

BRONZE CUCKOOS



• *Little Bronze Cuckoo*

Photo: B. & J. Morgan

Bronze Cuckoos *Chalcites* spp.

Bill width was measured in front of the nostrils with calipers, as described by Mayr (1932). Plumage descriptions were taken from skins held with the head pointing downwards and towards a light source, but not in full sunlight. In full sunlight the colours may be somewhat different, tending to be more iridescent and overall bronze.

DIAGNOSTIC CHARACTERS

The Horsfield Bronze Cuckoo can be distinguished from all other Australian Bronze Cuckoos by its rufous outer webs to the tail feathers. The Shining and Golden Bronze Cuckoos differ from each other on bill width. The Little and Rufous-breasted Bronze Cuckoos can be distinguished from all other Australian Bronze Cuckoos on their small size, red occipital rings and usually red iris. Although little is known of these two species, the best distinguishing characters appear to be

the overall rufous wash to the upper parts of the Rufous-breasted and the contrasting mantle and crown, with rufous on tail only, of the Little Bronze Cuckoo.

References

- Mayr, E. (1932) Birds collected during the Whitney South Sea Expedition XIX—'Notes on the Bronze Cuckoo *Chalcites lucidus* and its subspecies'. *Amer. Mus. Novit.* 520:1.

Drawings by B. Bertram

Horsfield Bronze Cuckoo *Chalcites basalis*

Bill width: Narrow, 4.3 mm or less.

Forehead: No white.

Crown, hind neck, mantle: Brownish with slight purplish bronze tinge.

Juvenile: Greyish brown.

Back: Bronze green.

Juvenile: Dull brownish green.

Wing coverts: Buffish white edges, sometimes lost with wear.

Juvenile: Slight rufous edges.

Tail: Feather No. 5 with five to seven large white spots. Feathers No. 4-2 rufous for two-thirds of both webs, or sometimes the outer web of No. 2.

Juvenile: Similar but rufous less intense.

Chin: Streaked brown.

Juvenile: Greyish buff.

Throat and breast: Wavy brown bars.

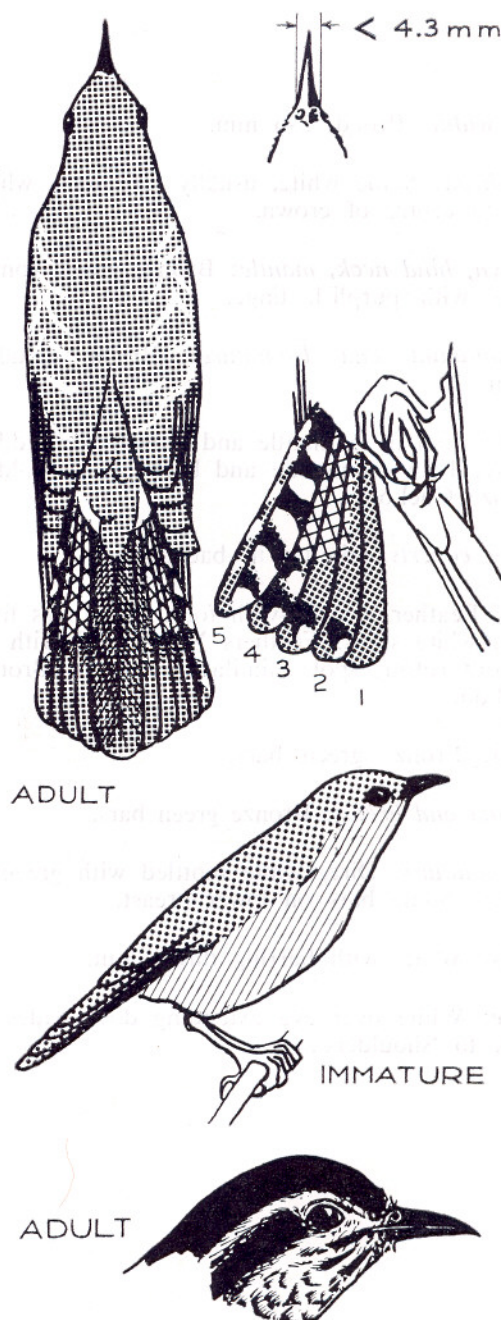
Juvenile: Greyish buff as for chin.

