

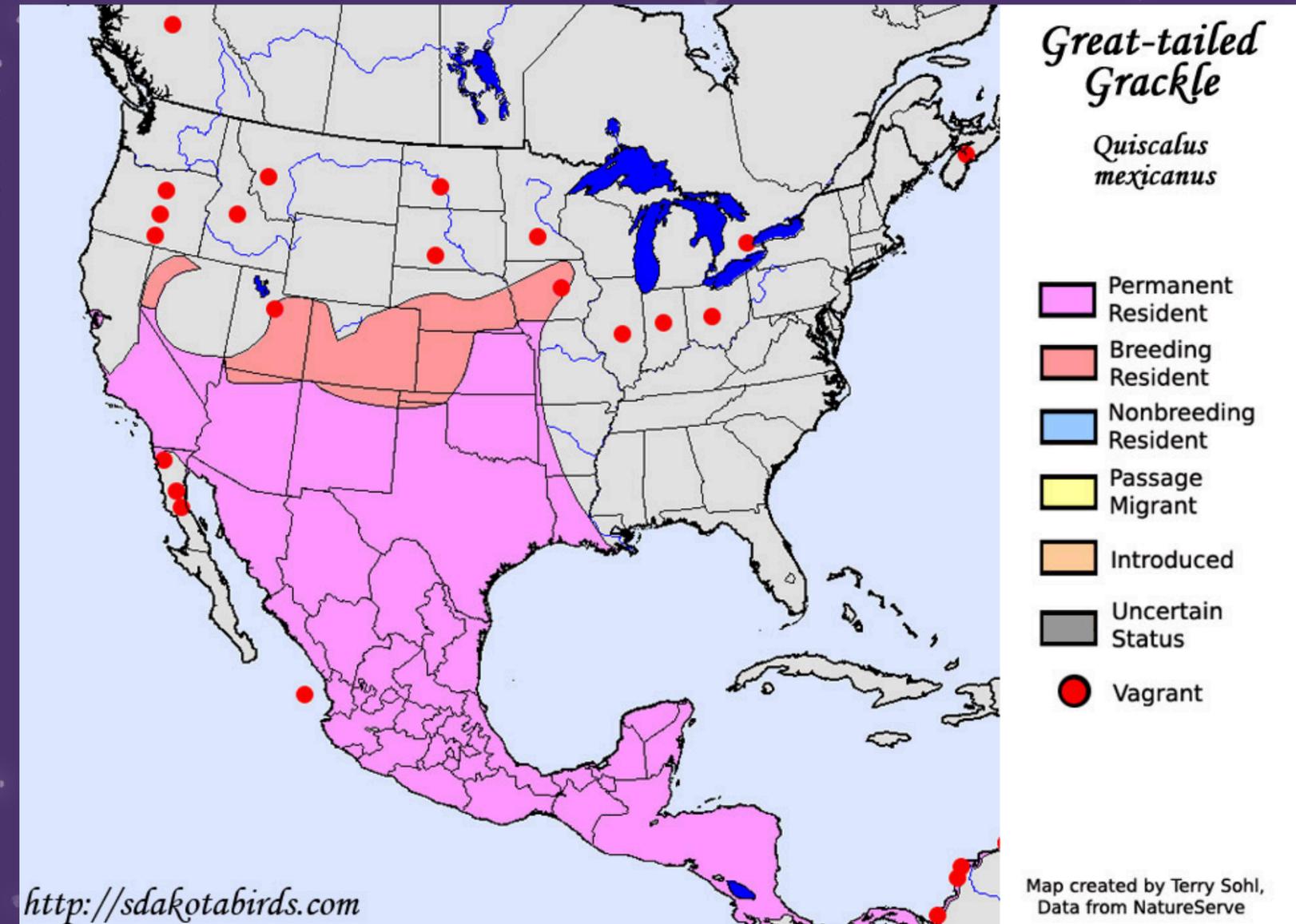


The Great-Tailed  
Grackle



The Great-Tailed, or Mexican Grackle (*Quiscalus mexicanus*) is a rather gregarious species of the New World blackbirds, or Icteridae family.

