



THE BABBLER

Newsletter of BirdLife Zimbabwe

*August - September
2018 No. 143*

Hi everyone,

Included in this issue are a few of the early winter reports that were held over because of the long wetlands report in *The Babbler* 142.

There is also a report on a visit by the Youth Group to Chiendambuya and it is hoped we will have more contributions from them in the future. "But where are contributions from Matabeleland?", you might ask. Come on you Matabeles, we would like to know what is going on down there!

See page 14 for the forthcoming 2019 calendar - it promises to be a 'goodie' with Roger MacDonald's photos and is something to look forward to. But more on this later in the year.

Happily it is August and the end of winter so I wish you all Happy spring and summer birding,

Ian Riddell gemsaf@mango.zw

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MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS WERE DUE IN APRIL

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 024-2481496 for all membership-related issues – new, renewals, payments, change of details, queries.

Branch News

Mashonaland

GREYSTONE PARK PRESERVE, Saturday 12th May, 2018

Since the breaching of the dam wall and the consequent loss of the body of water, this small reserve is not a beguiling prospect for walkers or birders. However, even without the African Black Duck, Common Moorhen, widowbirds, and warblers in the reeds the 9 members who gathered managed to spot about 70 species on a beautiful May morning.

As we stood and waited for latecomers we were amazed to identify Variable Sunbird, Miombo Double-collared, Purple-banded Sunbird, White-bellied and Amethyst Sunbird in the flowering cherries along with Chin-spot Batis, Red-billed Firefinch, African Yellow White-eye, Yellow-breasted Apalis and Pin-tailed Whydah. Red-faced Cisticola, Dark-capped Yellow Warbler and Lesser Swamp-warbler called from the dried-up dam and Arrow-marked Babblers from the undergrowth.

In the scrubby grassland on the other side of the dam we saw White-browed Scrub-robin, Whyte's and Crested Barbet and Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird and heard White-throated Robin-chat and Black-crowned Tchagra. The woodland held an assortment of common species like weavers and Tropical Boubou, Terrestrial Brownbul and Orange-breasted Bush-shrike but also a Black-throated Wattle-eye and Red-throated Twinspot. A Lizard Buzzard was heard and we watched an African Goshawk on a low branch. Later a Lanner Falcon and an Ovambo Sparrowhawk overflew while Helmeted Guineafowl and Natal Spurfowl called from the dense bush.

All in all, an impressive list for the month of May. Thanks to the Greystone team for allowing access to their preserve.

Ken Dixon

Komani Estates, Sunday 27th May 2018

Wow, there is a lot going on at Komani: new fences, graded roads, mowed vlei, a huge herd of young calves, flourishing crops of beans and peppers, refurbished buildings and more. Our usual visit is in January when we wade through knee-deep water and long wet grass but this was late May so fewer birds and dry feet for most of us. 17 of us in 3 or 4 groups carried out our annual survey, John and Ronnie and the youth group starting from the airfield side, the rest from the farm.

Leaving the vehicles at the farm, we wandered down to the vlei seeing lots of Cattle Egret, hearing Red-eyed Dove and pausing to photograph a Long-crested Eagle on a telegraph pole. Grey-rumped Swallow swooped over the



grass, Levillant's Cisticola called and Black-headed Heron, still and silent, searched for prey. Both Yellow-throated Longclaw and Cape Longclaw were easily seen and the group on the airfield also found the Rosy-throated Longclaw plus Capped Wheatear and African Snipe.

Other vlei species were Crowned Lapwing and African Wattled Lapwing, Lesser Swamp-warbler and Little Rush-warbler, Southern Red Bishop, Red-collared Widowbird, Croaking Cisticola and Pale-crowned Cisticola and Marsh Owl.

A group that took in the woodland fringe added the common miombo birds like Whyte's Barbet, Miombo Double-collared Sunbird, Variable and Amethyst Sunbird, Cardinal

Woodpecker, a White-browed Scrub-robin and Lesser Honeyguide.

After a while we all met up at the cars and the two groups swapped sides of the river, eventually gathering at the Microlight Bar for the count which was ably conducted by Moses and a final figure of 80 was reached, not bad for late May.

We thank the Selby family for inviting us to their impressive farm and wish them continued success.

Ken Dixon

MONA VALE VLEI, Sunday 17th June 2018

As I drove in along Fenella Drive, a Long-crested Eagle landed in a gum and this bird and its mate were to be active on the vlei throughout our visit. Only six of us arrived on time but we were later joined by six more to tramp the newly cleared paths across the frosty grass following the spoor of the bushpigs. Fortunately, we had Moses with his keen hearing to detect the calls of the vlei birds and the distant White-browed Robin-chat, Purple-crested Turaco, Arrow-marked Babbler, Black-collared Barbet and Crested Barbet from surrounding gardens.

