

# BABBLER

## BirdLife Zimbabwe

A PARTNER DESIGNATE OF BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL

ISSUE #38 – SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2000

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### COMMITTEES

#### Mashonaland Branch

Chairman: John Saunders	490167
Members: Jennifer Carter	300082
Richard Dennison	747567
Helen Fraser	481316
Di Rushforth	741765
Pat Saunders	490167
Nigel Steyn	776993
Bette Riddle	303679

#### Matabeleland Branch

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5 Colenbrander Road,		3A Holdengarde Ave. Hillside,	
P O Belvedere, Harare		Bulawayo	

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### ACTIVITIES

#### MASHONALAND BRANCH

##### Regular outings *NB Note new times*

1. Mukuvisi Woodlands: Sundays, 3 September and 1 October, 2000. Meet at the Paget Road entrance at 6.30 a.m. There will be a vehicle guard in attendance.
2. Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary: Sundays, 10 September and 8 October 2000. Annual breakfast – see details below. Meet at Marimba Shopping Centre for departure at 7.00 a.m. Bring your chairs and tea. Beginners are most welcome.

Annual breakfast – Sunday 8 October 2000 – Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary. If you would like to join in this popular event please complete the form included with this issue.

##### Saturday afternoon outing

16 September 2000: Two alternatives for you to choose from: Either visit a site in the Masembura Communal Lands where Mottled Swifts breed. The area is approximately 50 km from the City. Meet at the BP Service Station, Hekensvale Shops on the right-hand side of the Borrowdale Road at 1.45 p.m. The alternative is a visit to Rainham Dams. Meet at the Belvedere Shopping Centre, cnr. Princes Road/Bishop Gaul Avenue at 3.00 p.m. Bring chairs and refreshments for both outings.

21 October 2000: Lyndhurst Farm, Ruwa. Meet at Queensdale Shopping Centre, Chiremba Road at 2.00 p.m.

**Sunday outings**

24 September 2000: Harava Dam (Bass Masters Site).

29 October 2000: Sand Sales.

For both venues: Meet at Kentucky Service Station (BP) on the Seke Road (right-hand side) at 6.30 a.m. Bring chairs and refreshments.

If members are in any doubt about visiting areas, please contact a committee member.

**Evening meetings**

1. Thursday 21 September 2000: Anthony Cizek will talk to us about Marlborough Vlei, some of its unique life forms, special birds, geological structure and ideas on preserving the area.
2. Thursday 19 October 2000: A representative from Kuimba Shiri will give us a presentation about the work that is done at the bird gardens.

Venue for both evenings: Bowls Pavilion, Old Hararians Association, Drummond Chaplin St., Milton Park. Time – 6.00 for 6.30 p.m. A cash bar and pies will be available. Security is provided.

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**MATABELELAND BRANCH****Evening Meetings**

Friday 8 September 2000 – video evening – “Attenborough in Paradise”. Featuring – yes you guessed it – David Attenborough and Birds of Paradise with excellent footage of these spectacular birds. Venue: 92 Arnold Way, Burnside at 8.00 p.m. or contact Penny Feather for details.

Saturday 7 October 2000 – Sunset ramble and evening braai at Whitestone School. A slight change from our normal Friday evening meeting. There should be something of interest within the attractive school grounds. Braai fires will be provided but bring food and eating utensils. Meet at Whitestone Pavilion at 5.00 p.m. or join us later for the braai from 6.30 p.m. onwards. Contact Jean Tucker (41079).

Friday 3 November 2000 – Dr Peter Mundy and ORU. Peter has recently formulated a future strategy for ORU and will brief us on the Unit’s approach in the new century. This will be combined with a soup and rolls evening at CBC from 6.30 p.m. onwards. Please do let Martin Smith know whether you would like to attend and please bring your own eating utensils.

**Outings**

Sunday 17 September 2000 – Khami Railway Dam. We last visited this dam a number of years ago and found plenty of interest including a variety of game. Meet at Bellevue Service Station at 7.30 a.m., bringing morning tea. Contact Martin Smith for further details.

Sunday 22 October 2000. We have yet to finalize this outing but favourable circumstances prevailing, we will probably visit Anne Visser’s property on the Nyamandhlovu Road, a short distance from town. Contact Julia Dupree for further details.

**Aisleby**

We have reverted to our summer time programme, designed to catch some of the morning activity before it gets too hot. Please note the times – October really is 7.00 a.m. at the Boom.

