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Figure 1. Groove-billed Ani in Topeka, Kansas, November 1973, photo by Orville O. Rice.

### GROOVE-BILLED ANI VISITS TOPEKA, KANSAS

ORVILLE O. RICE

A Groove-billed Ani (*Crotophaga sulcirostris*) was discovered in the Kansas River valley on November 28, 1973 by Mmes. V. F. Shafer and Esther A. Norris, 2824 Lower Silver Lake Road, Topeka, Kansas. Although she was unable to identify the strange bird, Mrs. Norris noticed that it was quite different from the Common Grackles (*Quiscalus quiscula*) which had been seen regularly in the neighborhood, and immediately notified Robert Glazier. Glazier and John Wortman, General Curator of the Topeka Zoo, checked the bird on November 29 and identified it as a Groove-billed Ani.

Although the bird was unusually confiding in its behavior, there was no evidence that it had been a pet or zoological specimen. It bore no leg bands or other identification marks, and Wortman confirmed that the Topeka Zoo had never possessed an ani in its collection. In addition, an announcement carried by a local radio station failed to elicit information from anyone who had prior knowledge of the bird.

Following the initial identification, many bird watchers in the Topeka area visited the Shafer-Norris home to see the ani, and several were able to obtain excellent photographs. A few were fortunate enough to approach within three or four feet of the bird as it walked awkwardly about the yard feeding on grasshoppers.

Mr. and Mrs. Roderick Runyon were probably the last observers to see the ani. They found it sheltering in a brush pile near the Shafer-Norris residence on Monday morning, December 3, after a cold front had brought fog and light rain into the Topeka area. By Tuesday, December 4, the rain had turned to snow, and it is doubtful that the ani survived the ensuing cold temperatures and concomitant loss of insects as a food supply.

Apparently most northward extraterritorial wandering by the Groove-billed Ani has occurred in the fall, with a preponderance of dates noted in September and October. Tordoff (Check-list of the birds of Kansas, Univ. Kansas Publ. Mus. Nat. Hist., 8:325) lists three specimens of the Groove-billed Ani for Kansas:

Specimen (KU 31948) found at McCune, Crawford County, between 1885 and 1910 by Alexander J. C. Roese; Specimen, Lyon County, November 1, 1904; Specimen, male (KU 31951) found 6¼ miles northeast of Blue Rapids, Marshall County, October 28, 1952 by Elizabeth G. McCleod.

Ely (Kansas Orn. Soc. Bull., 20:27, 1969) reported a fourth, taken in a pecan grove in Labette County during December 1964. The most recent sight record is from Stafford County on 15 July 1973 (Martinez, Kansas Orn. Soc. Bull., 25:8, 1974).

George M. Sutton (Oklahoma Birds, Norman, pp. 246-247, 1967) lists four records for Oklahoma with the following dates: September 25-27, 1952; October 7, 1952; March 11, 1962; October 18, 1963. Sutton also includes information on sightings in other areas: September 21 near Stuttgart, Arkansas; and late September to October 4 near Elgin, Nebraska.

Both the Shawnee County and Labette County records are of particular interest due to the lateness of the period in which the Groove-billed Ani has wandered north of its normal range into Kansas.

1627 W. 28th, Topeka, Kansas 66611.

**Cattle Egret nests at Cheyenne Bottoms.**—On 8 July 1973 Martinez found a nest of the Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*) in pool 3 of the Cheyenne Bottoms Waterfowl Management Area. Nesting had been anticipated in recent years as the species continued to expand its range northward on this continent. Cattle Egrets are native to southern Eurasia and northern Africa. During the past half century they have exploded their range throughout the temperate parts of the world, reaching Florida in the early 1940's (Annual Report of Smithsonian Institution, 1954:258-276) and Kansas in 1961 (Boyd, Kans. Orn. Soc. Bull., 13:15-16, 1962).

Mr. and Mrs. Carl Holmes, with other birders, made the first Cheyenne Bottoms sighting—a single bird on 26 September 1965. Singles were seen on several occasions in late September and early October and Dr. David F. Parmelee collected one (now at Emporia Kansas State College) on 16 October 1965. A Cattle Egret was next observed on 22 April 1967. Nine were recorded on 23 May 1969 and sporadic sightings were made during the summer. Three immature birds were recorded along the Redwing dike on 24 November 1969. No sightings were made during 1970.

The first observations of birds in breeding plumage was in July 1971 by Roger and Jan Boyd and Schwillig. Egrets were last seen on 26 September. During 1972, birds were regularly reported until 28 October. In 1973, three birds had returned to the Bottoms by 24 April and 13 were present by early May. All 13 remained for the summer and 12 of these attained full breeding plumage. Considerable time was spent observing the birds in an attempt to locate their nesting area but these efforts were unsuccessful.

