

THE BABBLER

Newsletter of BirdLife Zimbabwe

December 2020–January 2021

No. 157



2020 wetland
counts
- 3

Mashonaland
News from the
Branch – 14

Lilian's Lovebird
poster – 15

Mashonaland East
news – 16

Mashonaland
West news – 18

Tail Feathers – 20

Committee	MASHONALAND (Code 024)	MATABELELAND (Code 029)
Chairperson	Innes Louw 0776-190795 hararebirdwalks@gmail.com 2490466 (h)	John Brebner 0782-781108 brebnerj@acolchem.co.zw 2242634
Vice Chairperson	Patrick Shadwell 0715-979640 patrick.shadwell@gmail.com	
Secretary	Kelvin Hein 0782-005889 bushpig48@gmail.com 2338714 (h)	Gaynor Lightfoot 0712-402341 gayetoes21@gmail.com
Treasurer	Debbie Wiggins 0772-252651 wigpd2015@gmail.com 2882851 (h)	Gaynor Lightfoot
Members	Geoff Lowe 0776-090632 d.i.systems@mweb.co.zw	Karen Learmonth 0772-231819 afspeg@yoafrica.com 2244990 (w)
	John Vekris 0772-381582 gakamira@africaonline.co.zw	Joan Banda (Youth) 0717-743691 joanbanda84@gmail.com
	Laurence Shadwell 0712-800905 adderley@iwayafrica.co.zw 2487670	Peter Makhusa (Youth) 0732-399651 peter.makhusa@gmail.com
		Helen Lewis 0772-262636 helen@betsig.co.zw
Membership	Sylvia Muzavazi 2481496 (w) sylvia@blz.co.zw	Jenny Brebner 0783033505 brebsj@gmail.com
Babbler Editor	Ian Riddell 0772-117054 gemsaf@mango.zw	

National Office

Office hours: Monday to Friday 8.30 – 4.30

35 Clyde Road, Eastlea, P O Box RVL100, Runiville, Harare, Zimbabwe

Telephone: 024 – 2481496

E-mail: birds@zol.co.zw

Website: www.birdlifezimbabwe.org also www.facebook.com/BirdLifeZimbabwe

Chief Executive Officer
Finance/Administration Manager
Conservation Officer: Special Species
In charge of IBA/KBA's
Messenger:

Julia Pierini
Sylvia Muzavazi
Fadzai Matsvimbo
Togarasei Fakarayi
Vengai Dengu

BirdLife Zimbabwe
The BirdLife International
Partner in Zimbabwe



The official dates for the next census will be Saturday 16 and Sunday 17 of January 2021



© Celesta von Chamier

As usual, we are happy with counts a month or so on either side of these dates and you are encouraged to count any sudden and significant influx that occurs at any time of the year

International Waterbird Census, Zimbabwe 2020

Ian Riddell

55 sites were counted in 2020, 54 in summer and 20 in winter. Of these, 19 were counted in both seasons, with 35 only counted in summer and 1 in the winter season. Winter counts were no doubt affected by Covid-19 restrictions (Table 1). The International Waterbird Census preferred count days were in the middle of January and July but our counts ranged a month either side of these dates, though only Mandavu Dam was counted in November 2019. Site counts in more than a single month per season can be seen in Table 1 and all these data including recounts are shown in this report.

In January, Nswatugi, Madingazulu and Whitewaters dams (Matopos) were dry. In July, Madingazulu, Maleme, Mesilume, Nswatugi, Sandy Spruit and Whitewaters dams (all Matopos) were dry.

Our Ramsar sites coverage is shown in Table 1. Chivero Bird Sanctuary (as part of Lake Chivero) and Monavale vlei were covered in January.

Participants are encouraged to count any sudden and significant influx that occurs at any time of the year.

Coverage of our wetland sites relies on the voluntary services of our members and their often limited resources so grateful thanks are due to those who participated, 50 in the wet and 12 in the dry season, plus those simply listed as BLZ. A big thankyou to those individuals who did extensive counts in Hwange and other sites.

12 652 birds of 150 species were recorded, this total number including 1 unidentified raptor and 7 unidentified waders; this total includes estimates and recounted sites (Table 2). A summary of most species is given below though single site records (1 record for the year) are only listed in Table 2.

Anseriformes (Anatidae): ducks and geese

White-faced Duck *Dendrocygna viduata*

Summer: Ranged from 2-229 (Av. 34.2); Chinga Pan had 51, Lanark Farm 80, followed by highs of 173 at Devon Dam and 229 at Mazvikadei Dam.

Winter: a range from 2-110, the high count from Suni Pan. Karima weir had 99 birds. Mandavu had 49 birds in May and 5 in June.

White-backed Duck *Thalassornis leuconotus*

Summer: counts were 10, 15, 40 & 157. The high count came from Clifton farm dam in January.

Winter: not recorded.

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiaca*

Summer: Generally ranged from 1-15 birds (Av. 5.3, 27 sites), and then numbers rose with 52 at Scotts Pan, 58 at Ngamo Pans, and a high of 74 at Mandavu Dam in November and 80 in January.

Winter: ranged from 2-63 birds (Av. 28.8). Low counts were from Mbonisa Weir (2) and Chinga Pan (5), and Mpopoma Dam had 61 birds. Mandavu was counted in May (31), June (63), and July (7).

Spur-winged Goose *Plectropterus gambensis*
Summer: Found in low numbers from 1-6 at 9 sites.
Winter: 1 each at Chinga & Suni pans.

African Comb Duck *Sarkidiornis melanotos*
Summer: From 1-9 at 13 sites, the 9 at Mtsholeli Dam.
Winter: not recorded.

African Pygmy-goose *Nettapus auritus*
Summer: Low numbers of 2-11 (Av. 6.3, 6 sites) were far exceeded by 110 at Clifton farm dam.
Winter: not recorded.

Southern Pochard *Netta erythrophthalma*
Summer: Only found at Clifton (2) and Kent Estate dams (7).
Winter: not recorded.

Hottentot Teal *Spatula hottentota*
Summer: Numbers were low with 1-6 at 7 sites.
Winter: not recorded.

African Black Duck *Anas sparsa*
Summer: 2 each at Knoll Farm Dam and Rakodzi Farm Dam (this updates the Jan. count data).
Winter: not recorded.

Yellow-billed Duck *Anas undulata*
Summer: a single at Ballantyne Park South on 15 January.

Cape Teal *Anas capensis*
Summer: recorded only at David Whitehead Ponds, Kadoma Textiles Dye Ponds and Mandavu Dam (November) with 2 at each site.

Red-billed Teal *Anas erythrorhyncha*
Summer: 2-39 birds (Av. 12.9) at 23 sites plus higher counts of 57 at Scotts Pan and 81 at Shumba pumped pan, Hwange.
Winter: numbers from 6-19 (Av. 11), 12 were at Dwarf Goose Pan and 19 at Karima weir.

Podicipediformes (Podicipedidae) grebes

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*
Summer: Counts were very low, from 1-3 at 8 sites, then 40 at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary.

Winter: counts were poor with 1 at Camp Hwange and 2 at Mpopoma Dam.

Cuculiformes (Cuculidae) coucals

Senegal Coucal *Centropus senegalensis*
Summer: from 1-3 at 6 sites.
Winter: not recorded.

Black Coucal *Centropus grillii*
Summer: from 1-4 at 4 sites, the largest number from Marlborough Vlei.

Diderick Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx caprius*
Summer: singles at 3 sites and 3 at Marlborough Vlei.

Gruiformes (Heliornithidae-Gruidae) finfoots, flufftails, rails, crakes, cranes

African Finfoot *Podica senegalensis*
Summer: 4 at Hippo Pools camp.

Red-chested Flufftail *Sarothrura rufa*
Summer: 1 at Monavale Vlei and 5 at Marlborough Vlei.

African Crake *Crexopsis egregia*
Summer: 1 at Marlborough vlei and 4 at Monavale Vlei.

Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*
Summer: 2 at David Whitehead Ponds on 20 January warrant special mention.

Black Crake *Zapornia flavirostra*
Summer: From 1-10 (Av. 4) at 11 sites, then 26 at Mazvikadei Dam.
Winter: not recorded.

African Purple Swamphen *Porphyrio madagascariensis*
Summer: From 1-3 at 4 sites, plus 14 at Clifton farm dam.

Winter: not recorded.

Allen's Gallinule *Porphyrio alleni*
Summer: 2 at Mandalay Dam and 4 at Marlborough Vlei.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*
Summer: Ranged from 1-10 (Av. 4.5, 10 sites) with higher counts of 23 (Marlborough Vlei) and 27 (Clifton farm dam).
Winter: 1 from Karima weir.

Lesser Moorhen *Gallinula angulata*
Summer: 1 at Biri Dam Fishing Site and 2 at Clifton farm dam.
Winter: not recorded.

Grey Crowned Crane *Balearica regulorum*
Summer: all recorded from Hwange, with 1 at Somavundhla Pan, 2 each at Shumba pumped pan, 'Back Pan' and Reedbuck Vlei, 4 at Camp Hwange, and 10 at Makalolo Pan.
Winter: 2 at Camp Hwange.

Ciconiiformes (Ciconiidae) storks

Marabou Stork *Leptoptilos crumenifer*

Summer: 1 at Dwarf Goose Pan, 5 at Mandavu Dam and 83 at Kent Estate dams. Note that the January report had 3 at Kent Estate, which was an error, though Table 2 reflected the correct number.



Yellow-billed Stork *Mycteria ibis*

Summer: 1-3 at 3 sites, 15 at Mandavu Dam in November & 29 there in January.

Winter: 1 at Mbonisa Weir, 6 at Mandavu in May, 7 in June and 8 in July, then 41 at Suni Pan & 44 at Chinga Pan.

African Openbill *Anastomus lamelligerus*

Summer: 1 at Shumba pumped pan, 13 at Mazvikadei Dam, 20 at Mandavu Dam, 53 at Chinga Pan, 5 at Kent Estate dams and 116 at Suni Pan.

Winter: 4 at Chinga Pan & 19 at Suni Pan.

Abdim's Stork *Ciconia abdimii*

Summer: 3-30 (Av. 15.3) at 6 sites, plus 70 at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary and 153 at Crowborough Farm.

Woolly-necked Stork *Ciconia microscelis*

Summer: 12 at Camp Hwange and 23 at Shumba pumped pan.

Winter: 1 at Suni Pan.

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*

Summer: 33 at Kent Estate dams.

Saddle-billed Stork *Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis*

Summer: 2 each at Dwarf Goose Pan and Mandavu Dam.

Winter: 2 each at Mandavu Dam, Mpopoma Dam and Suni Pan.

Pelecaniformes (Threskiornithidae-Pelecanidae) ibises, spoonbills, herons, Hamerkop, pelicans

African Spoonbill *Platalea alba*

Summer: 1-12 (Av. 4.1) at 7 sites 13 at Mandavu Dam in November and 26 in January.

Winter: 1 at Suni Pan and 15 at Chinga Pan. Mandavu Dam had 9 in May, 8 in June and 4 in July.

African Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus*

Summer: ranged from 1-17 (Av. 5.4) at 12 sites, Mandavu Dam having 17 in November & 2 in January, with a high of 225 from Crowborough Farm.

Winter: 3 at Suni Pan & 35 at Chinga Pan. Mandavu, with 3 counts (May-July), showed no appreciable change in numbers with 2-3 birds.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*

Summer: 2-25 (Av. 9.9) at 7 sites, Mandavu Dam having 4 in November & 16 in January, plus 48 at Mazvikadei Dam.

Winter: 1 at Mandavu Dam.

Black-crowned Night-heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

Summer: 2 at Suni Pan and 3 at Chinga Pan.

Green-backed Heron *Butorides striata*

Summer: From 1-3 birds at 5 sites, then 8 from Hippo Pools camp.

Winter: 1 each at Suni & Chinga pans.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*

Summer: 2-8 (Av. 4.4) from 8 sites, plus 49 from Mazvikadei Dam.

Winter: 2 at Suni Pan.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

Summer: Numbers ranged from 1-130 (Av. 30.1, 14 sites) followed by 164 at Little Devon Dam, 320 at Crowborough Farm and 478 at Mazvikadei Dam.

Winter: 1 at Mpopoma Dam and 2 at Mandavu Dam.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Summer: from 1-8 (Av. 2.3) at 12 sites, then 18 at Mandavu Dam in November & 21 in January, plus a high 70 at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary.

Winter: apart from singles at Mpopoma Dam & Shumba pumped pan, ranged from 12-21 at 3 other sites. Three counts at Mandavu in May-July had 12-18 birds.

Black-headed Heron *Ardea melanocephala*

Summer: 1-8 (Av. 2.4) from 13 sites, plus 10 from David Whitehead Ponds and 30 from Kadoma Textiles Dye Ponds.

Winter: 1 each at Mandavu Dam and Suni Pan.

Goliath Heron *Ardea goliath*

Summer: 1 at Mandavu Dam.

Winter: 1 each at Mandavu, Chinga & Suni pans.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

Summer: From 1-3 birds at 5 sites, then 9 at Clifton farm dam and 25 at Mazvikadei Dam.

Winter: not recorded.

Great Egret *Ardea alba*

Summer: 1-8 (Av. 3.9) at 7 sites, Mandavu Dam having 5 in November & 3 in January, 12 at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary, 1 at Clifton farm dam and 22 at Mazvikadei Dam.

Winter: 1 at Chinga Pan & 8 at Suni Pan; Mandavu (3 counts, May-July) had 2-8 birds.

Yellow-billed Egret *Ardea brachyrhyncha*

Summer: 1 at Somavundhla Pan, 27 at Mazvikadei Dam, 32 at Chinga Pan and 49 at Suni Pan.

Winter: not recorded.

Black Heron *Egretta ardesiaca*

Summer: 1-2 at 5 sites, then 75 at Mazvikadei Dam.

Winter: not recorded.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Summer: from 1-8 (Av. 3.9, 9 sites), Mandavu Dam having 5 in November & 8 in January, 37 at Mazvikadei Dam and 46 at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary.

Winter: 5 at Mandavu Dam.

Hamerkop *Scopus umbretta*

Summer: ranged from 1-7 (Av. 2.3), the 7 from Hippo Pools camp.

Winter: from 1-2 at five sites.

Suliformes (Phalacrocoracidae-Anhingidae) cormorants and darters

Reed Cormorant *Microcarbo africanus*

Summer: from 2-40 (Av. 12.3, 16 sites), then 186 at Mazvikadei Dam.

Winter: not recorded.

White-breasted Cormorant *Phalacrocorax lucidus*

Summer: from 1-11 at 2 sites, then 300 at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary.

Winter: Mandavu only with 2-4 in May-July (3 counts).

African Darter *Anhinga rufa*

Summer: 2 each from 3 sites (Chinga Pan, Suni Pan and Mandavu Dam (November)), then 5 at Mazvikadei Dam being the only record from the plateau.

Winter: Mandavu only with 4 in May and 3 in June.



Charadriiformes: thick-knees, avocets & stilts, plovers, jacanas, sandpipers & snipes, coursers, pratincoles, gulls, terns & skimmers

Water Thick-knee *Burhinus vermiculatus*

Summer: 3-12 from 5 sites, the 12 from Hippo Pools camp.

Winter: singles in May & June at 2 at Masuma Dam/Pan.

Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

Summer: Only 1 at Mandavu Dam in November and 10 at Pasi Dam in January.

Winter: not recorded.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

Summer: 1-24 (Av. 9.3) from 15 sites, 55 at Mazvikadei Dam, and from Mandavu Dam, 57 in November and a high of 174 in January.

Winter: the 3 Mandavu counts (May-July) had 21, 15 & 14 birds.

