

BABBLER

ORNITHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION OF ZIMBABWE

A PARTNER DESIGNATE OF BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL

ISSUE #19 – JULY/AUGUST 1997

COMMITTEES

Mashonaland Branch

Chairman: Mr J Saunders 490167
Secretary: Mrs P Saunders 490167
Treasurer: Mrs I Gray 885406
Members: Mrs D Varden 8879124
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 Mr D Rockingham -Gill 882412
Editor: Mrs D Rushforth 741765

Matabeleland Branch

Martin Smith 42474
Mrs P Feather 44034
Mrs A Perry
Mrs P Ditchburn 45635
Mr W Goodwin 64121
Mrs M Stone 46709
Mr C Townsley 46617
Mr M Smith 42474

Postal Addresses:

Committees: P O Box CY 161, Causeway
Editors 5 Colenbrander Road,
Milton Park, Belvedere, Harare

P O Box 44, Bulawayo
P O Box 44, Bulawayo

ACTIVITIES

MASHONALAND BRANCH

PLEASE NOTE CHANGE OF SPEAKER FOR THURSDAY 19TH JUNE WHICH WILL NOW BE GIVEN BY TWO REPRESENTATIVES FROM BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL, ONE OF WHO IS THE HEAD OF THE AMERICA'S BRANCH AND THE OTHER FROM THE NETHERLANDS. ROGER HOWMAN WILL TALK AT A LATER DATE

Regular outings

1. Mukuvisi Woodlands: Sundays 6th July and 3rd August 1997. Meet at Paget Road entrance at 7.00 a.m. There will be a vehicle guard in attendance.
2. Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary: Sundays 13th July and 10th August 1997. Meet at Marimba Shopping Centre at 7.00 a.m. Beginners are very welcome. Bring your chairs and tea.

Saturday afternoons

1. 19th July 1997: Chedgelow Farm. Meet at Queensway Shopping Centre, Airport Road, 2.00 p.m. Bring chairs and tea.
2. 23rd August 1997: Haka Nature Reserve at Cleveland Dam. Meet at Haka gate 2.00 p.m. Entrance fees are payable – \$10 for adults, \$5 for children.

Sunday Outings

1. 27th July 1997: Ewanrigg Botanic Gardens. Meet at The Grange Service Station, beyond Chisipite Shopping Centre, at 7.00 a.m. Bring chairs, tea and lunch there are braais available. National Parks entry fees will be payable.
2. 31st August 1997: Robin Gilmour's farm, Nyabira. Meet Greencroft Shopping Centre, left-hand side Lomagundi Road, at 7.00 a.m.

Thursday Evenings

1. 17th July 1997: Dr L. Fishpool, Co-ordinator of IBAs for Africa, who is based at BirdLife International, Cambridge, England. Venue: - Alexandra Sports Club. Time 6.00 for 6.30 p.m.

A cash bar will be available.

2. 21st August 1997: Video evening (owls and kingfishers) at John and Pat Saunders' home, 3 Star Close, Chisipite. Starts sharp at 6.30 p.m. Directions: Turn left into Drew Road off Enterprise Road, first left into Merlewood Drive, first right into Star Close.

Rifa Education Camp, Chirundu

This has been confirmed for the period Thursday 25th September to Monday 29th September. Cost per person (including catering) is \$600, payable in advance. The Hunters' Association will run a cash bar. To book, please complete tear-off slip at the end of the newsletter. Accommodation consists of 3 dormitories which each accommodate 8 people, and a limited number of 2 bed cubicles which are usually allocated to married couples. Maximum 30 people with allocation to be on a strictly first-come-first-served basis on receipt of completed application form and payment in full. OAZ members will get first preference.

EASTERN DISTRICTS BIRD CLUB

Chairman: Mr Ken Dixon Tel: 65819 Mutare Recorder: Mr Tony Curtis Tel: 60281 Mutare

Outings

<u>Saturday</u>	12 th July 1997	Cynara Farm, Old Mutare	2.00 p.m.
<u>Sunday</u>	27 th July 1997	Save Drift	6.30 a.m.
<u>Saturday</u>	9 th August 1997	Holiday weekend, no meeting	
<u>Sunday</u>	31 st August 1997	Vumba	6.30 a.m.

