

# 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:</b> Stewart Ford	Office Use
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<b>Address:</b>	<b>Phone No:</b>
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<b>Species Name:</b> Asian Koel	<b>Scientific Name:</b> <i>Eudynamys scolopaceus</i>
Date(s) and time(s) of observation:	09-Jun-2018 (1130, 1620), 13-Jun-2018 (1637), 14-Jun-2018 (1445), 15-Jun-2018 (1518) and 19-Jun-2018 (0647).
How long did you watch the bird(s)?	For a few minutes on each occasion
First and last date of occurrence:	08-Jun-2018 and 19-Jun-2018
Distance to bird:	Varied from 2m to 80m

<b>Site Location</b> “WAPET Landing”, a small goods handling port on the east coast of Barrow Island, off the northwest coast of Western Australia.
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<b>Habitat</b> (describe habitat in which the bird was seen): Sparse <i>Ficus brachypoda</i> & <i>Acacia coriacea</i> tall shrubs over <i>Triodia</i> sp. spinifex grassland.
<b>Sighting conditions</b> (weather, visibility, light conditions etc.): Varied, but mostly overcast or sunny with excellent lighting.

<b>To your knowledge, is the species seen frequently at this site?</b> No prior records
<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)? At various times, other observers were Julian Kalau (who originally found it and alerted me to the presence of what he thought was a drongo), Roy Teale, Patrick Cullen and Brad Daw.
<b>How confident are you of your identification?</b> , e.g. 70%, 100%. If not 100%, why not? 100%
<b>Please confirm that you are willing for BARC to display your images</b> (fully credited with your name) electronically Yes – please note they are not all my photos. Copyright is identified in the image metadata.

**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?

There are no historical or anecdotal records of Asian Koel on Barrow Island or, to the best of my knowledge, the Australian mainland. However, adult males in particular would be easily overlooked.

**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?

1 A single individual was present.

2 Immature male.

3 Size was of a moderately large cuckoo, to my reckoning slightly larger and bulkier than a Pallid Cuckoo, but smaller than a Channel-billed Cuckoo. Shape was that of a cuckoo with an elongate, rounded tail and pointed wings.

4 Plumage was very dark, bird looked all black in shade but in the light adult feathers were glossy blue-black. Juvenile feathers where present were dull brownish black with paler tips. The right-side primaries and secondaries as well as rectrices were adult; the left-side primaries, most secondaries and the rectrices were retained juvenile feathers.

5 Bill was horn coloured, tinged light green. Eyes were red. Legs & feet grey.

6 No calls. Audio recording devices were placed at the three *Ficus* trees frequented by the individual but did not yield any calls. The bird reacted strongly to a female Asian Koel call (<https://www.xeno-canto.org/464464>) but not to male Eastern or Asian Koel calls.

7 The individual was located almost exclusively in three fruiting *Ficus brachypoda* trees at the locality, where it would skulk in the darkest parts. When flushed, it did occasionally use adjacent acacia shrubs. It was observed feeding on the *Ficus brachypoda* fruit.

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

The pale colouration of the bill rules out Black-billed Koel (*Eudynamis melanorhynchus*) and the only likely confusion species would be Eastern Koel, *Eudynamis orientalis*. In fact the author had thought that was what the species was, and reported it as such to some Perth birders. Fortunately, Martin Cake noted that there were juvenile feathers present and that they were inconsistent with those of an immature Eastern Koel. The retained juvenile feathers are clearly observed in the first image, below, in which the adult (glossy blue-black) lesser and median coverts contrast with the browner, worn greater secondary coverts, primary-coverts, tertials, secondaries and primaries. Note the retained pale tips most prominent on the primary coverts but mostly abraded from the other juvenile feathers; in Eastern Koel, the juvenile feathers visible would all be lightly barred or spotted (e.g. <http://tytotony.blogspot.com/2016/12/young-blue-male-koel-soon-to-be-black.html>). There is no evidence of this barring or spotting on any of the retained juvenile feathers of this bird.

Was the description written from memory? From memory and photos.

Were photographs taken? (please include where possible) see below.



©Pat Cullen. Individual in a fig tree, *Ficus brachypoda*.



©Pat Cullen. In flight shot, showing asymmetrical moult typical of cuckoos.

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

Observed previously in SE Asia, but I have little experience with this species until now. As noted above, I didn't recognise the significance originally; it was Martin Cake that pointed out that it was an Asian Koel.

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**Email Address:**

Please email all material