Kittlitz's Plover *Charadrius pecuarius*

Summer: 1-11 (Av. 3.8) at 13 sites, 17 at Mazvikadei Dam and 46 at Kent Estate dams.

Winter: At Mandavu Dam only with 3-8 (May-July, 3 counts).

Three-banded Plover *Charadrius tricollaris*

Summer: 1-10 (Av. 3.9) from 11 sites, then Mandavu Dam had 21 in November and 13 in January.

Winter: 2-11 (Av. 5.6), from 3 sites. Mandavu Dam (May-July, 3 counts) had 3-11 birds.

Blacksmith Lapwing *Vanellus armatus*

Summer: 27 sites had 1-11 birds (Av. 4.4) (Mandavu 9 in November), 8 sites had 16-37 (Mandavu 16 in January), Av. 25.4, then 73 at Ngamo Pans and 100 at Mazvikadei Dam.

Winter: ranged from 1-33 (Av. 11.1). Higher numbers were 20 at Chinga Pan and 26-33 at Mandavu Dam (May-July, 3 counts).

Crowned Lapwing *Vanellus coronatus*
Summer: 1 at Marlborough Vlei, 2 at Mandalay Dam, 6 at Ngamo Pans and 9 at 'Back Pan'.
Winter: 2 at Camp Hwange.

African Wattled Lapwing *Vanellus senegallus*
Summer: 1-6 (Av. 3.2) at 8 sites, and 19-32 (Av. 26.5) at 4 sites, the 32 from Lanark Farm.
Winter: 1 at Mpopoma Dam and 6 at Chinga Pan.

African Jacana *Actophilornis africanus*
Summer: Numbers ranged from 1-687 (Av. 41.9) at 23 sites. High counts were 98 at Clifton farm dam and a high of 687 at Mazvikadei Dam. These figures correct the January report.
Winter: 1-8 at 5 sites, Mandavu (May-July, 3 counts) with 1-2 birds.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*
Summer: from 5-13 (Av. 9.6) at 7 sites (Mandavu 7 in January), 21 at Kent Estate dams and 47 at Mandavu Dam in November.
Winter: 1 at Mandavu Dam in May.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*
Summer: 1 at Mandavu Dam (January) & Kent Estate dams, 5 at Mandavu Dam (November) and 26 at David Whitehead Ponds.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*
Summer: Low numbers with 1-4 at 7 sites.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*
Summer: 1-4 at 9 sites.

Winter: Mandavu Dam had 1 each in May & June.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*
Summer: 1-15 (Av. 6.2) at 18 sites, Mandavu with 3 in November & 6 in January, followed by 52 at Mazvikadei Dam.

Winter: 4 at Mandavu Dam in July.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*
Summer: low counts of 2-3 at 5 sites, Mandavu with 2 in November & 3 in January.
Winter: 1 at Shumba Pans in July.

African Skimmer *Rynchops flavirostris*
Summer: only found at Mandavu Dam with 2 in November and 13 in January.
Winter: Mandavu Dam - 1 (May), 7 (June) & 6 (July).

Grey-headed Gull *Larus cirrocephalus*
Summer: 1 at Mandavu Dam, 6 at Mazvikadei Dam and 50 at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary.
Winter: 1 at Mandavu Dam in July.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida*
Winter: 3 at Mandavu Dam in May.

White-winged Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*
Summer: 2 at Clifton farm dam, 29 at Mandavu in November & 27 in January, and 300 at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary.
Winter: not recorded.

Strigiformes (Strigidae) owls

Marsh Owl *Asio capensis*
Summer: 1 at Monavale Vlei and 4 at Marlborough vlei.
Winter: not recorded.

Accipitriformes (Pandionidae-Accipitridae) osprey, kites, hawks, eagles

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*
Summer: Singles at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary, Mandavu Dam and Rakodzi Farm Dam, and 2 at Mazvikadei Dam.
Winter: not recorded.

Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus*
Summer: Singles at Ballantyne Park South, Crowborough Farm, David Whitehead Ponds and Devon Dam.
Winter: not recorded.

Long-crested Eagle *Lophaetus occipitalis*
Summer: 1 each at Mazvikadei Dam and Monavale Vlei.
Winter: not recorded.

African Fish-eagle *Haliaeetus vocifer*
Summer: 1-3 at 15 sites, 8 at Mazvikadei Dam and 20 at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary.
Winter: 1-3 at 6 sites. Mandavu Dam had 1-2 birds in 3 counts in May-July.

Yellow-billed Kite *Milvus aegyptius*
Summer: 1-3 at 5 sites and 7 at Scotts Pan.

Coraciiformes (Meropidae-Alcedinidae) bee-eaters, kingfishers

White-fronted Bee-eater *Merops bullockoides*
Summer: 2 at Mbonisa Weir and 4 each at David Whitehead Ponds and Devon Dam.
Winter: 2 at Chinga Pan and 3 at Mbonisa Weir.

Southern Carmine Bee-eater *Merops nubicoides*
Summer: 3 at Makalolo Pan, 7 at 'Back Pan' and 8 at Scotts Pan.

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*
Summer: 1-6 at 5 sites, 14 at Chinga Pan, 20 at Monavale Vlei and 66 at Country Club Golf course.

Little Bee-eater *Merops pusillus*
Summer: 1-6 (Av. 3) at 5 sites. The January count had 4 sites, which was an error.
Winter: 1 at Mbonisa Weir.

Malachite Kingfisher *Corythornis cristatus*
Summer: 1-2 at 4 sites with a high 14 at Mazvikadei Dam. This corrects errors in the January count.
Winter: 1 at Mandavu Dam.

Half-collared Kingfisher *Alcedo semitorquata*
Summer: 1 at Hippo Pools camp.
Winter: 2 at Hippo Pools camp.

Giant Kingfisher *Megaceryle maxima*
Summer: 1-4 (Av. 1.9) at 11 sites.
Winter: not recorded.

Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis*
Summer: 1-8 birds (Av. 3.3), then 40 at Mazvikadei Dam.
Winter: 1-5 birds (Av. 3) at 5 sites. Mandavu Dam (3 counts May-July) had 4, 3 & 5.

Woodland Kingfisher *Halcyon senegalensis*
Summer: 2 each at Chinga Pan and Suni Pan.

Falconiformes (Falconidae) falcons

Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis*
Summer: Only 1 each at David Whitehead Ponds and Kent Estate dams.

Lanner Falcon *Falco biarmicus*
Summer: 1 at Marlborough Vlei and 2 at Kent Estate dams.

Cisticolas and allies (Cisticolidae)

Red-faced Cisticola *Cisticola erythrops*
Summer: 1-5 at 5 sites, the high count from Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary.
Winter: not recorded.

Rattling Cisticola *Cisticola chiniana*
Summer: Singles at Marlborough Vlei and Monavale Vlei.
Winter: not recorded.

Croaking Cisticola *Cisticola natalensis*
Summer: 1-2 at 3 sites and 6 at Monavale Vlei.
Winter: not recorded.

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis*
Summer: 1-3 at 8 sites.
Winter: not recorded.



Rattling Cisticola

Tawny-flanked Prinia *Prinia subflava*
Summer: Possibly undercounted, 2-4 at 4 sites.
Winter: not recorded.

Reed-warblers (Acrocephalidae)

Dark-capped Yellow Warbler *Iduna natalensis*
Summer: 1 at Monavale Vlei and 3 at Marlborough Vlei.

African Reed-warbler *Acrocephalus baeticatus*
Summer: 2-3 at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary, Marlborough Vlei and Monavale Vlei.

Lesser Swamp-warbler *Acrocephalus gracilirostris*
Summer: 1-6 at 5 sites, then 15 at Marlborough Vlei.
Winter: not recorded.

Grasshopper-warblers and Grassbirds (Locustellidae)

Little Rush-warbler *Bradypterus baboecala*
Summer: 2 & 3 at Monavale Vlei & Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary, then 9 at Marlborough Vlei.

Winter: not recorded.

