

BABBLER

BirdLife Zimbabwe

A PARTNER DESIGNATE OF BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL

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ACTIVITIES

NATIONAL

World Birdwatch — 6/7 October 2001 and World Bird Festival

In 2001 World Birdwatch will mark the opening of World Bird Festival. This will be an opportunity to encourage and introduce people to the pleasures of birdwatching, especially during the World Birdwatch weekend of 6 and 7 October. The international festival will run through to the end of the first week of November and will officially end at the Taiwan Bird Fair run by the Wild Bird Federation of Taiwan (BirdLife in Taiwan) 2 to 4 November. On show at that Fair will be photographs of the world wide winners in the schools bird competition “Save the birds, save the trees, save the earth” and will include a photograph of the world runner up display panel entry by Twin Rivers School, Zimbabwe – a national winner in our schools bird competition organised by the BLZ Education Committee.

During October, as members of BirdLife Zimbabwe, we appeal to you to please try to encourage and stimulate others to take an interest in birds and maybe even try to get them to join BLZ. October is a wonderful month for birding – there is a lot of breeding activity and summer migrants are here to swell the number of species we are lucky enough to see in Zimbabwe. In these difficult times we need to focus on that which is still beautiful and inspirational – even if you only watch the birds in your garden.

BirdLife Zimbabwe 24-hour Birdwatch

On a National level our own Birdwatch will be held over the weekend 6/7 October to coincide with World Birdwatch. BirdLife Zimbabwe will participate in the 48 hour World Birdwatch over the weekend and teams’ sighting during the period will all contribute to a grand Zimbabwean total. For our own Birdwatch the following aims and rules are:

AIMS

1. To identify as many birds as possible in a continuous 24 hour period during the weekend.
2. To raise money for the Chimanimani Schools Bird Project.
3. To have fun – enjoy ourselves – and increase awareness of our wonderful bird life.

RULES

1. A team must consist of at least 2 members of BirdLife Zimbabwe.
2. Each bird must be seen or heard by at least 2 members of each team.
3. Only free flying, wild birds may count.
4. The area covered during the Birdwatch must not exceed a 50 km radius from your starting point.
5. The list of birds must be taken from your best 24 hour period over the weekend 6/7 October. For example, if you have commenced birdwatching at 6 a.m. on 6 October and finished at 6 p.m. on 7 October and your best 24 hour Continuous period has been between 6 a.m. on 6 October and 6 a.m. on 7 October then this can be chosen for entry in our own competition.

For entry forms and further information please contact:

BirdLife Zimbabwe	Terence Fallon
35 Clyde Road	6 Wingate Road
Eastlea	Highlands
Tel/Fax: (04) 490208	Tel. (04) 496100
E-mail: birds@zol.co.zw	Fax (04) 498551

MASHONALAND BRANCH**Regular outings****NB Note new times**

Mukuvisi Woodlands: Sundays, 2 September and 7 October, 2001. Meet at the Paget Road entrance at 6.30 a.m. There will be a vehicle guard available.

Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary: *Please note new meeting place.* Sundays, 9 September and 14 October 2001. (Annual breakfast – see details and booking slip included). Meet at 6.30 a.m. at Old Hararians Bowls Section car park where there will be a security guard. Please bring a small amount of cash for payment for security. Bring your chairs and tea. Beginners are most welcome and spare binoculars will be available. We encourage members with children to attend. Parents must however be there as well.

Saturday afternoon outings

15 September 2001: National Botanic Gardens, Fifth Street Extension. Meet at 3.00 p.m. in the car park. There will be entry fees payable.

20 October 2001: 12 Welston Road, Glen Forest. Meet at 2.00 p.m. at Wingate Golf Club, Teviotdale Road. Bring chairs and refreshments.

Sunday outings

23 September 2001: Mazowe Sailing Club, Lake Chivero. Meet at 6.30 a.m., at Old Hararians, Bowls Section car park where guarded parking will be available. Please bring a small amount of cash for payment for the guard. Lunch will be available at the Sailing Club but bookings a week in advance are essential. If you would like to book lunch please contact Mr Mike Robinson on telephone 744410.

28 October 2001: Kent Estates, Norton. Again, meet at Old Hararians Bowls Section car park at 6.30 a.m. Security will be available. Bring chairs and refreshments.

