshes or trees over water, but a few can be found in trees and palms around human habitations. The female builds the nest of grasses and lays 2 or 3 or, rarely, 4 eggs. The eggs are pale bluish-gray, and marked black, brown, and gray. Incubation, performed solely by the female, takes 13 days, and the young fledge when 14 to 16 days old. Boat-tailed Grackles are omnivorous. They eat insects, fish, amphibians, lizards, grains, and occasionally birds, eggs, and probably small mammals.

**Seasonal Occurrence.** The normal nesting season in Florida is from late February through July (Selander and Nicholson 1962, Bancroft 1987), but this species will occasionally nest in the fall (Selander and Nicholson 1962, Kale 1975, Riddle 1976).

**Status.** As a breeding species, this bird is widespread throughout the peninsula but has a scattered distribution in the Panhandle and is absent from the Keys. At least 2 subspecies occur in the state: *Q. m. torreyi* of northern Florida and *Q. m. westoni* in the remainder of the state. Additionally, *Q. m. alabamensis* may occur in the Panhandle (Stevenson 1976).

The species is relatively easy to confirm as a breeder because it tends to nest colonially and is loud and conspicuous near nests. Males often display above nests, and females can readily be seen carrying food to nestlings. In documenting breeding care must be taken because subordinate males will often display in areas where no nesting is occurring. In addition, males will often display to each other to establish dominance hierarchies outside of the nesting season.

G. Thomas Bancroft

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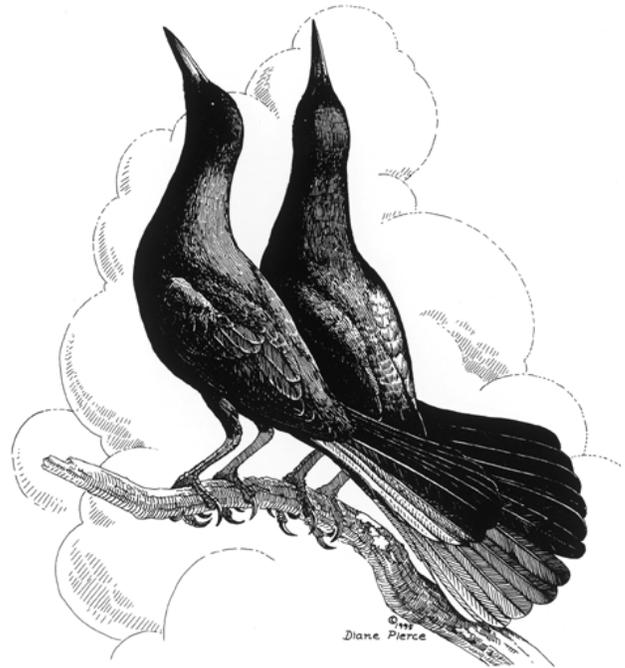


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