The widowbirds and bishops have now lost their gaudy breeding plumage but are still there in numbers. Red-eyed Doves and Laughing Doves called and flocks of Orange-breasted Waxbill seemed to be blown across the long grass by the cold breeze. They are as pretty as ever, as is the African Stonechat. An African Black Duck whistled over us, Purple Heron and Black-headed Heron appeared from time to time and African Wattled Lapwing complained noisily about our presence. Levillant's Cisticola, Croaking Cisticola, Red-faced Cisticola



and Rattling Cisticola were spotted and African Reed-warbler, Little Rush-warbler and Lesser Swamp-warblers were calling along the streams. A Marsh Owl was seen by those who ventured into the central area.

A detour to the pond added Blue Waxbill, Common Waxbill and Common Moorhen but the Pearl-breasted Swallows seem to have gone. Only Grey-rumped Swallows remain.

Exactly 50 species were recorded which is pretty good for late June.

Ken Dixon

BLZ Mashonaland Branch Long Weekend at SELDOMSEEN, VUMBA, Friday 18th - Monday 21st May 2018

Having lived in Mutare for 15 years from 1991 to 2005 and having first visited this lovely property when it was owned by the fanatical netter and ringer Alec Manson and his orchid-loving wife, Cecilia, I was delighted to return and rediscover the beauty of the landscapes and the birds. All 16 of us who formed the BLZ party, hosted by Sue and Ken Worsley with help from Martha and Buluwesi, fully appreciated this gem in the Eastern Highlands despite sometimes cool and cloudy conditions.

At the end of a pothole-free 290 km drive we were allocated our cottage or rooms, had a

welcome cup of tea and set out for our first walk. As it was overcast and therefore too dark in the forest, most of us walked up towards the Vumba Road. Birds were hard to find but an African Stonechat, a signature Vumba species, atop a stump gave super views and Miombo Double-collared Sunbirds and Variable Sunbirds fossicked about in the bushes. The first local specials were a Malachite Sunbird and a White-tailed Crested Flycatcher. In all, 29 species including Lemon Dove and Cinnamon Dove were identified that evening when we took the count around the log fire after a copious supper.

On Saturday morning most of us were drinking tea or coffee by 6.30 and ready for action by 7. However, the birds, apart from African Olive-pigeon, had not been made aware of our arrival and failed to appear before 8 a.m. at the earliest; the forest was dark and silent. My group was soon discouraged and climbed up and out into the protea field, which was warmer and sunlit. A restless group of Yellow-bellied Waxbills held our attention for some time but we failed to find a Gurney's Sugarbird. The best sighting was an African Goshawk circling and clicking as per *Roberts* and Eastern Saw-wings were ever-present. We returned to the forest but that was still too quiet so we moved on to the gardens of the cottages and the nursery spotting Yellow-streaked Greenbul and African Firefinch as well as numerous Olive Sunbirds, Miombo Double-collared Sunbirds, Variable Sunbirds and White-bellied Sunbirds. Tipped off by another group a couple of us returned to the protea patch and this time found the Gurney's in the company of a Malachite Sunbird. At last it was time for a delicious breakfast and lots of chat.



In the afternoon, we drove up to Leopard Rock and parked in the hotel car park near the golf course from where we wandered down to the water hazards hoping to see lots of waterbirds but found only 2 African Black Ducks, a Giant Kingfisher, a Little Grebe and a Hamerkop. The flowering *Aloe arborescens* alongside the ponds attracted myriad sunbirds allowing all of us to study at our leisure Scarlet-chested Sunbird, Malachite, Variable, Amethyst Sunbird, Olive, Miombo Double-collared, White-bellied and Collared Sunbirds. Also in evidence was a (now uncommon) Common Fiscal and 3 Crowned Hornbills flew over. What a feast! A

stroll along manicured, undulating fairways led us past a wide variety of tree species, nice for our Tree Society members, and attractive kopjes. The special White-eared Barbet was easy to spot as was Brown-hooded Kingfisher and Brimstone Canary. A Lesser Honeyguide could be heard in the distance. Later, as we patronised the Golf Club bar, we were privileged to see a flock of 18 (now rare?) Silvery-cheeked Hornbills braying their way over us. Some of us were lucky enough to pick out the faint trilling of a Scaly-throated Honeyguide. Sadly, the wonderful facilities available were under-utilised; we saw but one group of golfers all afternoon and there were few guests at the hotel.



Olive Bush-shrike. © Roger MacDonald

By the end of the day we had recorded about 60 species. That evening after supper, Ken Worsley gave us his lively and interesting presentation on the history and development of Seldomseen from nursery to birding paradise.

Sunday, having learned from the previous day, we set out later for the Botanic Gardens but mist and guti persuaded many birds to remain unseen. The aloes around the 'lake' attracted sunbirds again, this time including the Bronzy Sunbird. A very confiding African Dusky Flycatcher held us in thrall for a while but once again the forest edges were disappointingly quiet.

After another hearty breakfast most of us returned to the Botanic Gardens to complete our survey and were able to add Cape Robin-chat, Tambourine Dove, Speckled Mousebird, Pin-tailed Whydah and a Long-crested Eagle, among others. We all became aware how sun-dependent we and the birds are. For those contemplating a visit, the facilities are little used but in good order; the campsite is now on the

old caravan park and the two cottages looked very inviting.

Sue, our hostess and the resident ecologist, gave the evening talk making us all very aware of the necessity of maintaining biodiversity on the Mozambique-Zimbabwean stage of the Rift Valley and to what extent flora and fauna are threatened, most significantly by over-population.

