

# THE BABBLER

Newsletter of



**BirdLife Zimbabwe**  
The BirdLife International Partner in Zimbabwe

**ISSUE # 116 – February 2014 /March 2014**

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Honeyguide production: Julia Duprée [daliadupree@gmail.com](mailto:daliadupree@gmail.com) 09-246269

### \*Subscriptions\*

**Your membership is important** to BLZ, whether or not you are able to attend the meetings and outings. Birds are indicators of the health of the environment and the fact that you are a member supports the on-going conservation and ornithological efforts undertaken by members and staff. This in turn supports the preservation of Zimbabwe's biodiversity, its avifauna and natural habitats, which are becoming increasingly threatened. As a member you receive our world-recognised journal *Honeyguide* twice a year and our newsletter the *Babbler*, every two months. The more members we have the more effective we can be at lobbying government, communities and local and international organisations.

The BLZ membership year runs from April to March. Subscription fees are in USD and have not been increased this year, but donations towards *Honeyguide* and our other publications and activities are welcomed.

Individual or Family members (including children under 17)	\$ 25.00
Pensioners (65 and over) Students and juniors	\$ 15.00
Schools (high density)	\$ 25.00
Schools (private)	\$ 50.00
Corporate	\$ 75.00
Rest of Africa	\$ 40.00
Rest of World	\$ 50.00

Carolyn Dennison is responsible for membership issues, so please send all communications regarding new, current or old members, renewals, payments, change of details and other membership-related queries to her at [rolly@zol.co.zw](mailto:rolly@zol.co.zw) Tel: 747567 or 0772- 210240. Sylvia Muzavazi at the national office will continue to take your membership subscription payments or they can be given to Carolyn or a committee member at any outing.

You can also deposit into the **BirdLife Zimbabwe** account at **NMB Bank, Borrowdale branch, Account No: 260092014** or Birdlife Zimbabwe Mashonaland Branch account at **CABS (Chisipite branch) Account No: 1002399955**. It is very important that with all direct deposits you include your name on the deposit so that it appears on the bank statement and please advise Carolyn by e-mail or by telephone or your payment may not be recorded.

**The next BirdLife Zimbabwe AGM has been set to take place in the Bvumba on 30-31 May- 1 June 2014 at Seldomseen (and Madrugada). More info to follow.**

### BirdLife Zimbabwe Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of BirdLife Zimbabwe is to be held in the Bvumba at Seldomseen on 31 May 2014.

Book **EARLY** to avoid disappointment!

Please email [mhumhe@zol.co.zw](mailto:mhumhe@zol.co.zw) to book your accommodation at Seldomseen and visit [www.seldomseen.co.zw](http://www.seldomseen.co.zw) for details of each self-catering cottage. The discounted price for

BirdLife members will be USD30ppp night (inclusive of 15%VAT and Tourism Levy).

Another accommodation option is to stay at Roger Castelin`s Madruga.

Please contact [madruga@zol.co.zw](mailto:madruga@zol.co.zw) to book there.

Madruga is offering three different rates :

- 1.Lodge accommodation at \$25 per person per night (\$40 with dinner and breakfast) -max no. 25
2. Cottage Accommodation at \$15 per person per night (\$30 with dinner and breakfast) – Max no. 8
3. Camping at \$5 per person per night - Max no. 15

**BRANCH ACTIVITIES**  
**Mashonaland Branch**  
**Outings February 2014 And March 2014**

<b>MUKUVISI</b>	Sunday 2 <sup>nd</sup> February 2014	0630
	Sunday 2 <sup>nd</sup> March 2014	0630
<b>CHIVERO</b>	NO OUTING	
<b>VLEI WALK</b>	Sunday 9 <sup>th</sup> February 2014 Alex Masterson's Vlei Walk (Venue to be advised)	0630
<b>MONA VALE VLEI</b>	Sunday 16 <sup>th</sup> February 2014 (Please note the new time)	0630
	Sunday 16 <sup>th</sup> March 2014 (Please note the new time)	0630

**4<sup>th</sup> Sunday Outings**

MANDA HILLS CONCESSION	Sunday 23 <sup>rd</sup> February 2014 *Meet at CABS Northridge Park	0630
BALLY VAUGHAN GAME PARK (G Putterill)	Sunday 23 <sup>rd</sup> March 2014 Meets at CABS Northridge Park	0630

**2<sup>nd</sup> Sat Outings**

GREYSTONE PARK	8 <sup>th</sup> February 2014	0700
BOTANIC GARDENS	8 <sup>th</sup> March 2014	0700

**3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday Meetings at Avondale Sports Club 1730 for 1800**

NIGHTJARS by T Alegria	20 <sup>th</sup> February 2014	1800
BIRDING IN MUTARE K Dixon	20 <sup>th</sup> March 2014	1800

\*Manda Hills is 1000 hectares 50 km north-west of Harare, across from the GMB silos next to the main road. There are scenic mountains with diverse species of trees, cave paintings, architectural artifacts, graves, fallen ancient walls, some trails, and of course, birds. Allow \$5 entrance fee.

**WEEKEND OUTING TO RIFA IN CHIRUNDU**

**FRIDAY 14<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2014 TO MONDAY 17<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2014**  
**ALL BIRDLIFE MEMBERS ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND**

### **RIFA- Away outing mid March 2014.**

During the 2011 Easter and February 2012, RIFA trips took place in an attempt to see the various crakes and ducks that use the pans for breeding. Although they were both great trips, they failed in their mission as in both years the pans didn't fill up. Well the pans are now full, so we are going to give it another go this coming March!

We will arrive at RIFA on Friday 14<sup>th</sup> and depart on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2014. The same format will apply as for the last two trips – limited catering in terms of a full English breakfast every day after the early morning walk and sadza & gravy for the evenings. So all you have to bring along is some meat and whatnots for the evening braais, snacks and drinks. This outing is open to all BLZ Members and a deposit of \$100.00 will book you a place – contact Tony Alegria for more details.

Contact a committee member if you need transport to any of the events. **Members, non-members and beginners are welcome** – don't worry if you do not have a pair of binos – there is usually an extra pair at most outings. There are no BLZ charges for any bird walk or evening presentation. However there may be entry fees (e.g. National Parks) or a tip required depending on the location. Remember to bring chairs and refreshments.

**Evening Meetings are on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday** of each month. 5.30pm for 6.00pm. The venue is the Avondale Sports Club on Brighton Road between Sam Nujoma Street Extension and Upper East Road. There is a cash bar and a security guard.

#### **Directions to regular venues:**

**Mukuvisi** - Mukuvisi Woodlands directions: "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 150metres on the left. Bring a reasonable tip for the guard, taking into account the value of your vehicle! Don't forget refreshments for after the walk when we record the number of species.

**Chivero and Rainham Dam** - Meet at Prince Edward School car park on Josiah Tongagara Ave

**Monavale Vlei** - Meet on the B.S Leon side of Fenella Drive

For info: Tony Alegria [talegria@zol.co.zw](mailto:talegria@zol.co.zw) cell: 0772-438697, (04) 490375

### **Matabeleland Branch**

#### **15 February: Matabeleland Branch AGM**

Please note the Annual General Meeting of Birdlife Zimbabwe – Matabeleland Branch will be held at 10:30 a.m. on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> February 2014 at the home of John and Jenny Brebner, 24a Inverleith Road, Burnside, Bulawayo. The meeting will begin promptly at 10:30 so please make sure you have arrived and are seated before that time. Please bring your own chairs.

We are looking for volunteers to fill the following positions: Chairman, Vice-chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, and Committee Members. Nomination forms are available from the Secretary, Gaynor Lightfoot. Completed forms may be returned by e-mail, with signed hard copies being handed to the secretary before the start of the AGM. Our constitution requires that nomination forms be handed in before the start of the AGM.

Please consider volunteering for any of the positions - your services will be most welcomed. The meeting will be followed by a bring-your-own lunch; braai fires will be available. We look forward to seeing many of you there.

### **Other Areas**

**Mashonaland South** – Margaret Parrock 068-22005 or 0773-263673

**Eastern Districts** – Monthly outings are on the last Sunday of the month and depart at 7.30 a.m. from the Mutare Museum. Spare binoculars and field guides are available. Members with a vehicle are encouraged to attend and fuel can be provided. Contact Peter Gwidibira 0773-524844 or [pgwidibira@gmail.com](mailto:pgwidibira@gmail.com) for details.

**Lowveld** - contact Clive Stockil 0772-219204 or [clives@senuko.com](mailto:clives@senuko.com)

## Obituary – Steve Davies



Steve Davies, the chairman of the Conservation Society of Monavale Trust (COSMO) since its inception in 2005, passed away on 1 November 2013. His passing is a great loss, not only to his family, his companion, friends and the Monavale community, but also to wetland conservation in Harare and indeed Zimbabwe. Steve's decades of experience working in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and his career representing the country as a commercial attaché to other African countries, and more recently in the private sector, was of great benefit to the wetland cause as he was aware of the inner workings of government and its channels of communication, understood the law and at all times demanded good governance.

