

THE BABBLER

ORNITHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION OF ZIMBABWE NEWSLETTER

ISSUE #9: November/December 1995

Mashonaland Branch

Chairman: Mr B Elliot 302465
Secretary/
Treasurer: Mrs I Gray 885406
Members: Mr G Lowe 735507
Mr C Rawson -
PRO Mr K Barrow 732457
Editor: Mr D Gray 885406

Matabeleland Branch

Martin Smith 42474
Mrs P Feather 44034
Mr W Goodwin 64121
Mr M Smith 42474

Postal Addresses:

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Sunbird: 14 Fisher Ave, Borrowdale

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MASHONALAND BRANCH ACTIVITIES

Regular Monthly Outings

1. Mukuvisi Woodlands: Sunday 5th November and 3rd December 1995. Meet at Paget Road entrance at 6.30 a.m. There will be a vehicle guard in attendance.
2. Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary: Sunday 12th November and 10th December 1995. Meet at Marimba Shopping Centre at 6.30 a.m. Beginners are especially catered for. Vehicles parked in a safe area. Bring your chairs and tea.

Saturday Afternoon Outings

1. 18th November 1995. Marlborough Sewerage Works. Meet at Marlborough Shopping Centre between Elizabeth Windsor and Princess Margaret Roads off Harare Drive. Time 2.00 p.m.
2. No December outing

Sunday Outings

1. 26th November 1995. Dichwe Lemon Forest, Mvurwi. A combined Wildlife Society and Mashonaland Birdwatchers Club outing. Meet at Ashbrittle Shopping Centre. Time 5.30 a.m. Bring tea, chairs and eats.
2. No December outing.

Evening Meetings

1. Thursday 16th November 1995. Video evening at Jacko William's home - 14 Harare Drive, Greystone Park. Phone 882206 for further details.
2. No December meeting.

EASTERN DISTRICTS BIRD CLUB

Chairman: Mr K Dixon 62882 Mutare
 Secretary: Miss G Henning 4 Mimosa Court, 2nd St, Mutare
 Recorder: Mr A B (Tony) Curtis 60181 Mutare

Outings

Saturday 11th November 1995 Penhalonga 2.00 p.m.
 Sunday 26th November 1995 Nyanga 5.30 a.m.
 Saturday 9th December 1995 Bvumba – Eden Lodge 2.00 p.m.
 Sunday 31st December 1995 Cynara 6.00 p.m.

The group assembles at the Museum in Aerodrome Road at the time stated. It is always advisable to check on arrangements by ringing Ken Dixon on 62882 or Tony Curtis on 60181.

MATABELELAND BRANCH ACTIVITIES

Friday 3rd November 1995: 'BERT' (Black Eagle Radio Telemetry) Warren Goodwin and his team have a short sequence of video on attaching transmitters to Verreaux's Eagles. Warren also has a variety of other 'shorts' which he will show. After tea a RSPB video "Osprey" or "The Secret Reeds". Venue: 3 Bouchier Wray, Hillside at 8 p.m. Contact Barbara Cromar for directions. Tel. 41983

Friday 1st December 1995: Sunset birding at Hillside Dams. Hopefully we will have had some rain and trees should be in leaf. Meet at the Aloe Garden car park at 5.30 p.m. for an evenings stroll

Outings

Sunday 19th November 1995: Southern Carmine Bee-eater Outing. We are planning to visit the Randall's farm in the Umgusa Valley – hopefully the Carmine colony will be active this year, if not the venue may change! Meet at the Falls Road Garage at 7.30 a.m., bringing morning tea and lunch if you wish to stay on. Contact Martin Smith for details – 42474.

Sunday 10th December 1995: Christmas Social. This year's social will be held at Willow Park – birding followed by an evening braai. Contact Penny Feather for details – 44034.

Aisleby: Sunday 26th November 1995: The wet season with hopefully plenty to see. Meet Tim English – Tel 45638 – at Aisleby boom at 7.30 a.m. Note – there is no outing to Aisleby in December.

