

**FIRST RECORD OF A BRUSH CUCKOO IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA.** On 12 November 1992 we were in the Ferries McDonald Conservation Park, 27 km SW of Murray Bridge, S.A., when we heard an unusual call that Dr. R. E. Britten-Jones recognised as that of a Brush Cuckoo *Cacomantis variolosus*. We followed its call but it stopped calling before we were able to find the bird.

On 14 November we went back in the morning with the Bird Observers Club (B.O.C.) Cassette (1990). We drove slowly along the road, stopping and playing the tape of the call of the Brush Cuckoo every 500 m or so. Coming back we heard the bird calling in the distance. We walked towards the call and played the tape again. The bird flew to us and settled on a dead branch of a mallee, within 3-5 m of us.

The overall impression was that of a dark grey bird, with a lighter grey head, a brown eye with an inconspicuous ring around the eye (in contrast to the conspicuous yellow eye-ring of the Fan-tailed Cuckoo *C. flabelliformis*, present in adult, immature and juvenile birds). The back was greyish-brown and a faint greenish sheen was clearly visible in certain lights. The throat was play grey grading into buff on the chest until it was clear buff on the under-tail. The tail was tipped white and we could see some indistinct notching on the edges, very different from the prominent notching of the Fan-tailed Cuckoo, with which we are both very familiar. Barring was apparent on the under-tail. The wings were in a very floppy position. The bill was dark and very much like that of the Fan-tailed Cuckoo. Its feet were a dull pink. The overall impression was that of a bird smaller than the Fan-tailed Cuckoo.

We observed the bird for about half an hour using Zeiss 8-30 and Gerber 7-42 binoculars. When we played the tape of the call of the Brush Cuckoo it flew directly towards the sound. It seemed to be

attracted more by what Pizzey (1980) describes as 'the shrill rising phrases'. The bird called several times while we were watching it, giving the same call we heard on 12 November. It was like the first of the calls on the B.O.C. tape. It was the only bird that was attracted to, or interested in, the call.

The Brush Cuckoo is a summer visitor to the south-east of Australia from October to February, when it is found in eucalyptus woodland and forest. It is a vagrant to the Victorian mallee (Pizzey 1980). The vegetation in the Ferries-McDonald Conservation Park is principally ridge-fruited mallee *Eucalyptus incrassata* with an understorey of broombrush *Melaleuca uncinata*, daisy bush *Olearia passerinoides* and some native pine *Callitris canescens*.

This is the first known record of the Brush Cuckoo in South Australia. Its presence may be associated with the exceptionally wet spring and early summer in southern South Australia and Victoria in 1992.

Three days later visitors did not hear the call and there was no response to playing the recording. Weather conditions were poor.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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#### REFERENCES

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- K. Figwer: 30 Gould Road, Stirling S.A. 5152*  
*R. E. Britten-Jones: 56 Alexandra Avenue, Rose Park S.A. 5067*

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