

BABBLER

ORNITHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION OF ZIMBABWE

A PARTNER DESIGNATE OF BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL

ISSUE #24 – MAY/JUNE 1998

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ACTIVITIES

MASHONALAND BRANCH

Regular outings *Note new times*

1. Mukuvisi Woodlands: Sundays 3rd May and 7th June 1998. Meet at Paget Road entrance at 7.00 a.m. There will be a vehicle guard in attendance.
2. Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary: Sundays 10th May and 14th June 1998. Meet at Marimba Shopping Centre for departure at 7.00 a.m. Beginners are very welcome. Bring your chairs and tea.

Saturday afternoon outings

1. 23rd May 1998: Lyndhurst Farm. Meet at Queensdale Shopping Centre, Airport Road at 2.00 p.m.
 2. 20th June 1998: Lowdale Farm. Meet at Ashbrittle Service Station, Golden Stairs Road at 2.00 p.m.
- For both outings bring chairs and refreshments.

Sunday Outings

1. 31st May 1998: Dichwe Lemon Forest. This venue is approximately 150 km (1½ hrs) from Harare. It is preferable that we do not enter the area with too many vehicles and transport should be consolidated wherever possible. If you require transport OR can offer transport please liaise with Pat Saunders (☎ 490167). The meeting place is Greencroft Shopping Centre, Lomagundi (Kariba) Road at 6.30 a.m. The forest is most rewarding with Narina Trogons and African Broadbills having been sighted here. It is a lovely spot to have a picnic so bring chairs and refreshments.
2. 28th June 1998: Ewanrigg Botanic Gardens. Meet at The Grange Service Station, Enterprise Road (beyond Chisipite Shopping Centre) at 7.30 a.m. There are braai facilities at the Gardens and it is a beautiful area to spend the day. National Park fees are payable at the gate.

Thursday Evenings

1. 21st May 1998: Leslee Maasdorp, the Educational Officer of Rifa Camp will give an illustrated talk on training at Rifa Camp in the Zambezi Valley.
2. 18th June 1998: Dr Colin Saunders will entertain us with reminiscences of "Birdy Bods – characters in Zimbabwe ornithology over the past half century".

Venue for both evenings: Alexandra Sports Club, Sable Room, 6.00 p.m. for 6.30 p.m. A cash bar will be available.

EASTERN DISTRICTS BIRD CLUB

Chairman: Mr. Ken Dixon ☎ 120-65819 Recorder Mr. Tony Curtis ☎ 120-60281

Outings

<u>Saturday 2nd May 1998</u>	Cynara Farm	2.00 p.m.
<u>Saturday & Sunday 30&31st May 1998</u>	Honde Valley	Details from Ken Dixon
<u>Saturday 13th June 1998</u>	Murahwa's Hill	2.00 p.m.
<u>Sunday 28th June 1998</u>	Hot Springs area (Bring lunch)	6.00 a.m.

We assemble 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. In addition to these outings there are regular events like the International Waterfowl Surveys of Cynara and Osborne which are conducted every three months.

Karoi Bird Club

Co-ordinator: Mr. K. Mitchell P O Box 398, Karoi ☎ 064-630220

Secretary: Mrs. M Mitchell P O Box 398, Karoi ☎ 064-630216

Outings

<u>Saturday, 2nd May 1998</u>	Rydings School Interpretive Centre	6.30 a.m.
<u>Weekend outing</u>	Lochinvar Bird Sanctuary, Zambia.	
<u>Friday, 22nd to Monday 25th May 1998</u>	April's visit, as advertised, was cancelled due to school holidays and people being away. Interested members to contact Kevin or Merle for details. Numbers restricted to 20 only.	
<u>Saturday 6th June 1998</u>	Rydings School Interpretive Centre	6.30 a.m.
<u>Weekend outing</u>		
<u>Saturday and Sunday, 27th June 1998</u>	Venue to be arranged. Interested parties To contact Kevin or Merle Mitchell.	

MATABELELAND BRANCH**Evening Meetings****Friday, 1st May 1998**

I.D. Evening – this will focus on oxpeckers and starlings and specimens, calls and slides will be used to aid identification. Martin will also attempt to show video footage of Malawi and the Cape.

Venue: 3A Holdengarde Avenue – Time 8.00 p.m. ☎ 42474.

Friday, 5th June 1998

Trees and Birds – Ken Blake has kindly agreed to show us more of his slides and in this presentation will link trees and birds. Venue: CBC staffroom – Time 8.00 p.m. Contact Martin for further details.

Away weekend**Saturday, Sunday & Monday, 23rd – 25th May 1998** – Wabai Hill

For details contact Martin ☎ 42474.

Outings

Saturday & Sunday, 20th & 22nd June 1998 – Matopos southwest

Warren Goodwin will lead this outing south and east from Figtree to a little-known part of the Matopos. Hopefully there will be plenty to see. Bring lunch. Meet at Southwold Shopping Centre at 7.30 a.m. or contact Warren ☎ 62237.

Aisleby: We have now changed to Saturday afternoons, meeting at the boom at 2.30 p.m. Dates and co-ordinators are:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Co-ordinator</u>	<u>Telephone</u>
23 rd May, 1998	Martin Smith	42474
27 th June, 1998	Clive Townsley	46617

MIDLANDS BRANCH

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

Day outings

Gweru Contact Gavin ☎ 154-24666/24058 or Bernard ☎ 152-6422. It is advisable to confirm with the organiser before each outing.