From the Chairman

A lengthy school holiday which has enabled plenty of 'odd' jobs to be tackled. A small group of birders spent a busy morning sticking up entries to the 'Paint a Bird' competition, which are now on display in the Museum courtyard. Standards were high with some delightful pictures. These have been judged results being:

<u>Seniors</u>	<u>Juniors</u>	<u>Infants</u>
1st Moira Masuka – Convent	Tinashe Uraya – Milton Jnr.	Mukudzai Chiweshe – Petra Primary
2nd Barbara Mazarire –	Sarah Rilling – Convent	Rumbudzai Maphosa – Petra High
3rd Fleur Fenner – Convent.	Twoboy Kauswa – Mhali Govt Primary	Cassandra Nixon – Whitestone

Thank you to all who helped to make this year's competition a success.

In the MATOPOS Warren's team have been in action and at the time of writing have succeeded in putting transmitters on three chicks [Verreaux's Eagle?]. Hopefully their movements can now be tracked and some of the queries solved.

Finally, reeds have been cleared - yet again - in front of the hide at Aisleby, though there is now no water due to a burst main!

Good birding - Editor.

Inter-branch Visit. This happened despite rather poor support - Geoff Lowe and Bryant Elliot were the only rash Branch members. On a Saturday morning outing to KHAMI Railway Dam, overcast conditions and a biting wind meant only a few birds were to be seen. Below the wall and along the water course small pockets of life were found including a variety of seed eaters and a small party of Burnt-necked Eremomela, overhead White-backed Vulture scudded past. Back to the dam the shore produced a pair of Buffy Pipit - it was pleasing to be able to name them positively - also a multitude of African Quailfinch which seemed to appear from under our feet. On Sunday the trip to AISLEBY proved rewarding with plenty of waders including white Ruff, a variety of ducks both Cape Teal and Maccoa. Perhaps next year this event will receive better support!
Martin Smith

Skeletons: The Ornithology Department of the Natural History Museum Bulawayo is building up a collection of bird skeletons. The specimens need not be in as good condition as is needed for the skin collection. All specimens should be sent to:
The Hon Curator of Ornithology, Natural History Museum, Bulawayo.

MIDLANDS BIRDING CLUB

Co-ordinator: B W Beekes P O Box 55 Shurugwi Phone 152-3422

Newsletter No. 1

To the questionnaire sent out in July, the following responses were received:

Number of responses	11	
	Yes	No
Are you interested in attending more birding functions in the Midlands area?	7	2
Are you interested in forming a Midlands Branch including Gweru and Kadoma areas?	3	2
Are you interested in forming a Gweru area branch?	2	2
Are you interested in forming a Kadoma area branch?	3	3
Are you interested in forming a Gweru Branch as a Sub-branch of Bulawayo?	3	2
Are you interested in forming a Kadoma Branch as a Sub-branch of Harare?	2	2

The response was underwhelming. Generally most members are too spread out to make organising functions a simple matter. Many people would like more functions but there is a real problem in attending anything more than 50 km away from home, especially if you live out on a farm.

However having said that, our birding day at Princess Farm in SHURUGWI was a success despite a small turnout. Jacko Williams and Monica Fiorini came from Harare. Insufficient member's attended to form a Committee but it was agreed that I would act as Co-ordinator. It was agreed by consensus to form a Midlands Birding Club covering the whole Midlands (subject to ratification by OAZ Council) and see how events develop. As I do not know anyone in Kadoma/Chegutu area

I regret that initially there will be a bias towards the Gweru end of the Midlands. Is anyone in the Kadoma/Chegututu area willing to act as organiser for that area? It was agreed to organise an event every two months or so, preferably alternating between the east and west ends of the Midlands.

If you are willing to hold a Birding day in January, March, May, July, September or November 1996 please contact me. If you can accommodate campers it will allow for a birding weekend and will enable people to come from further afield on a self catering basis.

Outing

Sunday 29th October 1995. Ted and Jacque Allen. Tarvie Farm, Gweru.
Directions: Coming from Gweru on the Shurugwi Road turn left at the 18.5 km peg (sign says Chitwinguisa Seminary). Cross the railway line, turn left immediately and follow the railway line along the old strip road. After a few hundred metres turn right at the base of the hill. Continue until you come to a Jacaranda Avenue and farm security gate. It is only about 1 km from the main road but is a poor road. If you wish to camp over the weekend you will be welcome to do so at our farm Princess which is about 20 km from Tarvie. Please phone me at 152-6422. Ted and Jacque can be contacted on 154-231124 (poor party line).

