



# THE BABBLER

Newsletter of BirdLife Zimbabwe

*June - July 2017*  
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## Hi everyone,

The bulk of this newsletter has the results of the January IWC wetland counts. Not many sites were covered so it is hoped that everyone will make a concerted effort to cover their usual spots in the July count.

The eBird Global Big Day happened on 13 May - you can see how we fared on page 13.

And how about contributing to the ADU Photos of weaver nests project! See the appeal on page 14.

Don't forget to send in pictures and news to brighten up the newsletter - anything is gratefully received.

Happy Birding,

Ian Riddell [gemsaf@mango.zw](mailto:gemsaf@mango.zw)

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# Important – changes to Membership Secretary

At the end of May I will be giving up my positions as Honorary National Membership Secretary and Honorary Council Secretary. I have been carrying out this voluntary work for BLZ for many years, but personal commitments now require my attention.

*I would like to thank everyone for their support over the years and trust you will continue to 'pay your subs please' without me giving some of you not so gentle nudges!*

For the moment Sylvia Muzavazi at the national office will be handling payments and publications distribution and Julia Pierini will be responsible for sending the reminders, notices of activities and *The Babbler* via e-mail. Please contact Sylvia on 04-481496 or e-mail [sylvia@blz.co.zw](mailto:sylvia@blz.co.zw) or Julia on 0772-894562 or e-mail [juliapierini@birdlifezimbabwe.org](mailto:juliapierini@birdlifezimbabwe.org) for membership-related issues. I will of course forward any correspondence that comes to me.

The position of Council Secretary is vacant and if any member is interested in volunteering, please contact Julia. We need someone to take the minutes for the forthcoming AGM please – you need to be fairly computer-literate!

BLZ appreciates your continued support for our conservation work which includes – saving species; conserving sites and habitats; encouraging ecological sustainability and empowering people for positive change. Please encourage other birders to join us – it is vital we conserve the environment – no nature, no birds.

Remember to see all about us on our website [www.birdlifezimbabwe.org](http://www.birdlifezimbabwe.org) and on our Facebook page, where you can see some great pics and interesting news. We are always happy to hear from members around the country, so if you see anything unusual we would love to hear about it – and if you have a pic, even better!

Best wishes and happy birding!

Carolyn

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## Branch News

### Mashonaland

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#### ***Branch visit to Aldington Farm, Harare South, Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> March 2017***

This 2,500 ha farm is situated on the Mhondoro Road about 40 km south of Harare. It was established as a tobacco-producing enterprise by an ex-British Army officer in the 50s but now also has beef and dairy cattle and 3 dams to supply water needs. There is evidence of the early activity in the form of abandoned seed beds beside the river surrounded by gum plots to supply fuel for curing the tobacco.

Our group of a dozen or so was met by Mass Kirk, the owner, who was to lead the day's walk, initially at a brisk pace that some of us were unable to match and led to a splinter group developing. We began at the most

recently established dam, very attractive with its rafts of Water Lilies but few birds except for a couple of Black Crakes and a resident croc that had already taken 2 unfortunate fish poachers. There was an abundance of kite spiders as we traversed the secondary growth miombo woodland and patches of Msasa Moths on the trees but still few birds. On our way along the shore we visited an area used for motor-cycle and 4x4 challenges which involved driving through an area of rocky kopjes difficult to find a way through even on foot.



**Msasa moth caterpillars**

The main dam was less than full, the wall having been deliberately breached in the recent storms. Nevertheless this favoured the birds and we saw Wood Sandpiper, Three-banded Plover, African Wattled Lapwing, Hamerkop, Green-backed Heron, Pied Kingfisher and Malachite Kingfisher and Egyptian Goose were standing in the breach. A Mocking Cliff-chat was spotted on a granite outcrop and Barn Swallows and Wire-tailed Swallows flew around us. At one point an Ovambo Sparrowhawk circled over the gums and

headed away upstream. Just where we reached our turn-around point and on the fringes of the woodland, other species appeared, like White-breasted Cuckooshrike and Black Cuckooshrike, Red-headed Weaver, African Paradise-flycatcher, Willow Warbler and Village Weaver. On our way back Yellow-throated Longclaw, Zitting Cisticola and Rufous-naped Lark called from the grassland and European Bee-eater were overhead.

The two groups reunited at the family's campsite for the coffee break. Those who had dropped off the main party earlier had spent some time birding on the shoreline and managed to see that rarity these days, an African Darter, plus White-faced Duck and African Black Duck. Our list of about 50 was augmented by species seen on the previous day by Mass and Richard and the total reached 77. We thanked the Kirks for hosting us at an attractive venue quite close to the capital city and were back at home for lunch.

**Ken Dixon**

### **Visit to Bryden Country School, Chegutu, Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> May, 2017**

Two new venues in one weekend: Sunday saw 8 of us travelling southwest 103 km to Chegutu. In February, Howard and Jan Matthews came to see what all the fuss was about on Monavale Vlei in Harare as they had a plan to protect a wetland area near the Mupfure River opposite their school. At the time, they kindly invited us for this visit and when we got there also marshalled several local birders to show us round.

We arrived just before 8 a.m. and enjoyed tea, coffee and muffins in the well-manicured school gardens before setting off through the abandoned fields on the north side of the A5. It seemed a shame to quit the school grounds which were alive with birdsong but we had a long walk ahead. The former farmlands were covered by a regrowth of scrub about 2 m high, mainly Sickle Bush, home to lots of common birds like White-bellied Sunbird, Terrestrial Brownbul, White-browed Scrub-robin and Bearded Scrub-robin, Red-headed Weaver,

Chin-spot Batis, Black-crowned Tchagra and Brown-crowned Tchagra among others.