Sunday, 10th May 1998 Meet outside G & T Contracting at 7.45 a.m. for

Sunday 12th June 1998 8.00 a.m. departure

Masvingo Contact Lynne ☎ 139-63657 for details

Kadoma Contact Margaret ☎ 168-3644

Camping weekends Contact Bernard ☎ 152-6422 for further information

19th-21st June 1998 Whitewaters Dam near Gweru – Gavin has a Cottage here allowing access to toilet/bathroom facilities, otherwise camping is available but *one has to be completely self-sufficient*.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

STRATEGIC PLANNING WORKSHOP – 14TH AND 15TH FEBRUARY 1998 SUMMARY OF REPORT

This workshop was held to define the purpose and objectives of the OAZ and to formulate plans to achieve these. It was attended by 24 members coming from all parts of the country and Dr Gary Allport, Head of the Africa Division of BirdLife international (BLI) in the UK. The meeting was managed by a qualified facilitator, Richard Maasdorp, who is also a member of the OAZ. This paper is a brief précis of the report of the proceedings. It has not been easy to make as the report is itself a summary of two days of concentrated work. Copies of the Facilitator's Report are available from the Secretary at a cost of \$30 or can be borrowed from her. A copy was also supplied to each participant.

Objectives

The first thing that the workshop had to do was to define its own objectives. These were

- to determine the future direction of the OAZ
- to generate new ideas and insights
- to set goals
- to develop commitment
- to review commitment
- to review existing projects and to define new projects
- to discuss the image of the OAZ
- to have fun!

These were the findings of the Workshop:

Purpose

The fundamental purpose of the OAZ is to promote the survival of bird life in Zimbabwe and elsewhere for its intrinsic value and the enjoyment of future generations.

Membership of BLI

There was unanimous agreement that the OAZ become a BLI Partner Designate. As well as sharing their objectives, this will strengthen regional and international links as well as increase the lobbying power of the OAZ. It was agreed that it was essential in the process to inform the membership fully and obtain its support through an appropriate mechanism.

Organisation Restructuring

Council should henceforth be organised on an activity basis as follows:

President

Vice-President

Treasurer – responsible for finance and membership records

Secretary – responsible for administration

Representatives – Research and Conservation Committee

- Education and Extension Committee

- Public Relations and Fund-raising Committee

- Publications

Branch Representatives

The following are the immediate objectives of the Committees:

Research and Conservation

- review and monitor existing projects including IBAs
- identify threatened birds and generate a red data book
- produce tourist checklists

Education

- produce guidelines for programme
- identify schools and trainers

Publications

- no formal committee at this stage. The small team will take advice on layout and design of *Honeyguide* and will be responsible for obtaining advertising for publications. It will also give guidance and assistance to *Babbler*.

Feedback from Questionnaire

The response to the questionnaire was fantastic with 244 returns out of a local membership of 550. This represents a 44% return. (At least another 30 came in too late for inclusion in the exercise). Some respondents did not answer all the questions. Useful insights were obtained when members elected to expand on various answers. Here is a summary of the replies to some of the questions.

Q1 Length of Membership

< 5 years	26%
5-9 years	19%
10-19 years	33%
20-30 years	14%
>30 years	8%

This reflects a reasonable growth in recent members and a drop off of members in the 5 – 9 years range.

Q2 Age of Respondents

Less than 25 years	3%
25-55 years	45%
55 years and over	54%

The very low percentage of young members must be addressed.

Q5 Main Activities

It is encouraging to note that the core activities of the OAZ as determined by the SPW have the support of the members. These were, in rank order, conservation, study and research, activities, developing awareness, attracting the young, lectures and scientific publications .

Q7 Relative Interest in *Honeyguide*

Items of General Interest	37%
Short Communications	33%
Scientific Articles	17%
Book Reviews	13%

Q8 Should *Babbler* be Upgraded?

Yes	35%	No	65%
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The Workshop came to the same conclusion. The low cost and timeous production militated against making any significant changes to *Babbler*.

Q9 Should *Honeyguide* be offered as an Optional Extra?

Yes	30%	No	70%
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The Workshop agreed with the membership that this publication goes a long way to ensuring that the OAZ is seen as a professional and dedicated organisation which is adding to the body of bird knowledge.

Q12 Do Members feel a Name Change is in order?

Support	30%	Object	16%	No strong feelings	55%
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This topic was not discussed in detail by the Workshop. A name change was not seen as a high priority at present.

Q14 What do the members see as the fundamental purpose of the OAZ?

To ensure that the population and diversity of birds is sustained	78%
To meet the needs of its members	22%

It was recognised that meeting the needs of members is important but the “purpose” must lead the way and to a large extent determine the type of membership. Naturally the two issues are inextricably linked.

Schedule of Objectives

These were identified as the broad objectives of the OAZ. Each has a set of sub-goals listed in the Report.

1. To conserve birds and their habitats.
2. To increase awareness and enjoyment of birds through education and training.
3. To use and develop a proven and a professional base in the research and study of birds and the habitats in support of achieving our objectives.
4. To overtly support sound governance of our natural resources.
5. To develop and strengthen our international networks as a means to assist in achieving our objectives.
6. To take advantage of the growth in tourism in general and the increase in “birding” activity worldwide.
7. To develop policies on relevant issues recognising that these are dynamic and must be sensitive to our socio-economic environment.
8. To maintain our existing publications.
9. Structure – to establish an activity based Council.

