



THE BABBLER

Newsletter of BirdLife Zimbabwe

Apr - May 2018
No. 141

Hi everyone,

I had hoped to include the results of the 'January' wetland counts in this issue but Mashonaland and Matabeleland AGMs and reports have filled up the pages. Perhaps not many of you bother reading these but do give it a go. The wetlands report will appear in the next issue, in time to stimulate you to take part! It will be interesting to see how this season's rainfall affects the birds.

This year's Golf Day will be held on the 17th May. We get much-needed conservation funds from this event so please participate if you are a golfer or pass on the news to any golfers you may know.

Take a look at the proposed BLZ outing to Seldomseen on page 21. May might be getting chilly but the birds will still be great and all members countrywide are invited!

Happy Birding,

Ian Riddell gemsaf@mango.zw

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MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE NOW DUE.

Some members are not informing us when they pay their subscription and we have to be detectives, which takes up time! There are several payments for the last membership year that have not been confirmed. When members deposit into NMB for example, the name shown on the statement is often only the first name and therefore we may not know who you are. Therefore it is **ESSENTIAL** please that you advise us by e-mail of your transaction, or your payment will not be recorded. Please contact Sylvia sylvia@blz.co.zw or carolyndennison@birdlifezimbabwe.org or phone Sylvia on 04-481496 for all membership-related issues – new, renewals, payments, change of details, queries.

Branch News

Mashonaland

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Mashonaland Branch of BirdLife Zimbabwe held at the Avondale Sports Club, Harare, on Thursday 18th January 2018 at 6.00 p.m.

PRESENT: T. Alegria (Chairperson), D. Wiggins (Treasurer), J. Ball (Vice Chairperson), K. Hein (Secretary), L. Shadwell (Committee Member), J. Vekris (Committee Member)

BRANCH MEMBERS PRESENT: 26 members

APOLOGIES: D. Gray, K. Rosevere, C. Dennison, L. Walker, D. Skinner, A. MacDonald, L. Maasdorp

Tony welcomed members and confirmed that this was his 9th AGM as Chairman.

1. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

Taken as read. Proposed by R. Chenaux-Repond. Seconded by R. Dennison.

2. MATTERS ARISING: Nil

3. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT: T. Alegria

I am grateful to Avondale Sports Club for letting us use this venue for all our evening events. Unfortunately the one dollars we collect are not always enough to pay for the use of this facility and also to pay the guard to look after our vehicles.

The outings have continued and as usual the numbers attending any venue is highly variable. If anyone has a new venue, please come forward and let us know. We are very grateful to everybody that allowed us onto their properties. I thank all the regular leaders–Dorothy Wakeling, Dave Dalziel and Richard Dennison and those who stepped in!

Lake Chivero is no longer a popular venue and last year we only went there twice – that is in the waterfowl counting months, during Jan

2017 and July 2017. Seen were about 350 White-breasted Cormorants, Black Herons, African Marsh-harrier, African Purple Swamphen, a single Lesser Gallinule and many White-winged Terns.

Thanks to our speakers, without them we would not have a monthly function. We had: (Jan) right after the AGM, Photo Safari by Ali MacDonald; (Feb) Birding in Lancashire by Linda Fussell; (Mar) Why taxonomists can't help being a pain in the neck by Tjeerd (Sebastien) Jongeling; (Apr) Garden Birding by Peter Munday; (May) PAOC, wetlands and birding in Dakar, Senegal by Ian Riddell; (Jun) Bird Books by Alex Masterson; (Jul) Hippo Pools Outing by Laurence Shadwell; (Aug) Flock at Sea by Innes Louw; (Sept) The Origins and Evolution of Birds by Tony Alegria; (Oct) Seldomseen by Ken Worsley; (Nov) Moosh in da Boosh by Tony Alegria (Dec) No presentation after our Xmas social – we had a fun team quiz instead. Of course monthly evening functions would be pointless without

an audience, so many thanks to all the members and non-members who attended the functions.

The most difficult job we have as a committee is finding topics and speakers to deliver the monthly presentations. If you can help with a presentation or suggestions for these things, let's hear from you!

Last year we had two week end birding trips both resulting in a presentation:

The first trip was to Hippo Pools in May, it was the last weekend before the chalets & lodges were demolished. We were catered for in terms of brunch and dinners and thus had very little need for snacky stuff for lunch. We saw 129 species of birds on this trip. They have since rebuilt the chalets and lodges and thus that destination is worth another visit.

The second trip was to Lasting Impressions located below Claw Dam 15 km beyond Kadoma. This was a birding trip with a difference - it was open to club members from BirdLife Zimbabwe, the Astronomical Society of Harare, the Tree Society of Zimbabwe and locals from the Kadoma area. About 50 people enjoyed a weekend devoted to bush activities in terms of talks and walks. During Moosh in da Boosh, 144 species of birds were seen!

Your incoming committee will be organizing an away trip this year - we are talking to Seldomseen at this point in time, so keep the targeted weekend free - May 11th to 14th!

We are also looking at repeating the very successful, One Week's Birding Holiday we had about four years ago to Hwange and Vic. Falls. We'll do this sometime after winter.

The Harare Garden Bird Survey we began in May 2016 came to an end in May last year - the results now need to be analysed. The number of participants was not as high as I would have liked but then that's probably the case with any survey. Debbie Wiggins did a terrific job in communicating and keeping the participants informed as we went along. Many thanks, Debbie.

I wish to thank all those who wrote articles for *The Babbler* thereby providing feedback to all our members on our outings and monthly functions.

I thank Carolyn and Julia for sending out the email reminders for the outings & evening functions and I thank Kelvin Hein for providing

the necessary information for the Ndeipi monthly magazine.

In closing I thank my committee for all their input & work during the last year and my wife for providing snacks and for putting up with our committee meetings every other month.

4. TREASURER'S REPORT: D. Wiggins

In spite of 2017 being a rather rough year economically, it's encouraging that BirdLife Mashonaland actually showed a small surplus of \$103.40 for last year. This was largely thanks to the 2 raffles which were held last year, one at the AGM and the other at the Christmas social in December, which together raised \$255. In addition there were a couple of small donations. Meeting donations raised \$380, of which \$360 went towards paying for the venue and the guard. These two costs remained the same as in 2016 and constitute the main expenses.

As to the other expenses, there were donations of \$102 made to Mukuvisi and \$45 made to Greystone Park Preserve as a gesture of support. In the case of Mukuvisi, BirdLife members are not charged an entrance fee so the donation also acknowledges this. The miscellaneous expense was the Christmas Social quiz prize for the winning team.

The PA System still appears on the balance sheet at its cost price as I feel that it's not worth depreciating it for our purposes but I'm willing to take advice on this! The CABS balance \$225.18 is less than last year as I decided not to deposit any of the cash income. The cash on hand aside from the \$30 float was \$252 as at the end of the year.

That sums up the BirdLife Mashonaland finances for last year and I just want to thank everyone for their loyal support at our meetings and of course buying raffle tickets which all goes towards helping to keep this wonderful club going! Here's to a better year this year!