The group assembles at the Museum in Aerodrome Road at the time stated. Transport and binoculars are available if prior notice is given. Contact Ken Dixon or Tony Curtis.

Karoi Bird Club

Co-ordinator: Mr K Mitchell P O Box 189, Karoi Tel: 164-630220

Secretary: Mrs M Mitchell P O Box 398, Karoi Tel: 164-630216

Outings

<u>Saturday</u>	5 th July 1997	Rydings School Interpretive Centre	6.30 a.m.
<u>Saturday</u>	26 th July 1997	Caversham (Danny van den Berg)	6.30 a.m.
<u>Saturday</u>	2 nd August 1997	Rydings School Interpretive Centre	6.30 a.m.
<u>Sunday</u>	30 th August 1997	We hope to visit an interesting venue in Tengwe	

Telephone either Kevin or Merle for details

MATABELELAND BRANCHEvening Meetings

- July 1997 No evening meeting — Fort Rixon outing instead
- Friday 8th August 1997 Video evening. First part of BBC Migration Series, featuring Barn Swallows. Venue: 3A Holdengarde Ave. Hillside at 8.00 p.m. Contact Martin Smith for further details.

Outings

- Sunday 13th July 1997 Fort Rixon Dam Water Fowl Survey. Meet at the dam at 9.00 a.m. or contact Penny Feather.
- Sunday 20th July 1997 Aisleby Waterfowl Count. Hopefully we can find plenty to count with the dam level being high. Meet at the boom at 7.30 a.m. or contact Martin Smith.
- Sunday 27th July 1997 Matopos Raptor Watch. A raptor watch is planned in the Matopos which might yield interesting information on raptors within the Hills.
All interested contact Martin Smith
- Sunday 24th August 1997 Mangwe Pass area. We are hoping to stay at a camp in the area. For information contact Martin Smith.
- Sunday 30th August 1997 Aisleby. Meet at the boom at 2.30 p.m. or contact Clive Townsley.

From the Chairman

Support over the past few months has been of a select but few nature which is a great pity because outings have taken place to some particularly attractive venues. Trips to the Cascades and Quietwaters only attracted seven people which was disappointing as Falcon had gone to considerable trouble to make us welcome. Informative booklets, geological and vegetation maps and hand-outs on nature trails were all made available and our visit finished with a guided tour of the Falconry Club. Please do let me know your views on our poor level of support and any suggestions for improvement would be most welcome. Good Birding! **Martin Smith.**

MIDLANDS BRANCH

Co-ordinator: Mr Bernard Beekes P O Box 55 Shurugwi Phone 152-6422

Outings

Day outings – Gweru Contact Gavin 154-4666 or 154-4058, Bernard 152-6422 or Tommy 154-4113 for further information. Meet outside G & T Contracting at 7.45 a.m. for 8.00 a.m. departure.

Sunday 29th June 1997; Sunday 31st August; Sunday 19th October; Sunday 16th November 1997.

Day outings – Masvingo Saturday 25th October 1997. Lake Mutirikwe shoreline waterbird count. It is hoped at least 5 boat parties can be organised, each covering a section of the Lake. If you wish to participate, or even better if you can provide a boat, please contact Lynne 139-63657.

Day outings – Kadoma Saturday 21st June, 23rd August, 4th October, 13th December 1997. Contact Margaret 168-3644. Note: outings are planned for Saturdays.

Camping weekends – Contact Bernard for further information.

Saturday 9th – Monday 11th August Sebakwe Poort, camping at Echo Park. Black Storks.

Friday 10th – Sunday 12th October Chatsworth. Wattled Cranes

Friday 28th – 30th November Central Estates, Mvuma. Southern Carmine Bee-eaters.

