

THE BABBLER

ORNITHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION OF ZIMBABWE NEWSLETTER

ISSUE #14: SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1996

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BLUE SWALLOW SURVEY, Nyanga National Park 9 -10 November 1996

The status of the Blue Swallow in Zimbabwe is uncertain and in South Africa it is endangered. A rough estimate of 300 breeding pairs was made for Zimbabwe, with the montane grasslands in Nyanga National Park being the main breeding area. It is vital that an up-to-date population assessment be made this season. A full scale count in the Nyanga area in November is being organised and an appeal to every member and their birding friends to assist with this important project.

Teams will be organised to walk selected sections of the National Park and surrounding areas to count the swallows and hopefully locate nest sites. This is a large easily recognised species and relatively easy to locate. This will be a fun weekend and you will be participating in a very important project. Here is an opportunity to do something worthwhile towards the conservation of our birds. Let's have a good OAZ turnout. The meeting place for a full briefing will be in the hall next to Rhodes Nyanga Hotel. Please will members and friends in Mutare, Chimanimani and Chipinge count Blue Swallows in their areas over the same weekend. Please contact Derek Solomon, P O Box BW594 Borrowdale Harare Tel/Fax 497746 for more information regarding accommodation etc. If you can offer accommodation please let Derek know as soon as possible.

MASHONALAND BRANCH ACTIVITIES**Outings**

1. Mukuvisi Woodlands: Sunday 1st September and 6th October 1996. Meet at Paget Road entrance at 6.30 a.m. There will be a vehicle guard in attendance.
2. Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary: Sunday 8th September and 13th October 1996. Meet at Marimba Shopping Centre at 6.30 a.m. Beginners are very welcome. Bring your chairs and tea.

Saturday Afternoons

1. 22nd September 1996. Gletwyn Farm. Water, woodland and grassland birds. Meet at Bon Marche, Chisipite Shopping Centre at 2 p.m.
2. 19th October 1996. Social Braai. Bring your own meat and drinks. Venue: 14 Fisher Avenue Borrowdale. Time 6 p.m.

Sunday Outings

1. 30th September 1996. Marvel Farm. (28.5 km peg) Domboshawa Road. Meet at T.A Motors opposite Sam Levy's village, Borrowdale at 6.30 a.m.
2. 27th October 1996. Dichwe Lemon Forest. Come and find the Narina Trogon and African Broadbill. Bring your chairs and tea/lunch if you want to make a day of it. Meet at Greencroft Shops - left hand side of Lomagundi Road at 5.30 a.m.

Weekend Outings

Hippo Pools Weekend. 22nd to 24th November 1998.

The above weekend is planned. The cost will be \$168.00 per person per night; this includes dinner around the campfire. Other meals are self catering. Bring your own drinks. There are 20 beds available on a first come first served basis.

Please complete the tear off and return it as soon as possible with your cheque. The total cost per person is \$336.00.

A Rifa trip is planned for 13th - 16th December 1996. Further details in the next issue of *The Babbler*.

Evening Meetings

Thursday evening. 19th September 1996. Video evening at 14 Fisher Avenue Borrowdale. Time 6 for 6.30 p.m.

17th October 1996. Michael Irwin will speak on "Birding Journals and Magazines". Venue: Alexandra Sports Club, time 6 for 6.30 p.m.

EASTERN DISTRICTS BIRD CLUB

Chairman:	Mr K. Dixon	62662 Mutare
Recorder:	Mr A B (Tony) Curtis	60281 Mutare

Outings

Saturday 14th September 1996. Penhalonga 2 p.m.
 Sunday 29th September 1996. Odzani area 6 a.m.

October outings have not been received. Please contact Ken or Tony.
 The group assembles at the Museum in Aerodrome Road at the time stated. It is always advisable to check on arrangements by ringing Ken or Tony.

MATABELELAND BRANCHEvening Meetings

Friday 6th September 1996. Video Evening. Ron Stuttaford will host this evening and show a couple of excellent videos including Botswana Kingfishers. Venue: 65a Clark Road, Suburbs at 8 p.m.

Friday 4th October 1996. Ken Blake will show his latest slides including some strange blonde raptors from Kruger National Park. Venue: 30 Holdengarde Avenue Hillside. 6 p.m.

Outings

Sunday 22nd September 1996. Verreaux's Eagle Survey outing. George Banfield will lead a tour of Verreaux's Eagle nest sites. Meet at Retreat Shopping Centre at 7.30 a.m. Bring tea and lunch. For further details contact George Tel 71624.

Sunday 20th October 1996. Southern Carmine Bee-eater Outing. Contact Chairman for further details. Tel 42474.

