

BABBLER

BirdLife Zimbabwe

A PARTNER DESIGNATE OF BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL

ISSUE #41 – MARCH/APRIL 2001

COMMITTEES

Mashonaland Branch

Chairman: Jennifer Carter	300082
Members: Richard Dennison	747567
Helen Fraser	481316
Liz Hudson	883251
Ian Riddell	339716
Di Rushforth	741765
Ken Wilson	745231



Matabeleland Branch

Martin Smith	282474
Julia Dupree	62401
Penny Feather	244034
Clive Townsley	244617
Jean Tucker	241079
Peter Tucker	241079



Executive Officer: John Paxton 011 608138 or at the office 490208

Addresses:

P O Box CY 161, Causeway
e-mail: birds@zol.co.zw

3A Holdengarde Aye, Hillside, Bulawayo
adrienne@acacia.samara.co.zw

Editors: Di Rushforth 741765
5 Colenbrander Road,
P O Belvedere, Harare
Email dirushft@zambezi.net

Martin Smith 282474
3A Holdengarde Ave. Hillside,
Bulawayo

Have you paid your subs for 2001? Your contribution will help birds. If you have queries about your subscription, please telephone the office, or if you have difficulty meeting the full subscription please write to the Executive Officer, giving your reasons – all information will be treated confidentially

ACTIVITIES

NATIONAL

The Annual General Meeting will be held on 21 April, 2001 at Echo Park, Kwekwe. Please see Notice of Meeting, Agenda, Programme and booking slip included with this issue.

MASHONALAND BRANCH

Regular outings

1. Mukuvisi Woodlands: Sundays, 4 March and 1 April, 2001. 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, 11 March and 8 April 2001. Meet at Marimba Shopping Centre for departure at 6.30 a.m. Bring your chairs and tea. Beginners are most welcome and spare binoculars will be available. We encourage members with children to attend these outings when their needs will be catered for. Parents must however attend with their children.

Saturday afternoon outing

17 March 2001: Greystone Park Nature Reserve. Meet at 3.00 p.m. in the car park which is off Halford Road. Bring chairs and refreshments.

NO SATURDAY OUTING IN APRIL DUE TO THE NATIONAL AGM

Sunday outings

1. 25 March 2001: National Herbarium and Botanic Gardens, Sandringham Drive. Meet at 7.00 a.m. in the car park. There will be an entrance fee payable,
2. 29 April 2001: Visit to Little England Farm, Kariba Road (Gwebi River). Meet at 6.30 a.m. at Greencroft Shopping Centre, Lomagundi Road (left-hand side). Bring chairs and refreshments.

Thursday evening meeting

15 March 2001. An illustrated talk will be given by James Varden, a well-known safari operator. Venue: 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.
NO EVENING MEETING IN APRIL BECAUSE OF EASTER AND INDEPENDENCE HOLIDAYS.

PLEASE NOTE ENTRY COSTS FOR EVENING MEETINGS HAVE HAD TO BE INCREASED TO \$10 EACH. THIS IS TO COVER THE SECURITY GUARD AND HIRE OF THE HALL.

Thursday outings to Marlborough Vlei

Ian Riddell is prepared to continue with the walks in Marlborough Vlei on the second and fourth Thursdays of each month. Meet at 4.00 p.m. on Newstead Road. As Ian's transport is a bicycle, he would appreciate being told whether people will be visiting the vlei. If he doesn't hear from you, he won't be there! Ian's telephone number is 339716. Dates are: 8 and 22 March, 12 and 26 April 2001.

MATABELELAND BRANCH**Evening Meetings**

Friday 2nd March – Verreaux's Eagle Survey Briefing. The project is now in its 39th year of formal reporting and it is vital that we continue to monitor this species. Warren now steps down as Co-ordinator with organisation passing back to the Branch. Julia, Penny, Clive and I are planning to divide various aspects of the Survey between us, but we do need your support. Please contact any of us prior to the meeting so we know how many people are willing to participate. Venue: 49 Heyman Rd at 6.00 p.m.

Friday 6th April – Audrey Msimanga, Curator of Ornithology at The Natural History Museum has recently completed an MSc thesis on the House Sparrow and she will brief us on her work. Venue: 49 Heyman Rd. Contact Julia for details.

Monthly Outings

17/18 March – Quietwaters, Falcon College. We are planning a camping weekend at Falcon College in Quietwaters, using their 'A' frame chalets. A number of options exist – either camp out or join us for the Saturday or the Sunday. All those interested should contact Penny Feather.

20/21/22 April – National AGM at Echo Park

Aisleby

Sunday, 25 March 2001	meet at 7.30 a.m. at the Boom	Co-ordinator Martin Smith
Sunday, 29 April 2001	meet at 7.30 a.m. at the Boom	Co-ordinator Clive Townsley

Hillside Dams

Monthly walks will continue. Meet at the Lower Dam Car Park at 4.00 p.m. on the last Friday of every month. Forthcoming dates are: 30 March and 27 April 2001.

