

# THE BABBLER

Newsletter of



## BirdLife Zimbabwe

The BirdLife International Partner in Zimbabwe

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Committee	MASHONALAND (Code 04)	MATABELELAND (Code 09)
<b>Chairperson</b>	Tony Alegria 0772-438697 <a href="mailto:talegria@zol.co.zw">talegria@zol.co.zw</a> 490375 (h)	Judy Ross 0712-419335 <a href="mailto:graffikgranny@gmail.com">graffikgranny@gmail.com</a> 242943
<b>Vice Chairperson</b>	Dave Rockingham-Gill 882412 (h) <a href="mailto:rgill@zol.co.zw">rgill@zol.co.zw</a> 0774-605314	
<b>Secretary</b>	Linda Fussell 0772-364423 <a href="mailto:fussell@zol.co.zw">fussell@zol.co.zw</a> 333896 (h)	Marina Jackson 0778-021818 <a href="mailto:mjackson@gatorzw.com">mjackson@gatorzw.com</a> 230264
<b>Treasurer</b>	Debbie Wiggins 0772-252651 <a href="mailto:wigpd@yoafrica.com">wigpd@yoafrica.com</a> 882851 (h)	Peta Ditchburn 0775-940714 <a href="mailto:trenchfirepeta@gmail.com">trenchfirepeta@gmail.com</a> 244596
<b>Members</b>	James Ball 0772-310351 <a href="mailto:jameszwe@gmail.com">jameszwe@gmail.com</a> 481351 (h)	Cecilia Hubbard 0772-433733 <a href="mailto:ceilhubbard@yoafrica.com">ceilhubbard@yoafrica.com</a> 285666
<b>Raptors</b>	Andy Fussell 333896 (h) <a href="mailto:fussell@zol.co.zw">fussell@zol.co.zw</a>	John Brebner 0782-781108 <a href="mailto:brebnerj@acolchem.co.zw">brebnerj@acolchem.co.zw</a> 242634
<b>National Membership Secretary</b>	Carolyn Dennison 0772-210240 747567 (h) <a href="mailto:CarolynDennison@birdlifezimbabwe.org">CarolynDennison@birdlifezimbabwe.org</a>	
<b>Babbler Editor</b>	Fiona Greiffenberg 0772-224248 <a href="mailto:fiona6@zol.co.zw">fiona6@zol.co.zw</a> 336663 (h)	

### National Office

Office hours: Monday to Friday 8.30 – 4.30 **until further notice**

35 Clyde Road, Eastlea, P O Box RVL100, Runiville, Harare, Zimbabwe  
Telephone: 04 – 481496/490208 (& fax) Cell: 0777 – 831704/ 0714 – 327814

E-mail: [birds@zol.co.zw](mailto:birds@zol.co.zw)

Website: [www.birdlifezimbabwe.org](http://www.birdlifezimbabwe.org) also

[www.facebook.com/BirdLifeZimbabwe](https://www.facebook.com/BirdLifeZimbabwe)

**Finance/Administration Manager:**  
**Conservation Officer:**  
  
**Projects Officer:**  
**Messenger:**

Sylvia Muzavazi  
Fadzai Matsvimbo  
Innocent Magunje  
Togarasei Fakarayi  
Vengai Dengu

#### **Useful Contacts:**

Julia Pierini: [JuliaPierini@birdlifezimbabwe.org](mailto:JuliaPierini@birdlifezimbabwe.org) 0772-894562 or 303178 (h)  
Rarities Committee: Ian Riddell [gemsaf@mango.zw](mailto:gemsaf@mango.zw) 0772-117054  
Ringing Programme: BLZ Office [birds@zol.co.zw](mailto:birds@zol.co.zw) 490208; 481496  
BLZ Library: [piumosso@zol.co.zw](mailto:piumosso@zol.co.zw) 304298; 490208; 481496  
Mashonaland South: Margaret Parrock 068-22005 or her daughter Coralee 0772-739370  
Eastern Districts: Peter Gwidibira 0773-524844 [pgwidibira@gmail.com](mailto:pgwidibira@gmail.com)  
Mashonaland East Natural History Society: Chairman Peter Hadingham 04-497035  
Secretary Colin de Beer 0279-23931 [jcdb1936@gmail.com](mailto:jcdb1936@gmail.com)  
*Honeyguide* production: Julia Duprée [daliadupree@gmail.com](mailto:daliadupree@gmail.com) 09-246269

#### **SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION**

Although the BLZ membership year runs from April to March, you can join at any time and are still entitled to back copies of the *Babbler* if you wish. I am sure you would not mind any extra few dollars difference from preceding months going towards our on-going fund-raising. 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 atlasing 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
*Corporate members with inclusion on our website	200.00

\*Contact Julia Pierini [JuliaPierini@birdlifezimbabwe.org](mailto:JuliaPierini@birdlifezimbabwe.org) for info about inclusion under 'Birding in Zimbabwe' 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 informative website [www.birdlifezimbabwe.org](http://www.birdlifezimbabwe.org)

### **Branch Activities**

#### **Mashonaland Branch**

**MASHONALAND BLZ – OUTINGS December 2014 AND January 2015**

*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*

### **Birdlife (BLZ) Zimbabwe Mashonaland Calendar of Events DECEMBER 2014**

**Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2014**      **Birdlife Marlborough Vlei Walk**      Meet at 07.00

**Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2014**      **BirdLife Mukuvisi Woodlands Walk**      Meet at 06.30

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**Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2014**      **BirdLife Greystone Park Nature Reserve**      Meet at 07.00  
Halford Road off Gaydon Road.

**Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> December 2014**      **BirdLife Monavale Vlei Walk**      Meet at 06.30

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**Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> December 2014**      **No Outing**

### **Birdlife (BLZ) Zimbabwe Mashonaland Calendar of Events JANUARY 2015**

**Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2015**      **Birdlife Marlborough Vlei Walk**      Meet at 07.00

**Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> January 2015**      **BirdLife Mukuvisi Woodlands Walk**      Meet at 06.30

**Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2015**      **BirdLife Rainham Dam Vlei Walk**      Meet at 07.00

**Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> January 2015**      **BirdLife Lake Chivero Walk**      Meet at 06.30

**Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2015**      **BirdLife Monavale Vlei Walk**      Meet at 06.30

**Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> January 2015**      **Komani Estate on the Mazoe Road.**      Meet at 06.30

**Turn left before the tollgate.**

Meet at CABS, Northridge Park off Borrowdale Road at 06.30.

**Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> December 2014 17.30 for 18.00**

- 1. Birdlife Presentation on Martin Mere, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust in Lancashire, UK    by Andy Fussell**
- 2. Christmas Social/Raffle and Bring and Share Snacks**

**Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> January 2015 17.30 for 18.00**

- 1. Birdlife Mashonaland Annual General Meeting**
- 2. Bird Photography by Roger and Ali MacDonald**

**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:**

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

**Marlborough Vlei** – 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:

Richard Peek will be hosting an early morning bird walk at Stonehills Wildlife Sanctuary on Saturday, 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2014. Participants to meet outside ACOL Chemical premises, Plumtree Road, at 6.00a.m. sharp. Bring a hat, your own chair and picnic lunch.

Christmas lunch for BLZ members will be held on Sunday, 7<sup>th</sup> December 2014. The venue has to be changed, so details will be advised to members individually shortly.

### 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

### Lake Chivero net clearing Exercise - BirdLife Zimbabwe Youth

BirdLife Zimbabwe Youth members got together on a net clearing exercise of Chivero lakeshore from the Bird Sanctuary. The first exercise was on the 11<sup>th</sup> October and another on the 1<sup>st</sup> of November 2014. The best period to retrieve abandoned nets would be when the water level on the lake has gone down. A total of 13 members participated in the two outings. 15 standard rubbish bags were filled with smaller pieces of nets while larger masses of nets, tangled, could not fit into the bin liners. Environment Africa through Veronica Chapman provided bin liners, gloves and facemasks.

Fishermen leave old nets on the lakeshore either intentionally or otherwise. These abandoned nets are indiscriminate death traps to aquatic biodiversity. Nets cleared from the lake, which are largely nylon, can only be burnt according to the advice given by Environment Africa; City of Harare has also been consulted but is yet to come up with their recommendations. Lake Chivero is an Important Bird Area and a Ramsar site and as such requires on going research and monitoring by interested parties such as BirdLife Zimbabwe.



Lake Chivero net clearing exercise



..... Much of this period was spent engaging with the authorities and cultivators to prevent agricultural activities on Marlborough Vlei. All the goodwill created over the last year was instantly flushed out with the first rains and today you will find a mass of people cultivating on that wetland, other than the area adjacent to the Marlborough Sewage Works. This, despite an official Order raised on the City of Harare by EMA to halt cultivation or be fined!

Similarly, objections made by the community to the Planning Department against the proposed developments on Marlborough and Ashbrittle Vleis have been disregarded. The Marlborough Local Plan Amendment 1 is now on display at the District Office. Legal objections, not planning objections, can be made through the High Court, as this is the final plan. Two very small wetland patches remain beside the Sewage Works, with the extensive wetland systems being entirely destroyed by the proposed developments. EMA feels confident that the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process will prevent both these activities from taking place. The City Planning Department is content that EMA has been consulted throughout the plan development thus negating the need for an EIA. Actions are taking place to address these concerns for the sake of the wetlands and the Project.

Research continues to take place each month on both wetlands and according to Dr Nhiwatiwa of Biological Sciences, UZ the results are very interesting.

The wetland ecosystem brochure has been published. It is called "Where does Harare's water come from?" We are indebted to Graham van de Ruit for his advanced infographic and design skills, which have contributed to the success of this brochure. This has been well received by all. A soft copy of this brochure can be viewed on the BirdLife Zimbabwe website: [www.birdlifezimbabwe.org](http://www.birdlifezimbabwe.org) and the Monavale website: [www.monavalevlei.com](http://www.monavalevlei.com) as well as Wetland Survival Forum and Kubatana websites. The brochure has been delivered to each house in Marlborough alongside a note requesting residents to view the new plan. Julia Pierini has kindly arranged a donation from BLZ fundraising for the ecosystem brochures to be enlarged and laminated for awareness work. Grateful thanks goes to Leslee Maasdorp for putting together under this Project a photographic wetland awareness package for each City Councillor, which includes the wetland ecosystem brochure.