REPORTS**MASHONALAND BRANCH**Visit to Sand Sales – Saturday 17 May 1997

Ten of us visited this area which I believe used to be a popular birdwatching place some years ago. We parked our cars under shady water berry trees and wandered down to one of the many dams on the farm. There were surprisingly few water birds, with White-faced Duck, Fulvous Duck and White-backed Duck, Egyptian Goose and Red-billed Teal being seen, as well as a few heron and allied species. The walk back to the woodland yielded abundant flocks of Helmeted Guineafowl and several groups of Blue Waxbill in the company of Bronze Mannikins and Pin-tailed Whydahs. Other birds worthy of mention were

Swallow-tailed Bee-eater, Common Scimitarbill and Bronze-winged Courser. Lacking were raptors, warblers and cisticolas. This site which is only ten minutes drive from the City Centre could once again become worthy of investigating, particularly in the summer months. **Editor**

Chris Bell – ducks – Thursday 15th May 1997

Chris gave a most interesting presentation on a few aspects of the biology of Zimbabwe's waterfowl with particular emphasis on the counting of waterfowl at pans and dams. Each member present was given a copy of Chris' paper and his theories certainly give food for thought, especially to those members involved in the Wetlands International census. Thank you very much Chris. **Editor**

EASTERN DISTRICTS BIRD CLUB

CYNARA Saturday 12th April 1997 QDS 1832D3

Only 5, including a new member – Linda Marshall – to whom we extend a warm welcome, turned out for the excursion which was better than usual. The weather was almost perfect and whilst the final total of species was not enormous there was a steady succession of sightings. More raptors than normal were seen and there was a surprising new record for the area as well as the appearance of a familiar species. Raptors seen were: a pair of Dark Chanting-goshawks (a good sighting), Long-crested Eagle and Lanner Falcon (a mature male perched and in flight). An uncommon visitor seen in an Acacia tree was a Half-collared Kingfisher. At least forty Long-tailed Paradise-whydah males were seen near the "new" dam, most of them conveniently perched on a power line (like swallows preparing to migrate) and others were cruising about "showing off" to the females who were not easily seen as they were often concealed in the vegetation and it was therefore impossible to make any estimate of their numbers. To see a large assemblage of Paradise-whydahs was a new experience for all five of us. Equally surprising was a Shaft-tailed Whydah in company with the Paradise-whydahs. Ken Dixon reported sighting one near the same site in January and will be happy to have this unusual record confirmed. The two sightings are, to my recollection, the first from this part of Zimbabwe. The species has a preference for the drier acacia savannahs (as does its main host the Violet-eared Waxbill) and the distribution maps, even the most recently revised such as those in the SASOL Field Guide, show that it is not normally found in the eastern and northern parts of Zimbabwe. Any information on this or any other unusual sightings will be very welcome – drop a note to P O Box 24, Mutare. **Tony Curtis**.

Karoi Bird Club

The weekend of 20th April 1997 – Musango Lodge, KARIBA QDS 1628C3

Six members went overnight to Musango Lodge, Kariba to do the BirdLife International Waterfowl count. A splendid location. Only 26 species were seen, making up a count of 330 birds in total. The rising of the lake made for a thick grassy shoreline, not attractive to waterfowl.

Saturday 3rd May 1997 – RYDINGS Interpretive Centre QDS 1629D3

The outing was attended by six early-risers. Our usual walk around the dam yielded 53 species, some of which were the ever-present doves, cisticolas, sunbirds, a Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird, a White-browed Scrub-robin calling endlessly, Pearl-spotted Owlet, a lone Black Stork, Orange-breasted Waxbill and Black-chested Snake-eagle, and once again we enjoyed the magnificent colours of the Grey-headed Kingfisher.

