

CHAMBERS, S. 2009.

Birds of New Zealand - Locality Guide. 3rd edn.

Arun Books, Orewa, New Zealand.

Shining cuckoo: pp 217-218.



SHINING CUCKOO

Family Cuculidae

Species *Chrysococcyx lucidus*

Common name Shining Cuckoo

Status Endemic

Abundance Common over summer

Size 160 mm (cf sparrow 145 mm)

Habitat A bird of scrublands, secondary forests and old forest. Also vegetated suburban gardens where Grey Warblers live.

Worldwide range A migratory species which winters to the north-west of New Zealand in the Solomon Islands, the Bismarck Archipelago north-east of Papua New Guinea, Papua New Guinea and eastern Indonesia. It breeds in Australia, New Caledonia, Vanuatu and New Zealand. It is not unlike the Didric Cuckoo (*Chrysococcyx caprius*) of Africa as to size, colour, call and its habit of “domed nest” parasitism, the Shining Cuckoo parasitising the Grey Warbler’s domed

nest, the Didric Cuckoo, the domed nests of weaver birds.

New Zealand range Found throughout North, South and Stewart Islands wherever there is sufficient bush and vegetation.

Discussion The Shining Cuckoo is noted for its habit of laying its eggs in the nests of other birds, so causing the other species to rear its young, the Grey Warbler being the usual bird host in New Zealand.

Description

Upperparts Shining green. **Underparts** White, finely barred with metallic green.

Conspicuous features

- Barring on the breast.
- A flash of green when in flight.

Conspicuous characteristics

- Mating birds tend to congregate in tall trees, especially eucalypts, where they carry out noisy behaviour. This often includes fighting between males and courtship feeding with moths between pairs.
- The song gives the bird away.

Call An easily recognised “tu-wee tu-wee tu-wee tu-wee tee-wuu” whistle. Upon arrival in New Zealand in the spring, birds are very noisy. Cuckoo song is seldom heard after the end of January. There is evidence to suggest that Shining Cuckoos, when in New Zealand, are in fact a territorial species, actually living throughout the breeding season within the defined territories of several pairs of Grey Warblers. Cuckoo song might therefore be a proclamation of territory as well as a way of attracting a mate.

Nesting The Grey Warbler’s nest is the preferred host but Silvereyes and Fantails are also on record as having reared cuckoo chicks. One olive-green egg is laid. A recent study suggests the cuckoo enters the nest head first, lays the egg and then retreats without damaging the nest (see Grey Warbler article).

Date of arrival Around the first week in September.

Date of departure Early February but some birds are still here at the end of March. These may be the young birds of late broods.

Where to find

Expect them anywhere where there is vegetation including eucalypts. They are widespread throughout forested areas. Listen for them, especially when near manuka or kanuka forests which are favourite haunts of the Grey Warbler.