Flocks of grackles and accompanying “black birds” (red-winged blackbirds, European starlings) are a sure sign of spring arriving in New England. When listening to a breeding colony of grackles, it helps to know that both males and females sing, and that each bird has a unique song identifying it as an individual. The female sings most often early in the spring, usually when “answering” her mate, with the two songs coming in rapid succession. Listen first here to the early spring flock of black birds, then to the distinctive songs of individual grackles, and last to the larger grackle colony, trying to pick out individuals by their voices.

♫691. A magnificent early spring flock of black birds: grackles, red-winged blackbirds, and no doubt starlings. April 15, 2012. Hatfield, Massachusetts. (9:18)

♫692. Sensitize your grackle-listening ears first here, where I have excerpted from a longer recording three song renditions from each March 18, 2012. Hatfield, Massachusetts. (0:13)

♫693. Here’s the longer recording from which those few songs of the breeding colony were extracted. Perhaps you can find more examples of songs from those three males, or listen for other individuals, but for the most part just enjoy the great variety of songs among the birds in this flock. March 18, 2012. Hatfield, Massachusetts. (10:19)

Play-691

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