Any Questions? Rolf stated that the takings at talks on Thursday evenings always "just manage to keep the ship afloat". He proposed that the payment be raised to \$2 per person. This was voted on by a show of hands and the proposal was carried.

ANNUAL REPORTS:

5.1 MUKUVISI WOODLANDS: David Dalziel

Monthly walks were undertaken, usually on the 1st Sunday of every month. January was an exception as the 1st fell on New Years' Day.

We usually have very good coverage with at least three groups and often we have people that walk from the office. The total number of species for the year was 175. The highest count was 118 in November.

There have been some very interesting sightings during the year. Perhaps the most interesting bird has been the single male Miombo Rock-thrush which was first seen in 2015. The Miombo Rock-thrush seems to have taken up residence near the bee hives but has also been seen in the quarry area. It was not seen on the BLZ walks during the first half of the year but it was being reported during this period by other Mukuvisi visitors. Towards the end of the year a female was recorded by visitors and the pair was seen on the first BLZ walk in 2018.

A Black Sparrowhawk nest was monitored and it appears they were successful as young birds were seen near the nest. The Wahlberg's Eagle nest was also monitored and a large chick was seen in the nest so it is hoped they were also successful. As in years past the female was a very white bird while the male is very dark. Other raptors seen during the year include Black-chested Snake-eagle, African Fish-eagle, Steppe Buzzard and Little Sparrowhawk.

Swallow-tailed Bee-eaters were seen during the winter months, usually near the power lines. In the last two years there have appeared to be less present than in previous years.

Birds that appear to be getting less common include Stierling's Wren-warbler, Neddicky and I suspect Spotted Creeper. The Spotted Creeper was seen on six walks but very often it is only seen by one group and often in the woodland just inside the game fence.

Birds that were infrequently seen include Ashy Flycatcher. This bird is not seen very often in the woodlands but has become more common around Harare in recent years.

We are very lucky to have such a wonderful area so close to town so make use of it and join us during 2018.

A table on birds seen follows but is too long to include here. Please contact David if you would like a copy.

5.2 LAKE CHIVERO BIRD SANCTUARY: Richard Dennison

We only visited the sanctuary in January and July last year for the waterfowl counts and there was no wader space.

Species Count

The annual species count was 123, which was 4 less than the previous year. The total number of species recorded since records began in 1992 rose by 1 to 332. This addition to the total species count was: Yellow-breasted Apalis - 1 in July

In my opinion the highlights were:

Shore and Water Birds

White-breasted Cormorant	350 in January
Black Heron	4 in January
African Marsh-harrier	2 in January
African Purple Swamphen	6 in January
Black-winged Stilt	42 in January
White-winged Tern	60 in January

Other Birds of Interest

Spotted Thick-knee	2 in January
Grey-headed Parrot	3 in January
Spotted Eagle-owl	2 in January
Red-faced Mousebird	30 in July
Banded Martin	60 in January
Retz's Helmet-shrike	10 in January
Orange-breasted Waxbill	100 in January

5.3 MONA VALE VLEI: Dorothy Wakeling

Monavale Vlei Programme Manager and Jimmy Muropa, Vlei Scout.

Conservation Society of Monavale Trust
cosmo@yoafrica.com; www.monavalevlei.com

The Conservation Society of Monavale Face Book Page

Observations

880.5 mm of rain was recorded on Monavale Vlei from January to May 2017. This brought in the Streaky-breasted Flufftail (estimated around 20 breeding pairs), the elusive Striped Crake, African Crake, Corn Crake, Dwarf Bittern, Little Bittern and Kurrichane Buttonquail and Black Coucal. Birders from all over, particularly

South Africa, arrived at short notice to see the flufftail and Striped Crake.

Wahlberg's Eagle, Black Sparrowhawk, Eurasian Hobby, Marsh Owl, Spotted Eagle-owl and Common Moorhen were recorded. White Stork came in good numbers with the winter fires. Red-backed Shrike and Lesser Grey Shrike passed through and the Temminck's Courser bred once again and good sightings of the chicks pleased photographers. Red-chested Cuckoo, Pied Kingfisher, European Roller, Lesser Striped Swallow, Pale-crowned Cisticola, Spotted Flycatcher, Copper Sunbird and Cuckoo Finch were noteworthy, with the Red-capped Lark welcomed back after an absence. Familiar Chat was seen on our 3rd Sunday December bird walk and a new listing for Monavale. It is interesting to note that despite the Vlei Specials being present the overall species count is 162 - 18 down from 2016.

As usual mammals seen occasionally included the Duiker, Bushpig, Side-striped Jackal, Scrub hare. Reptiles seen were Olive Grass Snake and Three Striped Grass Snakes.

Monavale Vlei Management and Activities

- A suspect EIA was approved for the development of 121 houses on Monavale Vlei by the new Minister Mwembwe of Tourism, Environment and Hospitality. This is being queried by COSMO and will be appealed if not reversed.

- The Harare Wetlands Advocacy Project is moving ahead with Jimmy Muropa our Vlei Scout and Ronnie Chirimuta from Marlborough training 5 other Vlei Scouts in Budiriro, Glenview, Rugare, Mabvuku and Dzivarasekwa. Monavale Vlei is the model restored wetland which the 5 new scouts have visited. 5 other high density communities also visited the Vlei during the years which are part of the project. All ten communities are under the project and forming their own Local Wetland Environmental Action Plans - LEAPs.

- The following schools and universities visited the Vlei: University of Zimbabwe, Midlands State University, Bindura University, Roosevelt Girls High School, Warren Park High School, Hellenic School, Mubeena Ehbrahim Primary School, Twin Rivers Primary, Harare International School, Palmsprings Preschool.

- The Monavale Vlei monthly bird walks continue to be well attended with newcomers every month.

- The COSMO Kids Club is running smoothly with many activities being undertaken including container vegetable gardening and waste management recycling. The children visited Mukuvisi Woodlands and Wild is Life. The Indigenous Tree Nursery continues with the nurseryman training high density area communities how to grow trees.

Monavale Vlei Bird Species Counted 2005 (210 Species) to December 2017 (246 Species)

Monavale Daily Bird Records and Rainfall Statistics kept since 2005

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total Birds & Rainfall
135	133	128	103	100	95	98	105	104	112	114	114	162
79	76	67	31	54	30	49	55	53	54	59	65	2017
465.8	179.2	164.5	70	1					3	128.5	89	1101
129	132	134	127	101	96	101	100	99	107	114	119	180
63	62	40	57	42	45	50	37	39	46	70	58	2016
169	96	197	84	3.5					5	126	270	950.5
149	137	126	127	104	101	104	104	104	114	124	123	178
66	70	62	54	43	22	39	47	45	57	35	44	2015
234.8	147	73	12.2						10.7	43.1	147.6	668.4
141	139	125	117	97	94	96	97	98	114	123	136	181
80	62	53	36	41	34	56	34	48	57	71	82	2014
172	239.8	28.2	48						44	107	274	912.48
138	135	134	113	102	97	100	103	103	119	119	125	180
74	72	77	58	48	38	67	64	63	54	66	67	2013
												3rd Sun