Eventually, the track led us unannounced to a wetland surrounded by woodland. This area had been flooded to knee-depth until recently but was now lush grass. There we found Zitting Cisticola, Grey Heron, African Fish-eagle and a Marabou Stork, plus Orange-breasted Waxbill. Back into trees, but this time tall riverine habitat, and at last the Mupfure River. There were two Hamerkops, Red-faced Cisticolas and that Grey Heron but nothing else.

The return route took us at first through mature riverine woodland containing White-browed Robin-chat and White-throated Robin-chat, Yellow-breasted Apalis, Lizard Buzzard, Purple-banded Sunbird, Red-billed Firefinch, Grey Go-away-bird and a Lesser Honeybird on the power line. Throughout the walk the fundis evinced great enthusiasm about the trees, butterflies and insects, of which there

certainly was a wide variety. We finally reached the main gate of the school at about 11.30 and by now it was hotter than in Harare in May. We were delighted to rest on the Head Teacher's verandah and enjoy a drink and a selection of biscuits and cakes. After a rest we counted 83 species, thanked our kind hosts and most of the group set off back to Harare leaving the Shadwell family to make a tour of the school grounds with some boarders and add to our list. I'll hand over to them for the last chapter.

With a small group of bored boarders as company we made our way around the cross-country path, following the perimeter of the school. We were shown a large acacia tree along the fence where Spotted Eagle-owls nested, though the tree was empty at the time. Carrying on across the sports fields we were hoping to find a roller perched in the gum trees

but alas, he was nowhere to be found. Alongside the fields there was a large open area with the grass cut short that attracted some seedeaters and swallows including Steel-blue Widowfinches, Bronze Mannikins, Streaky-headed Seedeaters, Southern Grey-headed Sparrows and quite a few Grey-rumped Swallows looking for nest-holes.

We made our way further around without seeing much of interest, and were then taken to be shown the colony of the Little Swifts under the verandah roof of the school hall. Alongside one of the quads there were a few Bauhinias in full flower and full of sunbirds including White-bellied, Scarlet-chested Sunbird and Miombo Double-collared Sunbird. We gave our thanks and left the boys to their lunch before heading back to Harare after a tiring but lovely time courtesy of Bryden Country School!

**Ken Dixon and Patrick Shadwell**

## Mashonaland West

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The very wet season has changed to cold dark days and temperatures dropping. The leaves on the trees are changing colour and falling. Are we beginning a long, cold winter?

Our avifauna friends are variable and take time to move around each day so activity is delayed. The Black-headed Heron heronry has quietened considerably with less noise and fewer birds. Where have they gone?

Theo Olivier and friends were boating on Claw dam on 9<sup>th</sup> May. The Giant Kingfisher and Pied Kingfisher were the only water birds. The dam water level is at maximum so there is hardly any shoreline for wading birds. But

gold panning along the water edge upstream is disturbing animals and birds alike.

The White-bellied Sunbirds in my garden are feeding profusely in the Chinese lantern shrub (*Holmskioldia*) so nectar is plentiful. A scruffy-looking Crested Barbet was hungrily eating a cut orange on the bird table. Our suburban birds are few in variety and numbers. A group of 7 Green Wood-hoopoes were harshly chattering to each other in a high tree and the African Hoopoe is also making himself heard, whilst the Lilac-breasted Rollers are enjoying the dry atmosphere.

So Kadoma and district continue with keenness and enthusiasm.

**Margaret Parrock**



*To all our wetland and waterbird counters – we hope to receive your valuable support for the July counts, country-wide.*

*These should be done as close to middle of July as you are able, the weekend of 15<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> being conveniently placed.*



# IWC Wetlands counts – January 2017

The response for the January 2017 counts was quite poor with only 47 sites (Table 1) counted, as against 104 in 2016. Certainly, where counts were done, the diversity and number of species was quite low. The heavy rains no doubt had something to do with it and wader shorelines were reduced or absent in some cases. By mid-January many areas had received heavy rain or floods, though others were still low. Khami was full in mid-January but the Lower Ncema dam was still low (16.7%) but by mid-February filled for the first time in 17 years. 4 Hwange site were unreachable due to flood

conditions and 1 Matopos dam was dry. Ramsar sites, such as the Manyame lakes, Monavale, etc., were not counted and neither was Aisleby in Bulawayo, the only site covered there being SAST.

Don't forget that any sudden influx of waterbirds at any time of the year is of interest so please do send them in.

40 volunteers participated and they are thanked for their efforts.

Species totals and the number of sites visited can be found in Table 2. 4,821 birds were counted, compared with 21,195 in January 2016 (i.e. 22.7%).

## Anseriformes (Anatidae): ducks and geese

### White-faced Duck *Dendrocygna viduata*

107 at Mazvikadei dam was the largest concentration, followed by 53 at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary, 35 at Lanark Farm (Irvines) North dams and 34 at Chingahobe Dam, Hwange. The remainder ranged from 2-16.

### White-backed Duck *Thalassornis leuconotus*

Mandavu dam had the greatest number with 6 birds, the remaining sites had 2 each (Clifton farm dam, Deteema Dam/Pan, Mazvikadei Dam, Whitewaters Dam).

### Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiaca*

A widespread duck found at 29 sites (62%). The bulk of the birds occurred at Ngamo Pans where 206 (37%) were counted. 81 were counted at Mandavu Dam and 76 on the Nyanyana Shoreline.

### Spur-winged Goose *Plectropterus gambensis*

No flocks were found; only recorded as ones and twos.

### African Comb Duck *Sarkidiornis melanotos*

17 at Lower Ncema Dam was the only large group, the remainder between 1-7 (average 2.5) birds.



### Hottentot Teal *Anas hottentota*

Only recorded at Hwange with 26 at Ngamo Pans and 2 at Salt Pans Dam.

### Red-billed Teal *Anas erythrorhyncha*

Found at 21 sites (45%). 37 were at Crowborough Farm, 12 at Camp Hwange, 11 at Somavundhla Pan and 10 at Mbisa Pans/Plain. The remainder ranged between 1-8.

## Podicipediformes (Podicipedidae): grebes

### Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

No large numbers recorded in the absence of counts on the Manyame lakes and Aisleby. 8 at Ngamo Pans and between 1-3 at other sites.

## Gruiformes (Heliornithidae – Gruidae): finfoots, flufftails, rails, crakes, gallinules, moorhens, coots, cranes

### Red-chested Flufftail *Sarothrura rufa*

Singles at Greengrove and Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary.

### Black Crake *Amaurornis flavirostris*

Apart from numbers between 1-7 at 7 sites, 36 were at Mazvikadei Dam and 12 at Lanark.

**African Purple Swamphen *Porphyrio madagascariensis***

7 at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary, with 2 and 1 at Greengrove Nature Reserve and SAST respectively.

**Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus***

26 at Mazvikadei Dam was the highest count, all others between 1-9.

**Ciconiiformes (Ciconiidae): storks**

**Marabou Stork *Leptoptilos crumeniferus***

13 at Mandavu Dam and 1 at Camp Hwange.

**Yellow-billed Stork *Mycteria ibis***

Low numbers with 6 each at Mandavu Dam and Ngamo Pans, 2 on the Nyanyana Shoreline.

**Abdim's Stork *Ciconia abdimii***

80 at Ngamo Pans, 44 at Hippo Pools and 21 at Country Club Golf Course were the higher numbers.

**Red-knobbed Coot *Fulica cristata***

Low numbers recorded, the largest being 6 at Ngamo Pans.

**Grey Crowned Crane *Balearica regulorum***

Apart from 2 at Widgeon Pan all were between 1-3 at Hwange sites.

**Woolly-necked Stork *Ciconia episcopus***

74 at Ngamo Pans, 15 at Camp Hwange and 7 at Somavundhla Pan, all in Hwange N.P.

**White Stork *Ciconia ciconia***

Only 39 at Ngamo Pans and 9 at Camp Hwange.

**Saddle-billed Stork *Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis***

Low counts with 2 at Back Pan, Hwange and 1 at Lanark Farm.

**Pelecaniformes (Threskiornithidae – Pelecanidae): spoonbills, ibises, bitterns, herons, egrets, Hamerkop, pelicans**

**African Spoonbill *Platalea alba***

46 at Ngamo Pans, 4 at Mandavu Dam and 1 at Chingahobe Dam, all Hwange N.P.

**African Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus***

29 at Ngamo Pans was the highest count, followed by 13 at Crowborough Farm, 10 at SAST, and lesser numbers at other sites.



**Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus***

The highest count was 11 at Mazvikadei Dam, followed by singles at 5 other sites.

**Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus***

3 at Hippo Pools, 2 each at Greengrove Nature Reserve and Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary and singles at Lanark Farm and Mazvikadei Dam.

**White-backed Night-heron *Gorsachius leuconotus***

A single at Hippo Pools in December.

**Green-backed Heron *Butorides striata***

The highest count was 4 at Hippo Pools, with between 1-3 at 7 other sites.

**Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides***

18 at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary, 14 at Mazvikadei Dam and between 2-6 at 5 other sites.

**Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis***

149 at Nyanyana Shoreline was a high count, the next highest being 85 at Crowborough Farm followed by 70 at Lanark Farm, 65 at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary and 44 at Mazvikadei Dam. The remaining counts were between 1-31.

**Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea***

29 and 28 at Nyanyana Shoreline and Mandavu Dam were the only high counts, the remaining 8 sites with between 1-4 birds.

**Black-headed Heron *Ardea melanocephala***

12 at Mazvikadei Ponds and 9 at Mazvikadei Dam were the highest counts, all others between 1-3.

**Goliath Heron *Ardea goliath***

Low numbers with 2 at Nyanyana Shoreline and 1 each at Mandavu Dam and Mazvikadei Dam.

**Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea***

20 at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary and 9 at Mazvikadei Dam.

**Great Egret *Ardea alba***

11 at Mandavu Dam was the only count with over 10 birds, the other sites with 1-5 birds.

**Yellow-billed Egret *Ardea brachyrhyncha***

10 at Lanark Farm and 1 each at Mazvikadei Dam and Salt Pans Dam.

**Black Heron *Egretta ardesiaca***

41 at Mazvikadei Dam was the only high count, 1-4 were at 3 other sites.

**Little Egret *Egretta garzetta***

19 at Mazvikadei Dam, 13 at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary and 10 at Mandavu Dam, with 1-2 at 4 other sites.

**Hamerkop *Scopus umbretta***

4 at Hippo Pools, between 1-2 at 6 other sites.

