

Feather Fascination!

with local Birdwatcher, Jim Butler

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HOW AND WHERE TO FIND THOSE SUMMER CUCKOOS

The two large noisy cuckoos are still with us. Several years ago a Channel-billed Cuckoo used a Crow's nest at the end of our street. The fledged chick stayed in the trees in our street for months begging for food from the crows. Everyone in the street learnt the bird's name and call. Here's how to identify the two big cuckoos and their calls.

The Birds in Backyards website has photos and calls for all our birds. To learn the call of the Koel, go to www.birdsinbackyards.net/species/Eudynamys-orientalis. You will see photos of the Koel and the button for its call. Play the call and you will recognise it I am sure. Search in the same website for the *Channel-billed Cuckoo* and listen to its call.

The second step is to know where it forages and what it eats.

Both of these cuckoos feed on fruits and forage high in the canopy of large trees. For this reason, both birds are difficult to find when they are perched and feeding, you really need them to be calling to pinpoint their location.

The special aspect to finding cuckoos is that they are often noisily attacked by groups of their host species. Flocks of crows can be seen harassing a pair of Channel-billed Cuckoos high in the sky. The crows know the cuckoo is seeking to exploit their nests and they fight to repel them. Listen out for flocks of birds uttering loud and raucous alarm calls, and they can lead you to the mobbing of a cuckoo.

– Jim

Image: Eastern Koel – Neil Humphris ©

Apologies to Jim Butler and our readers for running the incorrect caption in November's issue of 'Feather Fascination' column. The caption that should have been shown with this image (right) is below.

Image: Channel-Billed Cuckoo - Neil Humphris ©

