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Observations on brood parasitic behavior of Jacobin Cuckoo fledgling at AMU campus, Uttar Pradesh

The avian brood parasites depend totally on the hosts to raise their young. They lay eggs directly into the nest of their hosts and leave parental care duties to the foster parents (Payne 1977; Ridley & Thompson 2012). It is rather a rare breeding strategy, a total of 100 species of brood parasites exist, accounting for nearly 1% of all the avian species (Davies 2000). Over 200 host species in various habitats, from reedbeds to mountainous areas, are known to be exploited across their range, indicating strong relationships with many passerine species occurring in various habitats (Yun & Lee 2022).

In southern Asian countries, brood parasitism is found in several members of the family Cuculidae and one species of Indicatoridae, i.e., the Yellow-rumped Honeyguide (Ali & Ripley 1981b; Praveen & Lowther 2020). However, there are only a few of these



Adult Jungle Babbler.



Jungle Babbler fledgling.



Adult Jungle Babbler feeding the fledglings.

parasites, and their associated hosts' interactions have been studied in detail (Nahid et al. 2016).

Jacobin Cuckoo is a partial migrant species belonging



Adult Jacobin Cuckoo.



Jacobin Cuckoo fledgling.



Adult Jungle Babbler with both the fledglings. © Mirza Altaf Baig.

to the family Cuculidae and is found throughout the Indian subcontinent up to an elevation of 2,600 m (Ali & Ripley 1981a). The host species within its range includes the genus *Argya*

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mainly in the plains and the *Garrulax* species at the higher elevations (Gaston 1976; Becking 1981; Praveen & Lowther 2020). Bhatt (2019) has documented a Jacobin Cuckoo pair trying to distract an Indian Paradise-Flycatcher at its nest. Their breeding season mainly coincides with the monsoon when most regions of the subcontinent have received a sufficient amount of rain and the caterpillars are abundant (Payne 2005; Praveen & Lowther 2020).

During a visit on 2 August 2021 at the Aligarh Muslim University campus, Aligarh District, Uttar Pradesh (27.912 N; 78.081 E), we sighted a Jacobin Cuckoo fledgling within a flock of Jungle Babblers. As we approached, it flew and perched on the outer canopy of *Senna siamea* tree. The babblers kept foraging on the ground. The parasitic fledgling was observed calling constantly throughout the time. After some time, the flock moved to the same branch the cuckoo fledgling was perched upon. As the babblers approached, it started calling loudly begging for food. A few minutes later, the parasite fledgling moved to the inner canopy of the same tree.

Three days later, we found the same scenario near the previous location. This time the Babbler fledgling was also there as the nestlings of this cuckoo species are non-evictors of host eggs (Payne 2005). The Jacobin Cuckoo fledgling was at a distance from the host fledgling, hiding within the grasses or perching on the outer canopy of a nearby *Ficus benghalensis* tree, but kept changing its position according to the movement of the Babbler fledgling. The adult babblers were observed picking figs from the ground. The cuckoo fledgling was exhibiting a peculiar wing movement while calling for food, similar to that of the host fledgling. As the parent approached the host fledgling, the parasitic fledgling quickly moved there and took a large amount of food from the beak of the foster parent. The babbler fledgling tried to push the cuckoo in order to get the proper amount of food. This happened several times until the cuckoo fledgling flew away. Similar kind of observations of the Common Hawk-Cuckoo and Jungle Babbler pair has been reported from Bhubaneswar, Odisha (Priyadarshini & Satapathy 2021).

Within the same campus, the other brood parasites recorded are Asian Koel and Common Hawk-Cuckoo. The Jungle Babblers that are parasitized by the two widely distributed cuckoos in peninsular India will be the perfect subject for further exploration.

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