Sunday 25th May 1997 – Nassau Farm, KAROI QDS 1629D3

11 birders gathered at Dave Penny's farm. On arrival, we were greeted by a Grey-backed Camaroptera hopping in a nearby bush. We had a good two and a half hour walk during which we had a good view of the gorgeous Orange-breasted Bush-shrike and this gladdened our hearts and we went on to see Green-winged Pytilia, Senegal Coucal, Groundscraper Thrush and both Jameson's Firefinch and Red-billed Firefinch. On surrounding ploughed fields were francolins, plovers (Crowned Lapwing and African Wattled Lapwing). 2 Black-chested Snake-eagles with a juvenile, plus a Brown Snake-eagle soared above us. Around the dam were White-faced Duck, African Darters, African Stonechat, Red-faced Cisticola and Brown-hooded Kingfisher, a pair of Grey Herons and African Jacana (were there three Lesser Jacanas too?). Alas, after much viewing from different directions,

it was agreed they were juvenile African Jacana! Our total for the morning was 78 in all which included a Black Coucal seen on the way out. Dave had mown the grass under some magnificent Mukwa trees and here we enjoyed a bush breakfast which was a fitting end to a satisfying walk. We thank Dave for his hospitality and the opportunity to walk through the unique bush on the farm. **Merle Mitchell**

MATABELELAND

Quietwaters Falcon College – 17 May 1997

QDS 2028B2

This was a most rewarding outing to an attractive Reserve. The good rains meant most trees were still green, although the Syringa had begun to “turn” – a variety of reds, yellows and browns offset by a clear blue sky. At first birds were difficult to find, most of the action taking place within parties – once found there was plenty to see. Orioles, Black-backed Puffback, Southern Black Tit and Tchagra were among the more common species encountered. Within the Acacia scrub fringing the water course plenty more was to be seen. 3 species of kingfisher, including a very tardy Grey-headed Kingfisher, seen close up through the car window. Overhead, we saw a pair of Shikra and a Brown Snake-eagle whilst within the trees we had good views of both White-crested Helmet-shrike and Retz’s Helmet-shrike. Finally, an attractive view of a Purple Roller before pausing for lunch. Afterwards we moved on to view the Falconry Club’s raptors. It was interesting and worthwhile to be able to view these elusive species close up and compare males and females as well as see the Sooty Falcon. Finally our thanks to Gordon Macdonald and the Falconry Club for their kind hospitality. **Martin Smith.**

AISLEBY Saturday 24th May 1997

QDS 2028B1

As always, Aisleby had plenty to offer, first a couple of raptors, one an adult African Fish-eagle with a fish in its talons, the second a confusing Black-chested Snake-eagle – it had to be! On up the water course to the Dam wall, where at least 20 Three-banded Plover were feeding beside the spillway, overhead a lone Common House-martin was seen, a late migrant or perhaps overwintering? On the Dam a multitude of waterfowl were present, lots of Little Grebe, Red-knobbed Coot and Egyptian Goose and a few specials – a single Black-necked Grebe and a lone, male Maccoa Duck. Of particular interest was a small group of Little Grebes which appeared to be feeding together. All would repeatedly dive on the same spot emerging with food; unfortunately we were unable to see what. Finally, we moved on to the lands and completed our tally with a pair of Temminck’s Courser. **Martin Smith.**

MIDLANDS

Mazuri Ranch, Kwekwe – Friday 21st to Sunday 23rd March 1997

QDS 1830C4

In the event, postponing this camping weekend was not the smartest move! The originally scheduled weekend was fine and dry but we got well and truly rained out, 67 mm on Saturday night alone! However, this didn’t stop us having a super weekend. Mazuri Farm is an interesting area, lying partly on the Great Dyke, with its interesting wetlands, and partly on mixed Miombo and Acacia woodland, in Granitic area to the east of the Dyke. Camp was alongside a small dam, and was very pleasantly situated. Few birds were seen within the campsite, an exception being a noisy family of Southern White-crowned Shrike, and an equally noisy group of Green Wood-hoopoes. In the evenings, a herd of Buffalo wandered along the edge of the dam, accompanied by reintroduced Red-billed Oxpeckers. At night lions could be heard roaring (caged, near the homestead). The bush was very wet, and not many water birds were seen. In the woodlands, birds were encountered in mixed bird parties. One interesting party comprised Orange-breasted Bush-shrike, Bennett’s Woodpecker, a female Black Cuckooshrike and a Red-headed Weaver. A group of low flying White-backed Vulture contained one bird which appeared to be larger, had pure white under-wing coverts, and may have been a Cape Vulture, but the secondaries did not appear lighter than the primaries. A mature (green neck) Black Stork passed overhead. A total of 102 species were seen. A total of 8 people attended. Thanks to Eleanor Lowe for making this successful weekend possible. **Bernard Beekes.**