Sunday 24 September 2000. Meet at the Boom (or its remains since it was destroyed by a beer lorry!) at 7.30 a.m. or contact the co-ordinator – Martin Smith.

Sunday 29 October 2000. Meet at the Boom at 7.00 a.m. or contact the co-ordinator – Clive Townsley.

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**EASTERN DISTRICTS BIRD CLUB**

Contacts: Tony Curtis ☎ 020-60281, Ken Dixon ☎ 020-65819, Jane Clegg ☎ 020-65610

**Outings**

Saturday 9 September 2000	Cynara, Old Mutare	2.00 p.m.
Sunday 24 September 2000	Dorowa Minerals	6.00 a.m.
Saturday 14 October 2000	Mutare Heights	2.00 p.m.
Sunday 29 October 2000	Mountain Home	6.00 a.m.

Please note that it would be advisable to contact either Tony Curtis or Ken Dixon prior to each visit.

Outings leave from the Museum in Aerodrome Road at the time stated. Transport and binoculars are available if prior notice is given.

#### **Karoi Bird Club**

Co-ordinator: Mr K Mitchell P O Box 398, Karoi ☎ 064-7010 (office) 7725 (home)

Secretary: Mrs M Mitchell P O Box 398, Karoi ☎ 064-7014 Fax: 064-7010

No outings will be arranged for Rydings School Interpretive Centre or anywhere else until further notice.

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#### **MIDLANDS BRANCH**

Co-ordinator: Gavin Conway ☎ 054-24058 (home) 24666 (work) e-mail [gjconway@icon.co.zw](mailto:gjconway@icon.co.zw)

Gweru Please contact Gavin for details of outings which may be planned.

Masvingo Contact Lynne Wilkins ☎ 039-63657

Kadoma Contact Margaret Parrock ☎ 068-3644

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#### **REPORTS**

##### NATIONAL

The Council is most grateful to Carter computer Services for giving office space to Susan Childes and providing equipment during May and June 2000.

##### RELOCATION OF OFFICES

BirdLife Zimbabwe's administration office has moved to a little house in the grounds of the Masonic Hall, 35 Clyde Road, Eastlea, Harare – telephone 490208.

##### RARITIES COMMITTEE

The last report of the BLZ (OAZ) Rarities Committee appeared in the June 1995 issue of *Honeyguide* 41(2). Since then it has experienced problems – both record submissions and reports have dwindled and the committee is officially defunct. Some BLZ members have expressed dissatisfaction and questioned BLZ's commitment to the centralising of accurate data. This is one of the primary aims of the Research and Conservation Committee and the Rarities Committee is in the process of being resuscitated. Ian Riddell has kindly agreed to chair it and we are finalising the remainder of the committee as well as the protocols for record submission and vetting which will be gleaned from rarities committees elsewhere in the World.

For those of you who have a feeling that they will see a Sanderling or a European Honey-buzzard in the next few months, make sure you have a notebook and pen (to make copious notes of plumage, stance, behaviour, morphology, etc.) A photo would be great, and, for the purists, a pencil/water colour/oil sketch would be the icing on the cake (I am also sure that these would look great in *Honeyguide*). Watch this space for details on how to submit records. **Anthony Cizek, Research and Conservation Committee**

##### RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION WORKSHOP – AUGUST 2000

As this issue of *Babbler* is going to print, the Research and Conservation Committee is holding a workshop at Robert McIlwaine Recreational Park for co-ordinators and those involved in BLZ projects and will also include ornithologists from the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management's Ornithological Research Unit, Bulawayo Natural History Museum and Zimbabwe Falconer's Club. The aims of the workshop are three-fold

- Firstly, we aim to find out what problems/limitations face each project and if and how BLZ can help to overcome them. Of particular concern is the lack of participation by BLZ membership.
- Secondly, we aim to focus the direction of BLZ research and conservation efforts for the next few years.
- There are several vegetation types and habitats that are under unprecedented pressure in this country. We aim to collectively identify species and habitats of concern. BLZ projects will be able to contribute to the

conservation of these species and habitats, but there are limitations to what can be achieved, so we hope to motivate research by larger organisations and institutions into the conservation of these species and habitats. A report back from the workshop will be published in the next issue of *Babbler*.

