

6. COMMON GRACKLE (*Quiscalus quiscula*)

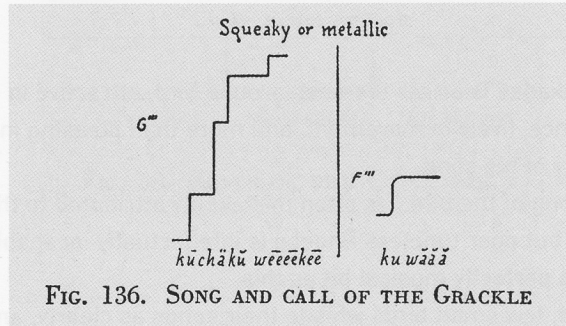


FIG. 136. SONG AND CALL OF THE GRACKLE

IF A BIRD SONG is always something beautiful and musical, the Grackle is no singer. But if, on the other hand, it is a definite sound produced by the male in the breeding season, the Grackle has a song. It consists of one or two short notes followed by a more prolonged squawk. The quality is harsh and squawky or squeaky, with a peculiar metallic sound difficult to describe, but easily distinguished by one once one has heard it. It suggests a rusty hinge or machinery badly in need of oiling.

(Diagrams and text, ARETAS A. SAUNDERS, *A Guide to Bird Songs*)

"Song," a split rasping note. (*Peterson Guide*)

High-pitched, rising screech like a rusty hinge.  
(*The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Birds*)

Song, an unmusical harsh *kh-sheee* or *shr-reezzh*.  
(*Sibley Field Guide*)

The Purple Grackle is a songless bird... but he gives us a good octave and sometimes a 6th, in a resonant metallic whistle, though most of his notes sound like the twanging of piano wires, and his harsh cr-r-r-rrr like the click of a watchman's rattle. ... The Bronzed Grackle's [Purple Grackle] note strongly resembles the noise of a squeaky hinge on an iron gate! The bird has no song, and there is no music in his harsh conversational chatterings. ... The other queer noises sound like rattling shutters, watchmen's rattles, ungreased cart wheels, vibrating wire springs, broken piano wires, the squeak of a chair moved across a hard wooden floor, the chink of broken glass, the scrape of a bow on a fiddle string, and the rest of those discords which play havoc with ones nerves! Evidently when nature's orchestra was tuning up for the Spring Symphony, the Grackle failed to screw up his vocal chords to the proper pitch.

(SCHUYLER F. MATHEWS, *Field Book of Wild Birds and Their Music*)