On behalf of the other Branches I would like to welcome the Midlands Birding Club and wish them every success and Good Birding. Editor

OUTING REPORTS

Sunday 30th July 1995. CYNARA Old Mutare.

As we arrived Cynara looked more dry and arid than ever before, dam levels too were lower even than in 1991. Despite this, 4 hours later we had a list of 80 species. It is such a pity that there were not more watchers to enjoy the spectacle. It was pleasing to have three juniors with us who were not only knowledgeable but very sharp-eyed – a facility lacking in the seniors! Expecting little on the water we set off across dry scrub and grassland and quickly built up a list of common species like Chin-spot Batis, Long-billed Crombec, Chestnut-vented Tit-babbler and buntings. Our attention was drawn to a raptor in a distant tree identified as a Dark Chanting-goshawk and later we saw it's junior. The same field of view had an even bigger bird of prey – a Hooded Vulture – not recorded before. When it took off we noticed circling above a hawk. Could it have been that Lanner Falcon we rescued last November? Over the dam a White-backed Vulture joined the Hooded Vulture.

Eventually we turned our attention to the water and were rewarded with 57 Egyptian Goose, an African Spoonbill, Glossy Ibis, a Comb Duck and the usual smaller varieties. Only the Grey Crowned Crane was missing. Our regular winter visitor the Capped Wheatear was running about with Red-capped Lark, Rufous-naped Lark, Buffy Pipit and African Pipit and Crowned Lapwing. An enjoyable morning's birding – much more fruitful than expected.
Ken Dixon

13th – 14th August 1995. Bulawayo.

Geoff Lowe and I visited the Matabeleland Branch over the long weekend. On Saturday we went to a dam owned by the Railways on the Plumtree road [KHAMI]. Interesting birds seen were Yellow-bellied Eremomela and Burnt-necked Eremomela, Chestnut-vented Tit-babbler, Buffy Pipit and an adult Bateleur.

On Sunday we visited the most impressive Aisleby. I strongly recommend all members to visit Aisleby. Geoff and I thank the Matabeleland Branch and Martin Smith for hosting us
Bryant Elliot

Sunday 27th August 1995. AUDLEY END.

Most of our records centred around a beautiful shallow dam surrounded by reeds of emergent vegetation, built about 5 years ago, close to the houses. We saw 12 Squacco Heron, a Little Bittern, a White-backed Duck and 3 African Pygmy-goose, 8 Common Moorhen and 2 Red-knobbed Coot, 14 African Jacana and the Lesser Swamp-warbler. In the soak zone of the dam 2 Wattled Lapwings, African Pipit, Yellow-throated Longclaws, Cape Longclaws and Rosy-throated Longclaws, Orange-breasted Waxbill and the African Quailfinch. (No Locustfinch this time!) On the dry land were 2 Crowned Lapwings, African Palm-swift and we heard Klaas's Cuckoo. A pair of Capped Wheatears, Grey Go-away-bird, Southern Grey-headed Sparrows and Yellow-throated Petronias. While in the garden we saw Lesser Honeyguide and Miombo Tit feeding chicks. White-browed Robin-chat and White-throated Robin-chat with Kurrichane Thrush and Groundscraper Thrush, Jameson's Firefinch and Red-billed Finches, House Sparrow and Streaky-headed Seedeater.

Trevor took us on a game drive where we saw 16 mammal species from Bush Squirrel to Giraffe. He reported that the Eland had completely ruined his arboretum with name tags on every tree and we saw a splendid specimen of flowering *Fernandoa magnifica* which he planted about 10 years ago and he reckons is one of Zimbabwe's rarest trees. He also mentioned that African Purple Swamphens had bred at the dam last year. In this terrible drought there cannot be too many places left for this species to nest! My copies of *Sunbird* revealed previous visits to this most interesting commercial tobacco farm in Nos. 72, 76, 85, 91, 93, 98, 105, 118 and 130. January - 3, April - 3, August - 2, September - 1 and December - 1 visit. I suppose if we comb through the Tree Society magazine *Treelife* we would find equally fascinating records of the flora on Audley End.