Belly: Centre line of belly white, separating strongly brown-barred flanks. Occasionally with barring throughout.

Juvenile: Buff. No barring on belly or flanks.

Face: White line over eye extending down to 'shoulders' separated from chin and throat by a brown line through ear coverts.

Juvenile: Eye line absent or slight.



Shining Bronze Cuckoo *Chalcites lucidus*

Bill width: Broad, 5-6 mm.

Forehead: Some white, usually forming a white line to centre of crown.

Crown, hind neck, mantle: Bronze green, sometimes with purplish tinge.

Sub-adult and Immature: Bright metallic green.

Back: Similar to mantle and crown. No sudden change between mantle and back, as in Golden Bronze Cuckoos.

Wing coverts: Similar to back.

Tail: Feather No. 5—with four, sometimes five, large white spots. Feathers No. 4 & 3 with or without rufous spots, similar to Golden Bronze Cuckoo.

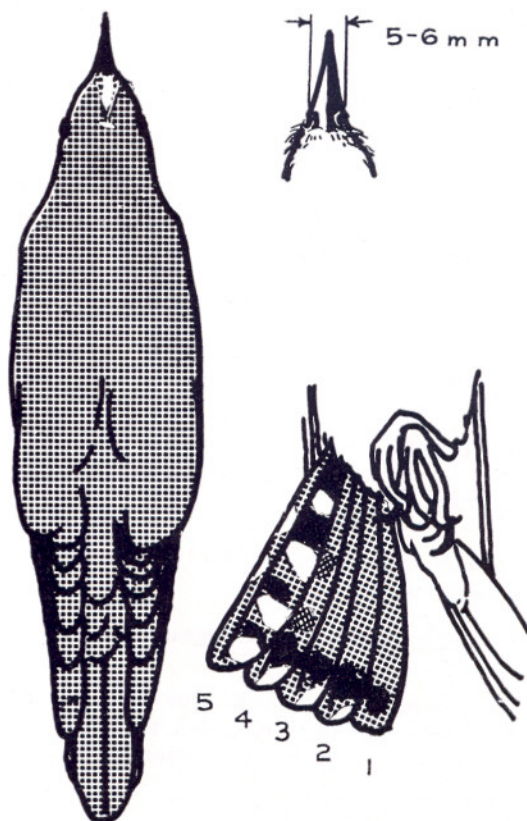
Chin: Bronze green bars.

Throat and breast: Bronze green bars.

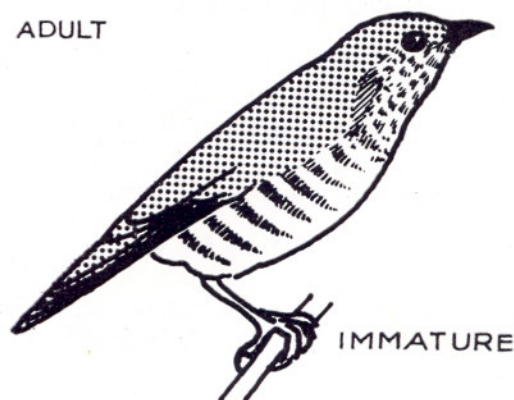
Immature: Dirty white mottled with greenish brown. Some bars on lower breast.

Belly: White with barring throughout.

Face: White over eye extending down sides of neck to 'shoulders'.



ADULT



IMMATURE



ADULT

Golden Bronze Cuckoo *Chalcites plagosus*

Bill width: Medium, 4.2-5.0 mm.

Forehead: Little or no white.

Crown, hind neck, mantle: Purplish copper bronze.

Juvenile: Brown with slight metallic green tinge.

Back: Bronze green, contrasting with purplish mantle.

