

**Avian Models for 3D Applications**  
Characters and Procedural Maps by Ken Gilliland

# Songbird ReMix

## Blackbirds & Grackles

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# Songbird ReMix

## Blackbirds & Grackles

### Introduction

"Songbird ReMix Blackbirds and Grackles" encompasses 2 families of mostly black-colored birds. First, not all blackbirds are true blackbirds. They are divided into two groups; "Old World" and "New World" Blackbirds. While "New World" Blackbirds are grouped where you would expect them, "Old World" Blackbirds fall into the Thrush family. "Grackles, which are "New World" birds, fall into the Orioles and Blackbird family.

The set include 6 "Old World" Blackbirds, 4 "New World" Blackbirds and 3 Grackles; all with male and female colors. As with all Songbird ReMix models, the product uses an arsenal of morphs to help mimic all the behavior its real-life counterparts would have from flight, to feeding, to sleeping.

There are two versions of this set for native support in Poser and DAZ Studio. Materials have been tuned to support Iray, Superfly and Firefly renderers.

### Overview and Use

The set is located within the **Animals : Songbird ReMix** folder. Here is where you will find a number of folders, such as **Bird Library**, **Manuals** and **Resources**. Let's look at what is contained in these folders:

- **Bird Library:** This folder holds the actual species and poses for the "premade" birds. Birds are placed into a "type" folder (such as "Birds of Prey (Order Falconiformes)" which for example would hold falcons, hawks and eagles). The birds for this set can be found in the following folder(s):
  - **Perching Birds (Order Passeriformes)**
    - **Orioles, Blackbirds & their Allies**
    - **Thrushes, Oxpeckers & their Allies**
- **Manuals:** Contains a link to the online manual for the set.
- **Props:** Contains any props that might be included in the set
- **Resources:** Items in this folder are for creating and customizing your birds
  - **Bird Base Models:** This folder has the blank, untextured model(s) used in this set. These models are primarily for users who wish to experiment with poses or customize their own species of bird. When using physical renderers such as Iray and Superfly, SubD should be turned to at least "3". For

DAZ Studios 3Delight renders, the SubD must be turned from the “High Resolution” setting to the “Base” setting (otherwise some areas will render incorrectly transparent).

## Poser Use

Select **Figures** in the **Runtime** Folder and go to the **Animals : Songbird ReMix** folder. Select the bird from the renderer (*Firefly or Superfly*) folder you want and simply click it to load. Some birds in the Songbird ReMix series may load with attached parts (*Conformers*) such as tail or crest extensions. Some of these parts have specific morphs. You will need to click on the attached part to access those controls. Associated poses can be found in the same folder- **Bird Library : (Type) : Poses**.

## DAZ Studio Use

Go to the **Animals : Songbird ReMix** folder. Select the bird from the renderer (*3Delight or Iray*) folder you want and simply click it to load. Some birds in the Songbird ReMix series may load with attached parts (*Conformers*) such as tail or crest extensions. Some of these parts have specific morphs. You will need to click on the attached part to access those controls. Associated poses can be found in the same folder- **Bird Library : (Type) : Poses**. **Note:** Using the "Apply this Character to the currently selected Figure(s)" option **will not** properly apply the correct scaling to the bird selected. It is better to delete the existing character first and load the one you want to use.

## One Folder to Rule Them All

When I reworked the entire Songbird ReMix library starting in 2018, I decided to abandon the way the birds were sorted (by product name) and choose an Ornithological approach. All birds are found in the Bird Library folder and are arranged by type of bird. This approach is hopefully easier for most to find what bird they are looking for. Admittedly, it will take some getting use to for some longtime users, but I’ve always approached the Songbird ReMix series as a learning tool as well as a graphics tool, so hopefully some knowledge will rub off by seeing how birds are grouped.

Probably the most deceiving subfolder in the **Bird Library** is “**Perching Birds (Order Passeriformes)**”. This is folder you probably will end up “favoriting” because this one folder (Passeriformes) **holds more than 50% of all birds**. Perching birds range from cardinals and jays to chickadees, crow and swallows.

Finding the bird you want within the “**Perching Birds (Order Passeriformes)**” folder can be daunting, even for an experienced birder (such as myself), so I’ve



## Where to find your Birds and Poses

Type Folder	For what species?
<p><b>Perching Birds (Order Passeriformes)</b> Orioles, NW Blackbirds &amp; their Allies</p>	<p>Jamaican Blackbird Rusty Blackbird Yellow-winged Blackbird Unicolored Blackbird Common Grackle Boat-tailed Grackle Red-bellied Grackle</p>
<p><b>Perching Birds (Order Passeriformes)</b> Thrushes, Oxpeckers &amp; their Allies</p>	<p>Eurasian Blackbird Chinese Blackbird Grey-winged Blackbird Indian Blackbird Tibetan Blackbird White-collared Blackbird</p>

### Why are not all Blackbirds in this set not put into the Blackbird folder?

It seems natural that the Blackbirds in this set would appear in the “**Orioles, Blackbirds & their Allies**” folder, but they appear in the “**Thrushes, Oxpeckers & their Allies**” instead. *Why is this not a mistake?* Well, welcome to the strange world of bird classification. The reason why they find themselves in the “thrushes” folder instead of the “blackbirds” folder is because scientifically they *aren’t* blackbirds, they are classified as “True Thrushes”. This has a lot to do with New World Vs. Old World bird naming battle. Scientists from Europe and Asia tend to lean towards the traditional naming of birds and how they’ve been labeled for centuries. The American scientist prefer DNA matching to classify birds. Most ornithologists have given in and now accept bird Latin names based on DNA analysis. However, most of the “Old World” birds still use their “historical” common names. Take for example, the House Sparrow,... yes, that one we see working the fast food parking lots around the world in search of those elusive French fries... That sparrow is really a finch (by DNA standards).

The bottom line: All New World Blackbirds fall into the “**Orioles, Blackbirds & their Allies**” folder while all Old World Blackbirds fall into “**Thrushes, Oxpeckers & their Allies**” folder.

# Songbird ReMix

## Blackbirds & Grackles

Eurasian Blackbird  
Chinese Blackbird  
Gray-winged Blackbird  
Indian Blackbird  
Tibetan Blackbird  
White-collared Blackbird  
Jamaican Blackbird  
Rusty Blackbird  
Yellow-winged Blackbird  
Unicolored Blackbird  
Common Grackle  
Boat-tailed Grackle  
Red-bellied Grackle

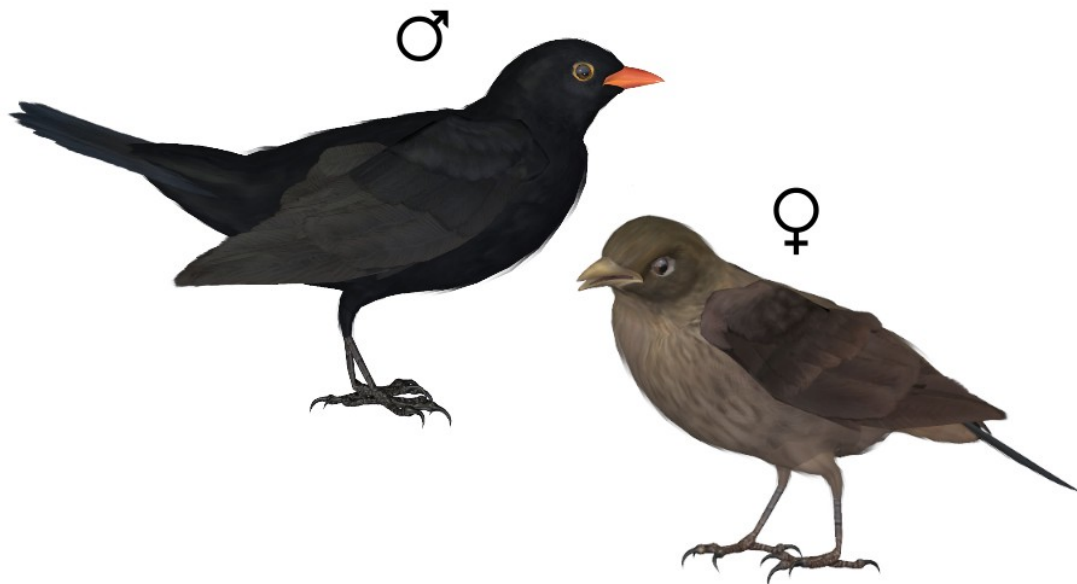
**Common Name:** Eurasian Blackbird  
**Scientific Name:** *Turdus merula*

**Size:** 9.3–11.4 inches (24–27 cm)

**Habitat:** Eurasia; it breeds in Europe, western Asia, and North Africa, and has been introduced to Australia and New Zealand.

