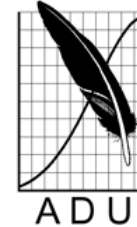


# Ornithological Observations



An electronic journal published by BirdLife South Africa and the Animal Demography Unit at the University of Cape Town



Ornithological Observations accepts papers containing faunistic information about birds. This includes descriptions of distribution, behaviour, breeding, foraging, food, movement, measurements, habitat and plumage. It will also consider for publication a variety of other interesting or relevant ornithological material: reports of projects and conferences, annotated checklists for a site or region, specialist bibliographies, and any other interesting or relevant material.

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## JACOBIN CUCKOO PARASITISING AFRICAN RED-EYED BULBUL NEST

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## JACOBIN CUCKOO PARASITISING AFRICAN RED-EYED BULBUL NEST

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I visited Soetdoring Nature Reserve north of Bloemfontein (Free State) on 21 December 2009 to do surveys for SABAP2. As usual I started the survey at the bridge over the Modder River (pentad 2845\_2605). African Black Ducks, Goliath Heron and Namaqua Warblers amongst other species were observed in the reedbeds on the banks of the river. The next section was the Acacia bush along the river and as always I stopped to observe birds at the picnic sites situated along the Modder River in the reserve.

While walking towards the river from the first picnic site a bird was flushed from a Buffalo-thorn *Ziziphus mucronata*. The grass and bushes in that part were relatively dense. After searching the area, a neatly woven nest with two pure white eggs and a smaller brownish speckled egg was discovered around 08:30 (Figure 1). As I was not yet sure of the identification of the nest I decided to revisit the nest later in the morning.

While atlasing the next pentad along the river, the wind became stronger and it turned cold. I went back in my tracks to revisit the nest to confirm the identification of the species. It was about 09:30.



**Figure 1** – African Red-eyed Bulbul nest with two eggs of a Jacobin Cuckoo, Soetdoring Nature Reserve, 21 December 2009

On arrival at the nest site, an African Red-eyed Bulbul *Pycnonotus nigricans* was flushed from the nest. I found a third white egg in the nest (Figure 2).

With the aid of **A Guide to the nests and eggs of Southern African birds** (Tarboton 2001) I could identify the host egg in the nest as that of an African Red-eyed Bulbul and the other eggs as those of a Jacobin Cuckoo *Clamator jacobinus*.



**Figure 2** – The same nest an hour later – with three Jacobin Cuckoo eggs.

Apart from Dark-capped Bulbul *P. barbatus*, Cape Bulbul *P. capensis*, Common Fiscal *Lanius collaris* and Sombre Greenbul *Andropadus importunus*, African Red-eyed Bulbuls are one of the main host species of the Jacobin Cuckoo (Hockey et al. 2005).

Between my two visits to the nest, the Cuckoo laid its third egg in the host nest. Tarboton (2001) reports that usually only one egg per host nest is found, and less often 2-3 eggs to a nest – rarely up to 7 eggs. This records another observation of three Jacobin Cuckoo eggs in the basket of an African Red-eyed Bulbul host.

Unfortunately, I could not monitor the nest further. The outcome of the Jacobin Cuckoo parasitising the African Red-eyed Bulbul nest is not recorded.

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**Tarboton WR 2001.** A guide to the nests and eggs of Southern African birds. Struik: Cape Town.

**Vernon CJ, Dean WRJ 2005.** Jacobin Cuckoo *Clamator jacobinus* In: Hockey PAR, Dean WRJ, Ryan PG (eds). Roberts Birds of Southern Africa, VII<sup>th</sup> ed. The Trustees of the John Voelcker Bird Book Fund: Cape Town: 200-201.