

First Indonesian Record of Probable Brood Parasitism of Chestnut-winged Babbler *Stachyris erythroptera* by Asian Drongo-cuckoo *Surniculus lugubris*

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Ringkasan. Tepus Merbah-sampah *Stachyris erythroptera* diketahui sebagai salah satu inang (induk *host*) dari Kedasi Hitam *Surniculus lugubris* di daratan Asia Tenggara, kedua jenis berbagi tipe pakan dan persebarannya yang saling tumpang tindih. Kedasi hitam pernah tercatat sebagai parasit Tepus merbah-sampah di Semenanjung Malaysia dan satu catatan yang meragukan di Sarawak, namun tulisan ini mendokumentasikan kemungkinan hubungan parasitisme pertama bagi kedua jenis di Indonesia. Kami mengamati satu ekor anak Kedasi Hitam yang sedang diberi pakan oleh seekor Tepus Merbah-sampah dewasa di Sumatera Selatan, temuan ini menyimpulkan bahwa kedua jenis memiliki periode bertelur pada pertengahan Juni.

Among avian brood parasites, the cuckoos are the most successful: they have the largest number of species, the largest number of host species that rear their young, and worldwide distribution. The Asian Drongo-cuckoo *Surniculus lugubris* has a wide distribution from India and China, through the Malay Peninsula and the Greater Sundas to Sulawesi, Halmahera, and the Philippines. In the Greater Sundas, the resident *S. l. brachyurus* is an uncommon race found up to 1300 m asl (Mann 2008). The hosts of the Asian Drongo-cuckoo are mainly babblers, forktails, bulbuls, shrikes, and warblers (Payne 1997, 2005).

On 29 July 2007 we witnessed the feeding of a juvenile Asian Drongo-cuckoo by an adult Chestnut-winged Babbler *Stachyris erythroptera* in logged secondary lowland forest at Harapan Rainforest along the banks of the Kapas River (2° 14' 56" S; 103° 14' 28" E; 64 m asl), Musi Banyuasin District, South Sumatra. The cuckoo gave loud begging calls from a horizontal perch c. 1 m above the ground, where the babbler fed it three times over a period of five minutes. It was distinguished by the diagnostic and obvious white spots on the head, breast and wings, and a short tail (see Payne 1997; MacKinnon *et al.* 1998). Although the forest understorey is an atypical niche for the cuckoo (Payne 2005), it is the main feeding stratum of the Chestnut-winged Babbler (Collar & Robson 2007). We were unable to identify the food items brought to the cuckoo. No other species were seen in the near vicinity during the observation period.

The Chestnut-winged Babbler is known as one of the host species of the Asian Drongo-cuckoo in mainland southeast Asia (Payne 1997; 2005; Wells

1999, 2007; Collar & Robson 2007), and there is a tentative record for Sarawak (Cranbrook & Wells 1980), but there appear to be no records of this relationship for Indonesia. Payne (1997) cautioned that observations of fledged cuckoos being fed by an adult bird are not always reliable evidence that the feeder represents a biological host species, as cuckoo fledglings have loud and persistent begging calls, which sometimes attract adults of non-host species, as well as their own foster parents. We believe that the Chestnut-winged Babbler was the biological host of the Asian Drongo-cuckoo in our observation because of the lack of other species in the cuckoo's vicinity and the atypical niche for the latter.

Although the incubation and nestling periods of the Asian Drongo-cuckoo are unknown (Becking 1981; Payne 1997, 2005), two other similarly-sized Old World cuckoos, the Brush Cuckoo *Cacomantis variolosus* and African Emerald Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx cupreus*, have incubation periods of 13 days, and nestling periods of 18 (± 1) and 19 (± 1) days, respectively (Payne 1997), giving a total nest cycle of 31-32 days for both species. Assuming that the incubation and nestling periods of the Asian Drongo-cuckoo are similar to those of the above species and that the juvenile in the above observation was no older than two weeks (post-fledging), we may extrapolate the time of egg-laying for the mother of the cuckoo fledgling, and presumably its hosts, as mid-June.

There are no Sumatran breeding records for either the Chestnut-winged Babbler or the Asian Drongo-cuckoo. In Peninsular Malaysia, fledglings of the Drongo-cuckoo have been found from early May to early July, and an egg in mid July (Wells 1999, 2007; Payne 2005). In Java it appears to lay in at least nine months of the year, with 54% of female specimens with eggs in their oviducts during April-May ($n = 24$), and in Borneo, females with eggs or enlarged oviducts were collected in April and May (Smythies & Davison 1999; Sheldon et al. 2001). The breeding season of the Chestnut-winged Babbler in Southeast Asia is said to be December to September, in Malaysia, January-July and September, and in Borneo, February-July and October-November (Collar & Robson 2007; Wells 2007; Mann 2008). Thus our tentative record of laying by both species during June in Sumatra fits well within their breeding seasons in the region.

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