Our grateful thanks to Mr & Mrs Trevor Gordon - whose average age is 89 - for a wonderful day.

On my way home at the 40 km peg on the Harare-Chirundu road, I came across a dead Southern White-faced Scops-owl with its elbow joint caught on the top strand of a barbed wire fence. I feel *The Babbler* is the ideal place to document casualties of this nature.

D V Rockingham-Gill

Sun 27th August 1995 Osborne Dam

A small group turned out on a glorious late winter morning to visit the area close to the eastern end of the OSBORNE DAM wall. Birds were scarce and by ten o'clock only sixteen species had been noted. The water level is very low and falling, leaving a wide margin of sterile sand and a few dead trees and beyond the area which was inundated earlier in the year the woodland is sparse with little or no undergrowth or grass. Of the 16 species seen, 4 were swallows or martins; the 5 water birds included 2 Yellow-billed Egrets. It was good to have Darrell and Mrs Plowes with us. We welcome them back to Mutare and look forward to the pleasure of their company on future outings.

Tony Curtis

Saturday 9th September 1995 CYNARA Farm, OLD MUTARE.

On the previous occasion Tony Curtis and I had visited Cynara, we had been lucky enough to have excellent views of a pair of Gabar Goshawks, one the standard grey version, the other the melanistic (black) phase. In fact had we not seen the grey we would have had great difficulty identifying the small black raptor in a tree alongside the farmyard. It was with this in mind that our group of 7 began the afternoon tour in the same spot. No luck this time, but despite the heat and dust there was plenty to see.

The upper dams were virtually empty but still attract a few waders; Three-banded Plover, Wood Sandpiper and Common Sandpiper. While searching for these our attention was diverted skywards where we were delighted to see a Black Stork. In fact, a month ago Tony and I a few days later had seen half a dozen of the same species on the large dam. As we wended our way through the fields and woodland we spotted White-bellied Sunbird and Meves's Starling which is surely a sign of the drought.

The lower dams had African Sacred Ibis, a Ruff and the usual Egyptian Goose and White-faced Duck while African Fish-eagles sat in the trees on the edge. A lone Mottled Swift put in a brief appearance followed by a flock of Speckled Pigeon. In all we saw or heard some 58 species. We hope that Betty, our visitor from Belgium, enjoyed the outing as much as the rest of us did.

Ken Dixon

Sunday 10 September 1995 Princess Farm, SHURUGWI

The day started with a walk around Berny's garden at about 0800. We saw a male and female Mocking Cliff-chat and Village Weavers at a bird table, with African Palm-swifts and Lesser Striped Swallows flying above us. We also saw a resident Wahlberg's Eagle perched close by.

We then went for a drive and walk which took us through hilly Brachystegia woodland and down into a dry riverine area which was mainly Acacia sieberiana with a tremendous amount of Lantana camara. The first stop was to watch a little Green-backed Honeybird and White-crested Helmet-shrikes, we then carried on to a dry river bed where we heard some Helmeted Guineafowl and saw some monkeys. A pretty White-throated Robin-chat was jumping around in the thicket. Downstream we saw a pair of Wahlberg's Eagle and a Brown Snake-eagle soaring above us. Further along we saw an African Hoopoe and a Tropical Boubou, above us were three Pied Crows. We did not see many birds on the walk through the Lantana jesse as it was pretty hot. When we arrived at the dry river bed we heard the Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird and either an Emerald-spotted Wood-dove or Tambourine Dove. No positive identification was made. At midday we went back to the house as it was getting too hot for birding. In all we saw and heard 56 species.

I would like to thank Mr and Mrs Beekes for this outing and our two Harare visitors for their attendance.

Gordon Conway 11 yrs.

Sunday 17th September 1995

Annual Verreaux's Eagle Outing - MATOPOS

A small group of Verreaux's Eagle observers met at Retreat car park at 7.30 a.m. on a bright morning with a breeze blowing.

