



# THE BABBLER

Newsletter of BirdLife Zimbabwe

*Oct-Nov 2019*  
*No. 150*

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## Hi everyone,

The eBird October event is coming up on the 19<sup>th</sup>; see the information under Tail Feathers on page 10. There was a time when BLZ used to enter the lists from those without an eBird account, but this hasn't happened for a year or two; it involves quite a bit of work! Quite often, birders would just go out and record their observations without much of the detail needed to properly register an eBird list – there are some minimum requirements to make your list meaningful so please note these! It is also best if a list appears under the name of the observer concerned. So why not sign up (if this event is new to you) and give it a go.

Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> November is also the day for **Birding Big Day 2019!** I have included some information – also under Tail Feathers – so this is another challenge to keep you all happily occupied. Happy birding everyone.

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

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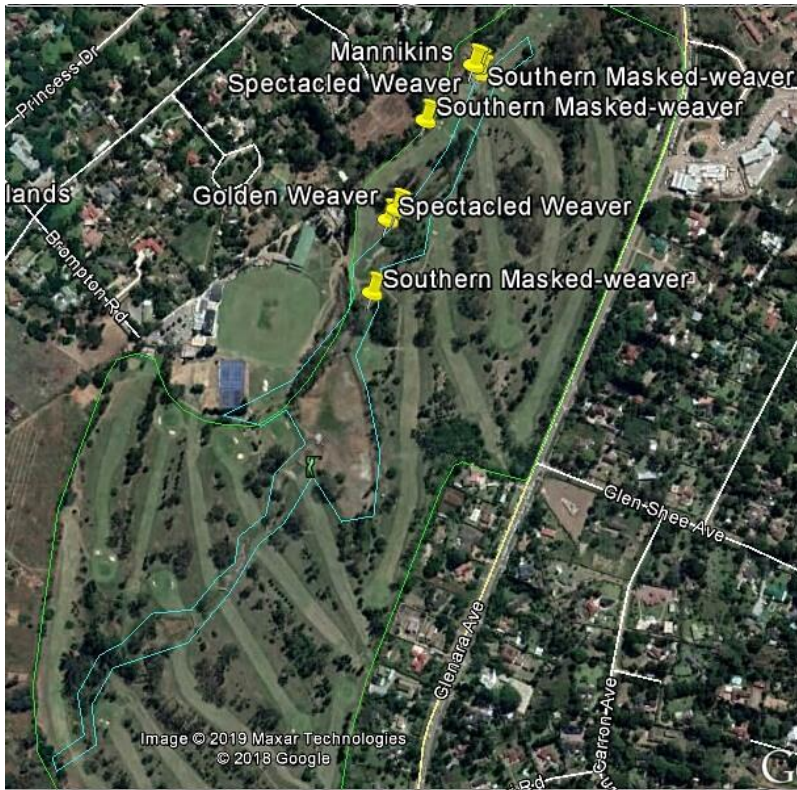




# Branch News

## Mashonaland

### The July 2019 waterbird count at Country Club golf course



Boundary of the Country Club wetland site in blue

So weavers were the prominent species with 2 Golden Weavers, c.17 Southern Masked-weavers and 3 Spectacled Weavers... and it was nice to add 2 Brimstone Canary. The only pond of water (*right*) attracted many birds in general, particularly a large flock of c.60 mannikins divided evenly between Bronze Mannikins and Red-backed Mannikins, the latter great to see in such numbers.



It was depressing to see the papyrus pond (*left*) dry - something I've never known to happen before; this used to be a good spot for 'skulkers' and is now the only habitat with a reedbed in water, though obviously dry now.

I wasn't expecting the July waterbird count to be productive - extensive landscaping occurred last year and the waterbird habitat negatively altered! Such are the dangers when cosmetic reforming is implemented without a deeper understanding of the ecological consequences. The streambed and the main pond had been gouged out by digging equipment, all the trees and reedbeds swept away in the latter. The streambed had been damaged and the seal broken, resulting in the rapid draining of the whole system. This, the conversion of the upstream vlei feeding the stream to housing, and the bad rains, meant that the only water was in the pond at the very top of the site! It will be interesting to see how many

years it will take for the site to recover and the birds return...





This Lizard Buzzard was very interested in some potential prey in the dry streambed below



The main pond, now dry and devoid of the trees and *Typha* beds that previously provided a diverse habitat for a variety of waterbirds

## Kent Estate: birding weekend 23<sup>rd</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> August 2019



Kent Estate is a wonderful birding location, with many different habitats providing home to over 200 species of birds. Having birded there before we eagerly packed our camping gear for the night and spent a few litres of precious diesel in order to do so again. Some 26 birders partook and were thoroughly rewarded.

