

Courtship Behaviour of Diederik Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx caprius* Observed in Kruger National Park

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Two pairs of Diederik Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx caprius* (Boddaert, 1783) were observed on 25 November 1986 in the Lower Sabie Rest Camp, Kruger National Park. Display flights by the males terminated when both pairs perched on two separate wild fig trees, some 100 m apart. Many nests of the Masked Weaver *Ploceus velatus* Vieillot, 1819, were present in both trees. Further courtship display with extensive vocalisation by the males ended abruptly when the male cuckoos acted atypically. Past observations indicate that after mating the male usually presents the female with a caterpillar (Rowan 1983, *The Doves, Parrots, Louries and Cuckoos of southern Africa*. Cape Town: David Philip). In this case, instead of presenting the female with the usual caterpillar, both males raided the weaver nests and presented the females with egg shell. It is of interest to speculate whether this behaviour is part of a learning process of a behaviour pattern which the female uses later in the breeding cycle. We refer to the fact that a female may or may not remove an egg from the nest of her preferred host when she lays her own egg in the host's nest. If she is so inclined, she will (on occasion) also eat the host egg. Does the presentation of egg shell play any role in the oophagy by some females in the reproductive cycle?

A further interesting observation was that during the raiding of the Masked Weaver nests, the Diederik Cuckoo males vocalised agitatedly and many of the Masked Weaver hatchlings were evicted from the nests, falling to the ground where they were eagerly snapped up and consumed by waiting yellow-billed hornbills *Tockus flavirostris* (Rüppell, 1835).

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