Thursday evening meetings

20 September 2001: Dr Peter Frost will give a talk on the status and biology of the Melodious Lark.

18 October 2001: As it is the month of the World Bird Festival a light-hearted quiz will be held. Please support the event and have fun.

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

Rifa Educational Camp – FULLY BOOKED**Thursday outings to Marlborough Vlei**

These are provisionally on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of each month provided Ian Riddell is available. Meet at 4.30 p.m. Directions – drive down to the bottom of Princess Margaret, turn left and continue

until the new houses begin. Parking is in a cul-de-sac where a caretaker lives in a fenced off area. As Ian's transport is a bicycle, he needs to be told whether people intend visiting the vlei. Telephone Ian on 339716, or E-mail gemsaf@mango.zw. Dates: 13 and 27 September and 11 and 25 October.

MATABELELAND BRANCH

Evening Meetings

Our September evening meeting will be combined with the August month end ramble at Hillside Dams.

Friday 5 October – Video Evening. Repeats of a couple of excellent videos including one on Eagles narrated by David Attenborough and starring local birds. Venue 3A Holdengarde Ave, Hillside at 8 p.m.

Monthly Outings

Sunday 16 September – Tshabalala. This will be a morning ramble and we intend to leave vehicles at the entrance gate and walk. The Sanctuary always has lots to offer and yields a good range of Acacia specials, so please do come and join us. Those interested should either contact the Chairman or meet at the Entrance Gate at 6.30 a.m., bringing morning tea.

Sunday 21 October – Kloof Farm Nyamandhlovu Rd. We aim to return to Anne Visser's property, which we visited last year, the farm offers a range of different habitats and is comparatively close to Bulawayo. All interested should contact Martin

Aisleby

Due to the rather poor support that our monthly outings to Aisleby have received, all interested should contact the co-ordinator, this will allow transport to be shared and, if nobody has fuel, will allow the outing to be cancelled with no one stranded at the boom. Dates are as follows:

Sunday 30 September Co-ordinator Martin Smith

Sunday 28 October Co-ordinator Penny Feather

Hillside Dams

Monthly walks continue from the Lower Dam Car Park, meeting at 4.00 p.m. Dates are as follows:

Fridays 28 September and 26 October.

EASTERN DISTRICTS BIRD CLUB

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

Outings

Sunday 30 September 2001 Rusape 6.00 a.m. I Browning 61809

Sunday 28 October 2001 Mutare Heights 6.00 am. K Dixon 65819

Outings will set off from the Museum at the arranged time and, if organised in advance, transport and binoculars can be made available.

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 are conducted on the first Saturday of each month.

Other Outings

To be arranged.

MIDLANDS BRANCH

Co-ordinator: Gavin Conway ☎ 054-24058 (home) 24666 (work) e-mail gconway@adtech.co.zw

Sadly, the Conways are leaving Zimbabwe at the end of the year. May we take this opportunity of thanking Gavin and his family for their valuable contribution to birds and birding, particularly their work monitoring Black Storks and their breeding sites. We wish you well for the future.

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 am. on the 3rd Saturday of each month. Contact Margaret Parrock ☎ 068-3644 for details.

REPORTS

NATIONAL

IMPORTANT – Tree cutting threatens birds in the MUKUVISI WOODLANDS

The Mukuvisi Woodlands in Harare contain the largest remaining tract of intact indigenous miombo woodland close to Harare. The Mukuvisi Woodlands area has an environmental education and recreational centre where Zimbabweans, in particular young schoolchildren, are shown indigenous wild animals and trees at a place close to their homes. The woodlands and the Mukuvisi River support a wide variety of small mammals, insects and birds. The Mukuvisi Woodlands are administered by a voluntary body the Mukuvisi Woodlands Association (MukWA).

BirdLife Zimbabwe has been conducting walks to observe birds in the Public Walking area of the Mukuvisi Woodlands on one Sunday morning per month for 25 years! At least 220 bird species have been identified in the woodlands and more than 100 of those are known to nest there each year. There is no other place more centrally placed around Harare where some of these birds may still be observed! Spotted Creeper, Miombo Rock-thrush, White-breasted Cuckooshrike, Stierling's Wren-warbler, Miombo Tit and Whyte's Barbet are particularly sought after and have also drawn foreign visitors. Of the species of birds found nesting in the woodlands a number nest in holes in trees including the following:

Southern Black Tit, Miombo Tit, 4 barbet species, 4 woodpecker species, African Grey Hornbill, 2 species of Wood-hoopoe, Meyer's Parrot, 2 roller species, 3 species of starlings, 4 species of kingfishers, 2 species of honeyguide and Yellow-throated Petronia.