Arriving after travelling the dusty roads south of Norton, we set up camp under a beautiful msasa grove resplendent in their spring colours. After a quick cup of tea to refuel we headed down to the dam overlooked by the campsite for some late afternoon birding. As before, the dam was a hive of activity with

hundreds of Comb Ducks, Red-billed Teal and White-faced Ducks swimming, dabbling and socialising. A few White-backed Vultures and Marabou Storks lounged around the headwaters alongside a few Spur-winged Goose. Around the dam edge African Openbills feasted in the company of Black-winged Stilt, African Jacanas, Great Egret and Little Egret, African Sacred Ibises and Glossy Ibises, African Spoonbill, Common Greenshank and Wood Sandpipers and Common Sandpipers.

On dry land our presence disturbed Blacksmith Lapwings and African Wattled Lapwings, and occasionally African Pipits or



Yellow-throated Longclaws with other birders finding Secretarybird in the grasslands further from the dam. From the surrounding woodland we could hear the Emerald-Spotted Wood-doves and Cape Turtle-doves as well as the less familiar Magpie Shrike. Making our way onto the dam wall we could look down onto the next dam, where we were thrilled to find White-backed Ducks, Southern Pochards and the exquisite African Pygmy-goose. At the end of the dam wall and in the top dam, we caught a glimpse of an African Snipe as it flew into some dense reeds and weeds in the shallow water there. Our subsequent patience was rewarded with excellent views, this time of Greater Painted-snipe instead. With the sun setting, Collared Pratincoles hawked over the dam and several Yellow-billed Storks flew over looking for a roost as we returned to base camp.



**Comb Duck (top) & Collared Pratincole (bottom)**

As darkness fell we were soothed by the calls of Fiery-necked Nightjar, African Scops-owl and African Barred Owlet as we enjoyed a hot shower and a hot braai. We were then educated briefly but enjoyably on some basic astronomy thanks to Tony Alegria before turning in for the night, eager to be up early for some woodland birding before breakfast.

Waking up early to the calls of a Giant Kingfisher, we split up into different groups with some of us making our way to a ridge of

Miombo woodland west of the dam to seek out what birds we could. With the weather warming up many birds were singing lustily. Our list quickly grew, with additions including Ashy Flycatcher, Kurrichane Thrush, Green Wood-hoopoes, Black-headed Orioles and African Golden Orioles, Green-capped Eremomelas, Red-headed Weavers, Miombo Blue-eared Starlings, African Yellow White-eyes and Red-faced Cisticolas all making themselves heard early on. Walking along the base of the ridge we were delighted to hear Coqui Francolin in addition to the more common Natal Spurfowl and Swainson's Spurfowl. With time flying, we turned back and retraced our steps only to find Retz's Helmet-shrikes and White-crested Helmet-shrikes, Green-winged Pytilia, Cardinal Woodpecker, African Grey Hornbill, Black Cuckooshrike and Swallow-tailed Bee-eater as well as a disgruntled Barn Owl that we flushed from a large tree cavity.



**Rosy-throated Longclaw (top) & the snake lily *Albuca kirkii* (bottom), the latter quite common in the woodland**

Heading back through the fields we hunted down a Rock Kestrel, and found a small flock of Red-billed Quelea before driving back to camp for some tasty breakfast. Afterwards we headed out of the estate through Norton Country Club to the CCC pig abattoir to try and watch the vultures being fed. However, the vultures and Marabou Storks remained wary of these strange

spectators and stuck to the treetops in spite of the delicacies strewn along the road. A few Yellow-billed Kites delighted in the bounty left all to themselves. After some time waiting fruitlessly the spectators headed back to the camp to pack up and do some last minute birding. One final walk along the dam edge yielded Buffy Pipit, African Quailfinch, Zitting Cisticolas and Croaking Cisticolas, Black Heron, Chestnut-backed Sparrowlark and a Ruff before we made our way homewards into town, more than satisfied with our fantastic weekend of birding.

Many, many thanks to Geoff Lowe for organising the trip, and to the van Leenhoff family and their farmhands for graciously hosting us and setting up the camping area and looking after us. Thanks also to Tony Alegria for sharing his knowledge on astronomy with us and to everyone who made it out there even with all the difficulties we presently face. It was an exceptional and most enjoyable weekend.