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total Birds & Rainfall
421	59.5	231	51.5						1.6	103.5	157.8	1025.9
142	136	137	124	103	100	102	102	110	117	120	129	178
72	62	59	66	56	32	65	32	47	57	62	70	2012
267.5	171.5	173.5	24.5						37.5	94.5	215	984
144	132	136	124	106	96	103	99	108	106	125	134	177
66	71	75	61	56	56	48	58	45	66	68	80	2011
221	75	62	9	1	2.5	9			35	115	419.5	949
142	140	136	111	93	87	97	106	107	121	130	143	181
62	66	61	54	46	54	32	64	63	62	83	78	2010
207.5	171	49	178	3.5					25.5	126	152	912.5
131	123	120	114	95	89	100	91	103	109	120	127	163
70	51	59	49	45	47	37	47	44	51	61	57	2009
197.5	130	165.5	20	40					4	142	183	882
117	113	115	110	90	91	87	98	103	108	112	126	
52	53	52	45	25	45	45	50	40	47	64	71	2008
383.5	38.5	43	33						9	167.5	253	927.5
121	118	112	109	91	91	91	93	97	101	109	116	
58	69	53	53	40	39	53	53	55	57	73	52	2007
174	58.5	92.5	45.5	2.5				4	2	168	540	1087
116	114	115	107	85	90	86	92	92	101	104	106	
	58	52			49	35	48	41	36	48	52	2006
279	171.5	155.5	3						9.5	65	148.5	832
								43	63	95	100	2005
183	94	137	24	8				0.5	12	106.5	285	850

Seasonal Rainfall totals

2017/17	1281.5	2010/11	683
2015/16	750.9	2009/10	938
2014/15	892	2008/09	982.5
2013/14	750.61	2007/08	1212
2012/13	1110	2006/07	596
2011/12	1206.5	2005/06	1013

ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS: MASHONALAND BRANCH COMMITTEE

The previously elected members were all prepared to stand again and were unanimously re-elected.

Chairperson	T. Alegria
Vice Chairperson	J. Ball
Treasurer	D. Wiggins
Secretary	K. Hein (Assisted by J. Hein)
Member	A. MacDonald
Member	L. Shadwell
Member	J. Vekris

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS:

7.1 Query about walk at Mukuvisi with three adults and one child. They were under

the impression that bird walks were only one hour long and were disappointed when the walk was so lengthy. Tony will pursue time limits on walks. Ndeipi does not state how long walks would be - this should be included in the magazine!

7.2 Ralph Chenux-Repond gave a vote of thanks to all Committee Members.

7.3 Julia P. reminded everyone about National AGM in Harare and asked for suggestions.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 6.28 p.m.

Waterbird count at Hideaway, Lake Manyame, Sunday 28th January 2018

16 of us made the journey out to hot, dry Manyame on Sunday arriving about 7.30. We immediately split into two groups, 6 of us setting off in the Lawrence's boat and the others on foot to scour the lake from the land. As usual, it was a slow start as we were all mesmerized by the number and variety of birds awaiting us on the shoreline, in the reeds and the sky. 6 Comb Ducks flew over and 6 Southern Pochards and a flock of perhaps a hundred White-winged Terns were good early sightings.

Having crossed the lake, the boaters cruised slowly westward combing the hyacinth and reeds for waterbirds. I sat calmly at the stern noting all the birds called out by the others with little opportunity to lift my binoculars. African Jacana and Squacco Heron were plentiful and Red-billed Teal and White-faced Duck too, yet this was a quieter section of the lake frequented by local fishermen. After about half an hour we began to experience occasional problems with weed in the prop and then netting of which there was a lot in the shallow water. Having extricated ourselves a couple of times we became entangled in what seemed an endless net full of weed and the occasional fish some of which we were able to release. Good altruistic, conservation-minded souls on board began to reel in this 'ghost net'

not realising quite how long it would be. An hour later, the boat now full of netting, the far end finally emerged and we were able to continue. This was no doubt just the tip of the iceberg. How many such nets have been set in the lake? We were told that few conventional anglers now frequent the camp because competition from the netters has become untenable.

A call from the chief on land reminded us that we were going to be very late for our count rendezvous so we set off again a little quicker. This was a pity because the density of birds increased as we made our way back. Excellent sightings were 2 African Pygmy-goose, a Black Heron and a lone Long-toed Lapwing. The groups of White-faced Duck and Teal, mostly Red-billed but the occasional Hottentot Teal, grew bigger. We rejoined the landlubbers at 11.00 for a most encouraging count of both water and land species. In all about 1,800 birds were counted of 49 waterfowl species while the overall total was 105. And this from perhaps about 25% of the lake.

We are very grateful to the camp owners who invited us to roam their delightful property and went so far as to waive the charges for our first visit in the New Zimbabwe era.

Ken Dixon

MONAVALÉ VLEI, Sunday 18th March 2018

Overcast, cool and windy; not the best birding conditions but a dozen of us couldn't resist tramping through the flooded, soaking grass of Monavale at the end of which we managed to compile a list of 51 species.

All the usual vleibirds were present, the bishops and widowbirds still in breeding plumage and very active. Croaking, Levaiant's, Rattling and Red-faced Cisticola were prominent and the Pale-crowned Cisticola called high above before diving steeply into the grass. A Black Coucal called sporadically and was seen on a few occasions.

A group left the path at one point to flush Marsh Owl from their breeding area and were very concerned to find an owl unable to fly

away. It was caught and taken to a local specialist who could find no obvious injury but was undernourished. We suspected it might have eaten poisoned prey. She has kept it to feed it up in the hope that it will fully recover.

Above us the European Bee-eaters were calling, 3 African Sacred Ibis flew over, a few African Palm-swifts and Barn Swallows hawked insects and a pair of African Black Duck sped past along the stream. As we were doing the count the resident Long-crested Eagle put in an appearance and Richard spotted a Lilac-breasted Roller sitting forlornly in a golf course gum tree.

Ken Dixon

BirdLife Golf Day

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BirdLife Zimbabwe - Saving Nature for Wildlife and People

17th May BirdLife Zimbabwe Golf Day



Photography: Roger MacDonald



Preserving
ecosystems
for Wildlife
& People



**BirdLife Zimbabwe
Golf Day**
in aid of
BirdLife Zimbabwe's Conservation Projects

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NMB Bank
are pleased to invite you to participate in the
2018 BirdLife Zimbabwe Golf Day

Venue/Date:
Borrowdale Brooke Golf Course, Harare
Thur 17 May 2018

Time:
'Shotgun' start at 12noon. Allow 15mins to find your tee box

Format:
"4 ball Better Ball Alliance", limited to 32 teams

Entry:
USD230 per team of four. Includes lunch, dinner & giveaways

Green and Teebox sponsorship available

BirdLife Zimbabwe promotes the survival of bird life in Zimbabwe and elsewhere for both its intrinsic value and the enjoyment of future generations. Habitat changes, indiscriminate development, destruction through wetland degradation, deforestation of woodlands, agriculture and mining pose major threats to the sensitive ecosystems which support wildlife but also human life. BLZ promotes conservation programmes which focus on the wise management of the environment for a sustainable future for us all!

www.birdlifezimbabwe.org

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For more info and to register contact:

Ross Wallbridge cell: 0772 202621
Email: ross.wallbridge61@gmail.com
Partners more than welcome to join you after the game for prizegiving

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Ewanrigg Botanical Garden, Sunday 25th March 2018

I suspect few of us venture out to this gem of a garden with its lawns, aloes, herb garden, woodland, arboretum and picnic sites these days. However, it is worth the drive and most rewarding, though our visit was too early for the aloe flowers; the level of maintenance is impressive and most paths are easy walking even for those over sixty, paying a meagre \$1.50 instead of the usual \$3.