Holes are also used by Night Apes and small rodents. Many of the "special" bird species, including Spotted Creeper exist only in mature woodlands with large trees and a well developed canopy. Other birds forage for small insect life living in decaying timber, e.g. woodpeckers and wood-hoopoes. With the current economic hardships being faced by many Zimbabweans, there has been increased human pressure on the woodlands. Of particular concern have been cases of mugging, littering and illegal tree cutting. Despite efforts to patrol the area, most of the dead branches, and therefore the nesting sites of hole nesting species, have already been removed and some large trees have been removed in recent weeks. The impact of this destruction on some bird species is not yet known. As the pressure on the woodlands is likely to be on-going it is planned to fence the entire area with a multi-stranded electric fence which will prevent illegal entry. Donors are being sought to fund the cost of the fence and it is hoped that the funds will be forthcoming soon! BirdLife Zimbabwe has assisted with the production of a project proposal for the fence and with the donation of signs declaring tree cutting as illegal!

A specialist bird guide is also being trained. He will, it is hoped, be able to take visitors on walks to show them the special birds that are found in the woodlands and in this way some income will be generated for the conservation of the woodlands. Surplus binoculars and bird books are needed. If anyone is able to assist or wishes to visit the area for walks in the woodlands with a bird guide during the week please contact Geoff Lowe, telephone Harare 332087 or the manager of the Mukuvisi Woodlands, telephone Harare 747111. **Geoff Lowe**

Bird Awareness Programme

2001 has been a year of competitions in this bird project. In quiz competitions, St Columbus Primary School's team won in Hauna, Aberfoyle B came first in the Eastern Highlands quiz and Chimanimani Primary School in that cluster of schools. These events were thoroughly enjoyed by all contestants. The Harare group of schools were invited to enter for an international competition organised by BirdLife International (BLI) — United Kingdom. There was much excitement when BLI announced that Twin Rivers School, Zimbabwe was a runner-up in the events with their large painted panels. Nationally, Glen View 6 Primary group was second, followed by Highlands and Alfred Beit School. The message from the winning team was "Cut a Tree, Plant a Tree" and from Glen View, "Educate people to respect trees and then enforce law". Another global competition for schools in the education programme of

BirdLife Zimbabwe will be held early in October, entitled “The Inspiration of Birds” – the inter-linking of birds in the culture of people.

A bird ringing demonstration with an element of research into the species found in the Honde Valley was an interesting exercise. Teachers and some of the pupils attended. Boys and girls enjoyed being given a bird to hold and release. Every one of the birds flew off unharmed with its identity number on its new band. Mrs Dale Hanmer led the ringing work and she was assisted by bird guides and scouts, who, together with all of us, learnt a lot about the birds that were netted.

Some of the lovely birds caught and set free were Little Bee-eater, White-starred Robin, two Collared Sunbirds and Green Twinspot. The bird that complained the most about being caught was a Square-tailed Drongo while a Little Sparrowhawk most resented being caught. A few lucky, hard working schools were each given a pair of binoculars donated by a German Bird Club and Mrs G Locherer. Almost at the end of term on a visit to Cheneka Primary School, Rusape, our team was surprised to find the whole school either road making or gardening – keen SCOPE exponents. **Mrs L Maasdorp – Co-ordinator**

MASHONALAND BRANCH

Correction to report on visit to GREYSTONE PARK Nature Preserve

Ian Riddell has pointed out that the African Hobby reportedly seen at Greystone Park on 17 March 2001 was most probably a Eurasian Hobby. Thank you, Ian, for putting us straight. **Editor**