Swallows and Martins (Hirundinidae)

Grey-rumped Swallow *Pseudhirundo griseopyga*
Summer: 3 at Monavale Vlei and 7 at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary.
Winter: not recorded.

Red-breasted Swallow *Cecropis semirufa*
Summer: 2 at Crowborough Farm and 4 at David Whitehead Ponds.

White-throated Swallow *Hirundo albigularis*

Summer: 1 at Kent Estate dams and 2 at Marlborough Vlei.

Wire-tailed Swallow *Hirundo smithii*

Summer: 4 each at Country Club Golf course and Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary.

Winter: not recorded.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Summer: 6 at Monavale Vlei, 10 at Kent Estate dams and 15 at Crowborough Farm.



Red-breasted Swallow

Old World Flycatchers and Chats (Muscicapidae)

African Stonechat *Saxicola torquatus*

Summer: 2 at Gletwyn Dam.

Winter: 3 at Marlborough Vlei.

Weavers (Ploceidae)

Thick-billed Weaver *Amblyospiza albifrons*

Summer: 2 at Gletwyn Dam, 8 at Monavale Vlei and 10 at Mazvikadei Ponds.

Winter: not recorded.

Red-billed Quelea *Quelea quelea*

Summer: Only a single at Kent Estate dams and 40 at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary.

Winter: not recorded.

Southern Red Bishop *Euplectes orix*

The counts of low numbers in the Euplectes spp. below probably reflect the visible males, with variable effort to count females.

Summer: Most counts from 2-25, though some under counting is likely, especially of females. Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary had 60 and Monavale Vlei had 65.

Winter: not recorded.

Red-collared Widowbird *Euplectes ardens*

Summer: 3-7 then 38 at Monavale Vlei.

Winter: not recorded.

Yellow Bishop *Euplectes capensis*

Summer: Singles at Country Club Golf course and David Whitehead Ponds, then 10 at Monavale Vlei.

Winter: not recorded.

Yellow-mantled Widowbird *Euplectes macroura*

Summer: 1 at Kent Estate dams and 24 at Monavale Vlei.

Winter: not recorded.

White-winged Widowbird *Euplectes albonotatus*

Summer: This season showed an incursion into Harare. 1 at Marlborough Vlei and 4 at Monavale Vlei.

Winter: not recorded.

Spectacled Weaver *Ploceus ocularis*

Summer: singles at 3 Harare sites and 4 at Country Club Golf course.

Winter: not recorded.

Golden Weaver *Ploceus xanthops*

Summer: 1 at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary and 5 at Marlborough Vlei.

Winter: not recorded.

Southern Masked-weaver *Ploceus velatus*

Summer: 3 at Monavale Vlei, 10 at Crowborough Farm, 12 at Country Club Golf course and 30 at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary.

Winter: not recorded.

Waxbills (Estrildidae)

Common Waxbill *Estrilda astrild*

Summer: 4-30 (Av. 14) at 4 sites with the high count of 30 from Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary.

Winter: not recorded.

Orange-breasted Waxbill *Amandava subflava*

Summer: 4 at Mandalay Dam, 15 at Marlborough Vlei, 18 at Monavale Vlei and 200 at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary.

Winter: not recorded.

Bronze Mannikin *Spermestes cucullata*

Summer: 5 at Marlborough Vlei and 6 at Monavale Vlei.

Winter: not recorded.

Whydahs and Indigobirds (Viduidae)

Pin-tailed Whydah *Vidua macroura*

Summer: 1-4 at 4 sites and 10 at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary.

Winter: not recorded.

Pipits and Wagtails (Motacillidae)

Yellow-throated Longclaw *Macronyx croceus*

Summer: 1-2 at 6 sites.

Winter: not recorded.

African Pied Wagtail *Motacilla aguimp*

Summer: 1-7 at 6 sites plus 16 at Hippo Pools camp.

Winter: 20 at 3 sites. Mandavu Dam counts had 2 (May), 8 (June) and 5 (July).

Finches (Fringillidae)

Brimstone Canary *Crithagra sulphurata*

Summer: 1 at Marlborough Vlei and 4 at Crowborough Farm.

Winter: not recorded.

Table 1. Sites covered in 2020 showing Month as a number and number of counts in brackets (if >1). Coverage of Ramsar sites and sites within their confines are highlighted

Site name	District	Summer	Winter
Airstrip 2	Hwange	1	
Ballantyne Park South	Harare	1	
Big Shumba Pan	Hwange	1	7
Biri Dam	Makonde	1	
Biri Dam Fishing Site	Makonde	1	
Broken Rifle Pan	Hwange	2	
Camp Hwange	Hwange	1	7
Chinga Pan, Sango Ranch, Save Valley Conservancy	Bikita	2	7
Chitampa Dam	Matopos	1	7
Clifton farm dam	Chegutu	1	
Country Club Golf course	Harare	1	
Crowborough Farm	Harare	1	
David Whitehead Ponds	Chegutu	1	
Devon Dam	Kadoma	1	
Dwarf Goose Pan	Hwange	1	7
Eiffel Flats Sewage Ponds	Kadoma	1	
Highacres Dam, Esigodini	Insiza	2	
Hippo Pools camp	Shamva	1	
Kadoma Textiles Dye Ponds	Kadoma	1	
Karima weir, Imire	Hwedza		7
Kent Estate dams	Norton	1	
Knoll Farm Dam	Goromonzi	1	
Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary	Zvimba	1	
Lanark Farm (Irvines) North dams	Seke	1	
Little Devon Dam	Kadoma	1	
Little Somavundhla pans	Hwange	1	
Madingazulu Dam	Matopos	1	7
Madison Pan	Hwange	1	
Makalolo Pan	Hwange	1	
Maleme Dam	Matopos	1	7
Mandalay Dam	Kadoma	1	
Mandavu Dam	Hwange	11, 1	5, 6, 7

Site name	District	Summer	Winter
Marlborough Vlei	Harare	1	
Masuma Pan/Dam	Hwange	1	7
Mazvikadei Dam	Zvimba	1	
Mbonisa Weir, Falcon College	Insiza	2	8
Mesilume Dam	Matopos	1	7
Monavale Vlei	Harare	1	
Mpopoma Dam	Matopos	1	7
Mtsheli Dam	Matopos	2	
Ngamo Pans	Hwange	1	
Nswatugi Dam	Matopos	1	7
Pans 2-3 km NE of Makalolo Pan, (Back Pan)	Hwange	2	
Pasi Dam	Kadoma	1	
Rakodzi Farm Dam	Marondera	1	
Reedbuck Vlei	Hwange	1	7
Sandy Spruit dam	Matopos	1	7
Scotts Pan	Hwange	1	
Shumba Pans	Hwange	1	7
Shumba pumped pan	Hwange	1	7
Somavundhla Pan	Hwange	1	
Suni Pan, Sango Ranch, Save Valley Conservancy	Bikita	2	7
Suri Suri Dam, Chakari	Chegututu	1	
Wexcau Pan	Hwange	2	
Whitewaters Dam	Matopos	1	7

Table 2. Species totals, including recounts, by season in 2020. The number of sites (including sub-sites) in brackets. Single site records, not mentioned above, are given here.