The conservation of Monavale Vlei (wetland) began four years prior to Steve's involvement. He came on board in May 2005, upon his retirement, when the famous all-stakeholders City of Harare Town House Meeting 'Saving the Wetlands' selected Monavale Vlei for preservation, rehabilitation, research and education at a time when many of Harare's wetlands were being threatened by informal agriculture, housing development, alien invasive plants, commercial water abstraction, pollution and fire. Water source degradation was a new concern and Harare's wetlands were at last being seen as the primary source of the city's water. Harare is situated within the Upper Manyame catchment basin headwaters and wetlands, and the only water available to the city comes from these wetlands. Their wise use is to restore and maintain them for the benefits they provide to people and nature, so that they are able to feed good quality water into the streams and rivers flowing into the supply reservoir downstream.

Steve became very involved in the restoration work at Monavale Vlei, which has now become a model for managing the conservation of other wetlands in Harare. This work was in large part achieved through his support in engaging all stakeholders, including government authorities, NGOs and educational institutions. Small Grants Funding from UNDP's Global Environment Facility (GEF) was awarded to COSMO to restore biodiversity, create wetland awareness and livelihood options based on an indigenous tree nursery, and write the Monavale Local Environmental Plan with the City of Harare Planning Department.



*Tsitsi Wutawunashe (GEFSGP N.C) extreme left followed by Steve Davis (COSMO Director) Anada Tiega (RAMSAR Secretary General), Dorothy Wakeling (COSMO Director), Jimmy Muropa (Monavale Vlei Scout) and kids from Monavale Kids Club on arrival at Monavale Vlei.*

*Photos courtesy of COSMO*

Steve's administrative communications and networking skills were outstanding and well appreciated. He challenged the recent controversial re-gazetting of the Declaration of the Protection of Harare's Wetlands. This exercise is on going through the Wetlands Survival Forum. Steve was very pleased with the accession of Zimbabwe to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and the according of Ramsar Site status to Monavale Vlei.

The formation of the Wetlands Survival Forum Trust to broaden the platform of those concerned about wetlands and water is great testimony to Steve's tireless work. The success of COSMO's efforts shows how concerned local residents can positively influence wetland ecosystem management and conservation.

In October 2012 Paul Ouedraogo of the Ramsar Secretariat and Denis Landenbergue of WWF met Steve Davies and Dorothy Wakeling for the first time in Harare during a joint mission to assist Zimbabwe's accession to the Convention. They quickly became friends, with Steve always ready to try his hand at the French language for the conservation of wetlands, and Dorothy curious and persuasive on wetland management and the struggle against wetland degradation.

It was a pleasure for the Secretariat to support these defenders of conservation and sustainable development. Their commitment and work over several decades led Ramsar Secretary General Anada Tiega to visit Monavale Vlei during the 2013 World Wetlands Day event organized by the Government of Zimbabwe.

With the death of Steve we lose a pioneer and a true champion of the wise use of wetlands. We hope to continue our good friend's work and commitment.

**Dorothy Wakeling**, Monavale Vlei Programme Manager, COSMO ([www.monavalevlei.com](http://www.monavalevlei.com))

**Paul Ouédraogo**, Senior Advisor for Africa, the Ramsar Convention

## **Recent Reports and Sightings National Office**

### **AAGE V. Jensen Charity Foundation Wetland Project Protecting Harare's Wetland Ecosystems for Nature and the City's People. Report for *The Babbler* 116 February March 2014**

The funding for this project was awarded to BirdLife Zimbabwe by the AAGE V. Jensen Charity Foundation, through the BirdLife International Africa Partnership Secretariat, Nairobi, and BirdLife International, Cambridge, UK. It commenced on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2013 and ends on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2015. This Project is jointly managed between The Conservation Society of Monavale (COSMO) and BirdLife Zimbabwe (BLZ). All the BLZ staff is involved and COSMO's Monavale Vlei Scout, Jimmy Muropa and Monavale Vlei Programme Manager Dorothy Wakeling (Project Co-ordinator). Leslee Maasdorp is the BLZ Council representative. Tony Wood, as President and Acting Director, signed the contract. We report to BLI APS Nairobi. BLI Cambridge reports to Jensen Foundation.

**The Project Goal:** Lessons learnt from the successful conservation, restoration and wetland awareness work at Monavale Vlei would be applied to halt the degradation of, and to conserve the extensive wetland ecosystem of Marlborough Vlei, to provide services and benefits to the local community and the city of Harare.

#### **The Project Objectives are:**

1. To consolidate and further enhance conservation and restoration at Monavale Vlei.
2. To conserve and rehabilitate Marlborough Vlei through the engagement of residents and other stakeholders
3. Raise the awareness of the importance of Harare's wetland ecosystems services and values to the residents of Harare

#### **The Project Activities are:**

1. For Monavale Vlei: to remove alien species as and when needed; maintain foot paths; continue with daily patrolling and monitoring of biodiversity; bird ringing;

- hydrological, soil, plant, grass surveys; mapping through remote sensing; link with Met Department.
2. For Marlborough Vlei: organize with EMA and C of H an all stakeholders meeting to agree on conservation management of this vlei; steer the formation of an environmental residents association and support that group in conservation activities: put up signs; engage a vlei scout; commence on restoration of the flora; conduct surveys and map as per Monavale Vlei.
  3. Raise awareness: produce wetland fliers and newsletters; use international days such as World Wetland Day and World Migratory Bird Days to promote wetlands in the field with schools, colleges, authorities and public participating; residents, environmental clubs in schools, community based organizations, youth groups to visit these vleis and learn about wetlands and their management; involve the media in this process.

#### **Actions taken from November 2013 to January 2014:**

An enormous amount of work has been achieved, despite the Christmas break, and with very encouraging results. Only key achievements are mentioned here.

#### **Marlborough Vlei Local Environmental Action Plan Training Workshop and Formation of Action Group**

A meeting was held with Environmental Management Agency (EMA) to invite them on board at the start of the Project. They were very enthusiastic and suggested implementing a Local Environmental Action Plan Training Workshop (LEAP) for Marlborough community, which matched our Project objectives. City of Harare Department of Urban Planning Services Planning Department was consulted at the start and also agreed to participate, with the C of H Environmental Officer being their contact person. We coordinated this exercise in close contact with the Marlborough / Mabelreign District Officer and the Marlborough Councillor.

A very successful LEAP Training Workshop was held on Marlborough Vlei on November 23<sup>rd</sup> 2013, with 95 people in attendance. EMA presented the LEAP and the agriculturalists present agreed that this would be the last season of planting. An interim committee of 16 residents was elected and it was agreed that an AGM would be held shortly.

Four committee meetings of the Marlborough Environmental Action Group were held to plan the AGM that was held on 18th January 2014 with over 100 in attendance with the talks by Member of Parliament, Councillor, District Officer, The Mayor of Harare, Professor Magadza, C of H Environmental Officer, EMA official and COSMO. The landowner was represented. An information flier, compiled by BLZ and COSMO on the importance of Marlborough Vlei, was distributed.

The MEAG AGM was a great success, with much awareness on Harare's wetlands presented and the need to preserve this important source of water in order to secure the city's water supply, highlighted. Of note was the intention of EMA and C of H to put EAPs in place in wards throughout Harare by the end of 2014! Further MEAG committee members were selected. It was agreed that MEAG would divide Marlborough into four sections for ease of management and that the conservation of Marlborough Vlei would take priority. MEAG, COSMO, BLZ and the local officials worked very closely to achieve this successful outcome. The enthusiasm of the local residents to sort out their environmental issues is remarkable and it is exciting to work with them.

#### **Research**

In order to achieve the best outcome for the ecosystem survey aspects of the Project it was decided to invite the University of Zimbabwe Departments of Biological Sciences and Geography to take part. They have welcomed the opportunity to embark upon field research on their doorstep and also on the subject of the little studied, but now highly topical, vleis of Harare. The on-going process of this research will be shared with schools, youth groups, residents (some participating), authorities and the media as an exercise in practical wetland awareness. Both programmes will commence in February once students return from vacation. Residents associations and project officers will be closely involved on the ground. We are very grateful to the Heads of Departments for accommodating our Project in such a meaningful way.

The Biological Sciences programme is entitled: *Monitoring Trends in Flora and Faunistic Diversity and Abundance, Hydrology, Water Quality, Nutrient Cycling, and Sedimentation Processes on Two Wetlands under Restoration in Harare, Zimbabwe. Proposal for a long-term*

*monitoring programme* by Biological Sciences Department, University of Zimbabwe. The Team Members are: Dr T Nhiwatiwa, Mrs P Gamundani, Prof I Grundy, and Prof CHD Magadza. Results will be written up, peer reviewed and published.

The Geography programme also been tailor made to fit our project. Techniques such as remote sensing and geographical information systems will be used to achieve the results. An MSc thesis will be completed by May 2014 and the structures for on-going monitoring put in place. Prof Amon Murwira intends to create a continuous Wetland Information Systems Programme from this study.