This species is common over most of its range in woodland and has a preference for deciduous trees with dense undergrowth. However, gardens provide the best breeding habitat, with woodland typically holding about a tenth of that density, and open and very built-up habitats even less. The common blackbird also lives in parks, gardens and hedgerows.

**Status:** Least Concern. **Global Population:** 80,000,000-160,000,000 mature individuals with a slightly rising population. In the western Palearctic, populations are generally stable or increasing, but there have been local declines, especially on farmland, which may be due to agricultural policies that encouraged farmers to remove hedgerows (which provide nesting places), and to drain damp grassland and increase the use of pesticides, both of which could have reduced the availability of invertebrate food.



**Diet:** Omnivorous; eating a wide range of insects, earthworms, berries, and fruits.

**Breeding:** The adult male has glossy black plumage, blackish-brown legs, a yellow eye-ring and an orange-yellow bill. Its bill darkens somewhat in winter.

The adult female is sooty-brown with a dull yellowish-brownish bill, a brownish-white throat and some weak mottling on the breast. The juvenile is similar to the female, but has pale spots on its upperparts, and the very young juvenile also has a speckled breast. Young birds vary in shade of brown; darker birds are presumably male. The first-year male resembles the adult male, but has a dark bill and weaker eye ring. Its folded wing is brown, rather than black like the body plumage.

Both sexes are territorial on the breeding grounds and have distinctive threat displays. However, they are more gregarious during migration and in wintering areas. Pairs remain in their territory throughout the year if the climate is sufficiently temperate. This common and conspicuous species has given rise to a number of literary and cultural references, often related to its song.

The nominate species commences breeding in March, but the eastern and Indian races start a month or more later. The introduced New Zealand birds begin nesting in August (late winter). The breeding pair look for a suitable nest site in a creeper or bush, favoring evergreen or thorny species such as ivy, holly, hawthorn, honeysuckle or pyracantha. The female incubates the eggs for 12–14 days before the chicks hatch. Fledging takes another 10–19 days, during which time both parents feed the young and remove the faecal sacs. The young are fed by their parents for up to three weeks after leaving the nest, and will follow the adults begging for food.

**Cool Facts:** It is also called the “Common Blackbird”. Until recently considered conspecific with Chinese Blackbird (*Turdus mandarinus*) and formerly with Tibetan Blackbird (*Turdus maximus*) and Indian Blackbird (*Turdus simillimus*). Proposed subspecies *insularum* from southern Greek islands (Lesbos, Andros, Ikaria, Samos, Crete, Rhodes) considered indistinguishable from *syriacus*. Seven subspecies recognized.

- *T. m. merula*. The nominate subspecies, breeds commonly throughout much of Europe from Iceland, the Faroes and the British Isles east to the Ural Mountains and north to about 70 N, where it is fairly scarce. A small population breeds in the Nile Valley. Birds from the north of the range winter throughout Europe and around the Mediterranean, including Cyprus and North Africa. The introduced birds in Australia and New Zealand are of the nominate race.
- *T. m. azorensis*. It is a small race which breeds in the Azores. The male is darker and glossier than *merula*.
- *T. m. cabreræ*. It was named for Ángel Cabrera, the Spanish zoologist, resembles *azorensis* and breeds in Madeira and the western Canary Islands.
- *T. m. mauritanicus*. It is another small dark subspecies with a glossy black male plumage, breeds in central and northern Morocco, coastal Algeria and northern Tunisia.

- *T. m. aterrimus*. It breeds in Hungary, south and east to southern Greece, Crete, northern Turkey and northern Iran. It winters in southern Turkey, northern Egypt, Iraq and southern Iran. It is smaller than merula with a duller male and paler female plumage.
- *T. m. syriacus*. It breeds on the Mediterranean coast of southern Turkey south to Jordan, Israel and the northern Sinai. It is mostly resident, but part of the population moves southwest or west to winter in the Jordan Valley and in the Nile Delta of northern Egypt south to about Cairo. Both sexes of this subspecies are darker and greyer than the equivalent merula plumages.
- *T. m. intermedius*. It is an Asian race breeding from Central Russia to Tajikistan, western and northeastern Afghanistan, and eastern China. Many birds are resident, but some are altitudinal migrants and occur in southern Afghanistan and southern Iraq in winter. This is a large subspecies, with a sooty-black male and a blackish-brown female.

**Common Name:** Chinese Blackbird  
**Scientific Name:** *Turdus mandarinus*

**Size:** 11-11.4 inches (28-29 cm)

**Habitat:** Asia; endemic to Central and Eastern China (east from central Shaanxi, Gansu, eastern and western Sichuan and Yunnan, and northern to Beijing); non-breeding also southern China, Hainan and northern Indochina.

It is found in open woodland of all types, especially deciduous, also edge habitats, parks, gardens, plantations and orchards. It occurs also in grassland areas with plenty of shrubs and other cover. It is found in areas up to 4000 m.

**Status:** Least Concern. **Global Population:** Unknown number of mature individuals with a stable population trend. It is considered common in most of its range and a common winter visitor and passage migrant in Hong Kong.



**Diet:** Omnivorous; during the breeding season, it primarily feeds on earthworms.

**Breeding:** The male nominate race is all sooty black above and brownish-black below, with narrow orange-yellow eye-ring. The iris is dark and the bill is orange to bright yellow. The legs blackish to dark brown. The female is only slightly browner than male, has paler chin and throat with broad darker streaks, less distinct eye-ring. Its bill is brownish with some dull yellow at its base (mainly on lower mandible). The juvenile is dark brown with variable paler buff mottling and streaking.

Breeding season occurs from March–July with up to two or three broods per year. The nest a large cup of dry grass and twigs packed together with mud, and lined with finer vegetable material (grass, stems), placed off ground in bush or tree. The clutch is 2–6 eggs, pale greenish-blue with pale red-brown spots. The incubation period is variable, 10–19 days. The nestling period is 13–14 days with chicks dependent on their parents for another 20 days.

**Cool Facts:** It was formerly considered conspecific with the Common Blackbird. The differences are slight; location and a slightly paler bill are the best identifiers for the differences. There are two subspecies:

- *T. m. mandarinus*. The “Chinese” blackbird breeds throughout much of southern, central and eastern China. It is a partial migrant to Hong Kong and south to Laos and Vietnam. The male is sooty black, and the female is similar but browner, and paler on the underparts. It is the larger of the subspecies.
- *T. m. sowerbyi*. First reported by James Sowerby. The Sowerby's Blackbird breeds from eastern Sichuan to Guizhou. It is partially migratory, with some individuals spending the winter in southern China and northern Indochina. It resembles *mandarinus*, but is smaller and darker below.

**Common Name:** Grey-winged Blackbird  
**Scientific Name:** *Turdus boulboul*

**Size:** 10.6-11.4 inches (27-29 cm)

**Habitat:** Asia; endemic to the Himalayas (from northeastern Pakistan), southern China (Yunnan, southern Guizhou, Guangxi, southeastern Hunan) and northern Indochina; non-breeding also in northeastern India (southern Assam hills), western Myanmar and northwestern Thailand.

