



THE BABBLER

Newsletter of BirdLife Zimbabwe

Aug - Sept 2017
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Hi everyone,

As winter draws to a close there seem to be more reports of threats to our environment. Wetlands are under increased pressure in Harare and in the Kadoma area there are reports of general destruction of previously unspoilt areas. I had a look at the Mafungabusi plateau on Goggle Earth and was dismayed to see that the *whole area* is now deforested with not a single patch of woodland left! Quite a change from the way I remember it. The birds must have gone with it.

Take a look at the advert on the last page and seize the opportunity to take advantage of this outing.

Happy Birding,

Ian Riddell gemsaf@mango.zw

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Important – changes to Membership Secretary

At the end of May I gave 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 or Julia on 0772-894562 or e-mail 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 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

Branch News

Mashonaland

Adventures at Ewanrigg Botanical Gardens, 25 June 2017 (pentads 1740_3115 & 1740_3120)

A small group of us car-sharers huddled at CABS before 7 a.m. on a distinctly chilly Sunday morning, and then contrary to advice, boldly took the Shamva road to Ewanrigg. It wasn't impassable as we had been led to believe and at least we only had 2 km of badly eroded dirt to travel, rather than the 4 km from the Mutoko road, which apparently, was in a bad way too! Consequently we arrived at the same time as the others – though they had left town much earlier – but we did miss out on their African Crake.

The birds weren't keen on the cold either and were slow to appear. Half a dozen birds were

heard from the picnic site where we parked and then we set out to the aloes, but just before we got there met a conspicuous Lizard Buzzard just starting to build a nest in a fork of a bare *Acrocarpus* tree... though Kelvin said they were also taking twigs into a another thickly leafed tree 100m away; it was all rather confusing. The aloes were bright candle flames of orange and red burning up the slope to which Variable Sunbirds added their own artwork with splashes of yellow and iridescent green and purple. Some Amethyst Sunbirds were about but in the main seemed to prefer a *Julbernardia* tree on the edge, along with White-bellied

Sunbirds and Miombo Double-collared Sunbirds and other odd-bods like Blue Waxbills. Perhaps, like us, the nectar was slow to flow at that time of the morning. Crossing down towards the tall *Acrocarpus* near the houses I hoped to spot the Western Violet-backed Sunbirds but no luck, the tree wasn't yet in flower like some are in Harare, and it was fairly bare though our raptors were taking sticks from near the top. The tree didn't look too healthy – I wonder if it is on the way out!



Libyaspis wahlbergi pill bug nymphs

Heading across the mowed grass, and keeping to the life-giving sunny patches, I made for the big bamboo clump, all the while accompanied by the noisy background vocals from some demonstrative band of Green-capped Eremomelas that had an awful lot to say about each other. A flock of non-breeding Pintailed Whydahs went hither and thither in the tree tops while our fragmented birders regrouped, catching sight of Green-winged Pytilias amongst the small stuff flitting about the bamboos; in the background a White-throated Robin-chat sang from the *Brachystegia* woodland while Terrestrial Brownbuls quietly chuckled away. A Black Cuckooshrike was 'chased' (we were only moving at the Tree Society pace!) but we had good views of some common birds before heading across the open to the southwest corner of the gardens, where Julia led us up the hill into the miombo. But this was the acme of dead-miombo-birding and was only good for insects, where we found some amazing pill bug nymphs that matched their grey branch perfectly, some *Polyrachis* ants that bit (Kelvin imprudently did the stick-your-

finger-in-them test!), and where we 'lost' Carla for half an hour!



Polyrachis ant

Rescue achieved and socks deburred while we waited, we headed to the top ponds area. Jameson's Firefinches sneakily snuck about at ground level, Whyte's Barbets were out-there on the bare tree top branches of a tall fig where African Green-pigeons performed their usual invisibility trick. Still no Western Violet-backed Sunbirds! James found some *Flaminia natalensis* bugs on some aloes and I have found they are particularly partial to aloes at home and have been considered a pest in South Africa! If you can't work out why they are called the 'eight-back bug' there is no hope for you☹. Near the herb garden a typically uncooperative dried-leaf-like Evening Brown flitted from dark patch to even darker patch until I eventually nabbed it and in the deeply shaded sisals back near the main gardens what appeared to be a couple of large antlions were instead Glistening Demoiselles.



