

BABBLER

ORNITHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION OF ZIMBABWE

A PARTNER DESIGNATE OF BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL

ISSUE #27 – NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1998

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WE OFFER SINCERE CONDOLENCES TO BASIL RIDDELL AND FAMILY ON THE RECENT PASSING AWAY OF JEAN. THOSE WHO HAVE ATTENDED THE MASHONALAND BRANCH BREAKFASTS WILL REMEMBER JEAN FOR HER HARD WORK AND HER SUPER SWEETCORN FRITTERS

ADVANCE NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The AGM of the OAZ will be held at Maleme Rest Camp in the Matopos, Bulawayo on the weekend 5th/6th March 1999. The entire camp has been booked which can accommodate about 70 people. Details of costs and accommodation available are included in the booking slip published with this issue. Closing date for bookings is 20 January 1999.

ACTIVITIES

MASHONALAND BRANCH

Regular outings

1. Mukuvisi Woodlands: Sundays 1st November and 6th December 1998. Meet at Paget Road entrance at 6.30 a.m. There will be a vehicle guard in attendance.
2. Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary: Sundays 8th November and 13th December 1998. Meet at Marimba Shopping Centre for departure at 6.30 a.m. Beginners are very welcome. Bring your chairs and tea.

Saturday afternoon outings

1. 21st November 1998: Chedgelow Farm. Meet Rushforth's Service Station (right-hand side), Airport Rd (Queensway) for departure at 2.00 p.m. Bring chairs and refreshments.

Sunday outing

1. 29th November 1998: Sands Sales, Seke Road. Meet Kentucky Service Station (BP on the right-hand side of road) for departure at 6.30 a.m. Beautiful woodland area. Bring chairs and refreshments.

Thursday evening

1. 19th November 1998: video evening. "Hunters of the sky" – an excellent video of goshawks and buzzards in Australia. Venue: 14 Fisher Avenue, Rolf Valley – 6.00 for 6.30 p.m. Bring a chair and your own refreshments, glasses, etc.

THERE WILL BE NO OTHER OUTINGS OR MEETINGS DURING DECEMBER**MATABELELAND BRANCH****Evening Meetings**

Friday 6th November 1998 – Gavin Stevens and the Matopos – Gavin will present his postponed talk on the Matopos. Venue: CBC staffroom at 8.00 p.m. Contact Martin for details.

Friday 4th December 1998 – Christmas Social – we are intending to hold our social at Aisleby this year, an afternoon of birding will be followed by a braai at Umgusa Yacht Club. Meet at the boom at 3.30 p.m. or join us at 6.30 p.m. at the club, bringing food and drinks. Fires will be provided.

Outings

Sunday 15th November 1998 – Southern Carmine Bee-eaters outing – plenty of sightings of Carmines have been reported but we have yet to confirm breeding. This outing will probably be to a site on the Umgusa River. Contact Martin for details.

Aisleby

For those wishing to escape the bustle of a family Christmas, Clive will lead an outing on 27th December. Meet at the boom or contact Clive for details

Date	Co-ordinator	Telephone	Time
Sunday 1 st November	Clive Townsley	46617	7.00 a.m.
Sunday 27 th December	Clive Townsley	46617	7.00 a.m.

EASTERN DISTRICTS BIRD CLUB

Chairman: Mr. Bill Chadder ☎ 020-63828, Secretary Mr. Ken Dixon ☎ 020-65819

Outings

<u>Saturday 14th November 1998</u>	Mountain Home	2.00 p.m.
<u>Sunday 29th November 1998</u>	Vumba	6.00 a.m. to 12.00 p.m.
<u>Saturday 12th December 1998</u>	Old Mutare	2.00 p.m.
<u>Sunday 27th December 1998</u>	no meeting	

We assemble at the Museum in Aerodrome Road at the time stated. Transport and binoculars are available if prior notice is given. Contact Bill Chadder or Ken Dixon. 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 ☎ 064-630220

Outings

Rydings School Interpretive Centre

<u>Saturday 7th November 1998</u>		6.00 a.m.
<u>Saturday 5th December 1998</u>	to be confirmed	6.00 a.m.

Other outings

Sunday 22nd November 1998 Protea Farm 6.00 a.m.

No other outings in December

MIDLANDS BRANCH

Co-ordinator: Gavin Conway ☎ -054-24058 (home) 24666 (work)

Day Outings

Gweru Contact Gavin ☎ 054-24666/24058. It is advisable to confirm with the organiser before each outing.

Sunday 1st November 1988 meet outside G & T Contracting, 2nd Street at 7.45 a.m. for 8.00

Sunday 6th December 1998 a.m. departure

Masvingo Contact Lynne ☎ 039-63657 for details

Kadoma Contact Margaret ☎ 068-3644

Camping weekends. Contact Bernard Beekes ☎ 052-6422 or Gavin Conway for further information.