It breeds in diverse humid oak and other broadleaf evergreen forests (with *Castanopsis*, *Ulmus*, *Magnolia*, *Alnus*, *Rhododendron*, *Aesculus*, *Populus*, *Sorbus*, etc.), at 1800–2700 m in the Himalayas (upper limit coinciding with upper limit of *Q. semecarpifolia*). It winters in open forest, secondary and bush jungle, dry scrub, clearings, forest edge and around villages, from foothills to 2600 m. Elevation 640–3000 m in China (lower elevations in winter), 1000–2500 m in southeastern Asia. In Pakistan typically associated with ban oak (*Q. incana*).



**Status:** Least Concern. **Global population:** Unknown number of mature individuals with a decreasing population trend. It is locally common in Pakistan and throughout much of breeding range. It is rare in China and an uncommon resident in northern Laos and northern Vietnam.

**Diet:** Insects, including a high proportion of larvae, ground-feeding caterpillars, snails, slugs, earthworms and fruit (mostly berries from *Cotoneaster* and *Berberis*).

It is an arboreal feeder, seeking invertebrates in moss on boughs. It equally forages on ground in typical thrush-like manner, with rapid hops and pauses. It is often found in small flocks during winter.

**Nesting:** The male is black with broad pinkish-gray wing panels and whitish-tipped wing-coverts. It has vague grayish scaling on the lower underparts. Its bill is yellow, a narrow eye-ring and yellowish-brown legs. The female is pale olive-brown with warm brown wing-coverts and broad pinkish-buff tips. The juvenile is dark brown with buff spots and streaks above, buff-brown with narrow dark bars below, plain wing panel grayer on male, buffier on female.

Breeding season is from April through July. They often double-brood at lower elevations. The nest is flimsy or bulky, sometimes mud-lined cup, decorated externally with moss and lichen and lined with hair, fern stems and fine rootlets. It is usually placed on branch close to main stem 2–5 m up in tree, sometimes on ground among roots or rocks. It lays 2-4 eggs that are pale greenish to yellowish-stone with dull reddish-brown blotches and streaks.

**Cool Facts:** The song from a treetop is a rich, loud, melodious series of relaxed phrases, each often ending with twitter, “*twii-tuuu twii-tuuu chuiyui-twit wiiar-twit wiiar-trtrtrt-wi-wi-wich wiiyar-wiiyar...*”. The small isolated population in Malkandi (Pakistan) has much more limited repertoire. Calls reportedly include low “*chuk-chuk*” (stronger in alarm), “*churi*” in contact, angry “*churr*” near nest, and mournful downward-inflected “*pie-oooh tie-oooh*” whistle when going to roost.

**Common Name:** Indian Blackbird  
**Scientific Name:** *Turdus simillimus*

**Size:** 7.5-8.7 inches (19-22 cm)

**Habitat:** Asia; it is found in southern India, the Ghats and Sri Lanka.

It breeds in moist deciduous and evergreen broadleaf forest, sholas, wooded ravines, dense scrub-jungle, scrubby woodland edge, groves, copses, shade coffee plantations. It winters down to the plains, in similar habitat and also wooded gardens and plantations.

**Status:** Least Concern. **Global Population:** Unknown number of adult individuals with a declining population trend. It is common throughout range.

**Diet:** Invertebrates and fruits.

It forages on the ground. It feeds in fruiting and flowering trees.



**Nesting:** Males of the nominate race are dark gray-brown above; darkest on the crown (with a slight capped appearance), and slightly paler grayish-brown below (palest on throat and mid-belly). It has orange-yellow bill, eye-ring and legs. Females are paler overall, with their throats slightly streaked. The juvenile is like the female above, but with orangey-buff tips of wing-coverts, orangey-buff with dark brown scaling and mottling below.

Breeding season occurs from February through November in India and March through April and August through September in Sri Lanka. The nest is a deep bulky cup of grass, moss and roots, strengthened with a few twigs and a mud layer, and with inner lining of fine roots. It is placed in a tree fork, stump or bush. Four bluish to pale green eggs are laid. They are very glossy with bold reddish-brown and light umber speckles.

**Cool Facts:** It differs from the Eurasian Blackbird (*T. merula*) mainly in paler plumage and smaller size.

There are four subspecies:

- *T. s. simillimus*. The nominate race is found in southwestern India (Nilgiris and surrounding hills).
- *T. s. bourdilloni*. This race is endemic to the hills of southern India (south of the Palghat Gap). The male is uniform slate-brown with paler edges of primaries.
- *T. s. nigropileus*. The “Black-capped” race is found in western, central, and southeastern India (mainly in the northern Western Ghats, Satpuras, and Eastern Ghats). It is paler than nominate, male with blackish head and paler gray-brown collar, lower under-parts paler.
- *T. s. kinnisii*. This race is endemic to Sri Lanka. It is smallest of the races. It is grayish-slate with vague bluish tinge and dark-scaled upperparts. The female similar but rather duller.

**Common Name:** Tibetan Blackbird  
**Scientific Name:** *Turdus maximus*

**Size:** 9-11 inches (23–28 cm)

**Habitat:** Asia; endemic locally in the Himalayas from northern Pakistan east to Nepal, northeastern India (northern Arunachal Pradesh) and southeastern Tibet. Non-breeding birds also are found at lower altitudes.

This blackbird is highly adapted to subalpine environment. It breeds in bushy patches of dwarf juniper (*Juniperus*) and rhododendron scrub on steep grassy, rocky slopes and alpine meadows just above tree-line, at 3200–4800 m. It winters in shrubs and juniper at lower levels, usually not below 3000 m.

**Status:** Least Concern. **Global population:** Unknown number of adult individuals with a stable population trend. It is scarce to frequent in northern Pakistan; locally common in Kashmir; very sparse in the east of its range.



**Diet:** Earthworms (in Hazara, Pakistan, a very short-bodied dark red species), mollusks, insects (including caterpillars), small lizards, fruits, berries and seeds.

Small worms seen brought to nestlings. It forages on the ground, hopping over rocks and boulders. It prefers the bare ground at edges of melting snow. In late summer, it forages in small parties of up to ten individuals.

**Breeding:** Both sexes may have subtle hooded appearance. The male is brownish-black, with stronger black head, breast, wings and tail. The bill is dull orange-yellow and the legs darkish-yellow. The female is blackish-brown above, browner below, faint throat streaks with its bill, a dusky yellow. The juvenile is like female, but mottled grayish-buff from back to wing-coverts and rump, streaked grayish-buff on throat, barred grayish-buff on belly to vent.

Breeding season occurs in May through July in Tibet. The nest is a bulky, but compact, cup with some mud, lined with animal hair and finer grass. It is placed on the ground amid roots, at foot of boulder, in low bush or on cliff face. In China, Cotoneaster is the preferred plant for nest, and a few nests placed against rocky wall. 3-4 eggs are laid with the incubation period being 12–13 days and the nestling period lasting 16–18 days.

**Cool Facts:** This blackbird differs from the Eurasian Blackbird in its lack of the yellow eye-ring.

**Common Name:** White-collared Blackbird  
**Scientific Name:** *Turdus albocinctus*

**Size:** 10.2-11 inches (26–28 cm)

**Habitat:** Asia; endemic to the Himalayas from northern India (western Himachal Pradesh) east to southern China (southern & southeastern Tibet, southwestern Sichuan) and Arunachal Pradesh; non-breeding also at lower altitudes in northeastern India.

It breeds along edges and in glades mainly in lower reaches of conifer zone, spruce-birch, locally in oak and rhododendron forest with rich undergrowth, dwarf rhododendron at tree-line, at 2100–4000 m in Himalayas. It winters below 3000 m to foothills, down to 250 m. It sometimes forages in bushless and treeless meadows adjacent to and even far from forest.

**Status:** Least Concern. **Global population:** Unknown number of mature individuals with a declining population trend. In Nepal locally common, but large stretches of primary forest may hold only sparse populations.



**Diet:** Invertebrates including earthworms and insects, fruit, drupes and berries (hawthorn, crab apple, cotoneaster, holly, dwarf mistletoe). It is dependent more on vegetable material in winter.

It forages on the ground and in trees. In the winter, it forages near villages and on the grass in gardens. It sometimes is found in large flocks with other thrushes.