**Susan Childes and Anthony Cizek – Research and Conservation Committee**

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## **MASHONALAND BRANCH**

### Peter Ginn – Tuesday 18 July 2000

What a wonderful evening this was – very well attended as would be expected for a “star” attraction. Peter described to us many of his secrets of successful bird photography – from the design of his hides to the placing of a carefully selected perch at nest sites. It seems that the perch has to be just the right distance from the nest so that birds feel comfortable when feeding their offspring thereby making it easier to photograph them. Peter has managed to capture on film almost all of the species of Zimbabwe birds plus many, many others all around the world. His work has appeared in several notable publications and it was a privilege to be able to see some of his work. The slides were confined to Eastern Districts species and we not only had the pleasure of seeing each bird but also learnt interesting little facts about them. We were treated to magnificent pictures of the elusive Buff-spotted Flufftail which Peter had photographed from a strategic point really close-by because he had ingeniously placed meal worms on the ground which the birds fed on. Two super little birds which were shown to us were the White-starred Robin and Swynnerton’s Robins. A pair of Stripe-checked Greenbuls was seen feeding young from their “artificial” perch and the elusive Roberts’s Warbler was also shown. Thank you very much indeed to Peter for an outstanding evening. **Editor**

### Weekend outing to Falcon College, ESIGODINI – 10 to 13 August 2000

Sixteen people took advantage of the opportunity to bird in the southwest of Zimbabwe. We were welcomed by the Deputy headmaster of Falcon College, Gordon Macdonald, on Friday afternoon and were treated to home-made chocolate and ginger cakes with tea which was served at the staff club house overlooking the meticulously maintained sports fields where we watched Crowned Lapwings and Blacksmith Lapwings and Groundscraper Thrush celebrating their new-found peace and tranquillity. After a quick walk around the grounds where we saw White-fronted Bee-eater, dozens of Black-headed Oriole out in the open, feeding on the flowers of *Acrocarpus fraxinifolius*, Marico Sunbird also feeding on the flowers. We returned to our dormitories for a hot shower after which we gathered in the Bushtick pub where we met “publican” David Fleming who served us with distinction during the whole of our sojourn. “Bushtick” is the name of the mine which was taken over to facilitate the construction of Falcon College in the early ‘50’s. We met other members of the teaching staff and their wives, many of whom had been at Falcon for over 40 years. Our first taste of Ian Johnstone’s excellent catering was a wonderful dinner of roast beef and Yorkshire pudding and was to result in our having to take long bird walks to work off the pounds gained by all of us.

The next day, some of us took a stroll along one of the perimeter fences of the College, dry crushed leaves underfoot, a Crimson-breasted Shrike making a wonderful commencement to the day. After a huge breakfast we boarded the College bus and were whisked off to the Quietwaters Study Centre (the 800 hectare nature reserve/wilderness area formed in 1983, primarily as an educational project to bring to the attention of the pupils and their families the bush, its richness and diversity and the need to conserve it). Three groups set off through the bush in different directions where a variety of birds and game were seen. A member of the teaching staff, Dave Grant, spoke to us about the history of the Esigodini district relating stories about Mzilikazi and the Matabeleland Rebellion. It was fascinating to learn about Mzilikazi’s relationship with Courtney Selous including their contrasting temperaments, problems with unwelcome hunters, the impatience of the indunas and punishments meted out to unfaithful followers added variety and the human element to his discourse. Our braai lunch setting overlooking Quietwaters Dam was Fish-eagle Retreat a building funded by the Stobart family of Arcturus in memory of their son, Andrew, head boy in 1985 and a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford who died of cancer before the age of 30.

Later on that day we were given a tour of Ron Hartley’s captive breeding programme of falcons which included Taita Falcon, Lanner Falcons and Peregrine Falcons. We met Cilia the Martial Eagle, an African Hawk-eagle and Bob the Southern White-faced Scops-owl – all stars in various David Attenborough documentaries. We then moved on to the snake house where we saw Black Mamba, an extremely large Mozambique Spitting Cobra and a couple of small Python.

Saturday brought another venue – Lumani Falls – situated in a section of the MATOPOS Hills in a communal area. A spectacular cascade of icy water gently fell over yellow and orange striped granite. Forced fording of the river enticed only one Robin Hood to shoulder his petite spouse over the shallow stream. We were rewarded with Bearded Scrub-robin, Lesser Honeyguide, Terrestrial Brownbul and Yellow-bellied Greenbul, White-throated Robin-chat and Augur Buzzard. The area contains spectacular scenery with patches of mixed woodland and riverine vegetation, stone kopjes, tree covered hills, meandering fresh water streams and unspoiled nature – a most welcome fillip to flagging dispositions. An Ashy Flycatcher's fleeting capers within centimetres of motionless binoculars, was a welcome respite to a busy morning. Our picnic lunch (meat pie, two sandwiches, quarter chicken, boiled egg and fruit) was a more than substantial reward for a morning's successful birding culminating with close-ups of an immature African Harrier-hawk flexing his double-jointed legs. That afternoon we had tea on the shores of Umzingwane Dam where a perfect view of a Grey Penduline-tit's nest was had.