EASTERN DISTRICTS BIRD CLUB

Contacts: Ken Dixon ☎ 020-65819 Jane Clegg ☎ 020-65610

For various reasons 2000 was not a good year for our Bird Club and attendance and enthusiasm waned. Often numbers were down to 2 or 3, transport was uncertain and some venues were feared to be insecure. However, a recent questionnaire circulated by Tony Curtis, the retiring Chair, showed that we still had many friends and supporters and a meeting on the future of the club was well attended and led to the establishment of a new, augmented committee consisting of:

Mr Ken Dixon (co-ordinator)	Mrs. B. Holland	Mr. A. Christie
Mrs. J Clegg	Mr. T. Browning	Mr. T. Peatling

At a meeting held on 31 January it was decided that there should be only one meeting per month, usually on the last Sunday. This would be supplemented by indoor meetings when suitable speakers could be found. The outings would be organised by a specific member of the committee who would be responsible for organising transport and encouraging members to attend. Most trips would be for part of the morning only but there would be 3 or 4 that would be go beyond the lunch hour and necessitate a packed lunch. As usual, outings will set off from the Museum at the arranged time and, if organised in advance, transport and binoculars can be made available.

Outings

Sun Mar 25th	Leopard Rock	6.00 J. Clegg	65610
Sun Apr 29th	Fern Valley	6.30 T. Browning	61809

It is hoped that the above visits will lead to lots more informal birding on the intervening weeks. Please support our initiative. **K Dixon**

Karoi Bird Club

Co-ordinator: Mr K Mitchell P O Box 398, Karoi ☎ 064-7010 (office) 7725 (home)
E-mail: mitchell@zimweb.co.zw
Secretary: Mrs M Mitchell P O Box 398, Karoi ☎ 064-7014 Fax: 064-7010

ACTIVITIES

Rydings School Interpretive Centre

Walks take place on the first Saturday of each month at 6.00 a.m.

Other outings

Members will be notified of these when arranged.

MIDLANDS BRANCH

Co-ordinator: Gavin Conway ☎ 054-24058 (home) 24666 (work) e-mail gjconway@icon.co.zw
Gweru Please contact Gavin for details of outings which may be planned.
Masvingo Contact Lynne Wilkins ☎ 039-63657
Kadoma Outings will be held at 7.00 a.m. on the 3rd Saturday of each month.
Contact Margaret Parrock ☎ 068-3644 for details.

REPORTS

NATIONAL

FROM THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Birdwatch 2000 raised \$82 661 in sponsorship. What an outstanding effort. This will be used for the project to save the Anchieta's Tchagra in the Honde Valley and in the compilation of the draft Red Data Book which is an essential tool in conservation planning.

Library

At the end of the year a grant of \$50 000 was made to a project to have the library set up by a professional Librarian who would also train the staff in its proper maintenance. A computer programme will be needed for this. This is a very large task which is essential before the library can be used by researchers as well as members.

Solar eclipse

Wildlife and Environment Zimbabwe (WEZ) have booked a number of sites at Mana Pools where people can observe the behaviour of wildlife during the eclipse which takes place on 21 June this year. WEZ is keen for members of BLZ to participate as it is expected that birds will react to the event in interesting ways, some of which may not have been recorded before. Participants must, however, be members of WEZ or be prepared to join. Full particulars are available from WEZ National Headquarters on 747500.

Sponsored Membership Fund

This now stands at \$2 950. One sponsored member has been approved by Council so far.

Binoculars

10 pairs of binoculars were donated to the Education Project by our German partner — Naturschutzbund Deutschland (NABU). They were handed over to us by Dr Kohler of the Embassy and Mrs Gisela Locherer who is a member of BLZ. They are going to be used in the Honde Valley by the schools participating in our Education Project.

World Birdwatch

The event will be held worldwide on 6 and 7 October 2001. The theme this year will be “The Inspiration of Birds”, the idea being to publicise and celebrate the place of birds in human cultures. Plans for BLZ’s participation will soon be underway.

EDUCATION PROJECT

The Schools Education Programme has received funding from the Canadian International Development Agency (Responsive Fund) to support the work being done on birds in the schools in the Honde Valley. The Education Committee is very grateful and pleased with the donation.

Mrs Maasdorp appreciates very much the calendars, pictures, etc. given by members for the Education Project. Children in rural schools have so little that they are very pleased to receive any informative material.

Thanks are also due to Mashonaland Branch who donated cash prizes for the art competition which the Education Committee ran in 2000. A successful quiz competition, which is to be a regular event, was held for schools in the Harare vlei areas. A high density — Glen View — school won the competition.

The Schools’ Bird Awareness Programme is entering its third year and a total of 53 schools are now involved. The schools are representative from all areas of the country. Members of the Education Committee keep in touch with the schools through newsletters and schools send records of birds seen in their schools grounds. Wherever possible visits continue to be made to the schools in the programme. One of the schools in Phase I (Katanga) in the southeast of Zimbabwe has always been difficult to visit as there are no members in the area. Fortunately the staff at Malilangwe Conservancy has “adopted” the school and they visit it regularly. They have also donated binoculars and books to the school. This concept will be encouraged and more people will be asked to “adopt” various schools. In the Honde Valley the project is lucky enough to have two bird guides who visit the schools. A conservation drive is also being done in the area to try to discourage the children from shooting special birds, one of which is the Anchieta’s Tchagra. Posters of this tchagra have been produced and distributed to people living in the area of wetland where a small population of the birds occurs. Not only are the birds being killed for food but their habitat is being destroyed by the introduction of maize fields and it is hoped that awareness of its uniqueness will save its habitat. Apart from the Anchieta’s Tchagra other birds will benefit from the conservation of their wetland habitat.