Measures

As these goals are all linked a few general, rather than goal specific measures were adopted as indicators of successful implementation.

- 1 000 members by December 1999
- 20% Black membership by December 1999
- Production of a Red Data book
- Identification of IBAs

John Paxton, President

REPORTS**NATIONAL****THE IBA PROGRAMME**

It is intended that until the African Regional Directory of IBAs is published in 1999, (which will contain Zimbabwe's data) members will be provided with as much information as possible regarding progress towards this goal and how members can become involved.

Report from Sue Childes – the OAZ IBA Co-ordinator

Those of you attending the recent AGM asked that I give a brief précis of the IBA Programme and the list of sites. A full summary will appear in *Honeyguide*.

The IBA Programme is part of a global initiative by BirdLife International to identify and ultimately conserve important bird areas throughout the world. The proposed Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in Zimbabwe are very provisional and the sites chosen should not be taken as absolute but rather as a basis for further research and discussion.

The sites

During early discussions on the IBA project, an initial list of 33 sites was considered. However, it became apparent that, although we considered these important nationally, they were not significant regionally.

Of the final list of 20 sites, the first 8 cover the most important biodiversity areas (birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians, plants and insects) in the Eastern Highlands. The remaining 12 sites were chosen for the presence of threatened/vulnerable species, significant numbers or as good examples of bionics or habitats in which species assemblages occur. Table 1 lists the sites and the key is self explanatory.

An example of the criteria developed when selecting sites is: **Sites 001 to 005** – the Eastern Highlands which contain threatened, vulnerable or restricted range birds such as Blue Swallow (*Hirundo atrocaerulea*), Roberts's Warbler (*Prinia robertsi*), Chirinda Apalis (*Apalis chirindensis*), Swynnerton's Robin (*Swynnertonia swynnertonii*). The Afrotropical Highlands Biome is represented by 18 species. Nyanga was split into Highlands and Lowlands on the basis of altitude, vegetation and land use. Stapleford Forest was chosen on historical data and anecdotal evidence, but has not yet been visited by the IBA team. The Bvumba Highlands are one of the best documented bird areas and contain the full range of Afrotropical Biome species. Banti Forest was also chosen on historical grounds (collection data) and was briefly visited. Its isolation, botanical importance, past (and probably present) avian importance made it a valid inclusion.

TABLE 1: LIST OF SITES AND THEIR QUALIFYING CRITERIA

SITE	A1	A2	A3			A4			O
			A07	A09	A10	i	ii	iii	
001	Nyanga Highlands	*	*	*	*	*			
002	Nyanga Lowlands/Honde Valley	*	*	*	*	*			
003	Stapleford Forest	*	*	*	*	*			
004	Bvumba Highlands	*	*	*	*	*			
005	Banti Forest		*	*	*	*			
006	Chimanimani Mountains	*	*	*	*	*			
007	Haroni – Rusitu Junction	*	*	*	*	*			
008	Chirinda Forest	*	*	*	*	*			
009	Hwange National Park	*				*			*
010	Chizarira National Park	*				*			
011	Batoka Gorge	*							
012	Mid Zambezi Valley					*	*	*	
013	L. Chivero & McIlwaine R. Park	*				*	*	*	*
014	Sebakwe Poort						*		*
015	Wabai Hill						*		
016	Matobo Hills						*		*
017	Driefontein Grasslands	*					*		
018	Limpopo – Mwenezi Pans		*		*				*
019	Mavuradonha Mountains				*				*
020	Save-Runde Junction		*		*				

KEY TO CATEGORIES

A1 = Globally Threatened Species

A2 = Restricted Range Species

A3 = Biome Restricted Assemblages

A07 = Afrotropical Highlands

A09 = East African Coast

A10 = Zambebian

A4 = Congregations

A4i = = 1% biogeographic population of congregatory waterbird species

A4ii = = 1% global population of congregatory terrestrial species

O = Sites that are not included in above categories but that are considered important.

National AGM held at Echo Park, KWEKWE – Weekend of 27th – 29th March 1998

There was a good attendance at the AGM this year – 48 members present, including members of the Council. The camp at Echo Park proved to be an excellent venue and grateful thanks are due to Bernard Beekes and his team for organising the weekend. The chalets were well-equipped and comfortable and the facilities offered at the scout hall were perfect for the AGM itself plus the communal braais on both evenings. Thanks are also due to the Conway family who offered rides in their boat on Dutchman's Pool Dam. One party was amply rewarded by a very good sighting of an African Finfoot swimming across the water. At the meeting itself, after some debate, it was agreed by the members present that John Paxton and Dave Gray serve another year in office as President and Vice-President respectively. The voting was 66 (including proxies) to 1 in favour of the re-election. The decision was made because of the work that John, in particular, and Dave have done to date to enable Zimbabwe (through the OAZ) to be eligible to become a Partner-Designate (ultimately a Partner) in BirdLife International. The new Council elected at the meeting is therefore

Administration

President John Paxton

Vice- President Dave Gray

Treasurer Ida Gray

Secretary Di Rushforth

Research and Conservation

Sue Childes

Education and Extension

Leslee Maasdorp

The post of Public Relations and Fund-raising is still open and we are appealing to members for a volunteer to fill this critical position. All interested persons should contact John Paxton on ☎ 884413. Although not an elected position, Michael Irwin has agreed to continue as editor of *Honeyguide*. We were so sorry to learn of the serious accident in which Keith Harvey was involved on his way to the meeting and we wish him a speedy recovery. **Editor**