16 of us set off in groups in different directions once we had viewed the array of sunbirds, Variable, White-bellied, Miombo Double-collared, Amethyst Sunbird and Copper Sunbird feeding on a bottle-brush in the parking area. My group wandered up the hill through the aloes hearing Red-eyed Dove and Laughing Dove, Black-collared Barbet, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird and watching Bronze Mannikins and Red-backed Mannikins whizzing past with grass for their communal nests. There were 10 or more African Green-pigeons in the trees.

On the lower grassy area a wide variety of butterflies could be seen and many photos were taken. Terrestrial Brownbuls churred and Natal Spurfowl squawked from the fringe of the woodland, White-browed Robin-chat and

White-browed Scrub-robins called. We were disappointed not to see the Western Violet-backed Sunbird but Brown-crowned Tchagra, Southern Black flycatcher, etc. compensated, as did the Red-throated Twinspots.



A pair of impressive white-eyed Gaudy Grasshoppers

From the picnic site we decided to embark on the walk through long grass and scrub to the dam. Perhaps not the best decision of the day as the thorn bushes which had to be negotiated ripped cruelly at our legs but we persisted and were rewarded by the sight of Yellow Bishop, Southern Red Bishop, Red-collared Widowbird, Rattling Cisticola, Little Rush-warbler, Willow Warbler and Icterine Warbler, Common Scimitarbill and a carpet of glorious, blue water-lilies on the dam but no birds except for a Reed Cormorant in a dry tree.

Altogether over 90 species were identified when we met for the count in the attractive braai site area and shared our experiences.

Ken Dixon

Matabeleland

Minutes of the 2018 Annual General Meeting held at The Gazebo, Qalisa Retirement Village, Suburbs, Bulawayo, on Saturday, 24th February, 2018 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT:

Karen Learmonth (KL) – Chairman
John Brebner (JB) – Vice Chairman
Jean Cranston (JC) – Treasurer
Marina Jackson (MJ) – Secretary
Clare Hubbard (CJH) – Committee Member

And members: Jenny Brebner, David Jackson, Tom Cranston, Margaret Frame, Laraine King, Geof Calvert, Peter Mundy, John and Coppie Dicey, Sue Harvey, Cheryl Nel, Linda Lawrie, Sharon Peters, Cathy Sharp, Gordon and Heather McDonald, Verity Bowman, Evans Mabiza, Gaynor and Elton Lightfoot, Cindy

and Howard Sellick, Paul Hubbard and Kudzanai Dhliwayo.
Guests: Pam Birch, Judy Ross

APOLOGIES:

Gwen Calvert, Helen Lewis, Peta Ditchburn, James Varden, Adele Edwards, Candice and Doug Kew, Sarah and Bruce Cronje, Colin Gillies, Tony Wareham, Verity Mundy, Stu Taylor, Julia Duprée, Shirley and Vernon Tarr .

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Chairman called for the Minutes of the 2017 Annual General Meeting held on 25th February, 2017 to be accepted as a true record of the proceedings.

Proposed: Sue Harvey Seconded: Gaynor Lightfoot

3. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising from these minutes.

4. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting and thanked everyone for the excellent attendance. She extended condolences to the families of those members who had sadly passed away during the year: Bill Lewis and Gwen Attwell - Helen's husband and mother respectively, John Bowman - father of Verity, and of course Cecilia Hubbard, mother of Clare and Paul, who had been our past Chairman, longstanding member and from whom KL had always received a tremendous amount of personal support.

The Chairman then presented her report, a copy of which is attached hereto.
Proposed: S. Peters Seconded: M. Frame

Peter Mundy expressed disappointment that the Harare Office of Birdlife doesn't do more conservation work. In his opinion, *Honeyguide* is the best journal of its kind in Africa, and we should continue publishing it twice a year. He has been visited by RSPB and, although it has been reduced, they are still providing some funding to BirdLife Zimbabwe - perhaps some funds could be diverted to Bulawayo to assist with the printing costs?

Judy Ross asked if BLZ outings could be advertised in The Morning Mirror, and Sue Harvey would also like outings advertised in

some alternative way, which KL agreed to look into. Elton Lightfoot requested a greater variety of places to go for birding. Verity Bowman offered Dambari as a venue for birding, whilst Gordon MacDonald said that Quiet Waters was also available, and commented that the new intake at Quest was very interested in birds. Heather MacDonald also very kindly offered her home as a base for a meeting if the Quest venue is busy.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Jean Cranston presented her report, a copy of which is attached hereto.

Proposed: M. Frame

Seconded: G. Lightfoot

JC stressed that serious fund raising was needed if the Black Eagle Survey is to continue. She also asked members to consider buying the BLZ calendars as Christmas presents in order to ensure that all calendars get sold each year and we get to retain a small portion of the proceeds.

Prof. Mundy recommends that members also subscribe to the African Bird Club, at \$30 per annum payable to BLZ in Harare. The African Bird Club publishes a full-colour bulletin bi-annually, containing fascinating articles and is well worth the annual subscription.

PROJECT REPORTS - MATABELELAND BRANCH

Black Eagle Survey:

The Chairman called upon John Brebner to present his Black Eagle report on the 54th Survey, a copy of which is attached hereto.

Proposed: P. Hubbard Seconded: C. Sellick

For the benefit of those unfamiliar with it, JB provided a brief history of the Black Eagle Survey which began with Ron Thomson from National Parks mapping nesting sites. These were eventually taken over by Carl Vernon in 1964, who began searching for new eyries. When Carl left Bulawayo he persuaded a retired mathematics teacher - Val Gargett - to take over the project; she invested hundreds of hours in observation, assisted by amateur volunteers. We have all been devastated by the untimely death of the co-coordinator, Cecilia Hubbard, who had been an integral part of this survey for many years. Along with her husband, Dudley, they built up an incredible

knowledge of old and new nest sites and her passing has left the survey much the poorer.

This year's permit has already been issued by National Parks, and JB thanked Matobo Conservation Society for a generous donation towards this project which will enable us to continue the survey for another year.

Hyrax Census:

John Brebner presented his report on the annual Hyrax Census - a copy of his report is attached hereto.

Proposed: C. Sellick Seconded: Prof. Mundy

JB pointed out that Verreaux's Eagles are 98% dependant on dassies as their food source - it is therefore of paramount importance that the survey continues. Prof. Mundy suggested that some sites are counted the weekend after the official survey, to make up for insufficient teams to cover all sites on the official weekend.

