

# Ornithological Observations



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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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## FORKTAILED DRONGO MARAUDING MANNIKINS

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## FORKTAILED DRONGO MARAUDING MANNIKINS

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The Fork-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus adsimilis* is known to prey on Bronze Mannikin *Lonchura cucullata* (Dean, 2005). This paper discusses this behaviour with photographic evidence. It also notes the capturing of the 2 other species of Mannikin by the aggressor.

The first observation of a Drongo preying on Mannikins was on 7 July 2011 when a Forktailed Drongo flew into the garden in Umzumbe, KwaZulu-Natal. It perched in a tree and watched the 3 species of Mannikin feeding at the feeders and perching in the tree above the feeders. The Drongo swooped down, “talons” at the ready and grasped a Bronze Mannikin perching in the Flat-crown Albizia. The Drongo then flew off to a Eucalyptus tree about 200 m away where it perched. It started pecking at the Mannikin which was still flapping its wings. This continued until the Mannikin was dead, whereupon the Drongo plucked the feathers and consumed the Mannikin piece by piece. The accompanying pictures document this preying of a Drongo on Mannikins.

The same behaviour was since recorded on numerous occasions. Later in winter the Drongo had been observed capturing or attempting to capture Mannikins every morning. Invariably if the Drongo fails to capture a bird, he scared the Mannikins off in all directions. Occasionally some of the birds flew into windows in their attempted escape. The Drongo would then swoop down to pick up a dead or stunned Mannikin. It would pluck the prey before consuming it. It did not discriminate between the different species of Manniken. The Drongo regularly flew to the same tree where it consumed its prey.

On one occasion while flying with a Magpie Mannikin that had been caught, the Mannikin flapped its wings continuously and was able to free itself and escape. It is worth noting that the Magpie Manniken *Lonchura fringilloides* is larger and weighs double the weight of the Bronze Manniken and Redbacked Mannikin *Lonchura nigriceps*.

The question now arises: has the Drongo learnt a new feeding technique as it is an easy and regular food source, or is it just supplementing its diet during winter when normal food is scarce?





**References**

**Dean WRJ 2005.** Fork-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus adsimilis* in Hockey PAR, Dean WRJ, Ryan PG (eds). Roberts – Birds of Southern Africa, VIIth Edition. Cape Town: The Trustees of the John Voelcker Bird Book Fund.