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Reçu 1 août 1995

Revu 19 mars 1996

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Observations of two *Cuculus* species fed by forest hosts in the Congo

On 6 Feb 1995 I found a fledgling Red-chested Cuckoo *Cuculus solitarius* low down in swamp forest in the Parc National d'Odzala, northern Congo (0°36'N, 14°54'E). It was being attended by a Fire-crested Alethe *Alethe diademata*. The young bird was uniform dark but for the underparts, which were cream-coloured and heavily barred with black from breast to vent. Its tail was about three quarters grown. It called continuously, uttering a loud, raucous "sschreep", repeated at a faster tempo when the alethe appeared with food. During the first few minutes of observation, the alethe stayed a few metres apart from the cuckoo and repeatedly uttered alarm calls (loud rattles), then it left. It came back shortly afterwards, still carrying food, and as I remained motionless about 10 m from the cuckoo, which was perched on a horizontal branch a few metres high, the alethe went to feed it. I waited in the same spot and a second feeding took place.

On 12 Nov 1995, my attention was attracted by a persistent calling, a "weef-weef-weef" or "kwif-kwif-kwif", in the canopy of swamp forest at a height of 20-25 m. A fledgling Black Cuckoo *C. clamosus* was with a group of three or more Cassin's Malimbos *Malimbus cassini*, of which at least one was a male. The young cuckoo was all black, with a few faint bars just visible across the breast. It was fairly active, hopping about in the foliage with half-open and quivering wings. The malimbos actively searched for food in the vicinity and one male fed the cuckoo twice in 20 min. Then the little party moved out of my field of view.

Both of these host records appear to be new, not only for these cuckoos, but neither *A. diademata* nor *M. cassini* has been recorded as a host to any cuckoo (Rowan 1983, Brosset & Erard 1986, Irwin 1988). However, *C. solitarius* is known to parasitize a wide range of Turdidae species, and the use of *A. diademata* as a host, in an area where it is one of the commoner Turdidae, is not surprising.

On the other hand, *C. clamosus* has never been claimed to have an interest in nests of weavers Ploceidae, which (genus *Ploceus*) are the preferred hosts of the much smaller Didric Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx caprius*, with one record of the latter

parasitizing a Crested Malimbe *M. malimbicus* (Irwin 1988). *Cuculus clamosus* normally parasitizes species of *Laniarius* and *Oriolus*, two genera represented by three common species in Odzala, the Sooty Boubou *L. leucorhynchus* (known as a host in Cameroon: Bates 1930), Western Black-headed Oriole *O. brachyrhynchus* and Black-winged Oriole *O. nigripennis*. The possibility of a female *C. clamosus* laying in a *Malimbus* nest seems unlikely, especially in one of *M. cassini*, whose nest has a funnel 0.5–1 m long (Brosset 1978). It seems more possible that the *Malimbus* had instead adopted the young cuckoo after it left the nest of another host. Females and juveniles of *M. cassini* are wholly black, and a young *C. clamosus* would appear like an enormous baby malimbe, thus perhaps acting as a supra-normal stimulus to *M. cassini* parents (cf. Tinbergen 1953). Such adoptive behaviour must make one extra cautious about identifying host species based only on the feeding of fledged cuckoos.

I thank Mr M.P.S. Irwin for having read a draft of this note.

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Received 29 September 1995

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Corrigendum

In the paper by R. Demey, "Notes on the birds of the coastal and Kindia areas, Guinea" *Malimbus* 17: 85-99, an error occurred in the table on p. 91. The line "*Sarothrura pulchra*....." should read as follows:

	C	K	Localities
<i>Sarothrura pulchra</i> White-spotted Flufftail	xx	xx	1,2,5