

Second South Carolina Record of the Smooth-billed Ani

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On 5 December 1981, while driving on the old ricefield banks of Hope Plantation near Jacksonboro, S.C., Mr. Turner and I noticed two grackle-like birds perched in low Chinese Tallow Trees (*Sapium sebiferum*). Their "loose-jointed" behavior and large bills immediately showed them to be anis. As the birds were remarkably tame, we were able to approach within 10 feet before they became alarmed. With binoculars I could easily see that the bills of both birds were smooth, without any trace of grooves. Neither bird foraged while we were observing them, and I could not help but wonder how they survive in an area so far removed from the normal range.

This appears to be the second record of the Smooth-billed Ani (*Crotophaga ani*) for South Carolina. On 29 November 1978, an individual of this species was found dead at Hunting Island State Park, S.C., but the specimen was not saved (Amer. Birds 33:761). A single specimen record for North Carolina is now believed to have been based on an escape (Amer. Birds 33:761).

Groove-billed Ani at Savannah National Wildlife Refuge, S.C.

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While touring the Savannah National Wildlife Refuge on 27 October 1979, members of the Columbia Audubon Society spotted a Groove-billed Ani hidden in shrubbery along the shoulder of a dike on the South Carolina side of Back River (east channel of the Savannah River). The two visitors who first noticed the bird immediately yelled "Ani!", but the question of whether it was a Smooth-billed or a Groove-billed soon arose. The ani accommodated viewers by flying to a high perch where it could be readily observed, and even though the bird changed perch sites several times during a 40- to 50-minute period, clear views (with binoculars and a 60X telescope at distances of 10 to 50 feet) were obtained by all visitors and refuge personnel. A careful study of the bird's field marks, particularly the distinctive grooves on the beak, indicated to all viewers that the bird was unquestionably a Groove-billed Ani (*Crotophaga sulcirostris*). The bird disappeared into brush along the bank of Back River and eluded people who sought it the following day, but was rediscovered on 29 October at the original site. It returned to the Back River area on 1 December, where it was last seen on 9 December (Amer. Birds 34:264).

Refuge Manager David Goeke, who had been summoned to the scene on 27 October, photographed the ani (see cover and Fig. 1) at 15 feet using a 35 mm Nikon FE camera equipped with a 400 mm lens. Examination of the photographs confirmed the identification of the ani as a Groove-billed; the beak was clearly grooved, not smooth. Also, the beak lacked the distinctly arched and knife-like hump that is characteristic of the Smooth-billed Ani, but exhibited instead the unbroken arc typical of the Groove-billed species. In life, the

feathers on the nape appeared silvery-tipped, not bronze-edged as in the Smooth-billed Ani. Photographs of the bird were shown to S.E. Gauthreaux, H.E. LeGrand Jr., and E.B. Chamberlain, who were in accord with its identification as a Groove-billed. This record was reported initially by LeGrand (Amer. Birds 34:151) in his summary of the autumn migration for the Southern Atlantic Coast Region in 1979.

Although the Groove-billed Ani has been observed on a number of occasions in states east of the Mississippi (see Associate Editor's note below), chiefly during the late fall, the present record is the first for South Carolina. Shortly after the initial report of the Back River ani, Richard H. Moore (Amer. Birds 34:766) provided information concerning a second South Carolina record, a dead bird in an advanced stage of decomposition found on the beach at Waite's Island near Cherry Grove on 23 January 1976. Although this specimen was not saved, its beak was clearly that of a Groove-billed Ani.

[NOTE: During the past two decades, the Groove-billed Ani has become an "uncommon but regular winter resident" in the Delta region of Louisiana below New Orleans (G.H. Lowery, 1974, Louisiana Birds, p. 372-373), a regular fall vagrant in the Midwest (Amer. Birds 36:184), and an irregular fall vagrant in other areas of eastern United States. As noted initially by Lowery, there is a general tendency for individuals of this species to move northward in the fall when other migrants are moving south. Although anis were scarce in the New Orleans area in 1967 (Amer. Birds 23:67), they were present in "unprecedented numbers" during the fall and early winter of 1968 (Amer. Birds 23:490). In other areas to the north and east, there were scattered fall records during the 1960s for Florida (Amer. Birds 17:38, 19:31, 21:24), Michigan (Amer. Birds 23:55), Ohio (Amer. Birds 18:43), Tennessee (Amer. Birds 23:67), and Wisconsin (Amer. Birds 23:55, 24:52).

In the 1970s, the number of sightings on the Gulf Coast and in the Midwest increased, and for the first time, Groove-billeds began to appear in Atlantic Coast states north of Florida. The species was again reported from Florida (Amer. Birds 25:47, 29:46), one or more birds made an appearance at six different sites in Alabama (Amer. Birds 33:289), and there were two sightings in Louisiana (Amer. Birds 33:289). In the Midwest, anis were seen in Illinois (Amer. Birds 34:168, 785), Michigan (Amer. Birds 31:181), Missouri (Amer. Birds 27:69, 33:184), Ohio (Amer. Birds 27:69), South Dakota (Amer. Birds 27:631), and Wisconsin (Amer. Birds 30:75, 34:165). Also, and more interestingly, Maryland (C.S. Robbins, and D. Bystrak, 1977, Field List of the Birds of Maryland), South Carolina (Amer. Birds 34:151; Chat, this issue), and Virginia (Amer. Birds 34:160) established their first records of the species.

In the fall and early winter of 1980, a Groove-billed was seen in Ohio (Amer. Birds 35:190), and an unidentified ani observed in Nova Scotia (Amer. Birds 35:803) may have been this species. During fall 1981, Groove-billeds were present in "approximately normal numbers" in coastal Louisiana (Amer. Birds 36:187), and were widespread in the state on the Christmas Bird Count (Amer. Birds 36:303). The *American Birds* Regional Editor for the Midwestern Prairie Region noted (Amer. Birds 36:184) that Groove-billeds "are becoming regular fall vagrants" and listed records from Illinois, Kentucky, and Ohio. There were also sightings in Wisconsin (Amer. Birds 36:181) and Virginia (Amer. Birds 36:178).

Although it seems clear that after the breeding season Groove-billed Anis do move northward and eastward away from the Gulf Coast region, the reason behind this pattern of behavior is unknown. The increase in the number of fall or early-winter sightings is at least in part a reflection of the successful expansion of the breeding range into Louisiana. Skutch



Fig. 1. In spite of the shadow across the tip of the bill, the grooves can be seen well enough to document the identity of the Groove-billed Ani found at Savannah N.W.R. in South Carolina in October 1979. The same bird appears on the front cover of this issue. (Photo by David Goeke)

(Auk 76:281-317) and others have commented that Groove-billed Anis often forage beside grazing livestock, a behavior that is shared with Cattle Egrets. Cattle Egrets, however, leave their breeding areas in North America and winter in the southeastern United States, mainly on the Gulf Coast and in Florida, although the number of birds wintering in the region has apparently declined (Amer. Birds 36:354-357). Competition for a similar feeding niche on the wintering grounds of the Cattle Egret with a concomitant displacement of Groove-billed Anis to other areas may be one factor that has led to a northward and eastward movement of this species in the fall.—JRH]

Audubon-Myrtle Warbler Specimen from North Carolina

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On 29 April 1982 Braswell collected a Yellow-rumped Warbler (*Dendroica coronata*) off Buffalo City Road, 5 miles SE of the town of East Lake, Dare County, N.C. Examination of the specimen (NCSM 8368) showed shared characteristics of both *D. c. auduboni* and *D. c. coronata*. M. Ralph Browning at the United States National Museum of