Bindura University Agriculture and Environment students visited Monavale Vlei (58 students) and Marlborough Vlei (78 students) to learn about the link between sewage farms and wetlands.

Regular monthly bird walks continue to take place on Monavale Vlei on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday at 6.30am and Marlborough Vlei on the 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday at 7am.

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.

**Dorothy Wakeling, Project Coordinator** [cosmo@yoafrica.com](mailto:cosmo@yoafrica.com); 0772 376506



**We have many 2015 BLZ Calendars to sell and are looking for sellers/outlets. Obtainable at BLZ Office at 35 Clyde Rd, Eastlea @ \$10 each. (Picture of cover attached).**

## RECENT REPORTS AND SIGHTINGS NATIONAL

### Africa Waterbird count, July 2014, Zimbabwe

Many people put in huge effort and some risk to get results. The count went very well with some good places visited like the Save Conservancy and 8 areas in the Kariba eastern basin. We received forms from nearly 100 sites in 20 districts, some from out of the way places where people find it difficult to get to during the rains.

The decision to take the count to mid-August was a good one, although a few incoming migrants crept in on the forms submitted. But it is the August holidays when we get birdwatchers going to some exotic places. While the average form has 18 species on it, one from Victoria Falls had 49. One of my cards, for Art Farm, had to be done over 3 days to get in the 4 hours or 5 km, from about 5 to 6 p.m. (after work) but counts should not be done thus to avoid recounts! Please don't put 'P' for present on a form. We count birds nowadays. We want a figure, even if it is a best guess.

While this report only really covers birds acceptable to Wetlands International, your reports on kingfishers, wagtails, swamp-warblers etc. will not be lost. It is envisaged that the consolidated report for January and July 2014 will appear in

*Honeyguide* at a later date so any observations, mistakes, etc., even out of time records should be brought to my attention.

The abundance terms are from *Birds of Africa* Volume 1. Very abundant = more than 100 birds seen daily; Abundant = 10-100 seen daily; Common = 1-10 seen daily; Frequent = quite often seen or heard, Uncommon = 10 or fewer seen in a year; Rare = unlikely to be seen in several years; Vagrant = only a few records exist. ***The Yellow-billed Duck seems to have been lost to this country*** but is an uncommon migrant and readers should let us know where and when it was last seen.

The January 2015 count should be done middle of January if possible. But I am happy with anything from mid-December to mid-February, particularly to take advantage of visits to out of the way place during the Christmas and New Year holidays. The country is so vast and the counters so few, that I don't worry about double counts too much. For consistency, please count your same old place in January.

*The ID booklet "Roberts Waterbirds of Zimbabwe – a field guide to 120 waterbird species" published by the BLZ in collaboration with the John Voelcker Bird Book Fund is now available. Thanks to all the work of Julia Duprée and her team, mainly in Bulawayo. It is a jewel in the crown of the BLZ.*

*Illustrations are those in Roberts; photos are by Richard Peek, maps by Guy Gibbon and Layout by Hugh Chittenden and Guy Upfold.*

*The whole project funded by Wetlands International and our BLZ fundraiser Julia Pierini.*

*It should be a good tool in the hands of our waterbird counters for a long time to come.*

#### GREBES

**Little Grebe.** Common. In July 235 birds at 28 sites. Some singles and pairs on pans in Hwange.

#### PELICANS

None reported in July but a Great White Pelican was seen at a drying pan in Mana Pools, near Mana Mouth, where 5 species of stork were congregated on 2 October 2014. DV and PC R-G

#### CORMORANTS & DARTER

**White-breasted Cormorant.** Common. 162 at 15 sites. The Wamba Dam, Mutasa had 12 birds. The Chishakwe Dam, Bikita had 22 birds and breeding.

**Reed Cormorant.** Common. 474 birds at 37 sites. 49 were at Kiplings and 37 at Hydro Bay, both at Kariba.

**African Darter.** Frequent and decreasing. 102 birds at 24 sites. It seems a huge drop in numbers since SABAP 1 (1987-1992). 5 were at Kiplings and 5 were at Hydro Bay, Kariba.

#### HERONS

**Grey Heron.** Common. 184 birds at 50 sites. Our commonest large wetland heron. Seldom are more than three seen at one place. 6 were counted at Hydro Bay, Kariba.

**Black-headed Heron.** Common. 273 birds at 28 sites. They are more visible in the cold-dry season. Our commonest large dry-land heron. A concentration of 99 at Aisleby was significant. In August they were at the height of their breeding season at the colony next to Borrowdale Village. On 20 August 20 were counted in a burnt grassland area of Art Farm. 8 White Storks were also there. Unusually one was run

down by road traffic on Harare Drive, I think directly as a result of people planting subsidised maize in the road servitude at Art Farm, and attracting rats and mice.

**Goliath Heron.** Frequent. 24 birds at 21 sites. Almost always solitary. Three were seen by S & S Long at Mandavu Dam, Hwange. None were seen in the Bulawayo Esigodini and Matobo areas.

**Purple Heron.** Frequent. 39 birds at 15 sites. 5 were recorded at Mazvikadei Dam by Rachel Bain

**Great Egret.** Common. 178 birds at 51 sites. 10 were seen at Rainham Dam and 17 at Hydro Bay by Julia Pierini.

**Black Heron.** Uncommon. 6 birds at 3 sites. 1 was at Victoria Falls, 4 were at Wamba Dam and 1 was at Hydro Bay. Richard Dennison saw another on 24 August at Carswell Farm, Zvimba. The birds at Wamba Dam would be an extension of range from the 1987-1992 South African Bird Atlas Project.

**Yellow-billed Egret.** Common. 67 birds at 18 sites. They were at 4 out of 5 sites counted by the Fussells at Mana Pools.

**Little Egret.** Common. 50 birds at 19 sites. At many places a single bird. A wonderful photo on [www.facebook.com/BirdlifeZimbabwe](http://www.facebook.com/BirdlifeZimbabwe) of one landing on a school of Hippo. 7 at the Mteri Dam, Chiredzi.

**Cattle Egret.** Abundant. 1347 birds at 36 sites. 150 at Greengrove Nature Reserve, where they tried to breed among the crush of 350 African Sacred Ibis. They were first reported breeding in about 1960 on the Arkells Farm at Glendale.

**Squacco Heron.** Frequent. 71 birds at 20 sites. Only half the birds seen in January at twice as many sites. Their stronghold is the Manyame lakes. On quiet waterweed stretches along the Zambezi.

**Rufous-bellied Heron.** Uncommon. 8 birds at 2 sites. The middle Zambezi is a stronghold. Surprisingly 3 were seen at Wamba Dam, Mutasa. Marked with a 'P' by two groups of people working between Ruckomechi Camp and Mana Mouth. I counted 5 at the Mana Pools Game Count in September, always on waterweeds, the two on the river were immature birds, and 3 just off the river in marshy areas, were single adults. It may migrate from the Okavango Swamps in Botswana.

**Green-backed Heron.** Common. 89 birds at 28 sites. Improved visibility in the cool dry season has produced a better count than January 2014, when only 15 birds were found at 7 sites.

**Black-crowned Night-heron.** Uncommon. 5 birds at 3 sites. Three were at Rainham Dam, 1 was at Borrowdale Brooke and 1 was at Chinga Pan, Save Conservancy. Those at Xanadu Farm, Goromonzi were looked for in their favourite spot but not found.

**White-backed Night-heron.** Uncommon. Two were seen on the Turgwe River by the Paolilos at Hippo Haven on 28 August 2014.

**Little Bittern.** Uncommon. Only 2 seen by the Mashonaland Bird Club outing to Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary.

## HAMERKOP & STORKS

**Hamerkop.** Common. 152 at 43 sites. Usually in small numbers and family parties; 10 were at Long Pool in Mana, 11 were at Wamba in Mutasa and 15 were at the Chegutu Sewerage Ponds. They are wherever there are frogs and the muddier the place the better.

**Yellow-billed Stork.** Common. 169 birds at 28 sites. In January they were only on the Zambezi. In July 2014, much more spread out, for example, 3 at Rainham Dam, Harare.

**African Openbill.** Common. 168 birds at 19 sites. 10 birds were seen at the Hwange Road Camp near Sinamatella, where they must have found something of interest to eat.

**White Stork.** Uncommon. Not recorded in July 2014. 8 were at a grassland fire at Art Farm, Harare, 22 August 2014. Were they too old to fly home, too young to breed at home or South African bred birds in Zimbabwe?

**Black Stork.** Uncommon. 18 birds at 6 sites. 7 were at Hippo Pools, Shamva, 4 at Save-Runde Junction, 4 at Victoria Falls and 1 at Chinga Pan, Save Valley Conservancy (SVC). A South African Taita Falcon survey of 25 km of Batoka Gorge produced no falcons, but 6 sites of Black Stork nests as a spin off (*African Birdlife* Jul/Aug 2014 pp 62-63). Are there other good places we don't know of?

**Woolly-necked Stork.** Near Threatened. Uncommon. In January 2014 - 21 birds at 2 sites, 20 being in the Mana Pools National Park, Hurungwe. In July - 20 birds at 6 sites, 4 were at Wamba Dam, Mutasa, 1 at Long Pool, Mana Pools, 3 were at Robins Dam, Bubi District and 12 were at the Save Valley at 3 sites (2 on the river and 1 on a pan).

**Saddle-billed Stork.** Frequent. 31 birds at 16 sites. 10 along the Zambezi in the Mana Pools area, 9 at the Save-Runde Junction 2 at Hildemara and 1 at Hideaway, both in Zvimba, 2 at Robins Farm, Bubi. With the idea that 800-1200 live in the Okavango Swamps, is it possible that some of these birds are east-west migrants? A pair with well grown chicks at Mucheni Pan, Mana Pools during the game count 6 September 2014.