After a search of the large heronry in pool 4 by Martinez and Stan Senner on 17 June 1973, Senner wrote: "Seen in the heronry were Black-crowned Night Herons,

Yellow-crowned Night Herons, Little Blue Herons, Snowy Egrets, Cattle Egrets, Forster's Terns, Boat-tailed Grackles and Yellow-headed Blackbirds. Nests were found of Black-crowned Night Heron, Little Blue Heron, Snowy Egrets, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Pied-billed Grebe, Coot, Redhead, Canvasback and Boat-tailed Grackle. We could not find a Cattle Egret nest although we are sure they are there. Estimated 400 nests in heronry." When the heronry was rechecked on 23 June, Cattle Egrets were still present but again no nests could be identified as belonging to this species. Numerous Boat-tailed Grackle nests were under construction and a few contained eggs—apparently their second nesting for the season.

Senner and Martinez visited a secondary heronry in pool 3 on 20 June. Senner reported that the nesting area was separated into two relatively small units. Many sub-adult Black-crowned Night Herons were nesting. Other nests recorded were: Avocet, Coot, Snowy Egret, Pied-billed Grebe, Redhead, Least Bittern and Forster's Tern. About 75 heron nests were found in the two units.

On 8 July when Martinez revisited the pool 3 heronry to band the young herons, he located a single Cattle Egret nest containing three young. We revisited the nest the following day and photographed the nest and young. The young were of unequal size—three sizes, apparently spaced an equal age apart. Their bi-colored bills and grayish-white down were quite unlike those of the young night herons but were similar to the down of the Snowy Egret and Little Blue Heron. The nest, likewise, resembled those of the latter two species and was unlike those of the night herons. The young were photographed again by Martinez on 19 July. Cattle Egrets remained at Cheyenne Bottoms through most of the fall with their numbers increasing to 54 on 31 October 1973. EDMUND F. MARTINEZ and MARVIN D. SCHWILLING, 5851 Hemlock, Great Bend and Route 1, Great Bend, Kansas 67530.

## NINETEENTH CENTURY BIRD LISTS FROM THE "VICINITY" OF FORT HAYS, ELLIS COUNTY, KANSAS

CHARLES A. ELY

I recently examined microfilmed medical records of Fort Hays for the period September 1869 through October 1889 (Records of the Adjutant General's Office, Record Group No. 94, The National Archives, Washington, D. C.: 1963). Recording observations of local meteorology and biology was included among the duties of the Post Surgeon at early military forts (Dr. Leo Oliva, Department of History, FHKSC, personal communication). The quality and number of such observations varied with the background and interests of each surgeon. The few observations from Fort Hays are of historical interest but provide little new material.

Remarks on birds include a general entry and a list of species under the general heading "Zoology of the vicinity of the Post" (Roll 3A, Medical History of Posts, Volumes 412 and 415, Records relating to Fort Hays, Kansas, ms. pages 53-54 and 57-61). The general entry, neither signed nor dated reads:

The birds of the immediate vicinity appear to be limited to the orders of Cuvier—first, second, third and sixth. Of the first group conirostres, families corvidae, principally the raven, magpies and jays; the merulidae of the group dentirostres the varieties being very limited. Of the second order Raptores there are but very few, among which Hawks and Owls are of occasional occurrence. Of the third order Scansores, Picidae is the only family represented. The Charadriidae or Plover tribe are met with to a limited extent and are the sole representatives of the sixth order of Grallatores. The migratory birds belong to the seventh order Natatores and to the family Anatidae, Geese and ducks. They habit chiefly the streams Saline, Solomon and Republican, fifteen (15) to seventy (70) miles to the North of this Post, and the Smoky Hill and Arkansas rivers, ten (10) and fifty (50) miles to the south, passing this point in the spring and

fall months, passing south mostly in November, lingering each way for a short time about Big Creek on which this post is situated. Wild Turkeys of the family Phasianidae, fourth order appear here occasionally.

The list of 87 (actually 86) numbered species is dated October 25, 1873 and is signed by John H. January, Asst. Surgeon, U.S.A. It is preceded by this introductory paragraph:

After a residence of two years at the Post, I find that the number of birds much more numerous than it was supposed and are constantly increasing as the country settles up. They, fall naturally into two groups according to the situations they most effect. Those frequenting the timber and those of the Plains proper—the former are by far the most numerous—Six or seven species only being confined to the Plains.