**Patrick Shadwell**



**Marabou Stork & White-backed Vulture at CCC. Photos I. Riddell**

## **CHIVERO BIRD SANCTUARY, 25<sup>th</sup> August 2019**

On the way back from Kent Estate, we did a 'quick' detour (*the state of the road belies 'quick'!*) to the Bird Sanctuary. The amount of wood poaching was distressing to see - most of them Mukwas, now classed as Near Threatened! With the very low water level the area was chockablock with waterbirds, including some 40 Pied Avocets. As sometimes happens, it was only on processing photos that I noticed the strange duck in the photo below, on the left! Despite the contrary green-looking speculum the concensus is that this is a Mallard, which should show blue (angle of light, like Emerald-spotted Wood-dove spots sometimes reflecting as blue?).



**Ian Riddell**

## **Walk on MONAVALE VLEI Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> September 2019**

Finally, one could leave the gumboots at home; no rain and no burst pipes, rock hard paths, the burnt areas showing regrowth. The usual birds were present, but widowbirds and bishops not yet in breeding plumage so we really needed Jimmy to identify the species.

Nothing special to report: an African Black Duck, Yellow-billed Egret, displaying Black-

shouldered Kite, Purple Heron and Pearl-breasted Swallow were the most notable among the 45 species logged by the nine of us present. A Streaky-breasted Flufftail has been claimed when burst pipes caused flooding but we await confirmation as the timing was wrong!

**Ken Dixon.**



## Friends of Hwange – talk presented by Dave Dell, Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> August 2019

Those of us who attended were rewarded with an exceptional résumé of the amazing work done by Dave Dell (and his team), and those who were not there missed a truly remarkable story of a 'GINORMOUS' conservation effort ongoing since 2005. Sponsors such as J. Mann and Cargo Carriers assisted with 'water/piping hardware and logistics' were there to offer their services, as well as international donors and others. There are many who have assisted in saving this amazing national park. As can be imagined, major fund raising has taken place to provide water for over hundred animal species. In addition, the park boasts +400 bird species, whilst there are some 1000 floral species, including 230 different trees and shrubs and 200 grasses.



Amur Falcon at Hwange. Photo J & J Brebner

During the ravages of the 2005 drought Dave decided to drive to Hwange to see what was transpiring and of course, what he could do. A few photos of a starving mother elephant with a 'dying calf' following clearly told a sorrowful story. Decision made! Fund raising, a team of volunteers assembled, including the good

Matabele/Bulawayo folk, and the action plan commenced.

Dave's presentation started with the geology of Hwange – sand driven over thousands of years cover the park, which is not agriculturally viable, together with the fact that Hwange is actually water deficient. There are many pans throughout the park, however the long dry seasons and variable rains do not render them sustainable. He also gave a brief summary of the people who used to live there.

Windmills and diesel-driven pumps were part one. However, one can imagine how expensive it is to run a diesel pumps 24 hours a day with herds of thirsty elephants at the pans.

Subsequently solar pump systems were introduced (only work during daylight hours) but the FOH have succeeded in establishing some hundred pumps, pumping hundreds of thousands of litres a day. Interestingly, the boreholes are mostly located in the northern sector of the park, which means the central and southern regions survive only on rain-fed water and game in dry seasons is forced to relocate in search of water.

Once again – the old story – it took one person (no doubt supported by Paula) to motivate, organize and implement a remarkable act of conservation for all to benefit. This story will never have an ending as the needs are everlasting, so your help/support will be truly appreciated.

Thankyou Dave, to your trustees, support team, sponsors, National Park and anyone else.

**Innes Louw**

Monetary donations: NMB Bank Friends of Hwange Branch; Borrowdale: 11106 Account No 26009374
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## Matabeleland

### Brief Birding on Hornung Park Golf Course – 6<sup>th</sup> July 2019

Having had no municipal water for a week and yet again, the power had gone off before

five in the morning, four of us set off for breakfast at Hornung Park, meeting up an hour

beforehand so we could do a quick walk around the golf course birding. We managed a fifty-minute walk and recorded 32 species.