Our last morning was spent mainly around the property and in the gardens and forest patches. I was very fortunate to see a group of 5

Livingstone's Turacos down at Crimsonwing and then came across a party of forest birds including Olive Bush-shrike, Yellow-streaked Greenbul, White-tailed Crested Flycatcher, Cape Batis, Yellow-breasted Apalis and Chirinda Apalis – a party of forest birds at last.

We all left after breakfast well satisfied with our stay and very grateful to Ken and Sue and Martha, Angela and Buluwesi for spoiling us for 4 days.

Ken Dixon

Birding trip to Chiendambuya from 11-13 May 2018

On the weekend of 11-13 May, Jimmy Muropa, John Vekris, Vengai Dengu and 5 BLZ Youth Club Members, namely Ronnie Chirimuta, Benhildah Antonio, Abigail Karimanzira, Sylvia Chigonera and Lorraine Munemo went to Weya Communal Land and neighbouring areas in Makoni North District, Manicaland Province for a birding expedition. This was the second such trip, the first one having been held in the Driefontein Grasslands IBA over the weekend of 26 January.

The team arrived in Chiendambuya at night and was welcomed on the road by a Spotted Eagle-owl; Jimmy named the bird "Oscar" and asked it to meet us at Mrs R. Mungure's (whom we referred to as Mai Marshall) house where we were going to be staying. The bird took heed of this request and as we were parking at Mai Marshalls a Spotted Eagle-owl was perched behind us. After supper, Jimmy and Ronnie heard a Barn Owl that was screeching nearby. Efforts were made to try to locate this bird but this was in vain.

The next morning we got up early and were on the lookout for birds around the homestead. At least 15 species were recorded and they included Red-faced Mousebirds, Black-collared Barbets, Pearl-breasted Swallows and Violet-backed Starlings. The Black-crowned Tchagra's call could be heard calling all morning and Benhildah compared the call to a song by popular South African musician DJ Cleo – this made it extremely easy for everyone to remember the call. After breakfast we went to meet David Chigumira who was going to be our guide for the day. On the way we saw a Purple Widowfinch, which was a lifer for everyone. We stopped on the bridge on the Nyagadzi River



and Abigail spotted a Giant Kingfisher. Mocking Cliff-chats were seen at that location by Innocent and Jimmy on a previous visit in 2016. Soon after collecting David Chigumira, we saw 3 Lizard Buzzards at different locations. At the Tanda Road turnoff sign Vengai stated that a giant eagle was soaring in the sky and on closer inspection it turned out to be a Martial Eagle. This was the bird of the weekend for Ronnie. As we were looking at the eagle, a Cape Turtle-dove was heard calling and since it was a

Saturday the bird wasn't saying "Work Harder, Work Harder" rather it was saying "Drink Lager, Drink Lager".



Martial Eagle © Celesta von Chamier

It was a long drive to the confluence of Mwarazi and Nyamukumani rivers and when we arrived we were greeted by an excellent view of a Pied Kingfisher. We then disembarked from the car and carried on with our birdwatching in the surrounding woodland. A bird was heard calling and it confused us – identifying this bird was going to be challenging. After a few minutes of trying to determine what this was, it turned out to be a Grey-headed Bush-shrike. This spot was proving to be difficult for us. Another bird was heard calling and when we tried to identify it we could not determine what it was. When we spotted it, it looked like a prinia but we could not tell what it was. We walked along the Nyamukumani River and we added a Spectacled Weaver, 2 African Black Ducks, Three-banded Plovers and an African Wood-owl. It was now after midday and to cool off, the team went for a swim in the river. Vengai, Sylvia, Abigail and Ronnie had a great time in the water. After this we got into the car again and went to have our lunch at a place called Mutiwegora (The tree of the Vulture). A special thanks to the ladies for preparing the delicious lunch for everyone early in the morning.

After lunch we headed for Nyamukumani dam. On the way we saw White-browed Sparrow-weavers, which were a lifer for John and Lorraine. 3 birds flew past us in a flash and Vengai shouted *parrots*, the car was stopped so that we could get a clearer view of the birds. These birds turned out to be 5 Meyer's Parrots.

Vengai and Benhildah were chuffed at having seen the birds before everyone else. At Nyamukumani Dam we saw African Black Ducks, a Purple Heron, Cattle Egrets, Hamerkop and heard an African Fish-eagle calling. Locals who reside in the area were busy fishing and Vengai, Sylvia and Abigail decided to give fishing a try. Two of the three were successful in catching the fish; I will not mention who the unlucky one was. After this we headed back home to Mai Marshall. Once again we heard a Barn Owl screeching but we could not see the bird.

On Sunday everyone woke up early, packed our belongings and we headed for Runyange Mountain where we intended to do our birding and mountain climbing. Not many birds were seen and heard. The few that were recorded included Chin-spot Batis, African Yellow White-eye, Jameson's Firefinch and Golden-breasted Bunting. Runyange is a sacred mountain and when climbing it we had been advised to mind what we said, as there have cases of people who have disappeared. I'm happy to report that the whole group managed to descend from the mountain without anyone disappearing! However, John's glasses remained on the mountain.