### **Monavale Vlei**

Daily bird and mammal monitoring continues, re-growth alien plant species have been removed, paths have been cut, plant surveys by the National Herbarium and the Tree Society of Zimbabwe have taken place. Rainfall records are kept. National World Wetland Day planning meetings have been attended. Close interaction has taken place with the Marlborough initiative.

Grateful thanks are extended to the Wetland Project Team for their support and efforts in the setting up stage of this programme.

### **Dorothy Wakeling**

Project Co-ordinator

26 January 2014

### **BirdLife Zimbabwe Shop Launch 14 June 2013**

On 14 June 2013, BLZ launched its shop (which was the former BLZ Library). BLZ branded bush-shirts, caps, Ground Hornbill T-Shirts, golf balls, face towels, bird paintings and 2014 BLZ Calendars have been put on sale. The event, which was both to launch the shop and to celebrate the revamp of the offices, took place at a cocktail/sundowner evening at BLZ premises to which corporates were also invited including Chemical Enterprises (now corporate member for donating some of the paint to paint the BLZ premises). Volunteer BLZ member, Ken Dixon and his assistant Forward painted the inside of the BLZ office and the shop in May. Grateful thanks to them both! Other invited guests were from the Press (Harare News, Sarah Davies) and (Daily News, Rita Chard), also Rodney Ndamba, CEO of INSAF (Institute for Sustainability Africa) who is liaising with BLZ to restore Greengrove Dam (important African Sacred Ibis roost and nesting ground in Harare) and Claude Ansley of AutoWorld (Platinum Sponsors of the July BLZ Golf Day). BLZ members also attended the event.

### **Julia Pierini**





## **Youth Programme for BirdLife Zimbabwe**

BirdLife Zimbabwe has engaged in a drive to get local communities involved with its activities. The target for this initiative, though not restricted, is the younger members of society. Youths constitute about 60% of the global population. This however does not reflect within the BirdLife Zimbabwe membership, which is constituted mostly by older members. A number of local communities have been approached and programmes have been lined up for them waiting funding. BirdLife Zimbabwe would want to educate youths in sustainable livelihood options like tree nurseries, organic farming and bee keeping. This comes in the wake of high unemployment levels among youths in both rural and urban set-ups. Such initiatives will add to their livelihood options at the same time bringing the youths closer to nature. Capacity building for youths in areas such as bird identification would also go a long way in equipping youths to monitor their local areas and contribute towards citizenship science. Youths with such skills can contribute towards biodiversity monitoring through waterfowl counts and bird atlassing. Youths in Chiota will assist in the 2014 January waterfowl counts at Nyamungai and Chikokorana pans while those in Harare were involved in the 2013 July waterfowl counts at Crowborough Farm in Harare, among other outings, will continue. Environmental sustainability through youth engagement is inevitable. As youths we are willing to come to your homes to assist with cleaning and cutting grass for a donation as we work towards raising funds for more environmentally friendly initiatives by young people. Please encourage your children to join the youth Club for \$5 only and bring them out for walks. Contact Innocent Magunje on e-mail [inno@blz.co.zw](mailto:inno@blz.co.zw) or 0773053126. You can ask for him at BLZ offices in Eastlea.

Report done by

**Innocent Magunje (Conservation field Officer)**

## **Measuring Ecosystem Services in Driefontein Grasslands**

The wet grasslands in Driefontein support a diverse of livelihoods; provide key habitats for cranes, and ecosystem services that support sustainable water supply and flood alleviation. Despite the importance of wetlands in Driefontein in sustaining biodiversity and human well-being, wetland loss and degradation continues. To promote better integration of knowledge and action for sustainable use of wetlands in this area, Togarasei Fakarayi has embarked on a study of measuring ecosystem services at Driefontein Mission, and Shashe and Chinyaure Villages in September 2013. This is the first study of this kind in Driefontein. Ecosystem services were measured using a Toolkit for Ecosystem Services Site-based Assessment (TESSA). This toolkit, developed by BirdLife International, Tropical Biology Association, University of Cambridge and other partners, is user-friendly and applicable at site level. The study aimed at determining economic value of cultivated goods, harvested wild goods, grazing lands for livestock and water services. Analysis for data collected is underway.

Demonstrating ecosystem service values at a site is instrumental in influencing policy towards birds and biodiversity conservation. Habitat loss and degradation is one of the major challenges in biodiversity conservation. Results from ecosystem services valuation, translated into policy may help address such challenges. The concept of ecosystem valuation is gaining momentum in biodiversity conservation. There is hope that output from this study may contribute to baseline information for economic valuation of ecosystems in this Important Bird Area, to help positive decision making on the wise use of wetlands.

**By Togarasei Fakarayi**

## **Blue Swallow Conservation**

Blue Swallow Surveys were carried out in Bvumba Highlands and Stapleford Forest between the 28<sup>th</sup> of November and 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2013. Fadzai Matsvimbo and Tendai Wachi (Parks and Wildlife Ranger) carried out the surveys. It took three days to cover the Bvumba Area. The team was assisted by Peter Magosvongwe (Bird Guide) to get around in the Bvumba area. The areas that were visited were the ones that have been included in past Blue Swallow Surveys that were carried out in 2007 and 2008. The areas surveyed include Eagle Training Centre, Partridge Hill Estate, Mutare School, patches of grassland within Bunga Forest and what used be to be Miss Taylor's property. A number of the properties have new owners and entry onto the properties had to be negotiated. A pair of Blue Swallows was seen at the Partridge Hill Estate and a nest with three eggs. Being in the Bvumba was also chance to see interesting birds and we saw and heard quite a number of birds including: Gurney's Sugarbird, Cape Grassbird, Bronzy Sunbird, Chirinda Apalis, African Crowned Eagle, Red-capped Robin-chat, Stripe-cheeked Greenbul just to mention a few.

At Stapleford Forest, no Blue Swallows were seen. The patches of grassland left within pine and wattle plantations have become smaller and smaller. Villagers use small patches of grassland

as grazing land. One of the workers based there, (Mr Mutihoto) saw one bird in October. A nest which might possibly be a Blue Swallow nest was found in the area where he saw the bird.



*Tendai Wachi and Peter Magosvongwe watching the pair of Blue Swallows at Partridge Hill Estate*

### **Bird Awareness Programme**

#### **Wildlife Clubs of Africa-Spring Alive Project**

The Spring Alive project was popular with the school children. The focus of the project is to raise awareness on migratory birds. The five species that are the focus of this project are White Stork, Common Cuckoo, Barn Swallow, Common Swift and the European Bee-eater. In 2013, a drawing competition was organised by OTO (BirdLife Poland) and BirdLife International. The competition was open to all countries that are part of the Wildlife Clubs of Africa project. This is the second time that school children from Zimbabwe took part in the competition. This year's theme was 'How I can help birds'. The office received more than 150 entries that we managed to send to the organisers. The competition was restricted to students below 16 years of age. The entries were placed in three age categories: 6-9, 10-12, and 13-16. One student from Queensdale Primary School came third in the first category. The first and second prize in the 13-16 categories went to two Zimbabwean students.



*Group of students prepares to go for a bird walk at Mukuvisi Woodlands*

## New BLZ Website Launch

The official launch of the BLZ website ([www.birdlifezimbabwe.org](http://www.birdlifezimbabwe.org)) is to take place on Friday 28st February 2014. An evening function at BLZ premises with bar facility and catering is being organized. Members, all our corporates, the safari operators that appear on the Birding Zimbabwe section of the website, National Parks, ZTA, Ministry of the Environment, University of Zimbabwe and Chinhoyi reps and the press are to be invited. Following the launch, RSPB, BLSA, BirdLife International, African Bird Club and other bird watching organizations around the world will be asked to put links to the Birding Zimbabwe section onto their websites as we often get visitors asking where to go and where to stay to see birds in Zimbabwe.

## BirdLife Zimbabwe Golf Day 25 July 2013

On 25 July 2013, a BirdLife Zimbabwe Golf Day was organised by Brett Pissas and Ross Walbridge and fundraised over US \$6000. 27 teams participated. BLZ President, Tony Wood, Jan Wood and Membership Secretary, Carolyn Dennison, Linda Fussell, BLZ Council Secretary, Debbie Wiggins, BLZ Mashonaland committee member and Sylvia Muzavazi, BLZ Finance and Admin officer assisted on the day. BLZ staff members F. Matsvimbo, T. Fakarayi and V. Dengu came to the event's prize giving in the evening to give support. The President, Tony Wood gave a speech at the prize giving and presented the BLI video to the audience. 19 corporate sponsors at the event were subsequently made BLZ corporate members to thank them for their support: Health International, Combined Accounting Services, Design Up, NMB Bank, AutoWorld, The Cheeseman, Irvine's, Laser Audio, HRIB Insurance, Africa Albida, KVV wines, Calcopet, Rooney's Hire Services, Tiger Sales, Westside Distribution, Freight World, Utandi, Nuffield, Seiff Properties. We are looking forward to staging another golf day in 2014!

