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AGGRESSION BY DIDERICK CUCKOO TOWARDS KLAAS'S CUCKOO

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AGGRESSION BY DIDERICK CUCKOO TOWARDS KLAAS'S CUCKOO

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This short paper describes my first record of Klaas's Cuckoo at Melville Koppies and the first for the Second Southern African Bird Atlas Project (SABAP2) in the pentad 2610_2800 which embraces central Johannesburg (see Fig 1). A pentad is a 5 min latitude x 5 min longitude square for the purpose of surveys for SABAP2.

On 17.11.2014 I heard the call of Klaas's Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx klaas* on Melville Koppies East (also known as Louw Geldenhuys view site). I was easily able to locate the bird as it called from a conspicuous position in a tree in one of the last gardens in Kafue Road (which are immediately adjacent to the site). The tree in which the bird was observed is located on the highest point on the ridge.

The bird then relocated into the only other tree on the ridge with a higher apex. It was immediately confronted by a Diderick Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx caprius* which called in an increasingly agitated fashion. The Diderick moved towards the intruder in a territorial aggressor posture with wings open and down (Figs 2 and 3). I have previously observed this competitive encounters between rival males of this species.

The Klaas's Cuckoo returned this gesture (which I have never observed in Klaas's Cuckoo before, but assume that it is also natural to this species). The evidently enraged Diderick Cuckoo flew at the



Fig 1 – The Klaas's Cuckoo at Melville Koppies described as being the first record of this species in SABAP2 pentad 2610_2800. © A Paton

Klaas's Cuckoo, put it to flight and pursued it aggressively for at least 300-400 m, beyond which both birds went out of view.

About 10-15 minutes later the Klaas's Cuckoo returned, calling from the second highest tree. It then moved to the highest tree and was repulsed again as described above. Within a further 10-15 minutes the Klaas's Cuckoo had returned and was calling for a third time, but at this stage I was unable to stay any longer to ascertain which species would outlast the other. There was a female Diderick Cuckoo present in the tree as well, but no female Klaas's Cuckoo that I was aware of.



Fig 2 – A male Diderick Cuckoo displaying – Maanhaarrand © A Paton

Presumably, as the tree is the highest point on top of the ridge, it is considered a prime calling post and this may explain why the Klaas’s Cuckoo continued to return despite the aggressive reception. Why the Diderick Cuckoo expended so much energy on expelling a non-conspecific is not obvious. If there are any previous records of this particular type of interspecific rivalry, I was unable to locate them.



Fig 3 – A male Diderick Cuckoo displaying with wings downward to show aggression towards an intruder
Maanhaarrand © A Paton

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