HAKA PARK – Sunday 24 June 2001

We started this outing by checking the CLEVELAND Dam wall area as we mistakenly believed that the game park did not open until 8 a.m. Some of our members, however, did go into the game park at 7 a.m. and reported that they saw good birds between 7 and 8 a.m. We had heard that African Pygmy-goose was being seen on the dam and we were not disappointed as we managed to find a breeding pair with a juvenile. In the same area we also had good views of 3 White-backed Duck and 3 Yellow-throated Longclaws. Away from the dam 2 over-wintering Klaas’s Cuckoo were heard and we managed to see two unusual raptors in the form of an African Cuckoo Hawk and a Dark Chanting-goshawk. Other highlights included 2 Swallow-tailed Bee-eater, 5 Whyte’s Barbet, 2 Southern Black Tit, 1 Buffy Pipit, 1 Stierling’s Wren-warbler and 20 Violet-backed Starling. The total species count was 65. **Richard Dennison**

Dick Pitman — Thursday 19 July 2001

Dick Pitman gave us a very interesting talk about The Zambezi Society, to which many Birdlife members also belong. He described how it started as a small advocacy group, trying to prevent damage being done to the area of the Zambezi Valley, saying “You can’t do this, you can’t do that”, and gradually developed into a professional organisation working with other environmental groups to lead and advise on the development and protection of the area. The Society is concerned with the whole of the Zambezi area and works with groups in Zambia and Mozambique as well as being very involved with three District Councils in the Zambezi Valley. The Society recognises that, as in many other areas, sustained utilisation is the only way forward.

Dick commented that Birdlife Zimbabwe is now going through a similar development phase in that we now have permanent staff and are dealing on a professional level as well as the amateur level of the general membership. Dick made us all look at the Zambezi Society in a very different light. We are very grateful to him for giving us his time. **Jennifer Carter**

Crundall Brothers GLEN FOREST — Saturday 21 July 2001

The decision to meet at Wingate Golf Club and share transport from there to Crundall Brothers Farm proved to be a good one as the number of vehicles used was approximately halved. We had a very good turnout of about 21 people, with some newcomers, and this was pleasing. We were a bit late in getting to our destination because, for the second time in a row, I took a wrong turning. This meant that we only had enough time to walk from the homestead to the wall of the main dam and could not visit the woodlands on the hills. However, the weather was perfect and both the small and the big dams gave some good birding. Highlights included 20 White-faced Duck and 9 White-backed Duck, 2 Egyptian Goose, 2 Red-billed Teal, 1 Long-crested Eagle, 3 Senegal Coucal, 2 Giant Kingfisher, 3 Whyte’s Barbet, 2 Miombo Tit, 1 Yellow-throated Longclaw, 30 Common Waxbill and 30 Pin-tailed Whydah. It is interesting to note that on the last three outings to dams in Mashonaland I have recorded White-backed Duck so their numbers could be high at present. A total of 60 species was recorded.

Our thanks go to Ken & Sue Worsley who provided tea and, cake for what was an unusually large turnout. **Richard Dennison**

MATABELELAND

From the Chairman

This BULAWAYO winter has produced a considerable amount of cold weather with minimum temperatures dropping to single figures. The last week in July seemed to be particularly unpleasant with a prolonged bout of cold and overcast weather. Avifauna must have been affected by the cold conditions with the weaker birds presumably succumbing to the low night time temperatures – within the garden I recovered a Dark-capped Bulbul corpse, with no obvious damage, suggesting it had suffered this fate.

Winter flowering trees are now in bloom and sunbirds, starlings, orioles and bulbuls have all “homed in” on Kenya Coffee Shade and Erythrina. Both trees must offer appreciable rewards, judging by the level of activity associated with each species.

In contrast, activity on Branch outings has been rather poor with cold weather and a lack of fuel keeping members at home. In July it was with sadness that we learnt of the passing of Ewan Frame, a staunch supporter of our evening meetings. Ewan always had plenty to offer and was renowned for livening up social evenings with his squeeze box. Our deepest sympathies go to Margaret – we will all miss him. Finally, October features a month of globally related avian activities with a Worldwide Birdwatch on 6/7th October and a number of festivals in different countries. We felt we could contribute to this and are planning a competition linked to the theme of “The inspiration of Birds”. We aim to hold an art, prose, poetry competition with the possibility of award winning entries being submitted to the Global event via E-mail. Please do continue with your support. **Martin Smith**

AISLEBY Waterfowl Count — Sunday 15 July

Five of us met at the boom on a cold but clear winter morning to conduct the 21st count at Aisleby since the current scheme commenced in 1992. The canoe was put to work on the Upper UMGUSA Dam which was still spilling and allowed its weedy fringe to be surveyed – it was certainly a lot easier to record “skulkers” from the water than from the land. Little Grebe and Red-knobbed Coot were numerous with the two species making up the majority of the water birds recorded. At the head of the dam reed islands and shallow water offered a little more variety with a range of ducks and herons present. Three Green-backed Heron were flushed from the water’s edge, whilst a Hottentot Teal and two young endeavoured to make themselves invisible. Across from the Club, the inlet held most of the dam’s waterfowl.