Meeting at the club house, we watched an immature Scarlet-chested Sunbird busy amongst the aloe flowers, his front still a muddy, patchy brown and his scarlet chest just beginning to colour his throat. Walking towards the first tee box, a little crowd of White-crested Helmet-shrikes took off in front of us and a bit later we saw two other flocks of them further along, hopping about gleaning. A flock of Yellow-fronted Canary flew past and while a Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird flew past the other way, right at the top of a tree, basking in the sun was a Streaky-headed Seedeater. Dark-capped Bulbuls were around in their numbers and we could hear Magpie Shrikes and the Black-collared Barbet's strident calls, both of which we saw a little further along. Crested Barbets could also be heard and were seen on several occasions. Flying past was a gang of Green Wood-hoopoes and of course, there was an ever present caw from the numerous Pied Crows flying around; some were flying really high and performing some aerobatics. We managed to unearth a Scaly-feathered Finch – a bird that used to be so common but now does not appear to be so. A Southern Black Flycatcher sat atop a pole as we listened to a Tropical Boubou calling. African Hoopoes were fairly numerous, poking about on the rather arid greens and several Laughing Doves, together with Southern Grey-headed

Sparrows, gleaned what they could along the fairways. Fork-tailed Drongos hawked here and there and high in a gum tree we spotted the Swallow-tailed Bee-eater, also hawking back and forth. Approaching the edge of the course, we could hear a White-browed Robin-chat and picked up two Long-billed Crombecs calling from a thorn tree. Having seen and heard several Grey Go-away-birds all along our walk, there were several all trying to muscle in for a bath in one of the birdbaths, making a racket and flapping up a shower of water on those waiting round the edge. When the Go-aways eventually went away, a Red-eyed Dove flew down for a drink along with several Yellow-fronted Canary and a couple of Black-throated Canary. Red-winged Starlings and Cape Glossy Starlings were about and flying above were Wire-tailed Swallows and African Palm-swifts. A couple of Kurrichane Thrushes dashed about and we saw a Red-headed Weaver in one of the fig trees. Before crossing the empty dam, we added Tawny-flanked Prinia to the list and when passing the reservoir, with breakfast calling, we could hear a Black-headed Oriole and saw a few more Swallow-tailed Bee-eaters. Strangely enough, Crowned Lapwings, which usually inhabits the fairways in their numbers, were conspicuous by their absence and we saw none!

**Dave and Marina Jackson, John and Jenny Brebner**

## **Extract from Bhejane Trust August 2019 Newsletter**

### **Wildlife**

Back in 2011 when we had a very poor rainy season, we saw Red-eyed Bulbuls at a few places around Sinamatella sector. We were relatively new to the area in those days and thought that was probably normal but then we have never recorded them again until this year, again following poor rains. The first Southern Africa Bird Atlas shows very few records of the species in our part of the Park and says "...dry season influxes are obvious in part of the Limpopo catchment in the eastern Botswana hardveld, particularly during drought years". That seems to be true for our area as well and must be what has happened this year as we have seen Red-eyed Bulbuls in good numbers in several places. The bulbuls are obviously an indicator of dry conditions for us, and they are very welcome to



join us for a few months and take a little of our game water supplies.

**By Trevor Lane & Stephen Long**

The African Red-eyed Bulbul seems to occur



sporadically in the park, often as a winter/dry season visitor and as far down as Linkwasha area. I have recorded them there from May-September between 1993 & 1999 but I don't

think anyone has tried to factor in the rainfall. They are very occasionally recorded around Bulawayo too - Ed.

## ***BLZ Council members visit the 'Black Eagle' survey in Matopos***

By Jenny Brebner. Images J Brebner; D Dell.



Over the weekend of 19<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> July, the CEO of BirdLife Zimbabwe together with two other members of council and another Harare-ite, travelled down to Matabeleland to have a look at how the Verreaux's Eagle survey is carried out in the Matopos. Accommodation was in Imbila lodge at Maleme and we settled in on Friday evening under a clear, star-studded evening, waiting for the moon to emerge from behind Pomongwe, listening to a Pearl-spotted Owlet and the ever-present clonk of cowbells as we began a hectic but thoroughly enjoyable weekend.



Waking to the clattering klak-keek of Natal Spurfowl down on the valley floor and two noisy African Wattled Lapwings flying about, we prepared for a long day out. While packing up the vehicles, we could hear an African Crowned Eagle calling from across the valley and a flock of Pied Crows flew over, making

their usual raucous din. At the first nest site, we could pick up the chick bobbing up and down and an adult was perched close by. The second adult was spotted flying along the range close to the nest, and as it made an attempt to gather some greenery, it was attacked by a falcon, possibly a Lanner; the tenacious smaller bird was like a flash of lightning in the early morning sun, mercilessly dive-bombing the much larger bird.

