

# THE BABBLER

Newsletter of



## BirdLife Zimbabwe

The BirdLife International Partner in Zimbabwe

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**\*\*\* HAVE YOU RENEWED YOUR SUBSCRIPTION? \*\*\***

**MEMBERS** – the BLZ membership year runs from April to March and I appeal to you all please to renew without delay. Whether you attend meetings and outings or not, your membership is important and supports our goal to protect biodiversity and conserve birds and their habitats through education, lobbying decision-makers and interaction with international organisations. In addition, your involvement with data collection through atlassing and submission of records is invaluable. As a member you get the newsletter, *Babbler*, every two months and two issues of *Honeyguide*, our internationally acclaimed journal, every membership year. All for a very reasonable annual fee. Donations towards these or any of our projects are always much appreciated.

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

\*Contact Julia Pierini [JuliaPierini@birdlifezimbabwe.org](mailto:JuliaPierini@birdlifezimbabwe.org) for info about inclusion on our website

Payment can be made direct to the BLZ office at 35 Clyde Road, Eastlea, Harare or by deposit into **BirdLife Zimbabwe at NMB Bank, Borrowdale branch Account No. 260092014** or the **BirdLife Zimbabwe Mashonaland - Chisipite branch of CABS Account No. 1002399955.**

It is VERY IMPORTANT please that you include your name on the deposit slip so it appears on the bank statement AND advise Carolyn Dennison by e-mail or phone, or your payment may not be recorded.

Please contact me, the national membership secretary, for all membership-related issues – new, renewals, payments, change of details, queries [CarolynDennison@birdlifezimbabwe.org](mailto:CarolynDennison@birdlifezimbabwe.org)

And look on our Facebook page for great pictures and recent bits of birding news [www.facebook.com/BirdLifeZimbabwe](http://www.facebook.com/BirdLifeZimbabwe) and our informative website [www.birdlifezimbabwe.org](http://www.birdlifezimbabwe.org)

## Branch Activities

### Mashonaland Branch

#### MASHONALAND BLZ – OUTINGS AUGUST 2014 AND SEPTEMBER 2014

#### Birdlife (BLZ) Zimbabwe Mashonaland Calendar of Events AUGUST 2014

Saturday 2 <sup>nd</sup> August 2014	Marlborough Vlei Walk	0700
Sunday 3 <sup>rd</sup> August 2014	BirdLife Mukuvisi Woodlands Walk	0700
Saturday 9 <sup>th</sup> August 2014	BirdLife Rainham Dam Walk	0700
Sunday 17 <sup>th</sup> August 2014	BirdLife Monavale Vlei Walk	0700

**Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> August 2014 Birdlife Outing to Double RO/Carswell Ranch/Nyabira 0700**  
**Meet at CABS Northridge Park**

**Birdlife (BLZ) Zimbabwe Mashonaland Calendar of Events SEPTEMBER 2014**

**Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> September 2014 Marlborough Vlei Walk 0700**  
**Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> September 2014 BirdLife Mukuvisi Walk (New time) 0630**  
**Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> September 2014 Greystone Park 0700**  
**Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> September 2014 BirdLife Monavale Vlei Walk (New time) 0630**  
**Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> September 2014 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday – BirdLife Outing to Tsindi Ruins/Marondera**  
Meet at Mukuvisi Woodlands Main Car Park at 0630 (New time)  
**NO OUTING ON THE 4<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF SEPTEMBER**

*BirdLife Zimbabwe Mashonaland Branch organises regular bird walks for its members and non-members free of charge (however there may be entry fees e.g. National Parks or a tip required depending on the location). For further information please contact Tony Alegria, [talegria@zol.co.zw](mailto:talegria@zol.co.zw), 0772 438697, (h) 490375*

**3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday Meeting at Avondale Sports Club**

**Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> August 2014 Why Do Birds Migrate? 1730 – 1800**  
By Julia Pierini  
**Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2014 What Mavuradonha Wilderness has to offer 1730 – 1800**

**Evening Meetings are on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday** of each month 5.30 p.m. for 6.00 p.m. 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:**

**Marlborough Vlei:** Meet on Newstead Road (driving to the bottom of Princess Margaret Road, off Harare Drive, follow the road round to the left).

**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 150 metres 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**

**Forthcoming Events:**

Vernon Tarr will do a “Small Raptor Identification” presentation at the Bulawayo Museum on Saturday afternoon, 23<sup>rd</sup> August. Time to be confirmed.

There will be a bird walk at Tshalabala Game Reserve on Saturday, 27<sup>th</sup> September 2014. Meet at the entrance gate at 8.00 a.m.

**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)

## National Office

### Species Distribution Modelling in Bird Conservation

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) can play a very important role in bird conservation. GIS is a technological tool which can be manipulated in various ways so as to collect, store, analyse, process, model, view and interpret data, which includes data on bird species. A GIS includes the hardware and software as well as the people who operate the system. Geographic information has basic components of what, where and when. A GIS is used to define the why and help to find solutions to real life problems.

There are various ways in which it is possible to employ this dynamic technology in Bird Conservation. Species distribution modelling is a technique which uses point observations of species, together with various environmental layers to predict areas where species are likely to occur. In this case, a GIS is used to simulate various spatial patterns on which species occur where, when they occur and why they occur there. These observations can be presence/ absence points. When observations points are modelled with the likely environmental parameters, which affect the presence of a species, it is possible to predict the patterns of occurrence. Environmental layers that are considered vary from species to species. They can be anything from elevation, vegetation to human population density as well.

Much information of presence and absence observations can be collected using simple game counts which accurately pinpoint points where the species was seen and when it was seen. More advanced techniques utilize the use of tracking data from Global Positioning Systems (GPS). Museum collections also help in identifying places where certain species have occurred over the past years. The worldwide web also has much information pertaining to species observations. Software used to model this distribution includes open-source software such as Maxent, R (a statistical package) and ArcGIS among others.

Species distribution maps are useful in identifying the areas that are most suitable habitats for the species under study. This information can be further used to protect those areas in terms of conservation of the species. Species distribution maps also help provide more information of how the species is faring in terms of extinction or migration. Since various environmental layers are utilized during the modelling, it provides a clearer understanding of which factors contribute to the probability of finding a certain species where it is found. In conclusion, technology in the form of GIS can play an important role in bird conservation. The data is already available; it is now time to utilize it for a better future for our birds.

**By Nyasha Yvonne Mwendera (BirdLife Zimbabwe Youth member)**

### **BirdLife Zimbabwe Golf Day 19 June 2014**

Our second fund-raising BirdLife Zimbabwe Golf Day took place in Harare at Chapman Golf Course on 19 June 2014. Our BLZ Institutional Support Partners from RSPB, Chris Magin and BLSA, Martin Taylor were in Harare and played at the event too.