Julia Pierini

**For the Birds  
Charity Golf Day**  
in aid of BirdLife Zimbabwe's  
Conservation Projects  
**Chapman Golf Course**  
**July 25th, 2013**  
BirdLife Zimbabwe and our  
**Platinum Sponsor AUTOWORLD**  
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invite your team of four to this challenge

**\$200 per team**  
or sponsor a green and or tee box

For more info and to register contact  
Brett Pissas [brett.pissas@gmail.com](mailto:brett.pissas@gmail.com) 0772 233 975  
Ross Walbridge [ross.wallbridge1@gmail.com](mailto:ross.wallbridge1@gmail.com) 0772 202 621

Why Birds? Read the attached or contact  
JuliaPierini@birdlifezimbabwe.org to find out  
[www.birdlifezimbabwe.org](http://www.birdlifezimbabwe.org)

KWV ISUZU CHEVROLET NMB BANK LIMITED BirdLife Zimbabwe

## Mashonaland

### Hwange National Park Bird ringing and SABAP2 Bird Atlassing Workshops 22- 27 November 2013

The first part of the bird-ringing workshop took place in and around Main Camp from 22-25 Nov. Many thanks to Brent and Laurie Stapelkamp and Jean Blake for the organization on the ground prior to the event. Thanks also to all the trainee ringers who participated with such enthusiasm including Arnold Tshipa, the Ecologist at Wilderness Safaris.

The second part of the ringing workshop took place from 25-27 Nov at Sinamatella Camp. Grateful thanks go to Stephen and Sue Long for their organization and participation. Keep up the good work, guys!

Celesta von Chamier, Tony Wood and Greg Watson formed the atlassing team. Many thanks for their efforts.

My very special thanks, however, must go to Damian Newmarch (for doing all the atlassing presentations and being one of the A ringers, for all the training), David Dalziel (A ringer and trainer) and Jane Rautenbach (record keeper), to the trainees Erin Murphy, Rebecca Kilner and Alan Morris – everyone an integral part of the team and who made the trip such a success.

**Julia Pierini**



*Hwange National Park Bird Ringing & SABAP2 Bird Atlassing Workshops 22-27 Nov 2013.*

### **SABAP2 Bird Atlassing Workshop 28-29 November 2013**

The SABAP2 Bird Atlassing Workshop was held at Victoria Falls at the Victoria Falls Safari Lodge Conference Centre (many thanks to VFSL for their professional service) on the 28 & 29 November 2013. Over 57 people participated at the workshop. Many thanks to all the resident Vic Falls birders who took part and special thanks to Damian Newmarch who did the presentation and Jane Rautenbach, Carolyn Dennison, David Dalziel, Carla Pierini, Celesta von Chamier and Tony Wood who assisted with the organization.

**Julia Pierini**



**Mashonaland Birdlife Zimbabwe**

**Incoming Committee 2014/2015**

Chairperson	Tony Alegria	0772-438697	04 490375 (H) talegria@zol.co.zw
Vice Chairperson	Dave Rockingham-Gill	0774-365314	04 882412 (H) rgill@zol.co.zw
Secretary	Linda Fussell	0772-364423	04 333896 (H) fussell@zol.co.zw
Treasurer	Debbie Wiggins	0772-252651	04 882851 (H) wigpd@yoafrica.com
Member	James Ball	0772-310351	04 481351 (H) jameszwe@gmail.com

**Birdlife Zimbabwe**

**Mashonaland Branch Report for 2014 AGM**

January 16th 2014

The outings have continued and we are getting some good turnouts, especially at the Mukuvisi Woodlands and the last Sunday of the month.

We are very grateful to everybody that allowed us onto his or her properties. I thank all the leaders of these events – Julia Pierini and Richard Dennison have been the main stars. However Julia Pierini has stepped down from leading the Mukuvisi Saturday outings and Dave Dalziel has taken to leading again.

Thanks to our speakers, without them we would not have a monthly function. We had: (Jan) right after the AGM, Celesta von Chamier showed us how to navigate the birding things in Facebook; (Feb) The Mozambique African Pitta trip by Tony Alegria; (Mar) War and treachery between Cuckoo Finch and the Tawny-flanked Prinias by Claire Spottiswoode; (Apr) Pentads and SABAP 2 project by Tony Wood; (May) The Common Myna by Geoff Lowe; (Jun) What do birds eat by Dave Rockingham-Gill; (Jul) Photographic Safari by Dave Hartung; (Aug) Report back on the Canada trip by Tony Wood; (Sept) Snakes by Steve Durrant; (Oct) Report back on the Hwange / Vic Falls trip by Ken Dixon; (Nov) Sounds of the Bush by Derek Solomon; (Dec) A

little bit about waterfowl counts by Dave Rockingham-Gill followed by a social. 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.

I thank Julia Pierini and Carolyn for sending out the email reminders for the outings & evening functions and also for providing the necessary information to the Ndeipi monthly magazine.

Last year we planned three away outings with the first trip being to Hwange & Victoria Falls. Eight birders enjoyed a one-week birding holiday during August and saw just over 250 species. The next trip to Hippo Pools followed one month later in September when some 20 birders saw just over a hundred birds – not too many, but many specials were seen e.g. White-backed Night-heron and Livingstone's Flycatcher. The third trip scheduled for a cool place during the hot month of October was cancelled due to insufficient interest.

Anyone who has never been on one of these outings is really missing out!

Your incoming committee will be organizing more away trips this year – if you have any ideas, please talk to or email the committee members. We have already planned a trip to RIFA, which will take place over weekend 14th – 17th March 2014. The pans at Chirundu are full so hopefully it will be third time lucky and we'll get to see the crakes and ducks that breed there.

We are also looking at going to Gonarezhou this year – either as a long weekend trip or perhaps as a one-week birding holiday!

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.

We began a booze raffle last year and raised sufficient funds to build a bridge over the Chiraura River in Mukuvisi. We also had a "bring something for the raffle" at the Xmas Social in December. Monies raised have gone a long way to purchasing a sound system to be used for evening presentations when the speaker is softly spoken or is in competition with noisy bar members.

I am grateful to Avondale Sports Club for letting us use this venue for all our evening events.

I'm pleased to say that all members of the present committee are prepared to stand again – so, no resignations!

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

**Tony Alegria**

**Chairman-Mashonaland Branch**

AOB – Has anyone have bridge building experience? This is to repair the bridge near where we park at Mukuvisi.

### **Mashonaland Birdlife Annual General Meeting**

A successful AGM was held at Avondale Club. 34 Branch Members attended the meeting and there were 8 Apologies.

Tony Alegria, the Chairperson, presented his report.

The 2013 Mashonaland Committee was prepared to stand for another year. It could do with an extra member on the committee. There were no nominations or volunteers for 2014.

The Chairman ended by thanking his Committee and thanking all the members for continuing to support the Mashonaland Branch at various outings and meetings.

The Treasurer gave a brief report on the Branch Finances. Holding raffles at the monthly meetings had raised funds. This had raised enough money to replace the small bridge at Mukuvisi Woodlands. An amplifier and microphone had also been purchased for use at the meetings.

Julia Pierini presented a report on Mukuvisi Woodlands monthly bird walks.

Richard Dennison presented a report on Lake Chivero bird walks.

Dorothy Wakeling presented an in depth report on Monavale Vlei and wetlands. Various activities and environmental studies are taking place at Monavale Vlei and also Marlborough vlei.

The 2013 Committee was voted back by unanimous vote.

The meeting closed at 7 pm.

### **Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary**

#### **January 2013 to December 2013**

The 2012/2013 rainy season was fairly average, as the rainfall in Hillside was 106% of Harare's average. Although the rains were good wader space was significant from October to December because water was drawn from the lake to supply Harare and there was a late start to the current rains in the catchment area.

Our special thanks go to Julia Pierini for organizing a successful clean-up of the shoreline in December when 20 of us collected about 200kg of old nylon fishing nets and other rubbish. We are also pleased that National Parks appeared to have arrested some wood poachers in November.

#### **Species Count**

The annual species count was 150, which was the lowest ever recorded. Although the drop off in species recorded started in 2008 we only visited in the 6 months of January, February, May, September, November and December in 2013. This was because from February we decided to reduce our visits from monthly to quarterly because of poor attendance by members. There were no additions to the total number of species recorded since records began in 1992 but the water birds were very good from September to December.

In my opinion the highlights were:

#### **Shore and Water Birds**

- ◆ Black Heron - 1 in February, 2 in November and 8 in December.
- ◆ White-faced Duck - 80 in September.
- ◆ Fulvous Duck - 2 in February.
- ◆ Cape Teal - 5 in November.
- ◆ Red-billed Teal - 60 in November.
- ◆ Cape Shoveler - 1 in November.
- ◆ Southern Pochard - 55 in November.
- ◆ Common Ringed Plover - 3 in December.
- ◆ Pied Avocet - 18 in November and 40 in December.
- ◆ Black-winged Stilt - 30 in December.