Raptor Report:

John Brebner presented his Raptor Report, a copy of which is attached.

Proposed: L. King Seconded: J. Dicey

Despite the falling numbers of raptor sightings received, Prof. Mundy says they have found that their numbers are up generally; you have to be there at dawn or shortly after to observe them hunting for their prey.

JB asked Evans Mabiza, who has just become a member of BLZ, Matabeleland, if he would provide some information on the Southern Ground-hornbill survey to members, so that members have a better appreciation of this survey. Evans very kindly gave an impromptu overview of this survey which he has been part of since 2007, commenting that ground-hornbills seem to be growing in numbers in other countries, where they have started harvesting the second egg in the nest and breeding from it. In Zimbabwe, the Ndebele culture reveres the species and consequently doesn't kill it. The ground-hornbills' most preferred breeding sites are in holes, trees and rocks, so Matobo is very popular, with little difference in success rates being reported in good rain or drought conditions. Over the past five years, groups have bred successfully annually in the Matobo, so the survey has expanded to the borders of the Matobo district, and Umzingwane and Malilangwe areas to determine how they are faring. They also have groups all over the

country that they are monitoring, although not on a regular basis, and these are doing well. Recently, Zimbabwe's project merged with the South African Ground-hornbill project to expand further, and Project Thunderbird has been established to try and encourage more countries to become involved. At this point in time, the highest concentration of ground hornbills in Africa is to be found on the Mana Pools floodplains!

In Zimbabwe, they have not had much success in publishing yet, as they wanted wider and more in-depth research. Now that they have 10 years of research data, they will soon be producing one or two papers. JB asked if BirdLife could organize an outing in conjunction with the Ground-hornbill survey at some point in the near future.

Proposed: C. Sellick Seconded: T. Cranston

Garden Bird Survey:

Regrettably, owing to Julia Duprée having undergone some major surgery, no Garden Bird Survey report is available for this AGM.

Youth Group:

Kudzana Dhlwayo, from the Natural History Museum, has been trying to grow a BLZ Youth Group, but has found it difficult to round up large numbers as they are busy with school, studies and extra curricula activities. Their objective is to hold a meeting a month, have an outing each month, improve bird identification skills, increase membership and try and raise more funds. In the past year they have only 7 members who have paid their subscriptions, they have had three meetings and been on three outings. They have managed to fund raise \$121! This year there will be a Rotoract campaign in conjunction with the youth.

Proposed: V. Bowman Seconded: Jenny Brebner

ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS

The Chairman advised that Jean Cranston and Marina Jackson were both stepping down from the Committee. Gaynor Lightfoot has offered to become Treasurer, and Cheryl Nel was prepared to stand as a Committee member, but a Secretary was still required. There were no volunteers for the position of Secretary.

Paul Hubbard voted *en bloc* for the two positions accepted, and they were seconded by G. Calvert.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Clare Hubbard thanked Jean Cranston and Marina Jackson for their hard work on the Committee.

Howard Sellick said that the electricians at the National Museum are below par and he would send us a report; the Chairman suggested that he speak to the Friends of the Museum as we were not in a position to assist.

Prof. Mundy suggested we approach Safari Operators for contributions towards the Black Eagle Survey or for assistance with repairs to roads in the Park. KL thanked him for this good idea and will act upon it.

Gordon MacDonald sighted a pale morph of a Wahlberg's Eagle at Makwa Pan in Hwange recently; was unable to get any photos of it as it was too far away. He contacted Peter Steyn about it and the latter has never seen one himself. Paul Hubbard has seen one at Kennedy 1 in Hwange, and Prof. Mundy has only ever seen one *en route* to Dambari, but suggested that Gordon mention it to Colin

Baker in Harare. *[There are discussions and sightings of pale and white phase Wahlberg's Eagles in Honeyguide; see Cackett, K. 1969. More observations on pale phase Wahlberg's Eagles. 57: 24-25, for example. The June-November 2014 Field Observations mentions a white phase female nesting at Mukuvisi and this pair nest there every year and have been well seen, this year included (surely someone has photographed them?), though we need to clarify if this is a pale or white phase since there is a difference. Editor]*

Prof. Mundy asked the Chairman to lodge a formal complaint with BLZ Head Office in Harare about the 5000 nest cards which have been lost by that office.

Members were reminded about the Bistro which is being held on 3.03.18 at 66 Burnside Road at 6.00 for 6.30 p.m.

Laraine King commented that everyone is receiving lots of Red-billed Quelea at their garden feeders this year. Prof. Mundy said hooray for the queleas as they are feeding the small raptors.

There being no further matters up for discussion, the meeting ended at 12.00 noon.

Chairman's Report for BirdLife Matabeleland AGM – 24 February 2018

This is the first report am giving as chairman of BLZ and I have to admit that it hasn't been an easy year! We lost some stalwart members who are hugely missed – our past chairman and committee member Cecilia Hubbard, who gave me personally huge support, and another long-time member Bill Lewis with whom many of us enjoyed bird watching outings. Also, the father of a member and director at Dambari, Verity Bowman [should read John Bowman]. Once again we extend our condolences to the families of these awesome characters.

I did originally treat BLZ as a social club, trying to gather members together for the purpose of bird spotting, but that hasn't worked, and once I realised that the position is more of an admin one than a social one, and that BLZ is more of a conservation entity, the job did become a little less frustrating and easier to understand. However, the support at members is an integral part of any association and it would make me very happy to see more members being more active. We do tend to

rely on the same members for support – although I suppose that happens in many organisations. With a supportive committee, one can do a lot, but I do feel that our committee is a little small and committee members end up being overloaded. As it is, due to lack of interest from members, we are starting this year without a secretary lined up! Fortunately we have had someone step up for the Treasurers position, and for that I am very grateful. I therefore appeal to any who has even a vague interest in what we do to please volunteer their services so that we can move forward – with each person having slightly less to do!

Everyone has their own idea on how to run an organisation, well, I feel that I have failed with this one. So I am asking members to contact me, privately if they wish, to give ideas on how to generate more interest.

I do not like to depict gloom and doom, so on a slightly more positive note, I have started a project which I hope will generate an interest in birds in rural areas. Dambari makes

attractive bird baths, so I am finding sponsors to purchase a bird bath which can then be installed at rural schools. The children at the school will form clubs to watch which birds visit these and report back to me what they have seen. We have for the past few months been able to supply Dambari with old calendars and magazines that BLZ was storing to be given to schools, through Dambari's education officer - originally Cedric, and now Bright. I have also just put an appeal out on Facebook and have managed to have another birdbath sponsored, and also to ask for older bird books to help with identifications. If anyone here is interested in sponsoring a birdbath for \$15 or donating a book, please speak to me after the meeting. I hope in time to be able to also include safari lodges who will report back their sightings, and may even be able to get National Parks to put water in their empty bird baths!

The National Office continues to do great conservation work, particularly concerning the conservation of wetlands, but also in all other areas. They have advised that the Honeyguide will now only be produced once a year, as a

cost cutting endeavour. Not surprisingly the biggest hurdle to BLZ has to be the lack of finances, but we do all seem to 'make a plan' to carry on.

