

Indian cuckoo feeding on caterpillars

Subject: Indian cuckoo, *Cuculus micropterus* (Aves: Cuculiformes: Cuculidae).

Subject identified by: Contributors.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, Bidadari cemetery; 29 November 2015; 0920-1000 hrs.

Habitat: Urban parkland and secondary forest.

Observers: Contributors.

Observation: A post-juvenile Indian cuckoo (based on its plumage pattern) of around 30 cm (Fig. 3) was flitting among the lower tree branches and actively foraging. It appeared to be clumsy, as it had lost its foothold on the branches a few times. The bird was feeding on slender green caterpillars (see Figs. 1 & 2 for a single feeding sequence) on a leguminous tree. A picture shared by another photographer showed a larger and hairier caterpillar consumed by the same bird.

Remarks: The Indian cuckoo is winter visitor and passage migrant in Southeast Asia. It is a brood parasite that lays one egg in the nest of other birds, such as the black-and-yellow broadbill and several species of drongo (Robson, 2011: 360). As illustrated by the featured subject, this bird feeds mostly on caterpillars, and is apparently the most common of the migratory cuckoos in Singapore (Yong et al., 2013: 86).

References:

Robson, C., 2011. *A Field Guide to the Birds of South-East Asia*. Updated edition. New Holland Publishers, London. 544 pp.
Yong D. L., K. C. Lim & T. K. Lee, 2013. *A Naturalist's Guide to the Birds of Singapore*. John Beaufoy Publishing, United Kingdom. 176 pp.



Fig. 1. Feeding sequence (left to right) with the Indian cuckoo spotting the prey and picking it up with its bill.



Fig. 2. Feeding sequence (left to right) showing the Indian cuckoo consuming its prey.

Photographs by Tan Heok Hui



Fig. 3. Latero-ventral profile of the post-juvenile Indian cuckoo. Photograph by Tan Heok Hui

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