



short communication / kratko priopćenje

## YOUNG CUCKOO (*CUCULUS CANORUS*) IN THE NEST OF THE BLACK REDSTART (*PHOENICURUS OCHRUIROS*)

**ZDRAVKO DOLENEC**

Department of Zoology, Faculty of Science, University of Zagreb,  
Rooseveltova trg 6, HR-10000 Zagreb, Croatia  
(E-mail: [dolenec@zg.biol.pmf.hr](mailto:dolenec@zg.biol.pmf.hr))

**Dolenec, Z.: Young cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*) in the nest of the black redstart (*Phoenicurus ochruros*). Nat. Croat., Vol. 14, No. 1., 53–55, 2005, Zagreb.**

I found a young cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*) in the nest of the black redstart (*Phoenicurus ochruros*) in the viticultural area of Andraševac (46°00'N, 15°57'E), in north-western Croatia, on June 15, 2004. The nest was situated on an outer wooden beam of a building in a vineyard.

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

**Dolenec, Z.: Mlada kukavica (*Cuculus canorus*) u gnijezdu mrke crvenrepke (*Phoenicurus ochruros*). Nat. Croat., Vol. 14, No. 1., 53–55, 2005, Zagreb.**

Na vinogradarskom području Andraševca (46°00'N, 15°57'E; sjeverozapadna Hrvatska) 15. lipnja 2004. godine našao sam mladu kukavicu (*Cuculus canorus*) u gnijezdu mrke crvenrepke (*Phoenicurus ochruros*). Gnijezdo se nalazilo na vanjskoj gredi drvene nastambe (klijeti) u vinogradu.

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

Avian brood-parasites are birds that lay their eggs in the nests of other bird (host) species, which incubate their eggs and rear their young. Brood-parasites are of special interest because of the extraordinary range of adaptations they have evolved for their specialized way of living (PERRINS & BIRKHEAD, 1983). After the spring migration from tropical Africa, the female common cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*) starts laying eggs from the beginning of May until mid-July (WYLLIE, 1981). According to CHANCE (1940), the cuckoo lays up to 25 eggs per season. Each egg is generally laid separately in different host nests. Often, the cuckoo female removes one or two of the host eggs before laying its own egg. If eggs of the host bird remain in the nest, the young cuckoo will eject these eggs soon after hatching. In Europe, the favourite hosts of the cuckoo seem to be various warblers from the genera *Acro-*



Fig. 1. Young cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*) (Photo: Z. Doleneć).

*cephalus* and *Sylvia*, pipits (*Anthus* spp.) and wagtails (*Motacilla* spp.), dunnock (*Prunella modularis*), wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*) and robin (*Erithacus rubecula*) (MOKS-NES & RØSKAFT, 1995).

I found a young cuckoo (Fig.1) in the nest of the black redstart (*Phoenicurus ochruros*) in the viticultural area of Andraševac, in NW Croatia, on 15. June 2004 (Fig.1). The nest was situated on an outer wooden beam of a building in a vineyard. According to some authors, cuckoo egg-laying in the nest of the black redstart is a rare event (e.g. WYLLIE, 1981). However, MAKATSCH (1955) regards it as a regular host in parts of Germany, and especially in Switzerland (The Alps). Furthermore, in Switzerland, a cuckoo parasitizing black redstarts lays white eggs that are highly mimetic of the host eggs (MAKATSCH, 1955). Interestingly, it is well-known that the closely related redstart (*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*) is a quite common host of the cuckoo in some parts of Europe, and that cuckoos laying eggs in nests of this species produce pale blue eggs that are excellent mimics of the host eggs (e.g. RUTILA *et al.*, 2002).

Received September 20, 2004

## REFERENCES

- CHANCE, E. P., 1940: The truth about the Cuckoo. Country Life, London.
- DOLENEC, Z., 2002: Intraspecific nest parasitism in the starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) in northwestern Croatia. *Natura Croatica* **10**(4), 315–320.
- MAKATSCH, W., 1955: Der Brutparasitismus in der Vogelwelt. Neumann Verlag, Radebeul und Berlin.
- MOKSNES, A. & RØSKAFT, E. 1995: Egg-morphs and host preference in the common cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*): an analysis of cuckoo and host eggs from European museum collections. *J. Zool.* **236**, 625–648.
- PERRINS, C. M. & BIRKHEAD, T. R., 1983: Avian Ecology. Champon and Hall, New York.
- RUTILA, J., LATJA, R. & KOSKELA, K. 2002: The common cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* and its cavity nesting host, the redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*: a peculiar cuckoo-host system. *J. Avian Biol.* **33**, 414–419.
- WYLLIE, I., 1981: The cuckoo. Universe books, New York.

## SAŽETAK

### **Mlada kukavica (*Cuculus canorus*) u gnijezdu mrke crvenrepke (*Phoenicurus ochruros*)**

Z. Dolenc

U ovome se članku daju prvi podaci o mrkoj crvenrepki kao domaćinu kukavice na području Hrvatske. Dok neki europski ornitolozi govore o rijetkom nametništvu kukavice u gnijezdu mrke crvenrepke, drugi to ne smatraju rijetkošću. Teško je odrediti korijene nametništva tijekom razmnožavanja (nesenje jaja u gnijezda drugih ptica). U nekih je ptica poznato nametništvo unutar vrste, primjerice u čvorka (DOLENEC, 2002), pa je vjerojatno mali korak između unutarvrstnog i međuvrstnog nametništva. Velike su evolucijske prednosti ptica nametnika. Nepostojanje roditeljske skrbi daje ženki mogućnost većeg usmjeravanja energije na razmnožavanje ili joj daje veće izgleda za preživljavanje do sljedeće sezone razmnožavanja.