20th to 2nd November 1998 – Central Estates (Southern Carmine Bee-eaters) **TO BE CONFIRMED**

FROM THE PRESIDENT**BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP**

At the time of going to print, no objections have been received opposing the advancement of the OAZ to partnership status within BirdLife International. At a recent meeting, the OAZ Council therefore resolved that I may sign the Letter of Intent if the OAZ's application for Partner-Designate status is approved by the Partners at the end of October 1998. **John Paxton**

REPORTS**MASHONALAND BRANCH**

EWANRIGG BOTANIC GARDENS – Sunday, 28th June 1998

As we were too late for the peak of the flowering of the aloes at Ewanrigg in July 1997 we decided to make our visit in June this year. This strategy was reasonably successful, although some of the aloes had already finished blooming. There was a good turnout of 27 people and the weather was fine and warm. Although we did not see as many birds as last year, we were treated to a clear sighting of 11 Magpie Mannikins which remained perched at the top of a dead tree near the ponds on the left of the entrance for about 15 minutes. We also managed to see the other 2 species of mannikin – namely the Red-backed Mannikin and the Bronze Mannikin. Other highlights identified included Speckled Mousebird, Common Scimitarbill, Whyte's Barbet, a male Greater Honeyguide, an Eastern Saw-wing, 2 White-necked Raven, Terrestrial Brownbul and both White-crested Helmet-shrike and Retz's Helmet-shrike. The total species count was 63. **Richard Dennison**

Visit to Beachy-Head's Farm, CHRISTON BANK – Saturday 18th July 1998, QDS 1731C1

After a somewhat confused start, we chose to visit the Beachy-Head's farm rather than the botanic gardens, which was the other alternative suggested by Judy Beachy-Head. About 18 of us walked around farm fields and along the bank of the upper reaches of the Mazowe River. Because woodland was restricted to a narrow riverine strip, we only managed to count 45 species. Special sightings included a pair of Speckled Pigeons, an Ashy Flycatcher, 3 Grey-headed Bush-shrikes, a Thick-billed Weaver and numerous seed eaters. The estimated number of Red-billed Queleas seen was 1 000. Our thanks to the Beachy-Heads for their hospitality on this afternoon outing. **Richard Dennison**

Visit to HAKA PARK, CLEVELAND Dam, HARARE, Sunday 26th July 1998, QDS 1731C3

About 11 people turned up at the Haka Game Park entrance on a fine day which, although chilly at first, ended up as pleasantly warm by mid-morning. Fauna was not restricted to birds as we had good views of game mammals. Special bird sightings included 7 White-backed Ducks on the

dam, a pair of nest-building Hamerkops, 2 African Green-pigeons – also nest-building, a White-throated Robin-chat, a Yellow-throated Longclaw and Pin-tailed Whydahs in partial breeding plumage. A total of 61 species was seen. **Richard Dennison**

Michael Irwin Bird Art Collection – Thursday, 20th August 1998

The art collection of Michael Irwin is superb, as the 21 of us attending the evening found out and it was most interesting to hear Michael's anecdotes and details about some of the pictures. Work by world-renowned artists such as J C Harrison, Ken Newman and David Reid-Henry were represented amongst the lovely work displayed. A particularly eye-catching work of J C Harrison was one of pheasants and apparently this artist is able to produce paintings of such quality within two days, believing that the minimal amount of effort should be put into the background, leaving one to focus purely on the study of the bird or birds in question. Michael has a painting entitled "The bird flew away" by George Reid-Henry (David's father) and a competition was held in which people had to guess which bird it was that had flown away. Surprisingly enough there were two winners who guessed at the Dartford Warbler, surprising because it was a bird known only to people who had seen the bird in Britain. Michael kindly awarded a hand-coloured lithograph by John Gerrard Keulemanns to each of the winners. It is estimated that Keulemanns (a Dutch artist) has painted 20 000 pictures in his time. **Editor**

Outing to Val D'Or, Ruwa – 22nd August 1988, QDS 1731C3

There was a good turnout of about 20 people for this Saturday afternoon trip. Our host at Val D'Or was Bill Clarke, who has developed the approximately 25 Ha property into a scenic attraction. Apart from Miombo woodland, there is a large, well kept garden and three small dams on the property. There are also single dams on neighbouring smallholdings upstream and downstream. Most of the bird life was concentrated around the garden and the dams. Afternoon visits tend to yield fewer bird sightings than morning ones and Miombo woodland areas need to be quite extensive to make high the probability of seeing good numbers of bird species. A total of 49 species was recorded with highlights being 18 White-faced Duck, a good sighting of a male Red-headed Weaver in full breeding plumage and nests of Giant Kingfishers and Hamerkops in use. Our warm thanks go to Bill and his family for throwing open the property to us and for providing us with tea and delicious cake at the end of the day. **Richard Dennison**

