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FIRST EVIDENCE OF EARLY SOCIALIZATION IN THE GREAT SPOTTED CUCKOO (*CLAMATOR GLANDARIUS*)

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Social behaviour of parasitic cuckoos remains unknown for most species. Up to date, basic life history patterns (mating systems, population structure, etc.) of these species are almost nothing but a matter of controversy, with the exception of the Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*) which has been

studied more intensively (CRAMP & SIMMONS, 1985).

Several observations support the view that early before migratory departure and shortly after arrival in spring, the Great Spotted Cuckoo (*Clamator glandarius*) becomes mildly gregarious (CRAMP & SIMMONS,

1985). During the breeding season, Palearctic cuckoos hold territories, probably containing a single breeding pair (ARIAS DE REYNA et al., 1987). For Ethiopian populations, no information is available concerning the social pattern of the species during winter.

In Spain, the breeding season of *C. glandarius* ends about mid-June, most of chicks fledging in late May. Young cuckoos spend about three months in their breeding quarters, before migrating on late August.

On June the 30th 1985, at 8h 10min p.m. (G.M.T.), two juvenile *C. glandarius* resting together on a wire fence nearby Guadiloba river (6° 12' W - 39° 26' N), Cáceres, were observed. The birds kept on perching for about two minutes and then flew away together. The nearest known nests where great spotted cuckoos are reared by magpies were 8 km away.

While South-african species of *Cuculus* and *Chrysococcyx* live solitarily or in pairs. *Clamator* cuckoos are usually seen in small groups (MACLEAN, 1985). Association between immature *C. glandarius* has not been reported to happen before the migratory season. The observation reported here, albeit anecdotal, could be indicative of early socialization in Great Spotted Cuckoo juveniles.

In captivity, post-fledged Great Spotted Cuckoo chicks roost in a strongly contagious way and they interact frequently. They also utter contact calls regularly (see RISCH & FRISCH, 1967, for a description of the calls) which elicit subsequent calling in other birds, in a "chorus"-like manner (Redondo, unpublished). Maybe such a frequent vocal advertisement serves to facilitate encounters between young birds in the wild.

It is the aim of this note to stimulate further reports or observations on this subject.

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ABSTRACT

First evidence of early socialization in the Great Spotted Cuckoo (Clamator glandarius).— The scarce information available regarding social behaviour of parasitic cuckoos suggests that most species are solitary out of the migratory season. *Clamator* cuckoos tend to live in small groups during winter. A single observation of two juvenile great spotted cuckoos resting and flying together in early summer is reported. Coupled with observations of captive birds, this fact suggests that Great Spotted Cuckoo may establish social relationships at an early age.

Key words: *Clamator glandarius*, Great Spotted Cuckoo, Ontogeny, Social behaviour.

RESUMEN

Primera evidencia de sociabilidad temprana en el Críalo (Clamator glandarius).

La escasa información existente sobre el comportamiento social de los cucúliidos parásitos sugiere que la mayoría de las especies son solitarias fuera del período de migración. Durante el invierno, los individuos adultos de *Clamator* tienden, sin embargo, a vivir en grupos. Se refiere en esta nota la observación de dos jóvenes críalos posados y volando juntos a principios de verano. Este hecho y observaciones en cautividad sugieren que el Críalo puede mantener relaciones sociales ya desde una edad temprana.

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