While having a coffee break and doing a waterfowl count at one of the dams, which still holds a minuscule amount of water, we were able to watch another of the active nests and were surprised to see a well-grown chick, its plumage beginning to get quite brown, standing large next to its mother. The male was seen flying onto the nest and later both parent birds were seen interacting with two African Hawk-eagles. At the third active nest site, we could just make out an adult bird tucked away into the crevice but could not see if there was a chick yet. Going into Whovi, the game park side of the park, at the first site we saw the chick being fed by an adult on the nest, with the other parent bird perched on a high point close by.

Checking the next nest before dropping down towards Mpopoma dam, we saw both adult birds flying in the vicinity but there was no action from the nest site and on our return later in the day, we still could not ascertain whether breeding had taken place or not.

Some members of the party cooked up a scrumptious brunch while others did the waterfowl count at Mpopoma. A crowd of White-faced Duck were resting on the bank in amongst a couple of crocs and across the other side of the dam several African Spoonbills, a lone African Sacred Ibis and a Great Egret fossicked about amongst a bunch of Egyptian Goose. Little Grebes and African Jacanas topped the numbers list as we managed to add Red-billed Teal, a Giant Kingfisher, an African Fish-eagle and one African Darter as well as five





Blacksmith Lapwings. We checked on another Verreaux's Eagle nest, which this year is not active. The pair in this territory has been reliable breeders but has obviously decided to have a year off. On then to the last nest we wanted to check in Whovi where, despite seeing an adult bird flying close to the nest with what looked like prey in its talons, this nest still remains a mystery. The adult bird did not go to the nest but flew off out of sight. Before going back to our lodge, we stopped off to view the last nest for the day, which is not active this year, but we did see the resident adult birds flying about during the weekend. While having a sundowner, we had a look at the African Fish-eagle incubating on its nest and we also had a fantastic view of a Black Sparrowhawk, its stunning white breast and black plumage

standing out in the last of the day's light as it perched motionlessly in a tree. Back at Imbila, we enjoyed another evening under the stars while a delicious meal was cooked on the braai fire and this time, an African Wood-owl's call accompanied the clonking cowbells!

Up and off early the following morning, we set off for a nest that needs to be walked into with a bit of a climb. Sadly, there'd been a change in the weather overnight, so a very cold and fairly strong wind was blowing grey scudding clouds across a washed out blue sky. The views from the top were absolutely stunning and the nest site was glorious too. A hen was hunkered right down and had soon become aware of our presence, even though we tried to be as unobtrusive as possible. A little later, we saw the male fly past and watched him a short while before he landed in a green tree and, flapping about, fought to dislodge a large twig with leaves. It was an awesome sight watching him float back into the strong breeze, hover to gain purchase in the wind and without a single flap of his enormous wings, find the right slipstream to take him to the nest. He gently laid the sprig down next to the female.

They exchanged brief vocal greetings before he took off again, spreading his wings and dropping off the rock face. The female fluffed up a bit, settled back down to her motionless self and continued to keep a wary eye on us.

It was on then to two other nests where, at both nest sites, an adult was seen lying on the nest, possibly still incubating or perhaps keeping a small chick warm. The final nest we visited had a fairly large chick lying sleeping, its brown plumage beginning to emerge, with no sign of the adult birds. We had managed to check thirteen nest sites in all.

Before getting back to Imbila, we did a quick waterfowl count around what remains of the water in Maleme. Not much to see but a Hamerkop wading along the shoreline, one Blacksmith Lapwing, two noisy African Wattled Lapwings, an African Fish-eagle looking for barbel and a Giant Kingfisher. A White-browed Scrub-robin was pecking away amongst the leaf litter near one of the picnic spots as three Black Storks flew high overhead. Another delicious meal was prepared as we watched a large dog baboon raiding the dustbin below the lodge, scattering the debris everywhere as he picked through scavenging what he could. He then



advanced closer and closer to the back door, probably hoping that we would leave it open for a raid – he was sadly disappointed in that regard. A Yellow-bellied Greenbul delighted our Harare guests as it fossicked about a small fig tree outside the kitchen door and shortly before we left, the resident pair of Verreaux Eagles did a flyby, magnificent as they flew along the kopje in front of their dark, lengthening shadows on the dwala.



## Mashonaland West

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### Kadoma-Chegututu News

The Charama chicks have had some wonderful sightings around Kadoma/Chegututu area. The dams, rivers, sewage ponds and dye ponds always surprise us with such a variety of birds.

#### Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> August

To the Stidolph dam, off the Gadzema-Chinhoyi road and on the Biri River.