A fundraising event, our "Bistro", started by Cecilia a numbers of years back, is taking place on the 3rd March, and is being hosted by Elton & Gaynor Lightfoot. We hope that many of you will attend. Tickets are \$10 each; please pay to myself, or Gaynor, or to our Ecocash number.

A few items of interest that have been much discussed amongst BLZ circles are, unfortunately mostly in a negative manner, being:

1. The increased number of quelea that are being seen this year.
2. The Common Myna and its spread throughout the country.
3. The water hyacinth which has completely covered Aisleby Dam.

It is hoped that something will be done, in time, about these topics.

And that is all that I have to report for 2017, Thank you.

Khami Ruins outing - 4 March 2018

The Natural History Museum of Zimbabwe held an open family fun day out at Khami Ruins, free of charge, on Sunday 4 March. (Khami Ruins was declared a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1986.) Several other interested parties were invited to come along as well so a few Matabeleland BLZ members arrived in time for the ten o'clock start. A crowd of at least 60 people had gathered with more arriving at intervals during the morning. It was heartening to see so many young families with children running around, some bicycling around while others were enjoying the open spaces of the picnic grounds amongst the tall, leafy trees.

Rob Burrett started off proceedings with a short chat before taking everyone off for a ramble, stopping off in stages to give an informative chat on the particular spot where we'd stopped. With such a large crowd moving along, it was a bit difficult birding with all the noise but, bringing up the rear, we managed to hear and see a few avian species along the way. With the recent rains, the grass

on the sides of the paths was very tall and fully leafed bushes and trees made it difficult to pick up fluttering birds. Getting to the Main Platform with its decoratively built stone walls, we heard a Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird while Barn Swallows, African Palm-swifts and Little Swifts swooped overhead. Fork-tailed Drongos hawked back and forth while disturbed Dark-capped Bulbuls chattered away. At the top of the Mambo's Platform we could gaze out on an incredible 360° view and while Rob continued the historical chat, we had our binos trained on the river below, picking up two Hamerkops, a Little Egret and a Pied Kingfisher, while two enormous fat dassies sunned themselves on the kopje opposite. Rambling back down to the picnic site we heard the Black-crowned Tchagra and the Emerald-spotted Wood-dove which we also saw later and a Yellow-bellied Greenbul grumbled away in the undergrowth. A Little Sparrowhawk, perched in a wild fig tree, seemed fairly unconcerned as it sat motionless watching everyone climb down the rough

stone stairway beneath its yellow-eyed glare. Getting back to the picnic site for a welcome cup of tea, Cape Turtle-doves could be heard calling and a Grey-backed Camaroptera chip-chipped nearby as a pair of Black-backed Puffbacks investigated the foliage above our site. Several children were running around excitedly with butterfly nets trying their luck at capturing flying insects, while others either gathered round the various insect traps that had been set around to see what had been captured or the fungi lady to see what interesting specimens had been collected while out on our walk.

Although it was getting on towards 12 o'clock two of us set off with a small following of birders for a short bird walk taking part of "The Ramble of the Lessers", which took us over a couple of low kopjes first to the dam wall. On the way, one of the younger members of the group spotted an African Golden Oriole sitting way up in a tall tree - such a stunning yellow colour. We came across a party of Vervet Monkeys feasting on enormous marulas while Southern Black Tits chattered away. On one of the stony islands in the middle of the dam were several White-breasted Cormorants and two Blacksmith's Lapwings and a sharp-eyed spotter found a Squacco Heron up in a tree on the far side. A Red-winged Starling graced the top of one of the pillars on the dam wall while many more swallows and swifts flew back and forth twittering. The walk then took us to the Precipice Platform where we managed to find a couple of Common Moorhens and some more White-breasted Cormorants. Along the track we came across about fifteen Red-eyed Doves which had obviously been feeding on something in the undergrowth as they flew up in alarm at our approach. Carrying on along the path to the Passage Platform all was pretty still because of the time of day, we suspected, but when we reached the platform with its huge trees, there was suddenly a cacophony of bird sound and we picked up several other species - Tropical Boubou, Violet-backed Starlings, a small party of Retz's Helmet-shrikes, a Golden-tailed Woodpecker, Blue Waxbills and we heard a Levaillant's Cuckoo as well as a Natal Spurfowl. Continuing on towards the road and

the Monolith Platform, we came across a Red-backed Shrike, Crested Barbet and a Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill as a Rattling Cisticola rattled away somewhere to our right. And later, two White Storks were seen riding the thermals way up in the sky.

All in all 49 species were seen or heard, with the addition of Magpie Shrike, Crested Francolin, Tawny-flanked Prinia, Brown-hooded Kingfisher, African Grey Hornbill, Jameson's Firefinch, Red-billed Hornbill, Grey-headed Bush-shrike (H), Cape Glossy Starling, Southern Grey-headed Sparrow, Chin-spot Batis (H), White Stork and Jacobin Cuckoo.

Jenny Brebner

THE BISTRO 🍴

SATURDAY 3RD MARCH

"The Bistro" was something started by our past Chairman, Cecilia Hubbard, a number of years back as a fundraising exercise. As we no longer have Cecilia, Elton & Gaynor Lightfoot and Tony Wharam stepped up and volunteered to host the event for members, and to cook up a mean Oxtail - the now-traditional Bistro dish. Held earlier in the year than previously, we scurried around and got several donations in, asked Marina Jackson who makes the best ever liver pâté to assist with the starter, and we ended up with 16 members present for the supper. This was hosted at the Lightfoots home, which has a lovely outdoor, under cover, area, and after the dinner we lit an enormous fire to sit around and exchange stories. All in all it was an awesome evening, and we raised \$129 too!

Karen Learmonth



Mashonaland West

David Whitehead Ponds - January 2018

I hope everyone can learn from my mistake!

On the bright, clear late afternoon of Saturday 13th January, my wife and I headed to David Whitehead Ponds to do our bit for the Waterfowl Count. The disused ponds of the collapsed textile industry are laid out in irregular fashion with well-grassed walls, dotted with trees. Only the furthest dam seems to be full of the residue of processing dyes long ago. It has a putrid smell, a murky colour and nothing growing at the water's edge.



Today was going to be special with 24 Pied Avocets standing peacefully on a peninsular of one of the nearer dams. There were the normal waders and Black-winged Stilts dotted along the shore of the shallow puddle. As we progressed to the smelly, far pond we did a double-take with what looked like flamingos. Yes, they were flamingos and now the problem was which kind? We were furtively stalking along the wall looking over cautiously at intervals. There were 14 Greater Flamingos resting in the smelly soup. The sunset was determined not to be outdone by the flamingos and put on a spectacular show of pinks and orange colours behind some tall clouds. There were frequent photo opportunities with my cell phone all trying to capture the moment. We were fortunate to see them fly and settle in a next door pond of cleaner water for the night. As we were heading for our vehicle I was lucky to put up in the thick couch grass a male Harlequin Quail with its grey front clearly visible.

We returned home exhilarated, keen to send in news to BirdLife.