**Marabou Stork.** Common. 316 birds at 13 sites. 113 were seen flying over Art farm, Harare from the nearby Pomona Rubbish Dump. 50 were at Carswell Farm, where there is an abattoir, 25 at Crowborough,

28 were above Victoria Falls, 36 were at Kiplings crocodile farm. Most birds were seen on the Highveld; this was not the case 40 years ago, but indicative of much more rubbish in Harare these days.

#### IBISES & SPOONBILL

**African Sacred Ibis.** Abundant. 1392 birds at 31 sites. 600 counted by Innocent Magunje at Crowborough, another 350 at Greengrove Nature Reserve where they have bred for some years now. Julia Duprée had 122 at Aisleby, Bulawayo, 49 at Kiplings, but otherwise lightly distributed along the Zambezi and the Save Valley. Abundant around Harare and common elsewhere. Often seen flying over the suburbs of Harare. Our second most common waterbird in July 2014.

**Hadedda Ibis.** Frequent. 112 birds at 14 sites. 6 at Wamba Dam, 2 at Sapi Pan, 4 at Suni Pan. More than 80 in the Save Valley Conservancy, 4 on Chishakwe Dam, 30 at the Save Runde Junction, 3 at Mteri Dam, Chiredzi, 12 at Turgwe River, and 6 at Victoria Falls.

**Glossy Ibis.** Frequent. 103 birds at 16 sites. 45 were at Aberdeen Farm, Lake Manyame and 17 on Lake Chivero both in Zvimba District. On Kariba 9 were at Kiplings, 6 at Nyanyana and 6 at Gubu River inlet. 3 were at Mteri Dam, Chiredzi District.

**African Spoonbill.** Frequent. 63 birds at 16 sites. 12 were at two sites in the Save Valley. 2 were at Mteri Dam, Chiredzi. Claw Dam Kadoma had 9, 7 were at Arcadia Dam Bindura where not seen for the past 8 years. 3 were at Robins Dam, Bubi. They were at several sites along the Zambezi at Mana especially at Long Pool. In Matabeleland 6 were at Quietwaters Dam and 6 at Upper Ncema Dam in the Umzingwane District.

#### DUCKS & GEESE

**Fulvous Duck.** Uncommon. 68 birds at 3 sites. 50 of these were at the High Acres Dam near Esigodini, 15 were at Aberdeen farm, Lake Manyame and 4 at Machanu Pan, Chiredzi.

**White-faced Duck.** Almost Abundant. 1866 birds at 26 sites. Our commonest duck by a long way, but really not so common if you rate common as sites counted, in which case the Red-billed Teal is most often seen.

**White-backed Duck.** Uncommon. 33 birds at 3 sites. 20 at Chinga Pans, SVC, 12 at Rainham Dam and 1 at Dwarf Goose Pan, Hwange. We expected to see them at Hideaway; we looked for them, and drew a blank.

**Spur-winged Goose.** Common. 303 at 13 sites. None seen around Bulawayo where I remember them well on Longridge Ranch, of which Quietwaters is a part. 60 were at Machanu Pan SVC, 9 were at the Save-Runde Junction, 9 were at Victoria Falls and 53 at Big Shumba Pan, Hwange. Richard Dennison counted 120 at Lake Manyame, but he reckoned he saw about 300. In small numbers along the Zambezi, at Mongwe they were looked for and not seen. In the drying pans at Mana Pools 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> September, several places had 13-16 birds. Comment was this was seen more than on other game counts (now 22 years on).

**Comb Duck.** Frequent but diminishing. 91 birds at 11 sites. Two small dams in Seke had 26 birds; there were 27 in the SVC and 7 above Victoria Falls. 15 were at Aisleby, with 11 around Main Camp. They seem to have declined drastically. They were once attracted to large wheat fields in large numbers, but now there is little wheat grown.

**Egyptian Goose.** Common. 676 birds at 58 sites. On site count our most common waterbird. The Save Valley had most birds. 100 were at Save Runde Junction, 97 were at Mteri Dam, 40 at Machanu Pan and 17 at Malilangwe Dam. Mongwe in Hurungwe had 30 and 23 were at Victoria Falls. 12 were at Claw Dam Kadoma and 7 on the Borrowdale Brooke Golf Course.

**African Pygmy-goose.** Uncommon. 6 birds at only 2 sites. 2 at Mteri Dam, Chiredzi and 4 at Ngezi Dam, Chegutu. May be becoming a rare bird.

**African Black Duck.** Frequent. 23 at 9 sites. In small numbers all over the country. 5 were at Connemara Lakes, Nyanga, 4 were at Wamba Dam, Mutasa, 2 were at Lower Ncema Dam and 3 at Quietwaters in the Esigodini area, 2 were at Hildemara and 3 were in Borrowdale Brooke. I looked for them in the Mukuvisi Woodlands but didn't see them in July.

**Cape Teal.** Rare. 21 birds at Aisleby were the only ones recorded.

**Red-billed Teal.** Abundant. 1374 birds at 33 sites. Abundant in the Bulawayo area. 477 at Aisleby, 135 at Cowdray Park, 99 at SAST and 153 on the High Acres Dam. Around Harare there were 71 at the Mavros Dam, 40 at Lake Manyame and 40 at Nyamungai, 26 at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary and 53 at Rainham Dam. In July seen at more places than the White-faced Duck.

**Hottentot Teal.** Frequent. 57 birds at 7 sites. Around Harare 24 at Lake Chivero, 12 at Mvurachena, 4 at Carswell. Around Bulawayo 7 were at Cowdray Park and 2 at SAST, while a few were counted in the Robins area of Hwange National Park.



**Cape Shoveler.** Uncommon. Only 12 birds at 4 sites. 4 were at Nyamungai Pan, 8 were at the 3 sewage treatment works around Bulawayo, with 5 being seen at Cowdray Park.

**Southern Pochard.** Frequent. 262 birds at 11 sites. Bulawayo is a stronghold. 205 were at Aisleby, 17 at Cowdray Park and 15 at High Acres Dam. 9 were in the Robins Dam, Bubi District. By comparison we had small numbers around Harare.

**Maccoa Duck.** Rare. 10 birds at 2 sites. Possibly our rarest duck. 7 were at Aisleby and 3 at Cowdray Park. Two were also seen at Shapi Pan Hwange on 7 May 2014.

**Mallard.** Vagrant or escapee. One female counted on the Borrowdale Brooke Golf Course by Colin Baker. Maybe the African Black Duck on the same water will mate with it.

## CRANES

**Wattled Crane.** Uncommon 6 birds at 2 sites. Not recorded in January 2014. 4 were released by the Late Rolf Hangartner and seen by him and Rolf Chenux-Repond on Cannonkopje Farm, Mtoroshanga. Two were at Driefontein Mission Dam 18 July. Later, 23 August one flock of 18 and a flock of 6 seen in the Driefontein Grasslands, some of which were young birds.

**Grey Crowned Crane.** Uncommon. 5 were at Hwange Road Camp near Sinamatella, 2 at Robins Dam Bubi, 5 were at Driefontein Mission dam 18<sup>th</sup> August. These all on official forms. On 23 August 33 were seen landing in the Driefontein Grasslands near Chinu Village. The cranes were foraging with cattle (see BLZ Facebook). On 8<sup>th</sup> May 2014, 26 were at Guvalala Pan, Hwange National Park.

## RAILS, GALLINULES & COOTS

**African Rail.** Uncommon. 5 were at Wamba Dam, Mutasa. After the count some were heard at Carswell Farm, Zvimba in late August 2014.

**Red-chested Flufftail.** Uncommon. Only recorded at Wamba Dam by Morgan Saineti.

**Buff-spotted Flufftail.** Uncommon. Only recorded once at Wamba Dam by Morgan Saineti.

**Black Crake.** Common. 290 birds at 39 sites. Especially common where there are reeds to hide in and weeds to walk on. Only a few in the pans of Hwange and along the Zambezi.

**Common Moorhen.** 250 at 26 sites. Especially common where there are reeds to hide in and pools to swim in. They don't walk and hunt as much as the Black Crake. 33 seen on the Borrowdale Brooke Golf Course.

**Jacana.** Abundant. 640 at 54 sites. Some at almost all quiet water bodies. Much less common on our rivers.

**Lesser Jacana.** Uncommon. 101 at 2 sites. 100 at Nyamungai Pan and 1 at Victoria Falls. Young African Jacanas and Lesser Jacanas are often difficult to separate.

## PAINTED-SNIPE, STILTS & AVOCET

**Greater Painted-snipie.** Uncommon. 15 at 4 sites. 9 at Chinga Pan, 3 at Chishakwe Dam in the SVC. 2 at Victoria Falls, 1 at Zebra Vlei in the Mana Pools. Dave MacFarland said he found them breeding at his camp in Mana.

**Black-winged Stilt.** Common. 168 birds at 22 sites. 30 and 2 juveniles were at Aisleby. On Kariba Nyanyana 29, Kiplings 20 and 10 at Changachireri. 12 were at Crowborough Farm, 10 were at Mandavu Dam, Hwange and 10 at Mteri Dam Chiredzi. Otherwise they seem to be in small numbers mostly on small pans in the lowveld areas.

**Pied Avocet.** Uncommon. 136 birds at 5 sites. Abundant at Aisleby, where 117 and a juvenile were recorded. 5 at Chinga Pan in the SVC. 2 were at Long Pool, Mana Pools and 110 were at the Chegutu Sewage Ponds.

## THICK-KNEES, COURSERS & PRATINCOLES

**Spotted Thick-knee.** Uncommon. One bird heard on the Chishakwe airstrip, SVC. Also recorded at the Marlborough Vlei, Harare. Some time ago the mangled remains from Art Farm were taken to Michael Irwin who said it was this bird. After the count one was reported at the Gubu River inlet, Matusadona National Park. Some years ago I found one breeding at the Mbizi Game Park, near Harare Airport. More often heard than seen.