Monteith Farm – 20 km northeast of GWERU – 13 April 1997 QDS 1929B

Once again the week before our birding outing was nice and hot but when Sunday came it turned miserable. We had a turn-out of 8 birders. On our way out to the farm we saw a Black-shouldered Kite, Rock Doves and some Pied Crows. Our first stop was at the farm dam. On the way there I saw a suspected Natal Spurfowl but I was not certain. Our new motto is "If in doubt FIND out" – this was impossible as it had disappeared! We stopped about 300 metres from the dam and started walking down the road to eventually veer off into the bush next to a hilly area. We were about to walk into the bush when my dad saw a BIG snake — it was a 10 foot Black Mamba which went down a large hole so we decided to carry on walking on the road. At the dam there was a complete lack of water birds except for an African Jacana calling in the reeds and some Cattle Egrets. Below the dam was a large sponge and weir – not a single bird sighted. We then went to some abandoned quarries to look and see if the pair of resident Black Storks was in the area. They nest in a quarry which we monitor in the breeding season. In the first quarry we went and sat down by some water and waited for the birds to come and drink. While we were waiting some White-backed Vultures flew over. Cinnamon-breasted Buntings, a male Green-winged Pytilia, a male Miombo Double-collared Sunbird, Magpie Mannikins, Tropical Boubou and lots of Blue Waxbills were close by in the thicket next to the waterhole. At the Black Stork quarry we had a Lanner Falcon soaring above us but no Storks. We looked to see if we could find the Lanner Falcons nest but only found white streaks on a few cliff faces. One had a hole just above it so we climbed up the cliff to see if there was a nest – there was not. When we got down, some of the other birders were watching a male Miombo Double-collared Sunbird showing off his yellow breeding "stripes". The bird would flap its wings to show its "stripes" and at the same time doing a courting call. After about three minutes a female bird arrived and they flew off together to live happily ever after. A Cape Bunting was hopping around a thicket at one end. All quarries had Familiar Chats present. Despite the amount of water available in the bush we still managed to see and hear 72 species of birds. **Gordon Conway** (Junior Member)

Day outing – MASVINGO 20th April 1997

No QDS reference is given as the outing covered three or four squares, although most records were from the Great Zimbabwe area. We left Masvingo at 7.30 a.m. under Lynne's leadership and headed for Great Zimbabwe on a lovely, cool morning. A large group of about 50 Pied Crows were passed on the way. Our main target was the sunbirds at Great Zimbabwe Ruins. We were not disappointed and saw Scarlet-chested Sunbird, Amethyst Sunbird, White-bellied Sunbird, Miombo Double-collared Sunbird and the beautiful Variable Sunbird. A special sighting was a Purple-crested Turaco seen in all its glory at close range! While having tea before leaving the Ruins we had a good view of a Lizard Buzzard. We then moved on to Norma-Jean's Lodges where we visited the garden of Murray McDougal's old home and the surrounding Miombo woodlands. There we saw little except White-necked Raven. Lunch was had at the Kyle Boat Club. Again little was seen except the ubiquitous, scavenging White-necked Raven. Apart from a solitary Grey Heron, no birds were seen on the shoreline. After lunch, we moved on to the dam wall, where we saw about 50 Little Swifts. Although not seen on the outing, a solitary African Black Swift was seen there amongst about 200 Little Swift the day before. One of the most interesting features of the day was the large number of Pied Crows and White-necked Raven seen, but they seemed to be mutually exclusive. Once we got into the hills around the dam, the White-necked Ravens were abundant, and had taken over the scavenging role, and no Pied Crows were seen here. 63 species were recorded. Altogether a very pleasant day with an attendance of 13. Thanks to Lynne for organising the day. **Bernard Beekes**.

