
January 1998

Blue Grosbeak Dustbathing

William Post

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/ffn>

Recommended Citation

Post, William (1998) "Blue Grosbeak Dustbathing," *Florida Field Naturalist*: Vol. 26 : Iss. 4 , Article 5.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/ffn/vol26/iss4/5>

This Contents is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. It has been accepted for inclusion in Florida Field Naturalist by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@usf.edu.

Florida Field Naturalist 26(4):126,1998.

BLUE GROSBEAK DUSTBATHING

WILLIAM POST

Charleston Museum, 360 Meeting Street, Charleston, South Carolina 29403

Although the Blue Grosbeak (*Guiraca caerulea*) is a widespread breeding species in North America, nothing appears to have been reported about its feather maintenance behavior (Ingold 1993). On 18 April 1993, at 1500 EST, I saw a second-year male Blue Grosbeak engage in dust-bathing for about 1 min. The bird sat in an open patch of sand on a westward-facing slope in a suburban yard on Sullivan's Island, Charleston County, South Carolina. The day was clear, with little wind; the temperature was 21°C. Mourning Doves (*Zenaidura macroura*) and House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) frequently used the same site for sunning and dust-bathing, although none was there at the same time as the grosbeak.

While dustbathing, the grosbeak formed a hollow about 1 cm deep with his body, ruffled his plumage, and drooped his wings. In forming the depression, he rotated his body slightly, shuffled his feet, and made ducking movements with his breast. These movements resembled those used by other passerines engaged in nest-shaping (Simmons 1964), and also those described for dustbathing House Sparrows (Lowther and Cink 1992). He then shook out his plumage, and flew about 2 m to a 1 m high branch, also in a spot exposed to the sun, and preened and scratched for about 3 min. I did not record the specific movements used during this phase. Since this occurrence, I have seen no other incidents of sunbathing by this species.

This appears to be the first report of dust-bathing in the family Cardinalidae, although several other species have been studied in detail. These include the Indigo Bunting (*Passerina cyanea*; see review by Payne 1992), the Lazuli Bunting (*Passerina amoena*; Greene et al. 1996), and the Painted Bunting (*Passerina ciris*; P. E. Lowther, pers. comm.). There also appear to be no published reports of dust-bathing in the family Emerizidae, although J. S. Greenlaw (pers. comm.) recorded one instance of an Eastern Towhee's (*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*) dust-bathing in New York.

I appreciate the critiques of R. T. Engstrom, J. S. Greenlaw and J. I. Ingold. Greenlaw also graciously provided unpublished data from his New York field journal.

LITERATURE CITED

- GREENE, E., V. R. MUEHTER, AND W. DAVISON. 1996. Lazuli Bunting (*Passerina amoena*). In *The birds of North America*, No. 232 (A. Poole and F. Gill, Eds.). The Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, and American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C.
- INGOLD, J. L. 1993. Blue Grosbeak (*Guiraca caerulea*). In *The birds of North America*, No. 79 (A. Poole and F. Gill, Eds.). The Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, and American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C.
- LOWTHER, P. E., AND C. L. CINK. 1992. House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*). In *The Birds of North America*, No. 12 (A. Poole and F. Gill, Eds.). The Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, and American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C.
- PAYNE, R. B. 1992. Indigo Bunting (*Passerina cyanea*). In *The birds of North America*, No. 4 (A. Poole and F. Gill, Eds.). The Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, and American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C.
- SIMMONS, K. E. L. 1964. Feather maintenance. In *New dictionary of birds* (A. L. Thomson, Ed.). McGraw-Hill, New York.