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### **Does the Didric Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx caprius* parasitize Cricket Warbler *Spiloptila clamans* in Nigeria?**

Wilson & Sallinen (2003) have claimed the first records of Didric Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx caprius* parasitizing Cricket Warbler *Spiloptila clamans*. As they remarked, Ploceidae are the main hosts of this cuckoo, although some other families have been claimed, including a few Sylviidae. The present records are so unusual as to warrant more convincing evidence than that presented by the authors.

Wilson & Sallinen (2003) based their claim on identification of juvenile cuckoos being fed by Cricket Warblers and the relative rarity of Klaas's Cuckoo *C. klaas* in the region, but nowhere do they mention the two unique and obvious features of juvenile Didric Cuckoos, the coral red bill and reddish-brown head. Instead, they considered them Didric on the amount of white in the tail and the eye-stripe (characters of limited value for separating young Didric from Klaas's Cuckoo).

Of 373 certain host records for Didric Cuckoo in Zambia (R.J. Dowsett, D.R. Aspinwall & F. Dowsett-Lemaire unpubl.) all but ten relate to 12 species of Ploceidae. The exception is the bunting *Emberiza flaviventris* which is a host in parts of northern Zambia. Similarly 37 host records from Malawi (F. Dowsett-Lemaire & R.J. Dowsett unpubl.) relate solely to seven species of Ploceidae. Another country with many breeding data is Zimbabwe, where Irwin (1981) accepted without question only records from Ploceidae. For Klaas's Cuckoo in Zambia 46 host records relate to 12 species that are primarily insectivorous (warblers Sylviidae, flycatchers Muscicapidae, Platysteiridae and Monarchidae, sunbirds Nectariniidae and Yellow-throated Petronia *Petronia superciliaris*) (R.J. Dowsett, D.R. Aspinwall & F. Dowsett-Lemaire unpubl.) and in Malawi there are 16 hosts recorded, most in the same families (F. Dowsett-Lemaire & R.J. Dowsett unpubl.).

These basic differences in host choice between these two cuckoos were stressed by Payne & Payne (1967). The claims for certain insectivorous passerines being hosts of Didric Cuckoo, mentioned by Fry *et al.* (1988), have come mainly from South Africa (Rowan 1983). Some have been documented convincingly, but in others there is the possibility that the birds tempted to feed a juvenile cuckoo were not the actual hosts, which may be the case with some unsatisfactory sunbird *Nectarinia* spp. records from Zambia (cf. Colebrook-Robjent 1984).

The rarity of warblers being hosts to Didric Cuckoo means that close attention must be paid to the claims from Nigeria. In the absence of diagnostic identification characters, I consider that the possibility that these records involved Klaas's Cuckoos rather than Didric has not been eliminated.

I thank John Colebrook-Robjent for sharing his considerable knowledge of parasitic cuckoos in Zambia.

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### La Cigogne noire *Ciconia nigra* au Mali

Le 18 janvier 2000, lors de comptages aériens réalisés dans le delta intérieur du Niger, au Mali, une bande de huit Cigognes noires *Ciconia nigra* a été observée en vol. Elle se situait à 14°16'N, 4°47'W, au sud de Ténenkou, soit environ 80 km à l'ouest de Mopti. L'identification de l'espèce est certaine, l'absence de croupion blanc notamment excluant la Cigogne d'Abdim *C. abdimii*.

L'espèce n'est pas signalée au Mali par Malzy (1962), Duhart & Descamps (1963) ou Wymenga *et al.* (2002). Une seule observation, au Lac Korientze dans le