Species	Summer	Winter	Total	Single site
Helmeted Guineafowl		25 (1)	25 (1)	Karima weir
White-faced Duck	856 (25)	265 (4)	1121 (26)	
Fulvous Duck	4 (1)		4 (1)	Mandalay Dam
White-backed Duck	222 (4)		222 (4)	
Egyptian Goose	408 (30)	202 (5)	610 (31)	
Spur-winged Goose	24 (9)	2 (2)	26 (9)	
African Comb Duck	51 (13)		51 (13)	
African Pygmy-goose	148 (7)		148 (7)	
Southern Pochard	9 (2)		9 (2)	
Hottentot Teal	28 (7)		28 (7)	
African Black Duck	4 (2)		4 (2)	
Yellow-billed Duck	1 (1)		1 (1)	Ballantyne Park South
Cape Teal	6 (3)		6 (3)	
Red-billed Teal	434 (25)	44 (4)	478 (26)	
Little Grebe	54 (9)	3 (2)	57 (10)	
Senegal Coucal	9 (6)		9 (6)	
Black Coucal	8 (4)		8 (4)	
Diderick Cuckoo	6 (4)		6 (4)	
African Finfoot	4 (1)		4 (1)	
Red-chested Flufftail	6 (2)		6 (2)	
Streaky-breasted Flufftail	1 (1)		1 (1)	Monavale Vlei
African Rail	9 (1)		9 (1)	Marlborough Vlei
African Crake	5 (2)		5 (2)	
Spotted Crake	2 (1)		2 (1)	David Whitehead Ponds
Black Crake	74 (13)		74 (13)	
Baillon's Crake	1 (1)		1 (1)	Mazvikadei Dam

Species	Summer	Winter	Total	Single site
African Purple Swamphen	22 (5)		22 (5)	
Allen's Gallinule	6 (2)		6 (2)	
Common Moorhen	103 (13)	1 (1)	104 (14)	
Lesser Moorhen	3 (2)		3 (2)	
Red-knobbed Coot	90 (1)		90 (1)	Clifton farm dam
Grey Crowned Crane	21 (6)	2 (1)	23 (6)	
Marabou Stork	89 (3)		89 (3)	
Yellow-billed Stork	49 (4)	107 (4)	156 (6)	
African Openbill	288 (6)	23 (2)	311 (6)	
Black Stork	2 (1)		2 (1)	Hippo Pools camp
Abdim's Stork	315 (8)		315 (8)	
Woolly-necked Stork	35(2)	1 (1)	36 (3)	
White Stork	33 (1)		33 (1)	Kent Estate dams
Saddle-billed Stork	4 (2)	6 (3)	10 (4)	
African Spoonbill	68 (8)	37 (3)	105 (10)	
African Sacred Ibis	295 (13)	47 (3)	342 (14)	
Hadedda Ibis		5 (1)	5 (1)	Chinga Pan
Glossy Ibis	127 (8)	1 (1)	128 (8)	
White-backed Night-heron		3 (1)	3 (1)	Hippo Pools camp
Black-crowned Night-heron	5 (2)		5 (2)	
Green-backed Heron	18 (7)	2 (2)	20 (8)	
Squacco Heron	84 (9)	2 (1)	86 (9)	
Cattle Egret	1386 (18)	3 (2)	1389 (20)	
Grey Heron	136 (14)	84 (5)	220 (15)	
Black-headed Heron	71 (15)	2 (2)	73 (15)	
Goliath Heron	1 (1)	3 (3)	4 (3)	
Purple Heron	44 (8)		44 (8)	
Great Egret	83 (10)	22 (3)	105 (11)	
Yellow-billed Egret	109 (4)		109 (4)	
Black Heron	83 (6)		83 (6)	
Little Egret	123 (12)	5 (1)	128 (12)	
Hamerkop	25 (11)	6 (5)	31 (14)	
Reed Cormorant	383 (17)		383 (17)	
White-breasted Cormorant	317 (3)	8 (1)	325 (3)	
African Darter	11 (4)	7 (1)	18 (4)	
Water Thick-knee	35 (6)	4 (2)	39 (6)	
Pied Avocet	11 (2)		11 (2)	
Black-winged Stilt	425 (17)	50 (1)	475 (17)	
Common Ringed Plover	3 (1)		3 (1)	David Whitehead Ponds
Kittlitz's Plover	112 (15)	17 (1)	129 (16)	
Three-banded Plover	77 (12)	28 (3)	105 (14)	
Blacksmith Lapwing	495 (36)	145 (11)	640 (40)	
Crowned Lapwing	18 (4)	2 (1)	20 (5)	
African Wattled Lapwing	132 (12)	7 (2)	139 (13)	
Greater Painted-snipe	4 (1)		4 (1)	Mazvikadei Dam
African Jacana	1007 (23)	20 (5)	1027 (24)	
Lesser Jacana	3 (1)		3 (1)	Clifton farm dam
Ruff	135 (8)	1 (1)	136 (8)	
Curlew Sandpiper	1 (1)		1 (1)	Kadoma Textiles Dye Ponds
Little Stint	33 (3)		33 (3)	
African Snipe	4 (1)		4 (1)	Kent Estate dams
Common Sandpiper	18 (7)		18 (7)	
Common Greenshank	19 (9)	2 (1)	21 (9)	
Wood Sandpiper	169 (19)	4 (1)	173 (19)	
Marsh Sandpiper	13 (5)	1 (1)	14 (6)	
Temminck's Courser	2 (1)		2 (1)	Camp Hwange
Collared Pratincole	16 (1)		16 (1)	Mandavu Dam
African Skimmer	15 (1)	14 (1)	29 (1)	

Species	Summer	Winter	Total	Single site
Grey-headed Gull	57 (3)	1 (1)	58 (3)	
Whiskered Tern		3 (1)	3 (1)	Mandavu Dam
White-winged Tern	358 (3)		358 (3)	
Marsh Owl	5 (2)		5 (2)	
Osprey	5 (4)		5 (4)	
Black-shouldered Kite	4 (4)		4 (4)	
Black-chested Snake-eagle	2 (1)		2 (1)	Marlborough Vlei
Long-crested Eagle	2 (2)		2 (2)	
African Fish-eagle	58 (18)	13 (6)	71 (21)	
Yellow-billed Kite	17 (6)		17 (6)	
White-fronted Bee-eater	10 (3)	5 (2)	15 (4)	
Southern Carmine Bee-eater	18 (3)		18 (3)	
European Bee-eater	17 (8)		17 (8)	
Little Bee-eater	15 (5)	1 (1)	16 (6)	
Malachite Kingfisher	19 (5)	1 (1)	20 (6)	
Giant Kingfisher	21 (11)		21 (11)	
Pied Kingfisher	88 (16)	21 (5)	109 (17)	
Woodland Kingfisher	4 (2)		4 (2)	
Amur Falcon	2 (2)		2 (2)	
Lanner Falcon	3 (2)		3 (2)	
Red-faced Cisticola	14 (5)		14 (5)	
Rattling Cisticola	2 (2)		2 (2)	
Croaking Cisticola	10 (4)		10 (4)	
Zitting Cisticola	11 (8)		11 (8)	
Pale-crowned Cisticola	3 (1)		3 (1)	Crowborough Farm
Tawny-flanked Prinia	10 (4)		10 (4)	
Dark-capped Yellow Warbler	4 (2)		4 (2)	
Sedge Warbler	14 (1)		14 (1)	Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary
African Reed-warbler	7 (3)		7 (3)	
Lesser Swamp-warbler	25 (6)		25 (6)	
Great Reed-warbler	4 (1)		4 (1)	Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary
Little Rush-warbler	14 (3)		14 (3)	
Grey-rumped Swallow	10 (2)		10 (2)	
Common House-martin	1 (1)		1 (1)	Kent Estate dams
Lesser Striped Swallow	37 (1)		37 (1)	David Whitehead Ponds
Red-breasted Swallow	6 (2)		6 (2)	
Greater Striped Swallow	3 (1)		3 (1)	Monavale Vlei
White-throated Swallow	3 (2)		3 (2)	
Wire-tailed Swallow	8 (2)		8 (2)	
Barn Swallow	31 (3)		31 (3)	
African Stonechat	2 (1)		2 (1)	Marlborough Vlei
Thick-billed Weaver	1 (1)		1 (1)	Monavale Vlei
Red-billed Quelea	41 (2)		41 (2)	
Yellow-crowned Bishop	3 (1)		3 (1)	Wexcau Pan
Southern Red Bishop	191 (10)		191 (10)	
Red-collared Widowbird	52 (4)		52 (4)	
Yellow Bishop	12 (3)		12 (3)	
Yellow-mantled Widowbird	25 (2)		25 (2)	
White-winged Widowbird	5 (2)		5 (2)	
Spectacled Weaver	7 (4)		7 (4)	
Golden Weaver	6 (2)		6 (2)	
Lesser Masked-weaver	3 (1)		3 (1)	Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary
Southern Masked-weaver	55 (4)		55 (4)	
Village Weaver	1 (1)		1 (1)	Marlborough Vlei
Common Waxbill	56 (4)		56 (4)	
African Quailfinch	2 (1)		2 (1)	Kent Estate dams
Orange-breasted Waxbill	237 (4)		237 (4)	
Bronze Mannikin	11 (2)		11 (2)	