Evening meeting – 17th September 1998

Mr Roger Howman kindly agreed to give a repeat talk on his most interesting study of the breeding habits of the Southern Masked-weaver. This time 33 people attended the evening meeting and even those who had heard the previous presentation again enjoyed the fascinating talk. Mr Howman has observed his weavers for over 20 years and he has encountered certain behaviour in these birds which does not appear to have been documented and some of his findings have even disproved several previous theories. An instance of this is that certain literature states that colonial breeding takes place although Mr Howman has revealed that in his garden only one male built nests in the subject tree but that there were several females. One of the most interesting examples explained by Mr Howman is that of the 3rd male who arrived in his Sentosa garden – during the period 1988 to 1995, this male recycled some of his old nests, something males 1 and 2 never did and then in 1996 he reverted to normal behaviour by totally destroying all old nests. Mr Howman was able to identify new males using the same tree by their choice of branches used for nest building as well as their repeated use of those branches year after year. Thank you very much for a most enlightening and entertaining evening. **Editor**

RIFA Camp, ZAMBEZI River – 5th to 28th September 1998

What a feast awaited us after negotiating the rocky road to Rifa camp. The Grays had sorted out our accommodation and, after a fairly quick unpacking, with binoculars around our necks we joined the hunters at the bar. On Friday evening 3 groups set off in different directions and each group had a fair amount to report. Before we left, Peggy Henderson spotted 2 lions resting under trees – sharp eyes that were well used throughout the weekend. Dave Gray's group came across a Red-billed Oxpeckers nest which was a great find – nests mostly escape our eyes. The Livingstone's Flycatcher was not spotted, despite all our searching. Brian Peters' group saw a pair of Collared Pratincole and on nearly reaching camp came upon 3 elephants quietly browsing. On Saturday, the vulture table was set and slowly the Hooded Vultures and the White-backed Vultures

descended – they all eyed the meat suspiciously and it was the Bateleur that soared magnificently, landed, went straight to the Impala leg and confidently stripped the meat away. This gave the others the courage to approach him and try to wrest the leg away from him. Then a Lappet-faced Vulture arrived, marched in a see-saw fashion over to the scraps, chasing the others away. A very small meal to be shared by so many. At Vulture point, George disturbed a sleeping crocodile and as the sun slid behind the horizon we watched, or imagined, Double-banded Sandgrouse move into their evening rendezvous. On Sunday, revived after a noise-filled night, we were taken to the fish ponds – buffalo with young grazed and watched us pass by. We were amply rewarded by a flock of African Openbills feeding with a bevy of waders, amongst which were a Ruddy Turnstone, Little Stints, Kittlitz's Plovers and Common Ringed Plover, Common Sandpiper, Curlew Sandpiper and Wood Sandpipers, Ruff and Common Greenshank. Watching the Giant Kingfisher plunder the seething fish ponds was an amazing sight. Down on the banks of the Zambezi, we spotted an African Skimmer, then seats were taken on an anthill and binos trained on a Knob Thorn tree where a wealth of birds were recorded, amongst them a Burnt-necked Eremomela. A late breakfast was eagerly devoured with refreshing beers and other liquids then back to camp for a siesta. The evening walk was divided into slow and fast walkers, the latter ran and saw only a fleeting glimpse of a Three-banded Courser and a good sighting of an African Green-pigeon. The slow walkers, however, had time to spot a male lion. That evening, Dawn heard a hooty call – a few of us had wild guesses, even to it being a baboon. Next day it was verified as a Verreaux's Eagle-owl. We also saw civets and a genet eating outside Spencer's home. On Monday, at the farewell breakfast a Little Sparrowhawk drank from the bird bath. A total of 163 species were recorded and a wonderful time was had by us all. The final laugh – and there were many in the ladies dorm – was circumventing a truck that was being raided by 3 elephants tearing away at the maize and showering themselves as though it were a dust bath! **Robin Gilmour**

Bird Awareness Course – Student Teachers

15 students from Belvedere Teachers Training College recently participated in a bird awareness course, which was sponsored by the OAZ and was run by Leslee Maasdorp, with assistance from Dorothy Wakeling and Geoff Lowe. Fact sheets were compiled on several of the more common birds likely to be seen in school grounds or home areas. The final stage of the course was held at Kuimba Shiri where the students were able to look at birds at close quarters. Certificates were awarded at the College on 9th October 1998 and each student teacher was presented with a bird poster. It is sincerely hoped that these new teachers will continue with their interest in birds and will impart their interest and knowledge on to the schoolchildren in their care. In order to assist these young people, we are appealing to any of you who may have old field guides or even binoculars you are prepared to donate or sell at a reasonable price. Please contact Leslee Maasdorp on Harare telephone number 883316 (home).