Sedge surrounded most of this region and moving away from the shore broke up into small clumps which held an appreciable number of Red-knobbed Coot nests, with clutches of between one to three eggs and, presumably, most of the birds were still laying. On the water, Maccoa Duck were present in a variety of different plumages, ranging from attractive males to scruffy juveniles. A total of 36 birds were recorded – one of the highest totals to date. North of the inlet, shallow water held a good number of birds including three Black-necked Grebes, whose red eyes were clearly visible in the low winter light. It was interesting to note a considerable difference in size, with one being significantly larger and longer necked than its companions, perhaps an adult as opposed to a juvenile.

Back on land it was pleasing to find a pair of Grey Crowned Crane, a far cry from the seventy plus birds that we had recorded in the past, but better than none at all which has been the result for the past two counts. Totalling species, it was interesting to note some significant changes in species totals from both the January 2001 count and the mid-winter count of the previous year. A few are summarised below:

Species	July 2000	January 2001	July 2001
Little Grebe	304	302	492
Black-necked Grebe	1	0	3
African Darter	4	17	1
Squacco Heron	0	37	1
White Stork	8	63	6
Southern Pochard	68	242	24
Red-knobbed Coot	379	1 307	789

Friday, 28 July – HILLSIDE Dams

In contrast with the chilly conditions of the morning, the sky had cleared and the sun emerged to add a little warmth to the afternoon. This seemed to have encouraged avian activity and we found plenty of interest. Shrikes were well represented with four species being recorded including an attractive

Orange-breasted Bush-shrike and some active Black-backed Puffback, who were highly vocal with a collection of whistles and clicks. Beside the watercourse a Lizard Buzzard acted as a focus for much avian chatter and produced a flurry of alarm calls on taking to the wing in search of prey. At ground level, Terrestrial Brownbul foraged amongst the undergrowth and it was pleasing to be able to compare its call with that of the more nasal and penetrating sound of the Yellow-bellied Greenbul, which called from higher up the watercourse. Out of the lee of the Upper Dam wall, we were exposed to a chilly wind, which led to a brief pause on the wall. White-backed Duck were present in substantial numbers along with the biggest tick of the afternoon in the form of an adult African Fish-eagle. This was perched in a tree at the head of the dam and quite a surprise for a comparatively small urban water body.

Across the dam wall, sunbirds were the next point of interest along with a Yellow-bellied Eremomela. At least six male Scarlet-chested Sunbird and a few females were actively gleaning insects in flight around large Albizia trees – with the low winter light and deep blue sky, scarlet chests seemed particularly vivid and made an attractive sight.

Lastly, we stopped at the reed bed on the watercourse between the two dams, where a good range of seed-eaters were planning to spend the night. Most were looking distinctly nondescript, out of breeding plumage and taxed our powers of observation. With the light fading and my knowledge of LBJ silhouettes being sorely tried, it was time to move on! **Martin Smith**

EASTERN DISTRICTS BIRD CLUB

Stonechat Cottage VUMBA Heights — Sunday 24 June 2001

It was a lovely sunny morning in Mutare but, sadly, we climbed faster than the sun and were enveloped in cloud well before we reached our destination. However, a cool morning like this required a bit of exercise, so the stroll through the forest paths around this lovely house was a delight despite the lack of birds.