**Suliformes (Phalacrocoracidae – Anhingidae): cormorants, darters**

**Reed Cormorant *Microcarbo africanus***

124 at Mazvikadei Dam. All other sites were considerably less with a maximum of 33 at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary.

**White-breasted Cormorant *Phalacrocorax lucidus***

284 was the high count at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary, the 7 other sites produced between 1-7

birds. Mazvikadei Dam with its high count of Reed Cormorants only had 7.

**African Darter *Anhinga rufa***

Low counts recorded: 5 on Nyanyana Shoreline, 4 on Mazvikadei Dam, 1 each at Mandavu and Mpopoma Dams.

**Charadriiformes (Burhinidae – Recurvirostridae): thick-knees, avocets, stilts**

**Water Thick-knee *Burhinus vermiculatus***

Nyanyana Shoreline produced 10, the 7 other sites between 1-5.

**Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus***

15 at Salt Pans Dam, 9 at Chingahobe Dam, and between 1-7 at the 5 other sites.

**Charadriiformes (Charadriidae): plovers, lapwings**

**Kittlitz's Plover *Charadrius pecuarius***

15 at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary, between 1-7 at 5 other sites.

**Crowned Lapwing *Vanellus coronatus***

10 and 9 at Ngamo and Scotts Pans, Hwange. Singles at Lanark Farm and Somavundhla Pan.

**Three-banded Plover *Charadrius tricollaris***

12 at Salt Pans Dam, ones or twos at 8 other site.

**African Wattled Lapwing *Vanellus senegallus***

10 at Mazvikadei Dam and 8 at Lanark Farm, the remaining 7 sites with 1-6 birds.

**Blacksmith Lapwing *Vanellus armatus***

A widely recorded species found at 29 sites (62%). SAST produced 70 and Nyanyana shoreline 60. The other sites had from 1-27 birds.

**Charadriiformes (Rostratulidae – Jacanidae): painted-snipe, jacanas**

**African Jacana *Actophilornis africanus***

Found at 21 sites, the highest count being 206 at Mazvikadei Dam. Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary had 44 and the remaining sites had between 1-36.

**Charadriiformes (Scolopacidae): sandpipers, snipes**

**Ruff *Philomachus pugnax***

39 at Salt Pans Dam, Hwange, the other 5 sites with 1-8 birds.

**Little Stint *Calidris minuta***

30 at Salt Pans Dam, 10 at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary and 2 at Crowborough Farm.



**Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos***

Numbers ranged between 1-5 at 6 sites.

**Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia***

Numbers ranged between 1-6 at 6 sites.

**Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola***

More widely found at 18 sites. The only appreciable numbers were 17 at Mazvikadei Dam

and 10 at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary, the remainder between 1-7.

**Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis***

Only found at 3 sites, 4 at Mazvikadei Dam, 2 at Salt Pans Dam and 1 at Chingahobe Dam.

**Charadriiformes (Glareolidae): coursers, pratincoles**

**Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola***

Only found in Hwange with 87 at Salt Pans Dam and 16 at Mandavu Dam.

**Charadriiformes (Laridae): skimmers, gulls, terns**

**Grey-headed Gull *Larus cirrocephalus***

5 at Nyanyana Shoreline, singles at 3 other sites.

**White-winged Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus***

6 and 3 from Salt Pans Dam and Masuma Pan/Dam, Hwange.

**Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida***

All records from 7 Hwange sites, the highest being 10 at Dwarf Goose Pan.

**Accipitriformes (Pandionidae): Osprey**

**Osprey *Pandion haliaetus***

3 at Mazvikadei Dam and 1 at Mandavu Dam.

**Accipitriformes (Accipitridae): kites, harriers, fish-eagles**

**Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus***

1 each at Greengrove Nature Reserve and Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary.

**African Fish-eagle *Haliaeetus vocifer***

10 at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary, between 1-8 at 13 other sites.

**Yellow-billed Kite *Milvus migrans parasitus* (*Milvus aegyptius*)**

**Coraciiformes (Meropidae): bee-eaters**

**Southern Carmine Bee-eater *Merops nubicoides***

Only recorded in Hwange, 12 being the highest number.

**Coraciiformes (Alcedinidae): kingfishers**

**Malachite Kingfisher *Alcedo cristata***

5 at Mazvikadei Dam, 4 at Mazvikadei Ponds and 1 at SAST.

**Giant Kingfisher *Megaceryle maximus***

9 at Mazvikadei Dam, the remainder being singles at 4 other sites.



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### Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis*

35 at Mazvikadei Dam, between 1-8 at 8 other sites.

### Motacillidae: longclaws, wagtails

Yellow-throated Longclaw *Macronyx croceus*

6 at Lanark Farm, 4 at Mazvikadei Dam and 2 at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary.

African Pied Wagtail *Motacilla aguimp*

Between 1-4 at 4 sites.

### Sylviidae (Old World warblers)

Little Rush-warbler *Bradypterus baboecala*  
8 at SAST and 2-3 at 3 other sites.

African Reed-warbler *Acrocephalus baeticatus*

5 at SAST, 1-2 at 3 other sites.

Great Reed-warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*

Singles at SAST and Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary.

Lesser Swamp-warbler *Acrocephalus gracilirostris*

Ranging from 1-6 at 6 sites.

### Ploceidae: queleas, bishops, widowbirds, weavers

Thick-billed Weaver *Amblyospiza albifrons*  
8 at Mazvikadei Dam and 5 at Country Club Golf Course.