**Nesting:** The male is black, with a very broad white collar extending from the chin to the mid-breast and around the lower nape and upper mantle. There are thin whitish lines and bars on the undertail-coverts. The eye-ring yellow, the bill is yellow and the legs yellowish-brown. The female mirrors male pattern but is more variable with the upper-parts generally brown (head darker), the under-parts are slightly paler, and the collar grayish-white or buffish-white. The juvenile is dark brown with extensive russet-buff spotting and streaking above, russet-buff with dark brown mottling and barring below.

Breeding season occurs from March to July. The nest is a compact large cup of moss, grass, rootlets and stems, lined with dry grass and rootlets, placed 1–3 m up (sometimes where snow has broken crown) on branch in tree, on mossy stump, rarely on or near ground. 3-4 eggs that are pale blue with pale reddish-brown blotches are laid.

**Cool Facts:** On the Tibetan Plateau White-collared Blackbirds can breed twice a year. The first breeding attempt results in small clutches where a few nestlings fledge in high body condition. Contrasting with the second attempt where larger clutches result in more chicks fledgling but these are in lower body condition. These differences are thought to be driven by parental feeding behaviour and seasonal variation in food availability.

**Common Name:** Jamaican Blackbird  
**Scientific Name:** *Nesopsar nigerrimus*

**Size:** 7.1 inches (18 cm)

**Habitat:** North America; endemic to Jamaica, where it is restricted to Cockpit Country, some central areas and the Blue and John Crow Mountains.

It is strictly arboreal and has a wheezing call. Pairs occupy large territories in a variety of wet montane forest types, including elfin and mist forests, that have substantial epiphytes and mosses on the trees. The Jamaican blackbird's habitats are confined to areas of above 575 m and are rarely seen in lowland areas.



**Status:** Endangered. **Global population:** 2,500–10,000 mature adults with a decreasing population trend. The principal threat is habitat loss. There are numerous threats to Jamaican forests, including bauxite mining, charcoal production, forestry, farming and development. This species is particularly vulnerable because it is dependent on large trees which support many epiphytes. Because of these threats it is listed as “Endangered” by the IUCN. It is protected in the Blue and John Crow Mountains National Park, and efforts are underway to stop bauxite mining in Cockpit Country.

**Diet:** Omnivorous; animal prey, mostly insects, which it finds in bark or in bromeliads.

In the absence of specialized tree probers such as the woodcreepers, ovenbirds and woodpeckers which occur in similar forests on the mainland, this blackbird has convergently evolved to fill this ecological niche. The majority of the food taken by this species is found on the trunks of trees and their inner branches. It has shorter legs and longer claws than typical icterids, uses its tail for support when climbing tree trunks, both of which are adaptations to its niche, and has a longer bill and stronger jaw muscles than other New World blackbirds used for probing, spreading and hammering. It utilizes a different niche from the other endemic icterids, such as the Jamaican oriole, which forages mainly in the outer branches of the trees.

**Nesting:** Sexes are similar but the female is slightly smaller and duller. It is an all-dark blackbird with slender sharp bill and relatively short tail and legs. The plumage is entirely black with slight blue gloss. Its short tail is often flayed. Its iris is brown and the bill and legs are black. The juvenile resembles adult, but its plumage is heavily tinged brown and lacks the gloss.

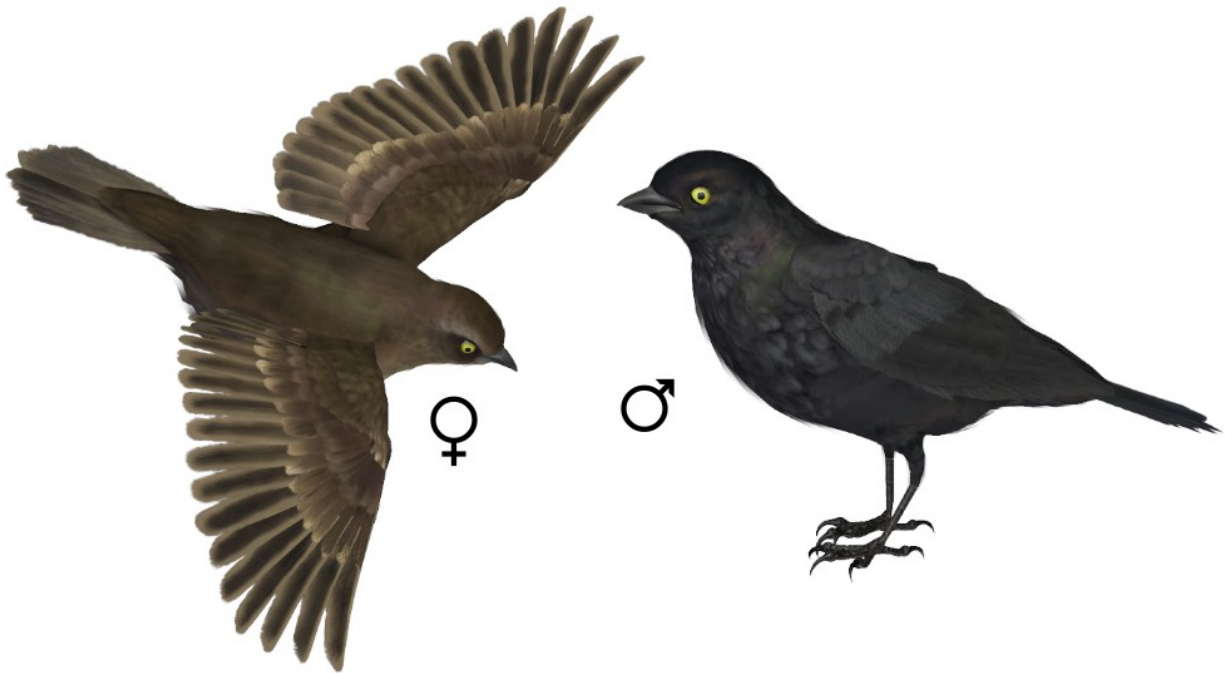
It is monogamous. Breeding season occurs May through July. It is a territorial, solitary breeder. It commonly performs aerial display, flying above canopy with slow wing strokes while singing. The nest built by the female and is a bulky open cup made mostly from epiphytic orchids and rootlets. It is placed at medium height (mostly 6–11 m) usually on near-horizontal section of main trunk of forest tree, commonly beneath an epiphytic bromeliad. The clutch is 2 eggs. Incubation is performed by the female, starting with second egg and lasts for about 13–15 days. The chicks are fed by both parents. Both parents defend the nest and the family group stay together for at least two months after the young fledge.

**Cool Facts:** The species has sometimes been included in the genus *Agelaius*, but molecular systematics have shown it not be closely related to any living New World blackbird or grackle.

**Common Name:** Rusty Blackbird  
**Scientific Name:** *Euphagus carolinus*

**Size:** 10.6-12.4 inches (21-25 cm)

**Habitat:** North America; it breeds north to the tree line in wet forests of Alaska, Canada, and the northeastern United States.



**Status:** Vulnerable. **Global population:** Unknown number of mature adults with a decreasing population trend. They have declined alarmingly (85-95%) in numbers over the past 40 years (1970-2010), spawning a recent spurt in studies of this. Potential factors promoting this decline have been identified and include loss of wetlands used by wintering individuals in the Southeast, contaminants on breeding grounds, poisoning of other blackbirds on wintering roosts (with the Rusty as an incidental victim), and increasing disturbance of boreal wetlands where this species breeds. Alone, none of these factors appears adequate to account for the broad and extraordinary loss in numbers of this species, so it is likely we are witnessing synergistic effects. Continued work is clearly needed to track population levels of this species and to better identify factors that may drive continued loss or recovery.

**Diet:** Omnivorous; mostly invertebrates during the breeding season.

It takes invertebrates by probing in mud and vegetation along the edges of wetlands. In winter and on migration, it joins mixed-species roosts and feeding flocks, but also occurs apart from other species, favoring woodlands more than

other blackbirds do. Also unlike other blackbirds, the Rusty is seldom a nuisance depredating crops or at roosts.