47 African Jacana, 3 Little Grebe, 4 Reed Cormorant, 4 Black-winged Stilt, a pair of Egyptian Goose, a pair of Malachite Kingfishers, 1 African Fish-eagle, 3 White-backed Duck, 1 Giant Kingfisher, 1 Grey Heron. A flock of Helmeted Guineafowl were in the bush nearby. This farm is still in active production with orange tree orchards. There are a few settlers around the dam but not too much disturbance.

At midday we crossed the Chinhoyi road and visited Balclutha farm and the large dam, also upstream on the Biri River. There were many settlers scattered around the dam and some wheat is being produced. 39 African Openbills, 35 African Sacred Ibis, 2 Three-banded Plovers, 7 Black-winged Stilts, a pair of Kittlitz's Plovers, 2 Little Egrets, 1 Giant Kingfisher, a pair of Lizard Buzzards perched on a centre pivot waiting for prey. Total 38 species.

#### Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> August

Clifton dam, along the Mhondoro road. This lovely peaceful area with many indigenous trees supplies clean water to Chegututu.

12 Red-knobbed Coot, 62 White-backed Duck, 6 African Jacana 8 African Pygmy-goose, 1 African Fish-eagle, 1 Lizard Buzzard, 7 African Wattled Lapwing, 12 Southern Pochard, 3 Squacco Heron, 1 Purple Heron & 1 Grey Heron.

#### Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> August

Along the Mhondoro road at a dam called Melbury [-18.196178, 30.317094; this is actually on Borden farm]. The water level is low because of barley irrigation; also tomato/cabbage growing. However, there is a security guard with dog Charlie who patrols the dam and prohibits netting!

18 Reed Cormorant, 1 Black Heron, 3 Great Egret, 1 Hamerkop, 2 African Fish-eagle, 4 Little Egret, 4 Yellow-billed Egret, 3 Egyptian Goose, 1 Malachite Kingfisher, 5 Glossy Ibis, 52 Red-billed Teal, 6 Black-winged Stilt & 2 Common Greenshank. As we were leaving at 14h30, 3 Collared Pratincoles flew passed, feeding on the wing – a bonus to see these uncommon birds!

#### Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> August

Ngezi Dam where platinum and chrome mining takes place almost up to the park gate. The water level was good.

11 Reed Cormorant, 87 White-faced Duck, 2 African Pied Wagtails, 7 Egyptian Goose, 1

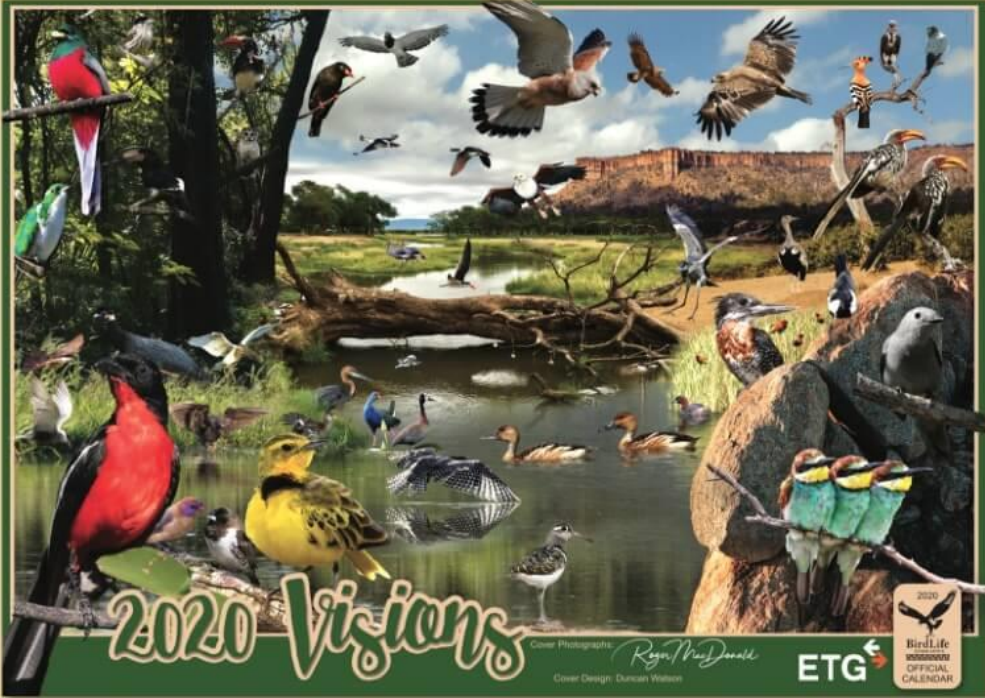
Hamerkop, 1 African Fish-eagle, 5 African Wattled Lapwing, 8 Black-winged Stilt, 7 Blacksmith Lapwing, 1 Little Egret, 10 African Jacana, 10 Red-billed Teal, 4 White-breasted Cormorant, 2 Black Crake, 8 White-crested Helmet-shrike, 2 Water Thick-knee, a pair of Natal Spurfowl & a Common Scimitarbill. As we sat having lunch, we watched three large crocodiles warming themselves on a sandbank. A terrapin appeared from the water to share the hot sand.