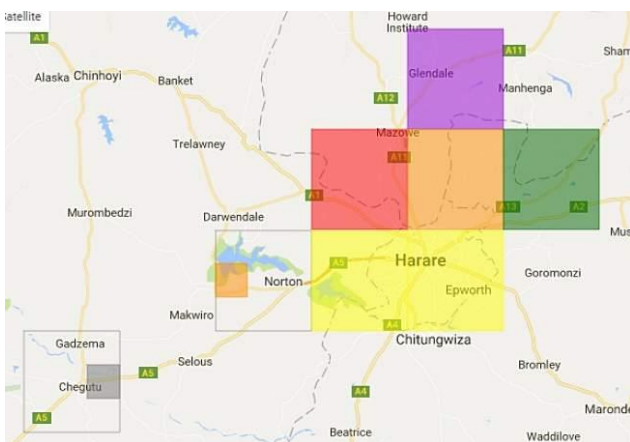
The Magpie Mannikins that used to be here years ago when the Bindura Bamboos seeded were not to be found but maybe this is where

Julia spotted some Red-backed Mannikins later? Heading back to try and get a photo of the Lizard Buzzard (wasn't there of course) a group of Steel-blue Widowfinches alighted in bare branches, looking much like the earlier Pin-tailed Whydahs except for their red legs; a couple of Thick-billed Weavers conveniently joined them so they could hop on our list.

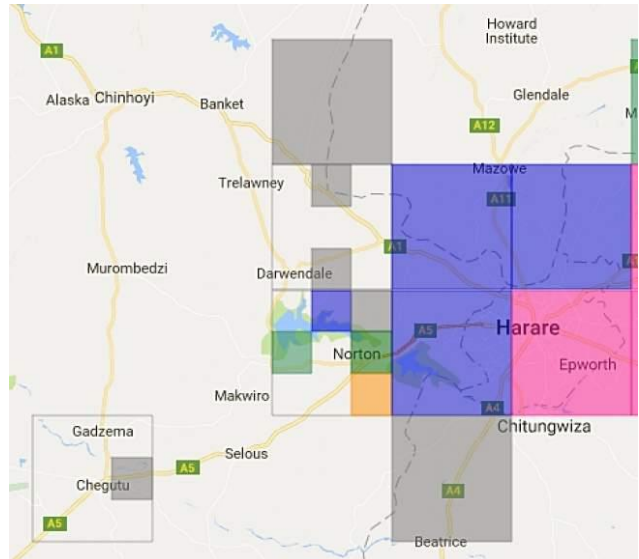


'Eight-back' bug

Back at the cars we did the list, arriving at some 60 species. Meyer's Parrots added themselves at the last minute and when everyone left a couple of us ventured to the dam. Here we added about another dozen birds but the only visible ones on the water were the Little Grebes; hidden away African Reed-warbler and Common Moorhen called from *Polygonum* backwaters and in the grass beyond were Orange-breasted Waxbills and others. Some Brimstone Canaries sang from a tree and swallows swept over. And we never did get to find those sought-after sunbirds!



Western Violet-backed Sunbird from SABAP2



Variable Sunbird from SABAP2

... & Bryden Country School

On the Tree Society visit to Bryden Country School, Chegutu (pentad 1805_3010), on 16th July I had a brief glimpse of a male Western Violet-backed Sunbird in an *Acrocarpus* tree in the grounds, an unexpected range extension. It turns out that Variable Sunbirds are also 'new' to that area, as are Black-throated Wattle-eyes, which were on the Umfuli River. The latter are less surprising as Ferdi and Tracey Couto have them from further 'upstream' in pentad 1805_3020, i.e. Pamuzinda. Possibly they have made incursions up the Sanyati from the Zambezi Valley. I was sure I heard Willow Warbler calling on the Umfuli but couldn't confirm it with a sighting!

Ian Riddell



Glistening Demoiselle *Phaon iridipennis*

BLZ MONA VALE VLEI WALKS, SUNDAY 18th June & 15th July, 2017

18th June

Not a lot to report: 6 members, Jimmy, Moses and Shelta from Cosmo Kids' Club and Walling from a Chinese radio station combined forces to winkle out the birds on a rather cool Sunday morning. We managed just 29 which might be good for a day's birding in the summer in the UK but will probably be the lowest count of the year on the vlei.

All the usual suspects: Black-shouldered Kite, Red-eyed Dove and Cape Turtle-dove, Yellow-mantled Widowbird, Variable Sunbird, Grey-rumped Swallow, etc. Highlights were a low-flying display by a Long-crested Eagle, 2 African Black Ducks, 2 Egyptian Goose, a distant African Hoopoe and a Gabar Goshawk.

Better luck next time...

15th July

Eventually, there were 9 of us to brave the frozen grass of the vlei and strive to beat the poor score of 29 from June. Once again, Kids' Club members, Shelta and Moses enlivened the

Retreat Farm revisited - July 2017

Having read with interest H.D. Jackson's contribution 'The Birds of Retreat Farm, Harare: 1950-1970' in *Honeyguide* Vol. 61(1), April 2015 and impressed by the number and variety of species recorded, a small group of us, Rolf Chenaux-Repond, Stuart Wood, Ken Dixon and Jimmy Muropa, the Monavale Vlei guide decided to see what the destination looked like 47 years later.