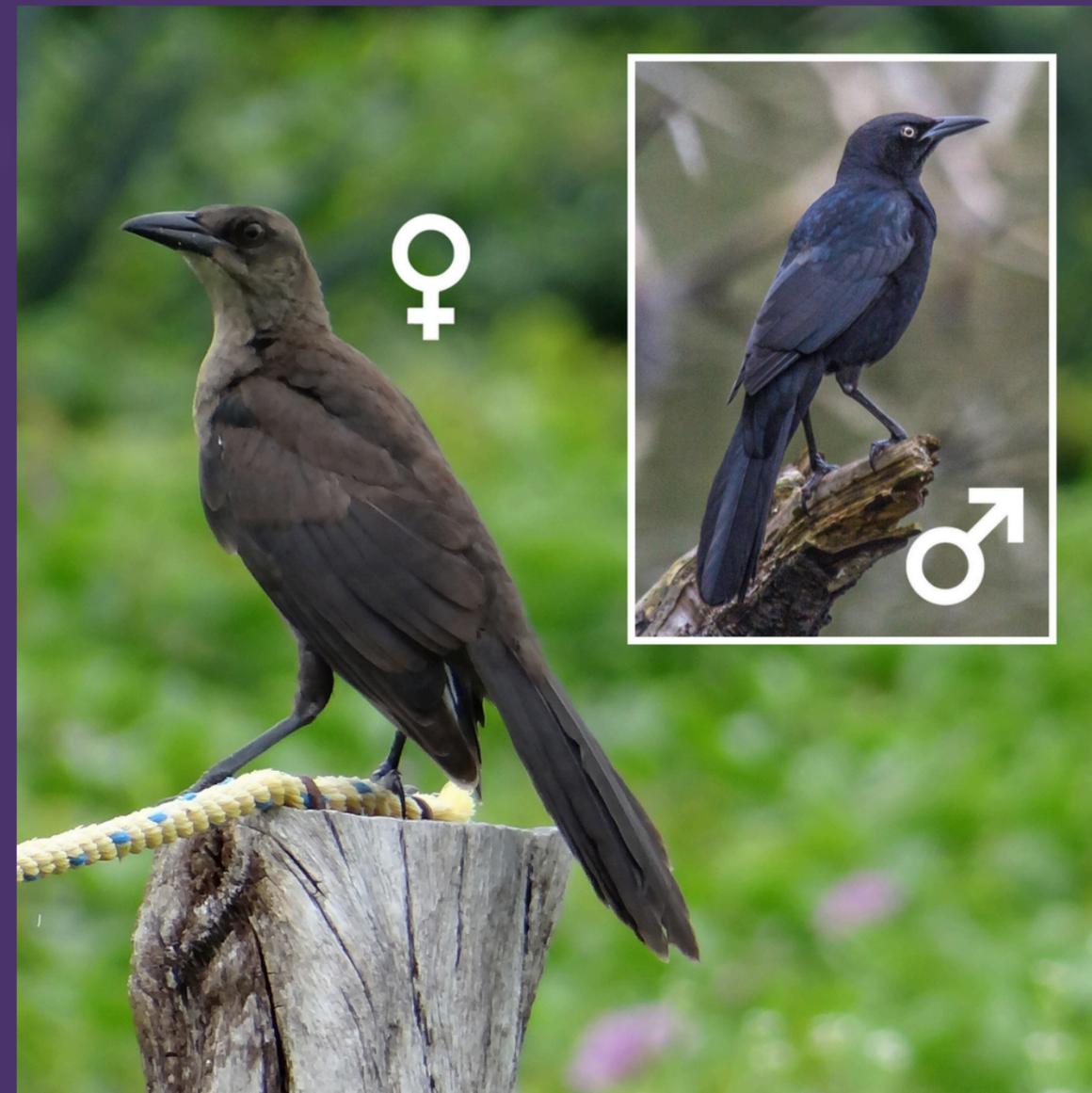
Centuries ago, they hailed from the coastal jungles of Central America; today their population spans from the northern range of South America all the way to the southwestern United States, with known locations as far as Canada.