As we set off we saw 2 African Olive-pigeon fly over and at the first clearing we found Olive Sunbird, Cape Batis and Variable Sunbird but there was little activity further in. All the paths are extremely well-maintained and we enjoyed our exploration especially as we were out of the cold wind. Back in the garden the African Stonechat sat beside Singing Cisticola and Cape Robin-chat appeared and disappeared. We took advantage of our hosts' generosity and warmed ourselves with coffee as we chatted. Further up the Vumba Road at Genaina, things were still very quiet until the sun finally reached us and birds appeared. First, it was White-tailed Crested Flycatcher, Red-backed Mannikin and Chirinda Apalis but down by the small dam we were thrilled to see Lemon Dove, Black-fronted Bush-shrike, Yellow-throated Woodland-warbler and Roberts's Warbler – all specials for the immediate area.

So, our count wasn't impressive but all 7 of us enjoyed the outing and we owe thanks to the Hollands and David Hancock for allowing us onto their property and to Jane Clegg for leading us. **Ken Dixon**

Outing to BURMA VALLEY — Sunday 29 July 2001

A few heavy-headed and tired bodies (after an excellent evening at the Odzi Club) dragged themselves out of warm beds to bird away the early morning in Burma Valley. The birding was very well worth it and was enjoyed by the usual stalwarts and a few newcomers to the Bird Club. Our party of 15 was met at the Burma Valley Club by Verna McGregor who so kindly provided us with coffee and sandwiches. Many thanks for your ever generous hospitality, Verna.

We set off, through mixed broadleaved woodland, to explore the Club area and after a few hundred metres our list was already looking respectable with sightings of Swallow-tailed Bee-eater, Whyte's Barbet, Greater Honeyguide and Lesser Honeyguides, Southern Black Flycatcher, Yellow-throated Longclaw, Golden-breasted Bunting and White-breasted Cuckooshrike. We also heard Red-throated Twinspot and Verna pointed out to us the quite haunting call of the Lizard Buzzard that seemed to be displaying overhead.

But a lifer was in store for many of us – a pair of Western Violet-backed Sunbirds flitting around in a "Mango tree"! At first we struggled to identify the mystery birds but we were all thrilled with our final verdict – even Terry had to confess that the female sunbird actually had a white eye-stripe! Its robust, shortish bill was a distinguishing feature as well and one may have been forgiven for identifying the female as a warbler. In fact, it was amazing how many species of sunbird were in the area, namely Purple-banded Sunbird, Miombo Double-collared Sunbird, Scarlet-chested Sunbird, Amethyst Sunbird, Collared Sunbird and, of course, the Violet-backed. The rest of our walk back to the Club House provided us with Yellow-breasted Apalis, Long-billed Crombec and a very active, small party of Green-capped Eremomela. By the time we set off for the dam wall on the McGregor's farm, our total tally for the day was already 60 birds.

At the dam our party then split up – one convoy off up to Piet Snyders Club in the Vumba for lunch and the other back to Mutare. Well, the birders that had to go back really missed something very special. As we were about to cross a small, very heavily vegetated and reeded river, an African Finfoot (male) busied itself along the river bank and even did us the favour of alighting from the water to show off its large, conspicuous bright reddish-orange feet and legs. What a treat this sighting was as the Finfoot was very obliging for as long as we sat very silently. For many, again, this was a lifer or, at best, a bird not many had observed from such close quarters. At the small bridge we also spotted Purple-banded Sunbird, Livingstone's Turaco and a Dark-backed Weaver.

After an excellent lunch, courtesy of the Piet Snyders Club (many thanks to Sheena Boswell-Brown and ladies), we set off on the bumpy Cascades Road back to Mutare.

The outing was enjoyed by all and our final list was a very creditable 80 birds, not to mention our two extra-special sightings!

Many thanks again to Verna for helping us to organise the outing and for looking after us all so very well. We shall be back! **Bridget Holland**