Sunday dawned cold, windy and overcast. AISLEBY Farm, which includes UMGUSA Dam, was our destination. Despite chattering teeth and shivering knees, a single Lesser Flamingo and several Grey Crowned Cranes were easily spotted from the Hugh Ashton Platform overlooking the Bird Dam. Di managed to spot her much sought after Acacia Pied Barbet, Burnt-necked Eremomela and Black-faced Waxbill, and several early Ruff were seen by the time the second group on its way to the platform. We are most grateful to Julia Duprée and Penny Feather for guiding us around the area and showing us some of their "specials".

Total count for time weekend was 178 species. For those who haven't had the pleasure of an outing to Falcon College it is a "must" for everyone's Zimbabwe list! Our sincere thanks to Gordon Macdonald and his incredibly accommodating staff and to our organisers, Pat and John Saunders. **Deb Gundlach**

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## **MATABELELAND**

### *From the Chairman*

This winter seems to have been particularly cold with plenty of overcast, cool days and over 50 mm of rain in June which kept the grass pleasantly green until a number of heavy July frosts finished it off, with the wind chasing any remaining leaves off the trees. Cold snaps seemed to coincide with our Hillside Dams rambles but despite this we have seen a number of new faces with an attendance of over 15 in July so it appears to be serving its function. Our flowering trees seem to be later this year with Kenya Coffee Shade and *Erythrina* only just emerging into bloom by late July. It is amazing to see how many birds are attracted to the former with Wattled Starling, weavers, bulbuls and sunbirds all busy gleaning nectar or pollen. On the topic of changes, bird life within BULAWAYO has changed as vegetation in the City has matured and the Editor of *Honeyguide* has suggested a "Then and Now" project to summarise some of these differences. All those who would be willing to participate, please do contact me. Good birding! **Martin Smith**

### AISLEBY Waterfowl Count – Sunday 16 July 2000

Following our exceptional rainy season, it came as no surprise to discover that totals of waterfowl were down on those from previous dry seasons, with waterfowl presumably still well dispersed. It was pleasing to discover the upper UMGUSA Dam still spilling with an appreciable amount of water flowing down the river and diluting some of the foul effluent that seems to make its way into the watercourse. We began with a drive through the pastures and managed to find reasonable numbers of both Blacksmith Lapwing and African Wattled Lapwings, the latter being confined to a single paddock and perhaps described as a flock? We also had good views of a number of Cape Longclaw, with throats clearly picked out in the early morning light. At the Upper Umgusa Dam we were frustrated by a considerable fringe of sedge and reeds, which prevented a clear view of time Dam. A boat is a must for future counts. It also may well have held some interesting skulkers and we were treated to a fleeting glimpse of a departing Little Bittern. At the Yacht Club the attractive kikuyu lawn was being used as a suitable resting site for a number of species including both Great Egret and Yellow-billed Egrets. It was useful to be able to compare salient differences between them with the aid of the telescope. We then moved on to the Bird Dam which has become increasingly overgrown and filled with an evil looking black broth which is supposedly described as treated water. Life is now very much confined to the edge and we recorded crakes, Common Moorhens and African Purple Swamphens and had a frustrating sighting of an immature rallid that scuttled along time waters edge and had us all puzzled.

In the lands, the mower was in action, chopping the weeds and was hotly pursued by a number of egrets, herons and storks, all of which were busy gleaning insects and the odd rodent that chose to emerge. Tim English had been watching the action for some time and had seen a Cattle Egret consume a mouse whole – complete with wriggling feet! We totalled species and numbers at the platform and had a brief view of an African Marsh-harrier, which appeared to be carrying nesting material. Unfortunately it behaved in classic harrier fashion and vanished into the reeds and did not re-emerge. We await further developments – if any. Our tally for the count was a total of 2134 birds representing 42 species. **Martin Smith**

