

Mugimaki Flycatcher *Ficedula mugimaki* on West Island, Cocos (Keeling) Islands from late November to 9th December 2019

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By Mike Carter & Geof Christie

A Mugimaki Flycatcher *Ficedula mugimaki* was present on West Island, Cocos (Keeling) Islands from late November to 9th December 2019. It was found by Richard Baxter in late November but the identification not confirmed until it was photographed by Bill Moorhead on 5th December. It frequented the lower storey of dense vegetation at the northern end of the island. Most often it was seen low down, not more than 2.5 m above the ground, in thicket-type roadside vegetation particularly where overgrown disused tracks headed into the bush from the main road. Sometimes it joined with a few other birds such as Eye-browed thrushes (up to 4), a Narcissus Flycatcher and other unidentified flycatchers to form a tiny bird-party typical of tropical rainforests. With the exception of an occasional Eye-browed Thrush, the group behaved very cryptically. This, together with the deep shadows that surrounded them when away from the immediate sunlit verge, made them very difficult to see. Observations were mostly in the early morning or late afternoon.



Mugimaki Flycatcher, West Island, Cocos (Keeling) Islands, 5th December 2019
Photo by Bill Moorhead

In addition to Richard and Bill, it was seen by island residents Geof Christie & Pamela Jones, those on tour groups led by Richard Baxter and Peter Barrand and by several independent birding tourists. Others that saw the bird included Biggles,

Tania Ireton, Glen Pacey, Faye Smith, Bruce Richardson, Noel Luff, Martyn Moffatt, Bill McRoberts, Norton Gill, Tony Nielson, Ann Breeze, Phillip Breeze, Jenny Spry, Joy Tansey, John Lombard, Brian Jones, Bill Betts, Rohan Clarke, Karina Sorell and Mike Carter.

It was a small bird about half the length of an Eye-browed Thrush. The only information regarding its morphology is contained in photographs, five of which are presented here.



Mugimaki Flycatcher, West Island, Cocos (Keeling) Islands, December 2019

Photos: top row by Bill Betts, bottom left by Brian Jones, bottom right by Karina Sorell.

Identification

With the evidence presented here identification to species as a Mugimaki Flycatcher is straight forward as there are no easily confused taxa (Kanouchi *et al.* 1998; Robson 2008; Brazil 2009; Myers 2016; Menkhorst *et al.* 2017). It is a first year bird and by the intensity of colour on the breast, probably a male.

Status in Australia

If accepted this will be the second record for Australia. In addition, a BARC submission of two birds seen on Cocos in December 2015 by Geof Christie is in preparation and there may be one or two other unverified reports. All but one are from Cocos (Keeling). The exception was a bird on Ashmore Reef.

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