

Common Name/Scientific name: **Fan-tailed Cuckoo/*Cacomantis flabelliformis***

Some species of birds sing only during the breeding season, but this is not strictly true for Fan-tailed Cuckoos. Although their plaintive, descending, trilled calls are most commonly heard in forests and woodlands during the spring and early summer breeding season, they are also occasionally heard at other times of the year — sometimes they even call in winter — though less often. Some populations of the species are migratory for breeding (eg in southern NSW and Victoria) but most on the Sunshine Coast are not.



Description: The Fan-tailed Cuckoo is a slender cuckoo and the adult bird is easily identified by a yellow eye ring (slightly greenish in young birds), its generally dark slate-grey back and wings, becoming pale rufous below, with a boldly barred black and white under tail. Younger birds are duller and browner in colour.

Where seen in the gardens: Its natural habitats are temperate forests, subtropical or tropical mangrove forests, subtropical or tropical moist mountain forests, paddocks, orchards and gardens. The Australian range is from Cape York in Queensland following the coast south to Shark Bay in Western Australia, and up to 1000km inland. In the gardens look in any forested area, except the very dense riparian vegetation along the major creeks.

Feeding & Behaviour in the gardens: The Fan-tailed Cuckoo enjoys hairy caterpillars in its diet, but will also take a variety of other insects and their larvae, fruits and vegetables, small reptiles, mammals and birds, especially bird chicks. Food is located from an exposed perch and is seized in flight or from the ground. The bird often returns to its perch to eat the prey.

Nesting: As with most other species of Australian cuckoos, the Fan-tailed Cuckoo is a brood parasite; laying its eggs in the nests of other species of birds. Host species include flycatchers, fairy-wrens, scrubwrens and thornbills, particularly the Brown Thornbill, *Acanthiza pusilla*. A single egg is laid in the nest and one of the host's eggs removed. The young cuckoo generally hatches earlier than the host's eggs and proceeds to eject the other eggs or hatchlings. The seemingly unaware foster parents then rear the cuckoo chick.

Similar Species in the gardens: The Shining Bronze-Cuckoos are a little larger, have bronze-coloured upperparts with green upper body and brown/white bold stripes on the chest and underparts. Although widespread throughout Australia, the also similar Pallid Cuckoo has only been recorded in the gardens once (Oct.2018).