Southern Red Bishop *Euplectes orix*

Between 1-12 at 5 sites. It is likely that females are undercounted.

**Table 1. Sites covered in the January 2017 counts**

Site name	District	Date	Status
Airstrip 2	Hwange	20 Jan	
Big Toms, Hwange	Hwange	4 Jan	Unreachable
Broken Rifle Pan, Hwange	Hwange	28 Jan	
Camp Hwange, Hwange	Hwange	24 Jan	
Chingahobe Dam, Hwange	Hwange	4 Jan	
Chitampa Dam	Matobo	14 Jan	
Clifton farm dam	Chegutu	28 Jan	
Country Club Golf Course	Harare	20 Jan	
Crocodile Pools, Hwange	Hwange	4 Jan	Unreachable
Crowborough Farm	Harare	28 Jan	
Detema Dam/Pan (Detema), Hwange	Hwange	4 Jan	
Dwarf Goose Pan, Hwange	Hwange	21 Jan	
Greengrove Nature Reserve	Harare	29 Jan	
Hippo Pools	Shamva	30 Dec	
		28 Jan	
Inyankuni Dam, Esigodini	Umzingwane	28 Jan	
Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary	Zvimba	15 Jan	
Lanark Farm (Irvines) North dams	Seke	30 Jan	
Little Somavundhla pans, Hwange	Hwange	28 Jan	
Little Toms, Hwange	Hwange	4 Jan	Unreachable

Site name	District	Date	Status
Lower Ncema Dam, Esigodini	Umzingwane	27 Jan	
		28 Jan	
Madingazulu Dam, Matopos	Matobo	14 Jan	
Madison Pan, Hwange	Hwange	23 Jan	
Mandavu Dam	Hwange	24 Jan	
Mandundumela Pan, Hwange	Hwange	24 Jan	
Manzichisa, Hwange	Hwange	4 Jan	
Manzimbomvo Pan, Hwange	Hwange	4 Jan	Unreachable
Masuma Pan/Dam, Hwange	Hwange	24 Jan	
Mazvikadei Dam	Zvimba	6 Jan	
Mazvikadei Ponds	Zvimba	8 Jan	
Mbisa Pans/Plain, Hwange	Hwange	25 Jan	
Mbonisa Weir, Falcon College	Umzingwane	13 Feb	
Mesilume Dam, Matopos	Matobo	14 Jan	
Mpopoma Dam, Matopos	Matobo	14 Jan	
Nantwich Camp & Dam, Hwange	Hwange	5 Jan	
Ngamo Pans, Hwange	Hwange	30 Jan	
Ngweshla Pans, Hwange	Hwange	29 Jan	
Nswatugi Dam, Matopos	Matobo	14 Jan	Dry
Nyanyana Shoreline, Kariba	Kariba	28 Jan	
Pans 2-3 km NE of Makalolo Pan, Hwange (Back Pan)	Hwange	21 Jan	
Salt Pans Dam, Hwange	Hwange	4 Jan	
SAST (Khami sewage works)	Bulawayo	4 Feb	
Scotts Pan, Hwange	Hwange	31 Jan	
Shumba pumped pan, Hwange	Hwange	21 Jan	
Somavundhla Pan, Hwange	Hwange	22 Jan	
Upper Ncema Dam, Esigodini	Umzingwane	29 Jan	
Whitewaters Dam, Matopos	Matobo	14 Jan	
Widgeon Pan	Gutu	10 Feb	

**Table 2. Species totals, excluding recounts, by site (including sub-sites) in January 2017. Single site records, not mentioned above, are given here.**

Species	No. of waterbirds	(no. of sites)	Single site
White-faced Duck	56	12	
Fulvous Duck	12	1	Ngamo Pans
White-backed Duck	14	5	
Maccoa Duck	2	1	Ngamo Pans
Egyptian Goose	555	29	
Spur-winged Goose	13	8	
African Comb Duck	45	12	
Southern Pochard	4	3	
Hottentot Teal	28	2	
African Black Duck	1	1	Mbonisa Weir
Red-billed Teal	131	21	
Little Grebe	27	12	
White-browed Coucal	2	1	Mazvikadei Ponds
African Finfoot	2	1	Hippo Pools
African Rail	1	1	Mazvikadei Dam
Red-chested Flufftail	2	2	
Black Crake	78	9	

Species	No. of waterbirds	(no. of sites)	Single site
African Purple Swamphen	10	3	
Allen's Gallinule	1	1	Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary
Common Moorhen	64	10	
Red-knobbed Coot	10	3	
Grey Crowned Crane	21	10	
Marabou Stork	14	2	
Yellow-billed Stork	14	3	
African Openbill	3	2	
Abdim's Stork	161	6	
Woolly-necked Stork	96	3	
White Stork	48	2	
Saddle-billed Stork	3	2	
African Spoonbill	51	3	
African Sacred Ibis	65	7	
Glossy Ibis	16	6	
Little Bittern	9	5	
White-backed Night-heron	1	1	Hippo Pools
Green-backed Heron	14	8	
Squacco Heron	50	7	
Cattle Egret	487	11	
Grey Heron	73	10	
Black-headed Heron	33	9	
Goliath Heron	4	3	
Purple Heron	29	2	
Great Egret	32	9	
Yellow-billed Egret	12	3	
Black Heron	50	4	
Little Egret	47	7	
Hamerkop	13	7	
Great White Pelican	1	1	Somavundhla Pan
Reed Cormorant	242	11	
White-breasted Cormorant	303	8	
African Darter	11	4	
Water Thick-knee	35	8	
Black-winged Stilt	42	7	
Common Ringed Plover	1	1	Back Pan
Kittlitz's Plover	33	6	
Three-banded Plover	22	9	
Blacksmith Lapwing	325	29	
White-crowned Lapwing	8	1	Nyanyana Shoreline
Crowned Lapwing	21	4	
African Wattled Lapwing	39	9	
African Jacana	374	21	
Ruff	56	6	
Little Stint	42	3	
Common Sandpiper	14	6	
Common Greenshank	16	6	
Wood Sandpiper	28	13	
Marsh Sandpiper	7	3	
Collared Pratincole	103	2	
Black-winged Pratincole	14	1	Salt Pans Dam