After Runyange we proceeded homewards to Harare, stopping at some miombo woodland near Wensleydale Training Centre, here we only added the Amethyst Sunbird to our list. This spot dampened our weekend as someone broke into our car and stole Jimmy's satchel with all his clothes and GPS, Abigail's shoes, Lorraine's phone and wallet. A near perfect weekend was spoiled right at the end.

In total 90 species were recorded during the entire weekend.

Special thanks to Mai Marshall for being a wonderful host, David Chigumira for being an excellent guide, BLZ for providing binoculars and to John for availing transport and facilitating introductions to the people and the area. Special mention has to go to Eddie Muropa who provided the fuel funds for the trip but could not join us due to work commitments. Without these people this trip would not have taken place.

Ronnie Chirimuta

National

Some reports and news from the National Annual General Meeting held at Mukuvisi Woodlands on Saturday 23 June 2018

At the AGM, new Council members were voted in:

President:	Neil Deacon
Vice president:	Ken Worsley
Honorary Treasurer:	James Ball
Finance:	Russell Clark
Acting Honorary Secretary:	Carolyn Dennison
New Council member:	Paula Dell
Education:	Leslee Maasdorp
Chairperson of Mashonaland:	Tony Alegria
Chairperson of Matabeleland:	Karen Learmonth

BLZ AGM June 2018 Report for Conservation 2018

by Togarasei Fakarayi

Introduction

This report provides a summary of major conservation achievements for the year April 2017 – March 2018. It is important to note that funding for doing conservation work has still been a challenge during this year. However, despite funding challenges, we had good achievements during the year and as an organisation, we maintained our networks at local, regional and international levels. At local level, BLZ remains a strategic organisation whose work is well recognised by the government, communities, civil society organisations and other stakeholders. The organisation has been instrumental in promoting conservation of birds and biodiversity in the country. The impact of our work is greatly appreciated by our stakeholders in areas reached this year.

Projects

The CEPF funded project on trans-boundary cooperation in the Chimanimani Mountains of Zimbabwe and Mozambique completed in June 2017 was successful. This project engaged stakeholders from both Zimbabwe and Mozambique in the Chimanimani Mountains. Last activities conducted between April and June 2017 were joint training on bird identification and habitat monitoring, site

exchange visit by local stakeholders and final joint meeting. The project helped improve knowledge and skills among communities, park officers and civil society organisations in bird identification, site monitoring and management across borders. Reports submitted to CEPF in August 2017 were all accepted and BLZ received a grant closure letter from CEPF in September 2017.

During the year, BLZ worked closely with Forestry Commission (John Meikles Forest Research Station (JMFRS)), Allied Timbers Zimbabwe (ATZ), Border Timbers Limited (BTL) and Rupinda Community (Honde Valley) in updating information of trigger species for Stapleford Forestry Key Biodiversity Area (KBA). This project, funded by CEPF and completed in December 2017, was successful. Field personnel from the key institutions namely ATZ, JMFRS, BTL and Rupinda Community were trained in bird identification and survey techniques, data capturing, analysis and storage. A total of 45 pairs of Swynnerton's Robin were recorded at Stapleford Forest KBA. In addition, a total of eight biome-restricted species were recorded. Out of the nine trigger plant species a total of five were recorded. The recorded target species were *Bersama swynnertonii*, *Bulbophyllum*

ballii, *Clutia monticola*, *Helichrysum chasei* and *Tephrosia festina*.

Engagement with Local Community Conservation Groups

Contacts and relations with our local community conservation groups were maintained during the year. Driefontein IBA was visited three times where communities were encouraged to continue monitoring their activities to avoid threats to species and habitats. Local communities at Stapleford and Vumba were engaged during participatory work on updating information of trigger species for Stapleford KBA. Frequent communication was done with communities in Chimanimani during the year, updates from site received.

Two Site Support Groups, namely Markdale SSG in Driefontein and Masangoni SSG in Chimanimani, and an individual Peter Magosvongwe, were nominated for Nature Heroes Award in 2017. This was successful and they were awarded certificates from BirdLife International in recognition of their contribution to birds and biodiversity conservation in their areas. Stories about these community people written were published on the BirdLife International website.

National World Wetlands Day commemorations held in Chirumanzu District (Driefontein IBA) in February 2018 were successful. BLZ was represented by Toga and joined by members of the local community conservation groups who participated in this event. Information about cranes and wetlands provided by BLZ was captured in the keynote address delivered by Honourable Minister of Environment, Water and Climate. Awareness on cranes and wetlands in Driefontein was raised at this highest level during the event.

IBA monitoring

Seven IBAs, namely Chimanimani, Driefontein Grasslands, Stapleford Forest, Hwange National Park, Matopos, Vumba and Lake Chivero, were assessed using the IBA monitoring framework. Key threats to these sites include illegal gold panning (for Chimanimani), alien invasive plant species

especially for Eastern Highlands and Lake Chivero IBAs, fire, agricultural expansion in natural habitats, deforestation, and overgrazing. Global warming is also affecting our IBAs, especially those in the Eastern Highlands.