#### Waterfowl Count – Fort RIXON Dam – Sunday 23 July 2000

Mention the words 'Fort Rixon' and one can predict a cold and overcast day with wind and, if you're lucky, rain as well! Fortunately, we were spared the latter and the strong wind may actually have helped by concentrating waterfowl close to the leeward shores. The dam had spilled this year and was an impressive 94% full, in stark contrast to last year's mid-winter level of 30%. Very little shoreline was exposed and we managed to find only a single Common Greenshank and a few Three-banded Plover. The dam had backed up into the various watercourses that fill the dam, which meant considerable leg work was needed just to survey the more accessible shoreline. As with the previous weeks count at Aisleby, numbers of waterfowl were comparatively low, the highest totals being of Egyptian Goose and Southern Pochard. Amongst other species of note were Glossy Ibis, Cape Shoveler, Water Thick-knee and Greater Painted-snipe. It was also interesting to find a juvenile African Darter with a strikingly white breast, contrasting with black, drying wings. Overhead a "pair" of African Fish-eagles created appreciable panic amongst the Egyptian Goose, with shore roosting birds fleeing onto the water. The "pair" was particularly vocal and a careful study showed one to be sub-adult with mottled plumage. It seemed to be trailing the adult bird and was the more vocal of the two. We puzzled over their relationship and wondered whether full adult plumage was needed for pair bonding and breeding. Finally, the dam maintained its reputation for reptiles with an impressive Rock Monitor and a 1.5 m Python slithering slowly across the rocky spillway. **Martin Smith**

#### **EASTERN DISTRICTS BIRD CLUB**

##### LA ROCHELLE Gardens, PENHALONGA – Saturday 10 June 2000

Well, a seemingly ordinary winter afternoon in the pot-holed Museum Car Park but, lo and behold, 10 birdwatchers looking forward to the afternoon's fare. We were pleased to welcome Daniel, a recently arrived Kenyan Zoology researcher at Africa University, and his student friend – Washington. A welcome return to the group was Gill Zambra who until lately had been nursing her husband, Jerry, who sadly passed away recently.

Whilst on this sad note, I must record too, the death of Martin Matende who had accompanied us on so many trips since Tony first brought him along in 1991. He was Tony and Janet's factotum for nigh on 40 years and, for them, will be irreplaceable. For us birders, he was a knowledgeable companion, with an excellent eye and ear responsible for the impressive tallies of our outings since, without him, so many birds would have gone unseen or unheard. Universally popular and with a great love of life he is sadly missed by his family in Wedza and so many of us here in Mutate.

The car park at La Rochelle was alive with birdsong and we split into 2 groups and set off with confidence. Birds, however, were hard to find. Apart from Amethyst Sunbird and Collared Sunbirds, the first real sighting was of 2 White-backed Vulture. Then, in a dark bushy corner, we found a White-starred Robin busily working its way through the undergrowth. Despite the many aloes in bloom, the only other sunbirds were Olive Sunbird and Variable Sunbird. Meeting the other group in the course of our tour, we expected to be told where all the birds were hiding but they had seen fewer than we had.

But a treat was in store for us as we circled the woodland around small dam. Both Gill and Daniel commented that there had to be a kingfisher there – and there was, but not Malachite as expected but a Half-collared Kingfisher! Only my second ever and a 'lifer' for some. It gave us splendid views from all angles. I was amazed how large it was compared to the Malachite. Unfortunately, that was the end of the excitement for the day and we ended with a measly 23, the last of which was a Red-throated Twinspot seen by Gill alone – some consolation for missing the Kingfisher! **Ken Dixon**

##### CYNARA Farm, Old MUTARE – Sunday 18 June 2000

In place of the trip to the Bazeley Bridge area planned for 25 June which had been cancelled, Ken, Rex and I spent a few hours at Mkoko and Cynara on Sunday morning. The weather was perfect – a cloudless sky

and no wind – chilly at first but by eight o'clock warm enough to warrant removing a layer or two of warm clothing. The dams were like mirrors, except that the Mkoko Dam was disturbed by fish breaking the surface. We wondered why the African Fish-eagle was not there – it would have had easy fishing.