MASHONALAND BRANCH**HARARE BOTANIC GARDENS – Saturday 14th February 1998**

The sun was shining brightly and not a cloud was to be seen in the sky. About 28 people were present. We had a lovely stroll underneath the trees and the most enthusiastic among us kept it up until about 5.30 p.m. In that time, 39 species of birds were seen. In the reeds, we observed a Thick-billed Weaver building its nest and a Brubru was spotted in a Fever Tree. We also saw male and female Violet-backed Starlings and Steel-blue Widowfinch. **Kim Smet** (11 years)

HARAVA Dam – Sunday 22nd February 1998

A larger than usual turnout of about 21 was very pleasing to see with several new or prospective members joining us. The morning was very pleasant and we were rewarded for making an early start by finding birds in abundance in the well-developed Miombo woodland, although the dam itself did not yield very many water birds, the highlight of which was a pair of African Black Duck. During the time we were there, we identified 87 species which included Black-chested Snake-eagle and Wahlberg's Eagle, African Cuckoo and Diderick Cuckoo, Broad-billed Roller, Black Cuckooshrike, Mocking Giff-chat; Stierling's Wren-warbler,

Rattling Cisticola, Lazy Cisticola and Levallant's Cisticola, Southern Hylia, Amethyst Sunbird, Variable Sunbird and Miombo Double-collared Sunbird and Cut-throat Finch. The area in which we walked is leased by Mbizi Game Park from the City of Harare and we are very grateful to Mr Mervyn Senior for allowing us free access.

Editor

Evening meeting – Thursday, 19th March 1998

Keith Harvey spoke to the Mashonaland Branch about FELIXBURG which is a wonderful area and where he ranches and lives. From the way Keith spoke, he imparted his great love for the area. Those of you who were unable to attend this evening talk missed an absolute treat.

Keith showed us a map of the area which is surrounded by small-scale, peasant farmers but Keith's area is open grassland which is associated with wetlands and, as a result of a very high water table, there are no trees. It is 400 feet higher than Ben Nevis!, and is the best breeding area in the country for Wattled Crane and Grey Crowned Crane. The foundation is old granite – about 4 million years old and about 1 million years ago the Kalahari Sands blew in and created a very fine, very pure sponge on the solid granite and this builds up a natural aquifer. The rainfall average is 700mm per annum. Keith then showed a map of where the cranes nest – he has named the pairs and he informed us of their progress which he has followed over the years. A truly wonderfully informative talk. Thank you, Keith. **Ida Gray**

CROWBOROUGH Sewage Works – Saturday, 21st March 1998

About 20 people turned out to this venue – either they didn't know that the place can be quite smelly at times, or they knew that they might experience some very good birding. Whatever the reason, it was pleasing to see so many people. The party were rewarded with seeing large numbers of ibis on the way through the cattle paddocks with approximately 300 African Sacred Ibis feeding in the fields in the company of about 200 Egyptian Goose and above us were a flock of nearly 100 Glossy Ibis. Once in the environs of the sewage works a great variety of birds were to be found, the exceptional sightings being Yellow Wagtail and Cape Wagtail, Wood Sandpipers, Ruffs and Wattled Starlings. **Editor**

EASTERN DISTRICTS BIRD CLUB

CYNARA Farm, Old MUTARE – Sunday, 1st March 1998

The "exeat" weekend caused such a big exit in all directions that the only birders fit and still in Mutare were myself and Never, Abbas's brother, who had never been to Cynara. For once an easy decision; the planned Stapleford expedition had foundered for lack of a suitable vehicle for the precipitous descent. The new dam, still spilling, was just welcoming 40 Comb Duck but otherwise there were the usual lone African Darter, Reed Cormorant and White-breasted Cormorant to adjust one's binoculars on before the more serious business began. We also saw a few Water Thick-knee on the rocks and the odd wader. On the flat rocks near the spillway we disturbed a nightjar but, despite seeing it four times, could not be sure which species. Our progress was slow as the sunny morning was bringing out a wide variety of birds. Driving along the track to the main dam, trying to avoid the worst of the mud as one does in a white car, I dropped a front wheel into a deep furrow and knew immediately that was that. Back at the farmhouse, nervous and embarrassed, I was immediately put at my ease by Jane and Reg Bennett. The former said, "Went in at the same point yesterday" and the latter "That's no problem. Shall we pull you out forwards or backwards?" Within 15 minutes we were birdwatching again. Although there was nothing startling, we were kept busy recording all our sightings, about 75 in all but in the excitement of the action I seem to have lost my notebook so we'll have to forgo the details. Thanks again to our hosts for rescuing me. **Ken Dixon**