#### **Other Birds of Interest**

- ◆ European Honey-buzzard - 1 in December.
- ◆ Sand Martin - 2 in December.
- ◆ Yellow-bellied Greenbul - 1 in November.

We saw or picked up the spoor of vervet monkeys, impala, clawless otter, bushpig, duiker, antbear and slender mongoose.

**Richard Dennison**

### **Monavale Vlei Highlights 2013: Report to BirdLife Zimbabwe Mashonaland Branch AGM 16<sup>th</sup> January 2014**

**Bird sightings of particular interest selected from the 180 species recorded during 2013.**

**Little Bittern: Feb**

**Dwarf Bittern: Jan 2013**

Marabou Stork: Jan, Feb, May, June, July, Aug

**African Black Duck: Jan-June; August, November**

**Yellow-billed Stork; Feb (7) and April. Flying over**

Yellow-billed Kite: March

African Cuckoo Hawk: May, Jul, Sept, Oct, Dec

African Fish-eagle: Mar

African Marsh-harrier: Feb

Corn Crake: Jan, Dec

Striped Crane: Jan  
Red-chested Flufftail: Jan, Feb, Dec  
Streaky-breasted Flufftail: Jan-Mar  
**Common Moorhen: Oct – Dec**  
**African Jacana: Jan**  
**Wood Sandpiper: Mar**  
**Spotted Thick-knee: May**  
Namaqua Dove: Jan  
Meyer's Parrot: Nov  
**Black Coucal: Jan-April, Oct-Dec (numbers increasing)**  
Fiery-necked Nightjar: May  
**Narina Trogon: Dec (Reeler)**  
**Pied Kingfisher: May**  
Malachite Kingfisher: Feb, Mar, May, June, Oct, Dec  
**Southern Carmine Bee-eater: March**  
**European Roller: Jan, Nov, Dec**  
Red-breasted Swallow: Jan, Aug, Oct  
Lesser Striped Swallow: Jan-Mar, July, Aug, Oct, Nov, Dec  
Greater Striped Swallow: Jan-Mar, Nov  
Groundscraper Thrush: Mar, Apr, June, Sept, Nov  
Great Reed-warbler: Jan-Apr, Dec  
African Reed-warbler: Jan-Apr, Aug-Dec  
Marsh Warbler: Jan, Feb  
Lesser Swamp-warbler: all year  
Dark-capped Yellow Warbler: all year  
Little Rush-warbler: all year  
Willow Warbler: Jan-Apr, Oct- Dec  
**Pale-crowned Cisticola: Jan, Feb, Apr, Dec**  
**Spotted Flycatcher: Jan, Feb, Apr, Nov, Dec**  
**Lesser Grey Shrike: Apr**  
**Brown-crowned Tchagra: May**  
**Common Myna: Nov**  
Copper Sunbird: Feb, June  
Cuckoo Finch: Jan-Apr, Oct-Dec

**New birds for list:** Common Myna and Brown-crowned Tchagra

**Missing:** Capped Wheatear, Rufous-naped Lark, Red-capped Lark

#### **Mammals:**

Common Duiker, Side-striped Jackal, Scrub Hare, Clawless Otter, Bush pig, Serval

**Snakes:** Olive Grass Snake, Three-striped Grass Snake, Mozambique Spitting Cobra,

**Amphibians:** Giant Bullfrog

#### **Bird Ringing:**

One session.

**Obituary:** Steve Davies, Chairman of COSMO, very sadly passed away in November 2013 after a serious operation. He is much missed by COSMO and the wetland sector. Various obituaries have been written. Tony Reeler is now the Chairman of COSMO.

#### **Visitors:**

**Sir Anada Tiega<sup>1</sup>, Secretary General, Ramsar, 4<sup>th</sup> Feb; Wetlands International Szabolcs Nagy<sup>2</sup>; USAID; Twin Rivers School; French School, RKR and MFN Trust, Tatagura Garden Club, Local Government Physical Planning, Urban Planning, John Gregory<sup>3</sup>**

1. I am pleased to meet with strongly committed stakeholders with high knowledge and courage. I encourage the on-going initiative and ensure that the Ramsar Secretariat will bring its support.
2. This is one of the most amazing example of community efforts for wetland conservation I have seen.
3. This local treasure – a beautiful haven which must be saved.



**Birdwatchers from beyond our borders:** South Africa, Finland, Switzerland, Norway, USA, UK, Canada

**Visitors from other countries: South Africa, Norway, USA, UK, and Holland**

**Workshops:**

Vermiculture: ROKPA November 2013

**Fire on Monavale Vlei:**

22 February, 1 June, 24 July, 30 July, 30 Aug, 28 Sept

**Bird Data Analysis:**

Dr Neil Deacon continues working on the Monavale Vlei daily bird records.

The 3rd Sunday of the month Monavale Walk field cards will be handed over to BLZ for inputting onto their database, once a copy has been made.

**Plant Survey:**

By Christopher Chapano, National Herbarium, Botanic Garden, Harare, 20 December.

**Ramsar Site Status:**

Sir Anada Tiega visited Monavale Vlei on the 4<sup>th</sup> February for World Wetlands Day. We were greatly honoured to have him visit. Reports have been submitted to *The Babbler*. Monavale Vlei has been accorded Ramsar Site Status. DW is in close contact with Ramsar Secretariat, Africa Co-ordinator for Africa, Paul Ouedraogo, who is of enormous support.

**Monavale Local Environmental Subject Plan:**

This has been approved by Council, advertised and is ready to be added to the Harare Master Plan. However, Physical Planning Local Government made queries that were resolved in the field and the Plan made ready for final approval by Council to go into the Master Plan. The landowners submitted a request to develop their portion of the Vlei. Their plans have not yet been submitted for consideration by City Planning. However, as the area is protected and a Ramsar Site, hopefully this is a formality.

**Conservation Society of Monavale continues to spearhead wetland protection throughout the City:** COSMO has been a key stakeholder in the implementation of the Wetlands Survival Forum, which is now a registered Trust. Five public meetings were held during 2013 to address wetland protection, legislative issues, zoning issues and much more. Happily Alex Masterson is a Trustee. WSF is a useful platform to address at top levels the major issues besetting the wetlands of Harare.

COSMO is also partnered with BLZ in the Jensen Projecting Harare's Wetland Ecosystems for Nature and the City's People. This project covers the management and conservation of Monavale and Marlborough Vleis through community involvement, research and on-going wetland awareness throughout society.

**Indigenous Tree Nursery**

COSMO continues to rent the space and hopes to purchase the area. Sales have picked up due to enhanced advertising.

**UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Status**

Monavale and Marlborough Vleis are to be initial core areas with all of Harare's wetlands the Biosphere Reserve.

**UNDP GEF SGP Funding**

The booklet on Monavale is still being written. When the ownership status has been resolved it will be completed. We are appreciative of the support UNDP has extended COSMO with this programme.

**Monavale Daily Bird Records and Rainfall Statistics kept since 2005.  
Monavale Vlei Bird Species Counted 2005 to December 2013: 210 – 240**

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total Bird Species Rainfall in blue	
138	135	134	113	102	97	100	103	103	119	119	125	180	2013
74	72	77	58	48	38	67	64	63	54	66	67		3 <sup>rd</sup> Sun 2013
421	59.5	231	51.5						1.61	103.5	157.8	1025.9	
142	136	137	124	103	100	102	102	110	117	120	129	178	2012
72	62	59	66	56	32	65	32	47	57	62	70		3 <sup>rd</sup> Sun 2012
267.5	171.5	173.5	24.5						37.5	94.5	215	924mm	335 Jan 2013
144	132	136	124	106	96	103	99	108	106	125	134	177	2011
66	71	75	61	56	56	48	58	45	66	68	80		3 <sup>rd</sup> Sun 2011
221	75	62	9	1	2.5	9			35	115	419.5	940mm	
142	140	136	111	93	87	97	106	107	121	130	143	181	2010
62	66	61	54	46	54	32	64	63	62	83	78		3 <sup>rd</sup> Sun 2010
207.5	171	49	178	3.5					25.5	126	152	912.5mm	
131	123	120	114	95	89	100	91	103	109	120	127	163	2009
70	51	59	49	45	47	37	47	44	51	61	57		3 <sup>rd</sup> Sun 2009
197.5	130	165.5	20	40					4	142	183	937.5mm	
117	113	115	110	90	91	87	98	103	108	112	126		2008
52	53	52	45	25	45	45	50	40	47	64	71		3 <sup>rd</sup> Sun 2008
383.5	38.5	43	33						9	167.5	253	927.5mm	
121	118	112	109	91	91	91	93	97	101	109	116		2007
58	69	53	53	40	39	53	53	55	57	73	52		3 <sup>rd</sup> Sun 2007
174	58.5	92.5	45.5	2.5				4	2	168	540	1087mm	
116	114	115	107	85	90	86	92	92	101	104	106		2006
	58	52			49	35	48	41	36	48	52		3 <sup>rd</sup> Sun 2006
279	171.5	155.5	3						9.5	65	148.5	832mm	
								43	63	95	100		2005
183	94	137	24	8				.5	12	106.5	285	850mm	

### **Thank you:**

To Jimmy Muropa once again for his daily bird records and for taking visitors and schools on walks. His knowledge is considerable, and increasing with the years! He has been with COSMO since 2005.

