

# THE BABBLER

Newsletter of



## BirdLife Zimbabwe

The BirdLife International Partner in Zimbabwe

ISSUE # 122 – February /March 2015

Committee	MASHONALAND (Code 04)	MATABELELAND (Code 09)
<b>Chairperson</b>	Tony Alegria 0772-438697 <a href="mailto:t Alegria@zol.co.zw">t Alegria@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: Special Species**  
**Environmental Education**  
**In charge of IBA/KBA's**  
**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. Even if you don't attend meetings and outings, your membership is really important and supports our goal to protect biodiversity and conserve birds and their habitats through education, lobbying decision-makers and interaction with international organisations.

In addition, your involvement with data collection through atlassing and submission of records is invaluable. As a member you get the newsletter, *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.

**Please note:** Council agreed not to increase the fees for the 4<sup>th</sup> year. However a number of our members prefer their newsletter, *Babbler*, in printed form and it was decided those members be requested to pay an extra \$5 per year to assist with the costs of printing and distribution.

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 our informative website [www.birdlifezimbabwe.org](http://www.birdlifezimbabwe.org)

## Special Notices

**IMPORTANT – We need to plan the way forward for BirdLife Zimbabwe over the next 5 years. To this end we are required to hold a **Strategic Planning Meeting** to discuss our objectives and activities. We need the participation of YOU, the members, to develop this 5-year plan. The meeting will be held on Saturday 21 March 2015. Please put this date in your diary – details to follow.**

**BirdLife Zimbabwe** is holding their AGM in Victoria Falls on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> June 2015. The theme will be 'Vultures'. Details will follow in due course but we aim to have interesting talks in the morning by local and visiting birders, open to everyone, with the AGM in the afternoon. There will be opportunities to socialise and bird, so come and support BirdLife and enjoy a few days somewhere different. Book your accommodation early, especially if you would like to stay in the national park lodges or Vic Falls rest camp.

BLZ is entering a team the next day for the **Victoria Falls Marathon**. This consists of a full 42.2 km marathon race, 21.2 km half-marathon run and a 7.5 km fun run. The marathon race route goes from the Ilala Lodge entrance, crosses over the Vic Falls Bridge and briefly into Zambia, offering some of the most spectacular scenery in Africa. The route continues through the Zambezi National Park with some great views of the river – and chances of seeing some wildlife – and ends at the Victoria Falls primary school. There are plenty of water points and cooling-down sections along the way. BLZ is appealing to its sporty members to take part in this event. You don't have to do the marathon – come and join in the fun run and raise awareness and help raise funds for birdlife conservation!

Please contact Julia Pierini 0772-894562 or e-mail her on [juliapierini@birdlifezimbabwe.org](mailto:juliapierini@birdlifezimbabwe.org)

**BirdLife South Africa** is holding their AGM – **Flock in Jozi 2015** from 20-22 March 2015. The venue is at Benvenuto Hotel and Conference Centre in Kelland, Johannesburg, on Saturday 21 March. The AGM is from 16h00-18h00 and includes the presentation of the Austin Roberts Memorial Medal Award 2015. This will be followed by a cocktail party with guest speaker, Ashley Smith, who is the Executive Life President of Hawk Conservancy (UK).

There is no charge to attend the AGM, but the full amount due for the Cocktail Party (R200 per person) must be paid to confirm attendance. More information as well as AGM documentation is available for download from BirdLife South Africa's website at <http://www.birdlife.org.za/events/flock>

## Branch Activities

### Mashonaland Branch

#### MASHONALAND BLZ – OUTINGS February 2015 March 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*

#### Calendar of Events February 2015

Sunday 1 <sup>st</sup> February 2015	Mukuvisi Woodlands Walk	Meet at 06.30 a.m.
Saturday 7 <sup>th</sup> February 2015	Marlborough Vlei Walk Bring your "Wellies"	Meet at 07.00 a.m.
Sunday 8 <sup>th</sup> February 2015	NO OUTING	
Saturday 14 <sup>th</sup> February 2015	Ballantyne Park Walk Meet at Ballantyne Park Car Park opposite the Ballantyne Shops on Wellburn Road. Bring your "Wellies".	Meet at 07.00 a.m.
Sunday 15 <sup>th</sup> February 2015	Monavale Vlei Walk	Meet at 06.30 a.m.
	Meet at the platform on the BS Leon side of Fenella Drive. Bring your "Wellies".	
Thursday 19 <sup>th</sup> February 2015	Presentation on BLZ outing to Kopje Tops Lodge, Mavuradonha by James Ball	5.30 p.m. for 6.00 p.m.
	Meet at Avondale Sports Club, Brighton Road, Avondale. There is a cash bar and a guard.	
Sunday 22 <sup>nd</sup> February 2015	Haka Park, Cleveland Dam	Meet at 06.30 a.m.
	Meet at entrance gate boom at Haka Park off Mutare Road, Msasa, opposite TM Warehouse (Old Jagers warehouse).	

## Calendar of Events March 2015

Sunday 1 <sup>st</sup> March 2015	Mukuvisi Woodlands Walk	Meet at 06.30 a.m.
Saturday 7 <sup>th</sup> March 2015	Marlborough Vlei Walk	Meet at 07.00 a.m.
Sunday 8 <sup>th</sup> March 2015	NO OUTING	
Saturday 14 <sup>th</sup> March 2015	Harare Botanic Gardens	Meet at 07.00 a.m.
	Meet in the car park at Botanic Garden off Fifth Street.	
Sunday 15 <sup>th</sup> March 2015	Monavale Vlei Walk	Meet at 06.30 a.m.
Thursday 19 <sup>th</sup> March 2015	Presentation – Baobabs and Birds By Claire Douie	5.30 p.m. for 6.00 p.m.
	Meet at Avondale Sports Club, Brighton Road, Avondale.	
Sunday 22 <sup>nd</sup> March 2015	Outing to Barwick Village, Mutorashanga	Meet at 06.30 a.m.
	Meet in the car park at CABS Northridge Park, Borrowdale at 6.30 a.m. prompt. This venue is approx. 1 hour 20 mins out of town.	

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 Woodlands: “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

## Matabeleland Branch

### Forthcoming Events:

1) There will be a full days outing to Falcon College on Saturday, 14<sup>th</sup> February. Birders to meet at Ascot Shopping Centre at 8.00 a.m. and then travel together to the home of Gordon and Heather MacDonald at Falcon for tea (please bring a tea basket). After tea, there will be a bird walk, followed by a bring-your-own- braai lunch at one of the picnic sites (please bring cutlery and crockery etc. – braai fire will be provided).

2) The BLZ Matabeleland Branch AGM will be held on Saturday, 28<sup>th</sup> February, at 10.00 a.m. for 10.30 a.m. The venue will be the Gazebo at Qalisa Retirement Village, Winnies Way, Suburbs, Bulawayo. Tea will be served, and braai fires will be available for those wishing to stay on after the meeting for lunch. Please bring your own meat, crockery, cutlery etc.

3) There will be a bird walk on Sunday, 15<sup>th</sup> March, commencing at 8.00 a.m. from the Gazebo at Qalisa Retirement Village, Winnies Way, Suburbs. For the more adventurous (i.e. younger folk), the walk will include the Bulawayo Golf Course. The more sedate participants can stroll around Qalisa Village and/or view birds from the garden or the elevated verandah of Dave and Marina Jackson's home, no. 46 Qalisa Village, where tea will be provided after the walk.

### 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) or [clive@chilogorge.com](mailto:clive@chilogorge.com)



# National Office

## RECENT REPORTS AND SIGHTINGS NATIONAL

### **Ballantyne Youth Project Innocent Magunje**

BirdLife Zimbabwe Youths are working under Ballantyne Conservancy Park Trust (BPCT) to rehabilitate Ballantyne Conservancy Area. This follows visits by the Youth group to City of Harare Parks Office on Remembrance Drive to ask for permission to revamp City Parks both to protect biodiversity and promote environmental education among urban youths. With the assistance of BirdLife Zimbabwe, youths have had two working days on Staley Dam, downstream of Ballantyne Dam. The first time was to stump out the alien and invasive *Lantana camara* off Staley Dam, while the second visit included clearing blocked storm drains to allow flow of water into the dam and removal of *Lantana* left over from first visit as well as Purple-top Verbena (*V. bonariensis*) another alien plant species. This project is crucial to the youths who have learnt to be responsible citizens by volunteering their effort and resources for the ultimate protection of Mother Nature. BirdLife Zimbabwe youth group is still in its infancy. The Youth group is looking at ways to raise funds for education and outreach activities among others. We will be running in the June Marathon organised by Econet in Victoria Falls and therefore solicit your support to help raise funds for the sustainability of the Youth project.



***BirdLife Zimbabwe Youths with Ballantyne Park Conservancy Trust Chairman (Sean Quanlin) on Staley Dam***

### **BirdLife Zimbabwe at IUCN World Parks Congress**

By: **Togarasei Fakarayi**

BirdLife Zimbabwe was represented by Togarasei Fakarayi at the IUCN World Parks Congress that took place from 12-20 November 2014 in Sydney, Australia. The congress is a global forum on protected areas that happens every 10 years. Purpose of the congress was to share knowledge and innovation and to [set the agenda](#) for protected areas conservation for the next decade. This congress was attended by 6,000+ participants from over 170 countries.

Togarasei gave four presentations at the congress, sharing our work on CEPF funded project and ecosystems (TESSA) case study of Driefontein Grasslands IBA. Key message sent through these presentations was centred on role of local stakeholders in driving conservation at critical sites, emphasising on the importance of setting and building up conservation networks at site level. Toga shared with audience BLZ's model on stakeholder engagement in Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs), in the Eastern Afromontane Biodiversity Hotspot in particular.

At the congress, Toga joined other BirdLife delegation in daily BirdLife meetings, events and other congress sessions. BirdLife had a huge delegation that numbered 55 participants, in total, including 42 from 26 BirdLife Partners and 13 from the Global and three Regional Secretariats. The delegation was actively involved in many discussions across seven streams of the congress. There was strong

presence of BirdLife at KBA discussions where various aspects of KBA initiative: the proposed new standard, end users and national experiences in KBA identification were discussed. BirdLife was instrumental in these KBA discussions, its strong role in the development of the KBA concept was properly acknowledged.