BirdLife Zimbabwe is most grateful to Mrs Sue Bell for developing the art work of the Anchieta’s Tchagra.

Zimbabwe Crane Working Group news

Friday Maozeka, field officer with the Zimbabwe Crane Working Group and based at the BirdLife Zimbabwe offices, has been involved in crane conservation for a number of years as an employee of Pinefarm Conservancy’s Wattled Crane Breeding Programme. In 1993 the International Crane Foundation (ICF) invited Friday to do an internship at their headquarters in Baraboo, Wisconsin, USA. Friday excelled at the Crane Foundation and returned to Pinefarm where he managed the crane breeding and wild nest monitoring programme. In 1998 Friday applied and was awarded the WWF Prince Bernhard scholarship to attend a three-month training course at the International Training Center of the Durrell Wildlife Trust. He graduated with ‘Distinction’. Friday is an outstanding individual, with a track record of commitment, perseverance, and work of an exceptional standard. He will undoubtedly make a significant contribution to crane conservation in Zimbabwe and we anticipate that in time he will become a key player in conservation in the southern African region. Taken from “Crane Link” – the newsletter of the South African Crane Working Group of the Endangered Wildlife Trust’

MASHONALAND BRANCH REPORTS

Visit to Munondo Road and Dunstan's Farm [Dunowen Farm], Hatfield – Saturday 21 October 2000

In view of unrest in the area it was decided not to go to the advertised Lyndhurst Farm. Instead, we parked in the well maintained, indigenous garden of Jeanette Cross' property and walked from there on to the bottom end of Dunstan's Farm. There was a lot of wood cutting evident in the area as well as human disturbance. Nevertheless, in the open vlei area, there were a few birds – African Wattled Lapwing and Crowned Lapwing, Cattle Egret, African Sacred Ibis, Helmeted Guineafowl, about three pairs of African Pipit, Zitting Cisticola and Croaking Cisticola, Yellow Bishop in non-breeding dress, whilst Red-breasted Swallow, Lesser Striped Swallow and Grey-rumped Swallow flew overhead. We crossed the Twentydales Road and walked through the remaining woodland which is unlikely to be there for much longer. Birds were more abundant there and highlights included Lesser Honeyguide, White-browed Scrub-robin, Long-billed Crombec, Yellow-throated Longclaw, Black-backed Puffback, Brubru, Black-crowned Tchagra, Orange-breasted Bush-shrike, Diderick Cuckoo and Klaas's Cuckoo, five varieties of sunbird feeding on the flowers of Mukwa trees – Miombo Double-collared Sunbird, Variable Sunbird, White-bellied Sunbird, Scarlet-chested Sunbird and Amethyst Sunbird. A flock of about 20 Orange-breasted Waxbills was put to flight whilst a Black-chested Snake-eagle flew overhead. It was an enjoyable afternoon which gave us a count of 65 species. Thank you very much, Jeanette. **Di Rushforth**

Sand Sales — Sunday 29 October 2000

This area includes 2 farms of which one has a significant area of miombo woodland and the other has several well conserved farm dams. Previous outings had been very productive and this one was no exception with a total of 97 species recorded. After 2 days of rain, there was plenty of moisture around and the overcast conditions reduced visibility.

Only 6 members attended of which 3 were newcomers who added quite a few species to their life lists. Nesting birds included Wahlberg's Eagle, Black Cuckooshrike and Yellow-throated Petronia. Other highlights were 6 White-backed Ducks and 2 African Black Ducks, 6 African Pygmy-goose, 6 African Green-pigeon, 2 White-rumped Swift, 2 Giant Kingfisher, 2 Broad-billed Roller and a Purple-banded Sunbird. **Richard Dennison**

MATABELELAND

From the Chairman

We begin the year with a number of projects to tackle. This year we are due to organise the National AGM and, with the current fuel crisis, we feel the best venue is Echo Park, Kwekwe, being a sensible halfway point. Accommodation has been reserved and we hope that we will have your support to make this event a success. The Branch has also taken on the organisation and co-ordination of the Verreaux's Eagle Survey. This valuable project is now in its 39th year and it is important that we continue with data collection. The Verreaux's Eagle is vital as an indicator species reflecting the state of the Park and collection of breeding data can be used as an important tool for future conservation. Last year the Project was adversely affected by the fuel crisis and the uncertainty produced by the election. We hope that this year many more members will come forward and support the Project. Please do come to our briefing meeting or contact Penny and we look forward to seeing you in the coming year. **Martin Smith**

AISLEBY — Sundays 29 October 2000 and 14 January 2001

We had planned an early start for October to avoid the midday heat and, as might have been predicted, it rained with a steady drizzle hampering visibility. Three of us squelched forth and were rewarded with some excellent birding. Driving through the pastures produced at least three pairs of Cape Longclaw, vigorously displaying with white outer tail feathers flashed in both flight and on perching. The dam held plenty of waterfowl, although driving rain prevented much from being identified. In the bush below the wall, plenty was to be seen with a good range of robin-chats, warblers, cisticolas and bulbuls, whilst in the lee of the wall an appreciable variety of both swifts and swallows was present – both Greater Striped Swallow and Lesser Striped Swallows being added to the list. On the spillway, a steady flow of water had attracted a good number of waders with Little Stint and Ruff being the most common.