**Nesting:** Sexes are dimorphic. During breeding season, adult male uniformly black above with a blue-green to greenish gloss, adult female slate gray, darker above with a bluish green gloss. In fresh Basic (fall and winter) plumage, males are characterized by rust-edged tertials and rusty brown feathering on crown, nape, and back with lighter brown to buff over the eye and on cheeks, throat, breast, and sides on otherwise black feathering; in females, tertials are edged rusty brown, as are crown, nape, and back, whereas cheek, chin, throat, breast, and sides have lighter buff-brown edgings. Fall females have conspicuous pale buff line above the eye. Immature birds resemble adults except that the rusty and light brown and margins are wider, giving a browner appearance overall. Immatures have brown irises until fall; then the iris becomes pale yellow and remain yellow throughout year. In all birds, narrow bill is shorter than the head. Wings appear long, narrow, and pointed. The tail is nearly as long as the wing and is slightly rounded.

**Cool Facts:** There are two subspecies:

- *E. c. carolinus*. First reported by Müller in 1776. The nominate race breeds from western Alaska east across northern Canada to eastern Quebec and south to southern Alaska and central British Columbia east through northeastern Minnesota and northeastern New York to northern New England. It winters from southeastern Alaska and southern British Columbia east to southern Ontario and south (generally east of the Great Plains) to eastern Texas east to northern Florida. Vagrants occur annually along the Pacific Coast, with records south to Baja California and northwestern Sonora, and individuals have reached Greenland and Siberia. The breeding male is flat black with a greenish gloss; the breeding female is moderate gray. The feather edging of autumn birds is medium rusty.
- *E. c. nigrans*. First reported by Burleigh and Peters in 1948. This race breeds in Newfoundland, the Magdalen Islands (Quebec), Nova Scotia, and, perhaps, eastern New Brunswick. It winters in the Carolinas and Georgia. It looks like the nominate race, but its breeding male is blacker, with a bluish gloss. The breeding female is darker and clearer gray. The rusty feather edgings of autumn birds is darker.

**Common Name:** Yellow-winged Blackbird  
**Scientific Name:** *Agelasticus thilius*

**Size:** 7 inches (17.9 cm)

**Habitat:** South America; this species is endemic to South America's southern cone, although there is also a highland population in the Altiplano of Bolivia and Peru.

This species is dependent on marshes, particularly during the breeding season. In winter, it may range to open areas near marshes, particularly muddy fields. However, it is particularly tied to marshes with *Scirpus* sp. as opposed to other emergent vegetation.



**Status:** Least Concern. **Global population:** Unknown number of mature adults with a stable population trend. It is common over most of its range, becoming naturally rarer or local toward the subtropics. It occurs in several protected areas, including Laguna Alalay (Bolivia); Vicente Pérez Rosales and Puyehue National Parks (Chile); Nahuel Huapi and Lanín National Parks, Laguna Llanquanelo Reserve, and Laguna de Mar Chiquita Natural Park (Argentina); Taim Ecological Station (Brazil); and Bañados del Este Biosphere Reserve (Uruguay). The cutting of reeds for human uses has been reported as a major threat to the Yellow-winged Blackbird in Mantagua (Valparaíso region), Chile

**Diet:** Omnivorous; insects, including emerging aquatic insects, and seeds. One study of the Yellow-winged Blackbird in Chile reported that it ate insects, but not

seeds, in fields planted with a grass crop; the species therefore likely was helping to control insect pests rather than decreasing crop yield.

It may perform a variety of behaviors while perched in the vegetation in which it forages, including singing and self-maintenance activities like preening and scratching.

**Nesting:** Sexes are dimorphic. The male nominate race is entirely dull black, except for the yellow marginal and lesser upper wing coverts (epaulet) and similar pattern on the under-wing coverts. Its iris is brown while its bill and legs are black. The female has a prominent pale buff supercilium, contrasting with a dark brown, streaked crown and ear coverts. The rest of head and upper parts are brown with broad dusky streaking, the brown edges becoming chestnut on lower scapulars and lower back. The wing feathers are dark brown with paler edges, more chestnut on the inner greater coverts, a hint of yellow on marginal coverts (but lacks male's yellow epaulet). The tail is blackish, the feathers thinly edged chestnut. The light buff-brown below with the darker streaking, the chin and upper throat are unstreaked. It often has a darker malar stripe and bare parts as for the male. The juvenile is like female, but more buffish overall.

It is monogamous and its breeding season occurs October through December in Chile and Argentina. It is a colonial breeder. The colonies usually in emergent marsh vegetation, less often in low dense vegetation in uplands but near a marsh. The degree of nest clumping is variable. A colony can have up to 5 nests in a radius of 5 m. The nest built by the female and is a well-made cup of plant material, usually pieces of wet rushes, cattails, or other marsh plants. Nests are often in a bed of *Schoenoplectus californicus* (cattails). A clutch of 2–4 eggs are laid and incubated by the female for 12–13 days. The chicks are fed by both sexes. Males also guard the nest and escort the breeding female. The nestling period is about 10–12 days. Nests are commonly parasitized by the Shiny Cowbird (*Molothrus bonariensis*) and the couple ends up rearing the parasite's chicks.

**Cool Facts:** There are 3 subspecies. The differences are mostly size and location related:

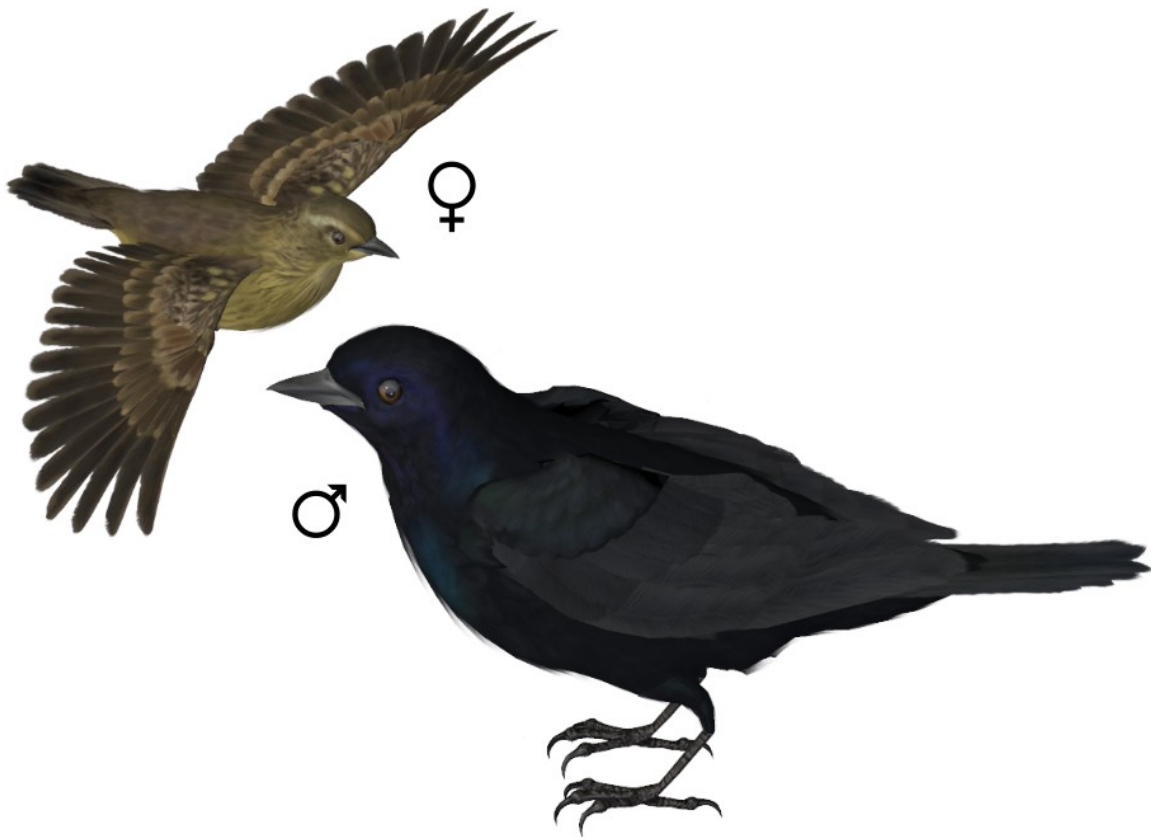
- *A. t. alticola*. This race is endemic to Southeastern Peru (Cuzco, Puno) and western Bolivia (La Paz, Cochabamba and Oruro). It is larger than the nominate race, also the female is darker, more streaked, with a thinner grayish supercilium (which is sometimes lacking), and usually with more yellow on the marginal upper wing coverts (sometimes approaching the epaulet of male).
- *A. t. thilius*. The nominate race is found in Chile (Atacama south to Los Lagos).
- *A. t. petersii*. This race is endemic to Argentina (from at least Santiago del Estero, Santa Fe and Corrientes south to Santa Cruz), Uruguay and southeastern Brazil (mostly coastal marshes of Paraná, Santa Catarina, and Rio Grande do Sul), and southern Chile (Aysén and Magallanes); in austral winter, extends to extreme northeastern Argentina (Salta, Chaco, Formosa) and most of Paraguay, with few records in Bolivia (Izozog). It is smaller than the nominate race.