The rather depressing drive through the once thriving industrial zone of Harare brought us to the Uplands section of Waterfalls, currently the source of large quantities of pit sand for the construction industry. Our first port of call was one of the two dams built between 1950 and 1960. We drove along the western boundary of the farm and, having left the car in the care of a local family, set off towards the partly-filled dam. Stretching out ahead of us was Retreat Farm but an almost treeless landscape as far as the eye could see

shivering 7 member group with their observations, questions and antics and Dorothy regaled us with the details of the latest illegal invasion of the hallowed ground when an earth moving vehicle and its driver fled on the arrival of the local police.

The usual suspects like Yellow-mantled Widowbird, Southern Red Bishop, African Wattled Lapwing, Senegal Coucal and Black-shouldered Kite were present and an African Black Duck and 2 Pied Kingfishers were over the stream. Little Swift and African Palm-swift and Grey-rumped Swallow flew overhead as did an African Sacred Ibis, Gabar Goshawk, Long-crested Eagle and Lizard Buzzard. Red-eyed Dove and Cape Turtle-dove were numerous and 8 Black-headed Herons were counted. More unexpected was a group of 12 Helmeted Guineafowl roosting in an *Acacia* and a White-bellied Sunbird.

The total of 44 we considered respectable for July as we sat in the warm sunshine at the end of our walk. A big improvement on last month's count.

Ken Dixon

dotted with small houses and shacks had replaced the miombo woodland and tobacco fields that Jackson describes.

The dam and pools where building sand had been extracted were however still a magnet for waterbirds like Grey Heron, White-faced Duck, Red-billed Teal, Reed Cormorant, African Jacana, Black Crake, African Purple Swamphen and African Wattled Lapwing. The rank grass and weeds bordering the dam yielded Southern Red Bishop, Levaillant's Cisticola, African Stonechat, Grey-rumped Swallow and Yellow-fronted Canary.

Our list had already reached 20 species in as many minutes when a group of 12 young men approached us wanting to know what we were taking photographs of and who had given us permission to enter the property. Jimmy negotiated at some length, explaining the motivation for our visit, but was unable to satisfy them and we reluctantly made our way

back to the car. Perhaps we shall try to obtain permission to explore further at some future date but it will be tricky finding out who is authorised to sanction this. We left having gained the knowledge that the area, though very different from what it was in 1970, would still be a fruitful birding venue.

Ken Dixon

Looking on maps and Google Earth a lot of that land has been divided into plots and has streets and is called Mbare East. There should be no more restrictions to walking those parts than there are to walking the streets of any suburb and the remaining 'green' bits around the dams are likely public areas! Did our intrepid explorers establish who these guys were to question their presence? - Ed.

Matabeleland

NATIONAL AGM WEEKEND - 09-11 JUNE 2017

The Matabeleland Branch of BirdLife Zimbabwe was delighted to be hosting the National AGM in Matopos this year, and was pleased with the turnout from both visiting members and local branch members on the day.

On the Friday night before the meeting, we had Gavin Stephens, who is Chairman of the Matobo Conservation Society, come and talk to us about Matopos and his talk was really very interesting. Gavin has been involved in Matopos one way or the other all of his life and there are few who know it as well as he does, so he was able to educate us with all sorts of facts. Most of the lodges in Maleme Rest Camp have now been renovated and were extremely comfortable, despite a few plumbing issues here and there.



Tony Wharam and his band of helpers turned out meal after meal for us and it was

great that everyone joined in and socialised at meal times, getting to know each other.

During our time in Matopos, which was a little chilly the whole time we were there, we managed to get in a bit of bird watching, went looking for the Verreaux's Eagles (found some!), and spent quite a long time with a beautiful African Crowned Eagle which sat in a tree in the rest camp for a good while. Also amusing to watch were the pretty Mocking Cliff-chats as they scuttled across the rocks.

On the Sunday a number of us head off to Tshabalala Game Sanctuary near to Bulawayo, and met up with local members who came out to join in a bird walk. We drove into the Park to one of the water points and walked from there a short distance along the river line. Quite a number of birds were seen, and of particular note was the number of young spurfowl running on the road. After a quick break with a cup of coffee and a muffin, we drove off in search of the small dam. It was the first time I had been in to Tshabalala after our heavy rainy season, so it was pleasing to see that a good stretch of the road had already had some maintenance work done. However, with the thick bush and high grass I did become a bit disorientated and was grateful I remembered I have a GPS on my phone! The road repairs came to an end and we continued on and did manage to find the dam. We spent a lot of time there and the area came alive with little birds, and with the exception of Mr & Mrs Wood, the rest of us all managed to notch up a "lifer" or 2 during the weekend.