PREMIER ESTATE, Old MUTARE – Saturday 14th March 1998

A Presidential visit was promised, so we all polished our gum boots and dusted our lenses. Promptly at 14.00 13 local members, or should I say 12 regulars and one welcome newcomer, Tim Peatling, left the museum for Premier Mine Road waving banners and shouting "Paxton for Life President!" ... but he had been dissuaded by the guti and didn't realise how the Eastern Districts birds thrive on it. A tad disappointed, we carried on and began to hunt for birds. For the first 20 minutes or so not a single species was recorded. Then a friendly Red-collared Widowbird showed himself and we were off. The cliff with its old mine shafts held our attention for at least 30 minutes. The Mocking Cliff-chat was always visible, an obliging Black-chested Snake-eagle flew back and forth, a possible Lanner Falcon, sunbirds and flycatchers

were all noted in a short space of time. A path leading down to the Mutare River was very disappointing, offering one lonely widowfinch but the Acacias along the road were much more rewarding. A Yellow-bellied Eremomela was a lifer for some, while the crombecs, an Orange-breasted Bush-shrike, African Paradise-flycatcher and whydah delighted us all. After a short visit to the Pioneer Cemetery, we set off into the wilderness area which was surprisingly productive for such a damp, dull day. There was a party of 12+ White-crested Helmet-shrikes, a group of Fork-tailed Drongos chasing an oriole, Violet-eared Waxbills and a Eurasian Hobby. We all enjoyed tracking various bird parties through the woodland and were able at the end to compile a list of at least 55 species. You missed a good one Pres. And the pick of Bill and Jane's portable bar. Thanks to all those who turned out on a unpromising afternoon, the drivers and the barpersons. **Ken Dixon**

KAROI BIRD CLUB

Saturday, 28th February 1998 – Pelele Farm

We finally got to this venue after it had been washed out in January. Spencer and Wendy James welcomed us with coffee while we waited for birders to arrive. Spencer had cut paths for us through the long grass, which made the going very pleasant, and we could concentrate our gaze upwards without having to jungle bash. Some of the birds spotted were Red-collared Widowbird, Senegal Coucal, Pin-tailed Whydah, Yellow Bishop and Tawny-flanked Prinia in the long grass. At the dam, Pied Kingfisher and Malachite Kingfisher, Southern Masked-weaver was seen. Through the woodland, Cardinal Woodpecker, White-browed Scrub-robin, the lovely Broad-billed Roller and then the African Barred Owllet – he quietly perched while we looked our fill and stayed put when we walked on. Up to a larger dam, we saw African Stonechat and Southern Red Bishop on the way. White-faced Duck and Comb Duck were on the water together with a lone Spur-winged Goose. Common Sandpiper and Wood Sandpiper were on the shoreline with Blacksmith Lapwing. On the way back, a male Red-backed Shrike was seen and, soaring above, two Wahlberg's Eagles. Back to the homestead for a farmhouse breakfast after a very pleasant morning's birding. Thank you Spencer and Wendy.

Saturdays 7th March and 4th April 1998

Several members participated in walks at Rydings School Interpretive Centre.

National AGM

Our Co-ordinator and a couple of members attended the AGM at Echo Park. They enjoyed the venue and being able to see the Black Stork breeding colony. They were, however, disappointed that they missed seeing the African Finfoot!

Merle Mitchell

MATABELELAND

MALEME Dam – 26th to 29th February 1998

This proved to be a rewarding weekend with a number of MATOPOS specials being seen, despite the hot, dry conditions. As usual the vegetation fringing the dam had plenty to offer, with a number of interesting parties to study. Southern Black Flycatcher, Spotted Flycatcher, African Paradise-flycatcher and Grey Tit-flycatchers were seen, whilst chats were well represented with Familiar Chat, African Stonechat, Mocking Cliff-chat and Boulder Chat being recorded. As always, cisticolas provided a challenge with Rattling Cisticola, Levaillant's Cisticola and Croaking Cisticola all being identified by a combination of markings, habitat and calls. The reedbed and its fringing Acacia provided a focus of activity with Yellow Bishop and the less common Red-collared Widowbird being seen, the latter having a limited distribution in Matabeleland. Other specials included Cape Batis seen in the vegetation on the kopje sides and Purple-crested Turaco, heard and seen along the Maleme valley. Overhead, raptors offered plenty of entertainment; the resident Verreaux's Eagle seemed to be particularly vocal, perhaps over a boundary dispute with the neighbouring 97 pair. African Crowned Eagle was also heard engaged in a high altitude display flight and it was pleasing to be able to see this less common raptor. Sadly, Sunday seemed to arrive too soon and the weekend drew to a close with a tally of just over 100 species for the Maleme valley, perhaps a suitable basis for a future checklist? **Martin Smith**

KHAMI Ruins – Sunday, 22nd March 1998

'Kick-off' was a little early for most members, but a small group of stalwarts met at the City Hall to head out through the ever widening Western Suburbs. Our first stop was the sewage works with its fragrant, open air settling tanks and productive vegetation. This proved to be particularly rewarding with a variety of waders, warblers, swallows and shrikes being seen. Red-backed Shrikes looked particularly attractive in fresh plumage and it was interesting listening to a male mimicking a warbler, also in good voice were Sedge Warbler, although it is hard to understand why they should do so here, do they need 6 000 km worth of practice? Swallows were also numerous and we had good views of both Greater Striped Swallows and Barn Swallows, it was interesting to note a considerable range from white to rufous underparts for the latter. Waxbills were well represented with a total of 4 species being recorded, the Orange-breasted Waxbill appearing particularly smart. Overhead, a young Lanner Falcon caused considerable panic with birds flitting into cover. After further deliberation over a distant snake-eagle we finally managed to reach Khami Ruins, arriving to see an altercation between a young Shikra and a Levaillant's Cuckoo, quite who was pursuing who and why was hard to work out. Khami was a mass of thick, rank vegetation with all sorts of interesting warblers to pursue and very few to identify convincingly. A misguided walk to a hilltop ruin provided good views of the sky and a distant pair of Verreaux's Eagles, whilst overhead a young African Harrier-hawk produced its plaintive call. A walk up the water course yielded Bar-throated Apalis, Willow Warbler and two species of robin, whilst the dam itself had very little life, other than some enormous barbel that seemed to be attempting to leave the pea green sludge behind. Finally, we returned to the car park past some extremely vocal Willow Warblers and a Purple Widowfinch, in all a tally of 166 species for the morning outing. **Martin Smith**

