

FEATURE ARTICLES

**COEVOLUTIONARY INTERACTIONS BETWEEN COMMON CUCKOOS AND  
CORN BUNTINGS**

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*Abstract.* Although Old World buntings (Emberizinae) may be considered suitable Common Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*) hosts, there is at present no evidence that any of the European species are regularly parasitized. Most historical parasitism records refer to the Yellowhammer (*Emberiza citrinella*) and Reed Bunting (*E. schoeniclus*). Both of these species reject almost 100% of experimentally added nonmimetic eggs, and also a considerable proportion of experimentally added conspecific eggs, showing exquisite egg discrimination abilities. In this paper, we report Common Cuckoo parasitism and egg rejection behavior in a Bulgarian population of another Old World Emberizinae, the Corn Bunting (*Miliaria calandra*). We found this species was regularly parasitized (9%, 8 of 90 nests) and that the parasitism rate was consistent among the three years of our study. Naturally laid Common Cuckoo eggs were fairly good mimics of host eggs and most were accepted (5 of 7). The Corn Bunting proved to be a suitable Common Cuckoo host as we recorded a successfully fledged cuckoo chick. Unlike Yellowhammers and Reed Buntings, Corn Buntings rejected only 42% (16 of 38) of experimentally introduced nonmimetic model Common Cuckoo eggs and none of the experimentally introduced conspecific eggs ( $n = 13$ ). Parasitized nests had more and higher trees in the vicinity than unparasitized nests and breeding habitat characteristics may explain the difference in egg discrimination abilities between Corn Buntings and other Old World Emberizinae.

*Key words:* brood parasitism, Common Cuckoo, Corn Bunting, egg rejection, spatial habitat structure hypothesis.