Moahana Farm, Shangani & WABAI HILL – 2nd to 4th May 1997 QDS 1929C4 & 2029B1

Gordon Conway reports that 128 species in the two areas were seen, highlights being a pair of African Black Duck, Violet-eared Waxbill, Green-winged Pytilia, Secretarybirds, two Verreaux's Eagles, Lanner Falcon, Tawny Eagle and what is believed and hoped to be a Southern Pale Chanting-goshawk. Good views were had by three observers who feel that the bird was in transition from juvenile to adult plumage.

TAIL FEATHERSConstantia Estates, Chivhu – 2 March 1997

1930B2

Two of us, Alex Masterson and I went to Constantia Estate. There is a pan there possibly 25 ha in extent. We waded in the water all day and found – 1 Lesser Jacana nest with abandoned egg, 1 nest with 1 egg, 1 nest with 3 eggs and an empty shell, maybe a chick had just hatched, 1 Common Moorhen nest with 1 egg. The most outstanding sighting was of a Saddle-billed Stork killing a duck (possibly a Red-billed Teal), then swallowing it, then taking a drink, possibly to lubricate its throat after such a huge meal, then flying off with its male to an unknown destination, but possibly to a nearby nest. Two Wattled Cranes were in attendance – a disused nest was found floating in the pan, detached from its base as the water was now 1.5 m deep. Two Bateleurs and two White-backed Vultures flew overhead, 10 White Storks were fishing on the edge of the pan, and a pair of Black-headed Herons was in a tree nearby. A Southern Pochard, 4 White-backed Duck, a Comb Duck and about 50 Red-billed Teal were on the pan. Red-knobbed Coots were heard. About 5 pairs of African Jacana, a pair of Blacksmith Lapwings, about 50 Wood Sandpiper flew over several times. Other things about were Magpie Shrike, a few Grey-rumped Swallows and two Impala under a tree in the rain. Later in the day we went to another pan between Chivhu and Mvuma right on the road (at the 158 km peg). Again we found Wattled Cranes, a pair and an old nest in the pan. Here we saw Yellow-crowned Bishop and a Lesser Moorhen nest with 9 eggs. We got thoroughly soaked in the rain. Passing traffic at 150 km per hour doesn't notice 2 Wattled Cranes, or two soaked bird-watchers changing into dry gear on the side at the road!! **David**

Rockingham-GillTemminck's Courser's encounter with Steppe Buzzard

Whilst having a brief interlude from cattle handling, my attention was drawn to a frightening noise from above, synonymous with that of a whirlwind at its greatest velocity hurtling at "g" force towards earth, which noise in all persisted for about 4 seconds before the dark brown figure of a hawk (Steppe Buzzard, I think) emerged at great speed from beyond the dense growth of a Marula tree and hit the ground at a terrific force, with outstretched wings. The blast from this bowled over a Temminck's Courser which was in a wheel rut on the approach road and was hitherto concealed from view at a spot about 35 metres from me. The stricken Courser did a 4 p Radian side-roll westwards as a result of the blast, and, had it not been for the hawk regaining its composure within that split second by standing up with opened wings before taking off in a westerly direction, the courser would have collided with it in its frantic bid to escape. In the event, it flew eastwards beneath its would-be assailant's still outstretched wings with unabated squawking at the low altitude of 1.5 metres along the road, until well out of range, before alighting in the grass whereupon the petrified bird stopped shrieking. When I examined the area where it had alighted, I found no trace of mortal soul. It had obviously gone in haste to alert its compatriots to the very real danger that existed in the vicinity!!! Only once before have I ever seen such a spectacle when, in 1937, I witnessed a Bateleur dive from an altitude of about 250 metres onto a hapless rabbit, a sight that was awe-inspiring to the onlooker, never mind the victim. **Ivor Wilkinson**, Springvale Farm, Lower GWERU.