New Grants and pending proposals

A small grant of US\$16,000 was secured from the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA). This grant is supporting crane conservation work in Zimbabwe focusing on Driefontein Grasslands and wetlands in Hwange area. The project, started in January 2018, is running until 30 June 2019.

A proposal to conduct a scoping study to assess impact of mining on ecosystems and communities in and around protected areas submitted to Global Green Grants Fund in March 2018 was successful. It has a total budget of US\$12,500. The project will be implemented in the current year (2018-2019). A proposal on species surveys and habitat assessment for improved crane conservation submitted to the National Geographic Society in March 2018 is still pending. Another proposal on species monitoring and habitat assessment for improved conservation of the endangered Grey Crowned Crane in Driefontein Grasslands, Zimbabwe submitted to the European Outdoor Conservation Association (EOCA) in November 2017, is pending.

Conferences

Toga participated at the African Great Lakes Conference held in Entebbe, Uganda from 2-5 May 2017. He presented case studies on the use of site-based tools to demonstrate ecosystem service values in Africa. At the conference, Toga was invited as a panellist during an Ecosystem Services and Biodiversity benefits plenary session where he talked about economic valuation of ecosystem services and biodiversity benefits. He highlighted the importance of valuing ecosystem services at Key Biodiversity Sites and using such quantifiable data to influence policy decisions towards ecosystem management and biodiversity conservation.

Conservation Report for the AGM, June 2018

by Fadzai Matsvimbo

Awareness

Following a journalist interview with Fadzai Matsvimbo by *The Standard* newspaper, an article entitled 'Spiritual rituals decimate vultures' was published in the newspaper on the 12th September 2017 to raise awareness on vultures to a large public audience across Zimbabwe.

On the 19th September 2017, Fadzai Matsvimbo gave a talk at the National University of Science and Technology to students from the Forestry and Wildlife Management course. Graduate students from this course are usually employed as ecologists and estate managers for National Parks and the Forestry Commission. By engaging the students and raising awareness on the plight of vultures and the impacts of illegal wildlife poisoning, BLZ was engaging the next generation of key stakeholders and as the students take up new roles in these important institutions they will already have a good understanding of this critical issue.

Capacity Building

To improve the confidence and ability for field-staff to identify vultures at poisoning crime scenes, 62 people (59 ZPWMA Rangers, 3 PDC Anti-Poaching Staff on the VSG) were trained on vulture identification and monitoring in July 2017. A separate training was held for the members of the vulture support group in September 2017 with 32 participants. This has greatly improved reporting of bird mortalities particularly vultures.

Research and monitoring

Hotspot mapping. In December 2017 the support of a GIS consultant was enlisted to produce a poisoning hotspot map for Hwange National Park using data spanning 2011 to 2017 that had been gathered through the bird mortality reporting forms in 2017. The map shows that Western Zimbabwe is a hotspot for illegal wildlife poisoning. However, it could also be that with increased efforts in awareness and training there is an increase in the rate of reporting, especially as a result of the anti-poisoning training and awareness.

Vulture Surveys

BirdLife Zimbabwe partnered with the National University of Science and Technology (NUST) to carry out a nesting survey of White-backed Vultures at Debshan Ranch (one of Zimbabwe's Important Bird Areas). The survey was carried out in June 2017, a period when vultures are breeding. On the Debshan Ranch, a total of 24 nests were located, with 22 being active, with either one or both parents in attendance. The two inactive nests had been refurbished but subsequently not used. Tree species used include *Albizia amara*, *Lonchocarpus capassa*, and *Acacia erioloba*. Tree heights ranged between 8-20 metres. No nests were seen on the Shangani Ranch. This could be due to the nature of the landscape, which is mostly wooded with no apparent large trees even on the riverine habitat along the Shangani River, as White-backed Vultures typically locate their nests close to a water source.



The significance of these results is that White-backed Vultures were not previously known to breed at Debshan. The ranch sits at just over 1200m in altitude, above which White-backed Vultures were not known to breed in Zimbabwe.

Diamond Route Conference

Fadzai Matsvimbo attended the conference which took place in Johannesburg South Africa on the 17th and 18th of October 2017. The purpose of the conference was to share outcomes of a range of research projects that have taken place across properties and other sites within the De Beers Group of Companies and E Oppenheimer & Son. BLZ partnered with the National University of Science and Technology (NUST) in June to carry out a vulture breeding survey at Debshan Ranch,

where 22 active nests of White-backed Vultures were located and the results of this monitoring effort was presented at the conference.

Proposals

1) A Concept Note entitled 'Vultures and the scourge of poisoning' (US\$ 250,000.00) was submitted to the Okavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area (KAZA TFCA) contact point for Zimbabwe in collaboration with Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority in June 2017 for consideration for funding. The proposal will be re-submitted to KAZA once the KAZA Bird Conservation Working Group has been endorsed by the Conservation working Group.

2) A project 'Vultures and traditional healers, working to change behaviour, attitudes and perceptions' (US\$ 19,500) was submitted to National Geographic Foundation in April 2018. The outcome is still pending.

