



# Guira Cuckoo

**CUCULIFORMES**  
**Family: Cuculidae**  
**Genus: *Guira***  
**Species: *guira***



**Range:** southern Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia and northeastern Argentina

**Habitat:** open and semi-open habitats; dry mixed tree and scrub savannahs, scrub woodlands, pampas (temperate grasslands, savannahs and scrubs), pastures and coastal dunes

**Niche:** arboreal, carnivorous, diurnal

**Wild diet:** large arthropods, frogs, eggs, small birds and mammals

**Zoo diet:**

**Life Span:** (Wild)  
(Captivity)

**Sexual dimorphism:** females are slightly larger

**Location in SF Zoo:** short string next to Komodo, tropical building

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## APPEARANCE & PHYSICAL ADAPTATIONS:

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The Guira Cuckoo appears very shaggy on their upper part of their body. It has white-streaked brown back and wings. Lower back and uppertail coverts are white. The long tail is blackish with broad white area at the base, and white tips. It has a relatively long, an orange-rufous crest. The bare parts of the face are yellow, including the eye-ring and it has a relatively heavy, orange-yellow bill that is downward curved.

Like other members of the subfamily Crotophaginae, the Guira Cuckoo gives off a strong, pungent odor, due to their large anal glands. The significance of this smell is unknown.

Their feathers are somewhat sparse on their backs; Guira cuckoos will often sun themselves to get warm, and the lack of feathers aids this process.

<b>Weight:</b> 4.9 – 5 oz
<b>Length:</b> 13 – 14 in
<b>Wingspan:</b>

Their beak is curved down and substantial, an adaptation for their diet of carnivorous diet

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## STATUS & CONSERVATION

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The Guira Cuckoo is usually common in its range, which has extended in the last century. This species is not threatened at this moment. They are listed as least concern on the IUCN Red List.

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## COMMUNICATION AND OTHER BEHAVIOR

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Guira cuckoos are social and arboreal, but can frequently be seen on the ground, usually in flocks of 6 to 18 individuals. They fly like kites in the wind; they are not good fliers, and are mostly seen gliding or hopping from one perch to another.

The Guira Cuckoo is a noisy bird that gives harsh calls in communal defense of territory against other groups, often accompanied by bill-clicks and chatters in aggressive disputes. They make a wide variety of noises, including yodels, guttural calls, gargled trills and whistles. This species is also able to imitate other birds' calls.

These non-parasitic, social birds live in groups, with an average of six to eight birds, although as many as 20 have been recorded together. Breeding pairs preen each other and will defend their breeding territory during mating season. They do not appear to behave aggressively in the communal nest. On cold days, group members will huddle together and they roost together in a tree at night as well.

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## COURTSHIP AND YOUNG

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The Guira Cuckoo performs courtship displays at the beginning of the breeding season. They spread and raise the tail to display the plumage pattern such as the white spots of the rectrices. The long crest is raised too. Nests are large platforms of sticks built high in a thorny tree and eggs are dark green and covered with a chalky layer. Often a nest used in previous years will be renovated and reused.

Guira cuckoos exhibit communal breeding behavior where groups containing as many as 10 females and up to 20 eggs are laid within a single nest; some incubate their eggs individually. Female birds promote the success of their own offspring by tossing eggs and/or chicks of others out of the communal nest. This is atypical to the many cuckoos, who practice brood parasitism. Guira cuckoos have a high rate of egg loss (only 26% survive), as well as a high mortality rate for nestlings, due to the tossing behavior of the adults (55% of hatchlings survive to fledgling).

An adult remains at nest as sentinel while the other group's members are away for feeding. If a predator approaches, the sentinel gives loud calls, and the other birds converge on the nest for defense. About half of the chicks survive to fledging. Parental care continues about three weeks after they fledge.

Incubation: 10 – 15 days	Sexual Maturity:
# of eggs: 5 – 7	Fledging: 15 days

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## MISCELLANEOUS

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On cold nights, Guira cuckoos will huddle together in a tree for warmth.

### Sources:

Created: 6/2016

Handbook of the Birds of the World, Vol IV © 2001 Josep del Hoya, Lynx Edicions, pg 136

The Cuckoos © 2005 Robert B. Payne, Michael D. Sorensen, Oxford University Press

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