Rescue of Southern White-faced Scops-owl Chicks

One of the most exciting and interesting experiences we ever had with wildlife was about 5 years ago when we had to rescue two Southern White-faced Scops-owl chicks from our dogs and cats as they repeatedly fell out of their nest which was in the fork of a large Jacaranda tree next to our bedroom. The nest was only about 6 feet from the ground. With help and advice from Kevin Robertson, our vet, we started to rear them, putting them into an aviary. During all this time, the mother sat on a branch overhead day and night. Our cats got combed regularly to mix the fur in with strips of steak (they wouldn't eat anything else!). And every morning we'd find the bottom half of a mouse on the aviary roof. We'd cut a hole in the side of the aviary to allow the parents to feed the chicks to no avail. When venturing out of the house at night Ron, my husband, had to take to wearing his motorbike helmet to safeguard his head as the parents would attack him. For 7 weeks this went on before the chicks were ready to go. But here is the unusual thing

that amazed us. After a couple of days of half mice, I looked up at the mother owl and said - "Now, look here Mommy owl, I have a problem. You have two look-alike chicks, and I don't know who is getting the half mouse daily, so I need two from now on please". To our amazement, the next morning there were two half mice and a huge hairy spider (stunned) on the aviary roof!! From then on until they were released to join their parents, we had two half mice every morning! The night of their release, they flew up to join their mother and there was much dancing and commotion of reunion before Daddy flew in from nowhere to feed them. **Antoinette Dick, KAROI**

Mother goose gets a helping mate

When La Lucia pensioner "Grobbie" Grobelaar set off on his annual six-and-a-half-hour trek to water recently with the latest goose family to take up residence in his garden he had no idea he would have extra help.

Mr Grobelaar's garden has become a popular nesting site for Egyptian Goose which, after they have hatched their goslings, are led by their host to the nearest water at Blue Lagoon. But the events that unfolded must certainly have been the most bizarre in the four years that Mr Grobelaar has been assisting his feathered friends to water.

The drama started with the disappearance of the gander over Christmas, leaving the female to raise her five goslings alone. So this year, Mr Grobelaar thought it would just be him, the mother goose and her babies heading for the lagoon. Waking at 4.00 a.m. on the day, Mr Grobelaar checked on the goose family who were happily paddling away in his fish pond. Moments later, the mother goose hopped out of the water and flew off, leaving her hungry brood to fend for themselves, or so Mr Grobelaar thought. He said that he was feeling a little sad, thinking she had deserted them. Mr Grobelaar's concern was short-lived. A little while later, mother goose returned – with two assistants in the form of an elderly goose couple.

The three landed on the roof of his house, he said, and had a little chatter after which old female flew off. The old male and young mother hopped off the roof and joined the five youngsters. It was apparently definitely not the lost mate, as the new arrival was clearly much older. Mr Grobelaar began his journey to the Blue lagoon, this time with the mother, five goslings and the old gander in tow, happily protecting his newly acquired gaggle. **Kathy Maloney** (as published in a popular Natal newspaper).

Trip to Tanzania, Zanzibar and Kenya

Thanks to two very good local guides and the assistance of the excellent new book "Birds of Kenya and Northern Tanzania" by Zimmerman, Turner and Pearson which was purchased in Harare, we experienced great birding with 311 species seen and identified. After two hours watching for birds from a very high rooftop in Zanzibar only four species were seen. All four were in great numbers – House Sparrow, House Crow, Feral/Rock Dove and about 100 Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters – one on every TV aerial.

Highlights were close up views of a pair of African Hawk-eagles with a juvenile, a pair of Black-and-white Flycatchers (our Vanga), Vulturine Guineafowl which are even more striking in the real. There were flocks of Golden Pipits fluttering like butterflies, Stone Partridge which were very tame, several Montagu's Harriers, the Superb Starling which is very aptly named, its near look-alike, Hildebrandt's Starling, White-headed Buffalo-weaver.