Species	No. of waterbirds	(no. of sites)	Single site
African Skimmer	3	1	Mandavu Dam
Grey-headed Gull	8	4	
Whiskered Tern	29	7	
White-winged Tern	9	2	
Osprey	4	2	
Black-shouldered Kite	2	2	
African Marsh-harrier	2	1	Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary
African Fish-eagle	44	14	
White-fronted Bee-eater	7	1	Mbonisa Weir
Southern Carmine Bee-eater	43	9	
Malachite Kingfisher	10	3	
Half-collared Kingfisher	1	1	Hippo Pools
Giant Kingfisher	13	5	
Pied Kingfisher	59	8	
Sand Martin	200	1	Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary
Yellow-throated Longclaw	12	3	
Rosy-throated Longclaw	1	1	Crowborough Farm
African Pied Wagtail	10	4	
Yellow Wagtail	1	1	Crowborough Farm
Cape Wagtail	1	1	Crowborough Farm
Red-faced Cisticola	3	1	Country Club Golf Course
Levaillant's Cisticola	2	1	Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary
Little Rush-warbler	15	4	
Sedge Warbler	8	1	Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary
African Reed-warbler	9	4	
Great Reed-warbler	2	2	
Lesser Swamp-warbler	21	6	
Thick-billed Weaver	13	2	
Southern Red Bishop	27	5	
Yellow Bishop	1	1	Country Club Golf Course
Orange-breasted Waxbill	100	1	Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary
African Quailfinch	20	1	Widgeon Pan

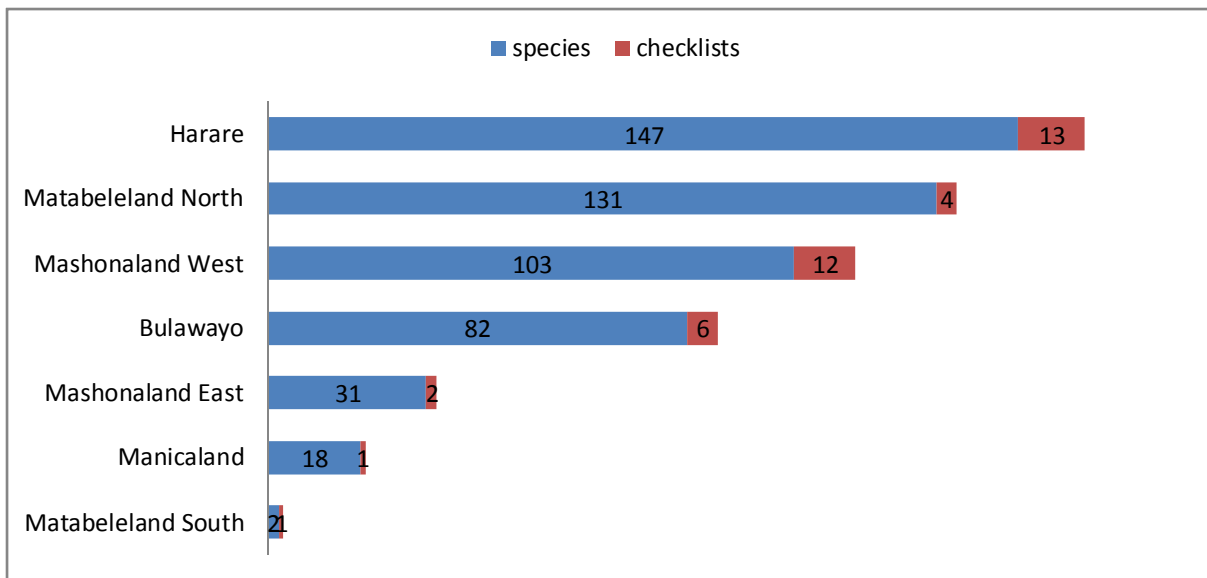
## Participants

J. Ball, G. Blair, M. Blair, J. Blake, John Brebner, Jenny Brebner, W Chigumbura, B. Collett, D. Dalziel, R Dennison, K Dixon, D. Hasluck, M. Jackson, D. Kok, H. Lewis, G. Lightfoot, E. Lightfoot, Stephen Long, Sue Long, I. Louw, H. Macdonald, G. Macdonald, H. Matthews, G. Matthews, C. McAdam, B. Morgan, T. Ndadziira, C. Ndlovu, I. Riddell, D. Rockingham-Gill, P. Rockingham-Gill, C. Sellick, H. Sellick, C. Shadwell, P. Shadwell, L. Shadwell, A. Tshipa, D. Wiggins, P. Wiggins, S. Wood

## eBird Global Big Day

On 13 May 2017, you went out birding. But this day wasn't like any other—your normal sightings joined with those of almost 20,000 like-minded birders across 150 countries. Together as a global team, you contributed 50,000 checklists containing 6,564 species of bird—more than 60% of the world's avifauna. **This is a new record for the number of bird species reported in a single day, and it's thanks to you.**

[See full Global Big Day results here.](#)



For Zimbabwe 240 species were recorded on 39 checklists but unfortunately the lowveld was not covered this time. I hope you all had fun on the day.