Surely our Chegutu Community would be interested in flamingos? So on the community

chat-group I organised to meet anyone interested at the top of the road leading to the ponds at 16h30 next afternoon. To my surprise we had a column of 8 vehicles all keen to see the flamingos and following me down the narrow road to the ponds. The Pied Avocets were still there at a distance and just as disinterested in us as the night before. But... where were the flamingos? Sadly they had gone! There was much laughter and ribbing at my expense. At least some of the participants had brought sundowners and so we made the most of the reflections of evening light and setting.

Moral of the story: birds might not be there the following day. SAVOUR THE MOMENT!

Howard Matthews

Kadoma News

After intense heat for most of January, February is now waterlogged and muddy. 20th Jan, a scorching hot day for IWC count but at Eiffel Flats sewerage ponds we were given a spectacle not always seen. The lone Grey Heron resident had no bother claiming a large barbel fish of about 1 kg, as the ponds' water level was low. After watching and waiting about 10 minutes, with the fish now docile, the heron was able to position it in his beak head first and swallow, his neck expanding considerably as we watched the shape slither down his long neck. That day, despite intense heat, we watched a pair of African Crakes jumping and frolicking around the bulrushes area. 1 African Rail and 1 Greater Painted-snipe were also seen.



18th Jan. On a morning car journey to Harare, and between Norton and the Hunyani bridge in the open field areas, 33 plus Black-shouldered Kites, all perched on the power lines.

3rd Feb. Part of IWC count: 1 pair of Saddle-billed Storks at David Whitehead ponds. A juvenile has since been seen with these parents. The heavy rains should protect this family as the grassland is thick and the roads pretty impassable around the ponds.

At Suri Suri dam in the Chigwell area, 28 African Openbills were counted. A small amount of human activity around the dam has not perturbed the bird life.

22nd Feb. The country is now very wet and sunless! Again, on a car journey to Harare and between Norton and Hunyani Bridge, 300 plus Egyptian Geese in the sodden, wet muddy lands, enjoying the watery fields and wet conditions.

24th Feb. A 7 a.m. visit to EF sewerage ponds. An overcast, humid morning of 4 hours birding for Ruth and myself. A burst sewerage pipe along the road rewarded us with 25+ Ruff, 7 Black-winged Stilts and 11 Blacksmith Lapwings. We could not walk far or wade, so just stood and watched. At the ponds, 18 Hottentot Teals, 16 Red-billed Teals, 14 White-faced Duck, 1 Southern Pochard, 7 Pied Avocet, 20 Common Moorhen and a mother with 3

chicks rushing away from us. The dense grassland and maize fields around the sewerage ponds showed big numbers of White-winged Widowbirds and Southern Red Bishops. Pin-tailed Whydah, Rattling Cisticola, Croaking Cisticola and Yellow-throated Longclaw were some of the 38 species we recorded that day.

Small flocks of Amur have been seen late evenings at end of December. Hopefully more will appear now that the rains are here in earnest.

We keen birders in the Kadoma Chegutu area carry on with enthusiasm.

Margaret Parrock

For Sale

Rolf Chenaux-Repond is selling 50 copies of *HONEYGUIDE*, the journal of the Ornithological Society of Zimbabwe (now BirdLife Zimbabwe) Vol. 39 (Dec. 1962) to Vol.58/2 (Sept. 2012)

A new copy of *THE VULTURES OF AFRICA* (Mundy, Butchard, Ledger, Piper, 1992)

Contact Rolf on 303591 or rochen@mango.zw



Hunting raptors start fires deliberately

15 Jan 2018 - 12:47 -- Ernest Garcia

The regular attendance of raptors at grass and scrub fires is well known. The birds hunt potential prey animals displaced by the flames. However, proof is now available from Australia that some individual Black Kites *Milvus migrans*, Whistling Kites *Haliastur sphenurus* and Brown Falcons *Falco berigora* deliberately spread fire by carrying burning twigs and dropping them elsewhere to start new blazes. This they seem to

do largely when an existing fire is being extinguished, seemingly in order to keep it going. The use of fire as a tool has previously been thought to be unique to human beings but it may well have first been used by raptors.

Related content matching this news

Black Kite (*Milvus migrans*)

Taxonomy:

Falco migrans

Boddaert, 1783, France.

Occasional hybridization with *M. milvus* reported....

Descriptive notes: 44–66 cm; male 630–928 g, female 750–1080 g; wingspan 120–153 cm. Mostly reddish brown; tail brown and only slightly forked. Juvenile generally paler and more heavily marked, with more contrasted pattern....



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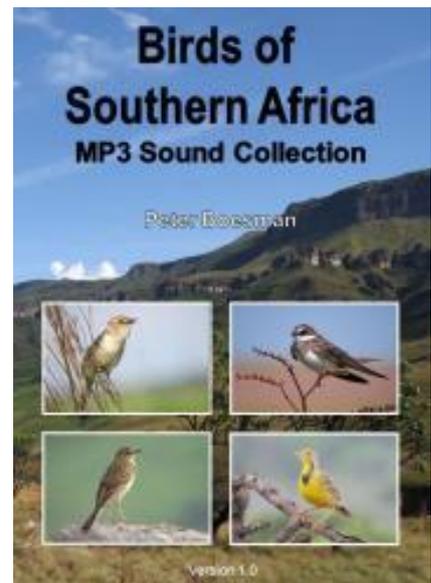
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Secretary: Colin de Beer 0279-23931 jcdb1936@gmail.com
Honeyguide production: Julia Duprée daliadupree@gmail.com 09-246269

BLZ MEMBERSHIP

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE NOW DUE

BirdLife Zimbabwe's membership year is from April to March, but you can join any time.

Even if you don't attend meetings and outings, your membership is really important and supports our goal to protect biodiversity and conserve birds and their habitats through education, lobbying decision-makers and interaction with international organisations.

In addition, your involvement with data collection through atlasing and submission of records is invaluable. As a member you get the newsletter, *The Babblers*, every two months and two issues of *Honeyguide*, our internationally acclaimed journal, every membership year. All for a very reasonable annual fee.

Especially in these difficult economic times, donations towards any of our projects are always much appreciated and you may consider mentioning BLZ in your will!

Individual/Family members (incl. children under 17)	US\$ 25.00
Pensioners (65 & over), Students	15.00
Youth Club	5.00
Schools (high density)	25.00
Schools (private), Educational Institutions	50.00
Rest of Africa	40.00
Rest of World	50.00
Corporate members	*75.00

* If you would like recognition on our public forums, choose the \$200 Corporate Plan. To learn more about corporate sponsorship and BLZ projects, write to JuliaPierini@birdlifezimbabwe.org

Payment details. Please deposit into BirdLife Zimbabwe account at **NMB Bank, (Borrowdale Branch) Account No: 260092014** or BirdLife Zimbabwe Mashonaland Branch, CABS (Chisipite Branch) Account No: 1002399955 or **Ecocash** – Merchant Code No. **22084**. You can **also** pay your subscription online with **Paynow**. Look on the BLZ website on the membership page www.birdlifezimbabwe.org/joinus, and click on the Paynow tab at the bottom of the page. This is especially important for our members outside Zimbabwe. You could **also** come to our office at 35, Clyde Road, Eastlea in Harare.