To Steve Davies who worked tirelessly on the Vlei Project since 2005, WSF and public talks right up until his operation in mid-Sept, and the community for their support.

To BLZ Council and members for their contributions and taking part in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday walks.

To Bobby Warren-Codrington for accompanying birding groups on the Vlei during the wet breeding season!

**Dorothy Wakeling, Monavale Vlei Programme Manager. [cosmo@yoafrica.com](mailto:cosmo@yoafrica.com);  
[www.monavalevlei.com](http://www.monavalevlei.com)**

### **Sabap2 and Bird ringing Workshops**

After the AGM, Julia Pierini (Vice President BLZ) presented a very interesting account of her trip to Hwange Main camp, including Sinamatella and Victoria Falls in November 2013.

The purpose for this trip was to present and hold workshops with interested parties on Bird Ringing and Sabap2 atlassing. This trip was well received and well attended by guides, National Parks personnel, researchers and various other interested parties. Julia Pierini, Dave Dalziel and Damian Newmarch are registered bird ringers. Damian also presented the Sabap2 atlassing program to interested parties.

Julia thanked the very hard working team consisting of Celesta, Jane, Carolyn, Tony, Carla, Erin, Dave Dalziel, Damian Newmarch and others, who made this trip such a success.

Ian Riddell then gave a short summary of the progress of the Sabap2 atlassing in Zimbabwe since February 2013. It is good to see that Pentads are being added to on a monthly basis and coverage is starting to widen. Obviously a lot more work needs to be done and members are encouraged to register and submit their field cards for update on this system.

Please have a look at the new Birdlife Zimbabwe website: [www.birdlifezimbabwe.org](http://www.birdlifezimbabwe.org)

A short DVD was shown to members on the work undertaken by the BLZ Education department with local school children. Innocent Magunje and Fadzai Matsvimbo from the BLZ office are seen talking and encouraging the young scholars to appreciate their environment and especially the birds. A colouring and drawing competition was held with the students and entries were submitted overseas for judging. Three entries from Zimbabwe won prizes.

### **Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary Fishing Net Clean-up 7 December 2013**

On 7 December 2013, members of the BLZ youth group, supporters, other members united with Innocent Magunje, BLZ conservation officer, Tendai Wachi of National Parks, Clever Garirofa and Fadzai, students on attachment at BLZ to clean up nets at the Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary. The problem with the abandoned fishing nets is that they get trapped by the submerged weed and are difficult to remove and become death traps for both fish and waterbirds. The problem of abandoned nets is extremely severe at both Lakes Chivero and Manyame with reports of birds hopelessly entangled by the nets getting more and more frequent.

### **Julia Pierini**



## Monavale Vlei December 2013 and January 2014

Rains that have been received since the onset of the season seem not to have had much impact in terms of the characteristic flooding this time around. The Vlei has been exceptionally "dry". Is it the changing weather patterns that we are noticing? Despite the flooding that we all expect, the general outlook of the Vlei is good. Pathways round the Vlei have been neatly cut and easily accessible including the verges. Birding has been amazing with interesting sightings. African Crakes arrived a bit late with the first sighting on 21<sup>st</sup> December. The first Streaky-breasted Flufftail call was heard on the 6<sup>th</sup> January 2014, a late date for them. Small pools of water were only realised at this stage. Other bird sightings included: European Roller, Amur Falcon, Diderick Cuckoo, Black Coucal, Malachite Kingfisher, Steppe Buzzard, Great Reed-warbler, Brimstone Canary, African Cuckoo Hawk, Common Moorhen, Red-chested Flufftail, Corn Crake, Marsh Warbler, Sedge Warbler, Copper Sunbird, Abdim's Stork, Wahlberg's Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, White-throated Swallow, Spotted Flycatcher, Cuckoo Finch, and White-winged Widowbird to mention these only. All are welcome for guided walks. I hope I find you well.

**Jimmy Muropa** Monavale Vlei Scout 0772 772771

Alex Masterson was commenting yesterday that the wetland grasses on Monavale Vlei are abundant and in very good condition this year having had good rains last season at the right moment. Indeed, 421 mm fell in January 2013 with 215mm in December 2012. February 2013 dropped right down to 60mm. This season we have received a total of 337mm since 24<sup>th</sup> October; that is rather low. The pools will form quickly with a bit more rain around at the moment.

**Dorothy Wakeling 24<sup>th</sup> January 2014.**

## Matabeleland

### Birding Big Day 2013

BBD13 took place on 16/17 November. Around the country eleven teams took part and submitted their results. There was only one team in the 36-hour category, the rest counting for 24 hours; four teams counted in their gardens while the other seven moved around an area of 50km radius. Thank you and well done to all those who took part. The Vic Falls "Turacos" saw the most birds, 144 species. Special thanks as well to the two teams that brought in sponsorship money – Two Old Ducks (\$156) and Bunny Huggers.

TEAM NAME	No.of Spec.	LOCATION	TEAM MEMBERS			
			1	2	3	4
<b>50km Radius – 36 hours</b>						
Ground Hornbills	108	Hwange NP, Main Camp	P.Ditchburn	L Lawrie		
<b>50km Radius – 24 hours</b>						
Vic Falls Turacos	144	Victoria Falls - 10km radius	G Blair	M Blair		
South West Wanderers	142	Gwanda - 50 km radius	C Hubbard	L Wharam		
Longs	124	Hwange NP, Sinamatella	S Long	S Long		
Two Old Ducks	120	Aisleby/ Hillside Dams/ Umfula	H Lewis	J Cranston		
Marondera Meanderers	118	Peterhouse/Gosho Park, Grassland Research Station & Gardens	P Jackson	K Connelly	P Raynor	G Wilson
Bunny Huggers	95	Chundu Island, Vic Falls	J Brebner	J Brebner	D.Jackson	M.Jackson
<b>Garden – 24 hours</b>						
3 Wise Owls	44	Garden	J Kets	S Peters	M Frame	
Birdy Things	31	Sethule Lodge/Gardens	G Lightfoot	E Lightfoot	C Sellick	B&J Stephens
Gilllott Family	29	Southway, Burnside	A Gilllott	C Gilllott		
Matland Kopje Prowlers	26	14 Aberdeen Rd, Matsheumhlope	N Pegg	V Pegg	A Edwards	

**Sue & Stephen Long, who are based at Sinamatella Camp, Hwange National Park, with Bhejane Trust sent in this report on their 24 hour count:**

Last year we thought it would be clever to use a route that would give us a chance to get out of the car and clock up a few of the small species that we otherwise don't get. It didn't work.

This year we decided to just stay in the Park, stay in the car, but reach as many different habitats as we could. That didn't really work too well either as it turned out and although maybe we came within a few waxbills of a personal best, there were as usual, too many glaring gaps in the list for it to be anywhere near a winner.

Our route took us from Sinamatella to the Lukosi river drive, to Masuma and Shumba then back home via Mandavu Dam for a late afternoon waterbird boost. We were awake at first light – no need for an alarm after yet another night when the temperature didn't go below 30 degrees. Out on the verandah for breakfast it was a lot cooler and we soon had over thirty species on the list but nothing startling at that stage apart from an unexpected African Emerald Cuckoo who called persistently from the trees at the edge of the hill. The outside possibilities for this part of the day – Narina Trogon, White-browed Robin-chat and Thrush Nightingale – all failed us.

We left camp not long after 6.00 a.m. and it was already starting to get hot. At the Kaputhi River crossing the always-reliable Mosque Swallows circled close overhead so that we could confirm their white throats, even without binoculars, but generally there was very little to be seen. At Baobab Pan we ticked off a surprise Little Grebe then headed down to the Lukosi River where we hoped the several different habitats would keep the scoreboard moving steadily. We knew exactly where to get the Buffalo-weavers – they weren't at home, and the Southern White-crowned Shrikes – who were also away, but we didn't expect the three beautiful Verreaux's Eagle-owls in a big *Diospyros* tree or the day's only Black Cuckoo that kept calling while we were admiring the owls. As for the Mousebird that had us sliding to a halt in a cloud of dust, that turned out to be an African Paradise-flycatcher.

By lunchtime we were at Shumba where the birds seemed to be as stunned by the heat as we were. Nothing much was moving or calling but at least we got a few of the 'absolute certainties' for that area – Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill, Rufous-naped Lark and Rattling Cisticola, along with a bonus flock of Common Waxbills and a Scarlet-chested Sunbird. We had planned a reasonably long stay at the picnic site but there was so little activity we decided to head towards home and hope for plenty of new species at Mandavu. It was a good move.