3) BirdLife Zimbabwe revised a concept note together with CWF entitled 'Vital Actions are needed in SADC Countries against the use of wildlife poisons' worth US\$ 73 000. Conservation and Wildlife Fund (CWF) is a new alliance of eight tourism operators and four NGOs established to address critical issues in the conservation and management of the Hwange Ecosystem in partnership with the authorities, private landowners and local communities. So far no funds have been committed to this work.

4) A project proposal to carry out Environmental Education in schools under the banner of Spring Alive for £ 1000 was submitted to BirdLife Otop in May 2017. The application was successful. The contract for the project was signed in July 2017.

5) Fadzai Matsvimbo took a lead role in developing a concept note entitled 'Tackling vulture poisoning and illegal trade through community involvement within the Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area' (€ 1.2 million) with BirdLife Zimbabwe as the lead applicant. Other organisations who are part of the proposal are BirdLife Botswana, BirdWatch Zambia and Namibia Animal Rehabilitation Research and Education Centre. The project application was not successful.

6) A proposal entitled 'Breeding of Dassie sp. to assist recovery of Black Eagle *Aquila verreauxii* population at the Matopos Hills Zimbabwe' (AU\$ 20,000) was submitted to Zoos Victoria in

August 2017. The application was not successful.

7) Fadzai Matsvimbo submitted a proposal in December 2018 to carry out surveys of Hooded Vultures in Mana Pools National Park to the BirdFair/RSPB Research Fund for Endangered birds. The grant application was for US\$ 1999.00. The application was successful and the funds were transferred to BLZ in March 2018.

8) Fadzai Matsvimbo applied to ESRI (GIS software provider) for software grant in January 2018. The grant was approved and a Master Agreement was signed at the beginning of March 2018. ESRI has provided ARCGIS software for free to BLZ for the year 2018.

9) Birding Ecotours put together a team of South Africans together to compete in a friendly birding-race, The World Series of birding <http://worldseriesofbirding.org/>, in May this year, and the funds raised will be used for the Blue Swallow Conservation project. So far more US\$ 1200 has been raised.

Representing BLZ

Convention on Migratory Species

Fadzai Matsvimbo attended as preparatory meeting for Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) meeting at ZimParks Headquarters on 18th July of Zimbabwe. The purpose of the meeting was to go through the various documents that are on the CMS Conference of Parties (COP) Agenda. The CMS COP will be taking place in from the 23rd-28th October 2017 in the Philippines. One of the agenda items that will tabled at CMS is the Conservation of African-Eurasian Vultures. BLZ encouraged ZPWMA and the then Ministry of Environment Water Climate (MEWC) to support this resolution as it is important for a concerted effort for vulture conservation.

Okavango-Zambezi (KAZA) Trans-frontier Conservation Areas Bird Conservation Working Group

On the 31st January 2018, a meeting was held in Victoria Falls with the representatives of the KAZA secretariat and four BLI partners (BirdLife Botswana, BirdLife Zimbabwe, BirdWatch Zambia, RSPB) and ZimParks attended the meeting and it was agreed that a KAZA Bird Conservation Working Group (KBCWG) should be formed as part of the TFCA structures. In April 2018, BLZ was then invited to present the proposal to the KAZA

Conservation, Safety and Security Working Group. The formation of the KBCWG was endorsed at this meeting. In the meantime, BLZ has assumed the role of group coordination to the Conservation Working Group. The meeting has not yet taken place. At the end of February 2018, Fadzai Matsvimbo and Togarasei Fakarayi attended the National TFCA Conservation and Veterinary Sub-Committee meeting. There was a proposal to have Bird-Conservation Working Group as a sub-group of the aforementioned group. This was on the back of the developments happening with the KAZA Bird Conservation Working Group. BLZ was tasked to coordinate the group until the group is functional. These developments serve to position BLZ as major stakeholder in bird conservation matters in the country and the Southern African region. Several meetings were held when Ian Barber and Dr Chris Magin visited Zimbabwe at the end of January to give them an understanding of the environment that BLZ is operating in, the various activities other conservation organisations are doing and how these collaborations can be made stronger.

1) A meeting was held with Tourism Safari Operators in Victoria Falls on the 30th January 2018 to discuss the potential of working together with BirdLife Zimbabwe as the organisation works to promote Birding Tourism this year. Players from major safari companies including Wilderness Safaris, Shearwater attended the meeting.

2) A meeting was held with conservation organisation on the 30th January 2018 in Victoria Falls as a way of updating each other on the various programmes they are working on. This included Victoria Falls Wildlife Trust, Bhejane Trust and Victoria Falls Anti-Poaching.

3) In Sinamatella, Hwange National Park the team met with Stephen Long who took the team on a tour of Sinamatella as well as explaining the role that Bhejane Trust is playing in assisting ZimParks to run the Park.

4) A short meeting was held with the Area Manager of Sinamatella on 2nd February 2018, Mr Marvellous Mbikiyana to understand some of their challenges, particularly those related to poisoning of wildlife and how they have been working BirdLife Zimbabwe on vulture conservation.