Proceeding towards Matopos at the Junction of Kezi/Matopos Roads in the blue gum trees on the right, we observed a Wahlberg's Eagle nest in the process of construction. Five Wahlberg's Eagles were seen. On the circular drive an African Hawk-eagle chick was seen on its nest - with the adult flying nearby.

We investigated a track before the Mtshelili Road, climbed the kopjie and had a good view of the valley towards Nest 86. A Verreaux's Eagle was seen flying. By now many calls sounded remarkably like teatime so we made our way to Efifi picnic site to meet up with Warren Goodwin's group who had been fitting radio transmitters to chicks. He had completed fitting transmitters to chicks on Nest 86, 111 and 48. We then drove along Kezi Road and saw a pair of Verreaux's Eagles perched atop a kopjie and sighted a Yellow-billed Kite. Just inside the Park fence down a rough track and after a long walk we climbed up the kopjie adjoining the rock which has Nest 111 and were rewarded with a lovely clear view of the chick on which Warren tried out his transmitter and he picked up a strong signal.

We stopped at Mesilumi Dam for lunch and viewed the chick on Nest 51B through the telescope. We drove towards Maleme Dam stopping on the way to view Nest 34A at the Stack - the chick was standing on the edge of the nest. Afternoon tea was at Maleme Dam and the telescope aimed at Nest No. 1 revealed no Verreaux's Eagles - instead a Lamer Falcon chick was on the nest with the adult perched on a small tree growing out of a crack. There was much discussion as to whether the Falcon was Peregrine Falcon or Lanner after a very keen German birder to whom we had spoken earlier categorically stated it was a Peregrine. The general consensus of opinion was that it was a Lanner Falcon.

A most interesting and rewarding day despite hordes of mopani bees.

Barbara Cromar

RIFA 1995 - Friday 22nd - Tuesday 26th September 1995.

Forty two enthusiastic Birders and Hunters converged on the Hunters' Association of Zimbabwe Education Camp near Chirundu. It was hot, dry and dusty with lots of good humour culminating in the presentation of OAZAR '95 (OAZ at Rifa) awards to deserving recipients. We were exhorted to wear our name tags - sadly one member did not comply once (perhaps wanting to remain unidentified?). However everyone got to know each other quickly and it was great to have members from Bulawayo (glamour and muscle), Mutare, Bvumba, Juliasdale, Kariba as well as Bamba Zonke. Some members were involved in vehicle rescues - much appreciated by those rescued. The programme was varied with visits to Vulture Point, B & C Camps, Sharu Forest (sheer magic), the Pattisons' Fish Farm and the Southern Carmine Bee-eater colony. Some members - on the first day - stumbled close to a lion - no one was keen to leave camp without a Hunter in tow after that!

Specials seen included in the 183 total were Eastern Nicator, Livingstone's Flycatcher and Bat Hawk.

Next year do yourself a favour and head for Rifa with the OAZ. The catering is superb as well as everything else.

TAIL FEATHERS

On Saturday 30th September 1995 I had a couple of hours to spare in Bulawayo and went to the Museum to see the "Paint a Bird" competition. It was fantastic and congratulations to Martin Smith and his Committee on a wonderful idea.

Dave Gray

On 15th June 1995 at 17.00 hours I heard birds twittering noisily and in a large Mopane tree at the base of a large granite, as expected was an owl. A Verreaux's Eagle-owl - *Bubo lacteus* - eating something feathered high up in the tree. As I approached the owl flew away and I went in search of someone to climb the tree in order to establish what was being consumed. About 30 metres from the tree there was amongst a pile of feathers, the head and one wing of an immature African Hawk-eagle - *Hieraaetus fasciatus*. This was slightly offensive. Someone climbed the tree for me and brought down the lower belly, rump and tail of the immature African Hawk-eagle. This we returned to a lower branch and on investigating a few hours later, it had been removed. Is it possible that the African Hawk-eagle was on the ground eating its prey when preyed upon by the Verreaux's Eagle-owl?

