

First record of Striped Cuckoo *Clamator levaillantii* parasitizing Pied Babbler *Turdoides bicolor*

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The Striped Cuckoo *Clamator levaillantii* is endemic to the Afrotropics and specializes in parasitizing babblers. The known African hosts are Arrow-marked *Turdoides jardineii*, Bare-faced *T. gymnogenys*, Hartlaub's *T. hartlaubii*, Brown *T. plebejus*, Blackcap *T. reinwardti* and Capuchin *Phyllanthus atripennis* babblers (Fry et al. 1988; Fry & Keith 2000). Parasitism of the Black-lored Babbler *T. sharpei* in East Africa requires confirmation. The only other known, and minor, host is the Chestnut-bellied Starling *Spreo pulcher* in West Africa. The Pied Babbler *T. bicolor* is not known as a host of the Striped Cuckoo and it may be that the babbler's distinctively noduled eggs help the bird to spot and eject cuckoo eggs, which are smooth (Fry et al. 1988).

On 28 January 1992, while undertaking field work for the atlas (Harrison et al. 1997), I came across a pair of Pied Babblers accompanied by a recently fledged babbler chick and a recently fledged Striped Cuckoo chick. The locality was along the Ga-Mogara River (a tributary of the Kuruman River) on the farm Telele in the Northern Cape Province (27°16'S; 22°27'E). Pied Babblers are the only babblers present in this area and the nearest records of Arrow-marked Babblers are some 230 km to the north east (Harrison et al. 1997). The habitat was tall, well-developed, riparian camelthorn savanna.

The cuckoo fledgling was larger than the babblers. It had a greyish head with a distinctive crest, dark-brown/black upper-parts with broad brown tips to the

feathers, and pale buff underparts with dark streaking on the throat (the streaked throat rules out possible confusion with Jacobin Cuckoo *C. jacobinus*). Its tail was long and coloured dark brown/black with white outer edges visible at the tip. In flight it showed a conspicuous white patch in the primaries, which was also visible in the folded wing when perched. Both the babbler and cuckoo fledglings noisily solicited food from the adult babblers and the begging call of the cuckoo was identical to that of the young babbler.

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