

## Great-tailed Grackle

*Quiscalus mexicanus*

### hypothetical, unassisted occurrence questionable

Great-tailed Grackle is resident to N and S America, from the s. U.S. to nw. Peru (AOU 1998). Populations expanded greatly during the 20th century, and vagrants have been recorded N to s. Canada, but it is not considered a highly migratory species. On O'ahu, at least four Great-tailed Grackles have been observed. The first two records involved long-staying birds: a female on the Waipi'o Peninsula, Pearl Harbor, 26 May 1980-14 Jan 1995 (*E* 44:98, 47:95, 48:114; [HRBP](#) 0201, 0236-0237, 0552-0553, 0958-0959) and a male along the waterfront of downtown Honolulu, most frequently at Ala Moana Beach Park and on Sand I., 26 May 1988-12 Jun 1995 (*E* 48:78; [HRBP](#) 0834-0837, 0895), which was found dead in Jul (specimen to BYUH collection). The female was missed for long periods (notably a three-year stretch in 1988-1991) promoting speculation that two birds were involved, and two males were reported for a period in about 1992 by workers on Sand I who regularly fed bread to the original male grackle, but we consider only two individuals during this period as substantiated to species. Subsequently, in 2010-2016, at least two and possibly additional male Great-tailed Grackles were seen at various locations around O'ahu. The first male was reportedly rescued from fishing-line entanglement near a barge near Aloha Tower, Honolulu 16 Jun 2010, and later observed nearby. On 28 Mar 2011 a male was found at Ala Moana Beach Park with a missing right foot ([HRBP](#) 6776-6777) and it was speculated that it may have lost its foot in the previous fishing-line encounter at Aloha Tower. This one-footed bird was seen at Ala Moana Beach park off and on (often missed by those looking for it) through at least 27 May 2016, and was also seen at White Plains and Kalaeloa beaches (near Ewa Beach) in Jun 2012 and Aug 2013 and W to Ko Olina BP near Makakilo in Sep 2013; one seen flying W over Moanalua Gardens 27 May 2011 may also have involved this individual. Meanwhile, a second male Great-tailed Grackle (with two legs and feet) was observed between Mokuleia and Kaena Point 9-28 Apr 2011 ([HRBP](#) 6778-6779), and additional sightings of two-legged males in Kapiolani Park 15 May 2011 ([HRBP](#) 6780) and 24 May 2015, and at the Waianae Boat Harbor 31 May 2016 ([HRBP](#) 6781) may or may not have involved this same individual.

The grackles that reached Hawaii were small, and the female had pale underparts, consistent with *Q.m. nelsoni* of s. California and adjoining areas. Given the relative non-migratory habits of this species, the proximity of records to container ports, and the fishing-line entanglement of one bird, we consider the evidence overwhelming that they were most likely ship-assisted in their passage to Hawaii and could not have reached the islands on their own accord. It is also possible that one or both of the earlier individuals had escaped from the Honolulu Zoo (*cf.* Pratt et al. 1987) but in 2011 the zoo confirmed that they had not recently had grackles there. Pyle (1983-2002) included it as a vagrant on the main Hawaiian Checklist and this opinion was followed by the AOU (1998).

### [Acronyms and Abbreviations](#)

### [Literature cited](#)

Citation: Pyle, R.L., and P. Pyle. 2017. The Birds of the Hawaiian Islands: Occurrence, History, Distribution, and Status. B.P. Bishop Museum, Honolulu, HI, U.S.A. Version 2 (1 January 2017) <http://hbs.bishopmuseum.org/birds/rlp-monograph/>