From the Chairman

Our Branch AGM in February was well supported and plenty of pertinent issues were raised, our approach to education was discussed and a vote taken on whether the Society should change its name, 12 to 7 in favour of the status quo. Elections saw Penny Feather and Margaret Stone stand down and we thank them for their work with the Committee. We welcome Julia Dupree and Vanessa Goodwin and wish them many years of service! The recent Workshop provided plenty of motivation to move forwards with a number of projects. Education is of particular importance and we are planning to address this at two levels. At Primary School level we are aiming to send a circular to all schools within Matabeleland with an introduction to birds. Schools which respond positively will receive more information, this being based on a pack first put together and used in Botswana. At Secondary School level we are organising a course of Upper Six Biology students which will be held at Falcon College during the Easter holiday. This will focus on bird identification, ringing, dissection and migration and will attempt to offer a basic introduction to ornithology. Hopefully, this may encourage some of our youth to pursue an interest in birds. In Matabeleland, our rather feeble rainy season appears to have come to an end with the veld rapidly drying out. Trees are beginning to lose their leaves and most of our migrants are moving northwards. It is an interesting time of year with many birds to be seen 'on passage'. Barn Swallow numbers have increased at AISLEBY, whilst along most road routes European Rollers were to be seen in early March. Please do record your sightings and submit them to 'Recent Reports'. Good birding. **Martin Smith**

MIDLANDS

Camp at CENTRAL ESTATES MVUMA – 28th to 30th November 1997

Well, fate definitely looks after some! Because of the (to put it mildly) inclement weather we all, including the Beekes, wanted to say we couldn't make it, but Bernard was 'off air' at the relevant time so the day (or should I say weekend) was saved for Andrew (the optimist) who had been delivered at 7.00 a.m. on Friday in anticipation of our arrival! From Gweru to camp the weather closed in. My heart sank and so did my bakkie within sight (and also, apparently, sound) of the camp, as the "good dirt track" had recently been graded with traditional timing – just before the rains. I was quickly rescued by Bernie and his henchman, as was poor Margaret, who got stuck in the same place next morning. And before you even think it – being women drivers had nothing to do with anything. It was we who had the disadvantage of contending with a road that had been adversely rearranged by those who preceded us, and who did not have the benefit of 4-wheel drive like some!! But it was all worth the effort, such a wonderful spot. The weather improved to a continuous dribble for the rest of that day, rain on and off the next morning, and then mere sog underfoot and cloud overhead. We severally and together made many visits each day to the Southern Carmine Bee-eater colony, watching from high on the opposite bank, disguised as bushes. To everyone's relief all was well, despite the enormous rise in the river which Bernie at first feared would have flooded the tunnels and drowned the chicks – can you think of anything more heartbreaking? But the fact that the burrows were located much further back from the river than usual led us to believe that at the relevant time the Carmines had foreknowledge of the inclement conditions to come. This particular colony, consisting of an estimated 1 000 plus birds, is unique in Zimbabwe in that nest holes are dug perpendicularly into the ground, rather than horizontally into a bank. Lots of the tunnels had soon-to-fledge youngsters with their heads appearing at the entrances waiting to be fed. We also noted that one or two adults arrived with beaks full of food and then sat motionless for hours. Could it be that they only fed those young who appeared at the entrance – or had their offspring perished? Most of the grounded juveniles seemed to be nearly fully coloured, although somewhat duller than their parents, as were those already airborne or perched on trees, accompanied and still being fed by adults. Some of our birding was done from the comfort of the camp itself. We saw, for instance, a Water Thick-knee chick pottering along the opposite bank, African Black Duck paddling along the river and nine types of raptor and the aforementioned Woolly-necked Stork flying around overhead. Just up on the river bend was a totally "invisible" Malachite Kingfisher – despite all that marvellous colour it took several people quite a few minutes to spot it sitting with its tummy to the fore. There were also fancolins scratching around under the trees, Pied Kingfishers diving and swallows and swifts, most European¹, but including Mottled Swift. We had wonderful forays "inland" through copses and kopjies, which produced audio and visual evidence of an abundance of species from Levaillant's Cuckoos and Red-chested Cuckoos to Arrow-marked Babblers, barbets and buntings; we crossed streams over which presided Grey-headed Kingfishers and more Pied Kingfishers and in which lived a Striped Frog; and along sand banks were a couple of plovers and sandpipers and more African Black Duck. Our total bag was 115 species. Warm thanks go to the Central Estates for allowing us to stay at the camp and to Bernard and Cathy for organising the trip. Report by **"Out of the meadow"**

TAIL FEATHERS

The MUKUVISI WOODLAND

It is with pleasure that I noted a remarkable improvement in the survival rate of chicks in the 1997 breeding season. There were several successful Southern Black Flycatcher nests, African Golden Oriole and Black-headed Orioles, Fork-tailed Drongos, Golden-breasted Buntings, Green-capped Eremomela, White-browed Scrub-robins and of course Fiery-necked Nightjars, Meyer's Parrots, Lilac-breasted Rollers and Brown-hooded Kingfishers and Grey-headed Kingfishers. In my opinion the improvement came about due to a considerable drop in the Woodland's raptor population. During the severe drought of 1992, there was an influx of raptors to the Woodland as the area was in reasonable to fair condition. The consequence of this invasion became apparent at the end of the 1992 breeding season. There were hardly any surviving chicks to be found. One of the most efficient invaders was the African Harrier-hawk. I watched it digging into nest-holes and hook out the chicks. Unfortunately, some of the raptors found the Woodland to their liking and remained or returned, that is until the last two breeding seasons.