Editor

MATABELELAND

From the Chairman

The hot, dry season is now upon us and migrants have begun to return. Our last outing yielded Wahlberg's Eagle, whilst Yellow-billed Kites have returned to the BULAWAYO City suburbs. At AISLEBY the water level in the Upper Dam has dropped to about 50% capacity, exposing a muddy, productive fringe attracting a multitude of waders. An appreciable flock of Ruff, Curlew Sandpiper and Little Stint were present in mid-September as well as a considerable concentration of wildfowl. Numbers of Pied Avocet have increased to over 200 and made an impressive sight on being put to flight by a circling African Fish-eagle. In the mornings, a real dawn chorus suggests spring is on the way, one of the most vocal being African Yellow White-eye, it is quite amazing how such a diminutive bird can produce so much noise. Our fig tree seems to be alive with Red-faced Mousebirds, scrambling amongst the branches in search of fruit and it was interesting to see a peculiar bouncing display, with one bird repeatedly hopping vertically upwards, rather like a clockwork toy. It is an interesting time of year for birds so please do support us on our outings. **Martin Smith.**

UMGUSA Nature Reserve – Sunday 27th September 1998

This was a rather poorly supported outing with a total of only 5 birders, fortunately the threat of cold weather receded and plenty of bird life was to be seen. As always, the watercourse proved to be the most productive habitat with a combination of water birds and Acacia specials. Amongst the latter, it was pleasing to find both Burnt-necked Eremomela and Yellow-bellied Eremomela, as well as a small group of Black-faced Waxbill which seemed to be in almost the same place as they were last year. Water had been released from the Upper Dam and the river was full, attracting both Giant Kingfisher and Pied Kingfisher, it was a delight to watch the latter hover almost stationary prior to diving after a fish. Further along the watercourse, the weaver colony was particularly active with males displaying vigorously outside newly built nests. At ground level a surfeit of dung offered excellent habitat for a considerable number of flies, who swiftly changed their attention from dung to us. This resurgence of insect life acted as a source of potential prey for a number of aerial feeders – Lesser Striped Swallows and Wire-tailed Swallows and African Palm-swift and Little Swift were present in good numbers. High overhead, the classic T-shape of a Wahlberg's Eagle was pleasing to see, presumably recently returned from the tropics and now at the start of its breeding season. By tea, we had recorded a total of just over 80 species with a number of notable exceptions – no ducks, francolin or hornbills, the lack of the former was most surprising as usually a few are to be found along the watercourse. This was an interesting contrast to the large numbers present on the Upper Dam on the same morning and is hopefully not linked to the semi-treated sludge that is still being released into the river. Happily, no noise pollution emanated from the Greenhaven Bottle Store and the whole atmosphere of Windermere seems to have improved for the better, adding to the attraction of the Reserve. **Martin Smith**

AISLEBY Notes

Waterfowl at Aisleby has increased significantly over the winter months which must now offer some of the best birding in the Province. In September, large numbers of duck were present on the Upper Dam and a considerable number of waders were to be seen foraging on the shoreline. Sightings of note included 22 Cape Teal and a total of 283 Pied Avocet for both the Upper Dam and the Ibis Dam. Sadly, at the latter, a devastating fire has swept through the *Typha* and, despite efforts by Council workers, our causeway has been totally destroyed – perhaps the only solution would be to construct an earth causeway and at the same time scoop out a portion of the Dam. Any offers of help would be most appreciated. Fortunately, the new hide remained unscathed and still affords an excellent view of the Dam. Please do support our monthly outings – in September there was only Clive and !! **Martin Smith**

EASTERN DISTRICTS BIRD CLUBBURMA VALLEY – Sunday 26th July 1998

On the way to Nyamakari, about a kilometre before the road plunges into the valley, when it was still quite chilly and damp, the area was surprisingly productive with twospots, White-browed Robin-chat, Gorgeous Bush-shrike and several other species seen or heard. Another stop, halfway down the hill, added Stripe-cheeked Greenbul and another Gorgeous Bush-shrike. At Nyamakari, where we were the guests of the McGregors, the garden has been planted with a variety of indigenous trees as well as various flowering shrubs and aloes which were attracting numerous birds, including Black-headed Oriole and at least four species of sunbirds. Among these was the day's star turn – a Purple-banded Sunbird *Nectarinia bifasciata*. To most of us this was a first. My own records, going back to 1982, show only three previous sightings. Overhead were Rock Martins, Lesser Striped Swallows, African Palm-swifts and Eastern Saw-wings. The cultivated lands and adjacent woodland and the dams added a Bearded Scrub-robin, several small raptors, an African Harrier-hawk, an African Fish-eagle and a selection of finches, warblers, shrikes, waxbills and the usual hard-to-identify LBJs. On the way back to Mutare, Jane added a Purple Roller to her list. Our total for the trip exceeded 70 species. Our thanks to Verna and Alan for their generous hospitality. **Tony Curtis**