Our grateful thanks to:

- Our Platinum Sponsor: AutoWorld Zimbabwe
- Our Gold Sponsor: NMB Bank
- All our supporters and sponsors who both put in teams and donated the awesome prizes: Africa Albida Tourism, Spar Ballantyne, Easi Holidays, Transerv, Irvine's, ColdChain, Eskill, HRIB, Colcom, The Cheeseman Moonlight Funeral Parlour, PWC, Specialist Hire, Westside Distribution, Laser Audio Vision, Med Tech, Glen Forest Crematorium, Evolution, FDGA, Combined Accounting, Health International, SAGS, Truworths, ALRO, Cliff Hangers, Dave Young Pvt Ltd, Freightworld, Expeller, Cape Wines. Many thanks to Brett Pissas and Ross Wallbridge for organizing the event for us and also to BLZ members Jane Rautenbach, Jan Wood, Carolyn Dennison, Celesta von Chamier and Linda Fussell for assisting to ensure the event was such a resounding success on the day. **Julia Pierini**

**For the Birds**

**THURSDAY  
19th June  
2014  
PRIZES &  
DINNER**

**Charity Golf Day**

In aid of BirdLife Zimbabwe's Conservation Projects.

**Platinum Sponsor - AUTOWORLD**  
**Gold Sponsor - NMB Bank**  
are pleased to once again invite you to participate  
in this year's BirdLife Zimbabwe Golf Day

• Venue/Date: Chapman Golf Club, Harare, Thursday 19 June 2014 •

• Time: "Shotgun" start at 12noon. Be the early bird on the tee 15minutes before hand •

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

• Entry: \$200 per Team of four. Includes light lunch, dinner & give-aways •

**GREEN AND TEE BOX  
SPONSORSHIP STILL AVAILABLE.**

For more info and to register contact:  
Brett Pissas - Cell: 0731-975233  
email: brett.pissas@gmail.com  
Ross Wallbridge - Cell: 0772-202621  
email: ross.wallbridge61@gmail.com

Partners are more than welcome to join you after the game for prize giving !!

Why birds? Visit [www.birdlifetzimbabwe.org](http://www.birdlifetzimbabwe.org) or contact Julia Pierini to find out more: [juliapierini@birdlifetzimbabwe.org](mailto:juliapierini@birdlifetzimbabwe.org)

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# Protecting Harare's Wetland Ecosystems for Nature and the City's People

Update June/July 2014

Highlights for the period were the successful **Friends of the Gallery Post Card Competition** prize-giving event which was held at the Italian Ambassador's Residence. The art work entered by the children was impressive and hard hitting and will be exhibited at the National Gallery in 2015. Much awareness on the importance of Harare's wetlands was achieved through this exercise both into schools and through three radio interviews and newspaper reports.

The Marlborough Clean-up attracted over 100 residents and concerned groups. A big dent was made on the Elizabeth Windsor/Mapareke Road informal dump site alongside Marlborough Vlei, with a very useful relationship established between the Marlborough Environmental Action Group, the Marlborough District Office and the City of Harare Cleansing Department. A further visit from the front-end loader and tipper trucks will complete this task. MEAG is working on a recycling programme adjacent to "Red Roofs".

The University of Zimbabwe Wetland Research Programme under the BirdLife Zimbabwe and **Dorothy Wakeling**, Project Coordinator [cosmo@yoafrica.com](mailto:cosmo@yoafrica.com); 0772 376506

## BirdLife Zimbabwe Youth July 2014 Waterfowl count effort

Ten youths participated in the latest waterfowl counts done in about ten sites around the country. Crowborough farm (S17°50'; E30°54') had a group of Marabou Storks lining a sewerage stream on the grassland. Other waterbird species of note were a pair of Little Egrets and huge flocks of Wattled Starlings. Twenty-three Comb Ducks were seen on Mvurachena Dam (S17°57'; E031°04') close to Harare International Airport along Seke Road. Mvurachena dam seems very productive with huge flocks of Red-billed Teals and White-faced Ducks sitting on the water.

The shorelines were unfortunately lined with duck-snaring nooses. Other dams surveyed around the Airport area were Tsanga (S17°57'; E031°04'), Chekumusoro (S17°57'; E031°03') and Koala Dams (S17°55'; E031°04') out of which a single Little Grebe was seen among other waterbirds. David Whitehead Sewerage ponds (36K0195560;utm 799484) are relatively dry, with isolated pools around which were Yellow-billed **Innocent Magunje**

COSMO project is well underway. Hydrological field work and water sampling, and more recently invertebrate sampling, is providing very interesting results which will be reported on regularly from this point. A newly formed student conservation group has been formed in the Biological Sciences Department particularly to follow the field work undertaken on this project.

A sub-committee of the National Wetlands Committee on which BLZ and COSMO are represented has produced fact Sheets for the 7 designated Ramsar Sites, of which Monavale Vlei is one. BLZ and COSMO staff and other members of the committee worked hard on these Fact Sheets. These are now available for distribution. WWF supported this initiative.

Appreciation is extended to BLZ staff and Council, COSMO and MEAG, BirdLife International and Aage V. Jensen Charity Foundation, for supporting the protection of Harare's wetlands. The involvement of EMA and City of Harare is acknowledged and appreciated.

Storks, Pied Avocets and Black-winged Stilts, white dust periodically stirred up in the wind as cattle grazed in and around the settling ponds.

Africa Development Bank is funding rehabilitation works on one of Chegutu sewerage ponds (36K 0198028; utm7991533). Here Hamerkops were seen copulating and Kittlitz's and Three-banded Plover abounded. Lesser Jacana and Southern Pochard stole the show at Nyamungai Pan, Chiota (36K 0310909; utm7984515) while a lone African Purple Swamphen made our visit to Chikokorana Pan (36K 0304792; utm7976237) worthwhile. Constantia Farm (36K 0271580; utm7890779) in Chivhu sheltered a pair of Grey Crowned Cranes together with a number of fish-eating birds such as African Fish-eagle, Grey Heron and Pied Kingfishers.

Please visit BirdLife Zimbabwe Facebook page for visual impressions. Please note two different gps formats were used.

## RECENT REPORTS AND SIGHTINGS

### Mashonaland

#### SUNDAY 25th MAY 2014: MASHONALAND BRANCH OUTING TO XANADU FARM (MCDONALD TIMBERS), NEAR RUWA

22 Members found their way to Kim McDonald's beautiful home by about 07h40 on a gorgeous, cloudless day for a morning's varied birding. The property offers dams, miombo woodland, arable

land and vleis, all of which were visited. The impressive, for May, species count reached 99 by the time I left but I'm confident those that lingered in the attractive garden will have taken it past the

century mark.

The small group I joined drove straight to the woodland and parked before following the boundary fence down to and along the edge of the reedbeds where we saw Yellow-throated Longclaw, Long-crested Eagle, Orange-breasted Waxbill, Lesser Swamp-warbler and Little Rush-warbler, Black Crake, Helmeted Guineafowl, African Wattled Lapwing and heard Rufous-naped Lark. On reaching the woodland we were soon rewarded by the discovery of a 7-species bird party rather difficult to see in the canopy against the sun. The highlight for me was a male Southern Hyltiota, always such a delight. The others in the party were lots of Green-capped Eremomela, African Yellow White-eye, and a whole family of Black-backed Puffback, Chin-spot Batis, Brubru and Fork-tailed Drongo. It must have taken half an hour for us to see all species, the Hyltiota proving especially elusive as usual.