Walking back past the staff houses produced a brief glimpse of a Meves's Starling which was pleasing to record after an absence of several months. With the rain having penetrated to skin level, we retreated to the shelter of the minibus and moved onto the lands. A single Steppe Buzzard was added to the list whilst, on freshly cultivated land, close to the road, five Caspian Plover were recorded – definitely the

highlight of the morning and our first sighting of this species for a number of years. Finally, we finished with waterfowl and waders on both the Ibis and Night Storage Dams which held good numbers of Little Stint, Ruff, Marsh Sandpipers and Curlew Sandpipers as well as a single Common Greenshank. Our total for the morning was just over 130 species and a couple of millimetres of rain.

Martin Smith

The count on 14 January 2001 attracted only a little support with Julia, Tim and I finding we had plenty to keep us busy for the morning. Julia was put to work in the pastures and had a good haul of Cattle Egret with the final total being just under 1 400, whilst Tim encountered an unpleasant amount of Lantana with associated prickles, but he did manage to record a female Western Marsh-harrier. I became waterborne and used the Birdlife canoe which was a real asset, enabling the reedy fringe of the dam to be surveyed. The Upper UMGUSA Dam remained full for most of last year which has led to a considerable amount of water-weed, sustaining high numbers of Red-knobbed Coot – our total of 1 307 being the highest number to date. Little fall in water level has meant the sedge fringe of the dam has become established and we managed to flush a total of 37 Squacco Herons from this habitat. Given the rich and organic nature of the water, fish must have multiplied and we recorded high numbers of Reed Cormorants and African Darters, Reed Cormorant being the most common with 164 being counted. Away from the water, the pastures were looking stressed with the lack of rainfall and Abdim's Storks were noticeable by their absence – we found a mere four birds. No Grey Crowned Cranes were present and these must have dispersed to suitable breeding sites. Blacksmith Lapwings were present in "flocks" and we had a high total of 385. Lastly, with most of the water levels high, waders were hard to locate and comparatively few although Julia found an appreciable congregation around one of the settling ponds close to the sewage works. Quite how they manage to tolerate such an unpleasant environment is extraordinary – we found the atmosphere considerably ripe and the grey sludge that was flowing through the pastures and then on into the watercourse must be cause for concern. **Martin Smith**

Chipangali Cheetah Watch – Chipangali have embarked on a project to rescue and breed Cheetah. So far they have three females and many males. Having captured the Cheetah and allowed them to adapt to captivity the next part of the project is to persuade them to breed. Females have been isolated in pens and when interest is shown a mate introduced. Subsequent events are rather slow and protracted and this stage of the project calls for volunteers to watch and record events if anything happens. This should provide basic data on conception rates and allow any pregnancies that result to be monitored. The attraction to our members is that the pens are located in thornveld with plenty of birdlife and watches are timed for when the Cheetahs are most likely to be active – from 6.00 a.m. to 10.00 a.m. and 3.00 p.m. to 6.00 p.m. If anybody would like to help with this project please contact Viv Wilson Tel. Byo 286603

EASTERN DISTRICTS BIRD CLUB

Visits to CYNARA – Saturday 11 November 2000 and Sunday 4 December 2000

Five people turned up for the outing which had been advertised as Premier Estate but unfortunately, as there was only one vehicle, one person had to be left behind. However, a pleasant afternoon was spent at Cynara where a list of 60 species was collected. As on previous visits, waders were very scarce as the dams were full with no foreshore – a single Wood Sandpiper and two or three Three-banded Plovers were the only ones seen. Other water birds identified were a pair of Egyptian Goose with two very young birds, a few White-faced Duck, our very old friend the Grey Crowned Crane and several White-breasted Cormorants on the Mkoiko Dam. Even African Jacana was almost entirely missing as were Black Crake. A solitary Yellow-billed Stork circled the farm several times, which made me think how rarely I had seen this bird in flight; it looked so much more impressive on the wing than wading when it seems to have a rather dejected air – because of its down-turned bill, I suppose. Cynara maintained its reputation for producing something special – on this occasion a bird seen perched in reeds in the centre of a small dam and which obligingly flew to the edge of the water, less than 10 metres from where we were standing and spent several minutes foraging there. We had some difficulty in deciding whether we had a Yellow Wagtail or a Grey Wagtail, but finally settled for Yellow (indeed, "finally" was not until we returned home and were able to consult various alternative field guides – *Roberts'* and Irwin!) But we ought to have been convinced when we saw a group of 3 or 4 similar birds a few minutes later. This is my first record of this species at Cynara.

