

LMT Bird Town **BIRD OF THE MONTH- THE GRACKLE**

- Grackles are highly social birds, often found in large flocks that can include other blackbird species like Red-winged Blackbirds and Brown-headed Cowbirds.
- Their diet is incredibly varied, including insects, seeds, grains, small fish, and even garbage. They are known to follow plows to catch invertebrates and mice, and they have even been observed eating leeches off turtles.
- They exhibit a behavior called “Anting”. This behavior involves rubbing ants on their feathers, potentially to get formic acid from the ants, which may help with parasite control. They’ve also been observed using other substances like lemon juice, mothballs, and even walnut juice in a similar way!
- Grackles are intelligent birds, demonstrating an ability to solve puzzles and adapt to new situations, according to kids' encyclopedia facts.
- Male Common Grackles may abandon their mates before the young fledge to find a new partner.
- While the oldest recorded Common Grackle lived for over 23 years, most don't live that long, with only about half reaching adulthood.
- Grackles exhibit different flocking behaviors depending on the season, gathering in smaller groups during the breeding season and forming massive flocks during the winter.
- Their calls are often described as harsh and unmusical, sometimes likened to a squeaky gate.
- A group of grackles is sometimes referred to as a "plague".
- Farmers are not fond of them because they are the #1 threat to corn. They eat ripening corn as well as sprouts, and because they travel in huge flocks, they can do multimillion dollar damage!
- Grackles have a hard keel on the inside of the upper mandible that they use for sawing open acorns.