On our way out we had 2 great sightings, the first being something we all like to see - a Crimson-breasted Shrike, and some of us had a good look at him before he fluttered off

through the bushes – with birders following! Whilst we pursued the little fellow for a better look, a raptor was spotted in the sky. There was much debate amongst some of us disbelievers, but in the end conceded that it was in fact a juvenile African Crowned Eagle. Not the typical place to find one, but with books and apps being consulted, it was agreed that it was one. So, two Crowned Eagles in one weekend.

At this point we parted company – our visitors headed back to Matopos to go and look for rhinos and the others went home to Bulawayo.

Karen Learmonth



African Fish-eagle on nest below Maleme Rest Camp

The bird list was as follows for Tshabalala

Lilac-breasted Roller	Helmeted Guineafowl	Black-crowned Tchagra
Black throated Canary	Green-winged Pytilia	Magpie Shrike
Blue Waxbill	Laughing Dove	Crimson-breasted Shrike
Shaft-tailed Whydah	Red-billed Quelea	Red-billed Hornbill
Swainson's Spurfowl	Grey Go-away-bird	African Crowned Eagle
Violet-eared Waxbill	Village Weaver	Emerald-spotted Wood-dove
Crested Francolin	Chin-spot Batis	Marico Flycatcher
Cut-throat Finch	Lark-like Bunting	Hamerkop
Black shouldered Kite	Senegal Coucal	Familiar Chat
White-browed Sparrow-weaver	Pearl spotted Owlet (H)	Fork-tailed Drongo
Black-faced Waxbill	Arrow-marked Babbler	Black-chested Snake-eagle
	Long-tailed Paradise-whydah	Namaqua Dove
	Scarlet-chested Sunbird	Blacksmith Lapwing
	Southern White-crowned Shrike	
	Brubru	

Bird walk in the NUST grounds with Prof. Peter Mundy – 8th July 2017

Just 5 members managed to turn out on this rather chilly morning – which later turned into a lovely day – and met up with Prof Mundy on Celebration Drive of NUST. We drove to the sports field where we left our cars and started our walk and for the next 3 hours or so managed to get 46 species noted, which we

didn't think was too bad for a mid-winters morning.

NUST has a 160 ha estate which is left to the wilderness, and the birds there are plentiful. We walked around just a small part of it, incorporating the edge of some of the buildings to find specific species.

Our list ended up as follows -

Green-winged Pytilia	White-browed Sparrow-weaver	African Pipit
Black-shouldered Kite	Bronze Mannikin	White-browed Scrub-robin
Crowned Lapwing	Laughing Dove	Dark-capped Bulbul
Marico Flycatcher	Marico Sunbird	Brimstone Canary
Blue Waxbill	Red-billed Quelea	Black-crowned Tchagra
Cut-throat Finch	Pied Crow	White-bellied Sunbird
Southern Grey-headed Sparrow	Black-collared Barbet	Swainson's Spurfowl
Senegal Coucal	Crimson-breasted Shrike	Yellow Bishop
Crested Barbet	Black-throated Canary	African Fish-eagle
Cape Turtle-dove	Namaqua Dove	Grey Go-away-bird

Little Swift
Black-headed Oriole
Speckled Pigeon
Helmeted Guineafowl (H)
House Sparrow
Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird

Common Scimitarbill
Acacia Pied Barbet
Yellow-bellied Eremomela
Cardinal Woodpecker
Scaly-feathered Finch
Rattling Cisticola

Tropical Boubou
Black-faced Waxbill
Golden-breasted Bunting
Chin-spot Batis

It is always good fun birding with Prof Mundy, and feeding off his vast knowledge. At the request of one of the members there, we

will do another walk in the middle of summer to see how the birds differ.

Karen Learmonth

Mashonaland West

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 9th 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.

Saturday 27th May

A weekend visit by Chris and Sandy Payne to Claw Dam produced African Darter, African Finfoot, African Fish-eagle, White-crowned Lapwing, Grey-headed Gull, Giant Kingfisher, Broad-billed Roller and Black-headed Oriole.

Saturday 3rd June

A warm pleasant sunny morning inspired Chris/Sandy and myself to visit the Martin Textile ponds, 10 km north of Kadoma on the Harare road.

There are 5 ponds with various water depths with grasses, reeds and dye sediment in the shallower areas. A worthwhile trip as the following were feeding or resting. 12 Kittlitz's Plovers, 10 Blacksmith Lapwings, 17 Three-banded Plovers, 6 Black-winged Stilts, 58 Cattle Egrets, 5 African Sacred Ibis, 9 Red-billed Teal, 6 Little Grebes, adult and 1 juvenile Grey Heron, 1 African Fish-eagle.