From there we walked to the dam wall hearing African Fish-eagle, Black-collared and Crested Barbet and seeing Blacksmith Lapwing, African

**Ken Dixon**

## 19<sup>th</sup> June 2014 Evening – Double bill presentation

### Part 1 – Waterfowl presentation by Dave Rockingham-Gill

In order to encourage waterfowl counts in July, David Rockingham-Gill gave a quick talk on some aspects of recent counts, using some slides provided by Roberts' multimedia.

2 Saddle-billed Stork were at Mandavu Dam, Hwange, an endangered species, with maybe its stronghold in the Okavango, where there are said to be 800-1200 birds. Hadeda Ibis were only recorded at Mana Pools, Cape Shoveler at Nyamungai Pan, Seki. African Snipe were seen at Art Farm and Rainham Dam. Greater Painted-snipe (Near Threatened) were seen at Hippo Pools, Murewa. One Pied Avocet was at David Whitehead Ponds, Chegutu. Black-winged Pratincole were again at Mandavu Dam, Rock Pratincole (NT) were at Deka River and breeding on Pratincole Island.

Long-toed Lapwings were at Kariba and the seven teams that surrounded the Mteri Dam in the SE Lowveld reported a handful of Senegal Lapwing. The Vulnerable Pel's Fishing-owl was at the Wamba Dam, Mutasa and the African Grass-owl, now very rare with only 2 seen in two years (1 at Rainham Dam and 1 at Monavale Vlei). The Near Threatened Half-collared Kingfisher was at Aberfoyle Tea Estate and Morgan reported an Anchieta's Tchagra from Katiyo. An unusual

Stonechat, Southern Red Bishop, Dark-capped Yellow Warbler, Variable Sunbird and Bronze Mannikins with Lesser Striped Swallow and Wire-tailed Swallow overhead. Around the dam were African Jacana and Black Crake and a Water Thick-knee stood on a rock, but that was all. The dam adjacent to the house was more interesting, offering Brown-hooded, Pied, Giant and Malachite Kingfisher, Egyptian Goose, all the egrets, Three-banded Plover, African Sacred Ibis, Hamerkop galore, Reed and White-breasted Cormorant and Red-faced Cisticola. The Xanadu special which nests in the garden, Black-crowned Night-heron, failed to show; they can usually be flushed if present. Instead a Greater Honeyguide put in a brief appearance.

When we had all assembled in the lovely, rocky garden for snacks and the count our Chairperson thanked the owner, Kim McDonald, warmly for welcoming us to this attractive venue and accompanying one group on the walk. What a privilege!

sighting was Mountain Wagtail at Umwinsidale. Yellow Wagtails were very sparse and the only Rosy-throated Longclaw was reported from Art Farm, Harare.

*There was no slide of the Yellow-billed Duck which seems not to have been reported for a long time now.*

Then there were some slides of animals, which can be included in MammalMap (the equivalent of Sabap2). Hippo, Water Mongoose & Clawless Otter (3 Seen in May 2014 by Tony Alegria in the Mukuvisi Woodlands).

Dave told us that the forthcoming July count will have few migrants and will be an Afrotropical species count. The count is to be done as close to mid-July as possible, but up to mid-August will be OK. A waterbird ID booklet is being produced by Julia Duprée in Bulawayo to help those that need help in identifying the many water based birds. David Ewbank has volunteered to do a 20 year review of what has been found in the African Waterbird Counts 1994-2014. Dave asked that the GPS locstat be placed on the form and that all forms be sent in as soon as possible, or by end of September at the latest.

**[GPS USERS PLEASE STANDARDISE THE FORMAT AND JUST USE DECIMAL DEGREES]**

### Part 2 Gonarezhou Presentation by Andy Fussell

Andy Fussell gave us a photographic slide show of his trips to Gonarezhou in 2011 and 2012 using various maps of the park to show us just where the features and places were that he was talking about.

He also showed us maps on how Gonarezhou was meant to be part of the Great Limpopo Trans-frontier Park.

The Mabalauta section of Gonarezhou was

covered first, with photos of the National Parks lodges at Swimuwini Rest Camp on the banks of the Mwenezi River. There were also photos of the views from the viewpoints along the Mwenezi River and some of the animals and birds seen.

25km south of Swimuwini Rest Camp lies the Manjinji Pan Sanctuary. This is an oxbow lake just outside the Park, and was gazetted as a Protected Area in 1968. The pan is a lush haven for many water birds, and well worth a visit.

National Parks accommodation at Chipinda Pools consists of 9 camping sites and 4 luxury tents

in the tented campsite on the Runde River. Chipinda Pools allows easy access to Massasanya Dam, which offers excellent birding opportunities. Various gorges on the Runde River are worth a visit, and the highlight of Chipinda Pools is a visit to the Chilojo Cliffs, a spectacular sandstone feature on the Runde River.

All these places Andy talked about in his presentation are to be visited during the one-week birding holiday to take place at the end of September. Thanks Andy for a preview of what we are going to enjoy in the near future.

### **Outing to Goshu Park, Marondera 21–22 June 2014**

Close to twenty BLZ members (of which nine were BLZ Youth group members), four Peterhouse School Learner Guides (accompanied by Penny Raynor) and RSPB's Chris Magin and BLSA's Martin Taylor braved the cold winter and met at Goshu Park Bush camp at 14h00 on the 21<sup>st</sup> June 2014, to spend the night and do some birding in the pristine Miombo wilderness of the park.

Accommodation in the bush camp consisted of men's and ladies dormitories plus one more dormitory for the overflow. Some brought their own tents and camped. Presentations by President Tony Wood (an overview of the past year), Obvious Mutambara (BLZ Youth member on what had motivated him to join the Youth Group) and Innocent Magunje (our BLZ Conservation Officer, a basic bird ID course) were held in the evening after dinner near the fire and it was a wonderful chance for members to meet and chat to our partners from RSPB and BLSA.

Several members from Marondera joined us for an early pre-breakfast bird walk in Goshu Park the next morning, as did others from Harare. We then headed



over to Calderwood Park (wilderness area attached to Peterhouse School) for more birding after breakfast. Good birds were seen: basically most of the Miombo specials including: Miombo Rock-thrush, Miombo Tit, Whyte's Barbet, Spotted Creeper, Southern Hyliota, Grey Penduline-tit, Southern Black Tit, but not the elusive Cinnamon-breasted Tit!

For more information on Goshu Park and the bird lists for the area: [www.birdlifezimbabwe.org](http://www.birdlifezimbabwe.org) under Birding Zimbabwe. Click on Mashonaland tab and then on Goshu link. Many thanks to BLZ

**Julia Pierini**

*Here (above) some of the BLZ Youth and a young Learner Guide from Peterhouse School study their bird book*

### **Monavale Vlei – June-July 2014**

The past months have seen BirdLife Zimbabwe (BLZ) and Conservation Society of Monavale (COSMO) working with the University of Zimbabwe Biological Sciences Department on an on-going research project on both the Monavale and Marlborough Vleis. See Protecting Harare's Wetland Ecosystems above.