**Water Thick-knee.** Common. 177 birds at 27 sites. None recorded in the 3 districts around Bulawayo. On many of the big rivers where they stand around well camouflaged. 24 were at Suni Pan SVC, 12 at Hippo Pools on the Mazowe River.

**Temminck's Courser.** Uncommon. 11 seen at 2 sites. 10 on Art Farm, Harare, in a harvested soya bean land, where I went out of my way to look for them. 1 was seen at Changachireri by Julia Pierini.

**Three-banded Courser.** Uncommon. 3 birds at 2 sites. 2 were at Main Camp and 1 was at Victoria Falls, both in Hwange District.

**Bronze-winged Courser.** Uncommon. 3 were recorded at Victoria Falls by Daryl Tiran.

**Collared Pratincole.** Uncommon. 145 birds at 8 sites. The biggest flock of 95 birds were at Aberdeen Farm, Lake Manyame. Smaller flocks of 13, 10, 10, 6 & 4 were on Kariba. 4 were at Machanu Pan, SVC. I have found their nests at Kariba. Have bred at Darwendale.

#### PLOVERS, SANDPIPERS, ETC.

**Long-toed Lapwing.** Uncommon. Two birds were recorded at Victoria Falls. Another group centred at Goliath Safaris marked it present in Mana Pools 12-13/8/2014. At Negashu, near Dete 4 were seen 16/5/2014 (a misidentification?).

**Blacksmith Lapwing.** Abundant. 669 birds at 59 sites. Almost always in small numbers all over the country, but probably more common on pans and dams than rivers. From 1-6 at many places in Hwange National Park.

**White-crowned Lapwing.** Common. 218 at 18 sites. Most were seen on the Zambezi, including Kariba. 19 were on the Save River with 15 at Malilangwe Dam Chiredzi.

**Crowned Lapwing.** Common. 206 birds at 18 sites. In small numbers all over the country. These dry land lapwings have to be looked for. 62 were at Main Camp, Hwange, 9 at Machanu Pan Chiredzi. 5 were in grassland south and near Long Pool, Mana. There are always good counts at Nyamungai Pan, Seke, where 20 were recorded.

**African Wattled Lapwing.** Common. 346 birds at 37 sites. 130 at Crowborough must be the largest concentration I have heard of. 24 were on the Borrowdale Brooke Golf Course, 14 at Xanadu Farm, Ruwa, 3 at Victoria Falls. Not as common in Hwange as in Harare and adjacent districts.

**Kittlitz's Plover.** Frequent. 52 birds at 7 sites. On Kariba at 3 sites, 15, 11 & 10 at Changachireri, Kiplings and Nyanyana respectively. Some were in Hwange and 6 were at Mverechena near Harare. Our birds are migrants moving south and southwest into South Africa. Tony Tree ([tony@zeane.com](mailto:tony@zeane.com)) asks that if you see one with a ring or breeding birds please contact Magda Remisiewicz at [kittlitz.plover@gmail.com](mailto:kittlitz.plover@gmail.com) (See *Babbler* 116 Feb/Mar 2014).

**African Snipe.** Uncommon. Only 5 birds seen at Art Farm by Colin Baker.

**Three-banded Plover.** Common. 115 birds at 32 sites. Definitely a bird of the water's edge and often with mud. Not as common on sand as the Kittlitz's Plover.

**White-fronted Plover.** Vulnerable. Uncommon. 26 birds at 4 sites. Most were in the Save Valley, 18 at Save Runde Junction. 2 were at Mana Pools and 1 was near Main Camp, Hwange.

**Black-tailed Godwit.** Vagrant. Seen by John & Jenny Brebner and photographed by Brent Stapelkamp in a natural rainwater pond near near Nyamandhlovu Pan, Hwange – March 2014.

**Terek Sandpiper.** Vagrant. Photographed by the Francis and Buttress families at Green Pond, Mana Pools National Park 3/12/2013. These palaeartic migrants are mostly uncommon in the cold-dry season, and most records are from early August 2014.

**Marsh Sandpiper and Green Sandpiper.** Reported from Mana Pools National Park by the Coles and Neill group with Goliath Safaris on 12-13/8/2014. *Birds of Zimbabwe* have them arriving early September. No doubt about it they are most often recorded in Southern Africa in Northern Mashonaland.

**Common Greenshank.** Uncommon in the cold-dry season, 3 were at the Save-Runde Junction and 3 at Machanu Pan. *Birds of Zimbabwe* have them arriving late July in any year. There are always some that overwinter with us.

**Wood Sandpiper.** Uncommon in the cold dry season. 20 birds at 7 sites. *Birds of Zimbabwe* have them returning in late July. Most of these records are from August.

**Common Sandpiper.** As above. 15 birds at 6 sites.

**Little Stint.** Rare in the cold dry season. 2 birds at 2 sites. *Birds of Zimbabwe* have them returning in early August. 1 was at Mteri Dam, Chiredzi in early August.

**Ruff.** Frequent. 3 birds at 2 sites. 2 birds at the Gubu River inlet, Kariba, 1 was at Wamba Dam Mutasa, and 1 at Mana Pools in August. *Birds of Zimbabwe* have them returning 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> week of August.

#### GULLS, TERNS & SKIMMER

**Grey-headed Gull.** Common. 175 birds at 8 sites. 107 were at Lake Manyame, 38 at Lake Chivero. 5 were at Victoria Falls. On Kariba there were small numbers, 3, 3, 6, 8 & 5 at Kiplings, Changachireri, Spurwing Island, Sanyati West and Nyanyana respectively. They may have been breeding somewhere.

**White-winged Tern.** Although 9 places were visited on Kariba, no one recorded them.

**African Skimmer.** Uncommon. One of the Threatened birds of Africa. 18 birds recorded at the Victoria Falls by Daryl Tiran. On 9<sup>th</sup> September some were photographed breeding on the banks of the Chobe River, Botswana, near the Zimbabwe Border.

## RAPTORS & OWLS

**Osprey.** Rare in the cold-dry season. 2 birds at 2 sites. 1 was recorded at Cannonkopje Farm by Rolf Chenaux-Repond and the late Rolf Hangartner. Another was on the Zambezi at Mana, both overwintering here, for what reason we don't know. Robin Rind took a photo of one on the Mazwikadei Dam 1/3/2014.

**African Fish-eagle.** Common. 171 bird at 54 sites. 20 were at Lake Manyame and 17 at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary. There were good numbers in the Save Valley and 7 at Ngezi Dam, Chegutu. One was breeding very late at Carswell Farm, Zvimba. *Birds of Zimbabwe* have no August breeding records. One was heard from the Mukuvisi Woodlands.

**Marsh Owl.** Uncommon. 4 birds at 3 sites. 2 were at Art Farm Harare, and 1 was at Rainham Dam, 1 was at Wamba Dam Mutasa. A bird one has to look for in the grass, but not far from any watercourse.

**African Grass-owl.** Near-threatened; not seen for some years now.

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**David Rockingham-Gill**, 4 Fernleigh Road, P O Borrowdale, or [rgill@zol.co.zw](mailto:rgill@zol.co.zw)  
Chairman, Waterbird Census for Zimbabwe

Recently got a very good sighting of a **TEREK SANDPIPER** -one individual with Greenshank, Little Stint and Marsh, Wood, Common, Curlew sandpipers. 23.10.14. Green Pool in Mana Pools. Its yellow/orange legs and very upturned bill with pinkish base being very distinctive at approx 40m distance

**James Varden**

## Mashonaland

### **BLZ Mashonaland Branch Week's Birding In Gonarezhou National Park, 27<sup>th</sup> September - 4<sup>th</sup> October 2014**

The 3 BLZ vehicles finally entered the southern end of the park near Mabalauta at about 3 p.m. and drove on to Swimuwini Lodges where we were to spend 3 nights. Having settled in we took a short walk along the raised bank of the dry Mwenezi River. Our first raptor, a pale morph Wahlberg's Eagle was sitting patiently waiting to be photographed on one of the first dry trees. Below were a few pools in the river bed containing Wood Sandpiper, Three-banded Plover and Greenshank while Hadeda Ibis flew noisily past.

After a delicious supper provided by Dee we sat and listened to Fiery-necked and Square-tailed Nightjar and Tony identified some constellations for us. The count was 45 species so far.

At 6 a.m. Sunday the 3 trucks set off in different directions. Ours followed the Mwenezi

downstream taking in the delightful viewing points and campsites on the way. At Malinangani we found a Wahlberg's Eagle on its nest and White-fronted and Carmine Bee-eaters. In the riverbed were a Saddle-billed Stork, Egyptian Goose, Greenshank and Blacksmith Lapwing. Next stop was Muvatomba Pools where Wire-tailed Swallow were nesting and Pied and Giant Kingfisher fishing. From the viewing platform at Rossi's Pool we could see Water Buck, Impala and Klipspringer, a Bateleur and a 4x4 Mazda returning from a long but productive drive to Malipati to visit a pan in the communal lands.

Later that afternoon we explored the sites upstream, Makwakwani Pools with its White-crowned Lapwing and Fish Eagle, Samalema Gorge, which was dry and quiet, and Nyavasikana. Our count that night was 130 species so far.

On Monday we had hardly left the camp when we came across 3 Painted Dog. Other vehicles saw up to 9. A fairly long drive brought us to Nyamungwe Pan, a shallow circular stretch of water surrounded by trees and bushes alive with movement and song. There were Brown-headed Parrot, Greater Blue-eared and Wattled Starling, Brown Snake-eagle, Hamerkop, Scarlet-chested Sunbird, Greater Honeyguide. On the water were Cattle Egret, Reed Cormorant and Three-banded Plover.