Violet-eared Waxbill at Charama. Ruth Baldwin-Paice

Tuesday 13th June

An African Grass-owl was seen huddled by a corner of a building in the industrial site area where there is lots of long grass. A close-up study was a rare treat.

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. We look forward to spring when our avifaunal friends will delight us with spring singing and beautiful colours of plumage.

Margaret Parrock

Belfast Farm: -18.241833, 29.569500

On 1st July we visited Vuka Ranch (Belfast Extension on the map), mostly mixed woodland (mopane, acacia and some *Brachystegia*) – some established lands with new ones recently cleared. The ranch is situated west of Golden Valley and some 10 km from the Umniati River. Some of the more notable birds we saw were Meves’s Starling, Crested Francolin, Red-billed Hornbill and 2 over-wintering White Storks.



Some elephants from the Hartley Safari area were moving around the area – two different herds, the larger one numbering around 13, with young. There was plenty evidence of their presence at the small dam we visited. This was the same dam where we saw the two White Storks and three Hamerkops.



Misty morning in the Kadoma area



Buffy Pipit

Southern Crested Guineafowl!! A flock was seen in the Mari River, a small seasonal stream, now dry.

Ruth and Siggy

[It is hoped to find out more about this interesting record – Ed.]



Wattle is going on?

If you are a Saddle-billed Stork who has wattles? The male? The female? Both? Like me do you have it in your head that the male is the one with wattles, an instance of sexual dimorphism like the iris being dark in the male and yellow in the female? I'm not sure when and how that idea got fixed in my brain – perhaps from earlier editions of *Roberts* depicting the male (with wattles). What brought this on was an email from Garth Thompson saying 'check out this female with the yellow wattles, any thoughts?' He obviously also thought that the male had the wattles...



Female Saddle-billed Stork with wattles, G. Thompson

So a little investigation reveals that the 5th edition has a male with wattles, though it doesn't expressly say in the text that it is a male thing. The 1966 impression has a female in the plate and no wattles and only mentions the eye colour in differentiating the sexes. The 3rd

impression (1942) has the same plate as the 5th but the text only has a few measurements. Mackworth-Praed & Grant (*Birds of the southern third of Africa*, Vol. 1, 1962) has a black & white line drawing showing a bird with wattles. The description mentions the eye being yellow and the sexes as being alike, so no real help there.

But the 3rd edition (1978) may have been the source of my error – this is the one I started birding with and has my notations in the margins in Indian ink. The plate is the same as earlier ones, with a male with wattles, but does say the 'female has yellow eye and no wattle'! Interestingly enough, *Sasol* (1993) depicts a female with what might be construed as small red wattles (but maybe they are lappets?) whilst the male (head only) seems to have the same, only smaller. The text does say the female 'lacks wattle' and this is repeated in the 3rd edition (2002)! I then pulled out my *Handbook of the birds of the world*, Vol. 1. The plate here shows a male with wattles and a female without, but it only mentions the eye colour as being sexually dimorphic – and also that *Ephippiorhynchus* is unique among storks for this reason (this includes the Black-necked Stork *E. asiaticus*). So there is a fun fact to remember.

But in answer to Garth's email I had a look online on the IBC (Internet Bird Collection – Follow the links below if you are interested). There is a nice picture of a female with wattles showing great interest in a passing crocodile; another with cormorants; a third from Ethiopia.

So now that we know both sexes can have wattles. But they don't *always* have them so what determines the *when* and *why*? Carnaby, in *Beat about the bush – Birds* (2010) p. 707, states 'This is a male [refers to a picture] because it has a dark (not yellow) iris, and it has developed small yellow wattles on the lower bill indicating that it is breeding.' The implication here is that wattles apply to breeding males only... but what about females, does it indicate breeding in females too?

Ian Riddell

<http://www.hbw.com/ibc/photo/saddlebill-ephippiorhynchus-senegalensis/bird-clsoe-crocodile>

<http://www.hbw.com/ibc/photo/saddlebill-ephippiorhynchus-senegalensis/side-view-female-adult-standing-near-cormorant>

<http://www.hbw.com/ibc/photo/saddlebill-ephippiorhynchus-senegalensis/walking-next-lake>

New species, splits

The *HBW and BirdLife International Illustrated Checklist of the Birds of the World: Passerines*, recognises 6592 species of passerines, adopting 627 splits and 54 lumps and incorporating 11 newly described species. Some of these affect us and here are a few of interest. New families have been adopted and some of our species have been shifted accordingly; there are some changes to taxonomic and common names but this will probably be best catered for in a new Zimbabwe list on the website in the near future.

