

First Record of Groove-billed Ani for North Carolina

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On 14 October 1996, Howe was birding at the Hoop Hole Creek area at the western end of Atlantic Beach, Carteret County, N.C. He heard a very loud, unfamiliar two-syllable call (the second syllable with an "O" sound) coming from an evergreen thicket. After calling several times, the bird flew across an opening and landed in the top of a small tree 15 to 20 yards away. It changed perches several times but remained in the tops of the small trees. The size of the bird was approximately that of a Boat-tailed Grackle (*Quiscalus major*) but appeared a bit chunkier. It was a solid black color, but it had a scalloped look on the back. The head and nape feathers "bristled" while the bird was calling. The eyes were dark, as opposed to the yellow eyes of a grackle. The bill was massive, but it did not have a hump or raised area at the base, which is characteristic of the Smooth-billed Ani (*Crotophaga ani*). Lines on the bill were visible, a definitive mark separating the Groove-billed Ani (*C. sulcirostris*) from the Smooth-billed Ani. The tail feathers were extremely long and thick, and these feathers were opened (fanned) in flight. The tail had a graduated shape, with the outer rectrices being half as long as the central ones. These feathers were pumped or drawn under the body when the bird called. The rounded wings appeared short for the body size.

Howe observed the bird with 7x binoculars for approximately 20 minutes. He was alone and did not have a camera to photograph the bird. The weather was clear, with temperatures in the mid- to upper-60's. The habitat was scrubby evergreen woodland/thicket adjacent to a tidal creek on Bogue Banks. Howe had seen both species of anis, having seen Groove-billed in Texas earlier in the year.

The species nests in southern Texas, but it winters sparingly eastward along the Gulf Coast. It is perhaps overdue to have been found in North Carolina, as a number of states in the East have records for the species, as summarized by Mlodinow and Karlson (1999). Both Virginia and South Carolina have previous records. Virginia's two records are from the mountains (Tazewell and Rockingham counties) (Kain 1987), whereas South Carolina's record is from the southern coast (Young 1983). Interestingly, all four Groove-billed Anis from Virginia and the Carolinas were first detected between 14 and 27 October.

This is the first report of Groove-billed Ani for North Carolina. The report was accepted by the North Carolina Bird Records Committee (1998) and was placed on the Provisional List, as no tangible documentation is available for the species.

Literature Cited

- Kain, T, ed. 1987. Virginia's birdlife: An annotated checklist. Virginia Society of Ornithology, Virginia Avifauna No. 3.
- Mlodinow, S G, and K T Karlson. 1999. Anis in the United States and Canada. *North American Birds* 53:237-245.
- North Carolina Bird Records Committee. 1998. 1997 Report of the North Carolina Bird Records Committee. *Chat* 62:180-182.
- Young, P. 1983. Groove-billed Ani at Savannah National Wildlife Refuge, S.C. *Chat* 47:23-25.

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