Continuing on our circuit we climbed through Red Hills where, when we stopped to take in the breath-taking view, a Grey Penduline Tit was spotted. Then back to camp to pick up Dee's binoculars and then back to Malinangani to pick up Debs's field guide and have lunch. The book was still there and so were 3 lionesses and 4 cubs drinking way below us. What a thrill! During lunch we saw Saddle-billed Stork, Lesser Honeyguide and Red-headed Weaver.

That night was memorable, not only for the excellent meal, but an unfortunate incident when our leader was bitten on the toe by a scorpion. Fortunately it was not the Parabuthus whose sting can be fatal but even so Tony had a very uncomfortable night and part of the next day. From then on he wore thick socks even in the shower.

Tuesday was devoted to the park south north crossing to reach our home for the next 4 days, Chipinda Pools, a journey of 100+kms on tricky roads. Where the previous day we'd seen

#### **Part 2; BLZ Mashonaland Branch Visit To Gonarezhou 27.9 – 4.10. 2014**

When we had adapted to the bucket showers and the bucket flush for the toilets we could begin to appreciate the riverside setting of the tented camp, the comforts of the tents and the bird and animal life of the riverbanks and trees. We had Paradise Flycatchers, Black-headed Oriole and Giant Kingfisher in our natal mahogany, Elephants and Waterbuck across the river and Nyala just below while it was possible for us all to gather on one stoep to share our meals and the stories of our separate journeys.

At first light Wednesday, still recovering from a full day in the 'saddle', we decided to explore the riverine both up- and down-stream from the camp. Many birds like Green Wood-hoopoe, Red-billed Oxpecker and Bearded Scrub-robin were in full nesting mode and easily observable. It was a supreme birding experience lasting 3 hours; Scimitarbill, Red-headed Weaver, Southern Black Tit, Long-billed Crombec, Green Pigeon, Brubru, Hamerkop, African Golden Oriole and many more.

In the late afternoon we all went to Masasanya Dam, some opting for the picnic site and views of Saddle-billed and Yellow-billed Stork, Spoonbill, egrets, Three-banded Plover

Wild Dog, today we saw Buffalo and Kudu. Our first stop was at Nyamungwe where we had the rare and exciting experience of watching 2 Honey Badger come down for a quick drink and also espied 3 Ground Hornbill. On the road we came across a few Coqui Francolin who gave excellent views. Another feature of the drive was regular sighting of Steenbok. Gorwe Pan was quiet except for Crowned Lapwing and Tawny Eagle. Lion Pan offered more; Lappet-faced Vulture, African Jacana, Blacksmith Lapwing, Stierling's Wren-warbler and Purple Roller. At Malugwe, almost half way, another herd of 80 Buffalo was leaving the pan as 4 Giraffe approached. Having lunched in the bush we pressed forward onto Fishans and Chinguli where we were due to cross the Runde. Our extremely competent and experienced driver forded the main river with ease but only after we'd sunk into the sand on a small tributary and been forced to deflate and re-inflate tyres and be pushed by 2 ladies. Our crossing was observed by some South Africans and 3 Spur-winged Geese.

On arriving at the tented camp at Chipinda our tour guide was informed that we couldn't stay because there was no water and although the tents were unoccupied they had no record of our booking made in April. Eventually, following diplomatic negotiations, we took up residence and a bowser of mvura was obtained from somewhere. Part 2 of Gonarezhou 2014 could begin.....

and Wood and Common Sandpiper. The other group gathered on the dam wall to watch Water Thick-knees, a colony of Lesser-masked Weaver, Pied and Malachite Kingfisher and African Fish Eagle. On a later visit we all witnessed two or three Nile Crocodile thrashing about in the dam, dividing up or fighting over what appeared to be a big Kudu male whose antlers and legs broke the surface from time to time during the titanic struggle.

It was overcast and windy Thursday morning as we set off on a long drive east towards the Save-Runde confluence to visit 2 pans and take in the Chilojo Cliffs on the return journey. On our drive south-east we spotted Bateleur and Tawny Eagle and the Spurwing were still at the Fishans crossing. Unfortunately, pressed for time, we had to bypass the summit of the Chilojos in favour of pressing on to Machaniwa Pan just south of the Runde. What a feast for our eyes! Carmine and White-fronted Bee-eater, 100s of White-faced Duck, Red-billed Teal, Comb Duck, Spurwing Goose, Saddle-billed, Woolly-necked and Openbill Stork, Hadedda, Glossy and Sacred Ibis, Goliath Heron, Yellow-billed, Cattle and Great Egret, Darter and



Little Grebe. Finally we dragged ourselves away, forded the Runde at Chamuluvati and reached Tembahata Pan, similar to the previous one and equally breath-taking for waterbird starved Mashonas. The spotting-scope was essential but even then it was difficult to identify the distant waders like Greenshank, Little Stint, Common and Wood Sandpiper and Ruff. The larger ones like Goliath Heron, African Openbill, Spoonbill and Yellow-billed Stork presented no problem.

The return journey was relatively easy but required our drivers to cross the Runde twice again at Chitove and Bopomela. The next sight to take our breath away was the Chilolo Cliffs, the pearl of the park especially when viewed from the north bank with the 60m tall East African Mahoganies in the foreground. The final long stretch of newly laid dirt but with more humps than Kew Drive was successfully completed just before dark: a hard day for the drivers with the return to Harare only 24hrs away.

Hence, as our last full day needed to contain less driving, it was decided to cover the points of interest more adjacent to the camp. The vehicle I was in took a leisurely early drive back to Masasanya Dam, on the way picking up Golden-breasted Bunting, Red-billed Quelea, Wattled Lapwing and a Crested Barbet. A fascinating spectacle was an African Hawk-eagle who was so surprised to see us that he dropped the Natal **Ken Dixon** et al.

#### **BLZ Mashonaland Branch Visit To Gonarezhou National Park 27<sup>th</sup> Sept To 4<sup>th</sup> October 2014**

As a first time visitor to this renowned park I found the size and the distance was true Africa, vast, undisturbed and natural. The week covered 2000km of travelling and a map of the area is a must to follow names of places, roads and rivers. The bush trees and shrubs were springing into new growth; a lovely time for visiting the park and as the grass cover was diminishing visibility was good.

Arriving at Mabalauta entry point along the Mwenezi River we stayed at the nearby Swimuwini lodges for 3 nights. Our daily trips included visits to Rossi pools, Muvatomba Pan and Makwakwani Pan at the Malipati business centre. The Yellow-billed Oxpecker were happily riding on the backs of the local cattle then ducked down as we passed close by. At Mamunya Pan and Mtoma Drive birds of note were: Greater Honeyguide, Carmine Bee-eater, Kori Bustard, Magpie Shrikes, African Hawk-eagle, Crowned Lapwing and Golden-tailed Woodpecker. Mr and Mrs Coqui Francolin and three chicks were spotted beside our vehicle. We stopped and watched their behaviour and listened to a chick's distress call.

At Nyamugwe pan and surrounds birds of note were: Brown-headed Parrots, Brown Snake-

Spurfowl he was eating onto a thorn bush just beside our truck. We watched him from a safe distance but he did not appear to retrieve it. From the dam we drove to the sandy beach of the Runde Gorge where we had coffee and snacks while watching various waders and Pied Wagtail, Swallow-tailed Bee-eater, Mosque, Wire-tailed and Lesser-striped Swallow. From there we struggled down to the Chivililla Falls for more snacks, Rock Martin and Southern Black Tit.

Our final sortie in the afternoon was to see the Broken Bridge over the Runde, an impressive raised concrete, pillared structure, which had sadly been breached during Cyclone Eline and will probably never be repaired. White-rumped Swift were obviously nesting beneath it. Our last bit of excitement was an old nest in the upper branches of a tall tree on the road back to camp. What at first looked to me like a rabbit turned out to be a Verreaux's Eagle which had taken over an old raptor nest.

We discovered at the final call over that we had reached our target of 200+, to be exact 210. But not only that; our week had been an unqualified success in every way and we all expressed our gratitude to the organisers for their careful planning, preparation and leadership. Our departure was well timed as we woke to guti next morning that became heavy rain all the way to Chivhu.

eagle, Bateleur, Yellow-billed Kite, 1 pair of Wahlberg's Eagle on a nest high up in a Mopane tree, White-crested Helmetshrike, African Scimitarbill, 3 Ground Hornbills, then a treat of 2 Honey Badgers slinking down to the water's edge to drink at 7.30 am.

Around Swimuwini camp Fiery-necked Nightjar and Pearl-spotted Owlet were the night callers. Early next morning a Mourning Dove was busy on her nest high up in the baobab tree by Kigelia lodge. The whole day south-north trip from Swimuwini, crossing the Rutenga railway line, then arriving at Chipinda Pools at 5pm was so varied and lovely in unspoiled territory.

We stopped for lunch in the middle of nowhere near the dry Mutowe River and were bombarded by Mopane flies, which made us pack up quickly. En route we stopped at Gorwe pan, Lion and then Malugwe campsite where 80 + Buffalo were slowly moving away from the water. A bit of excitement when fording a sandy tributary of the Runde river and our car got bogged down in the sand. The tyres were deflated and 2 strong girls helped push it out. On the other side the tyres were re-inflated and off we proceeded. Spurwing Geese were washing in the Runde

River and 20 Helmeted Guinea-fowl wandering through the shady tree areas near the Runde.

Next day at 6am a walk around the Chipinda Pools area was stunning. The morning was sunny and warm and the birds responded to the lovely day. Of note were- Cinnamon-breasted Bunting, Grey-headed Bushshrike, White-browed Scrub-robin, Cardinal Woodpecker, White-fronted Bee-eater, Red- and Yellow-billed Hornbill, Meve's Starling, Green-winged Pytilia, Grey-backed Cameroptera, Red-capped Robin-chat, Bearded Scrub Robin (with nest), Lesser-masked Weaver, Yellow-bellied Bulbul, Lesser Honeyguide, Collared Sunbird, Brown-headed Parrot, Green Pigeon, Bar-throated Apalis, Long-billed Crombec. In a large wild mango tree along the water's edge, pair of Red-billed Oxpeckers were cosily ensconced in their nest on a large dry branch. Water birds were Darter, African Fish Eagle, Great Egret, White-breasted Cormorant, Giant, Brown-hooded, Pied and Malachite Kingfishers, White-crowned Lapwing, Water Thick-knees, Grey and Green-backed Heron.