63 Belvedere Technical Teachers College (BTTC) enthusiastic environmental club students and their lecturer visited Monavale in early June to learn about the functions and services of wetlands on the ground.

Bird highlights on Monavale Vlei this winter include White-browed Scrub-robin, Swallow-tailed Bee-eaters, Little Bee-eaters, Black-chested Snake-eagle, African Pipit, Lizard Buzzard, African Wattled Lapwing, Crowned Lapwing, Marsh Owl, African Hoopoe, Pearl-breasted Swallow, African Stonechat, Yellow-throated Longclaw, Yellow-fronted Canary,





African Cuckoo Hawk  
with rodent

and last but not least, all the *Euplectes* species in their out of breeding dress. Strangely a Giant Bullfrog was seen this winter. It should have been hibernating at this time of year. Side-striped Jackal was seen on the BTTC visit and so too is the Common Duiker seen on occasions. Our Monavale Vlei DVD produced by Green Studio for ZTV is available. Some of you may have seen it aired on ZTV on two occasions.

**Jimmy Muropa**, Monavale Vlei Scout 0772 772 771;  
[cosmo@yoafrica.com](mailto:cosmo@yoafrica.com) [www.monavalevlei.com](http://www.monavalevlei.com)  
Conservation Society of Monavale Facebook Page

### Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary visit, 13 July 2014, 1630D4

About 10 of us were out at the bird sanctuary on 13 July 2014 from about 08h00-10h00 or a little longer. I was there for the waterbird count. Our average species count for a water body in 2012 was 15, and in 2013 was 13, so this was a good day with 25 waterbirds seen.

The African Darter was not recorded but my counts of White-breasted Cormorant were 64, and Reed Cormorant 30. Grey Heron was the most surprising, 31 counted; at one place I could see 16 at once. Among them was a Goliath Heron, a couple of Great Egrets and a Little Egret. I was lucky to see two Little Bitterns, one on an island waking up and yawning from the top of the reeds. 17 Glossy Ibis and 10 African Sacred Ibis were counted. 4 species of duck, but only 1 Egyptian Goose and a pair of Hottentot Teal with 10 ducklings. Also breeding were African Purple Swamphen with 2 well-grown chicks.

Grey-headed Gulls coursed backwards and forwards; I counted 38 and I hope that was about right, and 17 African Fish-eagle. 8 Pied and a male Giant Kingfishers made up our lot – but I looked hard and saw no African Pied Wagtails. Warblers associated with wetlands were Lesser Swamp, African Reed and the Dark-capped Yellow Warbler, which is common and breeds.

For those interested to read other reports from Lake Chivero in *Babbler* look at 29, 30, 35, 39, 41, 42, 45, 47, 49, 52, 53, 60, 69, 70, 86, 90, 92, 105, 110 and 116.

The total species count for the day was 79. Plus a duiker and an 8-foot crocodile.

I think we should repair the fence around the bird Sanctuary.

**David Rockingham-Gill**, 4 Fernleigh Road, Borrowdale, or [rjill@zol.co.zw](mailto:rjill@zol.co.zw)

### Raptor Diversity in Greater Harare presented by Neil Deacon – 17<sup>th</sup> July 2014

There was a large gathering of over sixty people for the Power Point raptor presentation – raptors appear to be a favourite even though many birders find them difficult to identify.

If there is a real raptor expert of note, then Neil is it! He began by showing us a page of his notebook. On his way to work and back again, he was keeping an eye out for any raptors and jotting down all his sightings day by day – that is, till he had a close encounter with another vehicle. He then decided raptor watching wasn't the safest thing to be doing in Harare traffic!

Apart from the high-rise buildings within the CBD, likened to cliff-faces with ledges and thus attractive to the falcons, there are tree-lined streets, which approximate riparian forests. Within the suburbs there is a huge variety of trees, grasslands and wetlands, a diversity of habitat supporting a large population of raptors and their prey. There are some 44 raptor species within Harare with perhaps some dubious sightings that may total a possible 51 raptors altogether. Neil is aware of some 20 species of raptors that breed in Harare – these include owls, which he calls "Feather-Tony Alegria

dusters". He then went on to tell us where various raptors are nesting in which buildings.

The advantage of nesting within a city and its suburbs is that there are less natural predators – few primates, genets, snakes and large owls. There is plentiful prey, especially rodents. Unfortunately the Pied Crows are a real threat and if a fledgling lands on the ground, then cats and dogs become a problem. Apart from owls, people generally do not persecute raptors. Other dangers of living in a city and environs are collisions with cars and fences, poisoning, electrocution and persecution.

Over the years, Neil has been given many wounded raptors to try and help. Out of 52 various raptors, 4 died, 5 were euthanized, 2 were kept as they couldn't be released and a staggering number of 40 were released back into the wild. Vets Rob Reese and Claire Savage were thanked for the tremendous amount of work they did in repairing broken wings and what have you.

This was a well-delivered presentation and was appreciated by all – if you were not there, you missed a good one!



## **Visit to Hideaway, Lake Manyame, Aberdeen Farm, Zvimba District, 17°49S; 30°40E – 27 July 2014**

13 of us pitched at about 8 o'clock, probably 60 km from Harare. Norton, the nearest town, was visible across the water.

No African Darters! White-breasted Cormorants and Reed Cormorants fish in the lake and rest and feed in the water lilies. This is where we saw most of our waterbirds. 15 Fulvous Duck were there. Richard Dennison reported seeing 120 Spur-winged Geese, and said there may have been 350. This biomass will outweigh all the other birds put together. 5 Southern Pochard, no change since January. 12 Squacco Heron were difficult to see and all were singles. 16 African Openbills and 1 Saddle-billed Stork were the only storks seen. They like the Lowveld Rivers at this time of the year. About 45 Glossy Ibis and 7 African Sacred Ibis were noted.

60 Common Moorhen and 21 African Purple Swamphen both had chicks, 1 Common Moorhen had 5 chicks. 104 African Jacana with many immatures. The 95 Collared Pratincoles were

**David Rockingham-Gill**

### **RAPTOR DIVERSITY IN THE CITY OF HARARE**

In preparing the presentation on 'Raptors in Harare' for the July monthly evening meeting, I compiled a list of the species that have been recorded and potentially occur within city limits and used the meeting as a forum to verify occurrence of some the less commonly seen species and breeding status of others. It is encouraging that the subject of raptors still sparks a lot of interest amongst birders and some very useful information came from discussion on raptors in the city. Amongst others, it was established that Dark Chanting-goshawk and African Grass-owl still occur in the city, albeit now very rarely. A Secretarybird was apparently frequenting Haka Park prior to the presentation and there was confirmation of occurrence of African Barred Owlet within city limits. Sooty Falcon, a species that I hadn't even considered, was added to the list following a recent verified (and published) sighting of this species. The addition of this vagrant falcon brings the total raptor species count for Harare to 48 species, including owls (Table 1 & 2). A further five species, namely Verreaux's Eagle-owl, Hooded Vulture, Augur Buzzard, Martial Eagle and Red-footed Falcon conceivably also occur within city limits, but have not been formally recorded. This is an impressive level of diversity comparable to wilderness areas such as Save Valley and Umfuruzi. An observation that Bateleurs were at one time recorded to breed in the city raised an unresolved question of how far back we go when compiling a 'current' species list? Nonetheless it was established that 22 species of raptor currently breed within city limits, excluding both African Grass-owl and African Marsh-harrier which used to

probably the find of the day. 10 Crowned Lapwing were on the airstrip – not really a waterbird, more like a dry land plover. There must have been 20 African Fish-eagles and at least ½ were immatures.