Species	Summer	Winter	Total	Single site
Pin-tailed Whydah	19 (5)		19 (5)	
Cuckoo Finch	4 (1)		4 (1)	Monavale Vlei
Yellow-throated Longclaw	10 (6)		10 (6)	
Rosy-throated Longclaw	2 (1)		2 (1)	Crowborough Farm
Yellow Wagtail	6 (1)		6 (1)	Crowborough Farm
African Pied Wagtail	37 (7)	20 (3)	57 (9)	
Brimstone Canary	5 (2)		5 (2)	

Participants

B Antonio, P.A. Banks, P.E. Banks, B Bester, Jenny Brebner, John Brebner, P Brown, G Calvert, R Chirimuta, V Chitauro, A Cooper, A Dare, D Dell, P Dell, R Dennison, K Dixon, L Edwards, D Hasluck, A Jeke, A Karimanzira, L King, C Kew, D Kew, D Kok, Stephen Long, Sue Long, I Louw, G Macdonald, H Macdonald, R Mamombe, L Mathe, H Matthews, J Matthews, B Morgan, J Muropa, T Mwedzi, T Ndadziira, R Paice, M Parrock, C Pierini, J Pierini, M Piki, I Riddell, C Shadwell, L Shadwell, P Shadwell, W Sibindi, S Stone, M Tadyanehondo, T Tarakini, A Tshipa, D Wakeling, D Wiggins, P Wiggins, S Wood, T Zondo, other BLZ members.

Branch News

Mashonaland

Bird outings around and about Harare

Ken Dixon

Bally Vaughan, Sunday 27th September 2020

Had the birds, as we had, been warned of the heat and heaviness of the day or were they driven away by the roars of the lions? Whatever the case, birding was really hard work despite guiding from Willem to all the most promising habitats of the sanctuary. Fortunately, we had eyes and ears keener than mine or the six of us wouldn't have reached even 50 species at this super venue.

Our first stage was a stroll round the dam and woodland near the cages of mostly exotic species of animals and birds. European Bee-eaters could be heard by some high above us and the frenetic activity of a colony of Village Weavers was evident but their nests threatened by a marauding Senegal Coucal. A White-necked Raven, attracted by the food supplied for the animals, was in the Bushpig's pen with a Cattle Egret. African Jacana, Levillant's Cisticola, Little Rush-warbler and Lesser Swamp-warbler were active in the reedbed and Black-headed Oriole and Klaas's Cuckoo called from woodland. The only bird on the dwala behind us seemed to be a Lazy Cisticola.

We next drove down to the riverine section where we had a pleasant walk through miombo

woodland, up one side and down the other of the dry gorge. Wonderful trees but almost no birds. On the way we came across a Lizard Buzzard foraging for nesting material and when we scanned an area of savanna, Patrick spotted a Greater Honeyguide, Amethyst Sunbird and a Black Cuckooshrike in a tall msasa. Striped Pipit could be heard in the distance. In the course of our walk back to the vehicles the same eagle eyes noticed a Little Sparrowhawk on its nest.

Our last port of call was the dam on Bally Vaughan farm on the other side of the Shamva Road. There was very little water left from the irrigating of the surrounding wheat fields but just enough to interest Reed Cormorant, Great Egret and Yellow-billed Egret, Egyptian Goose and African Sacred Ibis.

The small woodland patch nearby offered up Terrestrial Brownbuls, Arrow-marked Babbler and boatloads of African Reed-warblers. With the temperature soaring we headed back to the sanctuary to tally up: 75 in total. All in all a very enjoyable morning was had in beautiful surrounds, even if the birding was a bit sparse!

THREATENED

Lilian's Lovebirds

MAJOR THREATS:

- **HABITAT LOSS** - Deforestation for agriculture
- **EXPLOITATION** - nest destruction for live bird trade
- **DAMMING OF ZAMBEZI** - flooding of feeding grounds
- **POISONING OF WATERHOLES** - illegal pest control and poaching

Lovebirds get their name from the strong bond which forms between a male and female. Pairs of lovebirds spend much of their time close together, regularly preening each other's feathers. They are in fact monogamous (they have only one mate during a breeding season, or throughout the breeding life of a pair).

In Zimbabwe, Lilian's lovebirds occur in the Middle Zambezi below the escarpment from the Angwa and Hunyani Rivers westwards to Binga and Msuna although much suitable habitat has been lost within the Kariba Basin. They are often found in woodlands of mopane trees but also inhabit Acacia woodlands on flood plains, forest bordering rivers and lakes, and in fig trees.

This brightly coloured lovebird has a gregarious nature and is usually observed in small groups, although sometimes up to 100 may gather. These large flocks only occur during winter, however, when the birds are not breeding.

HOW TO HELP:

Record sightings,
roost and nest sites
and report to:

Abigail Karimanzira

Contact details:
Email: karimanziraabigail@gmail.com
Cell: +263 771 868 706

or BirdLife Zimbabwe

Contact details:
Email: birds@zol.co.zw
Phone: +263 24 248148



Endemic
Distribution

Classified as Near Threatened (NT) on the IUCN Red List, and listed on Appendix II of CITES, the total population of Lilian's Lovebirds has been significantly reduced by habitat loss and exploitation. Like many other lovebirds, this stunning bird is captured for the local and international cage-bird trade. In addition, the cereal-eating lovebird is considered a pest by farmers, and is persecuted as a result. (Lilian's lovebirds feed primarily on grass seed, particularly millet and sorghum seeds, which is picked off the ground, or plucked from the ripening heads of plants).



BirdLife Zimbabwe promotes the survival of wild birds and biodiversity in Zimbabwe and elsewhere for both their intrinsic value and for the enjoyment of future generations. This is achieved through programmes to increase awareness of biodiversity and the need to protect their habitats through policy, advocacy, education and training. Biodiversity, ecosystems and ecosystem services – our natural capital – must be preserved as the foundations for a sustainable future for us all.

To learn more about BirdLife Zimbabwe's Nature conservation programmes and to support them:



www.birdlifezimbabwe.org or email: birds@zol.co.zw



MONAVALLE VLEI, Sunday 18th October 2020

Another very dry Sunday morning which produced only 31 species for the 4 observers present. However, as usual, there were high points. It was good to be accompanied once again by the doyen of Monavale, Alex Masterson with his inexhaustible fund of knowledge of the vleis' inhabitants. Another surprise visitor was a Common Whitethroat singing gaily on a small acacia. This seems to be

an early arrival, perhaps seeking to escape the lockdowns in Europe or elsewhere.

Apart from that, nothing much to excite us although the Yellow-mantled Widowbirds and White-winged Widowbirds are showing signs of breeding plumage. Only one new burst pipe flooding an area of the golf course providing a clean water source for the wildlife.

Lanark Farm, Sunday 25th October 2020

It was a great pity that more members and friends did not take advantage of the opportunity to explore this extensive game park offered by Dave Hasluck. The eight of us were not far from Harare, in the open air, masked and distanced as desired, untroubled by roadblocks and treated to a feast of 116 species of birds in a delightful area of woodland and dams.