A new Field Card is being designed so watch that space for what splits and names we adopt for the official Zimbabwe list!

Cape Batis *Batis capensis*/Malawi Batis *Batis dimorpha*

Usually treated as conspecific with *B. capensis*, but differs in its white vs rich rufous wing-flash and flanks in male; grey vs yellowish-olive-grey mantle, back and rump; black vs olive-grey carpal and scapulars; shorter bill. The population on Mt Namuli, in N Mozambique, is currently placed in nominate but may represent a separate, as yet undescribed race.

Two subspecies recognized.

B. d. sola Lawson, 1964 – N Malawi and, locally, E Zambia (Nyika Plateau, Mukuta and Mafinga Mts).

B. d. dimorpha (Shelley, 1893) – mountains of C & S Malawi, and adjacent N Mozambique (Mt Namuli).

So ours remains the Cape Batis but you may have ticked the Malawi Batis in Malawi or N Mozambique.

Eastern Crested-flycatcher *Trochocercus bivittatus*/Southern Crested-flycatcher *Trochocercus cyanomelas*

Hitherto treated as conspecific with *T. cyanomelas*, (= the Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher) but differs in its longer crest; and in female dark grey breast covered in bold white spotting vs mid-grey breast (slightly darker than pale grey of belly) with very vague small white spots; double white wingbar vs bold white wing patch; and greyish, slightly sheeny vs matt greyish-brown upperparts and tail.

Three subspecies recognized.

T. b. vivaax Neave, 1909 – W Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, NW Tanzania, SE DR Congo (Shaba) and adjacent N & W Zambia; also, perhaps this race, SW Kenya.

T. b. bivittatus Reichenow, 1879 – C & SE Kenya, S Somalia and to E Tanzania, including Zanzibar I.

T. b. megalolophus Swynnerton, 1907 – Malawi and N Mozambique S to E Zimbabwe and NE South Africa (E KwaZulu-Natal).

Southern Crested-flycatcher was hitherto treated as conspecific with *T. bivittatus* (see above).

Two subspecies recognized.

T. c. segregus Clancey, 1975 – NE South Africa (Limpopo S to W KwaZulu-Natal).

T. c. cyanomelas (Vieillot, 1818) – coastal S & SE South Africa.

Red-necked Falcon (*Falco ruficollis*)

Hitherto treated as conspecific with *F. chicquera*, but differs in its barred vs plain back, scapulars, rump and uppertail, with heavier barring below and on wings; plain, slightly elongated pale buff-pink breast feathers vs plain white or narrowly dark-streaked upper breast; chestnut of nape extending less onto mantle; more black markings on eyebrow and moustachial stripe; and preferred breeding habitat, closely linked to *Borassus* palms [*Hyphaene* in Zimbabwe] and not generally associated with human habitation vs frequent nesting close to villages, and only occasionally in *Borassus*. Further, genetic differences between *ruficollis* (African) and Asian *chicquera* suggested as sufficient to warrant treatment as separate species. Validity of form *horsbrughii*, described on basis of single individual, has been questioned; may not merit recognition.

Two subspecies provisionally recognized.

Subspecies and Distribution

F. r. ruficollis Swainson, 1837 – S Mauritania, Senegambia, Guinea to Nigeria and E to Ethiopia, then S to Zambia, Malawi and N Mozambique.

F. r. horsbrughii Gunning & Roberts, 1911 – S of R Zambezi, from Zimbabwe and S Mozambique W to Botswana, Namibia and S Angola, and S to N South Africa.

Southern Crested Guineafowl (*Guttera edouardi*)

Once considered a separate species from *G. pucherani* (which then included *G. verreauxi*), but analysis of morphological characters concluded that the two were conspecific; now, however, separated again from *G. pucherani* (sensu stricto; see that species) on basis of blackish-grey vs red and blue facial and neck skin; hood not descending down front of neck as a short tube but tying up under chin, with brownish-white patch at rear; blackish-chestnut collar vs none; and different voice, being “a staccato chuk-chuk-chukchukerr” vs a “very harsh rhythmical clucking with descending churrs”. Differs from *G. verreauxi* (also previously lumped with *G. pucherani*) in its blackish-grey face and throat (no red at all) vs

blue face with red throat; hood tying up under chin, with brownish-white patch at rear vs hood descending as short tube down front of neck; broad blackish-chestnut vs black collar; red vs dark eye; different voice, being as given above vs “a crack followed by a distinct rapid piping krk pu-pu-pu-pu-pu”. Described races *lividicollis* (Zambezi region) and *symonsi* (KwaZulu-Natal) are regarded as synonyms of nominate *edouardi*; *suaelica* (coastal S Tanzania) is considered inseparable from *barbata*.