The 4p.m. afternoon trip to Masasanya Pan proved to be worthwhile: Retz's Helmetshrike, African Pipit, 1 pr Grey Heron, 1 pr Hamerkop, 1 pr Saddle-billed Stork, 2 Spoonbill, 1 pr African Fish Eagle, 8 Yellow-billed Storks, 3 Water Thick-knees sitting majestically on the dam wall, 1 pr Black-headed Heron, 1 pr Egyptian Geese, 4 Little Stints, Greenshank, Common and Wood Sandpiper, a 3-banded Plover, 1 pr African Hawk-eagle were all seen. A flock of Lesser **Margaret Parrock**

**Two visits to Mana Pools (1) for the game count at Nyamepi Camp (15 24S. 29 22E.) 3-8 September 2014, and (2) for holiday with visitors from Johannesburg at Nyati Lodge (15 43S. 29 21E.), 2-6 October 2014. The places include Mana Mouth and Long Pool, all in the same pentad. Hurungwe District.**

A Great White Pelican, obviously on passage, was photographed standing amongst 7 Yellow-billed Storks (2 Oct). Penny once saw 42 at a pan during a game count c.2004

A Black-headed Heron was on very grazed (by hippo) lawn, next to the river in front of Nyati Lodge. Yellow-billed Egrets were seen on both occasions.

Cattle Egret was in small numbers and only with elephant, hippo and buffalo. During the game count, I saw 5 Rufous-bellied Heron, but in October only 1, near BBC Camp. Mucheni Pool had 1 in September but was dry in October. When stressed the one we saw was close to baboons and elephant and sat down in water lilies, with just its face and eyes above leaf level.

Hamerkop were not common – only 2 seen in October. 1 on the Zambezi and 1 at Long Pool

When we saw the Pelican, there were 5 species of Stork within a radius of 50m. 2 x White, 1 x Openbill, 2 x Saddle-billed, 9 x Yellow-

Masked-weavers were nesting noisily on a tree growing on an anthill by the water's edge.

At the same pan we watched from a distance 3 or 4 crocodiles devouring their kudu prey, its horns and legs and the croc tails thrashing through the water.

Our three vehicles set off promptly at 6am for the Machaniwa pan near the Save/ Runde river confluence. What a haven for the water birds and baboons and hippos. The water hyacinth, muddy edges and shallow pools all conducive to much activity: 1 pr Goliath Heron, 4 Saddle-billed Stork, numerous White-faced Ducks, 4 Ground Hornbill, 21 Spur-winged Goose, 3 Spoonbill, many Yellow-billed Egret, 6 Grey Heron, 6 Great Egret, Sacred Ibis, Darter, Pied Kingfisher, Black Crake, Jacana, African Fish-eagle, were all sharing this vast open water area. We also stopped at Tembata Pan where similar birds were seen; 40 Yellow-billed Stork had favour here, also 30 Egyptian Geese.

Our day's return trip to Chipinda Pools Camp was made on the west side of the Chiljo Cliffs where we stopped and admired the setting sun against the pink hue of the famous cliffs

Our departure day on Saturday 4th October was cold, windy and wet so it was appropriate our trip was ending. A truly unique and unforgettable week in good company. Some members' encyclopaedic knowledge of trees, vegetation and animals added variety and value to the whole stay. A big thank you to all for a well organised trip.

billed and 5 Marabou.

The White Stork had landed and were on passage somewhere else, the two Saddle-billed were walking in the bush some way from the waters edge, the Marabou were standing around, well fed at this drying pan near Mana mouth. There may have been 4 pairs of Saddlebill and a similar number of Openbills, neither was common. During that time we probably only saw 6 Goliath Heron.

All the Ibises were getting commoner, Hadedah were noisy and closely there were a group of 7, Glossies were next in pairs and singles and Sacred were only seen 3 times as singles. In that group Spoonbill were common and could be seen at most pans, but not on the river so much.

In October 4 Red-billed Teal were on Long Pool. During September 2 Knobbies were on the river at the end of our transect near BBC Camp. Also in September Spur-winged Geese were all over the place on river and pans. Maybe more

than I have ever seen before, with numbers between 5 and 16.

By the 3<sup>rd</sup> September, the Common, Wood and Marsh Sandpipers, plus Greenshank & Ruff were there. In October a few, up to 6 Little Stints had arrived.

Ken & Lyn Forbes were dying to see skimmer. We found 7 at the waters edge between 3 Spoonbill at Long Pool, while three of them hunted.

The pan was far less choppy than the river. To see them one needs to get into position early in the morning. Our flying birds allowed close

### **Dave Rockingham Gill**

\*Suni (*Neotragus moschatus*) is a very small species of antelope.

### **Monavale Vlei Report**

The rainy season is with us and the Vlei is looking wonderful. The beautiful landscape is characterised by lush green grasses and pools dotted here and there. Birding has been amazing with the following species seen or heard and they can be expected this time of the season:

European Bee-eaters, Diderick's Cuckoo, Lesser Striped Swallow, Barn Swallow, Willow Warbler, Eurasian Hobby, Steppe Buzzard, Red-chested Cuckoo, Levaillant's Cuckoo, Abdim's Stork, Cuckoo Finch, Red-backed Shrike, African Black Duck, African Cuckoo Hawk, Purple Heron, Black Sparrowhawk, Wahlberg's Eagle, Klaas's Cuckoo, Marsh Owl, White-throated Swallow, African Stonechat, Spotted Flycatcher, Thick-billed Weaver, White-winged Widowbird, Yellow-fronted Canary, Brimstone Canary and many more. Our 19<sup>th</sup> October 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday walk yielded 57 bird species with 14 birders. The 16<sup>th</sup>

**The Monavale Indigenous Tree Nursery** has moved next door to 1 Fenella Drive and has many very reasonably priced trees for sale from US\$3 up to US\$15. Call Wilson Maher 0779 260 834 or Jimmy Muropa for further information.

**The Monavale Vlei 2015** A2 single sheet calendar is now available at US2 each. It is a gorgeous calendar. Photos by Nick Hart, Jimmy Muropa and Philippa Marett.

Dorothy Wakeling, Monavale Vlei Programme Manager

[cosmo@yoafrica.com](mailto:cosmo@yoafrica.com) [www.monavalevlei.com](http://www.monavalevlei.com) Monavale Facebook Page.

Dorothy Wakeling and an international bird guide were lucky enough to spot a Black Coucal on Monavale vlei on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2014

approach, which was good for photography. Stilts were fairly common everywhere, and I found 1 Avocet at Long Pool. It was there two years ago (29-30 September 2012, see Babbler 110.) The *Birds of Zambia* have not atlased them in this square before. About 6 years ago I once circled Long Pool, and there were no avocet then.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> October there was a single Temminck's Courser on the Mana Pools Airstrip (15 46S. 29 22E.). Nearby in the Combretum Jesse we found 12 feeding Crested Guineafowl being followed by 1 Eastern Nicator. It is near here that I once saw Livingstone's Suni\*.

November walk had 15 birders and a total of 71 bird species seen or heard. Two Vlei duikers are constantly being sighted and fresh bush pig spoors noted. Scrub Hares have been flushed and tortoises seen.

A number of university students from different institutions have been visiting the Vlei for the various projects. University groups have also visited. The COSMO Kids Club had the pleasure of visiting Imire Game Park near Marondera and what an experience it was for them. We are looking forward to the arrival of our Vlei specials as the season progresses.

**Jimmy Muropa** Monavale Vlei Scout  
0772 772 771

### **BLZ Mashonaland Branch: Visit To 'Kopje Tops', Mavhuradonha 24<sup>th</sup> To 27<sup>th</sup> October 2014**

17 BLZ members, a melange of old timers and first-timers, took part in our latest 'Week's Outing' to this remote and beautiful venue in the Mavhuradonha Mountains on the Zambezi escarpment between Mvurwi and Guruve, or Sipolilo as some remembered it. We were the first party to test the refurbished accommodation and facilities of this photographic and hunting camp and our verdict was very positive; attractive, comfortable chalets and excellent food provided

by Tony and Linda and cooked by Pension and Rose and enjoyed by all of us in the central dining area. An additional attraction was the thatched lookout and relaxation post on top of a small kopje reached by rambling stone steps.

Our first sortie was on Friday afternoon when 2 groups walked along the river Tingwa, one up-, and the other down-stream. Few birds except the ubiquitous Black-headed Oriole, Senegal Coucal and Kurrichane Thrush and lots of Yellow-

throated Petronia. Our guide saw a Shelley's Francolin and others later heard it but it evaded most of us. Of interest along the river were the Raffia Palms, a speciality of the area.

The count at our braai was a meagre 43 species but by Saturday morning we had added Fiery-necked and Rufous-cheeked Nightjar and African Scops-owl and Southern White-faced Scops-owl (47). This was followed by a stargazing session orchestrated by our leader.

As we drank our tea/coffee and dunked our rusks at 6 a.m. next morning we were aware of Yellow-throated Longclaw, Red-collared Widowbird, Black-crowned Tchagra, Tropical Boubou and Dark-capped Bulbul in the grassland nearby. The 2 groups reversed the direction of the riverside walks and our party also took in a visit to a burial cave on a kopje and some rock paintings. Birds were still hard to find, our best being a Boulder Chat near the cave and a Wahlberg's Eagle in the vicinity of its nest. European Bee-eater called overhead and an African Pied Wagtail flew off down the river. The only sunbirds were Amethyst and weavers were all Red-headed, the lone animal a Grysbok.

A hearty brunch was very welcome at 1030 after which some rested, some birded and others relaxed at the lookout shelter. Birding in camp was disappointing despite the constant watering. Blue Waxbill, Black-crowned Tchagra, a Red-throated Twinspot, Miombo Double-collared Sunbird and Emerald-spotted Wood-dove were among the species recorded there.