His list (despite a few discrepancies) is based largely on J. A. Allen's visit of 1871 (Allen, Notes of an ornithological reconnaissance in portions of Kansas, Colorado, Wyoming, and Utah, Bull. Mus. Comp. Zool., 3:113-183, Parts 2 and 3, 1872). The only species (from Part 2) omitted by January (Eastern Bluebird) is an obvious copying error. Included in his list with the notation "not common" are two species (Yellow and Prairie Warblers) listed by Allen (Part 2) as "probably, . . . occur sparsely along the Big Timber Creek [south of Ellis County] but none was observed during a day's hunt along that stream."

An additional nine species on January's list may have been observed near Fort Hays but are more likely from Part 3 of Allen's paper since they include ALL species not duplicated in Part 2. Allen (op. cit.) made a 250 mile wagon trip through a 50 square mile area west of Fort Hays during the period 25 December 1891 through 12 January 1892. Comments on botany elsewhere in January's report indicate that "vicinity" could include the large area south to the Arkansas River, north to the Solomon River and at least two or three days march to the west. The nine additional species (modern names) are: Snow Bunting (possibly Lapland Longspur?), McCown's Longspur, Tree Sparrow, Short-eared Owl (listed as questionable by Allen ". . . heard . . . on the Solomon, supposed to be this species."), Pigeon Hawk, *Buteo lineatus* (probably an error), Rough-legged Hawk, Golden Eagle and Bald Eagle.

The bases for inclusion of the remaining 15 species is unknown. Perhaps some may have been reported by Dr. Louis Watson who made ornithological observations at Ellis during the period 1875-1885 (Ely, a history and distributional list of Ellis County, Kansas, birds, Fort Hays Studies—n.s., Science Series No. 9, 115 pp., 1971). In view of the many uncertainties involved these species are listed for historical reasons only:

15	American Goldfinch	not very common
63	Squatarola helvetic	common
66	Semipalmated Plover	common
71	Greater Yellow-legs	common
72	Lesser Yellow-legs	common
73	Totanus Chloropus	common
76	Least Bittern	occasional
78	King Rail	common
81	Bufflehead	frequent
82	Mergus serrator (more likely Common Merganser)	frequent
83	Branta Bernicla (more likely Canada Goose)	frequent
84	Mallard	frequent
85	Black Duck	frequent
86	Sandhill Crane	common spring and fall
87	Pied-billed Grebe	not common

The third entry (Roll 3C, Reservation File, Documents relating to the establishment, construction, maintenance and abandonment of military posts. Fort Hays, Kansas) in both longhand and typewritten form is included in a "History of Fort Hays, Kansas" corrected and approved by Major Geo. K. Brady, 18 Infantry, C. P. and dated June 20, 1889. It lists 35 species by common name (ms. pages 6 and 10) as follows:

The birds are the turkey buzzard, duck-hawks, pigeon-hawk, sparrow-hawk, great horned owl, screech-owl, burrowing owl, sapsucker, black woodcock, red-headed woodpecker, red-shafted flicker, whippoorwill, nighthawk, belted kingfisher, bee martin, robin, cliff-swallow, mocking-bird, red-bird, cowbird, red-winged blackbird, western lark, crow blackbird, crow, blue jay, Carolina dove, wild turkey, dusky grouse, prairie-chicken, sand-hill crane, killdeer, wild-goose, long-billed curlew, blue-winged teal, mallard.

While reviewing the literature I located two entries omitted from my previous paper (Ely, op. cit.) but from this same time period. Cooke (Report on bird migration in the Mississippi Valley in the years 1884 and 1885, U.S. Dept. Agric., Div. Economic Ornithology, Bull. No. 2, 1888) reported the Acadian Flycatcher (p. 154) from "as far west as Ellis" and Blue-winged Warbler (p. 240) from "Ellis." Both records are apparently from Watson during the spring of 1884. In the absence of substantiating details both are best referred to the hypothetical list of Ellis County species.

*Fort Hays Kansas State College, Hays, Kansas 67601.*

**Roadside hawk count in north-western Kansas.**—The recent article, "Road counts of hawks in Kansas" (Fitch, *et al.*, Kansas Orn. Soc. Bull., 24 (4):33-36) stimulated me to record sightings during the winter of 1973-74. Sightings were made on 40 different days between 1 December 1973 and 28 February 1974 in the 17 northwest Kansas counties bounded by Norton, Ness and Greeley counties. Approximately 95% of the observations were made from highways and black-topped roads. A total of 1067 sightings was made during 3514 miles of observation. Observations were made with binoculars but about ten percent of the birds could not be positively identified because of distance, sun position or lighting, obstructions and other factors.