Juvenile: As for mantle.

Wing coverts: No buff or light edges; same colour as back.

Juvenile: Slight rufous edges.

Tail: Feather No. 5 with five large white spots. Feathers No. 4 & 3 with or without rufous spots.

Juvenile: Similar.

Chin: Copper Bronze bars.

Juvenile: Dark greyish brown with faint barring.

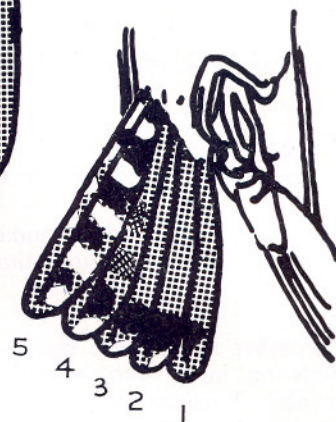
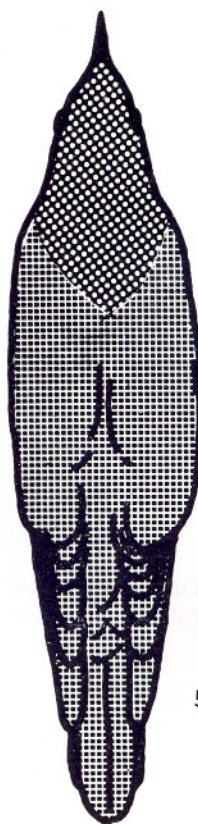
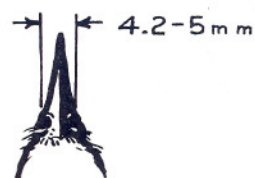
Throat and breast: Copper bronze bars.

Juvenile: As for chin.

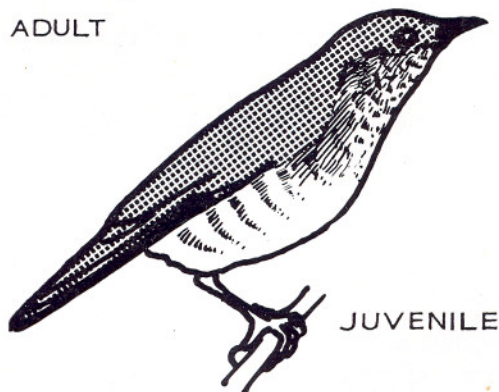
Belly: White with barring throughout.

Juvenile: Whitish with brownish bars becoming more numerous with age, especially on flanks.

Face: White over eye not extending down sides of neck.



ADULT



JUVENILE

ADULT



Little Bronze Cuckoo *Chalcites minutillus*

Bill width: 4.5-5.3 mm (9 measured).

Forehead: A few small white feathers on front next to beak.

Crown and back of head: Dark bluish bronze green.

Hind neck, mantle, back: Light bronzy brown-green to bronze green, contrasting with head.

Wing: Secondaries and secondary coverts with very pale rufous edges sometimes lost through wear.

