

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