¹ Unclear is this refers to Barn Swallow or Common Swift

During last year, the pair of Long-crested Eagles had two successful broods, the Black-chested Snake-eagle had one chick, so had the Lizard Buzzards, the Little Sparrowhawk and Shikra also did well. Attempts at breeding by the Wahlberg's Eagle were frustrated by Pied Crows. In the middle of last December, I was privileged to watch a spectacular hunting foray of an African Goshawk. With outstretched, vibrating wings, it rushed forward between some *Monotes* trees about a foot off the ground, pursuing a bird which it finally caught in the open. When I approached, the captive Kurrichane Thrush managed to break loose and escaped. **John Sievi**

Rescuing and rearing a juvenile Black Stork – August 1997

For the last few years we have been monitoring a Black Stork nest in an abandoned quarry 15 km northeast of GWERU. The storks seem to be having a problem with rearing their chicks as not many have survived. In 1997, four eggs were laid and they all hatched in mid-July. By 7th August only three chicks remained in the nest and on 30th August one dead chick was observed in the nest and one had fallen out and was lying 5 metres below. It still had a lot of fluff and had a slightly damaged wing. We named him "Monty" after the farm "Montieth". Progress of the rearing of the stork is detailed as follows

Age at rescue 46 days – Day 1	Tried to force-feed with Japanese Koi and squashed fish – not interested. Splashed water into mouth which it enjoyed. We put some fish on the ground while we thought about the next feeding method and it snatched the fish up and ate it with ease. Problem solved. Could not stand – very wobbly, crouching on knees. Clapped bill loudly.
Age 47 days – Day 2	Eating fish easily $\pm 7 - 12$ cm long ± 10 /day. Still very wobbly.
Age 49 days – Day 4	Started feeding on small, cut up, day-old chicks ± 3 /day with fish.
Age 50 days – Day 5	Started losing baby fluff from neck and back.
Age 53 days – Day 8	Started to stand but only for short while – very wobbly. We would hold it up a few times to teach it to stand and gain strength in its legs.
Age 56 days – Day 11	Started to walk – not too bad. Getting stronger all the time. More feathers than fluff now.
Age 69 days – Day 24	Started to catch fish in a shallow trough in cage.
Age 80 days – Day 35	Started to flap around the garden, just off the ground and would land with a bump. Seemed to find high rock walls to jump off. Ringed lower left leg with stainless steel ring No. 9-18063 and yellow ring on lower right leg.
Age 85 days – Day 40	Flying more and more now – for a good distance around the garden. So scared it might fly into our power line. Refused to go into its cage at night. Roosted on our orchid sheds or pump house.
Age 90 days – Day 45	Standing on one leg with good balance.
Age 101 days – Day 56	We placed sand in one of our shallow fish ponds and placed fish in it. The stork wasted no time in fishing for itself. It was getting tired of baby chicks and started refusing to eat them.
Age 102 days – Day 57	Started daily flights away from our house, returning by mid-afternoon. Not feeding on our fish much now.
Age 115 days – Day 70	Flew away and did not return that day. Returned to say "Hi Guys" on 2 nd December, 23 days after leaving. Fantastic to know it had survived. Before flying away Monty was getting quite tame and we were concerned that he would land at someone's fish pond and as he was not scared of dogs might get killed. We can now officially log it for our garden check list!

(9th November 1997)

Gordon Conway, Gweru (junior member)

Black Storks breeding – July 1997

We were walking in Mkanga Gorge, Chewore South Hunting Area and saw 5 nests belonging to Black Storks. The nests were on ledges in the gorge. Two nests had young in them whilst another had 1 nestling in it with the other one on the ground trying to get back to the nest. The adults were circling overhead. **Pam van Leenhoff**

Birding with Jacko and Bill Oddy – 31st January 1998

On Saturday evening, 20 members of the Mashonaland Birding Club, complete with chairs, drinks and supper, converged on Jacko and John Williams' home. Jacko showed three 'Birding with Bill Oddy' videos. In the first he took us around the British Birding Fair which was most interesting and showed all sorts of things connected with birding, including some trivia. Then off to Minsmeer, a Nature Reserve which covers a number of habitats and birds to match. The third video dealt with sea birds and migration. This was a most enjoyable and social evening. Thank you Jacko and John for your hospitality. **Dave Gray**