At first glance, their appearance may seem lackluster to some, but a deeper look reveals the rich purple-blue and green-copper plumage that shines on the adult males in the sunlight.

Females are adorned more modestly, with solid brown and black feathers. Between the two, it's their song that turns the most heads.



Their song is a rather distinct one, and one that everyone in Texas has heard at least once. When these birds use songs, they create whistles, harsh screeches, pitchy static, and multiple syllable phrases that can be heard across fields.

Male Great-Tailed Grackles utilize their horrific repertoire of cawks and shrills to exude dominance and display territorial defense. They also serve as aids to their flocks by using alarming calls to warn of potential threats or predators nearby.

Journeying from one realm to another is a tale as old as time, and one that can be shared among man and nature. From the ever favored Greek Gods on Mt. Olympus, the divine cultivation of Chinese mythology, to the prolific stories surrounding plants and animals across cultures, there are centuries of shared experience among us all.

What's often overlooked in our modern society is that we still live on the same grounds, the same realms, where these ancient stories were born.

To help guide us through our journey, we would like to call on the Great-Tailed Grackle to guide us through theirs, and to educate us on their history so that we may understand ours.





We are known by many names, near our homelands we are known as *Clarinero*, *Mariamulata* or *Chango*, .

One day, we caught the eye of humans with great power. They were astounded with our cacophonous chatter but most admired the iridescent glow of the males' feathers. By rule of their emperor human, *Āhuitzōtl*, we were contained and transported by the masses.

We endured the journey with the humans hundreds of miles west and thousands of feet in elevation to a new home in Mexico's highlands. There, humans spoke Nahuatl, and *Āhuitzōtl* appointed us the name *Teotzānātl*, 'sacred bird'.



But it's been a long time since those days, over time,  
our colonies spread even further.

Some flew to return to the familiarity of coastal lowlands,  
others, contained & transported by the humans.

As our lands have changed, so has our reputation. We were once revered by the most  
affluent empire, constantly given food and gifts for our favor. The land was bountiful  
and cared for. My brothers and sisters could freely fly through the skies and realms with  
only the weather to worry about.

Where once we flew freely, now, we approach cautiously. Eventually, it became common practice among the humans to block off portions of the land they claimed as their own.

They built long, high fences, and large housing structures that obstructed our usual views.





Now, with the everchanging environment, we are mocked and murdered. Our song, previously beloved and protected, now sends nothing but annoyance down the spines of this land's new inhabitants.

Massive mirrors block our vision and force the illusions of another realm onto us. Many have fallen victim to this new type of mirage, believing that the image is a guiding light to deliver our messages.



Adaptability, although necessary, feels as if we are losing our ancient ways. Not only are our songs ridiculed and mocked, the paths we once knew are now being misshapen and with that, our mission as well.

However, we are ever resilient in our ways and we refuse to be left behind like our beloved empire. Adaptability has always been one of our strengths. Soon we learned of the deceptions of this new world and changed our ways. We have learned to not only adapt to these new paths but to the new people as well.

Carrying messages across realms has always been our mission but with new inhabitants on this land, our destiny has been altered. Not only do we deliver messages but we are a guide for the souls from the realm of the dead.

For a few days a year, during the Fall, we grackles are tasked with a new mission.

Our song may be an annoyance to the living, but for the dead, it is a commanding sound that will lead them to their loved ones.



We believe this is one of the most notable traits about us that keeps us in good graces with the land. We adapt to new locations by learning and living closely with our neighbors.

We build mutualistic relationships with most other birds, and live curiously among the other animals. Humans we observe carefully, as they've changed dramatically the further in location and time we've come.



Great-tailed Grackle by Scott Gentling (1985)



And although it may seem odd the amount of effort we put into protecting our reputation for a population of people who do not care for our wellbeing, it is the least we can do.

We were treated with so much respect by the ancestors of this new age so despite what they may say about us or do to our kind, we owe them our lives.

So while the meaning of our presence has grown lost on many, we live to pass on the knowledge we've amassed for all of these years. We live so that we may fly beyond the living realm and reunite with our brothers and sisters, and be restored to our former glory with the Nahua people.



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Gracias