We confined our birding to the two largest dams and the cultivated lands, pastures and woodland between them (so as not to disturb the visitors who we had been warned were present at Cynara dairy) but this comparatively small area was enough to provide us with well over sixty species. These included Giant Kingfisher, a Bearded Woodpecker, a pair of Grey Penduline-tit and two Trumpeter Hornbills. This species of hornbill is not often seen at Cynara – my last record is from July 1998. We enjoyed a first-class view of a lone Lilac-breasted Roller perched and in flight in the brilliant early morning sunlight its colours were spectacular. Raptors were represented by a Lizard Buzzard and a pair of Black-shouldered Kite. Water birds were comparatively scarce – we saw only three or four Egyptian Goose, two Comb Duck, an African Darter and a few Reed Cormorant. One or possibly two Crowned Lapwings were present in the cultivated lands. Waders were represented by a few Three-banded Plover and African Wattled Lapwings.

A large flock of African Black Swift observed first at a considerable altitude and then descending much lower above the water was the most interesting observation on the visit. We watched them for some time wheeling and swooping overhead. It was difficult to estimate numbers, but we guessed that several hundred were present. Swallows seen included large numbers of Grey-rumped Swallows (winter visitors to our area).

A final addition to our list was a very unusual sighting – a first for Cynara, we thought – a microlight aircraft making a leisurely tour of the district! **Tony Curtis**

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#### **MIDLANDS BRANCH**

Black Storks in the Midlands are very late this year. A few nests are being monitored with some measurements being taken of eggs. Some chicks are busy hatching. **Gavin Conway**

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#### **TAIL FEATHERS**

Hamerkop – Cherrybank Farm, KADOMA Correction

I incorrectly reported in the previous issue that the Hamerkop nest at Cherrybank Farm was 1.5m from the ground. In fact the nest itself is 1.5m high being approximately 10m from the ground.

Sincere apologies to Margaret Parrock. **Editor**

Satellite tracking African Penguins at sea

An extract from an article by the Avian Demography Unit of the Department of Statistical Sciences at the University of Cape Town

At 03h00 on Sunday, 9 July, Peter (the African Penguin) was between Mossel Bay and Gouritsmond – about 23 km offshore. That means he was past Seal Island at Mossel Bay, with its associated seals and sharks. He seems to have known to stay offshore. He was released at Cape Recife at about 09h00 on Friday, June 30 and had by 9 July covered a straight line distance of 333 km in about 210 hours, giving him a speed of about 1.6 km per hour. Peter then had 415 km to travel to get back to his home – Robben Island. At that rate he would be expected there in another 11 days, at about midnight on July 19.

Unfortunately, a number of penguins were still arriving at the island covered in oil from head to toe and looked a sorry sight.

Pamela and Percy – penguins from Dassen Island, north of Robben Island, had also been released and would have to travel a straight line distance of about 825 km to get home. They were behind Peter. Pamela, who left Cape Recife on 3 July morning was by 12h30 on 9 July 40 km offshore, directly south of Plettenberg Bay.

Percy, who left Cape Recife on the morning of Wednesday, 5 July was staying closer inshore. He was 6 km off Bloukrans River mouth in Tsitsikamma Coastal National Park at 03h00 on Sunday, 9 July.

All three were still in the order in which they were released from Port Elizabeth. Peter on Friday 30 June, Pamela on Monday 3 July and Percy on Wednesday 5 July.

Bird smuggler jailed

In March this year, Harry Sissen was sentenced to two and a half years in prison and ordered to pay costs of around US\$8 000 after being found guilty of smuggling Lear's Macaws *Anodorhynchus leari* and other parrots into the United Kingdom. The UK's Customs and Excise division brought the case to court and Dr Nigel Collar from the BirdLife Secretariat in Cambridge was called upon to give expert evidence about

Lear's Macaws, a critically endangered species which is found exclusively in north-eastern Brazil where only tiny populations exist. Also called upon as an expert witness was Carlos Yamashita, who has studied Lear's Macaws in Brazil for many years. It is hoped that the tough UK stance on this issue will be followed throughout the rest of the world so that the illegal trade in threatened species can be drastically reduced. This article was published in the June *World Birdwatch* magazine. **Editor**

Trip to SELDOMSEEN in the VUMBA – 11 to 18 August 2000

What a fantastic place to relax and do some birding. We were in comfortable accommodation and had good weather while we were there. A total of 72 species were seen including 25 "lifers" for us. Some specials were Red-faced Crimsonwing, Red-throated Twinspot, Swynnerton's Robin, Orange Ground-thrush and Olive Thrushes, Roberts' Warbler, Chirinda Apalis, Dark-backed Weaver, White-eared Barbet, Yellow-throated Woodland-warbler, Malachite Sunbird, Yellow-streaked Greenbul, Barratt's Warbler and Cape Batis. We also thought that we had found a Grey Wagtail at the VUMBA BOTANIC GARDENS but, much to our disgust, it turned out to be a Mountain Wagtail – a problem of wrong numbering in our copy of Sasol. The two bird guides really knew the area and the birds and were very keen to find the species we wanted to see. A week there was so relaxing with the beautiful forests so close and all the different "special" birds on offer. I would advise any birder to visit Seldomseen. **Gavin Conway**