A short drive around the dam revealed 10 waterbuck, 2 bushbucks and a duiker, with signs of Helmeted Guineafowls also.

May our desire and enthusiasm to visit our natural environment in different seasons continue with peace and understanding. Wherever we go we greet the people and offer friendly advice.

**Margaret Parrock**

## The 2020 BirdLife Calendar is out!



**HOT OFF THE PRESS**

**2020 Visions**  
Cover Photographs: Roger MacDonald  
Cover Design: Duncan Wilson

**BIRDLIFE ZIMBABWE'S**  
*and stunning*  
**OFFICIAL 2020 CALENDAR**  
**"2020 VISIONS"**

With Photographs by: Roger MacDonald,  
Brian Ashby, Mike Bridgeford, Chris Collyer,  
Darmesh Daya, Dave Dell, Patrick Kelly, Laura Rosen and Piet Zwanikken





I mentioned in the last newsletter that the [SABAP2](#) website has a number of videos on atlassing and BirdLasser. The latest is on BirdLasser, Submit an atlas card. This is a short tutorial to show how you record and submit an atlas card to SABAP2 using the BirdLasser mobile app. Visit the site to see these.

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## eBird October Big Day—19 Oct 2019

October Big Day is back. Are you ready? Whether you have 5 minutes or 5 hours, make your sightings count!

### How to participate

- **Get an eBird account:** eBird is a worldwide bird checklist program used by millions of birders. It's what allows us to compile everyone's sightings into a single massive October Big Day list—while at the same time collecting the data for scientists to use to better understand birds. [Sign up here](#). It's 100% free.
- **Watch birds on 19 October:** It's that simple. You don't need to be a bird expert, or go out all day long. Even 10 minutes in your backyard will help. October Big Day runs from midnight to midnight in your local time zone. You can report birds from anywhere in the world.
- **Enter what you see and hear on eBird:** You can enter your sightings [via our website](#) or— even easier—download the [free eBird Mobile app](#). You can enter and submit lists while you're still out birding, and the app will even keep track of how far you've walked, so you can focus on watching birds. While you're downloading free apps, try out the Cornell Lab's [Merlin Bird ID](#) app for help with identification. Please enter sightings before 23 October to be included in our initial results announcement.
- **Watch the sightings roll in:** During the day, keep an eye on how the lists are growing in different parts of the world. Follow along with sightings from more than 150 countries. Stats will be updated in real-time on our [October Big Day page](#).

If you intend to enter, please note that there is a format to follow.

Your location - Latitude and Longitude is useful, or at least a clear description of the area covered. Start time, Duration of birding, distance travelled and number of people. Important is the Observation type - Travelling or Stationary.

What you saw or heard - You can enter numbers next for each species that you observe, or just an "X" if you aren't sure how many individuals you saw; numbers are preferred if possible.

# Birding Big Day 2019 – Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> November

## Open Category

The rules for this category are:

- \* The maximum area that can be visited is an area within a radius of 50 km.
- \* Record all the bird species seen or heard during a 24-hour period **from midnight on Friday 29 November to midnight on Saturday 30 November 2019**.
- \* Teams can consist of a maximum of four members.
- \* Only free-flying birds may be recorded (i.e. no caged birds).
- \* The majority (for example 2 out of three or 3 out of four) of the team members have to agree on a call or sighting.

Teams are requested to limit the use of callback to attract birds to an absolute minimum (preferably avoiding using callback at all). This is especially true when birding in a nature reserve or national park or targeting threatened bird species.