A few days later another immature African Hawk-eagle attacked my Bantam who was with all her chickens. She and the cock squawked so much that the dogs and I ran out frightening off the hawk-eagle. Judging by the feathers and her wounds I think that the hen had been picked up and then dropped when we arrived on the scene. The African Hawk-eagle perched on a tree close by and watched us for a while. The hen was in a state of shock with a few wounds on her rib cage. The Rooster took over the brooding of the chicks! The hen survived and now watches the sky very closely.

Margaret Gawlor

4th - 8th September 1995. HWANGE/VICTORIA FALLS area.

A couple of hot, dry and dusty days in the area of Main Camp followed by a short spell at the Falls was rewarded by positive identification of 97 species including 6 of the Eagles (Martial Eagle, Tawny Eagle, Bateleur, Lesser Spotted Eagle, African Hawk-eagle and Wahlberg's Eagle and 3 of the Vultures (Lappet-faced Vulture, White-backed Vulture and White-headed Vulture). It was fascinating watching Swallow-tailed Bee-eaters and Little Bee-eaters hawking. The most interesting sightings however, were that of a flock of 14 Trumpeter Hornbills (*Bycanistes bucinator*) in the Rain Forest of the Falls and a handsome pair of Collared Palm-thrush (*Cichladusa arquata*) upstream from the Falls in the Game Reserve between Kazungula and the Falls. The Collared Palm-thrush was a lifer for me and I discovered that this bird is not listed in Newman's 1901 Update but it is depicted in Sasol's Birds of Southern Africa, Roberts and is well described by C J Vernon in the Complete Book of South African Birds compiled by Ginn, McIlleron and Milstein. W R L Stuttaford

When on a game drive whilst staying at Manzou Safari Camp, MAZOWE during the recent Heroes holiday Doug and Vida Siebert and I came across a Crested Barbet perched upon the rim of a very active ants' nest, feeding voraciously on the unfortunate ants labouring nearest the surface. The bird was obviously enjoying its meal as the head was thrust repeatedly into the opening as it sought to get its fill. It had obviously been doing this for some time as there was evidence all around the exterior showing that the Barbet was not moving away even to ablute! We watched spellbound and the Barbet didn't appear the best bit concerned.

We thoroughly enjoyed the weekend and although exceptionally dry the surroundings provided lots of interest and the camp is very comfortable.

Marjorie Barker

Birdwatch 1996 - 24th/25th February 1996

Cards available from Jacko Williams, 14 Harare Drive, Greystone Park, Harare.

This is the Annual 24 hour Birdwatch. At least 2 of your team must be OAZ members and species recorded seen by them both. Keep to One QDS if possible (25km x 25km square). This will help update Atlas data for the future.

VIDEO

The OAZ Council has purchased Ken Newman's video "Birds - An Introduction", which may be borrowed by members. It will be kept in John Paxton's office - Phone Harare 14 - 794611. Anyone wishing to borrow it can contact John. There will be a charge of \$10 for three nights for the use of the tape and this money raised will go towards the purchase of further wildlife tapes with a bias to birds.

AGM 1996 - 29th and 30th March 1996

Venue: La Rochelle, Penhalonga

Accommodation:

Virginia (Sleeps 6 - 2 Bedroom's)	\$60.00
Large Rondavel (Sleeps 2)	
East Wing (Sleeps 5 - 2 Bedrooms)	per person
West Wing (Sleeps 4 - 2 Bedrooms)	
Small Rondavel (Sleeps 2 - Double Bed)	per night
Bernard Wing (Sleeps 4 - 1 Bedroom)	
Fantasy (Sleeps 2 - Double Bed)	
Camping	\$20.00 per campsite of 6 people
	Self Catering

Further details in next issue of The Babbler,
Enquiries Mr Ken Dixon, P O Box 343, Mutare, phone 62882

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 1996

	<u>Zimbabwe</u>	<u>Overseas and anywhere outside Zimbabwe</u>
Ordinary	\$85	\$140
Family	\$110	
Juvenile	\$30	
Institutions	\$175	\$185

Nyanga Cottage For Hire

Six beds available with stretcher space for three. Ideal number of occupants 8. Take own bedding and towels. Self catering.