The numbers of hawks seen and their densities per 1000 miles of observation are indicated in Table 1. The Rough-legged Hawk was the most frequently observed

TABLE 1  
HAWKS OF VARIOUS SPECIES SEEN PER THOUSAND MILES OF DRIVING IN NORTH-WESTERN KANSAS.

Species	Number Recorded	Hawks/1000 Miles of Driving
Rough-legged Hawk	488	138.9
Marsh Hawk	194	55.2
Unidentified hawks	109	31.0
Ferruginous Hawk	79	22.4
Sparrow Hawk	77	21.9
Red-tailed Hawk	60	17.0
Prairie Falcon	21	6.0
Golden Eagle	18	5.1
Harlan's Hawk	15	4.2
Bald Eagle	5	1.4
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	.3
Total	1067	303.4

species. It and the Marsh and Ferruginous Hawks were the most evenly distributed species. It is interesting that the densities for rough-legs and Marsh Hawks are nearly the reverse of those indicated by Fitch *et al.* (1973). Red-tails were encountered regularly only in or near wooded areas (river bottoms) and Sparrow Hawks were usually seen in such areas. Although Golden Eagles were infrequently seen, conversations with other observers indicate they are more regular than my observations indicate. All five Bald Eagles were at Scott County State Lake. Five species were not seen: Goshawk, Cooper's Hawk, Peregrine Falcon, Pigeon Hawk, Osprey.

A number of encounters between hawk species or between hawks and other species were noted. On 6 December, near Colby, a Prairie Falcon dove at a Horned Owl, hitting it on the back and knocking it to the ground. The falcon, later joined by a rough-leg, then made repeated passes at the grounded owl. On three occasions (near Colby, between 1 and 19 February) Rough-legged Hawks were seen to pursue Marsh Hawks until the former dropped a prey item which was then seized by the rough leg. On another occasion a crow was similarly pursued and the dropped prey was seized. WILLIAM C. PIPER, 430 Smith Drive, Colby, Kansas 67701.

**Rufous Hummingbird taken at Great Bend, Kansas.**—I first observed a hummingbird with a wide rounded tail on 18 August 1973 at my home near Walnut Creek Dam, Cheyenne Bottoms Waterfowl Management Area, three miles north of Great Bend, Barton County. As with many birds, fall plumages make positive identification difficult and as the hummer appeared to be juvenile, species identification was a real challenge. Was it a Broad-tailed Hummingbird (*Selasphorus platycercus*) or a Rufous Hummingbird (*S. rufus*)? On 23 August two more hummingbirds in very similar plumage were in our yard. Primary feeding flowers of the three hummers, in approximate order of preference, were: a mimosa (*Mimosa borealis*), two trumpet vines (*Bignonia* sp.), butterfly bush (*Buddleia* sp.), blue salvia (*Salvia* sp.), *Zinnia* sp., and low narrow-leaved milkweed (*Asclepias pumila*).

After considerable observation I concluded they were Broad-tailed Hummingbirds. One was collected on 23 August 1973 and was forwarded by Dr. Charles Ely to Dr. Allan R. Phillips for positive identification. It proved to be an immature female Rufous Hummingbird, the first specimen for Kansas and now FHKSC 3600. The remaining two hummers were observed daily through 28 August 1973. No hummers could be found on 29 and 30 August. A Ruby-throated Hummingbird (*Archilochus colubris*) took up residence at the large trumpet vine on 31 August.

There are excellent Kansas sight records (Thompson, Kansas Orn. Soc. Bull., 20: 25-26, 1969) and photographs were taken at the Wallace Champeny home near Oxford, Sumner County. Hummingbirds believed to be Rufous were seen there in 1964, 1966, 1968 and 1969. Except for the 15 September 1964 sighting, Champeny's observation dates were all between 19 and 30 August and my observations (18 through 29 August) cover the same period. This suggests that Rufous Hummingbirds may occur over a large part of Kansas for a short period during the last two weeks of August. It also points out the similarity of some plumages of the Broad-tailed and Rufous Hummingbirds which make identification difficult, even when the bird is in the hand. MARVIN D. SCHWILING, Route 1, Great Bend, Kansas 67530.

**Red-breasted Nuthatch apparently breeding in Kansas.**—While bird watching in the Highland Cemetery (Junction City, Geary County, Kansas; 18 June 1974; 11:30 a.m.) LaShelle noticed a fairly aggressive encounter between two small birds. On identification, the two species proved to be an Eastern Wood Pewee and a Red-breasted Nuthatch. After further observations in the vicinity, another adult nuthatch and three juvenile birds were located in a group of large Red Cedars. The juveniles at this time were being fed by the adults.