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**NOTICEBOARD**

Buy a brick campaign for BirdLife Zimbabwe's Headquarters building

The total is slowly increasing and is now \$34 700 and we thank the following for their donations which have been received since publication of the previous issue of *Babbler*. For those members still wanting to give a donation, a form is included at the end of the issue.

Kevin Mitchell	\$5 000	Rio Tinto	\$4 500
I & H Fraser	\$1 500	AE & SI Howland	\$1 000
J R Shaw	\$1 000	J Williams & D Varden	\$1 000
P & V Mundy	\$1 000	C & B Silk	\$1 000
J & B Daniel	\$1 000	Gray's Electrical	\$1 000
Bette Riddle	\$ 500	John Shepherd	\$ 500
Phil Goodall	\$ 500	Colleen Davy	\$ 300
P F O'Neill	\$ 250	Rita Mills	\$ 200
Zahn Kidson	\$ 200	Peter Westrop	\$ 200
Cecilia Manson	\$ 200	R B MacCallum	\$ 100

Blue Swallow survey

Susan Childes is still looking for volunteers to record sightings of Blue Swallows in the Eastern Highlands.

She has had a good response from volunteers in the Nyanga area but desperately needs people in the Chimanimani and Chipinge areas. The Blue Swallows arrive in Zimbabwe in November and leave again in April. If you think you can help, please write to her at PO Box BW53, Borrowdale for more information.

Books for sale

The following publications are available for sale at reasonable prices. If you are interested in purchasing any of these please contact Mrs J Williams on telephone 882206 or write to her at 14 Harare Drive, Greystone Park, PO Borrowdale.

Highveld Birds	Sinclair and Goode	\$100.00
Birds of Prey	Sinclair and Goode	\$100.00
Discovering Birds	Berruti (illustrated M Newman)	\$200.00
The World of Birds	Malcolm Ellis	\$200.00
RSPB BirdLife Annual		\$ 85.00
RSPB Puzzle and Project Book		\$ 75.00
Bird watch Zimbabwe	D Solomon, J Williams	\$250.00

Checklists for Robert McIlwaine National Park

Checklists drawn up by Tracy and Ferdie Couto are available for sale at \$10 each. Contact Pat Saunders



Birdwatch 2000

We challenge all Zimbabweans – from the uninitiated to the seasoned – to be a part of BirdLife Zimbabwe's annual birdwatching event.

Great PRIZES to be won!

PRIZES

BirdLife Zimbabwe would like to express its gratitude to the following people and organisations for the offer of prizes for Birdwatch 2000.

- \* The Director of the Malilangwe Trust for a weekend for 2 people at Nduna Lodge, southeast Lowveld.
- \* Steve Edwards of Musango Safari Camp for 3 nights for 2 people at Musango Safari Camp, Islands 134/135 Lake Kariba (the Bumi Hills side of the Ume River).

THANKS VERY MUCH FOR YOUR SUPPORT!!

**Aims**

- For teams to identify as many birds as possible in 24 hours within an area with a radius of 50 km.
- To raise money to help bird conservation projects
- To enjoy ourselves!

**Rules**

- Choose in which of the following categories you would like to enter a team:
  - \* OPEN A team of 3 or 4. The "life lists" of individual members must be less than 500 species each.
  - \* EXPERIENCED A team of 3 or 4. The "life lists" of individual members must exceed 500 species each.
  - \* CORPORATE A team with 3 or 4 employees of a company or their immediate family, with a minimum of 2 employees. A minimum sponsorship of Z\$ 1 000 must be raised.
  - \* SCHOOL A team with 3 or 4 children plus a non-participating driver (includes school, girl guide or scout groups).
  - \* COMMUNITY A maximum of 20 people, involving any community group (churches, sports teams, company staff, etc.)
- Three or four team members only, except COMMUNITY category. Please note: at least two members of each team must be paid-up BirdLife Zimbabwe members.
- Birdwatch 2000 will be run over a period of one week from:
  - 12 midnight on Friday, 3 November 2000 to 12 midnight on Friday, 10 November 2000. Each team must choose a 24-hour period during this week and submit this to the central recorder/scorer by 8.00 p.m. on Wednesday 1 November 2000
- A species may be added to the tally only if it is seen within a radius of 50 km of a specified central point. This central point MUST be specified on the submitted Zimbabwe Bird Atlas Project form.
- Each bird either seen or heard must be identified by at least 2 members of each team.
- Only free-flying, indigenous or feral birds may be counted.