All the waterbirds at Mandavu woke us up a bit and we added one or two others as well. The Dam is still very high but it has some good muddy margins, shallows for the waders and herons and a couple of islands for the shy stuff. We ticked off storks, African Spoonbills, ibises, ducks, waders and even a few unexpected Comb Duck, presumably waiting for the rain to flood the Pans where they will spend the summer. Surprisingly the Goliath Herons were missing. They nested at Mandavu last year and have been in and around the nest recently so I don't suppose they have gone far but we couldn't find them.

The day ended with us sitting on the edge of the hill at Sinamatella waiting to hear some owls and nightjars. When the last of the cicadas finally shut up there were a few lovely moments of silence then for some reason, instead of the night birds, Southern Red-billed Hornbills, Meves's Starlings and Swainson's and Natal Spurfowls began calling. Somewhere behind all the noise Sue thought she could hear a nightjar but whether Square-tailed or Rufous-cheeked was impossible to tell. After a while the day birds quietened down and we got African Scops-owls, Spotted Thick-knee, Three-banded Coursers and Freckled Nightjar. Eventually the mosquitos drove us indoors and we added up the score. 124 species.

**Sue & Stephen Long**



Marjorie and Gavin Blair, based at Victoria Falls with Gavin Blair Safaris, started their 24-hour count a 7p.m. in order to fit it in between trips with clients. Marjorie commented: Shockingly we didn't see or hear any owls and only managed to record two cuckoos – at the time of the count we'd had as good as no rain at all in VF's and so maybe not all the migrants had arrived. It was also very hot and dry. However, we thoroughly enjoyed ourselves and had a spectacular start and end to our count – our first bird was a Fiery-necked Nightjar sitting in the leaf

litter with two tiny chicks under its breast - a truly delightful sight (photo attached); our last bird of the count was a male Pennant-winged Nightjar showing off its pennants, albeit they were only half grown.

### **Verreaux's Eagle Breeding Survey**

The 50<sup>th</sup> year of the Verreaux's Eagle Breeding Survey conducted in the Matobo Hills ended in November 2013.

Teams participated with their usual enthusiasm and dedication. A total of 76 nest sites within 56 known territories were monitored.

Thirty-three territories were occupied, with 21 pairs of Verreaux's Eagle *Aquila verauxii* rebuilding their nests. Of these 21 pairs, 18 made a breeding attempt.

Of the 18 pairs who made a breeding attempt, with their attempt being confirmed by signs of incubation, teams were able to confirm that 10 chicks successfully reached the fledging stage.

The results of the other eight attempts remain unclear. At five nest sites reports indicate they possibly failed for unknown reasons at the incubation stage, as at subsequent checks the nests were no longer being used. At three sites, visiting teams were unable to reach a confirmed decision on whether a chick had fledged. The sight and sign at these three nests left room for doubt as to their success, and no fledgling was seen in the territory.

In spite of this, the confirmed replacement rate per pair of eagles is 0.30, and whilst lower than recent years, this result remains within what can be considered the norm for these eagles.

The history of this survey has proved that the members of BirdLife Zimbabwe Matabeleland Branch have always unconditionally dedicated themselves to this survey. The private and business communities of Bulawayo have supported their dedication. This 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of this survey, proved to be no exception. The private and business communities of Bulawayo were outstandingly generous, and a total in excess of \$1 000 was raised.

Our Branch hereby acknowledges, and offers sincere thanks to, all who contributed in any way. Your contributions have ensured the continuation of this world record survey.

Long may it continue!

**John Brebner and Cecilia Hubbard**

Co-ordinators Verreaux's Eagle Breeding Survey

### **Annual Bistro – 7 December**

The branch ended the year with our ever-popular bistro. Once again it was an evening of delicious food and good company. To remain us of our common interest in birds Karen kept us entertained between courses with an impromptu quiz. In our mellow state some of the birdcalls had us completely baffled – but there was no shortage of wild guesses! Thanks to our

chairman, Cecilia, for hosting this event and to all those who cooked and contributed to the meal.

**Adele Edwards**

### **Aisleby Outing – 11 January**

The Branch outing for January 2014 was a morning at Aisleby Farm. With January being nominated as one of the months for Waterfowl census to be undertaken, committee felt that many members may have some difficulty in identifying waterfowl, and Aisleby would prove the ideal venue for interested members to get together and assist each other in learning how to identify, and count, these birds.

Two members of BirdLife Australia, Gavin Masters and Jaymal Chicksen, had contacted me during December, and arrangements were made so as to include them in our outing. Whilst we appreciate the rain, it was with some relief that Saturday morning dawned, cloud free.

After collecting our visitors, we made our way to the farm, and met up with the other branch members at the entrance boom. A drive around Aisleby, making frequent stops and walks along the way, with a final stop at the Umgusa Club to view the dam and the species it held, allowed members and visitors to positively identify 93 species.

A very pleasant, satisfying morning, with the added bonus of being with knowledgeable, like-minded people from the other side of the world, whose pleasure at seeing new species that they were able to photograph and add to their life lists, was palpable.

Their pleasure reminded us local members of how we take seeing so many species, in such a relatively short time, for granted.

**Cecilia Hubbard**

### **Visit to Inn on Rupurara and not just for the food.**

Just before Xmas 2013, my wife, Lynn, and I took advantage of a '3 nights for the price of 2' offer at Inn on Rupurara in Juliasdale and found it not only an excellent destination for comfort, service, relaxation and high quality meals but also good birding.

As well as the usual hospitality services, Inn on Rupurara offers a wide range of activities on the adjoining estate. These include game drives, horse riding, mountain biking, rock climbing, fishing, visiting Bushman paintings and bird walks or drives. For the latter, Paddington Aidini, the resident BLZ trained guide is always available. We took advantage of his services on two occasions during our stay, once for an early morning walk near the hotel on a varied trail that he had blazed through miombo woodland, grassland and riverine forest and secondly for a drive and walk on the estate investigating other habitats but especially paperbark acacia woodland.

A pair of Verreaux's Eagle, Swee Waxbill and Blue Swallows are the main rarities, the Waxbill in the scrub near the hotel and the last in the grassland further away. However, Cape Robin-chat and White-starred Robin, Magpie Mannikin, Southern Hyliota, Eastern Saw-wing, Steppe Buzzard and Black-shouldered and Yellow-billed Kite were all easily spotted. Lazy and Wailing Cisticola called constantly from the rocky hillsides. For some reason, Whyte's Barbet and Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird were surprisingly numerous and confiding.

The estate has been generously stocked with plains game and Bushbuck and Klipspringer occur naturally, the latter comfortably viewed in silhouette on Rupurara Rock from the bar terrace. Go on, spoil yourselves. You deserve it!

**Ken Dixon**

### **Birding Durban's Western Suburbs-25/12/13 to 31/12/1**

My wife Carolyn and I stayed with relatives in the Durban suburb of Gillitts about 20km west of the coast from the 25<sup>th</sup> to the 31<sup>st</sup> of December, 2013. This suburb and its neighbours are situated on an escarpment that is characterized by high rainfall, warm temperatures, grassy hilltops and scarp evergreen forest in rocky gorges. The nearest we have to this type of environment would probably be the Vumba. The gardens are well vegetated with many large indigenous and exotic trees and there are significant areas of protected scarp forest nearby at the Kloof and Giba Gorges.

Most of the bird watching was done when going on early morning walks with the dog in the suburbs. However, we did pay single visits to the Kloof and Giba Gorges later in the day when the best birding time had passed. What struck me as unusual in the suburbs was the presence of birds that are restricted to wild areas in Zimbabwe. Most readers are probably aware of the high numbers of Hadeda Ibis that are found in many South African suburbs and they have become so confiding that you can often walk within a few metres of them. Other birds that were in this category were Trumpeter Hornbill, Buff-spotted Flufftail, Cape Rock-thrush, Cape Batis and Dusky Indigobird. On one occasion an Augur Buzzard was seen in a tall tree in a school ground.

Other birds of interest included Woolly-necked Stork, Knysna Turaco, Burchell's Coucal, Square-tailed Drongo, Cape Robin-chat, Yellow-throated Woodland-warbler, Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher, Black-bellied Starling, Southern Tchagra, Greater Double-collared and Collared Sunbird, Dark-backed Weaver and Cape White-eye. A total of 60 species were identified by me and of these I was very pleased to get 2 lifers in the form of the Cape Rock-thrush and the Southern Tchagra.

**Richard Dennison**

## **Tail Feathers**

### **Kittlitz's Plover**



*Kittlitz's Plover*  
27.8.13, B'pan.