A guestimate of the gathering of White-faced Ducks was 1,500. What a sight when they all took off! Plenty of Egyptian Goose, a dozen Spur-winged Goose, 11 African Spoonbill, Grey Squacco and Green-backed Heron and a pair of African Black Duck plus a Pied Kingfisher and 4 Malachite Kingfisher, Common Sandpiper and Wood Sandpiper, Three-banded Plover, Little Egret and Great Egret, African Jacana and a Common Greenshank completed the dam count. Nearby were Dark-capped Yellow Warbler, Lesser Swamp-warbler African Reed-warbler and Red-faced Cisticola all singing lustily.

The mixed miombo and acacia woodland was alive with birds; Golden-tailed Woodpecker and Cardinal Woodpecker, Black Cuckooshrike, Orange-breasted Bush-shrike and Grey-headed Bush-shrike, Diderick Cuckoo and Levaillant's Cuckoo, Red-headed Weaver, Village Weaver and Southern Masked-weaver and many others. Recent arrivals or Covid escapees were Barn Swallow, a Common Swift, European Bee-eater and a Garden Warbler. One eagle-eyed observer spotted a nest in an acacia with a Lizard Buzzard hunkered down on it. Other raptors were a Black-chested Snake-eagle and an African Harrier-hawk.

We enjoyed our snacks in a rocky, shaded picnic spot, went through the list and thanked Dave and his Security Manager, Kevin and his wife who had accompanied us, then rushed back to town for a branch lunch at Highlands Club.

Mashonaland East

*Mashonaland East Natural History Society MARONDERA
September/October 2020 Newsletter*

The early rains and warmer weather has brought about a lot more bird activity and with the lifting of lockdown restrictions at the Trust the residents have been able to enjoy getting out into the districts and look for birds.

The news on the Helmeted Guineafowl in the Trust is not too good. The eggs Louis Jacobs was trying to incubate were infertile and obviously didn't hatch. A further 24 eggs were laid in Louis' garden and he put 12 of them in the incubator. At the time of writing it is day 15 since incubation started. Regrettably, the female is still not sitting on the other 12 eggs. Only 4 of

the 9 juvenile Guineafowl received a few months ago have survived. One fatality was to drowning in a water container. The cause of the second fatality is not known, while the remaining 3 fatalities were caused by domestic cats. Thank you Louis for your time and effort in trying to raise the Guineafowl. Please don't give up.

A few weeks ago, Malcolm Moodie posted a picture of a Southern Black Flycatcher. It is nice to see these birds back in the Trust. Phyllis van Reenen was very blessed to find and photograph a Spotted Creeper in the Kushinga

Phikelela area. Some of our members have been trying to see one of these birds for a while now but sadly without success. Phyllis' sighting prompted a group of us to spend a morning in the Kushinga Phikelela dam area specifically looking for the Creeper. We had a lovely morning, accepted our defeat and vowed to try again. We did record 39 different species that morning. Stuart Wood came out all the way from Harare to join us, which was a noble effort.

We enjoyed a morning outing to Rakodze where we recorded 49 different species. Thanks to Jen Mitchell for allowing us to wander around her garden and also for the use of her house for our morning tea and luncheon.

Sue saw a Senegal Coucal in our garden and later I had a very close up view of it hiding in our neighbour's hedge.

Sue and I went to Seldomseen in the Vumba for a couple of nights. This was a very successful outing for us and without the services of Bhulawezi, the resident guide, I am sure we would have returned home disappointed. The more notable sightings were of the Swynnerton's Robin (3 different occasions), White-starred Robin, Black-fronted Bush-shrike, Red-faced Crimsonwing, White-tailed Crested Flycatcher, Livingstone's Turaco, Yellow-bellied Waxbill, Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird, Lemon Dove and the Chirinda Apalis. We also saw several Samango monkeys and a Sun squirrel. We heard the African Emerald Cuckoo calling several times but sadly we were unable to get a sighting.

While up there, we checked on the condition of the National Parks cottages with a view of our members staying there. We also called in at the Blue Forrest Inn to view their menu but sadly they were closed as there was a wedding function taking place. We went to the White Horse Inn to try and dine there but they were hosting a conference so weren't open to the public. The next venue to visit was Tony's Café. I wish he had been closed but admit that the coffee and cakes were delicious.

A few of our MENHS members went to Connemara at the beginning of October to do some birding and partake in the trout fishing competition. Well done to Penny Raynor who won the Ladies prize. I think Penny could easily hold her own competing with the men. Jenny Milne reported that the birders got to see a number of birds but they were all the usual ones, no specials.

I saw an advert for seats available on a three-night birding trip to Rifa with the Mashonaland BirdLife Zimbabwe members. I contacted Geoff Lowe and Sue and was accepted. We thoroughly enjoyed ourselves and our bird count tallied 95 species. In Marondera we had slowly been working up the 20s degree Celsius scale and then when we got to Rifa we found we had skipped the 30s and gone straight into the 40s degrees. My lasting memories of that Rifa trip were the Lilian's Lovebirds, Southern Carmine Bee-eaters, Meyer's Parrots, Meves's Starlings and large amounts of plastic in the ellie dung. Faith, at the Zimbabwe Hunters' Association Office, was very helpful with payment of relevant fees and issuing a permit for use at the roadblocks. Fortunately we never had to use them.

Sue and I were hoping to go to Mkushi in Zambia to visit our oldest daughter Bridget and her family as soon as the land borders opened. Bridget had said they wanted to take us to witness the bat migration in the Kasanka National Park in November. A few of the people we met at Rifa had previously been there to see the 10 million fruit bats that arrive in Kasanka between October and December each year. The bats fly out of the trees in the morning and arrive back to their roosting place each evening. Quite spectacular.

It is a pleasure to see and hear of so many of the birds returning to the Trust. Jo has reported the African Paradise-flycatchers are regular visitors to her birdbath. Sue also came across 4 of them at the water tanks near the Baxters' cottage on one of her morning walks. I saw a Green Wood-hoopoe coming out of the gable vent above the snooker room and assumed it had a nest there. I have been back a few times to check but haven't seen the bird again. Groundscraper Thrushes are back and Pat Lister is watching some African Hoopoes that are nesting close to his cottage. Pat tells me the eggs have hatched and the youngsters have left their nest. Barbie Ervine has been watching a Kurrichane Thrush nest in her garden and the two babies have just left the nest. I did see the Greater Honeyguide again in the same place near the beehive.

I love it when people call on me to tell me about some bird or the other. The Spotted Eagle-owls are back in Steve's garden and can be seen in the tree they usually roost in. Patch Martin told me that some Verreaux's Eagle-owls

are nesting in somebody's workshop in Marondera. I haven't been to see them and I hear the owner was attacked by one of the parents when he tried to help a baby owl that had fallen out the nest. Peter Rawstorne told me that he found an injured Spotted Eagle-owl in his garden. He thinks the owl flew into an overhead power line and injured its wing. He looked after it for a few days and it has since flown off. Well done Peter. An Abdim's Stork has been seen on the Frail Care lawn. Jen Mitchell said she saw the Common Mynas nesting in the roofing of the forecourt of Pick 'n Pay.

I have had the Violet-backed Starlings inspecting my work mowing the bowling green at the Trust. They seem to be chased by the Fork-tailed Drongos, which in turn are chased by the Miombo Blue-eared Starlings. While mowing the green last Friday I heard a most unusual bird call. I suspected it was a raptor. I listened to the call for a while and tried to memorise it. About an hour later, just as I finished mowing, Anton arrived and told me he had heard a Diderick Cuckoo calling in his

garden. He imitated the call and it seemed to be the call I had been hearing a bit earlier. Anton said his father called it his rain bird because when his father heard the Diderick Cuckoo calling it would rain within 2 or 3 days. I immediately thought he was confused with the "Piet My Vrou" but he assured me not so. Low and behold it rained that night. Thanks Anton for that lesson.

A couple of members managed to go into Harare recently and visit the Spar bird sanctuary. They thoroughly enjoyed their morning outing. A few other members took part in the game count in the Zambezi Valley and spent a few days at Chitake Spring.

I did visit the Grasslands Research station and met the officer in charge, Accadius Kigere. He has no objection to us going birding there but requested we give him a few days' notice and also liaise with the farm manager.

