

Common Koel *Eudynamys scolopaceus* new for Turkmenistan

ELDAR A RUSTAMOV, SHANIYAZ MENLIEV & EVGENIY AGRYZKOV

A female Common Koel *Eudynamys scolopaceus* was recorded by us in extreme southeast Turkmenistan at 37° 45' 30" N, 66° 22' 01" E on 8 May 2013, in the Koitendar'ya river valley near Khodjagaraul in the foothills of the western escarpment of the Kugitangtau (Koitendag) mountain range. The main characteristics of the species were clearly observed (profusely spotted and barred white with buff spots on the head). The bird stayed in a 4.5 ha area overgrown with Lucerne *Medicago sativa* and scattered Mulberry *Morus nigra*, Osage apple *Maclura pomifera*, Elm *Ulmus carpinifolia* and Plum *Prunus domestica* (Plate 1). The bird was shy, and frequented the same Mulberry tree most of the time, feeding on the fruits. Other avian spp recorded in the area included Long-tailed Shrike *Lanius schach* (one nest with six eggs), Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* (one pair), two pairs of Laughing Doves *Spilopelia senegalensis*, Masked Wagtail *Motacilla personata* (one pair), Indian House Sparrow *Passer (domesticus) indicus* (four large colonies in tops of Elm trees and under roofs of single-storey constructions in the vicinity), Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* (three pairs) and Indian Myna *Acridotheres tristis* (three pairs under roofs). Both Long-tailed Shrike and Indian Myna have been recorded as hosts of Common Koel (Begum *et al* 2011). The bird was found dead (Plate 2), 14 May 2013, under the same Mulberry tree where it was watched feeding. The reason for its death is unknown but it was possibly killed by local people of the garden. The following measurements (mm) of the bird were taken: wing 180, tail 174, tarso-metatarsus 30, beak 27 (to forehead) and 21 (to nostril).



Plate 1. Habitat where the female Common Koel *Eudynamys scolopaceus* was observed, Khodjagaraul, Turkmenistan.
© E Rustamov

Common Koel habitats include open forest, forest margins and undergrowth, sparse forest, outskirts of monsoon forests, mangrove forests and scrubby river valleys; it also frequents gardens and parks around settlements (Payne 2005). The habitats of the Koitendar'ya river are similar, gardens around settlement. The species is distributed in Asia from the Indus south to Sri Lanka, including the Maldives, east to the southern shore of the Yellow sea, southeast to the Greater and Lesser Sunda



Plate 2. Dead female Common Koel *Eudynamys scolopacea*, Khodjagaraul, Turkmenistan, 14 May 2013. © E Agryzkov. Seen alive 8 May 2013 (see text).

islands and Philippines (Payne 1997). The nearest populations to Turkmenistan are those in the northern part of the Indian subcontinent (that in eastern Pakistan is c650 km away). There are currently seventeen recognized subspecies (Payne 1997). Ali (1964) described the species as not only resident but also locally migratory. Payne (2005) considered the species to have great potential for colonizing new areas.

This is the first record of Common Koel for Turkmenistan (Rustamov 2015). It has not been recorded in Kazakhstan (Sklyarenko *et al* 2008, Wassink 2015) or Uzbekistan (Kashkarov *et al* 2008) and Ayé *et al* (2012) only include it in their appendix 1 (old vagrants, undocumented records and doubtfully recorded species, for Afghanistan). Mike Blair (*in litt*) considers that the species is uncommon, local, but regular in Afghanistan south of the Khyber range perhaps due to the big increase in small dams and local irrigation schemes there. It might be found in extreme southern Uzbekistan and southwestern Tajikistan in the future. Other OSME region records are vagrants to Iran, Kuwait, Socotra and UAE (Porter & Aspinall 2010). In Oman it is a fairly common but irregular visitor with records in every month except July (Eriksen & Victor 2013).

LITERATURE CITED

- Ali, S. 1964. *The Book of Indian Birds*. Bombay NHS, Bombay.
- Ayé, R, M Schweizer & T Roth. 2012. *Birds of Central Asia*. Bloomsbury, London.
- Begum, S, A Moksnes, E Røskaft & BG Stokke. 2011. Interactions between the Asian koel (*Eudynamys scolopacea*) and its hosts. *Behaviour* 148(3): 325–340.
- Eriksen, J & R Victor. 2013. *Oman Bird List*. 7th edn. CESAR, Sultan Qaboos University, Muscat.
- Kashkarov, RD, GR Welch & M Brombacher, M (eds). 2008. *Important Bird Areas in Uzbekistan*. Uzbekistan Society for the Protection of Birds, Tashkent.
- Payne, RB. 1997. Family Cuculidae (Cuckoos). In: del Hoyo, J, A Elliott & J Sargatal (eds). *Handbook of the Birds of the World*. Vol 4. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona.
- Payne, RB. 2005. *The Cuckoos*. Oxford University Press, UK.
- Porter, R & S Aspinall. 2010. *Birds of the Middle East*. Christopher Helm, London.
- Rustamov, EA. 2015. An annotated checklist of the birds of Turkmenistan. *Sandgrouse* 37: 28–56.
- Sklyarenko SL, GR Welch & M Brombacher (eds). 2008. *Important Bird Areas in Kazakhstan*. Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity of Kazakhstan, Almaty.
- Wassink, A. 2015. *The New Birds of Kazakhstan*. Wassink, De Cocksdorp, Texel, Netherlands.

Eldar A Rustamov, Turkmenistan, Ashgabat, ul. Khodjav Annadurdyeva, 57A. elldaru@mail.ru