In addition, BirdLife launched some products at this congress. The products launched include;

- IBA publications: “IBAs – a global network for conserving nature and benefitting people” and “IBAs in Danger map”
- “IBAs in Danger: The State of Australia’s Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas”: BirdLife Australia’s publication was launched at the same time as the global IBA publications on the 15<sup>th</sup> of November.
- “Great Lakes of East and Central Africa: Strategy Summary” was also launched at the WPC.

The PDFs of these publications are available at the BirdLife Website:

<http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/sowb/sowbpubs>; <http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/sowb/spotIBAs>;  
<http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/info/IBAsInDanger>

Outcome of the congress was the “The Promise of Sydney”. It is the joint commitment of the more than 6,000 participants of the Congress to step up the conservation of protected areas world-wide. BirdLife has sent commitments regarding conservation of IBAs and IBAs in Danger as contribution to the Promise.

The final version of the Vision and some commitments can be found on the WPC Website [http://worldparkscongress.org/about/promise\\_of\\_sydney\\_vision.html](http://worldparkscongress.org/about/promise_of_sydney_vision.html).

### **Protecting Harare’s Wetland Ecosystems for Nature and the City’s People Update Mid-December 2014 to mid-January 2015 Report**

Although the December break took away two weeks of project time work continued behind the scenes to save Marlborough Vlei from development. An appeal to the High Court was lodged on 12<sup>th</sup> December by the Marlborough Environmental Action Group (MEAG) against the approval of the Marlborough Local Plan Amendment 1 by the Harare City Council as certain due processes were not followed. A response has been received and is currently being answered. Meanwhile heavy rains have fallen and the maize crop is feeling the effects of the inundation.

A meeting was held with the Director General of the Environmental Management Agency and the wetland project coordinator, Marlborough and Borrowdale Councillors and Professor Magadza on the 19<sup>th</sup> of December at which the flawed EIA process was discussed. This was a breakthrough as the EIA for Borrowdale Vlei was shared and a public consultative meeting with over 120 people in attendance was held on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2015. The owners of a portion of Monavale Vlei were present at that meeting. Whilst it appears unlikely Borrowdale will be saved there may be hope for Monavale, Marlborough and Ashbrittle.

Our second Wetland Ecosystem Workshop was held on 28<sup>th</sup> November at the Renewal Fellowship Church in Marlborough. It was well facilitated by Fadzai Matsvimbo and 7 presentations were made including one by Toga Fakarayi which can be found on the Wetland Survival Facebook Page. Clifford Muzofa, Environmental Officer City of Harare, Katy Lannas, Professor Chris Magadza, Dr Nhwatiwa, officials from EMA and Manyame Sub Catchment Council also made presentations. We were pleased with the attendance of officials from local and national government, which included a senior planner from Physical Planning Local Government and local residents. All attendees were shocked by what they learnt from the presentations which well described what we stand to lose should the wetlands continue to be destroyed.

The BirdLife Zimbabwe Ringing Group undertook 4 ringing sessions on Monavale Vlei during this period. There were interesting re-traps – including a Great Reed-warbler which was first ringed on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2010. Around 20 African Reed-warblers as well as Sedge Warblers and Marsh Warblers were ringed on 17<sup>th</sup> January!

An alien plant species re-growth removal session was undertaken on Monavale Vlei including the extraction of poplar trees along Avondale Stream. This wetland is in fine condition with 630mm of rain received to date this season. 4 Streaky-breasted Flufftails were seen on one occasion with Striped Crake, Dwarf and Little Bittern, Black Coucal, and the usual vlei specials recorded. 181 bird species were recorded during 2014 on Monavale Vlei. Our new bird record for the area, a few meters from the wetland on the Hill, is the Buff-spotted Flufftail. It or they arrived on 21<sup>st</sup> December and are still calling daily.

GIS mapping has been completed for both Monavale and Marlborough Wetlands. Aerial photos were taken ahead of the rains and will be repeated in February.

World Wetland Day 2015 will be held on Monavale Vlei on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2015 for schools, residents and the public from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. All BirdLife Zimbabwe members are invited to attend. Innocent Magunje and Fadzai Matsvimbo were interviewed on Star FM on 26<sup>th</sup> January. They did well in promoting BirdLife Zimbabwe and sharing wetland awareness ahead of this event.

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.

## BIG BIRDING DAY 2014

Ian Riddell

### PART 1

Big Birding Day 2014 followed the dates for Southern Africa this year and was held over the weekend of 29-30<sup>th</sup> November. The aims were:

- To identify as many bird species as possible
  - a) in either a continuous 24 or 36 hour period, and
  - b) within either an area with a radius of 50 km or your garden.
- To have fun and enjoy ourselves, while at the same time increasing awareness of our wonderful bird life and introducing more people to the joys of birding.

**OPTIONAL:** To seek sponsorship to raise much needed funds for BLZ. While not compulsory teams are encouraged to find sponsors.

The rules remained the same as previous Big Birding Days, or Birdwatch's, as they have been termed in the past.

14 teams took part this year, 5 around Harare, 4 around Bulawayo, 2 each in Hwange and Chilo Gorge/Gonarezhou respectively and 1 at Victoria Falls. The eastern highlands and Zambezi Valley were not represented, evident from the lack of birds particular to those regions. However, Victoria Falls and Gonarezhou brought in some 'specials'! 9 teams chose the 24 hour category, of which 1 (Magora) concentrated on the garden.

Congratulations to the *Stork(s) Raven Mad*, the only team to bust the 200 species mark in 24 hours, and to team Shadwell who got 163 species in the 36 hour category. But I'm sure everyone had fun, which is the main purpose of the exercise.

## RESULTS — 2014 BIG BIRDING DAY

**Table 1. Overall list ranking on number of species**

Position	Species	Name	Leader	Category	Location
1	207	Stork Raven Mad	T. Wood	24 hour	Harare
2	180	Chilonatics	D. Newmarch	24 hour	Chilo/Gonarezhou
3	163	Shadwell	C. Shadwell	36 hour	Harare
4	158 <sup>1</sup>	Vic Falls Turacos	G. Blair	24 hour	Victoria Falls
5	154	Bunny Huggers	M. Jackson	36 hour	Bulawayo
6	147	Mahenye Malkohas	J. Laing	24 hour	Chilo/Gonarezhou
7	143	Sinamatella Trio	S. Long	24 hour	Hwange
8=	119	Two Old Ducks	J. Cranston	24 hour	Bulawayo
8=	119	Migratory Birds	P.-A. Ditchburn	36 hour	Hwange
10	109	Hot Spotters	R. Dennison	24 hour	Harare
11	105	Dodo's	A. Masterson	24 hour	Harare
12	92	Louw Toppies	I. Louw	24 hour	Harare
13	64	Magora	P. Mundy	24 hour <sup>2</sup>	Bulawayo

14      43      Three Chickens      J. Ross      36 hour      Bulawayo

<sup>1</sup> 1 species disallowed

<sup>2</sup> includes garden category

**Table 2. 36 hour category**

Position	Species	Name	Leader	Category	Location
3	163	Shadwell	C. Shadwell	36 hour	Harare
5	154	Bunny Huggers	M. Jackson	36 hour	Bulawayo
8=	119	Migratory Birds	P-A. Ditchburn	36 hour	Hwange
14	43	Three Chickens	J. Ross	36 hour	Bulawayo

**Table 3. 24 hour category**

Position	Species	Name	Leader	Category	Location
1	207	Stork Raven Mad	T. Wood	24 hour	Harare
2	180	Chilonatics	D. Newmarch	24 hour	Chilo/Gonarezhou
4	159	Vic Falls Turacos	G. Blair	24 hour	Victoria Falls
6	147	Mahenye Malkohas	J. Laing	24 hour	Chilo/Gonarezhou
7	143	Sinamatella Trio	S. Long	24 hour	Hwange
8=	119	Two Old Ducks	J. Cranston	24 hour	Bulawayo
10	109	Hot Spotters	R. Dennison	24 hour	Harare
11	105	Dodo's	A. Masterson	24 hour	Harare
12	92	Louw Toppies	I. Louw	24 hour	Harare
13	64	Magora	P. Mundy	24 hour	Bulawayo

**Table 4. Special Species**

	Area	Team
African Fish-eagle	Bulawayo	Bunny Huggers
	Chilo/Gonarezhou	Chilonatics
		Mahenye Malkohas
	Harare	Dodo's
		Hot Spotters
African Pygmy-goose	Bulawayo	Louw Toppies
	Harare	Shadwell
		Stork Raven Mad
	Hwange	Migratory Birds
	Victoria Falls	Sinamatella Trio
Bateleur	Bulawayo	Vic Falls Turacos
	Harare	Three Chickens
Black Kite (incl. Yellow-billed Kite)	Chilo/Gonarezhou	Dodo's
	Hwange	Chilonatics
		Mahenye Malkohas
	Bulawayo	Migratory Birds
	Hwange	Bunny Huggers
Common Ostrich	Bulawayo	Magora
	Hwange	Two Old Ducks
	Victoria Falls	Migratory Birds
Grey Crowned Crane	Hwange	Sinamatella Trio
		Vic Falls Turacos
Martial Eagle	Harare	Stork Raven Mad
	Hwange	Migratory Birds



	Area	Team
Red-billed Oxpecker	Hwange	Mahenye Malkohas Sinamatella Trio
	Chilo/Gonarezhou	Chilonatics Mahenye Malkohas
	Hwange	Migratory Birds Sinamatella Trio
	Victoria Falls	Vic Falls Turacos
Saddle-billed Stork	Chilo/Gonarezhou	Chilonatics Mahenye Malkohas
	Harare	Stork Raven Mad
Secretarybird	Chilo/Gonarezhou	Chilonatics
	Hwange	Migratory Birds
Southern Carmine Bee-eater	Bulawayo	Two Old Ducks
	Chilo/Gonarezhou	Chilonatics Mahenye Malkohas
Southern Ground-hornbill	Hwange	Migratory Birds
	Victoria Falls	Vic Falls Turacos
	Chilo/Gonarezhou	Chilonatics Mahenye Malkohas
	Hwange	Migratory Birds Sinamatella Trio
White Stork	Hwange	Migratory Birds
Yellow-billed Oxpecker	Hwange	Migratory Birds
		Sinamatella Trio

## PART II – THE ORNITHOLOGICAL RESULTS

388 of the 389 species claimed (treating the Black & Yellow-billed Kites separately) were allowed, the one suspect bird being a Swamp Boubou claimed around Victoria Falls (though not altering the ranking above). As Hustler *et al.* (1990. Second report of the OAZ Rarities Committee. *Honeyguide* **36(3)**: 113-117) have stated, the Tropical Boubou “taken from the Victoria Falls westwards becomes increasingly white on the underparts as the range of the Swamp Boubou is approached suggesting some gene flow between them.” The Swamp is also only recorded from papyrus around Kazungula. However, the call should help and according to G. Blair, they heard the call of the Swamp in thick vegetation, and it is a call they know well from Chobe, etc.! This provides an ID challenge and the potential for misidentification of this species-pair and this record cannot be fully corroborated at the time of writing. However, this also presents a challenge for birders in that area to prove a range extension below the Katombora Rapids (or not?) with detailed and careful notes on all aspects of sightings. We look forward to something in *Honeyguide*!

