

## Coucal - Pheasant or Cuckoo?

by Ed Parker

Walking along Centenary's riverfront bushland in the morning or evening, you may have heard it - a penetrating, deep "hoop-hoop-hoop" noise echoing along the river valley. Or you may be lucky enough to have seen it scurrying clumsily through the undergrowth beside the track. Occasionally it can be seen, sometimes as a pair, flapping from branch to branch in a tree.

The call is distinctive, often being a succession of fifteen to twenty "hoops" steadily descending in scale, then rising again.

Its appearance is of a large dark bird with a long tail, some 60cm long. The body is black while its wings and tail are a lighter or reddish brown with white bars giving a striped appearance.

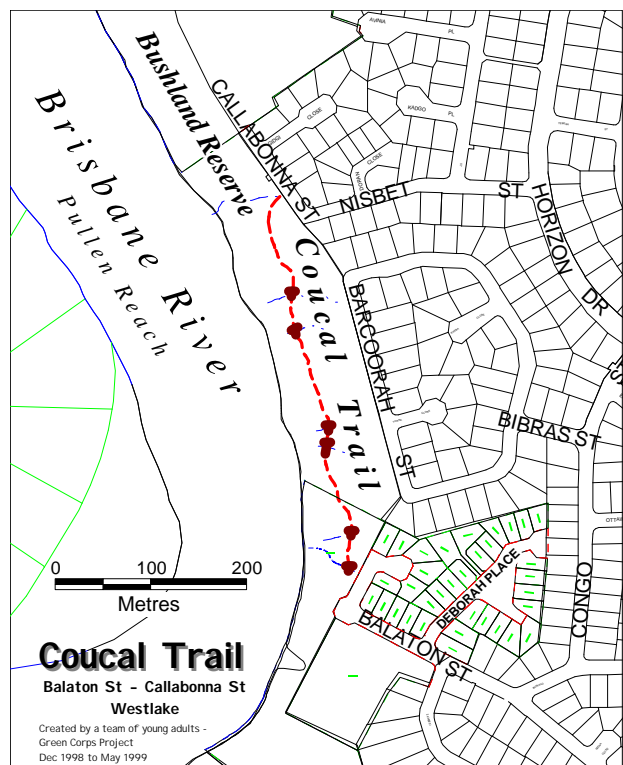
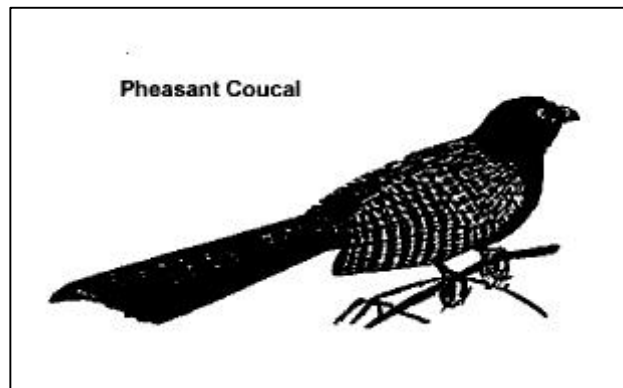
Well if this description fits, you most likely have observed a Pheasant Coucal (*Centropus phasianinus*), alternatively known as a Swamp Pheasant.

The Pheasant Coucal prefers unkempt, scrubby areas, so if you have been lucky to have seen one in your backyard that may be a commentary on your garden maintenance skills! In wild areas, it also inhabits grassland and the margins of swamps.

Recently, a team of young adults completed a Green Corps project in Westlake, constructing a walking trail and undertaking bush rehabilitation. They were sufficiently inspired by the presence of this bird to name their new track "The Coucal Trail". The map shows the location of the bush trail meandering its way along the Brisbane River's Pullen Reach.

Why not take the opportunity to try out this new walking trail - enter from either Balaton St or Callabonna St, Westlake. An informative trail guide is available (refer contact numbers below, or email).

Oh, and if you're wondering about article's title, the Pheasant Coucal *is* of the cuckoo family. In fact, it is unique among native cuckoos in that it makes its own nest rather than laying its eggs in the nests of others.



This regular Nature Watch column is contributed by your local Centenary bushland care groups.

Enquiries: Westlake/Riverhills: Ed 3376 1389, Maree 3376 5803; Jindalee: Noel 3376 1412.

Email: [eparker@ozemail.com.au](mailto:eparker@ozemail.com.au)

Web: [www.ozemail.com.au/~eparker/sorb.html](http://www.ozemail.com.au/~eparker/sorb.html)