

Crested Coua

Coua cristata

Bird

Scientific Name

Coua cristata

Other Names

Crested Madagascar Coucas

Range

Madagascar

Habitat

Forests, savannas and brush lands

Average Size

Length: 18 – 24 in.

Weight: 135 – 150 g

Description

A medium-sized bird with greenish-grey plumage, long, white tipped bluish tail feathers, a grey crest on their head and bare blue skin surrounding their brown eyes. The breast is light brown, the belly is white, and the feet and beak are black.

Diet

In the wild: Insects, snails, fruit, seeds and small reptiles

In human care: Insects, fruit and mixed vegetables

Lifespan

In the wild: Unknown

In human care: Unknown

Incubation

17 – 19 days

Fledgling period

1 – 3 weeks in human care

Sexual Maturity

Two years of age

Clutch Size

2 – 3 eggs

Predators

Birds of prey, Fossa, snakes and humans

Population Status

Not Threatened



Behavior

These diurnal, primarily solitary birds are non-migratory. They spend their days foraging for food in the trees (arboreal) but are relatively weak flyers that mostly glide from branch to branch. They are most often seen in the mornings sunning themselves with their wings open and drooped to absorb the heat. As an adaptation to increase their grip in the trees, their third toe can reverse to point backwards. Crested Couas are fairly communicative, making calls back and forth to one another primarily at sunset, creating a melodic twilight chorus.

Reproduction and Breeding

Nest building in the wild begins in November and December with eggs hatching from October to March. Although Crested Couas are monogamous in the wild, in human care females have been documented mating with more than one male in rapid succession.

Unlike many other members of the cuckoo family, these birds make their own nests and incubate their own eggs, rather than laying their eggs in another bird's nest (brood parasitism). Females create the nest, made of twigs and sticks, in a tree or bush 12 – 30 feet off the ground. Both the male and female incubate the eggs. Once the chicks hatch, both parents work together to provide food and protection for them. Crested Coua chicks make feeding them a bit easier for their parents because they have a bright red "bullseye" on the inside of their mouths that tells the adults exactly where to place the food.

Conservation

Although their populations appear to be decreasing, due to their large range this bird is considered of Least Concern by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Although this species can live in degraded forests, the population is thought to be in decline due to habitat loss, deforestation and hunting pressures.



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Amazing Facts

Crested Couas are in the cuckoo family.

This species can often be seen sunning on a tree limb, with wings extended and their feathers fluffed to expose their back skin.

Most of the birds in the cuckoo family are named for the calls they make.

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