Remaining with Victoria Falls, the African Hobby *Falco cuvierii* was the only rarity recorded on this exercise and specials for the area included Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola*

*nordmanni*, Rock Pratincole *Glareola nuchalis* and Schalow’s Turaco *Tauraco schalowi*.

Other specials from other areas included Brown-headed Parrot *Poicephalus cryptoxanthus* and Green Malkoha *Ceuthmochares aereus* from Gonarezhou, but as ‘specials’ is such a subjective term, other interesting birds are dealt with below.

In the ‘invasive birds’ category mention can be made of the Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis*, recorded in both Bulawayo and Hwange.

Black Herons *Egretta ardesiaca* were only recorded by two Harare teams and at Victoria Falls, whilst Rufous-bellied Heron *Ardeola rufiventris* was recorded by the Chilonatics at Gonarezhou. There was a fair showing amongst the stork family, and apart from the White Ciconia *Ciconia ciconia* and Saddle-billed Stork *Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis* in Table 4, the Woolly-necked Stork *Ciconia episcopus* was seen by teams Chilonatics and Migratory Birds in Gonarezhou and Hwange respectively. The Maccoa Duck *Oxyura maccoa* was only had by the Bunny Huggers, presumably at Aisleby.

Vultures were confined to the National Park areas whilst one Harare and Hwange team collared the African Cuckoo Hawk *Aviceda cuculoides*. The Stork Raven Mad team was the only one to record Steppe Eagle *Aquila*

*nipalensis* and Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina*, though one may have rather have expected them ticked in Hwange. The only harrier seen was the Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*, in Harare and Bulawayo, and though not unexpected it was nonetheless nice to have Dickinson's Kestrel *Falco dickinsoni* recorded from Gonarezhou.

Red-billed Spurfowl *Pternistis adspersus* was a Hwange special and to this could be added Bradfield's Hornbill *Tockus bradfieldi* and Southern Pied Babbler *Turdoides bicolor*, with Red-crested Korhaan *Lophotis ruficrista* recorded by both Hwange teams and Victoria Falls.

The Lesser Jacana *Microparra capensis* was only seen around Harare and the Greater Painted-snipe *Rostratula benghalensis* at Gonarezhou. Apart from Gonarezhou, the White-fronted Plover *Charadrius marginatus* was reported in Bulawayo (presumably Aisleby) where it is fairly rare, whilst the Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus* was only noted in Gonarezhou. The Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* was only recorded by two Bulawayo teams and three Harare teams.

Courser are more prevalent away from Harare so both Three-banded Courser *Rhinoptilus cinctus* and Bronze-winged Courser *Rhinoptilus chalconotus* were only seen in Hwange.

The Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida* was only found in Hwange, whilst Harare and Victoria Falls had the White-winged Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*.

Amongst the parrots, Gonarezhou was the only place to have the Grey-headed Parrot *Poicephalus fuscicollis*, and naturally the Brown-headed Parrot *Poicephalus cryptoxanthus* which is restricted to that side of the country. And the Mahenye Malkohas lived up to their name by also having the Green Malkoha *Ceuthmochares aereus*... fortunately!, whilst both teams there managed to see Burchell's Coucal *Centropus burchellii* and the Chilonatics also got Mottled Spinetail *Telacanthura ussheri*.

Whyte's Barbets *Stactolaema whytii*, Green-backed Honeybird *Prodotiscus zambesiae*, White-breasted Cuckooshrike *Coracina pectoralis*, Miombo Tit *Parus griseiventris*, Grey Penduline-tit *Anthoscopus caroli*, Spotted Creeper *Salpornis spilonotus*, Miombo Rock-thrush *Monticola angolensis*, Boulder Chat

*Pinarornis plumosus*, Southern Hyliota *Hyliota australis*, Red-faced Crombec *Sylvietta whytii*, Green-capped Eremomela *Eremomela scotops*, Striped Pipit *Anthus lineiventris*, Miombo Blue-eared Starling *Lamprotornis elisabeth*, Black-eared Seedeater *Crithagra mennelli* and Cabanis's Bunting *Emberiza cabanisi* were restricted to Harare – a list of miombo specials! The Harare vleis were the sole localities for Pale-crowned Cisticola *Cisticola cinnamomeus* and Rosy-throated Longclaw *Macronyx ameliae*.

Arnot's Chat *Myrmecocichla arnoti*, Red-capped Robin-chat *Cossypha natalensis*, Collared Palm-thrush *Cichladusa arquata* and Bearded Scrub-robin *Cercotrichas quadrivirgata* were ticked in Gonarezhou although the palm-thrush was also shared with Victoria Falls and the scrub-robin with Hwange.

Bulawayo was the only place to record Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*, whilst Yellow-bellied Eremomela *Eremomela icteropygialis* was seen there and at Hwange. Harare, Hwange and Victoria Falls all recorded the Stierling's Wren-warbler *Calamonastes stierlingi*.

Amongst the flycatchers, team Shadwell did well to pick up the African Dusky Flycatcher *Muscicapa adusta*, and Stork Raven Mad had the Grey-tit Flycatcher *Myioparus plumbeus*. The Marico Flycatcher *Bradornis mariquensis* was restricted to Bulawayo and Hwange and the Pale Flycatcher *Bradornis pallidus* to Harare.

The Mountain Wagtail *Motacilla clara* was the only wagtail unrecorded; it was pleasing to see that Bulawayo picked up the Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*.

Both Bulawayo and Hwange got Crimson-breasted Shrike *Laniarius atrococcineus* and both Gonarezhou teams found Gorgeous Bush-shrike *Telophorus quadricolor*.

Two Harare teams recorded Marico Sunbird *Cinnyris mariquensis*, one which always makes me nervous because of possible confusion with the Purple-banded Sunbird *Cinnyris bifasciatus*, which was also found by one team. The Miombo Double-collared Sunbird *Cinnyris manoensis* was also found in Bulawayo and the Variable Sunbird *Cinnyris venustus* restricted to Harare. Well done indeed to Stork Raven Mad for finding that most difficult Western Violet-backed Sunbird *Anthreptes longuemarei*!

Red-billed Buffalo-weavers *Bubalornis niger* were restricted to Gonarezhou and Hwange but

both Hwange and Victoria Falls ticked the Northern Grey-headed Sparrow *Passer griseus*. Bulawayo joined Harare and Victoria Falls with the Thick-billed Weaver *Amblyospiza albifrons*, a range extension discovered during Big Birding Day 2013. Team Shadwell noted Lesser Masked-weaver *Ploceus intermedius* for Harare

and it would be interesting to know just where this sparsely distributed (around Harare) bird was seen.

Violet-eared Waxbills *Granatina granatina* were found in Bulawayo and Hwange but only the latter had the Black-faced Waxbill *Estrilda erythronotos*.

### January 2015 African Water Bird Census in the Lowveld

Chilo Gorge Safari Lodge participated in this year's waterbird census focusing on IBA 19 which includes the Tambahata Pan and the lower Save / Runde river systems.

Chilo Gorge guests and staff participated in an exciting day of quality birding with many interesting observations. Whilst counting waterfowl and various waders at a small rain-fed pan adjacent to the Save River, our attention was drawn to an active weaver breeding colony. These were obviously not the common Village Weaver (*Ploceus cucullatus*) who happened to also be breeding over the same pan.

So out came the books, to confirm identity; we quickly came to an agreement that these were Lesser Masked-weavers (*Ploceus intermedius*) with their characteristic yellow eye.

A total of 14 nests were counted, the adults were very active and appeared to be excited. There was only one adult male observed during the time we were there. There were approximately 8 adult females attending the nests, who were busy removing faecal sacks, and bringing food to the young chicks.

It was then we noticed that there were 3 Green-backed Herons (*Butorides striata*) under the small Leadwood (*Combretum imberbe*) tree. Eager to vary their diet from frogs and fingerlings, these birds were waiting for young weaver chicks to fall out of the nests! These they would rapidly pick up and take to the water's edge, where they were swallowed and washed down with a drink of brown water. The adults did not appear to be too

concerned about the events that were taking place below.

Here is a photo of the chick robber caught in the action.



In addition to the excellent birding, we enjoyed many encounters with a diverse range of mammals which included Elephant, Buffalo, many Eland, Zebra, Wildebeest, Kudu, Nyala, Impala and Warthog.

The day ended with 151 bird species being recorded. The results of the water bird survey with total numbers of species and figures confirming abundance of these species will be presented to the national coordinator and will contribute to the final water bird survey results.

**Clive Stockil** 17<sup>th</sup> January 2015

### Mashonaland

#### MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE MASHONALAND BRANCH OF BIRDLIFE ZIMBABWE HELD AT AVONDALE BOWLING CLUB, HARARE, ON THURSDAY 15<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2015 AT 6.00 PM

PRESENT: T. ALEGRIA (CHAIRPERSON), D. WIGGINS (TREASURER), L. FUSSELL (SECRETARY), D. ROCKINGHAM-GILL (VICE CHAIR), J. BALL (MEMBER), A. FUSSELL (MEMBER)

BRANCH MEMBERS PRESENT: 40 members.

APOLOGIES: D. DALZIEL, L. MAASDORP, D. FALLON, D. KINNAIRD, D. APPEL, J. MAROPA, J SCOTT

Tony Alegria welcomed the members and thanked them for their attendance.