Our next outing is to the Worswicks' farm in Macheke on Sunday 15 November.

Keep on twitching,
Gez Bester

Mashonaland West

Time waits for nobody – here we are at year-end!

Our hot days of September-October have been extreme, the barometer often -9, and the frogs croaking for a month, calling the rain! The bush is lush, refreshing and new growth in different colours, with the birds, insects and bees feeding on the ground and above.

We visit weekly different areas and habitats.

19th September

A hot, hazy day with a visit to Sable farm near Suri Suri dam, the big coffee-shade trees a relief. A juvenile Black-chested Snake-eagle overhead, two Black-shouldered Kites, a Hamerkop, two Marabou Storks with a nest in an *Albizia* tree near the piggery, a calling Lizard Buzzard and African Harrier-hawk. The European Bee-eaters were overhead giving their distinctive call, plus an African Fish-eagle, a resident Purple Heron, a pair of White-backed Ducks, 40+ Cattle Egrets at the piggery. White-bellied Sunbird, Scarlet-chested Sunbird and Amethyst Sunbirds scouting about the trees, the

White-browed Scrub-robin, a favourite, chirpy with his repertoire. Of course, nesting time for many birds, hence lots of calls.

10th October

A bright sunny day – we drove to Suri Suri, a well-built dam of the 70s. Natal Spurfowl and Swainson's Spurfowl along the dry bush roads, stopping to look at us before disappearing into the thickets. Flappet Lark, Red-capped Lark and Rufous-naped Lark were active along the red tobacco field, two pairs of Crowned Lapwing trotted along the hot ground – with nests somewhere? Three Spotted Thick-knees moved from an open area into short grassland. An African Grey Hornbill called as he flew in his undulating fashion. Diderick Cuckoo and Klaas's Cuckoo called, and an African Barred Owllet from the woodland. At the dam we enjoyed out tea break beside a *Combretum* and granite of spectacular formations, worn clean and smooth from centuries of flooding; not a noise or soul in sight! On the dam, 2 Three-banded Plovers, 3 Reed Cormorants, 220+

White-faced Ducks, a Little Egret, 10 African Openbills, 116+ Comb Duck, 1 Egyptian Goose – the African Fish-eagle nest was occupied by a standing adult, then the other flew in and both attended to a chick?

17th October

A lovely cool, sunny day, we motored to a dam beyond Gadzema on the Chinhoyi road. We stopped at random: a Black Cuckoo with his mournful call, Golden-breasted Bunting, Lilac-breasted Roller, Natal Spurfowl and Helmeted Guineafowl all happily calling on this fresh morning, fresh after recent rain.

Proceeding to this dam with little water and abundant shoreline, we noted 6 African Wattled Lapwings, 2 Kittlitz's Plovers, a pair of Buffy Pipits and another of African Pipits, 4 Black-winged Stilts, 3 Collared Pratincoles, a Common Greenshank, 2 Temminck's Coursers. Rattling Cisticola, Croaking Cisticola and Red-faced Cisticola called from the nearby grassland.

7th November

The day already hot at 7 a.m. A new area (-18.443650, 29.814017) called Bentley Plots, across the Umsweswe old low-level bridge – but what a road – a tractor would have been better!

There are still many large woodland trees and large amounts of water behind the weir – a Malachite Kingfisher had found food. The Lesser Striped Swallows are nesting under the old bridge but perch on the railings, so we were able to get good photos. A Levillant's Cuckoo

with its gun-rattle roll at the end of his call; the Red-chested Cuckoo 'piet my vrou' are loud and clear – are they scouting for nests to parasitise? The Orange-breasted Bush-shrikes were plentiful with their repetitive liquid 'poo-poo-poo', but such handsome creatures. Nesting time for many birds everywhere. Southern White-crowned Shrikes moving in a group of 5-7, enjoying the new vegetation, the Emerald-spotted Wood-dove always calling in the heat of the day, the Cape Turtle-doves calling earlier. The Lesser Masked-weavers are nesting along the riverbank above deep water.

31st October

Chigwell Estates, halfway between Kadoma & Chegutu on the railway line side. Not far from the main road, a lovely-sized dam on the youthful Suri Suri River; lots of woodland so regular sightings. The Violet-backed Starlings shimmering in their glossy plumage, a lone Wahlberg's Eagle soaring above the canopy, then landing out of sight. An Egyptian Goose family with 7 goslings enjoying the shoreline, a pair of Pied Kingfishers, an African Pied Wagtail, Squacco Heron, Little Egret, 4 African Jacana, Hamerkop, Giant Kingfisher, Marsh Owl as we crossed the foreshore. A few friendly villagers helped us change a punctured tyre.

Despite the heat, our birding continues in the suburbs and rural areas. The locals are always interested in our mission and travels.

Margaret Parrock



Follow [this link](#) to read this edition of the Mabula Southern Ground-hornbill project newsletter

Useful Contacts:

CEO/Ringing Programme: Julia Pierini JuliaPierini@birdlifezimbabwe.org 0772-894562
Rarities Committee: Ian Riddell gemsaf@mango.zw 0772-117054
BLZ Library: piumosso@zol.co.zw 2304298; 2481496
Special Species: Peta Ditchburn 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
Mashonaland East Natural History Society: Chairman Peter Hadingham 024-2497035
Secretary: Gez Bester ges.bester@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 Babbler*, 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!

Due to the instability of the local currency at present, subs are listed in USD, but may be paid in Zimbabwe Dollars at the Bank Rate on the day

Students	1.00
Youth Club Members (Unemployed)	1.00
Youth Club Members	5.00
Individual/Family members (incl. children under 17)	15.00
Pensioners (65 & over)	10.00
Schools (Government)	10.00
Schools (private), Educational Institutions	50.00
Rest of Africa (payable in forex)	40.00
Rest of World (payable in forex)	50.00
Corporate members	*100.00

* 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

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, 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 notify Sylvia sylvia@zol.co.zw phone 024-2481496 and Paula Dell paula.dell@strachansphoto.com when you have made your payments – and 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 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. \$400 entrance fee for BLZ members, \$500 others.

Greystone Park -17.746184, 31.127215. From Rolf Avenue/Harare Drive traffic circle, turn east onto Gaydon Road. After 2 km turn right into Halford Road and preserve is 200 m on left.

Mashonaland Branch

BirdLife Zimbabwe Mashonaland Calendar of Events: DECEMBER 2020

Saturday 5th	Marlborough Vlei walk	Meet at 07.00 a.m.
Sunday 6th	Mukuvisi Woodlands walk	Meet at 06.30 a.m.
Saturday 12th	Greystone Park	Meet at 07.00 a.m.
Saturday 19th	Talk on Wild Dogs & Christmas function	Meet at 03.00 p.m.



Nick Dyer will give a presentation at the Mukuvisi Woodlands rondavel, US\$2.00 or ZWL exchange rate of the day per person, followed by braai & Raffle, bring your own eats & drinks

Sunday 20th	Monavale Vlei walk	Meet at 06.30 a.m.
-------------------------------	---------------------------	--------------------

BirdLife Zimbabwe Mashonaland Calendar of Events: JANUARY 2021

Saturday 2nd	Marlborough Vlei walk	Meet at 07.00 a.m.
Sunday 3rd	Mukuvisi Woodlands walk	Meet at 06.30 a.m.
Saturday 9th	to be advised	
Saturday 16th	BirdLife Mashonaland AGM Mukuvisi rondavel, US\$2.00 or ZWL exchange rate of the day per person	Meet at 03.00 p.m.
Sunday 17th	Monavale Vlei walk	Meet at 06.30 a.m.
Sunday 24th	Hideaway, Manyame Meet at Prince Edward school car park	Meet at 06.30 a.m.

For further information, please contact Innes Louw, innes.louw@ames.co.zw or 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 for more details.

Lowveld – contact Clive Stockil 0772-219204 or 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 158
Feb-Mar 2021 any time before the 15th Jan.*