Birding visit to Haroni-Rusitu Valley – 27th February 1998

On a recent trip to this area, I was shocked at the amount of deforestation which had taken place. The unique rain forest, the "Vhimba" had been decreased to a mere 2 kilometre tumble of trees and the creatures that dwell there were fast disappearing. Leonard, our bird guide from Kiledo Lodge, identified various flycatcher species, including Black-throated Wattle-eye, Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher and Ashy Flycatcher. Black-winged Bishop and Blue-spotted Wood-doves were prolific in the cultivated lands as were African Firefinch and Red-billed Firefinches. Nearby, lies the "Haroni Forest" which is a much drier area than the Vhimba. The Haroni River runs through this forest and makes for an enjoyable swim after some serious birdwatching. The Haroni has less conspicuous bird life than the Vhimba even though some birds often found there are not present at all in the Vhimba. Green Twinspots called constantly from the dense undergrowth, while Black-fronted Bush-shrikes crept through the dark canopy of the forest. On our return journey through the Vhimba, we were luckier and ticked off sonic "Haroni-Rusitu" SPECIALS! A Half-collared Kingfisher savoured a tiny fresh-water fish on a quiet stream close by and a Green Malkoha perched in full view above us, allowing SPLENDID views to all of our party members. Eurasian Golden Oriole (immature) scurried about in the canopy high above us; an extremely pain-staking exercise trying to get a good view of THAT BIRD! Many hours are needed to find the REAL specials of this unique valley and unfortunately we did not have this time in hand. Definitely a 4 x 4 is required to reach this remote destination and expect nothing less than a hole in your exhaust pipe and a couple of deep scratches on your car. A good idea is to base yourself at the peaceful and beautiful "Kiledo Lodge", a 40 kilometre but two and a half hour drive from Haroni-Rusitu! Many specials are present in the Lodge's surroundings and don't hesitate to go on a walk with Leonard, the Bird Guide looking for birds such as the Eastern Nicator, Green Malkoha, Narina Trogon and African Broadbill. The forests are slowly disappearing and will probably be absent from all maps by the end of this century. TAKE YOURSELF DOWN THERE – IT'S LONG, IT'S TIRING, IT'S PAINFUL, BUT IT'S WORTH IT!!!
Emma Holland, Mutare (Junior member)

Recent sightings in Matabeleland

Sightings of note

22 nd February 1998	Thrush Nightingale	CBC Woodland BULAWAYO
26 th -29 th February 1998	Red-collared Widowbird	Moth Shrine & Maleme Valley MATOPOS
15 th March 1998	Western Marsh-harrier	Ibis Dam, AISLEBY
18 th March 1998	Speckled Mousebird	Reported from MATOPOS Tours at Kezi Road Game Park entrance. Awaiting confirmation
21 st March 1998	Lesser Kestrel 10+	HILLSIDE – in flight north

Martin Smith

Birds at Chikwenya, MANA POOLS – 16th to 26th March 1998

I was at Chikwenya Safari Lodge in the Sapi safari area during March and enjoyed good birding whilst staying there. Highlights were Eastern Nicator, Lesser Honeyguide, Terrestrial Brownbul, Crowned Hornbill, Trumpeter Hornbill and Southern Ground-hornbills. One day we took a drive along the ZAMBEZI River and saw 4 Long-toed Lapwings, a Rufous-bellied Heron, a Green-backed Heron, African Openbill and Saddle-billed Storks and White-faced Ducks. In the woodland were Brown-hooded Kingfisher, Woodland Kingfisher and Grey-headed Kingfishers. At night we heard Pel's Fishing-owl, Verreaux's Eagle-owl and African Wood-owls. Bee-eaters seen were White-fronted Bee-eater, Southern Carmine Bee-eater, Blue-cheeked Bee-eater and Little Bee-eater. I was surprised to see 2 Black Coucals near the reeds along the river. This is a bird I often record at Marlborough Vlei which I call "my garden of birds". I also saw White-browed Coucal and Senegal Coucals. Flycatchers seen were Black-throated Wattle-eye, Southern Black Flycatcher, African Paradise-flycatcher and Ashy Flycatcher. Unfortunately, I did not see Livingstone's Flycatcher, although another group saw 7. Sunbirds were abundant – Copper Sunbird, Scarlet-chested Sunbird, Variable Sunbird, Purple-banded Sunbird and Collared Sunbird. Our search for Shelley's Sunbird was however in vain. Being a keen birdwatcher, I thought that Fothergill Island was the best birdwatching place but now I do not mind admitting that I was wrong. Wait until you have been to Chikwenya. **Taimu Kenneth Mtemwa, Harare**

NOTICEBOARDFor sale

1981 "**Roberts**" for sale. Excellent condition, proceeds to Island Hospice. Any offers? Contact Mrs Jan Carew, ☎ Bulawayo 41764.

Constitution of the OAZ

This has been reprinted and if any members are interested in obtaining copies, please send a stamped, self-addressed envelope (to take a "*Babbler*"-sized document) to Di Rushforth, 5 Colenbrander Road, P O Belvedere, Harare.

OAZ Birdwatch Competition 1998

Another reminder that this year's competition will be held over the weekend 24th/25th October 1998. Remember, the rules are that teams have to have a minimum of 2 OAZ members and participants have to choose their best 24 hour period over the weekend. Atlas cards can be obtained from Jacko Williams, 14 Harare Drive, Greystone Park. Please DO NOT use field cards or sheets of paper. ***Please join in – Its good fun!***

OAZ Library

The OAZ has a comprehensive library of books and magazines of an ornithological nature for use by all members. The library is housed at the home of Mr M P S Irwin who can be contacted on Harare ☎ 882957.

OAZ hats for sale

Bernard Beekes has had very nice hats made which bear the OAZ emblem. They are available in three sizes – medium, large and extra large and the colours are either khaki or green. They cost \$65.00 each. Bernard has a supply and can be contacted at Shurugwi on ☎ 152-6422 or phone Di Rushforth on Harare ☎ 741765 if you are interested.