1. CONFIRMATION OF PREVIOUS MINUTES:  
Proposed by K. Dixon and Seconded by R. Chenux-Repond
2. MATTERS ARISING: None
3. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT (T. Alegria)

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

The outings have continued and we are getting some good turnouts, especially at the Mukuvisi Woodlands and the last Sunday of the month. Mukuvisi continues to have a problem at this time of year – we need rubble to put into the swampy parking area. Please bring any rubble you have whenever you go on a Mukuvisi bird walk. Any amount can be used – anything and even rocks up to the size of your head will be OK. Just dump it out of the way near a gum tree!

We are very grateful to everybody that allowed us onto their properties. I thank all the leaders of these events – Dave Dalziel and Richard Dennison have been the main stars.

Thanks to our speakers; without them we would not have a monthly function. We had: (Jan) right after the AGM, Celesta von Chamier showed us how to navigate the birding things in Facebook; (Feb) Nightjars by Tony Alegria; (Mar) Birding in Mutare by Ken Dixon; (Apr) Amur Falcons by Iain Mc Donald; (May) Birding in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century by Celesta von Chamier; (Jun); We had a double – Waterfowl count by Dave Rockingham-Gill and Gonarezhou by Andy Fussell; (Jul) Raptors around Harare by Neil Deacon; (Aug) Why birds migrate by Julia Pierini; (Sept) What Mavuradonha Wilderness has to offer by Bridget Henderson; (Oct) Cleveland Dam by Tony Alegria; (Nov) The one weeks' birding holiday in Gonarezhou by Richard Dennison; (Dec) Martin Mere – A wetland of note in the UK by Andy Fussell followed by Julia Pierini who explained why we needed funds by selling the calendar and ended up talking about all the happenings in BLZ. This was then followed by the Xmas social. Of course monthly evening functions would be pointless without an audience, so many thanks to all the members and non-members who attended the functions.

I thank Carolyn Dennison for sending out the email reminders for the outings & evening functions and I thank Linda Fussell for providing the necessary information to the Ndeipi monthly magazine.

Last year we planned three away outings with the first trip being to RIFA when we had a "third time lucky" and at last got there whilst the pans were full. As we had hoped for, various specials were breeding in the pans – e.g. Allen's Gallinule and Lesser Moorhen. Also seen near RIFA was the Dwarf Bittern. Unfortunately no Zambians were able to be with us on this particular trip. The second away trip was when twelve birders enjoyed a one week birding holiday in Gonarezhou from late September to early October. The last trip was to Mavuradonha Wilderness (Kopje Tops) later in October when 17 birders participated. Reports on these three trips have been placed in the appropriate *Babbler*.

All these trips were great and anyone who has never been on an away outing is really missing out!

Your incoming committee will be organizing more away trips this year with school teachers in mind – if possible, we'll try and organize some trips during school holidays.

This is not guaranteed but we are looking at organizing a Shoebill trip later on in the year – this could be the one weeks' birding holiday of a lifetime. Then, perhaps it could be slightly longer than one week!

I wish to thank all those who wrote articles for the *Babbler* thereby providing feedback to all our members on our outings and monthly functions.

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

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

**Tony Alegria** Chairman – Mashonaland Branch

## TREASURER'S REPORT (D. Wiggins)

2014 was a quiet year as far as expenditure goes. Whilst last year we utilised the accumulated funds to purchase a sound system, this year we managed to replenish the funds a bit with a surplus figure of nearly \$300. Our plan is to raise enough funds to purchase a projector of our own as Tony Alegria currently carts his own projector along for the monthly meetings for which we are grateful.

Starting with revenue, about half of this came from monthly meeting donations, which happen to be similar to last year, so the average attendance at the meetings was much the same both years. Thanks to everyone for supporting these evening talks and without your help, we would have no venue or car guard!

The remaining revenue was mainly raised through raffles held during the year. Those organised by the committee netted \$257, so thank you to everyone who bought tickets. Then Jane Rautenbach's superb Christmas cake with tipsy robins on it that she donated and was raffled at the December social brought in a further \$64. Many thanks Jane for your contribution. Donations were also received by Mashonaland Branch from Di Rushforth (\$70) and Richard Dennison (\$20) in support of Big Birding Day. Our grateful thanks to you both.

On the expenditure side, there was nothing out of the ordinary during 2014. The Avondale Sports Club fees were the same, as was the cost of the car guard. The main local venue expenses were a \$45 donation to Greystone Park Nature Preserve which we visit 2 or 3 times a year and \$124 for Roundup which we donate annually to Mukuvisi for keeping the electric fence clear of vegetation. In addition there were some minor general expenses amounting to \$53.

As far as the cash & assets go, our assets include the PA system purchased last year, the funds held in CABS which currently stand at \$526.50, plus a meeting float of \$30.

In conclusion, with your help this year, we hope to boost our funds towards the purchase of a suitable projector, which will be a very welcome addition for the branch.

*Revenue and Expenditure worksheet is available on request.*

### 4. REGULAR VENUES:

#### 5.1 Mukuvisi Woodlands: (D. Dalziel)

I am going to keep this report of our 2014 trips to Mukuvisi nice and short. As usual, we did the monthly walk on the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of every month. Thanks to Richard Dennison for doing the June walk.

We have had a good turn out to most of the walks and are therefore getting a good coverage of the area.

There are birds that are not seen anymore. These include Miombo Rock-Thrush and Southern Black Tit. The Rock-thrush was always likely to be a bird that we lost from the Woodland once it was isolated from other Miombo but the loss of the Southern Black Tit is strange. This bird used to be seen in gardens in Greendale and was a bird one would see on most bird outings around Harare. Interestingly both these birds are disappearing from Haka as well.

Spotted Creeper, Southern Hylota, Whyte's Barbet, Miombo Tit and Miombo Double-collared Sunbird are all still seen frequently.

Other birds of interest have been the African Black Duck which is often seen. The Long-crested Eagle was often seen around the nest area and the Black Sparrowhawk was seen with a couple of nearly fledged chicks. The Wahlberg's Eagle moved back to the nest near the cement bridge and may have been successful this year as there was a chick on the verge of fledging. Grey-headed Kingfishers were seen in January, October and December. Pearl-breasted Swallows were seen in October and November.

Nick Hart and some bird ringers from Australia ringed near the cement bridge and caught Garden Warblers, Great Reed-warblers and Marsh Warblers. These were not recorded on our walks.

If anyone would like the complete list of sightings for the year I can send them by email.

We hope to see most of you during the year at least once as this is a wonderful place so close to Harare.

#### 5.2 Lake Chivero: (R Dennison) JANUARY 2014 to DECEMBER 2014

The 2012/2013 rainy season was fairly low, as the rainfall in Hillside was 78.5% of Harare's average, so wader space was significant in November.



## Species Count

The annual species count was 139, which was the lowest ever recorded. This was not surprising because we decided to reduce our visits from monthly to quarterly. There were no additions to the total number of species recorded since records began in 1992 but the water birds were very good in November.

In my opinion the highlights were:

### Shore and Water Birds

- ◆ Little Grebe 200 in November.
- ◆ Reed Cormorant 200 in January.
- ◆ Black Heron 2 in November.
- ◆ Grey Heron 31 in July.
- ◆ Glossy Ibis 30 in November.
- ◆ Red-billed Teal 80 in November.
- ◆ Common Ringed Plover 6 in November.
- ◆ Kittlitz's Plover 50 in November.
- ◆ Little Stint 60 in November.
- ◆ Pied Avocet 20 in November.

### Other Birds of Interest

- ◆ White-backed Vulture 1 in November.
- ◆ Common Cuckoo 1 in January.
- ◆ Eastern Saw-wing 300 in November.
- ◆ Lesser Grey Shrike 1 in April.
- ◆ African Pygmy-kingfisher 1 in November.

## 5.3 Monavale Vlei (Dorothy Wakeling) *Full Report available on Request.*

### **Birds sightings of particular interest selected from the 181 species recorded during 2014.**

#### **January:**

**Raptors** – African Cuckoo Hawk, Black-chested Snake-eagle, Steppe Buzzard, Wahlberg's Eagle, Long-crested Eagle, Gabar Goshawk, Lizard Buzzard, Amur Falcon, Black-shouldered Kite (daily), Marabou Stork, Marsh Owl (monthly).

Kurrichane Buttonquail, Corn Crake, African Crake, Streak-breasted Flufftail, Little Bittern, Common Moorhen, Black Coucal, African Black Duck, Abdim's Stork.

European Roller, Marsh Warbler, Sedge Warbler plus others. Cuckoo Finch – and the usual *Euplectes*. Golden-breasted Bunting

#### **February:**

**Raptors** – as for January plus Peregrine Falcon.

Striped Crake and Dwarf Bittern including above. Abdim's Stork.

#### **March:**

**Raptors:** European Honey Buzzard, Yellow-billed Kite (also March last year) in addition to above.

African Crake – other crakes likely there but not calling. Black Coucal still present. Yellow-billed Stork (last year in February and April).

#### **April:**

**Raptors:** African Fish-eagle, Black-chested Snake-eagle, Long-crested Eagle, Steppe Buzzard, African Goshawk, Gabar Buzzard, Lizard Buzzard, Amur Falcon (left 3<sup>rd</sup>), Marsh Owl, Abdim's Stork (9<sup>th</sup> last seen).

Spotted Thick-knee (also May 2013), Lesser Grey Shrike, Groundscraper Thrush (1<sup>st</sup>) Cuckoo Finch (left 9<sup>th</sup>).

#### **May:**

**Raptors:** Long-crested Eagle, Brown Snake-eagle, Black-chested Snake-eagle, Lizard Buzzard, Gabar Goshawk, African Goshawk, Marsh Owl.

Common Moorhen, Spotted Thick-knee.

#### **June:**

**Raptors:** Brown Snake-eagle, Black-chested Snake-eagle, Long-crested Eagle, Lizard Buzzard and Gabar Goshawk, Marsh Owl.

Rufous-naped Lark.

#### **July:**

**Raptors:** African Cuckoo Hawk, Long-crested Eagle, Black-chested Snake-eagle, Little Sparrowhawk, Black Sparrowhawk, Gabar Goshawk, Lizard Buzzard, Spotted Eagle Owl, Marsh Owl

African Pipit

#### **August:**

**Raptors:** Long-crested Eagle, Black-chested Snake-eagle, Lizard Buzzard, Gabar Goshawk, Spotted Eagle-owl, Marsh Owl.

African Pipit.

