

common grackle *Quiscalus quiscula*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Passeriformes

Family: Icteridae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The common grackle averages 11 to 13 inches in length (tail tip to bill tip in preserved specimen). Its body feathers are iridescent black, and it has a wedge-shaped tail. The male shows iridescent purple on the head and bronze or purple on the back. These birds have yellow eyes.

BEHAVIORS

The common grackle is a common migrant and summer resident throughout Illinois and a common winter resident in southern Illinois. It takes advantage of nearly every habitat. Grackles form large flocks, particularly in the fall and winter. This aggressive bird is also noisy, making loud “chuck” or “chack” notes. Spring migrants begin arriving in Illinois in late February. The breeding season occurs from April through June. Grackles nest in conifers and other trees. The nest is a bulky, loose, cluster of plant materials with a mud-cup lining. The female builds the nest in about 11 days. Four to seven, blue eggs with black marks are deposited by the female, and she alone incubates them for the 11- to 12-day period. The common grackle is an omnivore, eating both plant products and animals. Its diet changes with the seasons. It may even eat fish and small birds, particularly house sparrows.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests; marshes; peatlands; swamps; wet prairies and fens

Woodland Habitats

bottomland forests; coniferous forests; southern Illinois lowlands; upland deciduous forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats

black soil prairie; dolomite prairie; edge; gravel prairie; hill prairie; sand prairie; shrub prairie

© Illinois Department of Natural Resources. 2016. Biodiversity of Illinois.