

The Journal of Caribbean Ornithology

RESEARCH NOTE

Vol. 28:15–16. 2015

Great-tailed Grackle (*Quiscalus mexicanus*) spreading in Jamaica

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Photo: Claude Fletcher

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Abstract Great-tailed Grackle (*Quiscalus mexicanus*), a species not known formerly from Jamaica, was first observed in 2005. Since then, the number of sightings has increased and it has been observed in other parts of the island. Here I summarize sightings and their locations in Jamaica.

Keywords distribution, Great-tailed Grackle, Jamaica, *Quiscalus mexicanus*

Resumen Dispersión de *Quiscalus mexicanus* en Jamaica—*Quiscalus mexicanus*, una especie no conocida anteriormente en Jamaica, fue observada por primera vez en 2005. Desde entonces el número de avistamientos se ha incrementado y ha sido observada en otras partes de la isla. Aquí resumo las observaciones y sus emplazamientos en Jamaica.

Palabras clave distribución, Great-tailed Grackle, Jamaica, *Quiscalus mexicanus*

Résumé Progression du Quiscale à longue queue (*Quiscalus mexicanus*) en Jamaïque—Le Quiscale à longue queue (*Quiscalus mexicanus*), une espèce qui n'était pas connue en Jamaïque, a été observé pour la première fois en 2005. Depuis lors, le nombre d'observations a augmenté et l'espèce a été mentionnée dans différentes parties de l'île. Les informations résumées ici portent sur les observations et leurs localisations en Jamaïque.

Mots clés Jamaïque, Quiscale à longue queue, *Quiscalus mexicanus*, répartition

Great-tailed Grackle (*Quiscalus mexicanus*) is widely distributed from western and central United States to southwestern Louisiana, Middle America, and both coasts of northern South America; and is casual in Canada and northwestern and north-central United States (AOU 1998). The species' breeding range has expanded greatly in the last century (AOU 1998). Great-tailed Grackle was observed in Hispaniola on 21 December 2007 (Mejía *et al.* 2009). Other records for the Caribbean include Aruba where it is listed as Vagrant (Wells 2012), although in May 2014 a male was observed accompanied by three females (Peterson 2014); and Trinidad and Tobago where, although it is listed as Rare/Accidental (Lepage 2015), a female was observed carrying nesting material (Jaramillo *et al.* 2013).

The first observation of Great-tailed Grackle in Jamaica was made by Herlitz Davis (2005), who observed a male and female at the Norman Manley International Airport, Kingston, on 13 June 2005. The female was observed foraging in the grassy mound surrounding the airport parking lot, whereas the male grackle perched in a nearby coconut palm. In March 2006, other members of the Gosse Bird Club also reported Great-tailed Grackle at the airport (BirdLife Jamaica 2006). On 24 June 2007, a group of 5–7, including males, females, and juveniles, were observed at

the Portmore Sewage Ponds, St. Catherine, and a photograph of a female was taken (Vaughan *et al.* 2007). Since then, the grackle has also been reported in southwestern and northwestern Jamaica: at Salt Spring, a tributary of the Black River, St. Elizabeth, 5 November 2009 (Smith 2009); and at Rio Bueno, Trelawny, 31 March 2010 (Whitehead 2010). Other reports have come from southeastern Jamaica, close to where the grackle was first observed: May 2011 in Greater Portmore Area, St. Catherine (Hay 2011); 20 February 2013 at Dyke Road, Portmore, St. Catherine (Knue *et al.* 2013); and 14 April 2013 at Morgan's Harbour, Kingston (Hoyer 2013).

The grackle's habitat includes second-growth scrub, pastures and agricultural lands, mangrove forest, and secondary forest (AOU 1998). Mejía *et al.* (2009) noted that Great-tailed Grackle has benefited from human alteration of the environment, responding especially to the irrigation of arid areas, expansion of croplands, and increased urbanization. It is to be noted that the further observations of the species in Jamaica have been mostly confined to wetland areas or near the sea. The Great-tailed Grackle is apparently spreading rapidly in Jamaica, and it remains to be seen whether it will displace or otherwise affect populations of the Greater Antillean Grackle (*Quiscalus niger*), of which an endemic subspecies (*Q. n. crassirostris*) is native to Jamaica.

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Acknowledgment

I wish to thank Dr. James Wiley for his assistance and com-

ments on the draft of this note.

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Cite this article as:

Levy, C. 2015. Great-tailed Grackle (*Quiscalus mexicanus*) spreading in Jamaica. *Journal of Caribbean Ornithology* 28: 15–16.