After much discussion it was resolved that most of us would visit the Bat Cave about 15kms drive or 2 hours walk away. 4 brave or, should I say, foolhardy individuals chose to join Blessing on the walk while the 4x4 enthusiasts took the bumpy road. The drive took 70 minutes and was followed by a quite demanding walk down to the river. The bat cave was not easily accessible but we could all 'hear' the smell. Nesbert and Tony volunteered to climb up to the cave and shine torches around to drive out the bats for our delectation. Sad to relate, the bats failed to perform, only moving deeper into the dark interior so after a reasonable wait we decide to return to the vehicles. All this time we had expected the walkers to join us but even Nesbert's piercing whistle failed to elicit a response. When 3½ hours from their setting out time had elapsed we concluded that for some reason or another they had gone back to camp and we set off to join them, leaving behind notes to tell them what we had done. But the camp was deserted except for the lame and lazy so Tony and Jenny had to jump back in their trucks for the rescue mission. What a relief to see lights appear almost 2 hours later

and all 5 prodigals emerging from the trucks. Supper was a joyous reunion, as you may imagine.

Sunday dawned cool, heavily overcast and windy, not ideal birding weather. Our walk to the source of the Tingwa was at first brisk and bird-less but led us through a beautiful steep-side gorge on to more open land, still bird-less except for a party of Red-collared Widowbirds. On the granite outcrops the flowers attracted our attention and also the sun at last peeped out. The Wahlberg's flew over and African Paradise-flycatcher, White-crested Helmetshrike and Amethyst Sunbirds were spotted as we made our way back for brunch. Those who'd remained behind had been lucky enough to see an African Pygmy-kingfisher in a dilapidated house being refurbished for the new leaseholders.

In the afternoon most of us drove to Elephant Gorge, pausing on the way to make the steep climb to an ancient cave which contained many pots and other artefacts, a place of refuge in less peaceful times. (Dead) Elephant Gorge was an attractive rocky spot on the river, which offered us possibly the best birding of the weekend so far, and an excellent location for sundowners. There were Rock Martin, a putative Half-collared Kingfisher, Red-winged Starling; the Wahlberg's again, Yellow-throated Petronia, Miombo Double-collared Sunbird and Yellow-fronted Canary among others.

Our final morning was fine and sunny and teased out the shier birds, which had so far eluded us. On our circular walk we came across a party of at least 20 species in the riverine woodland; Chinspot Batis, Yellow Bishop, Arrow-marked Babbler, African Green-pigeon, Southern Hyliota, Red-faced Cisticola, Willow Warbler, Red-headed Weaver, a baby African Wood-owl which had fallen out of the nest, Tawny-flanked Prinia, African Grey Hornbill, Cardinal Woodpecker, Bar-throated Apalis, Southern Black Tit, White-browed Robin-chat and White-browed Scrub-robin, Flappet Lark, Emerald-spotted Wood-dove, Green-capped Eremomela and Grey-backed Cameroptera.

Brunch was a lively, sociable event; our final count was 112 species with 10 new added on that day and the whole weekend had turned out cheaper than expected. Socially it had been a great success and there was an enthusiastic response to suggestions of future such outings. All the staff gathered to be warmly thanked for their hard work and Tony Alegria and Linda Fussell for organising the long weekend.

**Ken Dixon**

## **Some Mavhuradonha Highlights and discussion**





*Lanner Falcon charging the vehicles  
Cheeseman*



*Lanner Falcon Dust bath*

*Photo Annie*



*Baby African Wood-owl Photo*



*Rock Paintings photos James Ball*

***Here are some pictures from James Ball. The nightjar photos provide an opportunity to study and discuss the id of these birds.***

Rolf and I thought it was a European but having returned home and carefully checked the literature I have found 2 problems with this identification!

a) The arrival date would be too early,  
and b) Robert's 7 says that European is difficult to distinguish from the Rufous- cheeked but lacks the rufous collar and is slightly larger. I noticed a faint rufous collar! It would be interesting and helpful to examine the photos carefully!

***The bird was flushed from the ground amongst light leaf litter and short grass on the side of a hill in light woodland. It flew a short distance before perching on the top of a broken off bare trunk of a dead tree where it sat quite boldly.***

***I will start off by saying it is probably not a male Pennant –winged because it had no pennants!***

***Is the Nightjar or is it not a Rufous- cheeked, or a Mozambique, or a Fiery-necked, or a European or a Freckled Nightjar?***

***What are the clues to its identification?***

I sent the photos of the nightjar to Des Jackson a world expert on Nightjars. He worked at the Queen Victoria Museum many years ago and did research on Nightjars in this country. He is a friend of Rolf and now lives in Australia.

I find his comments very informative and have learned a bit! Newman's illustration poor and Robert's has none! Colour of scapulars interesting. can we sometime have a look at museum specimens?

We were all mistaken apart from Alex I believe! Any more photos of nightjars at rest?

**Geoff Lowe**



*Nightjar - still to be identified.*





Dear Geoff,

*The European Nightjar occurs in Zimbabwe from about mid-November to mid-March, so 27 October is indeed rather early for this species. It is, however, not too early for the Rufous-cheeked Nightjar, which occurs there from late August to late April, or the Pennant-winged Nightjar, which occurs there from mid-September to early March.*

*The two photos show that the bird you saw was an adult female Pennant-winged Nightjar, a species that readily perches on a branch when flushed from the ground. The habitat sounds right and the lack of wing and tail patches in flight (according to Rolf), along with the clear rufous collar and pinkish bar along the scapulars, are all diagnostic features. The size of the bird would also have been a help in the field ... Rufous-cheeked and Fiery-necked both being a lot smaller ... but then size is always relative and difficult to judge until one has seen and handled a lot of these birds. The European is also a large Nightjar ... but one which does indeed lack a collar.*

*Photos usually provide sufficient evidence for settling nightjar identification issues ... so do not hesitate to send me any more that you may take.*

Best wishes

Des

### **MENHS outing to Kyle Game Park - 16 - 20 October 2014**

Fifteen members of the Marondera Birding Group arrived at Kyle National Park at 1.30pm after a comfortable 5½hour drive via Gutu. There was a light drizzle when we checked in at the entrance gate, which helped to settle the dust, but there was no further rain and the skies remained clear for the rest of our 5-day stay. It was rather chilly and windy on Friday morning, but the afternoons and evenings were warm and we enjoyed our sundowners and spectacular views from the kopje summit above the lodges

The lodges are fully furnished and offered all the convenient amenities such as stoves, fridges, hot water, linen and comfortable beds. Parks staff were friendly and helpful, especially Chipso the housekeeper and her team who serviced the lodges. It was a pleasure to arrive back after our early morning birding outings each day to find the dishes washed, the beds made and the rooms clean and tidy. The electricity supply is normally good as Kyle National Park is connected to the Masvingo water pumping station but we did experience a couple of breaks in the supply. It must also be mentioned that maintenance is required to some of the electrical wiring at the lodges

The road network in the Park is reasonably good and much of the birding was done from the back of pick-ups, as walking in the Park is prohibited. We were accompanied by a parks game scout one morning and did quite a lot of mileage visiting different areas, and eventually ended up at Popoteke Gorge picnic site where we were able to walk along the banks of the river. It is obvious that much work has been done in the Park to provide good facilities for guests to enjoy their visit, but some picnic sites require repairs and maintenance,

**Colin de Beer**

Kyle Dam is 37% full and the game and bird viewing on the vast stretches of lakeshore was superb. We saw 19 different species of animals, including, buffalo, giraffe, wildebeest, impala, bushbuck, eland, klipspringer, duiker, warthog and 5 single white rhinos [one which looked very pregnant] as well as a mother and her calf. Apart from the birding drives on vehicles, walking in the large areas of varied habitats around the lodges, admin buildings and camping grounds provided rewarding birding.

We recorded 139 species of birds including Goliath Heron; Saddle-billed Stork; Secretarybird; White-backed Vulture; Verreaux's, Long-crested, Martial, Black-chested Snake and African Fish Eagles; common Buzzard; Gabar Goshawk; African Harrier-hawk; Osprey; Spotted Thick-knee; African and Red-chested Cuckoo; Green Wood-hoopoe; Trumpeter, Crowned and Grey Hornbills; Cardinal, Golden-tailed and Bearded Woodpecker; Chestnut-backed Sparrowlark; Ashy, Miombo and Southern Black Tits; Yellow-bellied Greenbul; Capped Wheatear; White-throated Robin-Chat; Grey-backed Camaroptera; Tree Pipit; Magpie Shrike; Black-crowned and Brown-crowned Tchagra; Southern White-crowned Shrike; Miombo Double-collared, Variable, White-bellied, Scarlet-chested and Amethyst Sunbirds; Golden Weaver; Yellow Bishop; Green-winged Pytilia; Black-throated Canary; Golden and Cinnamon-breasted Bunting.

Our stay was most enjoyable and Kyle National Park is well worth a visit.

We thank the ladies sincerely for the work they do before and at the camp who, as usual, provide such delicious meals each day.

## Matabeleland

### Tshabalala Sanctuary - 27 September

Only five members appeared in the morning, namely Judy Ross, Julia Duprée, the Brebners and myself. It seems such a pity that more bodies did not attend as this sanctuary is known for its birdlife, and even if one is not into birds, the odd animal does appear, (in our case initially we saw one warthog, and one male adult impala and then in the latter part of the morning on the north eastern side of the park we saw 9 zebra and 7 wildebeest at quite close range!) It is also one of the most peaceful environments even though it is right on the boundary of Bulawayo. It is also fun at times trying to identify the birds, (especially when I am doing it; not quite as bad as I was. Initially I thought a Common House-martin was a House Sparrow!) We all have to start somewhere though.

As for the morning itself, it was warm initially. As the day progressed it became stiflingly hot, and the birds were certainly not as profuse as earlier. We departed at approximately 11am before the heat became unbearable.