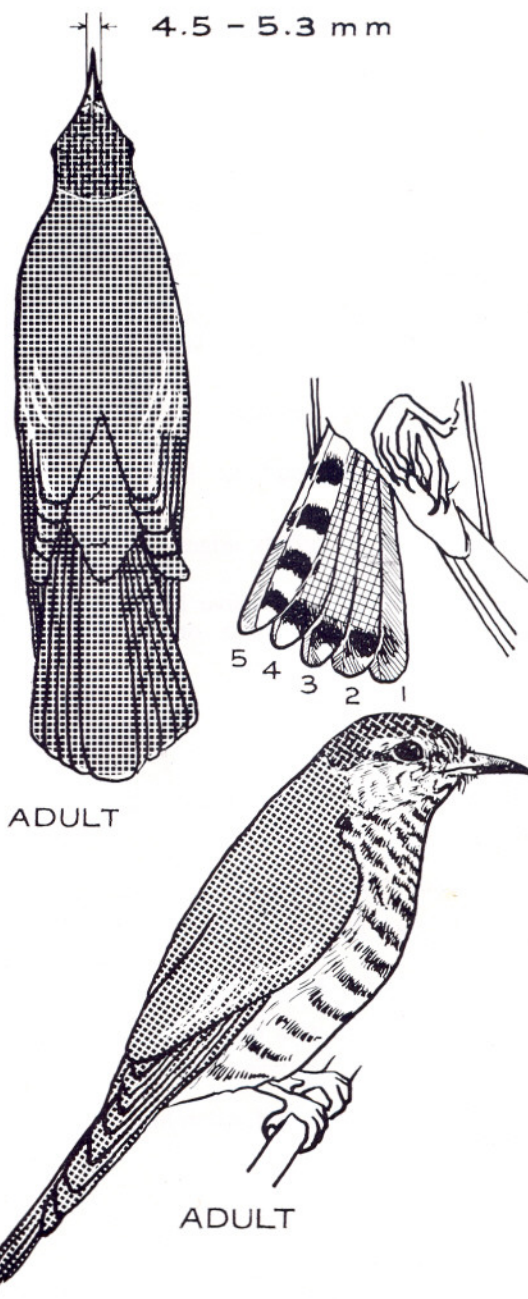
Tail: Feather No. 5 with black and white bands or spots on inner web, sometimes with rufous bands also. Feathers No. 2, 3 & 4 with rufous on inner webs only, sometimes with very slight rufous edge to outer webs.

Chin: White with narrow well marked bronze green bars.

Throat and breast: Similar to chin. Sometimes very slight pale fawn on side of breast.

Belly: Bars wider and more copper bronze than breast.

Face: Eyelids red or scarlet; white lores; white line above eye and white patch above back of eye and mainly white ear coverts extending down to 'shoulder' of wing, to give the same effect of a white face as in the Shining Bronze Cuckoo.



Rufous-breasted Bronze Cuckoo *Chalcites russatus*

Bill width: 4.5-5.8 mm (24 measured, only three less than 5.0 mm, eight of 5.4 mm or more).

Forehead: No white feathers on front.

Crown, back of head: Rufous bronze green.

Hind neck, mantle, back: Rufous bronze green not contrasting with head.

Wing: Primaries with deep rufous edging (sometimes lost through wear), secondary coverts edged and often tipped with rufous.

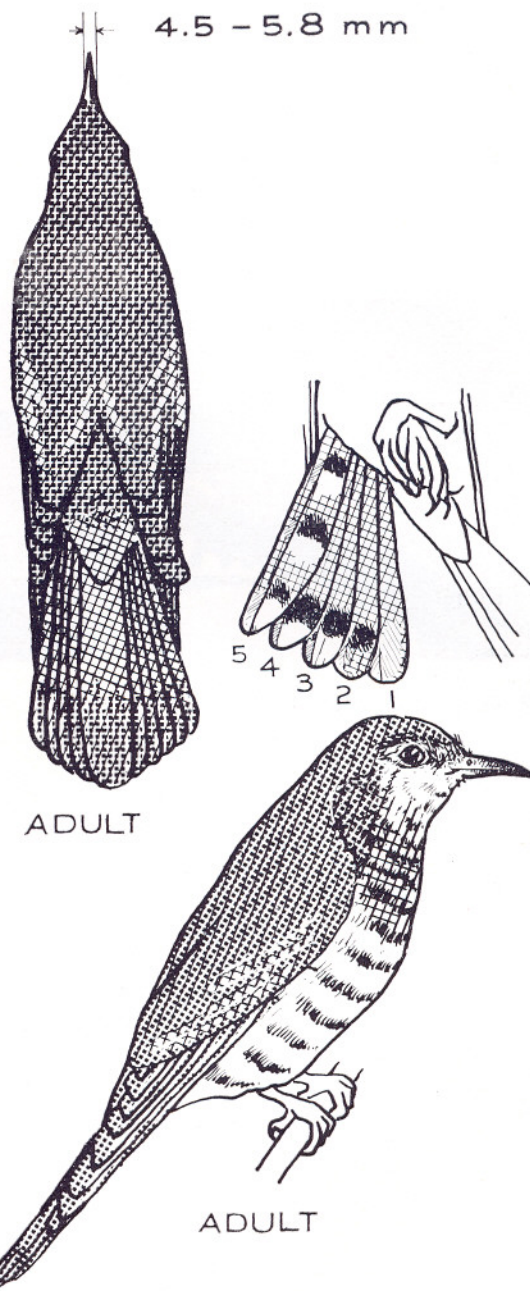
Tail: Feather No. 5 with well marked black and white bands and rufous (occasionally very pale) bands on inner web. Feathers No. 2, 3 & 4 with rufous on inner web and well marked deep rufous edge to outer webs; in older birds the amount of rufous increases until the tail is almost entirely rufous except the terminal bands.