**Common Name:** Unicolored Blackbird  
**Scientific Name:** *Agelasticus cyanopus*

**Size:** 10.6-12.4 inches (18-21 cm)

**Habitat:** South America; its range extends from northern Bolivia and southern Brazil to northern Argentina, including much of the lower Amazon region.

It is found in marshes, near the edges of ponds and lakes and in adjacent grassland, and its altitudinal range is up to about 600 m (2,000 ft). It is especially common in the Brazilian Pantanal.



**Status:** Least Concern. **Global population:** >10,000 mature adults with a stable population trend. It is a fairly common species but its distribution is somewhat patchy. The bird seems to be facing no particular threats and the International Union for Conservation of Nature has assessed its conservation status as being of "least concern".

**Diet:** Omnivorous; arthropods (mostly insects), small vertebrates and seeds; reported as taking nectar from inflorescences of the vine (*Combretum lanceolatum*).

This bird usually occurs in pairs and is much less gregarious than the chestnut-capped blackbird which is found in similar swampy habitat. It moves about on floating vegetation and forages among reeds, never straying far from water.

**Nesting:** Sexes are dimorphic. The male nominate race is entirely black with very slight bluish gloss. Its iris is dark brown; its bill and legs are black. The female has its crown and upper parts are brown, boldly streaked blackish, with narrow yellowish supercilium (often ill-defined) and blackish ear-coverts. The upper wing is brownish, most feathers with conspicuous rufous edging. The tail is blackish. It is pale yellow below, streaked dusky brown on the flanks, sometimes streaked also on breast. The under wing-coverts are pale yellow. The lower mandible is sometimes with bluish-gray to pale horn at its base or along the entire length. The juvenile resembles female, but is more buffy yellow, also more heavily streaked above and below. Many males do not acquire adult plumage until second year.

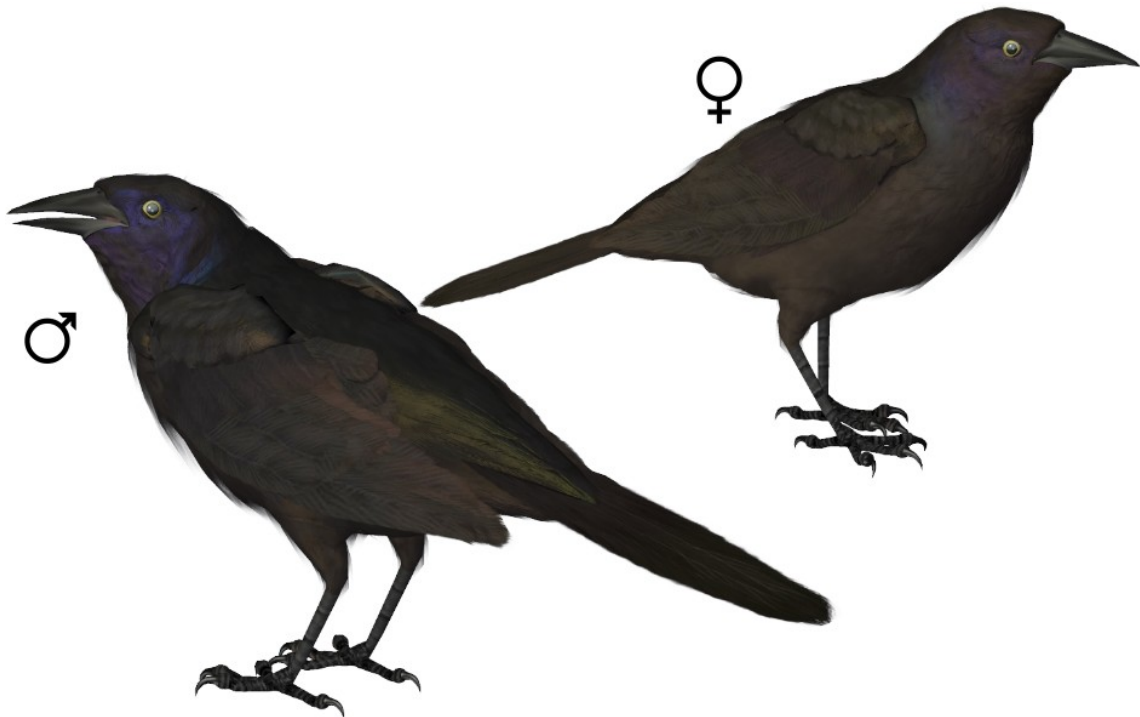
**Cool Facts:** Races differ mainly in the coloration of female. There 3 subspecies:

- *A. c. unicolor*. This race is endemic to northeastern Brazil (Amapá, northeastern Pará and northern Maranhão); possibly also French Guiana. It is larger than others, female has darker upperparts and underwing-coverts, but underparts somewhat intermediate in tone between previous and nominate.
- *A. c. atrolivaceus*. Azara's Blackbird is found on the coastal plain of eastern Brazil from Espírito Santo south to Paraná. The female is much darker overall than nominate, under parts dark brownish-olive with yellowish wash, palest on the throat.
- *A. c. cyanopus*. The nominate race is found in eastern Bolivia and southwestern Brazil (western Mato Grosso and Mato Grosso do Sul) to Paraguay and northern Argentina.

**Common Name:** Common Grackle  
**Scientific Name:** *Quiscalus quiscula*

**Size:** 11-13.4 inches (28-34 cm)

**Habitat:** North America; they breed north to extreme south-central Mackenzie, northern Alberta, northwestern and central Saskatchewan, central Manitoba, all but northern-most Ontario, southern Quebec (including Anticosti Island), New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and southwestern Newfoundland. The breeding range extends south along Atlantic Coast to southern Florida, including Florida, Gulf Coast, southeastern and west-central Texas, and southeastern New Mexico. The breeding range has been extending west to north-central New Mexico, western Colorado, extreme northeastern Utah, eastern Idaho, west-central Montana, west-central Nevada, western Alberta (excluding the mountains of southwest), and northeastern British Columbia.



It winters from southern portions of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Ontario, New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine (casually farther north), south through central portions of Nebraska, Kansas, and Oklahoma to north Texas, southeastern New Mexico, central and southern Texas (rarely in western Texas in Big Bend region), Gulf Coast, and southern Florida. Largely withdraws, however, from Florida Keys in winter. Less numerous and very local in northernmost portions of main winter range (and may occur in these areas primarily during early winter), but more numerous in these areas during warmer winters. Small numbers may occur in early winter in southeastern Nova Scotia.

Also, it winters in small numbers in areas west of main winter range (e.g., Colorado).