Visit to DOROWA – Sunday, 30th August 1998

A large party of 15 members of the EDBC were joined by Mr and Mrs Des Munch and Mr and Mrs R Musto from Rusape and Eric and Una Bowker from Harare to make the largest group we have

yet mustered at Dorowa, which has become by far the most popular venue on our calendar – we hope it is not only because of the excellent lunch and the bar! The weather was perfect and the combined total of the 3 groups into which this large party was divided was 117 species. This satisfactory total (not many migrants can be expected at the end of August) included several which we had not seen there before, although they were probably on the list Eric made during the Atlas Project. The birds which caused the most interest and discussion were Curlew Sandpipers – there was a group of four or five on the muddy shore of the large holding dam which were studied for some time before consensus was reached. They should not have been so difficult to identify – the rather thick, slightly down-turned bill is sufficient to enable them to be named, it was just that most of us had never seen a Curlew Sandpiper before. The books tell us that these little birds come to us from northern Siberia where they breed. Most of them fly on to the South African coast and are only in transit through Zimbabwe. They make the return journey in April – how they find time for nesting and rearing their young before returning to Africa is hard to see. Most of the other species seen were easily identified, although the pipits gave us headaches as always. Probably most of us would agree that the best bird of the day was a Secretarybird spotted by Jill and Gerry Zambra – and disgracefully overlooked by the occupants of the preceding car, who shall be un-named). This magnificent raptor is one of our endangered species and not often seen these days. Once again, we are indebted to the Manager and the Club Staff at Dorowa Minerals for their excellent catering and hospitality.

Visit to "Drifters", Harare Road – Saturday 12th September 1998

After a month in England where there seem to be few birds apart from every garden's overfed sparrows, starlings, Blue Tits and Wood Pigeons or Collared Doves, I was more than ready for a much wider range of species. I must admit I felt a little nervous; isn't it amazing how quickly one forgets calls and names. The weather didn't look too promising – guti in Mutare – but, as usual, over Christmas Pass the scene was different. Two of the residents, Dave and Gail Burnett, kindly led us on a walk around this attractive property which combines a residential area, tourist accommodation and a small game park. Sighting number one was a Black-shouldered Kite and in the gardens we found hosts of Amethyst Sunbirds, Yellow-bellied Greenbul and Southern Black Flycatchers. The empty dam area had Kurrichane Thrush, Red-billed Quelea, waxbills and what we were pretty sure was a Neddicky. Nearby, a Cardinal Woodpecker gave us wonderful views of everything but its front and a Namaqua Dove settled on the path. At the farmhouse where we ascertained that the Red-headed Weavers were back, we came across a bird party containing Long-billed Crombec, Yellow-breasted Apalis, Pale Flycatcher and African Yellow White-eye. A Lizard Buzzard carrying a mouse landed briefly giving us a lovely view of its hooped trousers. The river bed contained another party with African Paradise-flycatcher, Chin-spot Batis, Black-backed Puffback and lots more Amethyst Sunbirds. Our count for the 2 hours was about 40, not bad for such dull weather. Thanks to Dave and Gail who filled us in on all the trees, and to Ros and Lynn whose property it is. **Ken Dixon**

MIDLANDS BRANCH

Black Stork monitoring by Conway family

Various nesting sites are being visited in the Midlands. Thanks to Mr Ian Cannel for all his input. Our youngsters, Gordon and Duncan are fast learners at abseiling skills as many nests can be seen only from a rope! Most known nesting sites have been visited (\pm 2000 km travelling) with the following results for June and July:

Monteith Farm	3 eggs – 2 hatched 27 th June – 2 chicks survived, doing well
Linslade Quarry	4 eggs – 3 hatched 20 th June – 1 chick survived, doing well
Guburie	2 chicks hatched ± 20 th June – nest not revisited
SEBAKWE POORT	5 nests active – 9 chicks total
Skipper and Empress Mine	Sites have been visited but no results given yet
Camperdown Mine	2 chicks almost ready to fledge – White-necked Raven and Lanner Falcon nesting within 4 metres
Wanderer Mine 1	2 chicks hatched ± 20 th July – doing well
Wanderer Mine 2	1 chick hatched ± 10 th July – doing well
SHURUGWI Peak	2 sites – nil seen
Kraanspoort	4 adults seen
Shangangwe and Adams	
Siding sites	Nil seen. Verreaux's Eagle nest not in use
WABAI Hill	Nil seen – 2 Verreaux's Eagles sighted
Hidden Valley near Wabai	Nil storks but a Verreaux's Eagle nest newly lined with leaves
Lumbamai and Chomvuri	2 adults and 1 juvenile seen at each site
Pringie Falls	Nil seen
Sanangwe	Nil seen – Lanner Falcons present – suspected nesting
Guruguru Hill	4 adults – 1 nest unused – White-necked Ravens, Brown Snake-eagle and Augur Buzzard present
Nalatala Quarry	8 adult and 1 immature seen no sign of nesting. Verreaux's Eagle nest with 1 chick, 1 egg and 2 whole Dassies. Grey Herons present but not nesting

September update – all the Black Stork chicks being monitored have now left their nests. We had an afternoon with Dr Peter Mundy and Mr Strazds at SEBAKWE POORT nesting colony which was most interesting. Mr Strazds is from Latvia and is the top “boffin” on Black Storks with their birding association. Interesting points and differences were discussed between our storks and his from the freezing north, i.e. different nesting habits, sexing adults, etc. Please would all birders look out for a “ringed” Black Stork – steel ring on left leg and yellow ring on right leg. We think this is the only Black Stork presently ringed as others were done about 20 years ago! Any observations of the bird are to be reported to Gavin Conway or Dr Peter Mundy. This bird was rescued as a chick last year and released in the Gweru area. **Gavin Conway**

Joint Botswana birding trip – April 1998

Birding started at the Plumtree border post where we saw a Speckled Pigeon sitting inside the building on a roof beam and just through the border, there was a big flock of raptors soaring which comprised White-backed Vultures and Lappet-faced Vultures, eagles and goshawks.

Once at Nata Sanctuary, we split into two groups and went for a drive to (Sowa) Sua Pan, one of the pans in the Makgadikgadi system. One group saw 2 Eurasian Curlews and a Cape Shoveler with 4 chicks. When approached, the Shoveler hustled her chicks into the grass and flapped around in the water as if she had a broken wing. There were hundreds of Great White Pelicans, Pink-backed Pelicans and Greater Flamingos and Lesser Flamingos on the pan. Other birds of interest were 2 Caspian Terns, Grey-headed Gulls, White-winged Terns, Yellow-billed Storks with juveniles and African Spoonbills which were plentiful along the sides of the pan. On the way back to camp, Double-banded Coursers, Northern Black Korhaans, Kurrichane Buttonquail and Greater Kestrels were spotted. The following day, an early morning walk yielded us Bradfield's Hornbill, Desert Cisticola, huge flocks of Burchell's Sandgrouse, Banded Martin, Magpie Shrikes and Crested Francolin. That evening, we did a checklist and the total count for the two days was 145 species. Highlights were a pair of Grey Crowned Cranes with a juvenile, Cape Teal and two Kori Bustards. On Sunday, most of the party left for home but we again visited the pan and saw Grey-backed Sparrowlarks flying around. Also identified were Tinkling Cisticola and a sub-adult Little Grebe. Back at the camp site were Violet-eared Waxbill, Golden-breasted Buntings and Cinnamon-breasted Buntings, Red-headed Finch, Black-throated Canary, Southern Masked-weavers and African Red-eyed Bulbul. On our way to Maun we stopped at Nata Lodge where at the bird table we saw Speckled Pigeons, Violet-eared Waxbill, Acacia Pied Barbet, Crested Francolin, Grey-backed Camaroptera, Meyer's Parrot, African Red-eyed Bulbul,