- Records of species seen MUST be entered onto (leftover) Zimbabwe Bird Atlas Project forms. These as well as sponsorship forms are available from the organiser (details below).
- Team record and sponsorship forms must reach the organiser by Friday, 17 November 2000 (i.e. one week after the final day of the event). Fax or deliver record and sponsorship forms to BirdLife Zimbabwe at the address and/or number below. Late entries will not be considered for the competition.
- There will be a GRAND PRIZE for the team that raises the most sponsorship. There will be lucky draw prizes for teams which raise more than Z\$500, Z\$ 1 500, ZW\$4 000 respectively.
- There will be prizes for the teams in each category that see the greatest number of species, and certificates for the top three teams.
- The organiser's decision will be final and no correspondence will be entered into.

#### SPONSORSHIP

In a bid to try and raise funds for a Research and Conservation Fund, we are asking teams to try and obtain sponsorship for their efforts. This is obviously a difficult year to initiate such an enterprise, but the same actions that are destroying the country's economy are placing unprecedented pressure on our natural resources. Woodlands, in particular, must be at risk. Decisions concerning the conservation of species and the habitats in which they live can be made only once we have an understanding of how these ecosystems function. We need that knowledge now more than ever, but this costs money. So please make the effort to find sponsorship for each bird you might see. The grand prize will be awarded to the team that raises the most money.

#### CONTACT

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 PO Box CY 161, Causeway

#### Articles of interest for *Honeyguide*

The Editor of *Honeyguide* is always looking for articles about birds, particularly interesting behaviour. If you have a story to tell about a bird or birds please send it to The Editor, PO Box BW 122, Borrowdale, Harare. Contributions are also needed for the Afdis page and submissions should number approximately 300 words and be of a spontaneous nature.

#### Prints of Peter Ginn Slides

Peter Ginn has kindly offered to allow members to order prints from his slide collection. Most Zimbabwean bird species are available. Prices: A4 size - \$230, A5 size - \$150 each. Contact John Paxton for details.

#### Car stickers

Included with this issue is your complimentary car sticker. Should you require further stickers they are available at \$5.00 each from David Gray, telephone 885406.

#### Pen friend

A 21 year-old Zoology student – Johan Meyer – living in South Africa is keen to become pen friends with one of our members. He is studying biological sciences at the Rand Afrikaans University in Johannesburg and his hobbies include bird watching and bird ringing. He is also interested in Shona and Ndebele languages and would like to know more about them. Should anyone be prepared to correspond with Johan he can be contacted by e-mail: [schwunn@hotmail.com](mailto:schwunn@hotmail.com) or at PO Box 51358, Wierda Park, 0149, South Africa.

“Free” Bird Surveying Book!

If anyone would like to download some or all of the BirdLife International Bird Surveying Techniques Manual by Bibby *et al.* 1998 please check out the web page <http://www.bp.com/conservation/manual.htm>

Special offer at Kiledo Lodge

Kiledo Lodge, who are associated with Inns of Zimbabwe, are offering special rates to bird clubs of southern Africa during the period August to November 2000. They are prepared to give members a 20% discount off their normal rates which are \$1 950 per person (single) and \$1 600 per person (double) per night. The rate includes dinner, bed and breakfast. They are also offering discounted tour leaders/guides accommodation for two persons with food (dinner and breakfast) at \$750 per person per night should a tour with 12 or more persons be organised. The lodge, situated in the Chipinge area (easy access to the Haroni-Rusitu area) comprises three cottages with double beds, three with twin beds and two with twin and bunk beds, each with en suite facilities. If you are interested in taking advantage of these offers, please contact Kiledo Lodge, PO Box 11, Chipinge, telephone/fax (027) 2944.

New members

We welcome the following new members

Wilson Chuma, A P Cowell, FT O’Donoghue, Dietrich Klein, Anna Marsden, J M Rheam, Kim Tapson, Tsitsi Wutawun Ashe.