**September:**

**Raptors:** Long-crested Eagle, Black-chested Snake-eagle, Lizard Buzzard, Gabar Goshawk, Black Sparrowhawk, Spotted Eagle-owl, Marsh Owl.

Red-chested Flufftail heard, Brown-crowned Tchagra, African Pipit.

**October:**

**Raptors:** Long-crested Eagle, Black-chested Snake-eagle, Lizard Buzzard, Gabar Goshawk, Black Sparrowhawk, Spotted Eagle-owl, Marsh Owl, Steppe Buzzard (19<sup>th</sup>), Eurasian Hobby (17<sup>th</sup>).

Willow Warbler (17<sup>th</sup>), European Bee-eater (7<sup>th</sup>), Common Myna (18<sup>th</sup>).

**November:**

**Raptors:** African Cuckoo Hawk, Wahlberg's Eagle (8<sup>th</sup>), Black-chested Snake-eagle, Long-crested Eagle, Black Sparrowhawk, Gabar Goshawk and Lizard Buzzard, Amur Falcons (18).

Abdim's Stork (4<sup>th</sup>), Red-backed Shrike (7<sup>th</sup>), Yellow-throated Petronia, Spotted Flycatcher (16<sup>th</sup>), European Roller (29<sup>th</sup>), Cuckoo Finch (4<sup>th</sup>).

**December:**

**Raptors:** African Cuckoo Hawk, Long-crested Eagle, Lizard Buzzard, Black Sparrowhawk, Gabar Goshawk, Marsh Owl.

Kurrichane Buttonquail (29<sup>th</sup>) Buff-spotted Flufftail (21<sup>st</sup>), Bronze-winged Courser, Dwarf Bittern (21<sup>st</sup>), Streaky-breasted Flufftail (23<sup>rd</sup>), African Crake (18<sup>th</sup>), Red-billed Teal, White-faced Duck, European Roller, Common Whitethroat (13<sup>th</sup>), Pale-crowned Cisticola, Great Reed-warbler (4<sup>th</sup>) rest of local warblers year round including Dark-capped Yellow-warbler.

New bird: Buff-spotted Flufftail

Missing: Capped Wheatear, Red-capped Lark

*Euplectes* seen all year round

*Full Report available on request.*

## 6. ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS, MASHONALAND BLZ COMMITTEE

The whole Committee is prepared to stand again. 2014/2015 Committee re-elected as follows:

Chairperson:	Tony Alegria
Vice Chairperson:	Dave Rockingham-Gill
Secretary	Linda Fussell
Treasurer	Debbie Wiggins
Committee Member	James Ball
Committee Member	Andrew Fussell

Proposed by Tony Wood and Seconded by Dave Gray.

## 7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS:

7.1 D. Rockingham-Gill asked members if there were any volunteers for giving presentations at the Thursday evening meetings. Please approach a committee member.

7.3 The old and new committee was thanked for its hard work and commitment by Rolf Chenaux-Repond.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 7 p.m.

## Greystone Nature Preserve Bird Island Project

Early last year the Greystone Nature Preserve Committee successfully bid for a substantial donation from John Neville, of South Africa, coordinated through Birdlife Zimbabwe, and intended to enhance the environment for birdlife in Harare.

The GNP is a seven hectare area of woodland in Greystone Park, centred around a small dam and stream. The Preserve was established in 1993 by local residents, and has become an important refuge for birds and wildlife. Over 150

species of bird have been recorded in the Preserve, along with Cape clawless otter, jackal, python, serval and many other species.

Following suggestions and advice from BirdLife Zimbabwe, we proposed building an island in the dam that would provide a safe breeding environment for larger waterfowl, and received John Neville's generous donation in mid-year.

In mid-December the committee set about building the island – when the water was at its lowest, in order to site the island as far into the

dam as possible.

With sterling support from the machinery operators of R Davis & Co Contractors, we were able to move nearly 100 m<sup>3</sup> of rock and soil in two days, dredging the dam inflow at the same time, before the rains came and made further work impossible.

The dam is spilling already, and as we suspected, this is not quite enough to keep the island above the high water mark. In any case, we knew that the first construction would settle and that we would need to add more earth next dry season. Fortunately we have funds in reserve for this purpose.

In the four weeks before the island was

submerged it became a favourite look-out for our resident Hamerkop, as well as the adult Egyptian Geese that have nurtured their brood on the dam this season, so we are confident that once we have made the island top permanently dry, it will indeed become a much-appreciated safe haven for our resident water-fowl.

The preserve is funded entirely through membership and donations, and welcomes enquiries from individuals or groups willing to assist with the running and maintenance costs.

For further information on the Greystone Nature Preserve, please contact Roger Fairlie on 04 883 119.



### **Mashonaland Branch visit to Rainham Dams, Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2015**

I think some were put off this outing by the prospect of the mud-filled ruts and potholes of the Old Bulawayo Road and having to wade through thigh deep water to access the dams. The road is appalling but for no known reason the dams are very low and easily accessible without getting one's feet wet. Of course, certain individuals, as usual, chose to ignore the dry paths and wade through the flooded marshland; Julia at least was equipped for wading!

Perhaps because there is an abundance of open water since the rains the waterbirds have spread themselves thinly over our area but for whatever reason the count was disappointing. The special bird of the day was a single male African Pygmy-goose among the water lilies but apart from that we could find only 10 White-faced Duck, 4 Red-

billed Teal and 2 Egyptian Goose. 6 Purple Herons were seen, lots of African Jacana and 1 Lesser Jacana, a few Great Egrets and Little Egrets and a Squacco Heron. An African Marsh-harrier quartered marshland and a Black-chested Snake-eagle flew over as well as about 60 Amur Falcons. The small area of woodland where we used to bulk up the list has now been all but chopped out but we picked up a Copper Sunbird, Yellow-throated and Rosy-throated Longclaw and the usual cisticolas and warblers in the bushes and wet grassland.

66 species in all on a super morning. Despite all the fences and fisherboys access is easy from the entrance by the farmhouse ruins and we need to keep the location open.

**Ken Dixon**

### **Waterfowl counting at Ngezi National Park**

Not much to be found here but I did successfully cook spaghetti in an oven. Best sightings were an Osprey, at least 6 Orange-winged Pytilia seen twice in same tree and an African Darter.

The sewage ponds at Turf, the mining 'village' outside the park, were teeming with birdlife including Common, Wood and Marsh Sandpiper, Ruff, Three-banded Plover and Black-winged Stilt.

**Ken Dixon**

### **White Stork on Wingate Park Golf Course**

A mediocre 9 holes was enlivened on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> January by a flock of at least 18 White Stork landing in dead gums on the 9<sup>th</sup> fairway alongside Alpes Road.

**Ken Dixon**

## **MASHONALAND BRANCH OUTING TO KOMANI ESTATES, Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> January 2015**

22 of us took advantage of Ned and Linda Kelly's kind invitation to visit their property and spent a productive morning surveying the woodland, fields, vlei and garden. 110 species were recorded from the 2 groups that converged on the garden at 1030 to be offered snacks and drinks.

Those wanting to keep their feet relatively dry set off for the woods while the more intrepid headed for the waterlogged vlei following our resident wader, Alex. In fact they chose to walk the north bank in front of the Microlight Club.

The miombo woodland held Yellow-fronted Canary, Black-backed Puffback, Brubru, Green Wood-hoopoe and African Hoopoe, Cardinal Woodpecker, Fork-tailed Drongo and Southern Black Flycatcher, weavers, Willow Warbler, Streaky-headed Seedeater, Blue and Common Waxbill, Stierling's Wren-warbler, Variable, Amethyst and Scarlet-chested Sunbird and Bronze Mannikins. Barn Swallows were all

around us. Along the farm road towards the vlei the hedges were full of Red-collared, White-winged and Yellow-mantled Widowbirds.

As the vlei on our bank was fairly dry we wandered down into the grassland with its huge flocks of Southern Red Bishop. We heard a Black Coucal call and then saw a graceful male Montagu's Harrier quartering the reedbeds and a Marsh Owl flushed by the group on the other bank. Over the grass flew Wire-tailed, Barn, Red-breasted and Grey-rumped Swallow and Zitting Cisticola; lower down Pale-crowned, Croaking, Rattling, Red-faced and Levillant's Cisticola and Orange-breasted Waxbill could be seen or heard. All 3 longclaws were identified and a Corn Crake and an African Crake briefly spotted.

We are very grateful for Ned and Linda Kelly's generous hospitality and look forward to continuing our visits to this lovely venue.

**Ken Dixon**

## **Matabeleland**

### **BLZ MATABELELAND OUTING TO STONE HILLS**

SATURDAY 22 NOVEMBER 2014

Six o'clock on Saturday morning saw eleven members as well as two visitors – one from Harare and one from the UK – meeting to travel out to Stone Hills, the Peek's wildlife sanctuary in the Marula area. A little birdwatching was done on the way out with Pied Crows, a small skein of African Sacred Ibis, several Yellow-billed Kites, Barn Swallows, Cattle Egrets, Southern White-crowned Shrikes and Cape Glossy Starlings being noted down, along with a Steppe Buzzard that flew alarmingly close to one vehicle.

On arrival we were met at the gate by Richard and Mabhena and taken first to the orchard and vegetable garden to look at a couple of nests. Walking round the garden to look at a Yellow-bellied Greenbul's nest, there were several vocal unidentified avians chirping away, a Black-headed Oriole called while a couple of Streaky-headed Seedeaters flitted about in the vegetable patch.

The Greenbul's nest was low down in a small bush and contained two featherless chicks which were being fed by attentive parents. After having a closer look, we watched as one of the parents came in with food and after feeding the chicks, settled down on the nest, perhaps a little perturbed at the intrusion. Next, Richard took us to have a look at a Black Sparrowhawk's nest containing three fluffy white chicks. On the way to and from the nest site, an adult bird was seen flying round and occasionally perching close by, obviously keeping a wary eye on us. Once we got to the lodge, seeing zebra, giraffe, sable, kudu and wildebeest along the way and having had a look at the African Paradise-flycatcher's dainty new cup of a nest as well as being greeted by several Red-winged Starlings, the party was split into two groups – the one going for the long walk to accompany Bookey and Mabhena and the other

smaller group of three going for a shorter walk in the company of Khanye.