Cut-throat Finch, Crested Barbets and the star was a male Shaft-tailed Whydah. On the road to Maun, a female Red-crested Korhaan refused to move off the road and we had to cross into the right-hand lane to miss her. Southern Pale Chanting-goshawks and Gabar Goshawks as well as Bateleur were plentiful, and 2 Tawny Eagles, Red-headed Finch and Scaly-feathered Finch, Burchell's Starling and Marico Flycatcher were seen. At Maun, during a walk through the camp site and surrounds, we witnessed a Gabar Goshawk take a female Shaft-tailed Whydah, one of a flock of about 20. Other species of interest seen at Maun were Pirit Batis, Lanner Falcon, Yellow-breasted Apalis, Burchell's Starling, Hartlaub's Babbler, Eurasian Golden Oriole, Swamp Boubou, Grey Tit-flycatcher, Blue Waxbill, Violet-eared Waxbill and Black-faced Waxbills, Brown-throated Weavers, White-browed Robin-chat, Shikra and Gabar Goshawk, African Fish-eagle, Southern Ant-eating Chats and Bradfield's Hornbill. We left Maun and drove north to Shakawe (the start of the Okavango Delta) where we stayed at Drotsky's Cabins. Overlooking the river we saw a large coucal which we concluded was a Coppery-tailed Coucal and Red-shouldered Widowbirds were common. Whilst taking a boat ride up the OKAVANGO River, we spotted a little finch sort of bird which we eventually decided was a Brown Firefinch, whilst sitting on the bank was a Yellow Wagtail. The boat driver pointed out two White-backed Night-herons which allowed us to watch them for some time and we also saw Long-toed Lapwings. Later we went for a walk along the river bank and into an *Acacia/Diospyros/Kigelia/Ficus* thicket looking for Pel's Fishing-owl. We heard a funny grunt up in the trees which we hoped was a Pel's but it turned out to be 2 White-backed Vultures sitting at the top of a huge *Diospyros* tree. A large number of trees around Drotsky Camp are threatened by the Strangler Fig. Several have already been killed and it is possible in years to come that the only trees there will be Strangler Figs! Continuing on our journey, when driving through the Caprivi Strip, we saw a Great Spotted Cuckoo and had an excellent sighting of a pair of White-headed Vultures on the road and then soaring above us. Once at Chobe Safari Lodge we heard a White-browed Coucal calling and African Pied Wagtails were present along the edges of the river. An African Pygmy-kingfisher was also seen. Our personal family species total for the whole trip was 222, with 35 to 38 lifers each. Although we used our Mazda 3.5 tonne lorry with no 4-wheel drive we had no problems as all the places were on tar or good gravel roads. We travelled 2 700 km in 10 days. The seat height in the spacious cab gave us good views of the countryside over the short, scrubby bush. **Gordon Conway – Junior Member**

TAIL FEATHERS

Sightings in the Midlands

A Crimson-breasted Shrike was seen 10 km west of GWERU. Eurasian Golden Orioles and European Bee-eaters arrived at the beginning of October. **Gavin Conway**

Another report of albinism in Dark-capped Bulbul

On 11th and 12th August 1998, I saw what appeared to be a white variety of a Dark-capped Bulbul. The head and yellow underparts were the same as a normal Bulbul but the rest was white. All mannerisms were the same as a Bulbul and the albino bird appears to have paired up with a normally coloured one. **Gus McTiernan, Mabelreign HARARE**

Window strikes by birds

Taken from the Internet: Birds fly into windows for two main reasons: firstly, due to the reflection of habitat in the glass pane and, secondly, because of the illusion of an unobstructed passageway when windows are placed opposite each other, creating a see-through effect. The glass hazard is estimated to kill more than 100 million birds annually in the United States alone. To prevent collisions with existing windows, particularly high-rise office buildings, birds must recognise that the area glass covers is a space to be avoided. Collisions can be completely eliminated by covering windows with netting that prevents birds from ever reaching the unyielding surface. This solution is acceptable for small to medium sized plate glass, but netting is cost prohibitive for large or continuous sheets forming glass walls. Covering all or parts of the external glass surface with opaque or translucent curtains also can completely eliminate bird strikes. Partially covering the outside of windows is as effective as complete covering if individual elements of varying sizes and shapes uniformly cover the entire glass surface and are separated by 5 to 10 cm. Interestingly, if covering elements are individual strips as narrow as 2 – 5 cm and

oriented either horizontally or vertically like Venetian blinds, the strips must be separated by 5 cm horizontally but can be as much as 10 cm apart when placed vertically. Single objects such as falcon silhouettes or owl decals, or large eye patterns do not reduce strike rates to a statistically significant level. They do not prevent most strikes because they cover only one part of the glass and are not applied in sufficient numbers to alert the birds to the glass barrier. Designers of buildings are now encouraged to install windows at an angle so that the pane reflects an image of uninviting ground instead of an illusion of safe passage through habitat or into the sky.

NOTICEBOARD

OAZ Birdwatch – Results (24th/25th October)

Results on Atlas cards must be sent as soon as possible after the event to Mrs J Williams, 14 Harare Drive, Greystone Park, Harare.