5) A meeting was held with the Conservation Manager of Painted Dog Conservation (P.D.C) on 2nd February 2018 to understand how they

have been to working with the communities bordering Hwange National Park and how they have been working with BirdLife Zimbabwe to promote both vulture and carnivore conservation.

CITES

Fadzai Matsvimbo attended CITES Animals and Plants Committee Meeting that was held at the Parks and Wildlife Management Authority Headquarters on 16th March 2018 as part of preparations for the next CITES Conference of Parties (COP). Vultures were on the agenda at the meeting to understand what the threats are that face them and what are the levels of trade taking place within the country and across its borders.

Mana Pools-Sapi-Chewore World Heritage Site Management Plan Meeting

Fadzai Matsvimbo attended the inception meeting for the drafting of the Mana Pools-Sapi-Chewore World Heritage Site Management Plan, which took place on 21st March 2018. The development of the plan is being spearheaded by ZimParks and African Wildlife Foundation. The area is of importance to BLZ as it also coincides with the Middle Zambezi Valley Important Bird and Biodiversity Area.

On the list of species of concern, Fadzai also indicated that vultures be included in the plan. Going forward BLZ will take part in the various thematic working groups for the development of the Management Plan. These include the Biodiversity and Research Working Group, Communities Working Group, Anti-Poaching and Security Working Group and the Tourism Working Group.

Global Flyways Summit

Fadzai attended the Global Flyways summit in Abu Dhabi, which was held in April 2018. This was a four-day event at which many of the key players in global bird conservation participated, representing NGOs, the scientific community, governments and the CMS family. The main item under discussion was how migratory birds can be better protected at every point of their arduous journeys along the flyways. The summit brought together representatives of 100 organisations from 70 countries in a series of workshops where experiences were exchanged and ideas for further collaboration discussed.

BirdLife Zimbabwe – Harare Wetlands Trust Wetlands Advocacy Project

Harare Wetlands Trust, an umbrella trust incorporating Civil Society Organisations, Community-based Organisations and concerned individuals promoting the conservation of Harare's Wetland Ecosystems to ensure the sustainable provisioning of water for Greater Harare, was formed in April 2016. HWT members include: BirdLife Zimbabwe, Conservation Society of Monavale (COSMO), Borrowdale Residents and Ratepayers Association (BRRA), Ballantyne Conservation Trust, Community Water Alliance (CWA) and the Combined Harare Residents Association (CHRA).

The current Harare Wetlands Advocacy Project is being funded by TRACE and managed by BirdLife Zimbabwe. Project staff contracted by BLZ onto the project include Selestino Chari (Project Manager), JP (Co-ordinator), Dorothy Wakeling (COSMO) Monitoring & Evaluation, Jimmy Muropa (COSMO) vlei scout, Ronnie Chirimuta (MEAG) vlei scout, Hardlife Mudzingwa (CWA) Community co-ordinator and Reuben Akili (CHRA) institutional support co-ordinator.

Wetlands cover about 1.5% of Zimbabwe's land area. They provide a wide range of ecosystems good and services. The latter include water storage, storm protection and flood mitigation, erosion control, ground water recharge and discharge, water purification and retention of nutrients. Wetlands provide food and nutrition for resident communities (as they provision water to grow food. Agriculture is **NOT** recommended on wetlands). They also stand out as rich islands of floral and faunal biodiversity that attracts tourism.

Wetlands are being destroyed at a rapid rate, resulting in its water source being lost. The wise use of wetlands is to preserve them for ground and surface water provisioning for residents to support their lives and activities in the city as well as for downstream users. Aside from sewage farming, other utilisation of wetlands results in their total loss, thus affecting water provisioning and the many other free services provided to the city and downstream users by wetlands.

Harare is located in and around the headwater wetlands of its catchment basin at the very beginning of the Manyame (Marimba,

Mukuvisi and Gwebi Rivers) and the Mazowe river systems. Greater Harare lies within the source of its water. Until recent decades the wetlands have been protected by law. However, the wide wetland ecosystems have been eroded by development and cultivation with core areas remaining, joined by streams and river corridors. What remains of these ecosystems must be preserved and restored to ensure water provisioning and purification to the City.

Position of Harare Wetlands Trust (HWT)

HWT proposes:

- That there should be no sustainable use of wetlands other than that already provided by Nature's ecosystem services.
- That all of Harare's wetlands are retrieved immediately from private ownership, restored and preserved for water provisioning and purification, and for the many other free services they provide to residents. They are national strategic assets at the service of Harare, which can be described as a Wetland City. The City cannot survive on runoff alone, carrying non-point source pollutants, during the rainy season. The wetland ecosystems have been compromised enough and cannot sustain any more negative impacts.

Harare Wetlands Advocacy Project Achievements to date are:

- The establishment of 10 Local Environmental Action Plan (LEAP) Community Based Organisations in Kambuzuma, Mabvuku, Tafara, Glenview, Budiriro, Highfields, Dzivarasekwa, Rugare, Kuwadzana and Mufakose. These assist in rendering state institutions accountable.
- HWT has brought about the engagement of communities with Parliament, which is serving to facilitate democratic processes. A total of 3 petitions from the community groups and one from HWT/BLZ have been successfully submitted to Parliament and responded to, with two of them resulting in Parliamentary hearings with the Environment, Water, Climate and Hospitality Industry Committees so far and one with 25 Members of Parliament (MPs) visiting Kambuzuma. The Chairperson of the Parliamentary Committee on Environment, Water, Climate and Hospitality Industry, Hon Y. Simbanegavi, presented their Wetlands Petitions Report in Parliament on 6 June 2018 – based on

our community LEAP petitions and HWT & Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR) recommendations.