Facilities: 4 plate with oven and grill Gas stove. Fridge with freezer space.

Cost: \$35 per person per night. Domestic to clean and wash up.

Enquiries: Jacko Williams, 14 Harare Drive, Greystone Park, P O Borrowdale.
Tel: 882206

Dates available: January 1996: 19th, 20th and 21st
February 1996: 2nd, 3rd and 4th
9th, 10th and 11th

TAIL END FEATHERS: Open Day Sunday 8th October 1995. LAKE CHIVERO

50 members and visitors turned out for the Mashonaland Birdwatchers Open Day.

96 different species were recorded of which the highlights were 2 African Cuckoo Hawks, an Osprey and a breeding pair of Collared Pratincoles. This is the first recording of Collared Pratincole breeding at LAKE CHIVERO. Our grateful thanks to Brett McDonald of the embryonic "Club Mac", which he is building on the old Harare Sports Club site, who supplied tea and Alistair Kitto who donated the milk

"Club Mac" is a chalet complex which Brett plans to open at the beginning of December.

Thank you to the members who made the effort to attend and who brought visitors.

Dave Gray

Binoculars for Birders (Continued)

Magnification. Binoculars come in different powers designated by the first number (e.g. 6 x 30, 8 x 30). The second number refers to the diameter of the objective lens in millimeters and discussion will be later. A 6 x (Six power) makes a distant object appear 6 times closer than it really is. The tendency to believe that bigger is better is not necessarily so and there are several reasons for this.

1. Higher magnification will increase the size, it will also increase handshake - a bigger image but details will remain essentially the same.

2. Greater magnification reduces the field: of view and produces a darker image. Most birders choose between 7 x and 10 x. What you choose hinges on a number of considerations and in general lower magnification is to your advantage if:-

- a. You are a beginner unpracticed at locating a bird.
- b. You have difficulty holding higher magnifications steady.
- c. Most of your birding is done close i.e. woodland, rain forest.
- d. You are a highly skilled birder more interested in speed than seeing 'field marks' - you recognise the birds by their JIZ (general impression and shape.)

Ten power are better if i. Your hands are steady, ii. Your birding is over great distances and open spaces, iii. You don't carry a spotting scope.

If undecided between 7x and 10x compromise with an 8x. Never buy a Zoom Binocular! They are optically inferior and are not supplied by the finest optic companies or used by top birders.

Light and Brightness

Previously guides to purchasing optics centred around brightness and light loss. Now with the advent of coated and multicoated lenses you are assured of binoculars that offer superior brightness. The problem is that when light strikes glass 5% is reflected away and in every binocular there are 10 - 16 glass surfaces resulting in cumulative loss of light equalled to about 50% resulting in a dark image. In compensation manufacturers could increase the size of the objective lens which is measured in millimetres and appears as the second number in the legend (e.g. 7 x 42, 10 x 50). By coating the lens the loss was reduced from 5% to almost 1%. When purchasing binoculars make sure the optics are 'fully multi-coated' meaning that both inside the binocular and out have been treated to reduce light loss. The coating process is exacting and costly but does ensure that you are buying binoculars that are bright and sharp.

Field of View and Depth of Field

Field of view is the measure of the distance from one side of a binoculars image to the other as seen through a stationary binocular. This measurement either inscribed on the binocular or included in accompanying literature may be designated in degrees of arc (e.g. 6.7); feet at 1000 yards. A wide field - one that offers no less than 6 degrees of arc is essential to birding. It enables you to pick up and identify fast flying birds, scan the sky or open spaces quickly.

It is also easier to locate birds at close quarters in a maze of branches.

Birding binoculars should also offer good depth of field - a sharp adjustment-free image from near to far. A generous depth of field mitigates the need to make focus adjustments every time a bird moves closer or further away.

Both field of view and depth of field are closely related to magnification. In general binoculars with lower magnifications offer greater depth of field and a wider field of view than binoculars with higher magnification.

To be continued in January/February 1996 issue of The Babbler.

By courtesy of Swarovski Optik

Obtainable from
Strachan's Photo Pharmacy
60 Baker Avenue
HARARE