It is now well established that our Zimbabwean Kittlitz's Plover are migrants and that they evidently head south to south-west during the summer months. A colour ringing study recently launched at Barberspan Nature Reserve, in the North-Western Province of South Africa, is looking at various aspects of the birds' biology not least that of migration. The use of coloured alphanumeric (engraved) rings now makes it easier to identify the individuals in the field. These rings carry a unique series of letters and figures (see accompanying photograph) and are in positioned on the tibia-fibula so that they do not get muddied and unreadable. To date the combinations of metal, colour and engraved rings used are:

#### Left leg:

Above tarsal joint: plain green ring – to mark the locality (Barberspan)

Below tarsal joint: metal ring (Polish ringers)

#### Right leg:

Above tarsal joint:

- white with black engravings (one letter, two digits) – for non-sexed birds, or
- yellow with black engravings (one letter, two digits) – males, or
- red with black engravings (one letter, two digits) – females.



Below tarsal joint: metal ring (SA ringers or whoever prefers to ring on the right leg.  
So can everyone please be aware of this project and think how exciting it would be to sight one of these birds somewhere in Zimbabwe.

Please notify: Magda Remisiewicz at [kittlitz.plover@gmail.com](mailto:kittlitz.plover@gmail.com) of any sightings giving the full details of ring placement, the date and locality and, if possible, whether breeding or not.

**Tony Tree**

**tony@zeanne.com    Cell+27-82-974 9844    Port Alfred, South Africa**

#### **African Pitta search**

On a recent trip to the Valley to look for the African Pitta we were fortunate enough to locate a male Northern Wheatear in a huge abandoned cotton field just north of Mahuwe. My colleague and I a few days before spent a week in the Northern Serengeti where we located 36 Wheatear in a 6 km stretch. Two of the 36 Wheatear were the rare Isabelline.

We also managed to locate a Terek Sandpiper at green pool in Mana Pools National Park.

**Jono Francis**

#### **Rhodesian/Zimbabwean birders of the past**

I wanted to comment on your project on prominent Rhodesian/Zimbabwean birders of the past. Your list misses out Richard Brooke, Val Gargett, Hans Grobler, Michael Irwin, Reay Smithers, and Peter Steyn. The other Manson you don't know was called Chris. There are obviously others. I could write brief biographies of these people as far as I know them but for many of them other people know far more than I do.

Best Wishes

**David Ewbank.**

#### **Bird Sightings Hippo Pools 19 January 2014**

I saw the African Finfoot running across the river to the island. The Narina Trogon lost three chicks to unknown predator on the 10th. On the 15th the adult male feathers was seen under the swing bridge. I think it was killed by the African Goshawk as they have chicks.

**Tadious Ndadziira** [tediousnd@gmail.com](mailto:tediousnd@gmail.com) Hippo Pools, Umfudzi Safari Area

**New research** proves that birds in V formation arrange themselves in aerodynamically optimum positions

<http://www.rvc.ac.uk/News/PressReleases/pr1401-birds-flying-in-V-formation.cfm>

#### **Fish eating birds**

<http://newswatch.nationalgeographic.com/2014/01/17/bird-snatching-tigerfish-freshwater-species-of-the-week/>

Following a recent report and film on Facebook BirdLife Zimbabwe that Tiger fish eat Barn Swallows. There must be lots of stories of "fish eating birds" like the one above.

If you have seen one lets collect them and put them in the *Babbler*.

I know I once saw inside the gut of a dead shark and there was a cormorant inside. This was at Ballito, Natal, about 1990.

**D. Rockingham Gill** Reply to [fiona6@zol.co.zw](mailto:fiona6@zol.co.zw)

#### **Babblers in the garden.**

Tuesday 21 Jan 4pm-got home and heard the babblers nattering away in the bushes but amongst their noise was a rather plaintive whiney sound as well, very similar but different.

Curious, I went closer to the bushes but startled the whole flock and a black and white cuckoo flew out as well. As they all perched on the wall and the great babbler chorus rang out, I fetched the binos and bird book to ID which cuckoo was giving them a hard time.

On my return the flock were down on the lawn, and amongst them the cuckoo that was whining again and begging for food from an adult, wings aflutter and beak gaping. Then I remembered that certain cuckoos parasitize babblers - this was a juvenile Levillant's and he was very moan-y and whiney for the next 10 minutes while they were in the vicinity. I didn't see an adult feed him though he picked up a few grubs or insects for himself.

A lovely episode of wildlife in the garden!

Interestingly, my old Newman's doesn't mention which cuckoos parasitize but my new Sasol does.

**Jenny Milne**

### **Spotted Eagle-owl**

Recently in my garden, a Spotted Eagle-owl in a *Trichilia emetica* tree (Natal Mahogany) was chased by Arrow-marked Babblers and landed on a Jacaranda tree where he was photographed. A Purple-crested Turaco heard the noise and flew in to sit next to the Spotted Eagle-owl. There was no aggression at all and both birds eventually flew away.

**Dave Hartung**, Mount Pleasant, Harare



### **David Whitehead Ponds – Chegutu.**

In mid-January I duly undertook my bi-annual trip to Chegutu to record waterfowl for the Water count exercise. (Kindly coerced by David Rockingham-Gill!!!). As the plant has been mothballed for a few years now the only water in the pans are direct from 'the clouds above'. Water coverage was at best 15-20%. Birds of interest were a Pied Avocet, Marsh and Sand pipers, a Stint (?), Black-winged Stilts, Cattle Egrets, one Cape Teal, a couple of Red-billed Teal, Blacksmith Lapwings and a few Black-crowned Night-herons. A far cry from years back when hundreds of migrant waders called in. No raptors, which is fairly unusual as I often get a 'circling' Black-chested Snake-eagle. There were however a fairly large variety of passerines around, all in all close to 50 species all told for a pleasant trip – that is if you enjoy forcing your way through tall wet grass.

**Innes Louw**

### **Egyptian Geese and chicks!**

For the summer of 2013 our garden was dominated by a pair of Egyptian Geese and their brood. From the time the babies arrived as a shower of fluffy balls falling at least fifteen metres from the Hamerkop's nest that Mum had chosen to nest in, until they all took off three months later, everything that happened in the garden revolved around these birds – we were all fascinated.

The parents had been with us the previous season but despite 3 attempts she failed to hatch any eggs successfully. But this year she brought down 11 babies and safely reared them all. Their progress was amazingly swift – from nest to ground to swimming pool in about two minutes, grooming themselves within a day, and learning rapidly about green grass, leaves and lettuce (kindly given to us by PGS in Strathaven), along with chicken mash. We kept them in the pool with just enough water to give them space to swim and paddle but also with a dry area for preening and sleeping. The dry end we covered to give shade and protection from visiting birds of prey. The other end was open so that the parents could join their brood as they wished. Dad spent most of his time on sentry duty from the roof of the house whilst Mum preferred standing on top of the waterfall that flows into the pool.

After a month we created a ramp so that when Mum woke us at sunrise the babies were herded out onto the lawn and they would spend the day exploring the garden, nibbling every plant to learn if it was edible. In the evening we gently chased them back into the pool and dinner was served in the pool with the ramp lifted.

Within two months the baby down was gone and they really looked like geese, but learning to fly was another matter altogether. Much running up and down the lawn with mad flapping of wings that were too big to control properly, many crashes into each other and the sides of the pool, but by 10 weeks they were all flying. Next problem is learning to land and stop gracefully where intended! Not so easy!

In this time the parents had daily being going off on morning and evening flights to Kingfisher Park where they could swim in a proper pond and socialise with other feathered friends. The babies would stay behind and were incredibly tame as long as the parents were away, talking with a soft beeping noise, but Mum was very protective and would fly straight at anyone she felt was too close to her children – quite scary to have a full grown goose flying at you! When the babies were airborne they would go with in the evening but enjoyed playing in the pool in the mornings without parental supervision.

It was only when they could fly out of the garden that their real problems began and three babies are unaccounted for. The remaining eight have taken up residence on the Kingfisher Park dam and been back to see us a few times but Mum has incredibly decided that she wants another brood this season so on Christmas Day she chased them all away and went back to her nest way up in the Albizia tree while Dad continues his vigil from the roof top. The babies came back one more time – early on New Year's Day – and they had friends with as there were 15 geese in the most amazing formation circling the house, but Mum would not let them land so, sadly, they disappeared again. But what a fascinating time it has been to be so privileged to have this family accept us into their lives and let watch as they grew up.

Now we wait to see if the second batch of eggs hatches successfully. Mum has not been off her nest for the past two days but we can hear her muttering in her nest so maybe in the next day or so she will show us her new brood and the cycle can start again – and I guess I will not be getting the use of my swimming pool back anytime soon.







**For Sale:**  
Peter Pan Wild Bird Seed Feeders made to order. For more info and to place your order contact Peter van Breda tel: 04-497561

**Who and How?**

Anyone know which bird these feathers are from?

Found in my garden presumably after a night kill.

My best guess is a Southern White-faced Scops-owl but kill an owl?

Who & how?

**George Fleet**



**Contributions for The Babbler 117 April 2014 / May 2014 may be sent to the Editor anytime between now and 14th January 2014.**