

## FLEDGING OF YOUNG SHINING CUCKOO

By HARRY WAKELIN

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At Glenbrook Beach near Waiuku on 19/11/66 I noticed a pair of Grey Warblers (*Gerygone igata*) working on an almost completed nest about seven feet above the ground. When I next visited the site on December 10th the nest contained very small young, but I could not be sure if all were yet hatched. The day was very stormy and the hen brooded frequently. The cock bird would return with food and seemed nonplussed to find the nest occupied.

On December 17th I found a small cuckoo (*Chalcites lucidus*) in the nest. I could only tell by feeling with my fingers, but I could feel its head larger than a Grey Warbler's would be. It was still in the bottom of the nest. On December 24th the cuckoo was virtually fully fledged with its head at the nest opening all the time. I noted that it held itself in that position by clinging to the rim of the entrance, thus effectively blocking access to any other young that might be in the nest.

About 11 a.m. it climbed half-way out of the nest. I set up the cameras and waited the rest of the day, expecting it to emerge at any time. Feeding continued till quite late. When it was almost dark, the cuckoo settled back into the nest with its head to one side of the opening to make room for a foster-parent to brood. I had the impression that the adult Grey Warbler would sit on its shoulder. I watched until my eyes played tricks from peering through the dark, but I did not see the adult return to brood.

December 25th — still no change. I caused something of a panic by attaching a microphone to a tree near the nest. The first Grey Warbler to return fluttered around a bit before landing on the nest; but after that, both parents approached by another way and landed on the opposite side of the nest entrance, away from the microphone. Photography was now very awkward.

Between feeding the cuckoo seemed to keep silent. I noticed that whenever the foster-parents brought food, they hesitated before flying away. About two out of every three visits, the cuckoo would violently peck at the foster-parent to make it fly away, but on the third visit, while the adult waited, it would do a contortion act and turn completely over in the nest, presenting its rear. The Grey Warbler would then remove the faecal sac.

There was little opportunity for observation on December 25th. Also I had picked up too much wind-noise on the sound tape, so I set it up again on the 26th. When I began watching early, everything seemed as before; and it was still too gloomy to set up a movie camera. At 9.30 a.m. the cuckoo stretched out of the nest twice as it had often done before. Then all of a sudden it scrambled out completely and up into the growth above.

Soon Fantails and White-eyes came and peered down as if in curiosity that such a monstrosity should emerge from a Grey Warbler's nest. Then pandemonium was let loose as the Warblers went berserk and vigorously drove them all away. The cock bird, in great agitation, called almost continuously and fussed about the young cuckoo, which within a very few minutes was flying from branch to branch as it followed its foster parent's call. Within half an hour it was well up in a tree about a chain from the nest. Barefoot among the blackberries, I had a painful time following it. Next day it was accompanying its foster parents in the tops of the manuka very near the spot where I had last seen it on the previous day. If the young cuckoo was hatched about December 10th, the period for fledging was about sixteen days.



Plate VIII — Young Shining Cuckoo

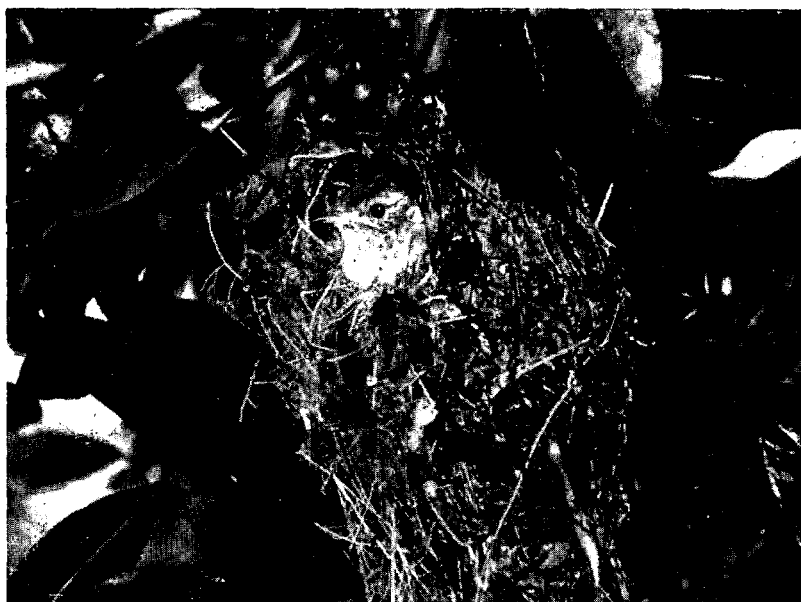


Plate IX — Young Shining Cuckoo



Plate X — Young Shining Cuckoo



Plate XI — Young Shining Cuckoo



Plate XII — Young Shining Cuckoo



Plate XIII — Young Shining Cuckoo



Plate XIV — Young Shining Cuckoo