Aisleby

<u>Date</u>	<u>Co-ordinator</u>	<u>Tel.</u>
Sunday 29th September	T. English	45636
Sunday 27th October	M. Smith	42474

Meet at Boom at 7.30 a.m. or contact the Co-ordinator.

From the Chairman

Sightings have improved considerably with a number of flowering trees playing host to sunbirds, orioles, canaries and Red-winged Starlings. All must show considerable local movement and it would be interesting to know more.

With the good rains rats and mice have bred prolifically. Barn Owls have cashed in on this and a number of large clutches have been reported in BULAWAYO. This also applies to a number of species raising two or three clutches. Bird numbers must have been affected by the drought "decade" and it would be useful to monitor how quickly they recover. Good Birding.

Martin Smith.

MIDLANDS BRANCH

Co-ordinator: Mr B W Beekes P O Box 55 Shurugwi 152-6422

Weekend Friday 11th - Sunday 13th October 1996. Nyororo Farm (Mr Keith Harvey) Chatsworth. Come and look for Wattled Cranes, Grey Crowned Cranes, Kori Bustards plus waterfowl and grassland birds.

For further details contact Bernard Beekes.

This is a camping, self-catering weekend and will be very worthwhile.

Weekend Friday 22nd to 24th November 1996. Central Estates, Mvuma. To be confirmed.

REPORTS

Mashonaland.

Thursday Meeting 18th July 1996. 20+ members braved the cold to listen to Dr Jan van Nes of Utrecht University, Netherlands. He spoke on birding and projects carried out by the Birding Club to which he belongs and illustrated his talk with slides. It was most interesting. **Dave Gray.**

Eastern Districts

DOROWA Minerals. Sunday 30th June 1998.

For this report we are indebted to 12 year old Emma Holland who delighted all of us with her unflagging interest and enthusiasm, identification skills, courtesy and charm. Editing was not necessary; "Spell-check" would have been superfluous. One bird was removed from the article. I think Emma on one occasion let herself be too easily influenced by a certain female friend. Thank you Emma, please join us again.

When we woke up at 6 a.m., it was a windless day and we felt good birding in the air. We were joined by Mrs Cecilia Manson from Bvumba, Abasi Jana from Aberfoyle and some local birders. On the way there a few of us were lucky enough to see a pair of Augur Buzzard perched on a leafless tree. First of all we went to meet our hosts at the club who were Mr Mafukidse, the present Manager and Mr and Mrs Bowker.

We had a good start with a Lesser Honeyguide, Long-billed Crombec, Golden-tailed Woodpecker, Marico Sunbird and Common Scimitarbill. We hear the Grey-headed Bush-shrike and Brown-crowned Tchagra calling in some thickets. On the way to the dam we spotted a few Chestnut-vented Tit-babblers.

At the healthily vegetated dam we saw martins and swallows crowding the sky. Red-billed Teal and Hottentot Teal were seen. On the way to the slime pan we spotted a lone Dickinson's Kestrel on a telephone pole. At the slime pan we had a good sighting of a Greater Flamingo and watched a Kittlitz's Plover doing her clever act to protect her eggs. The pan also gave us herons, duck and a Black-chested Snake-eagle. At the river we identified Common Greenshank, plovers and wagtails with a brief sighting of a Giant Kingfisher. On the Bird Club's usual trip to the landing strip we sighted Red-capped Lark, Crowned Lapwing, Kittlitz's Plover, Capped Wheatear, Chestnut-backed Sparrowlark and Tawny Eagle. After a delicious lunch we spotted Groundscraper Thrush on the lawn. The EDBC would like to thank our hosts for their kind hospitality and the cooks for a wonderful lunch.

Emma Holland.

OSBORNE DAM. Saturday 13th July 1996. Waterfowl Census

Our objective this pleasant afternoon was to monitor the gradual build up of waterbird numbers on this beautiful piece of water.

In the short term this may seem rather a pointless exercise but

when the dam is well established, our figures will no doubt be useful evidence of how a new area of water is slowly colonised. The numbers, along with those from Cynara are also sent to Slimbridge in the UK as our contribution to the African Waterfowl Census.

As our group of eight crossed the dam wall we were pleased to see that the water depth stood at a healthy 86.8m. The paths used by the local villagers had to be relocated once again as previous ones had disappeared under water. With such a vast area of water we only saw about 10% but this produced Egyptian Goose, White-breasted Cormorant and Reed Cormorant, Little Grebe and Pied Kingfisher. Waders were absent as there was no established shoreline but Rock Martin, Wire-tailed Swallow and Eastern Saw-wing were seen over the water.

