

TWO YOUNG COMMON CUCKOOS (*CUCULUS CANORUS*) IN TWO DIFFERENT CLUTCHES OF THE SAME PAIR OF BLACK REDSTARTS (*PHOENICUROS OCHRUIROS*)

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Dolenec, Z.: Two young common cuckoos (*Cuculus canorus*) in two different clutches of the same pair of black redstarts (*Phoenicurus ochruros*). *Nat. Croat.*, Vol. 17, No. 3, 207–211, 2008, Zagreb.

The common cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*) is an obligate interspecific brood parasite. I report the first observations of two young cuckoos in two different clutches of the same pair of black redstarts (*Phoenicurus ochruros*) in same year, 2007. I found a young cuckoo in the grape-growing area of Andraševac (46°00'N, 15°57'E; north-western Croatia), on May 25 (first clutch) and June 30 (second clutch), 2007. According to my previous findings, a pair of black redstarts lays the clutches in the same nest during one year. The nest was situated on the inner beam of a wooden vineyard hut.

Key words: common cuckoo, *Cuculus canorus*, black redstart, *Phoenicurus ochruros*, brood parasites, north-western Croatia

Dolenec, Z.: Dvije mlade kukavice (*Cuculus canorus*) othranjene od istog para mrkih crvenrepki (*Phoenicurus ochruros*) tijekom prvog i drugog gniježđenja. *Nat. Croat.*, Vol. 17, No. 3, 207–211, 2008, Zagreb.

Kukavica (*Cuculus canorus*) je obvezni međuvrtni nametnik u razdoblju gniježđenja. Ovdje pišem o nalazu dviju mladih kukavica u dva gnijezda (prvo i drugo gniježđenje) koje su othranjene od istog para mrkih crvenrepki (*Phoenicurus ochruros*). Mlada kukavica u razdoblju prvog gniježđenja nađena je 25. svibnja 2007. godine, a druga mlada kukavica zabilježena je u gnijezdu tijekom drugog gniježđenja istog para mrkih crvenrepki 30. lipnja 2007. godine. Prema mojim dosadašnjim istraživanjima mrka crvenrepka u pravilu smješta gnijezdo na isto mjesto unutar jedne sezone. Oba gnijezda nalazila su se na istome mjestu, na unutarnjoj gredi drvene nastambe (klijeti) u vinogradu.

Ključne riječi: kukavica, *Cuculus canorus*, mrka crvenrepka, *Phoenicurus ochruros*, nametništvo u gnijezdu, sjeverozapadna Hrvatska



Fig. 1. Young cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*) in first clutch (Photo: Z. Dolenec, 25.05.2007).

According to KLEVEN *et al.* (1999) interspecific brood parasites lay their eggs in the nests of other bird species, which incubate the parasitic egg and rear the young. The common cuckoo is an obligate interspecific brood parasite. In Europe more than hundred bird species have been registered as potential hosts (WYLLIE, 1981). For example, the great reed warbler (*Acrocephalus arundinaceus*) (MOSKÁT *et al.*, 2006), the reed warbler (*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*) (KLEVEN *et al.*, 1999), the meadow pipit (*Anthus pratensis*) (AVILÉS & MØLLER, 2003), the redstart (*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*) (AVILÉS *et al.*, 2005), the black redstart (*Phoenicurus ochruros*) (DOLENEC, 2005) and other bird species. The female common cuckoo lays just one egg per host nest (DAVIES *et al.*, 1998) and typically parasites the nest before the hosts complete their clutches (MOSKÁT *et al.*, 2006). The function of host preferences remains unknown, but it is likely that cuckoos prefer hosts that provide suitable food for the parasite offspring, or that build nests from which the cuckoo nestling is able to eject host offspring, or that do not physically attack the female cuckoo when she is laying (SOLER *et al.*, 1999). An adult black redstart is about 14 cm long (FELIX & HISEK, 2002) and weighs approximately 16.5 g (PERRINS, 1987), which is only 14 % of an



Fig. 2. Young cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*) in second clutch (Photo: Z. Doleneć, 30.06.2007).

adult male cuckoo (according to data from SEEL, 1977). The mean clutch size is 4.67 (1 to 6 eggs per nest) and the mean mass of fresh laid eggs 2.12 grams (DOLENEĆ, 1999).

I found a young common cuckoo in the grape growing area of Andraševac (46°00'N, 15°57'E; north-western Croatia), on May 25 (first clutch, Fig. 1) and June 30 (second clutch, Fig. 2), 2007 (I was unable to take a photo of the young cuckoo in the nest from above because the nest was situated only about 8 to 12 cm under the roof and placed on a beam). The nest (Fig. 3) was situated on an inner beam of a vineyard hut (Fig. 4). The young cuckoo from the first clutch pushed the host's eggs out of the nest, and the young cuckoo from the second clutch pushed the host's nestlings out of the nest. Since the nest was placed on the wooden beam it was no problem for young cuckoos to push the host's eggs/nestlings out. According to my previous findings (DOLENEĆ, 1999), the pair of black redstart lays the clutches in the same nest during one year. Interspecific brood parasitism is a reproductive strategy which consists of laying eggs in the nest of another species, known as the host, which usually provides care for the eggs and chicks of the parasite



Fig. 3. The nest situated on an inner wooden beam (Photo: Z. Dolenec).



Fig. 4. Hut in the vineyard (Photo: Z. Dolenec).

(SOLER *et al.*, 1998). Rejection of parasitic eggs is the most common host defence against interspecific brood parasitism (ROTHSTEIN, 1999) and absence of rejection behaviour may be due to an evolutionary lag in the development of defensive mechanisms by the host (e.g. HOOVER, 2003).

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SAŽETAK

Dvije mlade kukavice (*Cuculus canorus*) othranjene od istog para mrkih crvenrepki (*Phoenicurus ochruros*) tijekom prvog i drugog gniježđenja

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