Khanye proved to be a superb bird spotter, taking us along the river past several little weirs and then further down along the dry river bed. African Quailfinch, Blue Waxbills and several small flocks of Red-billed Quelea came down to drink and a Reed Cormorant did a fly by for us while a Pied Kingfisher hovered above the water. Coming across a kingfisher's nesting hole in a steep bank, Khanye went to investigate to see if it was active and discovered it had been raided by a snake. Lying in the sand below the nest were three neat pellets of shell that had been discarded by the egg-eating serpent once it had finished with the enclosed contents. A Golden-tailed Woodpecker was making its presence heard as were a couple of Brown-hooded Kingfishers, a Three-streaked Tchagra was also calling and although we searched and searched we could not pick up the Lesser Honeyguide that was well hidden in a thorn tree. Several times we heard and saw the Willow Warbler, whilst Chin-spot Batis flitted around and several vocal Scarlet-chested Sunbird males and females were dashing about while two noisy Black-collared Barbets trilled from the top of another thorn tree. On our way back to the lodge, Khanye showed us a Grey-headed Bush-shrike's nest – the bird having taken over a Yellow-bellied Greenbul's nest and just added another storey. We didn't see the present occupant but while there recorded the Jameson's Firefinch. Continuing on, we were shown a Fork-tailed Drongo's nest with parent bird incubating and disturbed a Black-crowned Tchagra that flew up close to us as did a Kurrichane Buttonquail that didn't wait around to be admired! Our small group



managed to record 38 species.

We then made our way to one of the dams, meeting up with the other walking group for a welcome drink break and watched three Black Storks flying about with a Wahlberg's Eagle. A Giant Kingfisher was seen on the dam wall and a Three-banded Plover was pottering along the edge of the water. Once refreshed we went for a short walk to inspect a Boulder Chat's nest that had been parasitized by a Red-chested Cuckoo and in a hollow underneath a boulder nestled a rather ugly blue Black Cuckoo chick. After the photo shoot was complete, Richard gently removed the chick (see photo attached) and fascinated us by pointing out what a beastly little critter it was. It has perfectly evolved to get rid of all opposition with its larger size, sharp beak, brightly coloured mouth cavity, longer wing span, hollowed out back and extended abdomen, not to mention its foul smelling faeces as well as having a rather malodorous body odour! Boulder Chat parents were seen flitting about the boulders, probably wondering what was going on. We then set off for an early lunch, our picnic site being under an enormous and most beautifully formed fig tree. After enjoying our food and drink, Richard gave us another informative talk about cuckoos, fascinating us with many and varied facts. Most of us were surprised to learn that cuckoos don't just pick any old bird to parasitize but each species of cuckoo has its preferences. Another fact, which not many of us give a thought to, is the knock-on affect to the parasitized species and how they then don't get to regenerate their own kind. We also enjoyed a couple of his interesting and unusual stories regarding the Verreaux's Eagles that reside at Stone Hills. After lunch, we went to see if a pair of Spotted Thick-knee's two eggs had hatched out yet. On our approach, the parent birds stalked off into the open grassland and we had a chance to inspect the two brown and speckled eggs, lying in the shallow scrape out in the open (see photo attached). The colour of the eggs was phenomenal and several of the photographers had difficulty picking them up in their lens they were so well camouflaged, blending in with the leaf litter, soil and stones.

***Red-chested Cuckoo photo Rob Bate***



Back at the lodge we had tea, accompanied by the African Paradise-flycatcher female flying around inside the high pitched roof before making her way out again, and a Red-winged Starling also flying around inside, sat on the window sill, chatting away to us. We just had time to go and see a Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill's nest, low



**Spotted Thick-knee Nest photo Rob Bate**

down in a tree trunk, being shown a Black-collared Barbet's nesting hole along the way, the entrance of which had sustained some damage from baboons trying to break in. Richard gave us a short talk about the hornbill's nesting habits, how the female is sealed inside and loses all her tail and flight feathers, being fed by the male during her time inside and how the youngsters are sealed in again once she has left to assist the male with feeding their brood. All the while, a couple of curious giraffe were craning their necks to see what was going on and some sable gave us a casual glance before continuing on their way.

Although very hot, it was an absolutely fabulous and fascinating outing, much enjoyed by all. It is wonderful to be in the company of such enthusiastic and informative folk, who are so in awe and aware of all that surrounds them and having them share their lovely little piece of Africa with us. In all, 80 species were recorded and we should like to thank the Peeks, Mabhena and Khanye for a lovely day out.

The comprehensive bird list follows.

**Jenny and John Brebner**

- |     |                           |     |                                 |
|-----|---------------------------|-----|---------------------------------|
| 58  | Reed Cormorant            | 435 | Brown-hooded Kingfisher         |
| 71  | Cattle Egret              | 438 | European Bee-eater              |
| 81  | Hamerkop                  | 444 | Little Bee-eater                |
| 83  | White Stork               | 447 | Lilac-breasted Roller           |
| 84  | Black Stork               | 452 | Green Wood-hoopoe               |
| 91  | African Sacred Ibis       | 459 | Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill |
| 102 | Egyptian Goose            | 464 | Black-collared Barbet           |
| 126 | Yellow-billed Kite        | 470 | Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird       |
| 131 | Verreaux's Eagle          | 476 | Lesser Honeyguide               |
| 135 | Wahlberg's Eagle          | 483 | Golden-tailed Woodpecker        |
| 148 | African Fish-eagle        | 494 | Rufous-naped Lark               |
| 149 | Steppe Buzzard            | 518 | Barn Swallow                    |
| 158 | Black Sparrowhawk         | 541 | Fork-tailed Drongo              |
| 205 | Kurrichane Buttonquail    | 545 | Black-headed Oriole             |
| 249 | Three-banded Plover       | 548 | Pied Crow                       |
| 260 | African Wattled Lapwing   | 554 | Southern Black Tit              |
| 297 | Spotted Thick-knee        | 560 | Arrow-marked Babbler            |
| 352 | Red-eyed Dove             | 568 | Dark-capped Bulbul              |
| 354 | Cape Turtle-dove          | 574 | Yellow-bellied Greenbul         |
| 356 | Namaqua Dove              | 576 | Kurrichane Thrush               |
| 358 | Emerald-spotted Wood-dove | 593 | Mocking Cliff-chat              |
| 373 | Grey Go-away-bird         | 610 | Boulder Chat                    |
| 377 | Red-chested Cuckoo        | 643 | Willow Warbler                  |
| 382 | Jacobin Cuckoo            | 645 | Bar-throated Apalis             |
| 401 | Spotted Eagle-owl         | 657 | Grey-backed Camaroptera         |
| 428 | Pied Kingfisher           | 672 | Rattling Cisticola              |
| 429 | Giant Kingfisher          | 683 | Tawny-flanked Prinia            |

689	Spotted Flycatcher	764	Cape Glossy Starling
701	Chin-spot Batis	769	Red-winged Starling
710	African Paradise-flycatcher	791	Scarlet-chested Sunbird
733	Red-backed Shrike	799	White-browed Sparrow-weaver
737	Tropical Boubou	805	Yellow-throated Petronia
740	Black-backed Puffback	819	Red-headed Weaver
743	Brown-crowned Tchagra	821	Red-billed Quelea
744	Black-crowned Tchagra	834	Green-winged Pytilia
748	Orange-breasted Bush-shrike	841	Jameson's Firefinch
753	White-crested Helmet-shrike	844	Blue Waxbill
754	Retz's Helmet-shrike	852	African Quailfinch
756	Southern White-crowned Shrike	869	Yellow-fronted Canary
761	Violet-backed Starling	881	Streaky-headed Seedeater

## Mashonaland South

### Kadoma 21<sup>st</sup> December 2014

20 plus White Storks feeding on an old CSC feedlot now filled with maize cultivation. These birds have not been seen in Kadoma area for many years so it is great news that they still travel from the northern hemisphere to visit us. Maybe their sighting is a sign of lots of rain with lots of insects as food for the various migratory birds.

The Amur Falcon has also arrived aerial feeding 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> December at 5.30 a.m. Then on 30<sup>th</sup> December at 5.30 a.m. a cloudy morning dawned but the birds happily feeding.

**Kadoma Golf course 26<sup>th</sup> December.** 2 pairs of Thick-billed Weavers, both pairs nest building at either end of the Mshumavale River which flows through the course which has many reeds and a rough wooded area alongside. These neatest of finely woven straw nests are almost as big as a football and securely fixed between a few reeds. Hopefully a small colony may appear before the end of summer season. Looking at bird distribution these birds should not be seen in our area.

### New Year's Day 2015

8.00 a.m. Although the morning was overcast with drizzle and mud I had to visit the golf course

to check on the Thick-billed Weavers. Another six nests were observed and three males at each own nest busily working. The cut grass of the golf greens and fairways is ideal for the building of these truly superb nests.

### Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> January 7.00 a.m.

Having had incessant rain for three days I decided I decided to check out the Thick-billed Weavers nests. The Mshumavale River was in full flow with water covering many fairways and bunkers, but the nests were holding firm, well secured on three to four strong reeds rather like a four poster bed. The males were seen in the area so activity is still on-going. The dull damp weather must suit these visiting weavers.

Families of Black-headed Herons have invaded a tall gum tree near town, and many stick nests have been built. I shall monitor the activity and the results.

A pair of Spectacled Weavers is nesting in my garden again (2<sup>nd</sup> year). The cheeping chick is being fed by both parents, as white residue on flowers below the nest is evidence of chicks being fed.

**Margaret Parrock.**

## Other areas

### Birding and ringing trip to Mahenya Communal Area and Gonarezhou 26-30

#### November 2014

The only real patch of sand forest in Zimbabwe occurs along the north bank of the Save River, in the Ndowoyo Communal Land – just before the river enters Mozambique. For this reason and the fact that Chestnut-fronted Helmet-shrike had been seen some months before – we decided to head down and investigate the possible ringing opportunities down there – and consider setting up a measured effort site to try learning something

about the birds in this special and unique patch of forest.

It so happened that the best time we could fit this in was around the Birding Big Day competition in November 2014, and as a result the ringing group joined up with the Chilo Gorge Safari Lodge staff to put in 2 teams for the day.

What transpired was in fact a rather short amount of ringing – as we did not realise the distance the forest actually was from the lodge, as

well as the fact that we had to arrange access with regard to the hunting camp operating there. Looking on the bright side, we have learnt all the info we need, and next time will know what to do and be prepared. As a result we did set up a ringing station closer to base, in the typical riverine forest one finds along Lowveld rivers.

