

# BREEDING LOCALITIES OF COMMON GRACKLES WINTERING IN THE CAROLINAS

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Banding and recovery records of Common Grackles (*Quiscalus quiscula*) in North and South Carolina were obtained from the Bird Banding Laboratory, Migratory Bird Populations Station, Laurel, Maryland. These reports were used to determine breeding localities of Common Grackles wintering in the Carolinas and wintering localities of Common Grackles breeding in the Carolinas. There were 135 usable records of birds recovered in the Carolinas after being banded in these states or elsewhere and 106 of those banded in South Carolina and later recovered in South Carolina or elsewhere.

## METHODS

Banding and recovery records were selected to represent breeding and wintering areas, with the season during which the birds are on their breeding grounds being defined as the period April through October and winter as the period December through February. Records of birds banded or recovered during November and March were eliminated from the analysis on the assumption that the birds may have been in migration when recorded.

## RESULTS

Figure 1 shows the distribution of the 106 Common Grackles recovered during April through October after being banded in South Carolina during December through February. The largest number went to Virginia, with 34.0% of the sample recovered in that state. A relatively large proportion, 20.8%, also went to West Virginia. With an additional 8.5% of the sample going to Tennessee, 5.7% to North Carolina, 0.9% to Georgia, and 7.5% remaining in South Carolina throughout the year, 77.4% of the birds remained south of Maryland after wintering in South Carolina.

Of the birds going farther north than the southern boundary of Maryland after being banded in South Carolina during the winter, the largest proportion went to Ontario (6.6%), with only slightly fewer going to Pennsylvania (5.7%) and New York (4.7%). It is notable that none of the 106 Common Grackles were recovered in states east of New York after being banded during the winter in South Carolina. Westerly, single birds went as far as Minnesota and Indiana.

Figure 2 shows the percentages of the 135 Common Grackles banded in various regions during the breeding season and later recovered in the Carolinas during the winter months. Of the 135 birds only 15 were recovered in South Carolina, with 120 recovered in North Carolina. Few recoveries are available from birds banded south of Maryland, already shown to be the principal breeding region of Common Grackles wintering in South Carolina. Thus, of the 120 recoveries taken in North Carolina, nearly all were from the more northern region. These recoveries indicate that birds from the more northern states, including the New England states, winter in North Carolina instead of moving farther into South Carolina.

Of the 15 wintering Common Grackles recovered in South Carolina, only two came from the region north of Virginia, or from New York. Further, of the 15 recoveries, eight were birds also in South Carolina during the breeding season. Thus, this small sample of 15 birds suggests that more than half of the Common Grackles wintering in South Carolina are birds also present there during the breeding season. However, the sample of 135 is biased by its lacking data from birds banded in Virginia and West Virginia, the more southern regions where most of the birds wintering in South Carolina breed (Figure 1).

Whereas, some Common Grackles remain for the winter after spending the breeding season in South Carolina, all available data indicate that the birds move farther



south after spending the breeding season in North Carolina. Thus, of 30 recoveries of birds banded and recovered in North Carolina, none was taken in both wintering and breeding seasons. Nine of the 106 birds banded in South Carolina were recovered in Tennessee during the breeding season and six in North Carolina. Of the 120 banded birds recovered in North Carolina in winter, none came from Tennessee. Data from Tennessee and North Carolina agree in showing that birds move southward after breeding at the latitude of these two states.

#### DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

It is unfortunate that I was unable to obtain data on the total numbers of Common Grackles banded in each of the states and provinces from which birds came to winter in the Carolinas. Without these data, there is no indication whether a specified number of recoveries includes all of those birds banded or only one of thousands. Thus, the proportions coming from the regions represented by the various states and Canadian provinces is incompletely shown. Data from birds banded in South Carolina and recovered elsewhere have the advantage that information on the total number banded to yield the recoveries is unimportant.

Common Grackles wintering in South Carolina breed largely in the area south of Maryland. Those wintering in North Carolina come from more northern regions, including the New England states. Birds breeding in North Carolina move southward for the winter, but some Common Grackles breeding in South Carolina remain there throughout the year. One Common Grackle traveled as far west as Minnesota after spending the winter in South Carolina; however, no South Carolina winter residents have as yet been recovered in New England.

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