The visit in December was not part of the regular Club programme but, as is almost routine at Cynara, it produced yet another unusual sighting. I thought that this was the first report of Woolly-necked Stork close to Mutare, but the *Atlas of Southern African Birds* shows that a report has been received from this

district (data for the Atlas was collected between 1985 and 1991). The solitary bird was a very young one, although it appeared to be fully grown. All the plumage, including the neck, was pale brown only the primaries were much darker. (*Roberts'* describes the juvenile as having white neck feathers [white even in nest – young African Openbill or Yellow-billed Stork perhaps?]). It was difficult to guess where this very young vagrant had come from and how it had become so far separated from its “family”. There are thought to be two distinct populations occurring in Zimbabwe; one which breeds in the southeast of Zimbabwe and another (non-breeding) which migrates from further north. It seems unlikely that a bird as young as this would be from the non-breeding migratory population. It is such conundrums which make our hobby so fascinating. **Tony Curtis**

Visit to JULIASDALE/NYANGA — Sunday 26 November 2000

It seemed like a good idea at the time! Faced with the annual visit of the Mutare members to Juliasdale we decided to take them somewhere different with a good chance of seeing Blue Swallows. The venue chosen was Nyazengu Nature Reserve on the upper slopes of Mount Nyangani. Although only two Mutare members – Rex Harrison and Gill Zambra – made the effort, our numbers were augmented by local enthusiasts and a friend from Harare. We were on the trail by 9.30 a.m. and above the cloud base, so visibility was poor and made worse by persistent “guti”. We traipsed across the extensive grasslands and through patches of dripping montane forest consisting of Yellow Wood *Podocarpus latifolius*, African Holly *Ilex mitis* and False Cabbage Tree *Schefflera umbellifera* where we were aware of bird activity in the upper levels but positive identification was virtually impossible with the exception of a flock of Livingstone’s Turacos which were keeping company with a Samango monkey. Late in the morning the sun broke through and we saw African Olive-pigeons flying to and from the massive rock face of Nyangani, the occasional Malachite Sunbird in the Protea shrubs and heard Olive Bush-shrike in the undergrowth. During the course of the day we saw about a dozen Blue Swallows quartering the grasslands. I was delighted to find an *Aloe rhodesiana* in flower. Unwisely, perhaps, we decided to return via a circular route which took us along the Nyazengu River – of great scenic beauty reminiscent of a Welsh stream, but which was taking us lower and lower. Inevitably we were then faced with an uphill slog which would have deterred even the SAS! Finally at 4 p.m. we reached the top, totally and utterly shattered, having covered nearly 10 km. Perhaps the birds were disappointing but where else in the world would you find a place of such outstanding natural beauty, and have it all to yourself? **John Andrews, Juliasdale**

KAROI BIRD CLUB

RYDINGS School Interpretive Centre

Walks took place around the dam, woodlands and vleis areas. The dam is nowhere near full, so some open shoreline is still there. Black-winged Stilt, Three-banded Plover, Common Sandpipers and Wood Sandpipers were present. Some young White-faced Duck were on the water. Common Waxbills and Orange-breasted Waxbills and Yellow-throated Longclaw were in the grass along the dam wall. We heard a coucal and in fact saw it in the distance. One had been heard in the same area several times before, only uttering the same call — doo, doo, doo, doo, doo — reminiscent of Burchell’s, although we are told that their calls are all the same. Further on was a Senegal Coucal with a more varied call so we will be doing some amateur sleuthing there! In the woodland were Terrestrial Brownbul (not often heard here), Grey Penduline-tit, Neddicky, which we often see here and obliges with his distinctive call, Orange-breasted Bush-shrike, Black Cuckooshrike, an unidentified woodpecker and a Lesser Honeyguide interested in a hole in a dead tree. Crested Barbet nearer the hostels had been chasing a Lesser Honeyguide too near to its nest. Five species of swallow, hawking insects and a Long-billed Crombec in an *Erythrina* completed our latest walk which yielded 70 species. **Merle Mitchell**

Other Outings

We have had none since our November count. Some recent happenings here at the farm have been the raising of two appealing Lizard Buzzard chicks by the resident pair in their beautifully festooned “Old Man’s Beard” nest. The pair of Wahlberg’s Eagles returned to successfully raise a chick, Black-shouldered Kites are now incubating and Brown Snake-eagle are preparing their nest. There was a juvenile harrier for a while, brown with a white band on the rump and just recently an adult Pallid Harrier was seen. A number of African Green-pigeons were feeding on the fruit of the Large-leaved *Rhus* in November/December while Dark-capped Yellow Warbler and Senegal Coucal bred, so too the Brubru with its spotted juvenile posing an identification problem at first. Marsh Owl in the vlei and now Black Coucal breeding, Black-throated Wattle-eye was a most unusual sighting for us, as were Terrestrial Brownbul. Six African Mourning Doves now come for grain, having bred in the garden. It was fascinating to see how many different species came to feed on flying ants emerging at sunset