On 20 June we returned to secure pictures of the adults feeding young. At that time only the male was observed feeding young in the same group of cedars but several photographs were taken. The adult foraged on the trunk from a few inches above ground to near the tips of the lateral branches of the cedars. The young

followed the adult at their leisure as he moved down the row of cedars. While waiting for food, the adult fed about every two minutes. The juveniles would occasionally peck the perch; however, the young did not move so it appeared they were not foraging for themselves. All food brought by the adult was extremely small. No large insect was ever seen protruding from the bill. The adult was either just beginning to molt or else the feathers were extremely worn. This was in contrast to the young which were in excellent feather with much duller colors and had yellowish bills. A few nearby holes were examined but none proved to be a nuthatch nest cavity.

On 27 June, LaShelle observed the birds in some nearby large pines. An adult and young were observed near the initial location on 7 July by LaShelle and Steve Hickok. On 17 July we made a systematic search of the nearby trees for the characteristic pitch-ringed nest hole but were unsuccessful. At that time we found both adults in heavy molt, but no young.

The Highland Cemetery is approximately 40 acres of mixed open woods, composed of large pines, Red Cedars, about half as many large deciduous trees and numerous granite erratics.

A Red-breasted Nuthatch observed in Highland Cemetery on a Spring K.O.S. field trip (7 May 1967) by several observers suggest possible previous breeding. However, late spring departure dates overlap this observation (Bent, Life histories of North American nuthatches, wrens, thrashers, and their allies, U. S. Nat. Mus. Bull., 195, 1948; Ely and Thompson, personal communication).

The nearest regular breeding localities are the Colorado Rockies, the Black Hills of South Dakota, and central Minnesota (AOU, Check-list of North American Birds, Baltimore, 1957). Bailey and Niedrach (The Birds of Colorado, Denver, 1965) list egg dates from mid-May to early June. Bent (1948) gives a 12 day incubation period and an 18-22 day nestling period. 18 June would be an early fledgling date for Colorado, making it highly unlikely that an entire family would make the 500 mile movement with newly fledged young. THOMAS G. SHANE AND ROBERT LASHELLE, 713 W. 8th and 105 W. 4th, Junction City, Kansas 66441.

**Possible "nest" construction by Clark's Nutcracker far East in Kansas.**—On 30 March 1973 Frank Wood showed me a Clark's Nutcracker (*Nucifraga columbiana*) that had remained the winter in Pleasanton, Linn County. The bird had been reported to him several weeks before and he and Ivan Sutton had observed the bird extensively during late winter. This bird appears to be a female or juvenile.

Following our extensive observation on 30 March, Mr. Wood learned that two nutcrackers had spent many winter days in the yard of "Red" Miller in east Pleasanton during the winter of 1973. Also a strange bird that may have been a nutcracker was reported to Mr. Wood during the winter of 1972 in west Pleasanton. He failed to see the bird that year, however.

I returned to Pleasanton on 27 April 1973 and observed a nutcracker in the same Red Cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*) where we observed the 30 March bird. It appeared to be the same bird observed earlier. On the 27th the bird was carrying nesting material to a bulky nest some 15 feet up and against the main trunk of the cedar tree. Frank, Ivan and I returned to the site about 19:30 hours but were never able to observe two birds. Mr. Wood had noticed the bulky nest structure about a week earlier when it was about one-third its present size.

I was unable to return to the possible nest site but comments of other observers are of interest. Marvin Rolfs of Hays visited the site on two occasions and Keith Baird visited it once. Neither saw any indication of nest building and neither climbed to the "nest." Rolfs has commented that on several occasions Wood saw a bird carry dog biscuits from a nearby dog pen to the "nest" where they were eaten. He suggests the "nest" may in fact have been a feeding platform. Ely and others had observed a nutcracker at Hays using an old Fox Squirrel nest as a temporary feeding platform. Since the nest interior was not examined at close range these comments are inconclusive. MARVIN D. SCHWILLING, Route 1, Great Bend, Kansas 67530.

**Color-marked Cowbirds.**—Over 5,000 cowbirds were banded and color-marked in west-central Kansas during 1974 as an aid in studying their movements and hopefully to determine their place of origin. Birds were marked with red, yellow or dark green plastic leg streamers. Observers are asked to report location and date of sighting, sex of bird and color of leg streamer to RICHARD A. HILL, *Department of Biology, Fort Hays Kansas State College, Hays, Kansas 67601.*

**Kansas Ornithological Society**

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