4th NTT World Bird Count – 1st to 31st October 1998

We have been invited to participate again in the NTT World Bird Count. All records of birds identified by you in the month of October are to be sent again to Jacko Williams. All species recorded for Zimbabwe will be sent as a whole by the OAZ to the organisers. Anybody can participate – just make a list for the month. NTT will make a donation of 1,000 Yen per species identified to BirdLife International for the Global IBA Programme. Last year 88 countries and regions participated and the total amount of observed species was an amazing 5 935. Therefore, 5,935,000 Yen was donated, but this year they have set a limit of 5,000,000 Yen. For those of you with access to Internet, up to date information can be referenced at <http://www.wnn.or.jp/wnn/w-bird>.

Change of name competition

The Council of the OAZ believes that the time has come to consider a name change perhaps something a bit more modern, dynamic, vibrant and appropriate as to what we do and also with the emphasis on bird conservation. Some comments have been made by members of the Association as well as the public that the present name of the Association indicates a purely professional body, which as we all know is not the case. Of those who returned the Questionnaire sent out early this year in conjunction with the Strategic Planning Workshop, 30% supported a name change, 54% had no strong feelings and 16% objected.

In order to involve members in a possible name-change, a competition is being held for a possible new name and a possible new logo/emblem for the association. Prizes of \$500 each will be paid for the best-adjudged name and logo. Members can submit an entry for either a name or a logo, or both. Logos should be produced in mono-colour and if possible in pen and ink. The Council of the OAZ reserves the right to use either the name or the logo which have been selected as the best.

Entries should be sent to: OAZ, P O Box CY 161, Causeway or sent to a Council Member. Last date for entries is 30th November 1998.

Prof. Maclean Birding Week in the Lowveld

Hippo Valley Safaris are offering an exciting week of birding with Prof. Gordon L Maclean (author of the Sixth Edition of *Roberts Birds of Southern Africa*). The dates are 13th to 21st December and accommodation offered is at Nyari Camp (18 guests) and Nhongo Camp (16 guests). These are luxurious twin and single lodges overlooking a lake which was formed on the Mteri River. Plains game, as well as buffalo and leopard, are in the area and the Lowveld is renowned for its variety of bird life and trees. If you would like to take advantage of birding with this eminent person, please contact Hippo Valley Country Club (Tel: 031-3360/3361, fax 3363), ensuring that you specify that you wish to attend the Prof. Maclean birding week. As you can see, the number of beds available is limited, so don't delay!

"Recent Reports" contributions for Honeyguide

Please would those members who are contributors to 'Recent Reports' in *Honeyguide* continue to send your reports to MPS Irwin, Editor: *Honeyguide* at P O Box BW 122, Borrowdale, Harare.

As in the past, these will not be individually acknowledged simply as a means of saving on postage costs.

Tips on cleaning of binocular lenses

Taken from the Internet: rather than buy commercial cleaning solutions, you can make your own. A good cleaning solution is a 50-50 mixture of isopropyl alcohol and distilled water with a few drops of biodegradable washing detergent. Do not use breath or saliva and be careful of some commercial solutions which contain silicones which can be difficult to remove from lenses. Use cotton balls of natural cotton or commercial lens cleaning cloths. Paper tissue can scratch the coatings on the lenses. John Paxton says that the solution cost him \$13 for 100 ml.

A Birder's Code of ethics (reference: *Albatross* (Natal Bird Club's newsletter))

Let us pledge ourselves to adhere to the following general principles of good birding behaviour:

1. Birders must always act in ways that do not endanger the welfare of birds or of other wild life
In keeping with this principle, one should -
Observe and photograph birds without knowingly disturbing them in any significant way;
Avoid chasing and repeatedly flushing birds;
Only sparingly use recordings and similar methods of attracting birds, and not use these methods in heavily birded areas;
Keep an appropriate distance from nests and nesting colonies so as not to disturb them or expose them to danger;
Refrain from handling birds or eggs, unless engaged in recognised research activities.
 2. Birders must always act in ways that do not harm the natural environment
In keeping with this principle, one should -
Stay on existing roads, trails and pathways wherever possible to avoid trampling or otherwise disturbing fragile habitat;
Leave all habitats as one found them.
 3. Birders must always respect the rights of others
In keeping with this principle, one should -
Respect the privacy and property of others by observing "no trespassing" signs and by asking permission to enter private or posted lands;
Observe all laws and the rules and regulations which govern public use of birding areas;
Practice common courtesy in one's contacts with others. For example, one should limit one's requests for information and should make them at reasonable hours of the day;
Always behave in a manner that will enhance the image of the birding community in the eyes of the public.
-

WHAT KIND ARE YOU?

*Are you an active member, the kind that could be missed?
Or are you just content to have your name on the list.
Do you attend meetings and mingle with the flock?
Or stay at home in comfort to criticise and knock?
Do you take an active part to help the work along?
Or are you merely satisfied just simply to belong?
Think it over member, you know right from wrong,
Are you an active member, or do you Just belong?*

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