(30 in all), although some only drawn by the activity I suspect but those seen hawking were: Amur Falcon, Miombo Blue-eared Starling and Violet-backed Starlings, African Golden Oriole, Black-headed Oriole, Dark-capped Bulbul, Black-collared Barbet, Southern Grey-headed Sparrow, Brown-hooded Kingfisher, Striped Kingfisher, Broad-billed Roller, Lilac-breasted Roller, Black Cuckooshrike, Southern Black Flycatcher, Fork-tailed Drongo, Mosque Swallow, European Bee-eater, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird, Tropical Boubou, Spectacled Weaver, White-browed Robin-chat, Chin-spot Batis, Brubru, Black-crowned Tchagra, Lizard Buzzard, Bennett's Woodpecker on the ground and a squirrel!, doves, Grey Go-away-bird and Purple-crested Turacos and African Grey Hornbill were sitting around hoping an ant would oblige and fly into their beaks! Water birds are disappointing here – with four dams one would hope for more – just not the right conditions I guess. One each of Squacco Heron, Purple Heron and Rufous-bellied Herons were seen, four Black-crowned Night-heron with 2 juveniles, African Black Duck, a handful of White-faced Ducks and the same of Comb Ducks, the latter only on a short visit, only two Egyptian Goose and a few of the usual African Darters and Reed Cormorants. One or two of Common Sandpipers, Wood Sandpiper, Three-banded Plover, a few more African Jacana and plenty of Black Crake. Lesser Swamp-warbler and Little Rush-warblers were in the reeds. We could do with a lot more, with all this water! **Merle Mitchell**

TAIL FEATHERS

Variable Sunbird in Spectacled Weaver's nest

Towards the end of September, I made an unusual observation. I saw a female sunbird (most probably Variable) fly up into the tube of an old Spectacled Weaver's nest in my garden. As the sunbird did not emerge, I watched for some time and noticed some movement from within the nest chamber itself. Unfortunately, I was unable to continue with my observations as shortly thereafter I went away. I returned home in the second week of October and watched the nest again but saw nothing of interest this time. I did, however, see a pair of Variable Sunbird feeding a youngster in the garden.

Trevor Edwards, 1 St. Martins Crescent, Hatfield, HARARE

Fishing rod perch for African Pied Wagtail

Last August I went to KARIBA on a fishing trip. I was in a boat with three others and we were tied to a dead tree which had some good branches on it. The nearest land was about 100 metres away. We all had our fishing rods over the side of the boat when an African Pied Wagtail flew up and landed on the rod of one of the other fishermen. It stayed perched there for a good 10 to 15 seconds (a mere meter from the hands of the fisherman) before flying away. **Trevor Edwards**

Rio Tinto Birdwatching Week

Deborah Varden and I went to two areas to help with the Rio Tinto Conservation Birdwatching week. On 24 October 2000 we went with Natalie Shade to Buchwa where we were joined by Collins – a Rio Tinto employee – working there on the Murowa project. He was keen to learn more about birds and I hope we helped a little. The first project area was a river valley – a small stream of water ran gently through it to meet the Runde River which we had waded across to get there. Some trees were already in leaf, others still bare. The highlight perhaps was an African Harrier-hawk just in front of us sitting in the stream bed cooling off. It was a pleasant surprise to hear Southern Ground-hornbill – they are obviously holding their own in communal land areas. We also came across footprints of a small elephant on the sand banks in the Runde River. The temperature was high mid 30's – and we returned to the mine house to find no electricity and no water!! Another house had water so we did manage a welcome shower, but of course, fans didn't work.

Sengwa Coal Fields with Brian Peters was even hotter. We expected power and a fridge but alas the generator had broken down again – but we did have water. We did a local walk upon arrival at 4.30 p.m. and saw the Southern Carmine Bee-eaters – some still feeding young in the colony. 6.00 a.m. on the 27th saw us set off plus water bottles, sun and insect repellents and sandwiches. We walked for over 6 hours down the gorge which had a few murky pools at times amongst the rocks. Walking was difficult at times – sandy or very rocky terrain with 300 ft cliffs on both sides and a real heat trap. Deborah became exhausted before we got back and Mathius who had joined us for the walk was not used to such strenuous exercise in that heat. We saw quite a few raptors, although we didn't confirm a Verreaux's Eagle, despite having seen plenty of Dassie. European Bee-eaters dived in and out of the rock pools and hornbills echoed from one cliff to another. In the evening, we sat by the river and about 40+ Double-banded Sandgrouse came to sip at an area of wet sand in the Sengwa. About 4.00 p.m. Brian and I set off along the cliff top above the Carmine Bee-eater colony but turned back after a tremendous dust storm came up and blotted out everything in all

directions – we felt we must be in the Sahara! Saturday morning, after a night of heavy rain and a thunderstorm, saw us out on an almost non-existent track to the old river bed where there were some big, well-matured trees including *albida* and we added quite a few more species to our list. We left for Eiffel Flats at about 11.00 a.m. and from there were driven back to Harare, quite pleased with our hard won 101 species (of which 31 are not on the Atlas list for Buchwa). It was a very profitable 5 days.

