

BREEDING BIOLOGY OF HOODED ROBINS *Melanodryas cucullata* IN NEW ENGLAND, NEW SOUTH WALES

LULU FITRI¹ and HUGH A. FORD²

Zoology, University of New England, Armidale, New South Wales 2351

¹Present address: Departemen Biologi, LABTEK XI, ITB, Jalan Ganesha 10, Bandung 40132, Indonesia.

²To whom correspondence should be addressed

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Hooded Robins were studied near Armidale in the 1991 and 1992 breeding seasons, when 26 nests were found. Nests were built from late August to late December and took from 4 to 10 days to build. They were placed in eucalypts from 0.2 metres to 9 metres above the ground. All clutches were of two eggs and were incubated for 15.2 days (6 nests), almost entirely by the female, who spent 65 per cent of her time on the nest. Males occasionally sat briefly on the nest when eggs were present, and fed the female before she laid the eggs and while she incubated. Both parents, and sometimes helpers, fed each nestling on average 5 times per hour. After fledging at about 12 to 13 days of age, the young were unable to fly, but hid in dense cover. Parents performed distraction displays if predators came near their young. Overall, only 22 per cent of nests were successful, with most failures probably being due to predation. Hooded Robins often re-nested after failure, but not after rearing young. Well-studied pairs made 2.75 nesting attempts during the 1991 season, and produced on average 0.7 fledglings. This level of annual productivity, if it is typical, seems inadequate to replace annual mortality. Therefore, high nest failure, which is mostly due to predation, could contribute to the ongoing decline of Hooded Robins in the region.