

the subject; that the bird is too large to be reared by so small a bird as the grey warbler (*Pseudogerygone igata*); and that any evidence in favour of the grey warbler being a foster-parent to the long-tailed cuckoo is the case of mistaken identity. At first sight these views certainly appear sensible. But in order to agree with this point of view one has to explain certain things away. For instance, Dr. Buller himself mentions an egg taken from a grey warbler's nest by Mr. Smith, which he (Buller) compared with one he already had. Next we find that discussing the relationship between grey warblers and cuckoos in Vol. 39 of "The Emu," 1939, you yourself comment: "I cannot understand the statements of Buller and Fulton that there are many well-authenticated cases of the warblers feeding the long-tailed cuckoo. . . it is my belief that these supposed instances are based on cases of mistaken identity." Possibly there are those who will accept this statement entirely, but knowing that the observers of the past were mainly extremely careful, I, personally, would prefer to hold an open mind.

Next I would wish to refer to page 59 of Dr. W. R. B. Oliver's work, "New Zealand Birds." Here he says: "A number of species of birds are parasitized by the long-tailed cuckoo. Eggs supposed to belong to this species have been taken from nests of the grey warbler." (Note the word "eggs," not "one egg" is used. The statement is in the plural.) Dr. Oliver then proceeds to quote the method employed by the long-tailed cuckoo to deposit its egg in the nest of the grey warbler. As he takes it from a statement made by Johannes C. Andersen in "New Zealand Song Birds" (1926) I will proceed to quote what this author has to say on the subject:—"It once seemed doubtful if the egg was ever placed in the nest of the riroriro (warbler) as the young of the shining cuckoo fills it completely when fledged, and the long-tailed cuckoo is a much larger bird, but the insertion of the egg in the nest has actually been observed by Mr. Overton, of Otago. The egg was first laid on the ground, and then carried by the bird in its beak and placed in the nest."

Now to comment upon the impossibility of warblers rearing so large a bird as the long-tailed cuckoo of New Zealand. In Great Britain the size of the famous cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*) is 14 inches, just two inches smaller than the long-tailed cuckoo, which is 16 inches. At one time if somebody had suggested to me that this 14-inch bird had as foster-parent the smallest bird in Britain, namely, the tiny gold-crest (*Regulus regulus anglorum*) I would have replied like the person who saw a giraffe for the first time, "I just don't believe it." The fact remains, however, that it is on record that this wee wren is amongst those which have been parasitized by the 14-inch cuckoo. The size of the gold-crest is 3.6 inches in length. For this I have the authority of the "British Bird Book," where F. C. R. Jourdain, after discussing "the cuckoo's foster-parents and eggs," gives a list of authenticated cases of species parasitized by the British cuckoo. The list is a surprisingly long one and contains the names of very small birds such as the chiff-chaff as well as that of the gold-crest.

In the light of the above record of a 14-inch cuckoo parasitizing a 3.6-inch wren, is it so impossible to visualise the same thing happening to a 4.5-inch warbler by the 16-inch long-tailed cuckoo in New Zealand?

Bearing this in mind and having in view the facts that I have quoted previously, I have not felt justified in removing the name of the grey warbler from the list of those birds acting as foster-parents to the long-tailed cuckoo.—I am, etc., PERRINE MONCRIEFF, sometime president of the R.A.O.U., and vice-president of the Forest and Bird Protection Society of New Zealand. Nelson, 4/11/48.

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