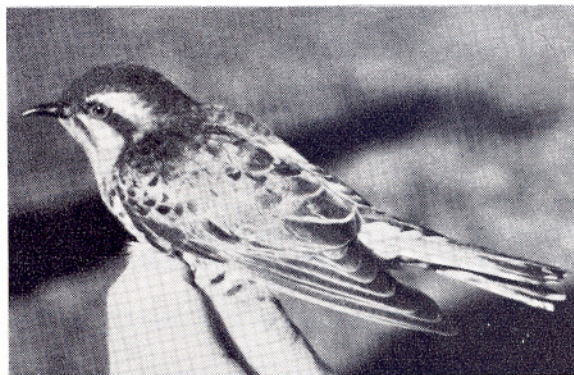
Chin and throat: Whitish with a few greeny brown marks or bars, or with many narrow dark green bars.

Breast: Rufous with under barring. Amount of rufous variable, sometimes restricted to sides of breast or even very faint or absent.

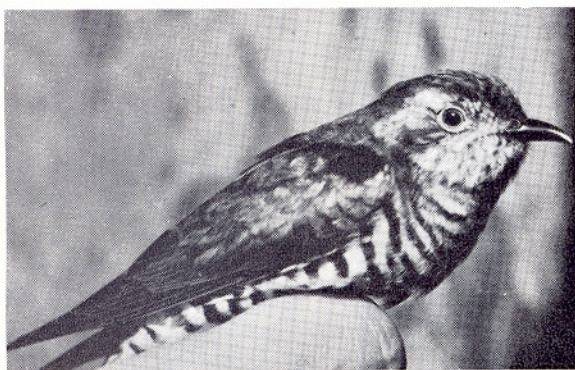
Belly and flanks: White with broad dark copper bronze bars.

Face: Eyelids red or scarlet. Lores not white. No well-marked line above eye, but sometimes a few white feathers. Sometimes with white above and behind eye, but never forming a prominent white patch as in the Little Bronze Cuckoo. Ear coverts mainly dark and not extending down to 'shoulder'.

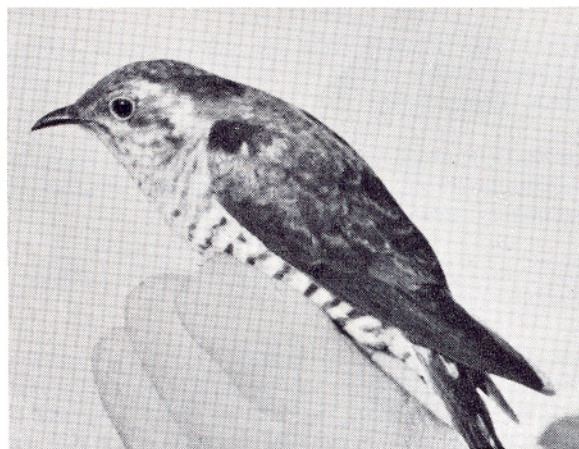




• *Horsfield Bronze Cuckoo*



• *Golden Bronze Cuckoo*



• *Shining Bronze Cuckoo*

Photos: S. G. Lane