Southern Crested Guineafowl at Catapú, Celesta von Chamier

Two subspecies recognized.

Subspecies and Distribution

G. e. barbata Ghigi, 1905 – SE Tanzania S to N & E Mozambique and W to Malawi.

G. e. edouardi (Hartlaub, 1867) – S & E Zambia, NE Namibia and NW Zimbabwe; S Malawi and Mozambique S to NE South Africa (S to CE KwaZulu-Natal).

Now have: Western Crested Guineafowl (*Guttera verreauxi*)

Subspecies and Distribution

G. v. verreauxi (Elliot, 1870) – Guinea Bissau E to SW Nigeria; E Congo and SW Central African Republic E through DR Congo to W Kenya and W Tanzania, and S to W Angola.

G. v. sclateri Reichenow, 1898 – SE Nigeria and SW Cameroon.

G. v. schoutedeni Chapin, 1923 – middle Congo Basin E to SE DR Congo and S to NE Angola.

G. v. kathleenae C. M. N. White, 1943 – E Angola and S DR Congo to NW Zambia.

...and Eastern Crested Guineafowl (*Guttera pucherani*)

Distribution:

S Somalia W to EC Kenya, and S to C Tanzania, Zanzibar and Tumbatu I.

African Spotted Creeper (*Salpornis salvadori*)

Until recently considered conspecific with *S. spilonota*, but differs in its patterned vs clear white chin and throat; shorter bill; longer wing; and higher-pitched song and calls. Race *emini* vocally distinct, having the shortest and lowest-pitched song of all races, and a longer, broader bill and shorter tail than others; merits further study.

Four subspecies recognized.

Subspecies and Distribution

S. s. emini Hartlaub, 1884 – **West African Spotted Creeper** – W Guinea, N Sierra Leone, extreme S Mali and N Ivory Coast E to Nigeria, N Cameroon, S Chad (S from Azoum/Chari confluence) and N Central African Republic; also S South Sudan, adjacent NE DR Congo (NE Uele) and formerly extreme NW Uganda (Arua district). Rare in Gambia and SE Senegal.

S. s. salvadori (Bocage, 1878) – **East African Spotted Creeper** – extreme E Uganda and adjacent highlands of W Kenya; also C Angola, S & SE DR Congo, most of Zambia, NE, W & S Tanzania (S from near SE of L Victoria in W and from Songea and Liwale in SE), Malawi and N Mozambique (S to R Zambezi). Recorded also at extreme N Botswana (Kasane).

S. s. erlangeri Neumann, 1907 – W & SC Ethiopian highlands.

S. s. xylostromus Clancey, 1975 – N & C Zimbabwe (Zambezi Escarpment and Mashonaland Plateau) and adjacent Mozambique (Manica platform S to R Save).

The Rock Martin has been split into two species in Zimbabwe, the Red-throated Rock Martin and the Large Rock Martin. This requires more investigation so more on this one later.

Red-throated Rock Martin (*Ptyonoprogne rufigula*)

Hitherto treated as conspecific with *P. fuligula* and often *P. obsoleta*, but differs from

former in its much smaller size; higher-pitched voice; darker upperparts; and pinkish-buff of throat rather abruptly switching to dusky grey on breast to belly vs extending onto breast and shading to dark pinkish-grey on belly. Differs from latter in its smaller size (effect size for wing vs *P. o. pallida* -1.25, score 1); stronger, darker pink-tinged throat; breast and belly dusky grey vs whitish-pink shading gently to mid-grey on lower belly; sooty-grey vs mid-grey to pale grey upperparts. Included *P. o. pallida* when grouped in HBW, but see *P. obsoleta* (above). Proposed race *birwae* (Sierra Leone, Guinea) included in nominate. When considered congeneric with *Petrochelidon rufigula* (e.g. when both were treated in *Hirundo*), name *rufigula* of present species becomes preoccupied, and is replaced with *fusciventris*; latter name erroneously retained in HBW. Two subspecies recognized.

Subspecies and Distribution

P. r. bansoensis (Bannerman, 1923) – SE Senegal, Guinea, Sierra Leone E to Nigeria and Cameroon.

P. r. rufigula (G. A. Fischer & Reichenow, 1884) – C & S Chad, Central African Republic, W Sudan, S & E South Sudan, SW Ethiopia, and E Africa S to Zimbabwe and N & C Mozambique.

Large Rock Martin (*Ptyonoprogne fuligula*)

Commonly considered conspecific with *P. obsoleta* and hitherto always with *P. rufigula* (see both, above).

Three subspecies recognized.