In the msasas on the eastern shore we found Golden-breasted Bunting, canaries, Red-billed Quelea and waxbills but the sighting of the day was the Martial Eagles. **Ken Dixon.**

Matabeleland

St. James Mission 16th June 1996

This proved to be an interesting area with a variety of different habitats to explore. We began on the banks of the Gwaai, a river fringed by a few tall Acacia trees with lush undergrowth to investigate. Horus Swift wheeled overhead, and at ground level a pair of Orange-winged Pytilia held our interest. Non breeding whydahs caused confusion and a pink-legged Purple Widowfinch added to identification problems. A Grey Tit-flycatcher called and a Verreaux's Eagle-owl was disturbed from its slumbers. Red-billed Oxpeckers flew across the river - perhaps a range extension for this species?

After lunch a walk through mixed woodland yielded Swallow-tailed Bee-eaters and Little Bee-eater and Black-chested Prinia. White-backed Vultures and Lappet-faced Vultures and a variety of raptors were seen on what was a memorable day with interesting sightings. **M Smith**

FORT RIXON DAM 14th July 1996

A small group of stalwarts participated in the July census - a count which was notable for what wasn't present. A shoreline count revealed little of note and the open shore produced a Three-banded Plover nest with two eggs, and the remains of a Yellow-billed Stork. A deserted fishing cottage now home to a Barn Owl and a termite mound occupied by an extremely large cobra which slithered back down its hole like a length of sucked spaghetti. Total of a little over 300 were mostly Egyptian Goose!

AISLEBY Waterfowl Count 21st July 1996

This proved the most interesting winter count to date. The influx of sewage into the Upper UMGUSA Dam at the beginning of the year produced a nutrient filled soup, ideal for a variety of ducks.

A considerable number of Little Grebes were present amongst which were four Black-necked Grebes. Feeding Pied Avocet and Black-winged Stilt were seen near the headwaters and the highlight of the morning was an out of range Long-toed Lapwing. 1200 Egyptian Goose caused plenty of confusion; however 14 Maccoa Duck were seen. All in all a total of 4000 birds with 42 species represented a worthwhile count. **M. Smith**

Midlands

Glen Livet 24th - 28th May 1996

There was a turn out of 11 and 106 species were recorded. We stayed at Martin and Lynne Wilkins lovely cottage at Glen Livet. The shore is heavily wooded with miombo on steep hillsides. We walked up the mountain behind the cottage where we encountered several bird parties which included Green-capped Eremomela, Southern Hyliota and Retz's Helmet-shrike. Cut-throat Finches were still in the vicinity of a Red-headed Weaver's nest which they had probably used. The riverine vegetation in the Popateke Gorge had been flattened by the recent floods and little bird life was seen there. A walk upstream produced an out of season Klaas's Cuckoo, Yellow-bellied Greenbul and Orange-winged Pytilia. The highlight of the afternoon was sitting 3 meters away from a Malachite Kingfisher in Gavin Conway's boat - a spectacular sight. Friday night owl tapes were played to which the African Barred Owllet responded immediately and subsequently called all night. Unfortunately Sunday's tour to Great Zimbabwe by Keith Harvey to see the sunbirds was rained out. **B. Beekes**

Princess Farm SHURUGWI 21st - 23rd June 1996

The weekend was cold, wet and windy with a turnout of 4 - 64 birds were recorded. Sunday at the sewage works Kevin Barry and I saw 20-30 Three-banded Plovers and 10 Black-winged Stilts including a number of juveniles. A solitary out-of-season White-throated Swallow was present with the resident Wire-tailed Swallows. The African Crowned Eagles nest we visited had been blown out of the tree and the pair had moved to a new site about 1 km away. The Mountain Acacia tree in which Southern Ground-hornbills had recently raised young was sadly rotten and likely to fall down. Happily the visit to the African Hawk-eagles nest proved to have two eggs in it and both eagles were in attendance. **B. Beekes**

INTERESTING SIGHTINGS

1. Cecilia Manson reports from SELDOMSEEN, VUMBA. In May early June an Anchieta's Tchagra and a pair of Cut-throat Finches, the latter being a first sighting in this area.
2. Edna Elliott-McColl saw 10 White Storks at CROWBOROUGH Sewage Works on 7th July 1996.
3. Rob Drummond reports seeing two groups of Magpie Mannikins at EWANRIGG BOTANIC GARDENS on 14th July 1996. One group of two adults and 4 juveniles, and the other of 10 - mostly adult birds.
4. Dave Gray saw:
 - a. 7th June 1996. 1 Black Stork near Beta School on the Marondera/Juru Road.
 - b. 10th July 1996. 4 White Storks in a wheat field on the Bindura/Shamva Road.
 - c. 10th July 1996. 1 Black Stork on nest with 2 chicks at Amm's Mine, Madziwa area.
 - d. 1st August 1996. 19 White Storks in wheat field on Harare/Karoi Road. Also 1 Yellow-billed Kite.
5. Sean Lues, Chikwenya Safari Camp, MANA Pools National Park:
 - a. 21st June 1998. Pair of Red-necked Falcons who spent some time between two trees - the main reason being a small bird the one had caught.