Before European settlement, may have preferred to nest in groves of cottonwoods, sycamores and other trees near watercourses in midwestern United States. It has as successfully adapted to human-made habitats and is now common in open areas with scattered groves of coniferous trees such as suburban developments, city parks, cemeteries, and conifer plantations.

**Status:** Near Threatened. **Global population:** 69,000,000 mature individuals with a declining population trend. It is extremely flexible in both feeding and nesting behavior. The clearing of eastern forests in the 1700-1800s, in association with agricultural activity, has increased suitable nesting habitat for it and provided additional food sources. Within the past fifty years, it has invaded the West, aided by increased planting of shelterbelts. As a result, this species is now one of the most successful and widespread in North America. The rapid increase in population size has had some negative consequences. The Common Grackle is now among the most significant agricultural pest species in North America, causing millions of dollars in damage to sprouting corn. It has also earned a reputation for eating other birds' eggs and nestlings, and it occasionally kills and consumes adult birds. Control measures are now contributing to the decline of its numbers in the East.

**Diet:** Omnivorous; insects and other invertebrates, some grain. During migration and winter periods, it feeds on agricultural grains or seeds (especially corn) and tree seeds (especially acorns). Some fruit is also consumed. They are resourceful foragers. They sometimes follow plows to catch invertebrates and mice, wade into water to catch small fish, pick leeches off the legs of turtles, steal worms from American Robins, raid nests, and kill and eat adult birds.

Grackles walk around lawns and fields on their long legs or gather in noisy groups high in trees, typically evergreens.

**Nesting:** They are large, lanky blackbirds with long legs and long tails. The head is flat and the bill is longer than in most blackbirds, with the hint of a downward curve. In flight, the wings appear short in comparison to the tail. It has iridescent black plumage, long, keel-shaped tail (larger in males), yellow irides, and long bill. The male is essentially black with a glossy, iridescent sheen. The head, neck, and breast are glossy purplish blue or bluish green. The female is slightly smaller and less glossy. Throughout most of its range, the glossy head contrasts with the brassy bronze body. Breeding birds east of the Appalachian Mtns. and south of New England have their bodies glossed purple. The juvenile is dull brown, with brown irides.

The female chooses nest site. She will "explore" for nest sites sometimes before she pairs with male. If already paired, the male follows her as she inspects

different locations. A large bulky cup consisting primarily of woody and monocot stems, leaves, and fine grasses is constructed by the female. Anywhere from 1 to 7 eggs are laid and incubated for about 13 days.

**Cool Facts:** While those raggedy figures out in cornfields may be called scarecrows, grackles are the number one threat to corn. They eat ripening corn as well as corn sprouts, and their habit of foraging in big flocks means they have a multimillion-dollar impact. Some people have tried to reduce their effects by spraying a foul-tasting chemical on corn sprouts or by culling grackles at their roosts.

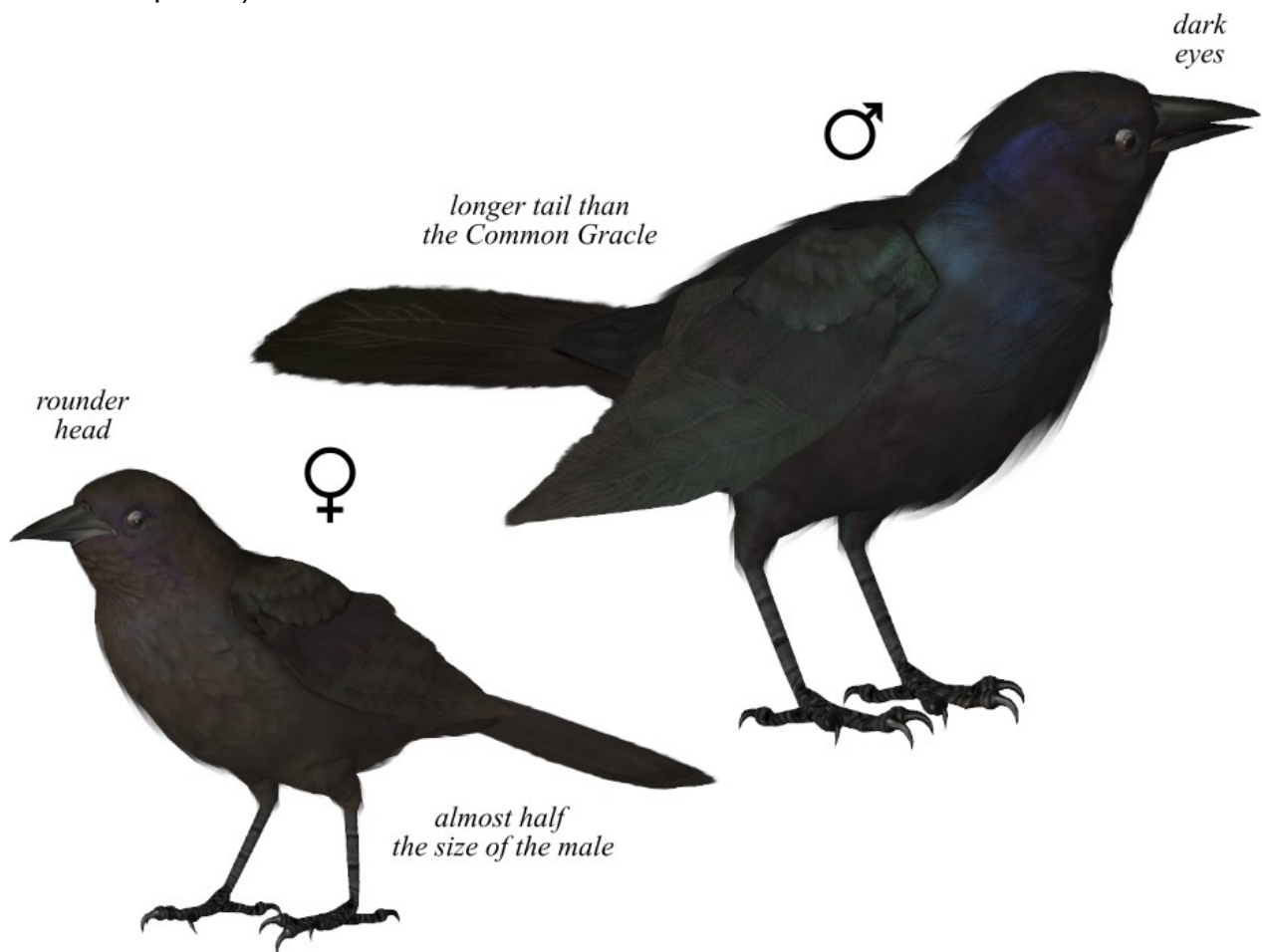
There are three subspecies:

- *Q. q. stonei*. The “Purple” Common Grackle (Purple) is found in the eastern United States from New Jersey and Pennsylvania southward (mostly along the Appalachians) to inland Louisiana, Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina.
- *Q. q. quiscula*. The nominate race or “Florida” Common Grackle is found the the southeastern United States on Atlantic and Gulf coasts from southern North Carolina southward to Louisiana and southern Florida (including Florida Keys).
- *Q. q. versicolor*. The “Bronze” Common Grackle is found in southern Canada from eastern British Columbia eastward to southern Quebec and Newfoundland, south in the United States (east of the Rocky Mts and west of the Appalachians) to central Texas and western Mississippi. They winter southward to southern Texas and eastward to South Carolina.

**Common Name:** Boat-tailed Grackle  
**Scientific Name:** *Quiscalus major*

**Size:** 16 inches (40 cm)

**Habitat:** North America; its breeding range is near the tidal zone along the Atlantic Coast, patchily distributed from Long Island (New York) to Maryland). It then occurs more or less continuously from Virginia to southeastern Florida. It does not breed in the Florida Keys. It is irregularly distributed on the Gulf Coast from southwestern Florida (Monroe County) to southeastern Texas (coastal only). It breeds up to 80 km from the coast along some large bays (Delaware and Chesapeake) and tidal rivers.