Altogether 34 waterbird species counted. So a very good day and maybe only 3%-5% of the dam counted. Maybe the best waterbird place in Mashonaland.

Lots of fish netting going on all around us. Some birds looked for but not found were Black Heron, White-backed Duck, Three-banded Plover, African Skimmer (seen in January) and African Pied Wagtail.

Non-waterbirds seen included a Peregrine Falcon, Namaqua Dove, Rufous-naped & Red-capped Larks, Capped Wheatears, Crested Francolins, Wattled Starlings, Wire-tailed and Pearl-breasted Swallows. The most exciting find was a single White-browed Coucal seen some 1 km away from the water.

nest in the vleis of Harare but are now rarely seen. African Fish-eagle and African Wood-owl were also excluded from this count although it is very likely that both species breed within city limits. In addition to confirming African Harrier-hawk breeding within city limits, I also learnt of a few new raptor nests in the city including a Lanner Falcon site in the industrial suburb of Graniteside, a Wahlberg's Eagle nest near the Aspindale industrial area and a day prior to the presentation I received a telephone call from a longstanding BirdLife member about Bat Hawks frequenting a plantation of trees in Borrowdale.

Clearly there is a wealth of interest and observation amongst us and I certainly support Julia Pierini's proposal in the meeting to pursue a survey of raptors in Harare. While we may immediately think of looking for Lanner and Peregrine Falcon nests on buildings, this habitat and these species really only represent a limited although extreme aspect of the urban environment. Other man-made structures such as electricity pylons are also potentially appealing nest sites to some species of raptor and while it is evident that Pied Crows have adapted to using cell-phone towers for nesting, as of yet there seems to be no local records of raptors using these structures. Suburbia, which probably occupies the bulk of the city by area, is also fundamentally an artificial environment that perhaps offers greater insight into the adaptability of raptors. This landscape, often dominated by exotic trees interspersed with grassland in form of sports fields, lawns and natural wetland supports the bulk of raptor diversity in the city. Certain raptor species have not only adapted

to this environment but appear to be thriving well beyond levels found in natural habitat. I believe that in recent years there has been a huge increase in the number of Gabar Goshawks, Long-crested Eagles and Black Sparrowhawks in Harare. Long-crested Eagles are particularly interesting in that they are relatively new to Harare with earliest nest records only dating back to the 1960's. [The first citation of Long-crested Eagle in *Honeyguide* is of a sighting in the Chikurubi area in 1967 – ICR]. Historical data from the 1970's and 1980's indicate Long-crested Eagle territories of 4.5-6.8 km<sup>2</sup> on the Mashonaland Plateau, yet today it seems that there is one in attendance on even the tiniest patches of natural grassland within the City. Surprisingly, published density data for Gabar Goshawks is extremely limited with only an estimate of 2-4 pairs in 680 km<sup>2</sup> in the Matopos. Gabar Goshawk densities in Harare could be orders of magnitude

**Neil Deacon**

higher than this. While one can only theorize on why these species are doing so well in Harare, the availability of prey, absence of natural predators and the ability to adapt to using exotic tree species for nesting may all be contributing factors. Black Sparrowhawks have become relatively common in Harare yet the similar sized Dark Chanting-goshawk is now a rarity, contrary to expectations since the latter has much more diverse prey base that includes reptiles and rodents. Why does one species succeed and the other not?

These few observations show how little we know about raptors in the urban environment despite them literally living in our own backyards. As suggested in previous presentations raptors are good indicator species as they effectively summarize the environmental impact of man so an understanding of their populations benefits us all.

**Table 1. List of diurnal raptors recorded in Harare in recent years (41 species). X = known to be breeding within city limits (18 species), I.M. = intra-African Migrant, P.M. = Palearctic migrant.**

Common Name	Species	Breeding	Migratory
European Honey-buzzard	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>		P.M.
African Cuckoo Hawk	<i>Aviceda cuculoides</i>	X	
Bat Hawk	<i>Macheiramphus alcinus</i>	X	
Black-shouldered Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>	X	
Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>		P.M.
Yellow-billed Kite	<i>Milvus aegyptius</i>		I.M.
African Fish-eagle	<i>Haliaeetus vocifer</i>	?	
White-backed Vulture	<i>Gyps africanus</i>		
Black-chested Snake-eagle	<i>Circaetus pectoralis</i>	X	
Brown Snake-eagle	<i>Circaetus cinereus</i>		
Western Marsh-harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>		P.M.
African Marsh-harrier	<i>Circus ranivorus</i>	?	
Pallid Harrier	<i>Circus macrourus</i>		P.M.
Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>		P.M.
Lizard Buzzard	<i>Kaupifalco monogrammicus</i>	X	
Dark Chanting-goshawk	<i>Melierax metabates</i>		
Black Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter melanoleucus</i>	X	
Gabar Goshawk	<i>Melierax gabar</i>	X	
African Goshawk	<i>Accipiter tachiro</i>	X	
Shikra	<i>Accipiter badius</i>	X	
Little Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter minullus</i>	X	
Ovambo Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter ovampensis</i>	X	
Steppe Buzzard	<i>Buteo vulpinus</i>		P.M.
Steppe Eagle	<i>Aquila nipalensis</i>		P.M.
African Harrier-hawk	<i>Polyboroides typus</i>	X	
Lesser Spotted Eagle	<i>Aquila pomarina</i>		P.M.
Ayres's Hawk-eagle	<i>Aquila ayresii</i>		
African Hawk-eagle	<i>Aquila spilogaster</i>	X	
Booted Eagle	<i>Aquila pennatus</i>		P.M.
Wahlberg's Eagle	<i>Aquila wahlbergi</i>	X	I.M.
Long-crested Eagle	<i>Lophaetus occipitalis</i>	X	
African Crowned Eagle	<i>Stephanoaetus coronatus</i>		

Secretarybird	<i>Sagittarius serpentarius</i>		
Lesser Kestrel	<i>Falco naumanni</i>		P.M.
Greater Kestrel	<i>Falco rupicoloides</i>	X	
Amur Falcon	<i>Falco amurensis</i>		P.M.
Sooty Falcon	<i>Falco concolor</i>		Vagrant
Eurasian Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>		P.M.
African Hobby	<i>Falco cuvierii</i>		I.M.
Lanner Falcon	<i>Falco biarmicus</i>	X	
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	X	

**Table 2. List of nocturnal raptors recorded in Harare in recent years (7 species). X = known to be breeding within city limits (4 species).**

Common Name	Species	Breeding
Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>	X
African Grass-owl	<i>Tyto capensis</i>	?
Southern White-faced Scops-owl	<i>Ptilopsis granti</i>	X
Marsh Owl	<i>Asio capensis</i>	X
African Barred Owlet	<i>Glaucidium capense</i>	
Spotted Eagle-owl	<i>Bubo africanus</i>	X
African Wood-owl	<i>Strix woodfordii</i>	?

