

# BirdLife Australia Rarities Committee

## Unusual Record Report Form

This form is intended to aid observers in the preparation of a submission for a major rarity in Australia. (It is not a mandatory requirement) Please complete all sections ensuring that you attach all relevant information including any digital images (email to [tonyp@bigpond.net.au](mailto:tonyp@bigpond.net.au) or [andrew.silcocks@birdlife.org.au](mailto:andrew.silcocks@birdlife.org.au)). Submissions to BARC should be submitted electronically wherever possible.

<b>Full Name: James Mustafa</b>	Office Use
---------------------------------	------------

<b>Address: 11 Tamar Street, Ringwood North</b>	
---	--

<b>Species Name: Square-tailed Drongo Cuckoo</b>	<b>Scientific Name: Surniculus lugubris</b>
Date(s) and time(s) of observation:	Sunday December 4 <sup>th</sup> – approximately 1.20pm
How long did you watch the bird(s)?	2-4~ minutes
First and last date of occurrence:	4 <sup>th</sup> December – not reseen
Distance to bird:	30~ metres

<b>Site Location</b> The Farm on West island, Cocos Keeling
--

<b>Habitat</b> (describe habitat in which the bird was seen):  The farm is an overgrown open space with a couple of large leafy trees. The entire area is surrounding by palm forest
<b>Sighting conditions</b> (weather, visibility, light conditions etc.):  Clear skies, warm day with mild humidity.

<b>To your knowledge, is the species seen frequently at this site?</b>  No, this was the first sighting of Square-tailed Drongo-cuckoo on West Island
<b>Were other observers present Do any of the other observers disagree with your identification, if so, who?</b> (please give names, addresses and phone numbers)?  Sue Taylor - <a href="mailto:suetaylor1@bigpond.com">suetaylor1@bigpond.com</a>
<b>How confident are you of your identification?</b> , e.g. 70%, 100%. If not 100%, why not?

100%

**Please confirm that you are willing for BARC to display your images** (fully credited with your name) electronically  
YES HAPPY TO BE SHARED

**Other details:** e.g. Do you have historical and or anecdotal information/comments relating to the prior occurrence/status of the species within or near this location?

This account took place during a weeks birding as part of Richard Baxter's Birding Australia Tours to Cocos/Christmas in December of 2016. On the 4<sup>th</sup> of December, Sue Taylor and I decided to take one of the cars to do some birding and exploring whilst we waited for everyone to finish lunch. We had about 2 hours to kill and decided to head to the Farm, given there was a Brown Shrike in the area and it would be new for our lists.

Upon arrival we walked through the grounds once and then when we were thinking about doing a second lap on the outside, we spotted a small black bird zip out of the palm forest (from the direct of Bechet Besar) and land in the main tree in the centre of the farmland to the left of the road.

It was said Square-tailed Drongo-cuckoo and it sat perched sometimes moving erratically up and down the branch. It was quite amazing to watch as it flew and behaved so much like a drongo, the only species I had experience with was a Spangled Drongo. This was so obvious, I initially that was what it was. Upon inspection it was however a drongo-cuckoo.

We watched the bird for a few minutes, before jumping back into the car to grab the group. The group took forever to get ready and by the time we reached the farm the bird had gone. We knew instantly looking at the photos that the bird was a different one to bird currently on Home Island as our bird appeared to be an adult without the speckling and markings on the juvenile.

Despite our looking for the next hour we did not see the bird again, nor did any others on follow ups.

**Physical Description of Bird - Please describe only what you saw:** (1) No. of individuals present (living or dead); (2) age (adult, juvenile, immature) and sex; (3) size and shape; (4) plumage colour and pattern (including any details of moult); (5) colour of bill, eyes and legs/feet; (6) calls; (7) behaviour, movements, flight pattern, and anything else that might help to identify the bird e.g. feeding, interactions with other birds, describe where the bird was – on ground, in canopy, flying etc. Were comparisons made with other species?

Our bird was a deep glossy black with pale markings under the tail, though they were super defined. It had a red eye, and a small pointed black bill very much like that of a cuckoo. It also appeared to have a slight grey ring around the eye. The tail was forked slight at the end, but not enough to be a Fork-tailed Drongo-cuckoo.

**Please indicate other species with which you think it might be confused and how these were eliminated?**

The Drongo-cuckoo complex appears to be split into into 4 species (Fort-tailed, Square-tailed, Moluccan and Philippine. Given the shape of the tail I believe both Fork-tailed and Philippine can be ruled out straight away. HBW suggests that Moluccan says a smaller head and smaller bill and online images seem to suggest as much.

I'm not an expert on this family by any means, so if I'm wrong it wouldn't surprise me. I just don't have access to the literature to really pinpoint this species, but am confident it can be identified off the images.

Was the description written from memory?

Were photographs taken? (please include where possible)

**Yes photos taken, all attached in submission email**

**What experience have you had with the species in question?** (Did you know it was a Rare bird when you first saw it?)

This was my first time seeing this species. I was aware it was a rarity as all passerines, cuckoos, etc on Cocos are megas given there are no naturally occurring birds that fit these families.

**Name: \_\_James Mustafa\_\_**