b. 24th June 1996. In a fairly large bird party there were a number of interesting birds, the most interesting being a female Black Cuckooshrike.

c. 25th June 1996. Ross Partington observed a Red-chested Cuckoo at close range.

d. At various times small groups of Southern Carmine Bee-eaters have been seen fairly regularly.

Editor: Thank you for your contributions without which the *Babbler* would read like a menu. Please – any future contributions should have the date, time and area of sightings which will add considerably to the interest. Thank you.

TAIL FEATHERS

Birdwatch, February 1996

Team Total

1. Bill Edwards	209	Clent Farm
2. H Erwee (9th Timers)	201	Tshabalala
3. G Douglas	191	Bumi Hills
4. Mahenya Lodge	150	Save/Runde
5. RB MacCallum	145	Darwendale
6. B Beekes (Hoop Folley)	136	Hope Valley
7. D Gray (Pooh Bears)	132	Harare area
8. P Stidolph	128	Karoi
9. Tony Curtis	123	Cynara/Seldomseen
10. R Bain	119	Chinhoyi
11. R Petzer	117	Kariba
12. C R Hartley	116	Lalapanzi
13. K Harvey	104	Felixburg
14. J Williams (Flat Feet)	101	Nyanga Downs
15. A J Wood	90	Enterprise
16. T Allen	29	Tarvie Farm

A full account will appear In Honeyguide later.

SUBSCRIPTIONS 1997

The Council has had to raise the subscriptions for next year. This is due to the rising costs of publishing and postage of *Honeyguide* and *Babbler*. It was voted at the AGM that Ordinary members should pay the full cost of their *Honeyguide* and *Babbler* and not be subsidised by other members as in the past. Below is a breakdown of costs done by the Treasurer.

	<u>Printing</u>	<u>Publishing</u>	<u>Postage</u>	<u>x Copies</u>	<u>+S/T</u>	<u>Total</u>
				per yr.		
Honeyguide	5727	3910	800	4 40948	6142	47090
Babbler	670	-	300	6 5820	-	<u>5820</u>
						52910
						Plus increased cost for 1997 by 20%
						<u>10582</u>
						63492

Membership +/- 650	
Cost of Honeyguide and Babbler	63492
Cost per Member (Divide by 650)	<u>650</u>
	98

Add \$6.00 for computerisation of subs, accounts and labels
 Add \$5.00 for four colour pages once a year.

Ordinary	\$110.00
Family	\$120.00
Junior	\$ 40.00
Institutional	\$200.00

Bone fide students over 17 but under 21 will be charged junior subs, also bone fide students over 21 with the consent of Council will pay the Junior sub.

MEMBERS ARE REQUESTED TO RECRUIT AT LEAST ONE NEW MEMBER IN ORDER TO CONTAIN THE COST OF SUBSCRIPTIONS.

FIELD CARDS

Stamped self addressed envelopes must be sent with 11 cards to facilitate their return. Cards to be sent to Dave Rockingham-Gill 4 Fernleigh Road, Pomona, Borrowdale.

Postage must be included with orders for extra cards at the following rates:

8	cards	\$ 8.00 plus	70c for postage
12	cards	\$12.00 plus	\$1 for postage
24	cards	\$24.00 plus	\$1.80 for postage

Please use a large size envelope.

Checklists. 5 for \$6.00 plus 70c postage plus large envelope.

'OUR MIOMBO WOODLAND'

What is it! Its conservation!
 Nesting birds in the woodland
 Bats & Rats & other miombo mammals
 Wildlife Re-Introduction
 * Guest speaker: PETER STEYN, Cape Town

Other speakers include our own local experts

Date: Saturday 26th October 1996.

Venue: Andy Miller Hall, Harare Agricultural Showgrounds

Time: 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Cost: \$165 per person, including lunch/teas, catering by Gliding Gourmet.
 Cash Bar available

This is a fund raising conference for the benefit of the Mukuvisi Woodlands Association.

All profits from this conference go towards the Mukuvisi Woodlands Conservation Education Project.

Advance booking is essential as seating is limited.

Cheques must be made payable to Mukuvisi Woodland Association