The first afternoon post-arrival was spent preparing the net lines and getting ready for the early morning departure. Accompanying us was Chilo guide, Sam Magwai, who is a keen birder and also provided weapons defence should we need it! We very nearly did as 4 a.m. the next morning saw us shining our torches down our cleared paths and cut lines – when the sound of breaking branches and other associated elephant noises caused a return to the vehicle. After some time they moved off – though they did delay the setting up of the nets – which in ringing is rather unfortunate as the first 30 minutes before sunrise is the best for catches. We did manage to get some nets up on the other side of the vehicle, and before long we were busy ringing.

Sombre Greenbuls were a pleasant change, though possibly the most interesting was the camaropteras we were catching. This area is the overlap zone between the Grey-backed common to the north, and the Green-backed Camaroptera common to the south. We caught more Grey-backed, but did catch two Green-backed. The photograph shows a Green-backed with a grey hind neck, an interesting feature not shown or mentioned in various bird books. Altogether we ringed 20 birds, and some hands-on experience was had by the Chilo staff as well. Other interesting birds ringed were White-throated Robin-chat and Red-backed Shrike. Eastern Nicator were seen and heard all around – though we did not catch one!

Whilst enjoying a break from the early rush of birds into the nets – an unusual call was heard, and I at first thought it must be a cuckoo or something similar. A mental flick through the options did not result in a match – and that's when I thought I better check the new and unknown calls – particularly those we wanted to see. Sure enough – it was the Green Malkoha. What a unique and interesting call. I had listened to it a few days before in preparation – but didn't quite expect it right next to our ringing station. A mad dash resulted as we grabbed binos and cameras and took off into the bush. Luckily no dangerous game was in the way otherwise they may have been flattened.

Once we reached the spot we thought the call had come from we stopped to listen. Sure enough it called not far away from the top of a thick tangled creeper that had completely taken over a medium sized tree of about 10m in height. How

were we ever going to see it in there? We moved to a better spot to see it from and right on cue the bird flew into the adjacent tree, where it allowed us very good views and even a few good photographs. It didn't stay long, and soon moved on to the next thicket, but it remained vocal for some 30 minutes. Having nets up we departed quickly to go check them and resume our ringing.

Given the next day was Birding Big Day, we in fact did not ring again but as a summary to the ringing side we now know where to go and how to prepare for a ringing site in the dry forest – and it is something we hope to develop in the future. There are some great birds there, and it is a unique patch of habitat for Zimbabwe.



**Green Malkoha** *Photo D. Newmarch*

Now to the birding side. We had already seen some great birds. Just before the entrance to Chilo we had a good view of Black-bellied Bustard. Seeing these big terrestrial birds is always a good indication of ecosystem health as they move away quickly when there is too much disturbance. That afternoon, after a rest from all the early morning activity, we took a trip to the sand forest where we had a short walk along one of the tracks. Gorgeous Bush-shrikes were calling all around us, but we could not get a good view of them. However, it was amazing to see the forest, and we had a good walk down to the dry and sandy Save River. Woodland Kingfishers were calling everywhere. The channel with water in it was the other side of a large island, but with limited time we returned home to be ready for an early morning start for Birding Big Day the next day.

The two teams both travelled around the same area, just at different times as well as on different roads within the park. 4 a.m. saw us climbing into



vehicles, and my team (The Chilonatics) departed straight back to the ringing station to see if we could hear the Malkoha again before the sun came up. With no luck we made our way towards the sand forest where we wanted to spend a good hour birding. We had brief views of Gorgeous Bush-shrike, but they were calling all around us. They are very common in the forest here. We had excellent views of Narina Trogon and Red-throated Twin-spot along a path to the river. Square-tailed Drongos were fairly common in the forest, and Retz's Helmet-shrike was seen by the other team.



**Green-backed Camaroptera**  
*photo D. Newmarch*

We left the sand forest and headed back up towards Chilo Gorge Safari Lodge where there is a river crossing into the Gonarezhou National Park. For much of the year, crossing the river is not possible by car, and you have to cross by boat and then use the lodge vehicle on the other side. It was a fairly adventurous crossing with Blue-cheeked Bee-eater flying about. The first rains had fallen and so there were in fact some rather muddy patches, but we managed to progress well,

heading for the palm forest. This is another special patch of habitat in the area. Palms are common in many other Lowveld areas of Zimbabwe – but I have never come across such a large “forest” of palms before. Admittedly they are not all tall – most are about 2m in height and more of a bush than the typical long tall palm trunk. The elephants here are known to be rather aggressive, particularly in this forest but we did not have any trouble. In one clearing we came across Dickinson's Kestrel perched in a dead tree, and towards the end of the forest we picked up Collared Palm-thrush at the edge of a backwater formed from seasonal flooding of the Runde River which passes just to the south of this patch of habitat. Upon closer inspection we found Glossy Ibis and Rufous-bellied Heron here. After a short lunch break we continued on our way.

The crossing of the Runde was not quite as adventurous as the Save and we headed towards Machiniwa Pan. Here we picked up several waterbirds new for our lists – mostly common ones like Grey Heron, Great Egret and African Sacred Ibis. Elephants were abundant here and held us up a few times, though not for long. The distances and time taken to travel along the roads here is deceptive especially when birding, so we decided to try the straightest route back – but first passing the old airstrip to the west of the pan, which appears now more as open field than an airstrip. A large flock of White-faced Duck flushed from a pan some distance away; we would not have picked them up if they had not taken wing. Along this open country we picked up Secretarybird as well as the Mottled Spinetail; to complete the pair as we picked up Böhm's Spinetail earlier before crossing the Save. At this particular large baobab there were also Mosque Swallows. The famous Tambahata Pan was far larger than I was expecting – it was my first time to see it. With the arrival of the first rains most game had dispersed, though there were still elephants present. We picked up an African Spoonbill and Yellow-billed Egret here on a side pan, as well as visiting the famous hollow baobab that housed the notorious poacher, Shadreck, in the old days.

Martial Eagles were common, as were Bateleurs. African Hawk-eagle and Tawny Eagle were picked up once only. Peregrine Falcon and Green Sandpiper were specials seen by the other team and we picked up Greater Painted-snipe twice. Marsh Sandpiper were also present along the sandy water's edge at the crossing of the Save. Great views were had of Verreaux's Eagle-owl at a small pan – a pair flushed out of the large tree as we drove under it. Altogether we ticked 212 birds; the late rains meant there were hardly any migrants around. We only picked up Yellow-billed Kite and European Roller the day before

BBD – and not again. So we missed on numerous storks, raptors, and swifts which come down with ITCZ following the first big rains. Excuses, excuses! To end the evening we drove down to the Save River at 8 p.m. to try finding a few more ticks. We managed to pick up Square-tailed Nightjar and African Wood-owl as our last birds.

Our last day was spent recovering! That afternoon we went back to the sand forest and visited Zimbabwe's biggest Nyala Tree. What an amazing sight – it is almost like one of the magical trees you get in Disney movies where they have their own ecosystem on them. I was half expecting to see smurfs pop out before the appearance of the Chestnut-fronted! Returning from the tree, we came across some Gorgeous Bush-shrikes calling along the path. We all sat down and waited quietly whilst we called them up. Great views were had by most of us as they came in close to see where the competition was coming from!

A big thank you to Clive Stockil and his team at Chilo Gorge Safari Lodge for hosting us and helping us out with the ringing at silly hours of the morning. There are two very comfortable, reasonable self-catering options available at Chilo Gorge. A family house with two rooms and all facilities can be hired out daily, and then there are four very well done, well positioned chalets with ensuite bathrooms looking over the Save River – serviced by a central kitchen and dining area. There is a small pool to cool off in, and gas cookers and electrical fridge/freezers are on site. All facilities are serviced by staff during the day and one can have a really comfortable holiday here with great birding all around! The far northern section of Gonarezhou is different to much of the area around the Chipinda Pools – Chilolo Cliffs area. It is more open mixed woodland with big old trees and dense riverine patches, and access is by far the easiest from Chilo Gorge Lodge. For more information on Chilo Gorge Safari Lodge and to book:

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

Here is a great video clip of Chilo Gorge and Machiniwa Pan taken from a drone:

<http://youtu.be/Xs7AkGNYrUI>

**Damian Newmarch**

## **A quick visit to Nottingham Estate, Beitbridge District, 15-16 October 2014.**

We had to go to a wedding in Lydenburg, RSA, so we decided to overnight at Nottingham Estate. We stayed at the Fishing Camp next to their dam, built in 1993, and 7 km long, it stores water for their orange plantations.

Our hostess Nella, asked if we would like to go out on their pontoon fishing boat. Certainly. In the time available we never got more than 1 km from our lodge.

Our first nest seen was a Grey Heron with two well grown chicks, then two other nests of Goliath Herons, on top of different islands, the last nest found was a Squacco Heron with two eggs. Other good birds were 10 African Darter, 2 Hadedda Ibis, 6 African Spoonbill, 2 Giant and one Malachite Kingfisher.

In the few hours available to us, we didn't manage a big bird list, but some of them near the dam were Southern Carmine Bee-eater, Meves's Starling, Yellow-bellied Greenbul, Meyer's Parrot, Marico Sunbird, Familiar Chat, Southern Black Tit and Dark Chanting-goshawk.

For our supper we went to the Fly Camp 26 km away. We saw the animals coming down to eat the citrus which is put out for them 6 months of the year. These were elephant, eland, kudu, impala, warthog and baboons. Extra birds seen here were Kori Bustard, Black-chested Snake-eagle, Mocking Cliff-chat, Orange-breasted Bush-shrike and Freckled Nightjar, heard.

Other animals seen on the farm were Dassie, Civet, Scrub hare, Steenbok, Waterbuck, Banded Mongoose and 12 Hippo with Red-billed Oxpeckers.

For a story on Nottingham Estate read Ant Williams in the African Fisherman Vol. 25, No 2 p 1 and pp 26-29.

We thoroughly recommend the place if you want to stop this side of the border –

[bookings@nottinghamestate.co.za](mailto:bookings@nottinghamestate.co.za)

**David and Penny Rockingham-Gill**

[rgill@zol.co.zw](mailto:rgill@zol.co.zw)

## **Tail Feathers**

### **Bird ringing**

A **Thrush Nightingale** was caught and ringed at Jean Blake's house on Sugarloaf Hill, Glen Lorne, Harare on 7 December 2014.