### “PHOTOS of Weaver Nests” in Zimbabwe

Weavers are perhaps best known for their engineering skills in weaving nests. As weavers are common and often breed in close proximity to humans, it is relatively easy to monitor the breeding efforts of many species, their distribution, and colony sizes.

To coordinate this effort the Animal Demography Unit at the University of Cape Town has setup a platform for observers, from across the globe, to submit data directly online, not only for weaver nests, but also butterflies, mammals and a variety of other taxa.

PHOWN – PHOTOS of Weaver Nests, <http://weavers.adu.org.za/phown.php> – has over 26000 records, mostly from South Africa. There are 45 PHOWN records of 10 species from Zimbabwe (Table 1) with Nick Hart having submitted 24 PHOWN records, and the rest were sent by 12 visitors to Zimbabwe.

**Table 1. Number of PHOWN records in Zimbabwe per weaver species**

ADU No.	Species	Records
780	White-browed Sparrow-weaver	11
790	Dark-backed Weaver	1
791	Spectacled Weaver	3
792	Lesser Masked-weaver	1
793	Red-headed Weaver	7
797	Village Weaver	6
801	Golden Weaver	5
803	Southern Masked-weaver	9
804	Thick-billed Weaver	1
808	Southern Red Bishop	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>



In addition to studying the breeding distributions of weavers, PHOWN gives new information on colony sizes (when nest counts are included). For example, the Spectacled Weaver has 290 records at the time of writing this, and 247 of these records have a nest count. The

colony size ranges from 1 to 15, with a mean of 1.6 nests. Usually there are 1 or 2 nests at a nest site, but rarely more, when a pair builds a new nest where old nests are still hanging. PHOWN also provides information on major nest site types. For example, the Spectacled Weaver usually nests in trees (278 records), but rarely in reeds or bamboos (5 records, e.g. [http://weavers.adu.org.za/phown\\_vm.php?vm=18629](http://weavers.adu.org.za/phown_vm.php?vm=18629) ), and rarely on man-made structures (3 records, e.g. [http://weavers.adu.org.za/phown\\_vm.php?vm=2303](http://weavers.adu.org.za/phown_vm.php?vm=2303) ).

All records are valuable, so please get out your cameras and start submitting more PHOWN records for Zimbabwe!

**H. Dieter Oschadleus**



## Useful Contacts:

CEO/Ringing Programme: Julia Pierini [JuliaPierini@birdlifezimbabwe.org](mailto:JuliaPierini@birdlifezimbabwe.org) 0772-894562  
Rarities Committee: Ian Riddell [gemsaf@mango.zw](mailto:gemsaf@mango.zw) 0772-117054  
BLZ Library: [piumosso@zol.co.zw](mailto:piumosso@zol.co.zw) 304298; 481496  
Special Species: Peta Ditchburn [specialspecies@blz.co.zw](mailto:specialspecies@blz.co.zw) 0775-940714, 09-244596  
Mashonaland South: Margaret Parrock 068-22005 or her daughter Coralee 0772-739370  
Eastern Districts: Sue Fenwick 0779-408557 [ingram.sue@gmail.com](mailto:ingram.sue@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

## BLZ MEMBERSHIP

**SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE DUE NOW** Please ensure you pay without delay!

BirdLife Zimbabwe's membership year is from April to March, but you can join any time.

**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, *The Babblers*, every two months and two issues of *Honeyguide*, our internationally acclaimed journal, every membership year. All for a very reasonable annual fee.

Especially in these difficult economic times, donations towards any of our projects are always much appreciated and you may consider mentioning BLZ in your will!

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

\* If you would like recognition on our public forums, choose the \$200 Corporate Plan. To learn more about corporate sponsorship and BLZ projects, write to [JuliaPierini@birdlifezimbabwe.org](mailto:JuliaPierini@birdlifezimbabwe.org)

**Payment details.** Please deposit into BirdLife Zimbabwe account at **NMB Bank, (Borrowdale Branch) Account No: 260092014** or BirdLife Zimbabwe Mashonaland Branch, CABS (Chisipite Branch) Account No: 1002399955 or **Ecocash** – Merchant Code No. **22084**. You can **also** pay your subscription online with **Paynow**. Look on the BLZ website on the membership page [www.birdlifezimbabwe.org/joinus](http://www.birdlifezimbabwe.org/joinus), and click on the Paynow tab at the bottom of the page. This is especially important for our members outside Zimbabwe. You could **also** come to our office at 35, Clyde Road, Eastlea in Harare.

It is **ESSENTIAL** please that you include YOUR name on the deposit slip so it appears on the statements **AND** advise Sylvia Muzavazi by e-mail or phone of your transaction, or your payment may not be recorded.

Please contact Sylvia on 04-481496 or e-mail [sylvia@blz.co.zw](mailto:sylvia@blz.co.zw) for all membership-related issues – new, renewals, payments, change of details, queries.