We initially started heading towards the windmill part of the sanctuary where we heard and saw many Marico Flycatchers, they were seen throughout the Sanctuary, as well as several varieties of noisy sunbirds. We had a pleasant half hour or so at the pan, watching the 3 different Waxbills, namely the Blue, the Black-faced and the Violet-eared enjoying themselves in the water, alongside the Jameson's Firefinches, the Green-winged Pytilia, which kept on making its presence known as well as the Golden-breasted Buntings. They are all little characters in so many ways. We also heard the monotonous tones, (in my opinion), of the Lesser Honeyguide, in a tree nearby.

By the time we drove round to the other side of the sanctuary where the very rustic ablutions were, the birds were obviously feeling the heat and not much was observed or heard.

**Cindy Sellick**

### Whitestone Junior School – 18 October

A disappointing three members joined us for this walk. It was a day with clear blue skies and sunshine but slightly chilly for an October morning! We parked under a large *Ficus glumosa* tree, where we saw the resident Spotted Eagle-owl. We wandered up to see the natural pool situated in some rocks and indigenous trees behind the school hall in the hopes that we would see Crimson-breasted Shrike, which is depicted on the school emblem. Alas, we unfortunately did not see them. We continued through the trees, towards the classroom blocks and sat on a bench in the quadrangle watching for birds and were

The highlight on the way back to the entrance, however, was a Sabota Lark, which sat on one particular scrubby tree for several minutes whilst Julia took several photographs rapidly, before it decided it was bored with us and flew off.

As for the vegetation at this dry time of the year, it is always delightful seeing the colourful violet shades of the flowering *Bolusanthus speciosus* (tree-wisteria), alongside the brilliant yellow flowers of the various *Acacias*.

In all it was a reasonably successful excursion. We saw 47 species of birds, (if we count the possible sighting of the Steppe Eagle). Unfortunately there were no migrant birds to speak of, (unless one counts the possible sighting of the Steppe Eagle), our list is as follows: -

Yellow-bellied Greenbul, Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill, Crimson-breasted Shrike, Magpie Shrike, White-browed Sparrow-weaver, Pied Crow, Arrow-marked Babbler, African Wood-hoopoe, Swainson's Spurfowl, Steppe Eagle, Tropical Boubou, Laughing Dove, Marico Flycatcher, Tawny-flanked Prinia, Chestnut-vented Tit-babbler, Southern White-crowned Shrike, Blue Waxbill, African Palm-swift, Grey Go-away-bird, Marico Sunbird, Scarlet-chested Sunbird, Pearl-spotted Owlet, Green-winged Pytilia, Brown-crowned Tchagra, Red-billed Hornbill, Fork-tailed Drongo, Crested Barbet, Rattling Cisticola, Acacia Pied Barbet, White-browed Scrub-robin, Black-backed Puffback, Sabota Lark, Black-chested Snake-eagle, Crowned Lapwing, African Pipit, Lesser Striped Swallow, Cape Turtle Dove, Jameson's Firefinch, Golden-breasted Bunting, Lesser Honeyguide, Green Wood-hoopoe, Chinspot Batis, Green-backed Camaroptera, Grey-backed Camaroptera, Black-faced Waxbill, Black-shouldered Kite, Emerald-spotted Wood-dove and Violet-eared Waxbill.

entertained by the squirrels chasing each other over the classroom roofs! We then made our way towards the playing fields sticking mainly to the areas of indigenous trees.

After a leisurely three hours, we headed back to our vehicles for tea where the Pied Crows were mobbing the quite unperturbed owl! Other birds seen were African Wood-hoopoe, Crested Barbet, Marico Sunbird, White-throated Robin-chat, Dark-capped Bulbul, Violet-backed Starling, Laughing Dove, Grey-headed Bush-shrike, Arrow-marked Babbler, Black-collared Barbet, Red-faced Mousebird, Yellow-bellied Greenbul, Black-faced



Waxbill, African Yellow White-eye, Black-backed Puffback, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird, Southern Masked-weaver, Brown-hooded Kingfisher, Cape Glossy Starling, Kurrichane Thrush, Blue Waxbill, Red-eyed Dove, Marico Flycatcher and African **Peta Ditchburn**

Paradise-flycatcher. We also head the Chinspot Batis, Emerald-spotted Wood-dove, Orange-breasted Bush-shrike and Lesser Honeyguide. Thank you to the Head of Whitestone School for allowing us to wander freely over the grounds.

## **Mashonaland South**

**Hove Farm Kadoma. Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> September 2014**

Birders: Margaret Parrock, Sigrid Stone, Ruth Paice and Lynne Edwards.

It was a very hot hazy day with temperatures of 36 degrees plus.

The dairy farm is situated 8km from Kadoma on the Harare road and 3km inland over the railway line.

Vegetation is open grassland (cut for hay) and mixed dry woodland of acacia, mopane, msasa, and mnondo with new sprig growth appearing so the birds are feeding everywhere.

*The following birds were confirmed:*

White-browed Sparrow-weaver

Lilac-breasted Roller

Flock Red-billed Quelea

Cattle Egret

Black-collared Barbet

Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird

African Grey Hornbill

Fork-tailed Drongo

Cape Turtle-dove

Emerald-spotted Wood-dove

Grey-headed Bush-shrike

Black-backed Puffback

Numerous Scarlet-chested and White-bellied Sunbirds feeding happily on different trees.

Numerous Southern Masked-weaver and Village Weavers busy nest building on the palm trees by the homestead.

Orange-breasted Bush-shrike

White-crested Helmetshrike

Tropical Boubou

Southern Black Flycatcher

Dark-capped Bulbul

Chin-spot Batis

Yellow-throated Longclaw

Brown-hooded Kingfisher

1 pair Green Wood-hoopoe

1 pair Common Scimitarbill

Red-faced Mousebird

Black-crowned Tchagra

A very nice 2 hour walk, but we four ladies were very happy to return to base for refreshments.

**Margaret Parrock**

## **Tail Feathers**

### **Common Ringed Plovers**

On 9<sup>th</sup> November 2014 Richard Dennison and the BLZ Mashonaland team, went to Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary, and saw 6 Common Ringed Plovers.

These are rare birds in this country. If you want to see them, go there now.

There were also 6 migrant wader species, 7 heron species, 20 Avocets and 50 Kittlitz's Plovers.

### **Abdim's Stork**

10 minutes ago, Ken Ambler called me to advise, that the regular visitor "Sam" or "Samantha" the Abdim's Stork had arrived and was sitting on the roof at the rear of the property. Ambler had prepared for his arrival and gave him his pet food. He was ravenous!!

Sam has arrived on exactly the 5<sup>th</sup> of November at the same address in Chadcombe, Harare, for the last four years. He has been visiting that house for over 35 years from when Karen was a little girl and she went outside to feed a big black bird! Karen is now a mother of 2 university students in Oz!

**Aren't birds amazing!**

### **Angola Pitta**

On the morning of 25 November at about 6 am I was checking my moth trap to see if anything interesting has turned up overnight. As I approached the trap I noticed an African Pitta feeding on flying ants that had been attracted to the trap and were now swarming on the ground around the trap. After a few seconds the Pitta flew off. This is the first record of a Pitta from my Harare property in the 35 years that I have been in residence. There have been the occasional Pitta sighting from Harare in past years, mainly in October, November and December when they pass through on their southerly migration.

**Rhett Butler**, 25 Wavell Road, Highlands, Harare`

### Garden plants for birds

*Dianella* is great for fruit-eating birds. There are a number of plants around the garden, which each year attract Thick-billed Weavers to the garden. It's all a bit much for the cat, especially once they finish the fruit further along the wall and come right outside my front door! Dark-capped Bulbuls, Blue Waxbills, Thick-billed Weavers and Bronze Mannikins are after the harvest at the moment, but today the mannikins took fright and one crashed into the window. Once I rescued the mannikin from the cat, I left it on a garden chair for a few minutes until it had recovered sufficiently to fly away.

I.C. Riddell. Email: [gemsaf@mango.zw](mailto:gemsaf@mango.zw)

*Dianella* photo Ian Riddell



*Thick-billed Weaver* photo  
Ian Riddell

### **In my Mandara garden:**

On two occasions during October, two groups of 10+ Thick-billed Weavers were observed feeding on the 'flowers' that precede the formation of new cones on Pine trees. On different days, groups of 5-6 birds were seen feeding off the ground.

The resident Little Sparrowhawks spent most of October taking turns to sit on egg(s) in their nest 20m up in a Pine tree. Not sure if this is the same pair of adults that hatched two youngsters last year, or if it is one or both of those youngsters. They look like smaller birds. By the second week of November, one nestling has been seen. The parents have to contend with marauding Vervet Monkeys, Pied Crows and potential attacks from a pair of local Lizard Buzzards.

October also witnessed the arrival of Red-chested Cuckoos and for me, the rare sighting of a Black Cuckooshrike.

Lanner Falcons seen overhead fairly often, intermingling with European Bee-eaters and Swifts. Abdim's Storks have arrived and seem disappointed by the lack of green pastures in the immediate area. Rainfall has been very patchy to date.

At Brookfield, the resident pair of Long-crested Eagles has produced a nestling, although in a different nesting site. This nest can clearly be seen from across the Enterprise Rd, high up in a Eucalyptus tree.

**James Ball**

## **Wanted!**

Volunteer to co-ordinate and curate the many years of past Special Species Survey cards, ideally to also digitalise and bring it all up to date.

Any interested parties to please contact Tony Wood on +263 772 224 224 or

[tonywood@birdlifezimbabwe.org](mailto:tonywood@birdlifezimbabwe.org)

[www.birdingzimbabwe.com](http://www.birdingzimbabwe.com)

Replies via [tonyZW@gmail.com](mailto:tonyZW@gmail.com) may reach me sooner

**Contributions for *The Babbler* 122 February 2015 /March 2015 may be sent to the editor anytime between now and 14<sup>th</sup> January 2015.**