Groove-billed Ani

Some birds catch your eye and speak to your soul,
And the groove billed ani left me feeling whole,
A bird first encountered down in old Mexico,
And encountered near Freeport along a hedgerow.

It was drizzly and cold out during the count,
Adverse conditions we determined to surmount,
We had just jumped two wood ducks on the pond,
And a vermilion flycatcher on the branch beyond.

And then movement in the bushes caught my eye,
Several birds moving fast, and they didn’t fly,
They were black, good sized, and then they slowed,
Making low mumbling sounds, talking in code.

We slowly approached the place where they stopped,
And into the opening a strange bird hopped,
It looked like a grackle emerging from the plants,
But possessing a bill that required another glance.

Oh, my what a snout that bird possesses,
Some evolutionary need that the bill addresses,
But the eye of that bird tells yet another story,
It looked at me as if taking inventory.

Seldom have I encountered such an intelligent look
From any other bird that can be found in the book,
For this ani’s eye was taking my measure,
A moment of interaction I will always treasure.

And looking back on that day decades later,
We can argue evolution or the initial creator,
But no doubt exists in this mere mortal being
That Earth Church is needed to protect birds’ well-being.

So welcome to Earth Church
Pull yourself up a pew
Say a prayer that the ani
Will eyeball you.