Jacko Williams

Outing to Patchway Mine (Rio Tinto Conservation Birdwatching Week)

Patchway Mine is 18 kilometres west of Kadoma. Our participants were Russell Chittenden (Mine Manager and BLZ member), Margaret Parrock and Bob Freeman (both of BLZ), Juliatha Mashiri (teacher at Patchway Secondary School – in charge of Action 21 Club) and Enrico Devalati (a pupil at Patchway Secondary School and a member of Action 21 Club). Three days had been set aside for outings and observations and we look forward to next year to develop and plan further outings. 47 species were identified, highlights of which were: Grey-headed Bush-shrike, Green-winged Pytilia, Woodland Kingfisher and Wire-tailed Swallow. **Margaret Parrock**

BUMI HILLS and Starvation Island — 18 October 2000

My previous experience of the lovely Lake KARIBA had been game drives and game walks along the foreshore but this was to change drastically when I was lucky enough to join Amos the boat driver on a boat cruise. Our first stop was just after the Katete harbour where we sighted Green-backed Heron and Goliath Herons, Little Egrets and Yellow-billed Egrets and the ever-beautiful Malachite Kingfisher. Later on we saw Red-billed Teal, Black-winged Stilt, Ruff, Common Sandpipers, Wood Sandpipers and Curlew Sandpipers as well as Collared Pratincole, juvenile African Fish-eagle and Osprey, White-winged Tern, Grey-headed Gull, Kittlitz's Plover, White-crowned Lapwing and Three-banded Plovers. Below Bumi Hills, far out on the land near the foreshore, we saw Southern Carmine Bee-eaters and Little Bee-eaters, Red-billed Oxpeckers, Southern Grey-headed Sparrow as well as White-browed Sparrow-weaver and Crested Guineafowl. We continued the trip until Starvation Island where we saw a Common Greenshank and heard Meyer's Parrot and Greater Honeyguide calling. Just below the viewing platform we saw a Common Ringed Plover. That evening there was a beautiful sunset on the Lake and when we were walking back from Katete harbour we saw Kurrichane Buttonquail, White-browed Scrub-robin, Grey-headed Kingfisher, Red-winged Starling, Buffy Pipit, Grey-headed Bush-shrike, Rattling Cisticola and Black-crowned Tchagra. Our search for the Bar-tailed Godwit was in vain but we will continue to try to find it. **Taimu Mtema, Bumi Hills Safaris**

Sightings at Rocara Park, LAKE CHIVERO

A feathered skeleton of a Green-Backed Honeybird was found on 22 October 2000 by my granddaughter, Hayley Bull, (aged 3). The bird has been given to Mrs T Couto.

A Scaly-throated Honeyguide was seen on 10 January 2001 – it would appear to be a “first” for the Park.

Mike Marriott

Letter to the Editor

It was with great regret and disappointment that I read of the halt to the Garden Bird Survey. I realise that it involves a lot of work for whomever co-ordinates and analyses the data (and I'm not going to volunteer!). However, for the likes of me, with the security situation, scarcity and cost of fuel, my HARARE garden has been my only birdwatching venue and enjoyment for over a year, the incentive for the most part being the survey and knowing I had an aim, I am sure there must be others of my sort of age and situation who feel as disheartened as I do. Yes, we can go on monitoring our birds in an aimless way, but it won't be the same. It isn't just the unusual that is of interest – with all the tree felling by ZESA who knows what may disappear by next year. The Gabar Goshawk from my area for one, crows are taking over their trees already. Without an annual report we won't know what is declining, increasing, e.g. House Sparrows have not been around my house this year whilst Blue Waxbills have and so on. With sadness, **Jacko Williams**

Thank you for letting me know your feelings – I have received similar sentiments from only two other participants in the survey. The decision to end the survey for the time being was not made by me and I would have been happy to continue to co-ordinate, but there had been a drastic decline in the number of people participating. What is very important though is for an analysis of the information already received to be done and comparisons made with the data which has been collected during the years 1971 to 1998. Later this year a questionnaire will be sent to members to see if there is sufficient interest to revive the survey in 2002. **Di Rushforth — Garden Bird Survey Co-ordinator**

NOTICEBOARD

Honorary Treasurer

Council is looking for a volunteer to take over from Edna Elliot-McCall as Honorary Treasurer. An experienced person with accounting knowledge would be ideal to offer advice to Council and to oversee the control of the Association's finances. The task is not at all onerous as staff write up the books of account as well as do the banking. The Honorary Treasurer would have to attend approximately four Council meetings per year and present a report at the AGM. If anyone feels they are able to take over the position please contact David Gray on 885406 or John Paxton on 490208.

Legacies and Wreath Funds

Many charitable organisations receive substantial income from bequests left to them by well wishers. For example, the RSPB, our Partner in the UK, receives about 25 % of its income in this way. If any of our members would like to remember BirdLife Zimbabwe in their wills and so make a contribution to our work in conservation and education this would be so greatly appreciated. A way to make a similar contribution in memory of a loved one is by Wreath Funds whereby money is donated to the charity in lieu of flowers. Please contact the Executive Officer for further information.

Special offer from Imbabala Camp at Kazungula

ARE YOU A KEEN BIRD-WATCHER? ARE YOU TIRED OF BEING SURROUNDED BY CRIME AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE? DO YOU WANT TO GET AWAY FROM IT ALL? HAVE YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO 'DO' THE OKAVANGO, BUT CAN'T AFFORD THE FOREX?

