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GROOVE-BILLED ANI IN OKLAHOMA CITY

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FROM EARLY OCTOBER to 11 November 1968 a Groove-billed Ani (*Crotophaga sulcirostris*) spent much of its time in a fairly large rose garden just back of J. D. Keltner's oilfield testing equipment shop at 1700 S.E. Twenty-fifth Street in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, central Oklahoma. The garden is fenced on



three sides, much of the fence being covered with a thick tangle of multiflora rose bushes. Beyond the garden are fallow fields upgrown with tall grass, scattered, vine-covered trees, and a small creek.

Mr. Keltner flushes the grasshoppers from his rose garden rather than using

a pesticide. When he first saw the strange bird it was catching grasshoppers that he had flushed into the open. Although he had no idea what his puzzling black visitor might be, he spent a good deal of time observing it and eventually so tamed it that it took food from his hand; gave its characteristic *peeto* callnote when it saw him; and came to be fed when it heard crude whistled imitations of its call. It accepted grasshoppers, crickets and centipedes, but refused worms, grubs, and meat.

Not content with someone's reasonable suggestion that the bird might be a Boat-tailed Grackle (*Cassidix mexicanus*), Keltner called the city's horticulturist, Henry Walter, who drove to Keltner's shop on 5 November, realized at once that the bird was an ani, then, noting the faint corrugations on the upper mandible, identified the species as *Crotophaga sulcirostris*. Brad Carlton joined Walter in further observations the following day. On 9 November about 15 members of the Oklahoma City Audubon Society foregathered at the rose garden to see the bird.

That day, possibly because of the noise and confusion, the ani could not be found for an hour. Finally someone spotted it sitting on a fence some distance away. Eventually it was coaxed into the garden where everyone saw it. Though it stayed near cover and in shadow most of the time, Herb Chezem managed to get very close with his camera and he took several shots. One of these is presented here.

The halftone does not show much detail; but several of us who studied the bird carefully at close range were able to see the grooves on the bill. We observed no evidence that the bird had been a captive. The wing and tail feathers were clean, smooth, and undamaged.

The ani's flight was direct, consisting of several wingbeats followed by a short glide. When not begging for food, the bird sought the shadowy protection of thick branches and vines. On 11 November Keltner saw it for the last time. After that date he was obliged to be away from the city for several weeks.

The Groove-billed Ani has not heretofore been reported from Oklahoma County. Sutton (1967, *Oklahoma Birds*, pp. 246-7) cites records for the following Oklahoma counties: Garfield (25-27 September 1952, photograph taken); Stephens (7 October 1952, specimen taken); Marshall (11 March 1962, sight record); Johnston (18 October 1963, sight record). On 27 October 1966 Yula Thomas and Edna Flippo saw a Groove-billed Ani in Wagoner County, 12 miles north of Coweta; this record, which came to Sutton's attention too late for inclusion in *Oklahoma Birds*, is mentioned by Wauer (1968, *Southwest. Nat.*, 13: 452) in such a way as to imply that it is the only Groove-billed Ani record for Oklahoma.

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