## Matabeleland

### Garden Bird Walk – Ntaba Moyo, Burnside, Bulawayo

My place – 21 June 2014

Why, oh why, whenever there is an outing at my home does the weather start off pretty miserable? What have I done to make it thus?

Well 8 other folks dragged themselves out of their warm beds to arrive at about 08h00. We started off by taking a wander down to a small dam on Jairos Jiri property, which is about 10 minutes away (S20°13'47" E28°36'45"). I was horrified to note that another 4 trees had been cut down. My immediate thought was – where are the tree frogs going to spawn next season? Rob Hopkins (a research associate specializing in amphibians) is trying to get the area proclaimed a sanctuary, as the variety of frogs there is important to the overall ecology.

Back to birds. We saw Rattling Cisticola, Tawny-flanked Prinia, Pied Crows, Crowned Lapwings (speaking of which much noise was coming from these birds from out of sight and two members wandered off to find out what it was all about. They returned 10 minutes later after flushing the birds and came to the conclusion that our presence on their patch was what the racket was about!) So to continue with our sightings: Hamerkop, Three-banded Plover, White-browed Robin-chat (for heaven's sakes it's a Heuglin's [...and before that it was a White-browed Robin-chat!]), Cinnamon-Judy Ross

### JULY WATERBIRD CENSUS – OUTING REPORT

#### Robins Farm (Enthokozweni Safaris) – 5 July

The day started with the usual chilly morning when we all met at the Natural History Museum. While waiting for members to arrive we watched a flock of seven Common Mynas fossicking about on

breasted Bunting, Black-shouldered Kite, Senegal Coucal, Golden-breasted Bunting, Yellow-crowned Bishop, Dark-capped Bulbul, Blue Waxbill, Green-winged Pytilia (erstwhile Melba Finch), Black-chested Snake-eagle, Laughing Dove, Emerald-spotted Wood-dove, White-throated Robin-chat and Arrow-marked Babbler.

Back up the slope to my garden (S20°13'40" E28°38'12") I was able to show members juvenile Greater and Lesser Honeyguides (I have a neon sign over the property saying "Bee Take Away"). These birds are with me all year and are very well fed! Some folks who drifted onto the veranda for tea and a chat added Grey Go-away bird, Yellow-bellied Greenbul, Crested Barbet, Common Scimitarbill, Swallow-tailed Bee-eater (which I'd never seen before – I must be blind!), Miombo Double-collared Sunbird, Fork-tailed Drongo, Cut-throat Finch, Bronze Mannikins, Greater and Lesser Honeyguides as mentioned above and Marico Flycatcher.

Where were all the rest of my feathered friends? – I guess it still wasn't warm enough to show themselves and perhaps the number and noise from the veranda had them hiding. And wouldn't you know it, an hour later the sun was out and they all appeared – but who'd believe me.

the lawn. This July outing was to a rather attractive farm dam located north of Bulawayo in the Bubi District, which will be included in the African Waterbird Census. We rather expected to be bird-

ing in an area of savannah thorn scrub but were pleasantly surprised to encounter granite outcrops, mixed Miombo woodland and open grassland. We were well looked after by the Streak family, being allowed to use the lapa in their garden that overlooked the dam. Our first sightings were Cape Glossy Starling, a pair of Saddle-billed Stork, Egyptian Goose, three Woolly-necked Storks, Hamerkop, a pair of Grey Crowned Crane, three African Spoonbill and two African Fish-eagles, one adult and a sub-adult.

There were also two herds of Impala, a couple of Zebra and a Wildebeest gazing on the floodplain. Further investigation revealed Great Egret, Yellow-billed Egret, three Green-backed Heron, a Grey Heron, Little Grebe, two rather elusive African Jacana, a hovering Pied Kingfisher, Red-billed Teal eventually positively identified when they flew as they kept hiding behind a small island, three Blacksmith Lapwing, one with a leg injury and a Three-banded Plover. Five members decided to scramble down the kopje towards the dam and then along the shoreline to the wall sighting Grey Go-away-birds, Black-headed Oriole, Red-eyed Dove, **Peta Ditchburn**

Dark-capped Bulbul, Blue Waxbill, Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill, Forked-tailed Drongo and seven Southern White-crowned Shrikes. Three members then walked around the dam and added African Dusky Flycatcher, Tawny-flanked Prinia, Cape Turtle-dove and Swainson's Spurfowl to our list. While having lunch we saw a female Bateleur, a flock of eleven Helmeted Guineafowls which drank from the dam, Lilac-breasted Roller, Lesser Honeyguide and Pied Crow. We also heard Meyer's Parrot, the distinct two-syllable call of the Black-backed Puffback, Emerald-spotted Wood-dove, Green-backed Camaroptera and a Chin-spot Batis giving its two-syllable call. In the green oasis of the garden we heard Yellow-bellied Greenbul, Arrow-marked Babbler and Black-collared Barbet.

On our way out we stopped at a smaller dam to count the water birds and added three more species to our list. A Southern Pochard family of two adults and five chicks, a Brown-hooded Kingfisher and we heard a Pearl-spotted Owlet. We had a very enjoyable day and would like to thank the Streak family for their hospitality and for allowing us to visit such a wonderful area.

## **Mashonaland South & Masvingo**

### **Charama Dam, Kadoma – June**

Three of us local lady birders spent a useful, leisurely morning at the dam on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> June. The morning was sunny, but cold and windy, so the water birds were still about and active.

#### Water birds identified

White-faced Duck: 140+one mother with seven juveniles following in line.

Red-billed Teal: 1 pair plus one

Little Grebe: 1 pair plus one

African Wattled Lapwing: 1 pair

Grey Heron: one

The water level is receding but hopefully some area of water will remain until the rains occur.

#### **Margaret Parrock**

### **Eiffel Flats Sewage Ponds, Wed 25<sup>th</sup> June, 2014**

A mild sunny winter's morning and Sigi Stone and me, we had 2 hours walking around the 6 ponds with minimal odour to discourage us! Kadoma municipality is attending to some tree and pathway clearance, so hopefully the waterbirds will return in numbers. The following were in the vicinity.

6 Blacksmith Lapwings	1 African Fish-eagle	1 pair Red-billed Teal
1 pair African Wattled Lapwings	1 Hamerkop	40 Cattle Egrets
Black-winged Stilt	1 Common Moorhen	Numerous Black Crakes
1 pair Black-headed Heron	1 Three-banded Plover	

A worthwhile visit to a forlorn area.

