

Notes



Mating behaviour of Cuckoos At approximately 08.00 GMT on 5th June 1986, on an alpine heath, in the vicinity of Ammarnäs, south Swedish Lapland, I heard a 'gowk' call and saw two Cuckoos *Cuculus canorus* approaching in a wild and noisy pursuit flight from the adjacent birch wood. When they came closer, I could see one distinctly smaller individual (female) being chased by a larger one (male).

After this initial pursuit, which covered about 200 m, the female landed on a birch branch some 50 m distant, and the male started to circle above her. Shortly after landing, the female 'bubbled' and took off. She began to fly in circles, with the male making slightly larger revolutions above her. After completing two circles, consisting of both flapping and gliding flight, the female landed on the same branch with her tail lowered. The male completed one more circle and landed directly on her back.

Copulation took less than five seconds, and the pair was silent during both the circling flight and the mating. Directly after coition, the male flew off silently in the same direction whence they had originally arrived, and the female started to preen. During this time, a Cuckoo was heard calling from the wood, and, after about two minutes, the female stopped preening and flew off at an angle of about 70° to that of the male's flight.

Copulation by Cuckoos is rarely observed, and this pre-copulatory circling display flight is not described in *BWP* 4.

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