It also breeds throughout most of peninsular Florida (as far as 100 km from coast). It is discontinuous in north-central Florida, to about 50 km from Georgia. Coastal gaps in the range are apparently related to the scarcity of suitable habitat (large areas of brackish or freshwater marsh).

Its winter range includes some birds along the northern Atlantic Coast north of Carolinas (withdrawing southward in winter). Movement from the Mississippi area

southward into Louisiana has also been reported. There are several specimen records south of the breeding range, to Rio Grande. Otherwise, breeding and winter ranges are about the same.

It prefers freshwater and salt marshes and contiguous open upland habitats. It is rarely seen more than 50km from tidewater.

**Status:** Least Concern. **Global population:** adult individuals with a decreasing population trend. No current populations are at risk. Because of narrow coastal distribution and use of freshwater marshes as breeding sites, this species probably should be more closely monitored than, for example, other *Quiscalus* species. It is treated as a crop pest to rice farmers.

**Diet:** Omnivore; arthropods, crustacea, mollusks, frogs, turtles, lizards, grain, fruit, tubers, and food scavenged from humans and domestic animals.

Its prey is located visually. The usual foraging mode is slow walking over ground or in shallow water, pecking or probing ground, litter, water, or low vegetation. It frequently turns over debris, stones, and shells with bill. Gaping (inserting closed bill into substrate, then opening to expose prey) is common.

**Nesting:** A large, semi-terrestrial blackbird. Its bill is about as long as the head, narrow, and more or less strongly decurved at tip. Its tail about as long as its wing, plaited, graduated for nearly one-half of length. The sexes are very different in size and color. The adult male is glossy blue-black, with its wings and tail more greenish, while the adult female is about one-half size of male, cinnamon brown above, and paler brown or buffy below.

The Boat-tailed Grackle's mating system (harem polygyny) appears to be unique among North American songbirds. The sexes remain apart most of the year, except in the nesting season when females gather in large, dense colonies, usually on small islands in marshes or in isolated trees in settled areas. Many males are attracted to each nesting colony, but only a few high-ranked individuals succeed in mating there. Relative positions in the male dominance hierarchy are maintained from year to year; the alpha male may be ten years or older. Despite the high mating success of alpha males within the nesting colony proper, a high percentage of young are sired by non-colony males.

The reproductive behavior of female Boat-tailed Grackles is molded by the potentially high rate of predation occurring in marshes. Females nest synchronously in predator-safe sites such as marsh islands patrolled by alligators, or in trees in highway traffic islands. Their incubation and nestling periods are shorter than in other similar-sized songbirds. Young leave the nest prematurely, and weight gain is sacrificed for early maturation of legs and plumage.

**Cool Facts:** What Grackle is what? The Great-tailed Grackle is larger with a longer V-shaped tail and has yellow eyes, while the Boat-tailed Grackle has a shorter tail, rounder head, and dark eyes. Both species are found in overlapping coastal areas, but the Boat-tailed Grackle is more associated with marshes and beaches. Boat-tails have dark eyes, rounder wings and slightly longer tails than Common Grackles do. Common Grackles also prefer more inland habitats.

In many areas it has established a commensal relationship with humans; by doing so, it may increase its rate of food intake and gain protection from predators.

Four subspecies are recognized, with adults separable on the basis of iris color and, to a lesser extent, body size and bill dimensions, for which discrimination ability is middling.

- *Q. m. major*. First reported by Vieillot in 1819. The nominate race is found along the Gulf of Mexico from southwestern Mississippi west to southeastern Texas. It is similar to race *westoni*, but the tail-to-wing ratio large.
- *Q. m. alabamensis*. First reported by Stevenson in 1978. This race is a resident along the Gulf of Mexico from to eastern Alabama west to southeastern Mississippi. It is similar to race *torreyi*, but its tail-to-wing ratio is larger.
- *Q. m. torreyi*. First reported by Harper in 1935. This race is largely resident coastally from Long Island, New York, south to northeastern Florida. Its eye is yellow and its tail averages shorter (tail-to-wing ratio is small).
- *Q. m. westoni*. First reported by Sprunt in 1934. This race is a resident across much of peninsular Florida, west to the central panhandle of that state. It is much like race *torreyi*, but its eye is dark.

**Common Name:** Red-bellied Grackle  
**Scientific Name:** *Hypopyrrhus pyrohypogaster*

**Size:** 10.6-12.4 inches (27-31.5 cm)

**Habitat:** South America; it is found discontinuously in the northwestern and central Andes and upper Magdalena Valley, in Colombia.

It prefers primary and secondary montane forests, forest edges, pastures and plantations near forest patches.

**Status:** Vulnerable. **Global population:** <10,000 mature adults with a decreasing population trend. They are considered uncommon throughout their range. The main threat is deforestation for agriculture, cattle production, timber and mining throughout the entire range. It has lost 64% of its original habitat, with a 7 to 8% reduction in the decade 2000–2010. However, it appears able to live at forest edges and in old second growth (and has nested in isolated trees in pastures), suggesting some tolerance of forest clearance and disturbance. It is sometimes persecuted as a crop pest and sometimes captured for the cagebird trade.



**Diet:** Omnivorous; it feeds on arillate fruits of *Cupania*, berries of *Miconia* and figs. It has been reported feeding on seeds of *Chusquea* bamboos during rare mast occurrences. The arthropods taken include spiders, orthopteroid insects and caterpillars. The nestling diet is mostly insects.

It forages mostly in the canopy in flocks of up to 30 individuals. It sometimes will join mixed-species foraging flocks of other mountain blackbirds, Red-ruffed Fruitcrows (*Pyroderus scutatus*) and Green Jays (*Cyanocorax yncas*).

**Nesting:** Sexes similar, female smaller than male. It is a distinctive blackbird. The plumage is glossy black with vivid red belly and crissum. Its feather shafts of head and throat pointed and shiny black, giving a streaked appearance. Its iris is a pale yellow and its bill and legs black. The juvenile differs from the adult in having black areas dull dark brown, red areas paler and more orange, thigh and rear flanks brown with reddish feather tips. The immature like the adult, but has retained juvenile flight-feathers contrastingly brown.

Breeding season occurs January through May in the central Andes, and March through August elsewhere. It is a co-operative breeder, in groups of 3–6 individuals, including adults of both sexes and juveniles with mutual feeding between group-members reported. The nest is built by the female and is a bulky open cup made from sticks and large dry leaves in a tree or large bush. The clutch size is 2–4 eggs which are greenish-gray with dark brown and lilac spots. The incubation is performed by the female for a period of 13–15 days. The chicks fed by many group-members, including older juveniles and the nestling period lasts for 14–18 days. The fledglings remain in vicinity of nest for about 5 days.

**Cool Facts:** The Red-bellied Grackle is a distinctive rare blackbird of cloud forest in the Colombian Andes. Grackles move through the forest in groups, giving a variety of calls and often flocking with Scarlet-rumped Caciques (*Cacicus uropygialis*) and other large birds.

# Special Thanks to...

...my beta team

Alisa andFlintHawk

## Species Accuracy and Reference Materials

Many birds of the same species do vary considerably in color. This package tries to emulate the colors and markings in the most commonly found variants.

The author-artist has tried to make these species as accurate to their real-life counterparts as possible. With the use of one generic model to create dozens of unique bird species, some give and take is bound to occur. The texture maps were created in Painter with as much accuracy as possible. Photographic references from photographs from various Internet searches and several field guides were used.

### Field Guide Sources:

- **Wikipedia** (<http://www.wikipedia.com>)
- **Birdlife International** (<http://www.birdlife.org> )
- **Handbook of the Birds of the World Alive** (<https://www.hbw.com>)

### More Blackbirds & Grackles:

Some Blackbirds and Grackles already appear in other Songbird sets that are already published. Here's where to find them:

- Brewer's Blackbird (Songbird ReMix Characters v3)
- Red-winged Blackbird (Songbird ReMix Characters v1)
- Tri-colored Blackbird (Songbird ReMix Characters v1)
- Great-tailed Grackle (Songbird ReMix Characters v4)

# Songbird ReMix

# Merchandise



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