**Nick Hart** [nick@hartofperth.com](mailto:nick@hartofperth.com)

One of BLZ's themes this year is '**Vultures**' and this is an edited version of information via Clive Stockil.



The recent report below does have some implications for African vultures and other bird species, particularly those used for witchcraft when the birds are handled as they are beheaded. This methodology could be used in South Africa where poisoned vultures are often found beheaded and law enforcement may already have a decent database of the fingerprints of wildlife criminals?

### **Scientists say they have made a forensic breakthrough in the fight against wildlife crime.**

A team from the University of Abertay, Dundee has been able to recover fingerprints from the feathers of birds of prey, which are under threat from illegal poisoning, shooting and trapping. If the birds have been handled, the incriminating marks could help police to identify the suspect. The team has shown for the first time that the incriminating marks can be lifted from the birds' feathers using fluorescent powders. The team was able to recover prints from the feathers of six species that they tested: kestrels, sparrowhawks, buzzards, red kites, golden eagles and white-tailed eagles.

The research is published in the journal *Science and Justice*.

The RSPB's latest figures reveal that in 2013 there were more than 120 confirmed incidents of shooting, trapping and poisoning of birds of prey in the UK. It is a problem also seen elsewhere in Europe and in other parts of the world. But scientists say that if the dead birds have been handled, possibly when they were discarded, crucial fingerprint evidence can now be gathered.

"We found the best way of doing it was to use the flight feathers: they sustain a fingerprint because they have a nice tight weave to them," said Dr Dennis Gentles, lead scientist.

The researchers also recovered fingerprints from eggs using black magnetic powder, which could help police to track down and prosecute illegal collectors.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-30802401>

A number of witchcraft-related issues have been popping up recently – a senior biologist at the Kenya Wildlife Service indicated that the trade in owl eggs is set to become the next quail egg craze. The market for quail eggs in Kenya saw explosive growth a couple of years ago based on false claims that they are a cure-all for most ailments. Owl eggs have been in high demand for a number of years in Kenya, but despite efforts almost no law enforcement action has been taken. Apparently the demand for owl eggs is now exploding. The prices are high and much of this demand has stemmed from Tanzania as their

witchdoctors regularly use owl eggs mostly as a 'cure' for cancer and AIDS. Of course, there are no medicinal properties of owl eggs, but our (Kenya) owls continue to be persecuted and populations have definitely declined due to this trade.

There was a recent report on the BBC that Tanzania had outlawed witchcraft because of the long-term problem of albinos being harvested for body parts for use in witchcraft. This of course is the same story that has been coming out of South Africa in regards to use of vulture parts. The outlawing of witchcraft will probably only drive the practice underground and make it more difficult to get information but time will tell if it may also have a positive knock-on effect for wildlife.

Dennis Gentles said: "We use fluorescent powder because fluorescent powder will glow if it's put under a laser light, and because it glows it separates itself completely from the background. That makes it nice and clear to record and hopefully identify as someone's particular fingerprint."

He added: "Before we've had birds of prey found lying at the bottom of a steep mountain and wondered how they've got there, people have been able to analyse them to see the cause of death. But if they look at the bird now and fingerprint the flight feathers, they will be able to see if the bird has actually been handled.

"If they find a fingerprint this would raise suspicions and it may even identify the person who has handled this bird and disposed of it in this way."

Ian Thomson from RSPB Scotland said: "While government laboratory testing has made it relatively straightforward to identify the cause of death of the victims in many cases, identifying the perpetrator of offences that often take place in some of the remotest areas of our countryside continues to be very difficult."

The scientists were also able to recover fingerprints from golden eagle eggs.

He said the study was a 'step forward' in the development of forensic techniques.

### **Breaking News**

We received word today of a first for the sub-region: a **Grasshopper Buzzard** located Ngamo Pans in the far **south-eastern section of Hwange National Park** on 7 December 2014 by Brendan Ryan. The Grasshopper Buzzard was spotted in a flock of Yellow-billed Kites feeding on the ground. Brendan Ryan was at Ngamo for a week but only saw it the one time. On 9 December a major rain front came through and with it came more than a hundred Lesser Spotted Eagles, about ten Steppe Eagles, more than 500

Abdim's Storks, a big flock of Amur Falcons and a handful of Eurasian Hobbies and Lesser Kestrels.

**Red-throated Twinspot** seen this morning (18 Dec 2014) by BLZ member Norman Kennaird for



**Grasshopper Buzzard**

Ngamo is phenomenal for migrant raptors in December. That's when the first rains usually arrive bringing out huge swarms of flying termites which the eagles go for along with Amur Falcons, European Bee-eaters, Southern Carmine Bee-eaters, etc.

From: **Trevor Hardaker** [hardaker@mweb.co.za](mailto:hardaker@mweb.co.za)  
Date: Tue, Dec 9, 2014 at 7:58 AM  
Subject: **MEGA ALERT from SARBN**  
To: [sa-rarebirdnews@googlegroups.com](mailto:sa-rarebirdnews@googlegroups.com)

**BLACKCAP** – news just in is that a male bird was located around midday yesterday at Seldomseen in the Vumba in Zimbabwe. It was calling quite a bit and also seen briefly. Reported by Matthew Axelrod and Faansie Peacock.

### **Buff-spotted Flufftail at Monavale**

The rains over Christmas and New Year have given the Monavale vlei its best flooding for years. On the morning of 2<sup>nd</sup> January there were at least 15 Streaky-breasted Flufftails calling. A Buff-spotted Flufftail has also taken up residence in the thickets on the Soper property that overlooks the vlei and its long drawn out call can be heard in the evenings.

**Alex Masterson**



the first time in his garden in Glenara (15 km outside Harare on the Mazowe Rd.)

### **Bath time for a Purple-crested Turaco**



**Photo George Fleet**





**African Pygmy-goose at Rainham Dam on 10<sup>th</sup> January**

**photo James Ball**

### **Birds' Breakfast – re-cycling left-overs**

Birds seem to be especially fond of porridge but also like a variety of leftover foods. Try this mix – soak 1 cup dog biscuits/meal and 1 cup of left-over porridge – oats, mealie meal, Cerevita or other left-overs in enough hot water to make a fairly stiff consistency and cool. Put the mixture in a flat dish out of reach of other animals and see who comes for breakfast.

Or you could even spoil them and attract the fruit-eaters as well with those 'brown' fruits that no-one really wants to eat and make an apple/fruit 'pie'... in a flat dish layer squashed up over-ripe apples/bananas and/or other fruit, left-over porridge, peanuts and sunflower or other seeds.

## **A new endemic species for Zambia, the White-chested Tinkerbird (*Pogoniulus makawai*)**

Ian Riddell

With recent reinvestigation<sup>1</sup> into the Black-chinned Tinkerbird this tiny barbet's status as a new species has been given a boost, with the synonym White-chested Tinkerbird taking precedence in HBW and BirdLife International's *Illustrated checklist of the birds of the world*. This contentious little bird is known from single specimen collected 4 miles north of Mayau, Kabompo District, NW Zambia, and has been considered an aberrant individual of the Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird *P. bilineatus*, which is widely spread from Senegambia across to East Africa and down to eastern South Africa.

We know the latter, of course, from the eastern highlands.

We first find mention of the 'White-chested Tinkerbird' in *Honeyguide* No. 63 in Benson's tribute to Jali Makawa, his renowned field collector who collected many thousands of specimens. Michael Irwin wrote an obituary to Jali Makawa in *Honeyguide* 42(3) and I include his quote, "I can always remember too, his slight figure in the far distance walking down the track where we had camped in the *Cryptosepalum* forest in northern Kabompo and looking rather puzzled at the tinker barbet in his hand which he (or nobody else) had ever seen before and that was to become the unique type of *Pogoniulus makawai*."

• <sup>1</sup> Collar, N.J. & Fishpool, L.D.C. (2006)

What is *Pogoniulus makawai*? *Bull. Afr. Bird Club* 13: 18–27.

It is suggested that is distributed in NW Zambia and adjacent Angola where suitable dense, evergreen *Cryptosepalum* thicket occurs.

Notes from *HBW Alive* on its status follow:

**Stratus and conservation:**

Not globally threatened. Currently considered to be Data Deficient, primarily due to questions over its taxonomic status, however it is also the case that the species is known solely from the type specimen ... with open questions concerning in precisely what habitat type it was collected and whether the few subsequent searches since then have been appropriately focused. Despite these surveys, the habitat around the type locality is by no means uniform and plainly has been modified since the 1960s, while efforts to rediscover the bird, although considerable, have not been exhaustive, since large areas of *Cryptosepalum* forest (in which it is believed the holotype was collected), extremely difficult habitat in which to work, have never been visited. *P. makawai* is currently judged by BirdLife International to be a rare, relict species, known only the bird collected at Mayau in NW Zambia, but it is also

possible that it was collected in riverine forest along the Mayau R, in which case *makawai* may occupy a more restricted habitat, or was a straggler from somewhat different habitats in adjacent Angola. *P. bilineatus* also occurs at the type locality of *makawai*, at the limit of its range, making it possible that *makawai* replaces it in Angola and Democratic Republic of Congo. Although treated as an aberrant *P. bilineatus* by many authorities, the case for its validity as a distinct species has recently been argued comprehensively. Intensive surveys at the type locality (and further N & W), which lies within an Important Bird Area, covering any slight variations in the structure of *Cryptosepalum* forest caused by water or topographical features, and paying special attention to mistletoes, are urgently required. *Cryptosepalum* thickets are sparsely populated outside West Lunga National Park and are difficult to clear for agriculture, so its habitat would appear not to be threatened, although fire is a potential risk as it has affected nearby areas. The most extensive areas of suitable habitat are in Lukwakwa Game Management Area.

**Bird feeders** for sale (US\$12) at BirdLife Zimbabwe office, 35 Clyde Rd, Eastlea, Harare. It a product made by one of our members of Vumba Site Support Group (VSSG). The VSSG is a group of voluntary community members who promote conservation of birds and biodiversity in Vumba Highlands KBA.



Contributions for *The Babbler* 123 April 2015/ May 2015 may be sent to the editor anytime between now and 14<sup>th</sup> March 2015.