#### **Margaret Parrock**

### **Umfuli Creek – Chegutu, Wed 9<sup>th</sup> July, 2014**

Whitehead Ponds at Chegutu was our first call but what a desolate place. No water of any sort, no birds and all surrounds burnt by fire.

We 3 birders headed to Umfuli River on the other side of Chegutu along the Chinhoyi road. What a paradise awaited us. A private area of ten acres all security fenced and the vegetation undisturbed. The river has deep water so no wading birds in that area.

The following were notable: 1 Verreaux's Eagle-owl; Common Scimitarbill; 1 Giant Kingfisher; Orange-breasted Bush-shrike; Grey-headed Bush-shrike; Scarlet-chested, White-bellied and Amethyst Sunbirds; Long-billed Crombec; 1 African Grey Hornbill; 1 African Fish-eagle; Chin-spot Batis; Green-backed Heron; Cardinal Woodpecker; Crested and Black-collared Barbet; Helmeted Guineafowl.

Pasi Dam, which supplies Kadoma with water, is situated on the Charama side of Kadoma but water

birds are scarce. Only one family of African Jacana was seen. There is a vast expanse of clean reed-less water, with wading areas but no activity. Unfortunately small-scale miners and settlers surround the area, so any bird life by the water is continuously disturbed

**Margaret Parrock.** (Birders were Ruth Paice, Maggie Parrock and Sigrid Stone)

### **Chishakwe, Save Conservancy, Bikita District, 20° 07'S 32° 05'E. 4-7<sup>th</sup> July 2014**

Without hunters the Chishakwe lawns hadn't had the watering we loved in 2010, but the birding was still great, and it is a real privilege to be that far in the bush, with lions, leopards and hyenas heard from the braai stand at the old farmhouse.

One of our first birds was a Bateleur male just standing on the sand, at the river, waiting for us to go before he had a drink. While we sat on the dam wall an African Fish-eagle took a barbel, and as the light left us, we had 4 Hadeda Ibis calling. Looking for the leopard that night with a spotlight, we had African Wood-owl and African Scops-owl calling and later heard Spotted Thick-knee.

Next morning (5<sup>th</sup> July), out to look for the Wild Dog; apparently they had a den of puppies. We were in the vicinity but no luck. However, we had an adult Martial Eagle, Long-billed Crombec seemed to be very common, and Burnt-necked Eremomela were there as well. Southern Yellow-billed Hornbills are common and Red-billed Hornbills are only frequent.

Courtney Connear, the resident pro guide, took us around the dam, with a bass motor, to fill in a form for the African Waterbird Count. 22 White-breasted Cormorants were nesting and breeding, with well-grown chicks. 5 African Darters were there and 3 Greater Painted-snipe, 5 African Wattled Lapwing, 16 Pied Wagtail and 2 Malachite Kingfisher. After a visit to the big tree (girth 27.5m), in the evening we settled for more PT with a cool box, and saw a pair of Goliath Heron. A pair of Egyptian Goose, with 8 large young, and a Giant Kingfisher, which we had not recorded at the big dam in the morning. That night another 3 owls were heard, Verreaux's Eagle-owl, Southern White-faced Scops-owl and African Barred Owllet.

On 6<sup>th</sup> July, we got up early and drove down

*I urge you to go there; contact particulars are [management@chishakwe.com](mailto:management@chishakwe.com) or [chishakwepr@gmail.com](mailto:chishakwepr@gmail.com) or for the slower pace, Chishakwe, Box 47, Birchenough Bridge. **D.V. Rockingham-Gill**, 4 Fernleigh Road, P.O. Borrowdale or [rgill@zol.co.zw](mailto:rgill@zol.co.zw)*

### **Some birding in Inhambane, Mozambique**

Set on high sand dunes overlooking the Indian Ocean and nestled in pristine coastal forest, Dunes de Dovela is a lodge which offers some very rewarding birding opportunities. The lodge is situated off the N1 about 80km south of Inhambane town and includes a number of different habitats: shoreline, coastal forest, scrub, dam, and cultivated land and coconut plantations.

We were lucky enough to stay there for four nights in March and had a memorable time with excellent birding. Our French hosts, Thomas, himself a keen birder, and his partner Alexandra

south, to see Jean & Karen Paolilo at Hippo Haven, once on a part of Humani Ranch, 20° 24'S, 32° 05'E. We were made very welcome and she told us about her 19 Hippo and 15 crocs, lots of semi tame baboons and monkeys. She said the settlers had chased away the Arnot's Chat, but they were now coming back, Southern Ground-hornbills were common. Sometimes when Red-billed Queleas are drinking they are caught by the crocs by the mouthful. Pel's Fishing-owl was on the river until cyclone Eline in 2001, and has not been seen since. A Common Myna pair had visited about 5 weeks before our visit (i.e. end of May or early June) and then disappeared. While we had African Wattled Lapwing at the Chishakwe Dam we had White-crowned Lapwing on the Turgwe River. A naturalist, of note, Karen, also told of some of her rare visitors – once a Silvery-cheeked Hornbill, once a Malagasy Pond-heron and once a Eurasian Bittern. Karen recently wrote a book "A Hippo Love Story" which she happily signed for Dorothy.

Up early on the 7<sup>th</sup> to go home, we had some little time walking the airstrip and saw Yellow-breasted Apalis, Southern White-crowned Shrike, Retz's Helmet-shrike, Red-billed Firefinch, Lesser Striped Swallow, Golden-breasted Bunting and a pair of Black-backed Jackal. Some other animals seen were Elephants, Rock Dassie, Scrub hare, Giraffe, Buffalo, Eland, Kudu, Waterbuck, and Wildebeest. Not far from HQ was Black Rhino spoor and Ant bear holes. Lots of conservation and research goes on here, with Wild Dog, Rhino and Leopard leading the way. Two other reports have been printed in *Babbler* 97 & 103.

Thanks to Geoff Lowe, Penny Rockingham-Gill, Dorothy Wakeling, John Kelly and Stuart Wood who made the holiday very memorable.

gave us a warm welcome when we arrived and after settling in, we wasted no time before picking up our bins.

Thomas couldn't have been more helpful in showing us where the best birding spots were and they have cleared an extensive network of trails around the property, giving access to all habitats.

On our first morning Carlos, the trainee guide at the lodge, took us on a long walk, starting in the forest around the lodge. We hadn't gone far when he identified calls of Yellow-bellied Greenbuls and Sombre Greenbuls as well as the Yellow-rumped

Tinkerbird, all of which were to become familiar, as they were fairly common. The paths meandered up and down over the dunes with views over the forest canopy or passing through tunnels of trees and shrubs. Livingstone's & Purple-crested Turacos were soon heard as well, but only the latter seen. A good number of the regular birds, which we commonly see here, were around as well, though instead of our Tropical Boubou, they have Southern Boubou. They are not especially easy to see but, like ours, the call is very distinctive. We saw a few Crowned Hornbills, very impressive silhouetted against the early morning sky, and the place abounded with Emerald-spotted Wood-doves. Most tantalising was the frequently heard call of the Gorgeous Bush-shrike, which we tried hard to hunt down in the dense vegetation, but failed.