## Play along by entering your data on BirdLasser!

Teams are invited to log their sightings on the mobile app BirdLasser. The sightings will automatically be displayed on a dedicated BirdLasser Birding Big Day event page ( <https://www.birdlasser.com/events/bbd2019zim24> ). In order to participate, one member of the team must enter the data on BirdLasser while birding. The following information must be provided to Ian Riddell at [gemsaf@mango.zw](mailto:gemsaf@mango.zw) or [ianriddell1957@gmail.com](mailto:ianriddell1957@gmail.com):

- \* The name and email address (the address used to register on BirdLasser) of the person in the team who will log the sightings on BirdLasser.
- \* Team name, which will appear on the BirdLasser events page.
- \* Names of team members.



## 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) 2304298; 2481496  
Special Species: Peta Ditchburn [specialspecies@blz.co.zw](mailto:specialspecies@blz.co.zw) 0775-940714, 029-2230075  
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 024-2497035  
Secretary: Colin de Beer 0279-23931 [jcdb1936@gmail.com](mailto:jcdb1936@gmail.com)  
*Honeyguide* production: vacant

## BLZ MEMBERSHIP

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.

Some members are not informing us when they pay their subscription and when members deposit into the banks, the name shown on the statement is often only the first name and therefore we may not know who you are.

Therefore, it is **ESSENTIAL** please that you advise us by e-mail of your transaction, or your payment will not be recorded. Please contact Sylvia [sylvia@blz.co.zw](mailto:sylvia@blz.co.zw) or phone her on 024-2481496 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 tip for the car guard. 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. \$40 entrance fee for BLZ members, \$60 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 charge of \$4 per person at the door please.

## Mashonaland Branch

### *BirdLife Zimbabwe Mashonaland Calendar of Events: OCTOBER 2019*

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<b>Saturday 5<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Marlborough Vlei walk</b>	Meet at 07.00 a.m.
<b>Sunday 6<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Mukuvisi Woodlands walk</b>	Meet at 06.30 a.m.
<b>Saturday 12<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Haka Park</b>	Meet at 07.00 a.m.
	Meet at the boom gate	
<b>Thursday 17<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>The Cape Eagle-owl</b>	Meet 5.30 for 6.00 p.m.
	Presentation by Geoff Lowe, Avondale Sports Club.	
<b>Sunday 20<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Monavale Vlei walk</b>	Meet at 06.30 a.m.
<b>Sunday 27<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Bindura (T.B.A.)</b>	Meet at 06.30 a.m.

### *BirdLife Zimbabwe Mashonaland Calendar of Events: NOVEMBER 2019*

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<b>Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup></b>	<b>Marlborough Vlei walk</b>	Meet at 07.00 a.m.
<b>Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup></b>	<b>Mukuvisi Woodlands walk</b>	Meet at 06.30 a.m.



<b>Saturday 9<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Botanic Gardens</b>	Meet at 07.00 a.m.
<b>Sunday 10<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Lake Chivero</b> Meet at Prince Edward School car park	Meet at 06.30 a.m.
<b>Sunday 17<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Monavale Vlei walk</b>	Meet at 06.30 a.m.
<b>Thursday 21<sup>st</sup></b>	<b>Israel Bird Trip</b> Presentation by Jean Blake, Avondale Sports Club.	Meet 5.30 for 6.00 p.m.
<b>Saturday 30<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>BIRDING BIG DAY (24-hour count)</b> Record all the bird species seen or heard during a 24-hour period from midnight on Friday 29 November to midnight on Saturday 30 November 2019 within a radius of 50 km. Teams can consist of a maximum of four members. More info <a href="#">here</a> .	

For further information, please contact Innes Louw, [innes.louw@ames.co.zw](mailto:innes.louw@ames.co.zw) or [hararebirdwalks@gmail.com](mailto:hararebirdwalks@gmail.com) 0776 190795

### 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)

### Are you using the **BLZ Mashonaland Calendar of Events** on your smartphone?

On your Google account on your computer, click the Google Apps icon (9-dot square) and click **Calendar**. Under My calendars, on the left, tick the box for BLZ Mashonaland Calendar of Events, or try this [link](#).

On your phone go to your calendar – mine is called S Planner – and tap on *More* (yours might say something else but it is your calendar menu) and then *Manage calendars* or whatever yours says. Under Device, the phone, my Samsung has *My calendars* – make sure that is on/ticked, further down it has my Google account – turn on all relevant items and the BLZ Mashonaland Calendar of course. There may be a box/switch to sync your phone with your Google account and this must obviously be on.

Phones and their menus are different but hopefully you can work it out...  
...and always have events easily available on your phone.

*Please send contributions for The Babbler 151  
Dec 2019-Jan 2020 any time before the 15<sup>th</sup>  
Nov.*