And look on our Facebook page for great pictures and interesting birding news -

[www.facebook.com/BirdLifeZimbabwe](http://www.facebook.com/BirdLifeZimbabwe). You can find out about us and projects you as a member can get involved with, on our informative website [www.birdlifezimbabwe.org](http://www.birdlifezimbabwe.org)



# Branch Activities

**Friends of the Vumba** is a community initiative that employs 3 trained scouts to protect the wildlife – tracking for snares and arresting poachers of game, birds and wood. We also support an education outreach into the schools in the area, mostly focussed on birding but more recently extending into wider environmental issues such as WESSA's Water program, rubbish health awareness, alien tree harvesting and indigenous tree planting.

## Directions to regular venues (Google Earth co-ordinates):

**CABS Northridge Park** -17.777494, 31.090782. 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** -17.742715, 30.990416. Meet at the bottom of Princess Margaret Road, off Harare Drive and follow the road round to the left. Park on the short road midway along the bottom of Princess Margaret.

**Mukuvisi Woodlands** -17.851935, 31.092010. 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.

**Prince Edward School car park** -17.818721, 31.036462. Josiah Tongogara Ave.

**Monavale Vlei** -17.806770, 31.010579. From Quendon Road turn into Lyndhurst Road, at bottom follow right hand bend, take first left and second right to BS Leon roundabout. Second exit is Fenella Drive. Meet on Fenella Drive.

**Haka Park** -17.843391, 31.143369. From the traffic circle at the Mutare Road/Harare Drive intersection continue 500m and turn left, follow the road (770m) to the Haka sign and boom on the left. If entering through the boom on Harare Drive (-17.828473, 31.140253; 1.9 km north of the circle) make your way to the meeting point. \$3 entrance fee for BLZ members, \$5 others.

**Avondale Sports Club** -17.785100, 31.041972. Brighton Road, Harare between Sam Nujoma Street Extension and Upper East Road. There is a cash bar and a security guard. A minimum donation of \$1 per person at the door please.

## Mashonaland Branch

### *BirdLife Zimbabwe Mashonaland Calendar of Events: JUNE 2017*

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<b>Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup></b>	<b>Marlborough Vlei Walk</b>	Meet at 07.30 a.m.
<b>Sunday 4<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Mukuvisi Woodlands Walk</b>	Meet at 07.00 a.m.
<b>Saturday 10<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Harare Botanic Gardens</b>	Meet at 07.30 a.m.
	Meet in the car park off Fifth Street. There will be a fee for parking.	
<b>Saturday 10<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>National AGM – Maleme Dam, Bulawayo</b>	
<b>Sunday 11<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>No outing</b>	
<b>Thursday 15<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Bird Books</b>	Meet at 5.30 for 6.00 p.m.
	Presentation by Alex Masterson, Avondale Sports Club	
<b>Sunday 18<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Monavale Vlei walk</b>	Meet at 07.00 a.m.
<b>Sunday 25<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Ewanrigg Botanical Gardens</b>	Meet at 07.00 a.m.
	Meet at CABS Northridge Park	

*BirdLife Zimbabwe Mashonaland Calendar of Events: JULY 2017*

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<b>Saturday 1<sup>st</sup></b>	<b>Marlborough Vlei Walk</b>	Meet at 07.30 a.m.
<b>Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup></b>	<b>Mukuvisi Woodlands Walk</b>	Meet at 07.00 a.m.
<b>Saturday 8<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Haka Park</b>	Meet at 07.30 a.m.
	Meet at Mutare road entrance boom to Park. Bring folding chair, drink and snacks.	
<b>Sunday 9<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Lake Chivero (Waterfowl Count)</b>	Meet at 07.00 a.m.
	Meet at Prince Edward School car park	
<b>Thursday 20<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Hippo Pools Outing</b>	Meet 5.30 for 6.00 p.m.
	Presentation by Laurence Shadwell, Avondale Sports Club	
<b>Sunday 16<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Monavale Vlei Walk</b>	Meet at 07.00 a.m.
<b>Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup></b>	<b>Hideaway – Darwendale Dam</b>	Meet at 07.00 a.m.
	Meet at CABS Northridge Park	

For further information please contact Tony Alegria, [tonyalegria47@gmail.com](mailto:tonyalegria47@gmail.com) 0772-438697 or 490375 (h)

### **Matabeleland Branch**

<b>Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> June</b>	National AGM at Maleme Dam.
<b>Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> June</b>	Bird Walk at Tshabalala Nature Reserve.
<b>Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> June</b>	Monthly visit to Aisleby.
<b>Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> July</b>	Bird Walk at NUST grounds with Peter Mundy.
<b>Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> July</b>	Monthly visit to Aisleby.

### **Other Areas**

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

**Eastern Districts** – Second Saturday of every month **The Vumba Walk**. These vary from the Upper to Lower Vumba areas and occasionally may extend into Penhalonga, Burma Valley, and even Chimanimani. Many birding enthusiasts join us although it is not officially a birding walk. They are usually hosted by either a Vumba resident or a commercial venue such as Tony's Coffee Shop, Forest Hills Lodge, White Horse Inn or the Botanical Gardens and the walks will often traverse private properties not always accessible by the public. Contact Sue Fenwick 0779-408557 [ingram.sue@gmail.com](mailto:ingram.sue@gmail.com) for more details.

**Lowveld** – contact Clive Stockil 0772-219204 or [clive@chilogorge.com](mailto:clive@chilogorge.com)

*Please send contributions for  
The Babbler 137 Aug-Sept 2017  
any time before the 15<sup>th</sup> July*