

Bird Note

Vegetation offering by a Fan-tailed Cuckoo

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While birding in Penola Conservation Park (37°21' S, 140°42' E), I noticed a Fan-tailed Cuckoo, *Cacomantis flabelliformis*, chasing another Fan-tailed Cuckoo. They were seen to land a number of times with the male seemingly displaying to the female each time.

The male was posturing in an almost perfectly horizontal position, with the beak and head stretched forward and the tail directly pointing backwards. During this posture the male would also lift his tail up to an almost vertical position.

I noted calling but am unsure if both birds were calling or if it was only the male.

Higgins (1999) describes a part of Fan-tailed Cuckoo sexual behaviour/ courtship feeding where the male will call and the female will fly to the perch next to him and the male will feed her, with the female calling during this period. In Common Cuckoo, *Cuculus canorus*, the male silently follows the female and may give a piece of vegetation to her just before mating (Payne 2005).

The unusual aspect of the behaviour I observed was the male was seen flying to where the female was perched, then postured in what appeared to be a courtship display and offered her a dried leaf and a small green leaf (Figure 1). Whether the two pieces of vegetation were picked up



Figure 1. A male Fan-tailed Cuckoo making a vegetation offering to a female Image Robert Green

intentionally or one of them was supplemental to the intended piece is not known.

This offering of vegetation matter appears not to be reported for Fan-tailed Cuckoo and it is not mentioned by Higgins (1999), which is a relatively comprehensive review of cuckoo social and mating behaviour.

REFERENCES

Higgins, P.J. (Ed) 1999. *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds. Volume 4, Parrots to dollarbird*. Oxford University Press, Melbourne.

Payne, R.B. 2005. *The Cuckoos*. Oxford University Press, Oxford. p 115.

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