Subspecies and Distribution

P. f. anderssoni (Sharpe & Wyatt, 1887) – NW & SW Angola and N & C Namibia.

P. f. fuligula (M. H. C. Lichtenstein, 1842) – S Namibia, Botswana and W South Africa.

P. f. pretoriae Roberts, 1922 – SW Zimbabwe and S Mozambique (Lebombo Range) S to E South Africa.

This is more complicated split since it creates 2 species in Zimbabwe and the distributional limits on various maps are confusing. The clearest is in *Roberts Geographic variation of southern African birds*, Chittenden *et al.* However, Michael Irwin doesn't 'believe' this split and we will keep just the one Rock Martin for Zimbabwe.

Useful Contacts:

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Eastern Districts: Sue Fenwick 0779-408557 ingram.sue@gmail.com
Mashonaland East Natural History Society: Chairman Peter Hadingham 04-497035
Secretary: Colin de Beer 0279-23931 jcdb1936@gmail.com
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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!

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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 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. You can find out about us and projects you as a member can get involved with, on our informative website 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. The **public car park** is off Hillside Road, -17.835393, 31.089111.

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: AUGUST 2017

Saturday 5th	Marlborough Vlei Walk	Meet at 07.30 a.m.
Sunday 6th	Mukuvisi Woodlands Walk	Meet at 07.00 a.m.
Saturday 12th	Ballantyne Park	Meet at 07.30 a.m.
	Meet at Ballantyne Park car park, opposite Spar Ballantyne, Wellburn Drive, -17.772667, 31.100923	
Sunday 13th	No outing	
Thursday 17th	Flock at Sea	Meet at 5.30 for 6.00 p.m.
	Presentation by Innes Louw, Avondale Sports Club	
Sunday 20th	Monavale Vlei walk	Meet at 07.00 a.m.
Sunday 27th	Ruwa – Kim McDonald	Meet at 07.00 a.m.
	Meet at Mukuvisi Woodlands car park	

*BirdLife Zimbabwe Mashonaland Calendar of Events: SEPTEMBER
2017 - we are back to Summer times!*

Saturday 2nd	Marlborough Vlei Walk	Meet at 07.00 a.m.
Sunday 3rd	Mukuvisi Woodlands Walk	Meet at 06.30 a.m.
Saturday 9th	Greystone Park Meet at the Preserve -17.746190, 31.127282	Meet at 07.00 a.m.
From Rolf Avenue/Harare Drive intersection, turn east onto Gaydon Road. After 2 km turn right into Halford Road and preserve is 200 m on left.		
Sunday 10th	No outing	
Sunday 17th	Monavale Vlei Walk	Meet at 06.30 a.m.
Thursday 21st	Indigobirds Presentation by Geoff Lowe, Avondale Sports Club	Meet 5.30 for 6.00 p.m.
Sunday 24th	Tsindi Ruins, Marondera Meet at Cresta Lodge, Samora Machel Avenue	Meet at 06.30 a.m.

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

Matabeleland Branch

Sunday 20th August Monthly visit to Aisleby Farm Bird Sanctuary. Meet at the boom at 07h30.

Date & Venue still to be confirmed - a get-together to discuss the BirdLasser App with presentation as supplied by the writer of the App. This will be followed by a bird walk and practical use of the App.

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 for more details.

Lowveld – contact Clive Stockil 0772-219204 or clive@chilogorge.com

*Please send contributions for
The Babbler 138 Oct-Nov 2017
any time before the 15th Sept.*

Moosh in da Boosh October 2017

BLZ Mashonaland has organised a birding week end with a difference! Birders are totally catered for, firstly with the BLZ Bird Talk and then the usual morning and late afternoon walks. However the Astronomy and Tree Societies are also being catered for in terms of talks and walks for trees and star gazing. There will also be other talks of interest – not finalised as yet but I anticipate talks on insects, snakes or butterflies or moths or whatever to fill in the gaps.

This event will take place from Friday 13th to Monday 16th October at Lasting Impressions (check out their web site <http://www.lasting-impressions.org/>) in Kadoma situated just below the Claw Dam wall; see also the photograph below. This is a religious based training camp with accommodation in dormitories. You have to pretend that you're on a houseboat and are sleeping on the top deck with your family and friends! They also have some tents or you can use your own. A charge of \$100.00 per person will pay for Friday lunch and Dinner, Bed and Breakfast for the three days. The charge is reduced if you are using their tent and even less if you are using your own tent. If you need lunch on Saturday or Sunday, this will cost an additional \$8.00 per meal. Take your own drinks!

The event is open to all BLZ, Tree Society and Astronomy Society members. If you are interested, send me an email and I'll send you the program (still to be finalised) and the payment details – tonyalegria47@gmail.com

This event could prove to be popular, kindly respond soonest to book your place!