Some members are not informing us when they pay their subscription and we have to be detectives, which takes up time! There are several payments for the last membership year that have not been confirmed. When members deposit into NMB for example, the name shown on the statement is often only the first name and therefore we may not know who you are.

Therefore it is **ESSENTIAL** please that you advise us by e-mail of your transaction, or your payment will not be recorded. Please contact Sylvia sylvia@blz.co.zw or carolyndennison@birdlifezimbabwe.org or phone Sylvia on 04-481496 for all membership-related issues – new, renewals, payments, change of details, queries.

And look on our Facebook page for great pictures and interesting birding news - www.facebook.com/BirdLifeZimbabwe. You can find out about us and projects you as a member can get involved with, on our informative website www.birdlifezimbabwe.org

Branch Activities

Friends of the Vumba is a community initiative that employs 3 trained scouts to protect the wildlife - tracking for snares and arresting poachers of game, birds and wood. We also support an education outreach into the schools in the area, mostly focussed on birding but more recently extending into wider environmental issues such as WESSA's Water program, rubbish health awareness, alien tree harvesting and indigenous tree planting.

Directions to regular venues (Google Earth co-ordinates):

CABS Northridge Park -17.777494, 31.090782. From town drive along Borrowdale Road, turn right into Whitwell, next right into Ridgeway North, next right into Northend Road and first right into Northridge Close. Drive to the end of the road and go through a security boom into Northridge Park.

Marlborough Vlei -17.742715, 30.990416. Meet at the bottom of Princess Margaret Road, off Harare Drive and follow the road round to the left. Park on the short road midway along the bottom of Princess Margaret.

Mukuvisi Woodlands -17.851935, 31.092010. Turn off the Chiremba Road into Ford Road (opposite Queensdale shops) cross over Longford Avenue and bear left down to the T-junction on Blatherwick Road. Turn right and the gate is about 150 metres on the left. **Note:** There will be no car guard. Don't forget refreshments for after the walk when we record the number of species. The **public car park** is off Hillside Road, -17.835393, 31.089111.

Prince Edward School car park -17.818721, 31.036462. Josiah Tongogara Ave.

Monavale Vlei -17.806770, 31.010579. From Quendon Road turn into Lyndhurst Road, at bottom follow right hand bend, take first left and second right to BS Leon roundabout. Second exit is Fenella Drive. Meet on Fenella Drive.

Haka Park -17.843391, 31.143369. From the traffic circle at the Mutare Road/Harare Drive intersection continue 500m and turn left, follow the road (770m) to the Haka sign and boom on the left. If entering through the boom on Harare Drive (-17.828473, 31.140253; 1.9 km north of the circle) make your way to the meeting point. \$3 entrance fee for BLZ members, \$5 others.

Avondale Sports Club -17.785100, 31.041972. Brighton Road, Harare between Sam Nujoma Street Extension and Upper East Road. There is a cash bar and a security guard. A minimum charge of \$2 per person at the door please.

Mashonaland Branch

BirdLife Zimbabwe Mashonaland Calendar of Events: APRIL 2018

Sunday 1st	Mukuvisi Woodlands walk	Meet at 06.30 a.m.
Saturday 7th	Marlborough Vlei walk	Meet at 07.00 a.m.
Saturday 14th	Ballantyne Park Meet at entrance off Wellburn Drive, -17.773177, 31.099791	Meet at 07.00 a.m.
Sunday 15th	Monavale Vlei walk	Meet at 06.30 a.m.
Thursday 19th	Interactions between snakes and birds Ben Vermeulen, Avondale Sports Club	Meet at 5.30 for 6.00 p.m.
Sunday 22nd	Ngomakurira Meet at CABS Northridge Park	Meet at 6.30 a.m.

BirdLife Zimbabwe Mashonaland Calendar of Events: MAY 2018 – winter times!

Saturday 5th	Marlborough Vlei walk	Meet at 07.00 a.m.
Sunday 6th	Mukuvisi Woodlands walk	Meet at 07.00 a.m.
Saturday 12th	To be advised	Meet at 07.00 a.m.
Thursday 17th	Cuckoos Alex Masterson, Avondale Sports Club	Meet 5.30 for 6.00 p.m.
Sunday 20th	Monavale Vlei walk	Meet at 07.00 a.m.
Sunday 27th	Komani Estates Meet at Mukuvisi Woodlands	Meet at 07.00 a.m.

For further information please contact Tony Alegria, tonyalegria47@gmail.com 0772-438697 or 490375 (h)

Other Areas

Mashonaland West – Margaret Parrock 068-22005 or 0773-263673

Eastern Districts – Second Saturday of every month **The Vumba Walk**. These vary from the Upper to Lower Vumba areas and occasionally may extend into Penhalonga, Burma Valley, and even Chimanimani. Many birding enthusiasts join us although it is not officially a birding walk. They are usually hosted by either a Vumba resident or a commercial venue such as Tony's Coffee Shop, Forest Hills Lodge, White Horse Inn or the Botanical Gardens and the walks will often traverse private properties not always accessible by the public. Contact Sue Fenwick 0779-408557 ingram.sue@gmail.com for more details.

Lowveld – contact Clive Stockil 0772-219204 or clive@chilogorge.com

Mashonaland Branch BLZ; birding weekend at Seldomseen, Fri 18 – Mon 21, May 2018 (3 nights)

Your committee has planned a 3 night stay at Seldomseen to see the forest specials. We have provisionally booked all the accommodation but need to know, in good time, how many members wish to take part. Because this is a BLZ weekend, Seldomseen are offering a special 20% discounted rate of \$28 pppn for staying in a lodge or cottage and \$8 pppn camping.

The beds can sleep 18 but two of them are double beds, so book early if you want one of them. Maximum of 8 people camping – they can camp in the cottage at the bottom of the hill, or use a tent!

Seldomseen will be catering for us at \$75.00 per person for the weekend – the full English breakfasts and dinners will be served at Witchwood Lodge. As per other bird outings, our breakfast will be a brunch served at 10:00 a.m. or later and dinner will be at 7:00 p.m. As Seldomseen are providing the meals, there won't be any self-catering. Tea and coffee will be provided. Thus for the weekend, costs are:

Camping: \$99:00

Lodge/chalet: \$159:00

Payment can be made via Ecocash or swipe card.

All BLZ members are invited on this birding trip – first come first served. This is a popular destination and demand could be high. Please email me ASAP or at the latest by Friday 4th May if you are interested and let me know your preferred accommodation: tonyalegria47@gmail.com



Some birds seen recently...

African Cuckoo Hawk on a Monavale Vlei walk in February

A motley-plumaged Laughing Dove in the garden in Newlands - he has the name 'Motley Coo' and you can't miss him!



Slaty Egret at Mazvikadei Dam on our waterbird count

Thanks to Bev Morgan for showing us this bird!

*Please send contributions for
The Babbler 142 June-July 2018
any time before the 15th May.*