Next day, after getting up bright and early again we heard a regular clicking call and scanned the surrounding coastal scrub from our chalet for the bird. We eventually realised that it was an African Goshawk soaring above us so what a good way to start the day! As we were leaving the camp, a few noisy Trumpeter Hornbills flew off from a nearby tree. We were told that typically they roosted by the lodge and moved down to area around the local village during the day where there was more food around. As well as hearing the Yellow-bellied and Sombre Greenbuls, we saw them this time and we also had excellent sightings of a party of Livingstone's Flycatchers as they flitted around the canopy of the large forest trees. Other good birds seen on this walk were Yellow-breasted Apalis, Terrestrial Brownbul, Dark-backed Weaver and Collared Sunbird.

By far and above the most rewarding walk we went on was when Thomas took us down to the local village where there were lots of coconut palms and castor oil plants. We'd hardly arrived at the site when we saw a couple of Sooty Falcons, which Thomas had seen there several times before. They were initially perched and then flew past us,

**Debbie Wiggins**

allowing us a good opportunity to make a positive ID. A party of White-crested Helmet-shrikes passed by, a pair of African Hoopoes appeared and a Scarlet-chested Sunbird was looking magnificent in the late afternoon light. Not long after seeing the Sooty Falcon, we noticed another small raptor perched in a palm. We were able to get quite close and study it at leisure. It fitted the description of the African Hobby perfectly but the distribution maps told us this was wrong. However, we later found that oddly enough some of the photos in the *Roberts'* multimedia guide had been taken in Inhambane and so concluded that we must have been right! As if two special small raptors were not enough, we came across a Dickinson's Kestrel just as we were leaving the village. Pretty good going seeing three lifers in the space of an hour within less than a square kilometre! On our way back to the lodge, we passed by the nearby freshwater dam where we saw an African Pygmy-goose as well as a number of Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters on the nearby trees. Although we did see a couple more water birds on the dam the next day, the birdlife here was quite sparse due to a scarcity of fish.

The next afternoon, we couldn't resist going back to the village in the hope of some more good sightings and weren't disappointed. We had excellent sightings of another Dickinson's Kestrel with its diagnostic pale head as well as seeing another Sooty Falcon and we also saw a pair of Collared Palm-thrushes. Most interesting and impressive just as the sun was going down was a large group of twenty or so Lilac-breasted Rollers. Whether there were some gnats or other food source that they were feeding on or whether they were about to roost, we were not sure. Night was falling as we drove back to the lodge and seeing a Spotted Eagle-owl in the headlights of the car was the cherry on the cake!

We would certainly love to go back to this lovely spot and would recommend this gem of a place if ever you find yourself in the Inhambane area.

## Tail Feathers

### Bulbul Chimera

I live in Hatfield and have finally got a reasonable photo of this unusual Dark-capped Bulbul which has been living in our garden for a couple of years. My friend Joshua spotted it a couple of years ago when it was still a youngster and appeared to be completely white and we thought that it was an albino. It was and still is terribly shy, unlike the other bulbuls, hence very difficult to photograph almost as if it knows it is very conspicuous. It later developed a few grey feathers and the typical orange bum of a toppie and has a black eye, which leads me to conclude that it is not albino but a chimera. It rarely visits the birdbath that it is photographed on. It has some association with the others but I have only seen it on a couple of occasions with another, which leads me to conclude that it may not have been breeding. It sometimes disappears for days on end and I worry that it may have become victim of a catapult but it is still around. My niece when she first spotted it thought that it



was a budgie!

I was wondering if you have heard of a mutant like this before?

An interesting point to note is that, because s/he is so distinctive, and I have been trying to photograph her for so long, my ear is now able to pick up her voice letting me know when she is nearby.

**Richie Gunner** [rgunnerzim@gmail.com](mailto:rgunnerzim@gmail.com)

*First of all a comment on chimerism... this is probably not the correct term and leucism is used for this form of defective pigmentation. People often loosely used 'albinism' but without going into details an albino is again somewhat different.*

*Leucistic birds have been fairly frequently reported in Honeyguide and of course in other regional bird magazines and can occur in any family. Examples include Red-knobbed Coot, African Darter, Blacksmith Lapwing, Comb Duck, Yellow-billed Kite, Red-necked Spurfowl, Cape Turtle-dove, Speckled Mousebird, Green Wood-hoopoe, Lilac-breasted Roller, African Dusky Flycatcher, African Pipit, Southern Black Flycatcher, Kurrichane Thrush, Common Fiscal, Red-billed Quelea, Black Widowfinch, Black-throated Canary, Brimstone Canary and Yellow-fronted Canary – in addition to the Dark-capped Bulbul and others.*

**Ian Riddell**

### Appeal to Mutare and surrounding areas

I'm appealing to all Mutare eastern district birding club members to give us much support as they can in our newly formed birding club. We would like to conduct our monthly outings in the eastern highlands and we are calling former members to join in and resume our monthly outings.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> of June we conducted our first outing at Leopard Rock Hotel. There were 5 of us birding around the hotel and we came up with a total of 40 species despite the chilly weather. The Swynnerton's Robin, Silvery-cheeked Hornbill and the African Broadbill were lifers among our group members. We are to do most of our monthly outings in areas very close to town because we don't have reliable transport yet, so those members with their own transport will be of great importance to our newly formed group. Those members with second-hand binoculars and field guides may hand them over to our members. We will be sending reports to your attention for our outings. We are looking forward to meeting more members joining and support the newly formed group. Happy birding once again in the Eastern Highlands and your support is of great importance.

**Peter Magosvongwe: +263779749336**

African Geographic is organizing a 7 day  
AFRICAN PITTA Quest in Zimbabwe

7-13 December 2014

Group size: 6 people (only 2 spots left)

Price: US\$ 2,340.00

See link below for details

<http://africageographic.com/expeditions/pitta-quest/>

### New Bird Sighting

Thomas Mutombeni, whilst guiding some guests from S.A. in the sand forest on the east bank of the Save River a few weeks ago, recorded and photographed this Chestnut-fronted Helmet-shrike.

#### Appeal by David Ewbank

I have currently compiling a list of new bird species recorded in the Bulawayo & Matobo Area starting from Vernon, C.J. 1967. The Acacia savannah avifauna of Bulawayo. *South Afr. Avi. Series 43: 1-45* or the *Atlas of Southern African Birds*. If anyone has seen birds not listed there in the Byo area, I would be glad to hear from them.

Best Wishes, David.  
[rabewbank@hotmail.com](mailto:rabewbank@hotmail.com)

This is a new record for us.

July 2014 Clive Stockil  
[www.chilogorge.com](http://www.chilogorge.com)

Contributions for  
The *Babbler 120*  
October/November  
2014 may be sent to  
the editor anytime  
between now and  
14<sup>th</sup> September 2014.



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