- The motion to stop development on wetlands was submitted and debated in Parliament by Hon. James Maridadi (with support from HWT/BLZ) who facilitated the oversight role of parliament in issues to do with engagement, policy and legislation. The Minister of Environment, Water & Climate was present at the debate of the motion and responded.

- Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) with EMA and Upper Manyame Sub-Catchment Council were signed in March 2018. A MoU with Zimbabwe National Water Authorities (ZINWA) is in draft format ready for signing. These key state actors are responsible for the preservation for wetlands. Signing a MoU with them is a buy-in to both the project and its intended outcomes and impact.

- HWT/BLZ interventions on Monavale East Wetland, Ramsar Site facilitated the removal of illegal buildings on wetlands by the City of Harare.

Plan ahead for 2019...

Now here's something to look forward to! The BLZ 2019 calendar promises to be spectacular, filled with impressive photos by Roger MacDonald

More, of course, in forthcoming issues of *The Babbler*





Survey of nesting vultures

I joined Fadzai (from the office) and Tendai Wachi, the ornithologist at Lake Chivero, on a vulture nesting survey at Mana Pools over the period 24-27 August 2018. The target species was the Hooded Vulture but other vultures and raptors and their nests were also noted.

It transpired that the Hooded Vulture was 'rare' and only a single bird was seen! Of course, the problem with the Hooded is that nests are very hard to find, being well concealed in thickly foliated trees and thus hard to detect on road transects. The White-backed Vulture was predictably the commonest



with 24 sightings and out of these two nests were found, one probably having eggs or a chick, and the other with a chick. Seven White-headed Vultures were recorded, the most interesting sighting being 4 birds at a carcass at Ruckomechi. Two Lappet-faced Vultures were also at this site.



Two Tawny Eagle nests were found and one of an African Hawk-eagle. A goodly number of Bateleurs were sighted.

It is planned to publish the full results in *Honeyguide*.

Ian Riddell

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Honeyguide production: vacant

BLZ MEMBERSHIP

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS WERE DUE IN APRIL

BirdLife Zimbabwe's membership year is from April to March, but you can join any time. Unfortunately, if a member's subscription is SIX (6) months in arrears, they shall automatically be deemed to have ceased to be a member! We would not like to lose you and your support is much appreciated, so please RENEW NOW.

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 atlassing and submission of records is invaluable. As a member you get the newsletter, *The Babbler*, 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 carolyndennison@birdlifezimbabwe.org or Sylvia sylvia@blz.co.zw or phone Sylvia on 024-2481496 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. Bring a tip for the 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: AUGUST 2018

Saturday 4th	Marlborough Vlei walk	Meet at 07.00 a.m.
Sunday 5th	Mukuvisi Woodlands walk	Meet at 07.00 a.m.
Saturday 11th	Botanic Gardens Meet in car park off Fifth Street, -17.801768, 31.050816	Meet at 07.00 a.m.
Thursday 16th	BLZ Youth Group Expedition Presentation, Avondale Sports Club	Meet at 5.30 for 6.00 p.m.
Sunday 19th	Monavale Vlei walk	Meet at 07.00 a.m.
Sunday 26th	Kent Estates, Norton Meet at Prince Edward School car park. Directions to their offices: from Harare, go past Norton, over the rail flyover for 1.6km. Turn left on Skyline Rd (which is the same as Chibero College but may read Lake Chivero!). Travel c.6km, then turn right at the Kent Estate signs. Travel a further 7km and go directly to the office next to the workshops.	Meet at 07.00 a.m.

*BirdLife Zimbabwe Mashonaland Calendar of Events: SEPTEMBER 2018 -
Note Summer time changes*

Saturday 1st	Marlborough Vlei walk	Meet at 07.00 a.m.
Sunday 2nd	Mukuvisi Woodlands walk	Meet at 06.30 a.m.
Saturday 8th	Greystone Park Nature Preserve	Meet at 07.00 a.m.
	-17.746240, 31.127204. From the new traffic circle on Harare Drive exit east onto Gaydon road and drive for 3.2km to Halford road, turn right and reserve is 200m on the left.	
Sunday 16th	Monavale Vlei walk	Meet at 06.30 a.m.
Thursday 20th	Owls	Meet 5.30 for 6.00 p.m.
	Presentation by Tony Alegria, Avondale Sports Club	
Sunday 23rd	Lanark Farm (Irvine's)	Meet at 06.30 a.m.
	Meet at Prince Edward School car park. Directions to follow.	

For further information please contact Tony Alegria, tonyalegria47@gmail.com 0772-438697 or 2490375 (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

*Please send contributions for The
Babbler 144 October-November 2018
any time before the 15th September.*