Meanwhile on the home front, seen in our HARARE Chisipite garden in March were a pair of Copper Sunbirds around and visible on Purple Salvia, also a female Orange-winged Pytilia and a Broad-tailed Paradise-whydah. **Mac Kirkpatrick**

Information Release from BirdLife International

US\$4.52 million for bird and biodiversity conservation in Africa. GEF (Global Environment Facility) supports a BirdLife International project in 10 African countries for biodiversity conservation. A total of 10 African conservation NGO's, all part of the BirdLife network, will receive support from the US\$4.52 million provided to the BirdLife International Partnership by the GEF. This is the first time that GEF has given support to a grassroots NGO network for conservation work. The decision, announced on 2nd May at the GEF Council meeting will help protect the environment in 10 African countries Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, Tunisia and Uganda – all of whom have ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity. The 10 NGOs will implement the "African NGO-Government Partnership for Sustainable Biodiversity Action" project which will improve the environment for local people. The project promotes the conservation of the world's most important sites for biodiversity. Because the richness of the site for birds is an excellent indicator of the richness of the site for other wildlife, birds are used as the tool for assessing these sites. Once the sites – the important Bird Areas – are identified, the next step is to get action under way to protect them as part of a national environment plan. Each African NGO will be closely involved in managing and monitoring these key sites. The programme supports the IBA programme in Africa, plus regional co-ordination of the programme including network meetings, training and the formation of subregional groupings of IBA personnel. The total programme will cost US\$11.447 million, with the remaining US\$7.117 million coming from the co-financiers — the BirdLife international Partnership, the European Union, and the UK Government's Overseas Development Administration and Darwin Initiative, amongst others. "This tremendous recognition of the BirdLife Partnership and Programme by GEFUNDF demonstrates the value of birds as indicators of biodiversity and the contribution that BirdLife can make to developing sustainable means of achieving biodiversity conservation. I would like to thank and congratulate the BirdLife Partners, network and staff who delivered this for their hard and professional work that has resulted in this support." says Dr Michael Rands, Director of BirdLife International. Kathleen Rosewarne, Communications Manager, BirdLife International.

NOTICEBOARD

Donation of binoculars for Youth Training Programme

The Association acknowledges with grateful thanks the donation recently made by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds in the UK of five pairs of binoculars for use in the Youth Training Programme.

Atlas Instruction Booklets

A supply of Atlas Instruction Booklets is available which, whilst the Atlas project is over, are still relevant as they give details of the whereabouts of the QDSs which are needed when field, special species and nest record cards are completed. If you would like a copy, please send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to: Jacko Williams, 14 Harare Drive, Greystone Park, Harare.

OAZ Birdwatch Competition and World Birdwatch

You will need two atlas cards for this event on 4th and 5th October 1997. Fill in one with a complete list of species seen ANYWHERE during that 48 hours. Fill in the other with your best 24 hour total for the OAZ competition. Send both back to me at my address as soon as possible after the weekend as results have to be sent to the UK. Try to get some sponsorship for that weekend. Bushnell Sports Optics, UK have agreed to support this event, which is Worldwide and benefits BirdLife International, with whom we are a Partner Designate. They have also donated 60 pairs of BirdLife/Bushnell binoculars

to be distributed between all Partners and Partner Designates. If you want cards, get them soon, as I shall be away from late July to late September. Cover as many areas as possible and have fun. Please send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to me and ask for an Atlas booklet as well. Enquiries regarding rules, etc. to Jacko Williams, telephone: 882206, 14 Harare Drive, Greystone Park, Harare.

Imbabala Safari Camp

This camp is situated in what is recognised as one of Zimbabwe's prime birding spots. There is a possibility that the management of Imbabala will consider donating to CAZ 10% of accommodation costs provided 14 people book for one of their special birding weekends later in the year. For further details, contact Dave Gray – Harare 885406.

CONDOLENCES

Heartfelt sympathy and sincere condolences are extended to Dave Rockingham-Gill, Alice and Clare who recently so sadly lost their beloved wife and mother, Susie.

EDITOR

Now that I am handing over as editor to Di, I would like to thank people for their support over the years which were much appreciated. Future contributions should be sent to Di. Thanks very much – **Dave Gray**.