FIRST SOUTH AUSTRALIAN RECORD OF THE ORIENTAL CUCKOO CUCULUS SATURATUS. The Oriental Cuckoo Cuculus saturatus migrates to South-East Asia and Australasia for the southern summer from its breeding grounds throughout Eurasia (White 1976). Oriental Cuckoos usually arrive along the northern Australian coast in November and December then move down the eastern seaboard (Reader's Digest 1986). Although the Oriental Cuckoo has been recorded as far south as Victoria, there are no records from South Australia, nor are there records from Western Australia or Northern Territory south of 21°S (Blakers et al. 1984).

This note documents the first South Australian record of the Oriental Cuckoo.

THE RECORD

At 1620 hours on 12 November 1993, John Davey noticed an unfamiliar bird outside the Environmental Laboratory at Olympic Dam (30°29'S 136°53'E), approximately 520 km NNW of Adelaide. The bird was sitting outside his office window in a Dodonaea viscosa shrub and was oblivious to its observers less than 2 m away, because of the tinted window (see Fig. 1). The cuckoo was perched in the shade and frequently drank from a dripping airconditioner adjacent to the observer’s window. The following notes were made by JLR from the very favourable vantage point inside the office.

Description: Back, wings and throat chocolate brown with narrow incomplete rufous/orange bands. Tail chocolate brown with distinct pale orange bands. Breast strongly barred with chocolate brown, slightly narrower than the off white base colour. Dark eye with distinct and complete yellow eye ring. Upper mandible grey, lower mandible grey with yellow base and yellow gape. Feet bright yellow/orange.

Although instantly recognisable by its strongly barred breast, the Oriental Cuckoo can be readily distinguished from juvenile Pallid Cuckoos Cuculus pallidus by its bright yellow/orange feet. The barred, rather than mottled, dorsum further distinguished this bird from an immature Fan-tailed Cuckoo Cacomantis flabelliformis. The rufous colouration suggests that this individual was either a juvenile or an adult rufous phase female (Cramp 1985). However, the bright yellow/orange feet, as opposed to pale or dark yellow, suggest that the bird was an adult (Cramp 1985).

The bird was observed for over half an hour before it flew off through the dense vegetation and was not subsequently recorded.

DISCUSSION

The Oriental Cuckoo was probably attracted to the Environmental Laboratory by the dense vegetation which approaches that of its normal forest habitat. Access to water may have also enticed the cuckoo to the area but other cuckoos in the region have not been recorded drinking. The temperature at the time was 33°C. The bird may have been migrating south through central Australia or may have overwintered in Australia.

It is unlikely that the Oriental Cuckoo would compete with Pallid Cuckoos for food resources if they do migrate through the Olympic Dam area in

Table 1. Months in which Pallid Cuckoos have been recorded (+) at Olympic Dam (* = breeding record)

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Figure 1. Oriental Cuckoo outside the Environmental Laboratory at Olympic Dam.
summer although the diets and foraging mode of these species are similar (Reader's Digest 1986). Pallid Cuckoos are typically only recorded at Olympic Dam during the winter months and have generally left in summer when Oriental Cuckoos arrive in Australia (Table 1).

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REFERENCES

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