All the Okavango 'specials' (and many more) are in Zimbabwe at Kazungula on the Botswana border. See Slaty Egret, Long-toed Lapwing, Coppery-tailed Coucal, Bradfield's Hornbill, Hartlaub's Babbler, Greater Swamp-warbler, Luapula Cisticola (new species split of Black-backed) and Chirping Cisticola, Marsh Wagtail (Cape ssp.), Plain-backed Pipit, Brown-throated Weaver, Fan-tailed Widowbird and Brown Firefinch. Plus (in season) the possibility of Swamp Nightjar, Olive-tree Warbler, Swamp Boubou, Shelley's Sunbird, Red-headed Quelea and Sitatunga Antelope. Perhaps even spend a day in Chobe (Botswana) for birds and game including Puku and Red Lechwe — and whilst viewing the Victoria Falls, check for Schalow's Turaco.

Northwest Zimbabwe is the quietest area of the country with no political hassles, minimal crime, and a total list of bird species of over 300 each month. Fuel is obtainable too. Because there are few international tourists visiting these days, prices to Zimbabweans have dropped and you can bargain for reasonable rates. Wild Horizons (e-mail wildhori@samaia.co.zw or Cell: 011 208074 or 011 401632) run Imbabala Camp at Kazungula and will give Zimbabwe groups preferential rates. Local birder Chris Pollard (e-mail: chrispy@telcovic.co.zw or Cell: 091 364875 can assist with any information sought and, if required, is available (at non-international rates) as a guide.

Get together with your birding friends – come to the paradise that Zimbabwe used to be!

Houseboat for charter

Reasonable rates are offered for a houseboat on Lake Kariba. Accommodation will sleep 12 people comfortably and charters are either self-catering or all inclusive. Discounts are being offered to members of BLZ and a percentage from those bookings will be paid to BirdLife Zimbabwe. For more information please contact Malcolm Attwell, Telephone/fax 060-5633 or e-mail Attwell@crosswinds.net

Sponsored Membership Fund

Thank you very much to the following people who have contributed to the Sponsored Membership Fund which now totals \$2 950 and which will be used to sponsor members who are unable to afford to pay subscriptions themselves.

Mr & Mrs G Hensman	\$ 500	Mrs W Bourne	\$ 450
Mr & Mrs B Rushforth	\$ 450	Mr & Mrs W Finch	\$ 450
Ann Carnegie	\$ 300	Mr & Mrs E S Travis	\$ 250
Mrs B Herman	\$ 200	K G Seiler	\$ 150
Mr C T Baker	\$ 50	Mr & Mrs D J Sheehan	\$ 50
Mr C M & Mrs M P Forder	\$ 50	Peter Caldwell-Barr	\$ 50

Buy a brick campaign for BirdLife Zimbabwe's Headquarters building

The total raised now stands at \$105 908 and we thank the following for their donations. For those members still wanting to give a donation, a form is included at the end of the issue.

Above \$1 000

Dr R M Harwin in memory of the late Mrs J Harwin	\$5 000
Mrs V Siebert in memory of the late Mr D M de Vos Siebert	\$3 000
S I Howland on behalf of J M Langford (UK) & Rosemary Langford (Channel Islands)	\$3 000
Mr & Mrs G Carter	\$2 000
S Pitt	\$2 000
Peter Van As	\$1 098
Terrence Fallon	\$1 550

\$1 000

Mr & Mrs E S Travis, Dr A Watt, Mr G & Mrs W Gilmour, J S Drynan, Mr & Mrs S R Fourie, R J Haywood, T J Searson (Snr.), Mr & Mrs J Barratt, Mr & Mrs G Hensman

Other

Mrs H M Young, Ant Fynn, Frank D Adams	\$ 550
W J Wragg, A D Hatton, Martin Smith, R I Robinson, } J D Andrews, Mr & Mrs P Clarke, W J Fraser, }	\$ 500
Colette Wiles, Mike Marriot, H Rees, J Reynolds	\$ 300
Ann Carnegie, Dr & Mrs J Clatworthy	\$ 250
Mrs J L Arnold, Kim Tapson,	\$ 200
Denise Oldknow, Mr & Mrs F Winch	\$ 100

The Building Fund now stands at \$1 148 976 made up as follows:

Grant from Vogelbescherming Nederland	944 544
Interest accrued	98 524
Members' contributions	105 908

As the target is \$1 600 000 you can see we have quite a way to go so all further contributions will be most gratefully received!

Donations

We are grateful to the following for their generous donations:

P G Industries	\$1 200
Mr & Mrs J Barratt	\$1 000
Mrs J Keith	\$ 500
D Stephens	\$ 50

New Members

We welcome the following new members:

C J Andersen, George Eastwood, Mrs Val Fielder, Mrs Ann Lennard, Clive Nealon, Kim Smet, Graham Speedy, R Stodart, K G Uzzell

Printed by JAY-KAY PUBLISHING

Shop 5, Patric Court, 113 Nelson Mandela Avenue, Harare. Tel. 733463/724754