Karoi Bird Club

Black Stork Colony — MHANGURA Mine – Friday 27 July 2001

QDS 1630C3

We visited this colony on 28 June 2001, and again on 27 July, 2001. In June we saw six nests and, in order to assist and simplify our monitoring, we numbered them 1-6 respectively. Four of them – nests 1, 2, 4 and 5 had chicks in them but, because of inadequate binocular strength, their small size and downy appearance it was difficult to ascertain numbers in each nest. Nest 3 had 2 eggs, which had been rolled out of the nest and nest 6 was empty with no activity noted. When we returned in July, better prepared with stronger binoculars and a spotting scope, we could now count the chicks, which had grown and were now standing up in the nests and we could see their ages varied from nest to nest. Nest 1 had 2 chicks and nest 2, which had chicks in June, was now empty. Suspected predation or accident – they would have been too young to have left the nest. Nest 4 had 3 chicks and nest 5 had 1 chick – this being the most advanced, with a good number of black feathers. Nest 3 was still empty and the rolled out eggs still in the same position. But there were two adults present, one adjusting the nest material. Nest 6 now had an incubating bird on it. We also found another two nests, which we numbered 7 and 8. Nest 7, which we hadn't seen in June, had 2 young chicks in it, and nest 8, curiously placed in the opening of a "cave", sited deep down in the quarry, had an incubating bird in it. We estimated, on appearance only, the ages of the chicks in each nest, with nest 5 having the oldest chick, nest 4 second oldest, nest 1 third oldest and nest 7 the youngest chicks. Eight chicks in all spread out in four nests, two incubating birds and two empty nests. We watched the parents feeding the chicks, and they also spent a lot of time, while we were present, circling overhead, calling. In a cave in a side wall, we spotted Speckled Pigeon, and there were African Palm-swift, together with two other unidentified swifts, as well as Rock Martin, flying around. A pair of Lanner Falcon flew down into the quarry, out and overhead periodically, but no breeding activity was sighted. We also enjoyed seeing Magpie Shrike – a group of four to five on telephone lines along the Lions Den/Mhangura road, together with a Southern White-crowned Shrike – at the 7 km peg from Lions Den, to be precise!

Shamrock Mine — Thursday 2 August 2001

QDS 1630A3

We arrived at this old mine quarry before dawn and were delighted to hear Freckled Nightjar and African Wood-owl call and, as dawn was breaking, African Broadbill. There was one lone Black Stork nest with an incubating bird. Red-winged Starling and Arnot's Chat were also present. **Merle Mitchell**

TAIL FEATHERS

"Birds" written by Courage Shereni. Grade 6F, Tamuka Primary School, Chitungwiza

The following poetry was one of four written in honour of a visit to the school by David Gray, Jennifer Carter and Friday Maozeka. The other poems will be published in future issues of *Babbler*.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. "My name is Birds.
We are colourful;
We have many colours -
Blue, green, yellow and many more. | 2. But people are jealous.
If they see me playing,
They want to kill me;
Killing me for meat -
Sometimes for no reason" |
|--|---|

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>3. Stop killing me, please.
I also need your love;
Please take care of me;
Always protect me;
Give me shelter and food.</p> | <p>4. Don't burn my habitat,
Don't take my eggs away,
Avoid killing my nestlings,
Please stop causing disaster to me,
Always keep me
And conserve me."</p> |
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Matabeleland birding

I had at last managed to find fuel and the time to go birding at a favourite destination of mine – Bonisa Farm, Redbank and its interesting dam. Any visit to the property invariably yields something new and today's trip was no exception. The dam was nearly full and held good numbers of breeding cormorants, nesting amongst a grove of Acacia that were heavily coated in "whitewash". Floating lazily over the dam were two Grey-headed Gulls, not too common for us, and on the far shore a pair of Black Storks were present. Standing on the middle wall that partially bisects the dam, we noticed three Hottentot Teals, flying rather strangely, at very low speed with heads held high. They proceeded to land on the water with a considerable amount of aggression, one diving beneath the surface and apparently disappearing, leaving the other two behind. Scanning the water we then noticed a V-shaped ripple which gave the first bird away, it was swimming low in the water with neck outstretched, presumably to avoid the attention of the other two male ducks? This was not to be and on spotting her (?), they flew quickly to her, causing yet another long dive beneath the surface before quietly surfacing with head just visible and slipping away. Having seen similar antics with Mallards I assume that "courtship" provides an explanation.

The second point of note was a mystery call, which I had heard on previous visits to the property and have yet to identify properly – can anybody offer any suggestions. The bird was not seen, despite looking carefully for it and appeared to be shy and elusive, calling from within thick vegetation found beside one of the oxbow lakes. The call is a loud penetrating 'whooweeep whooweeep' and was emitted occasionally. This time I managed to tape the call and have since been through the range of shrike calls found on Guy Gibbon's CD's, the closest being part of the call of a Southern Boubou, presumably if it's a single bird the call will sound a little strange. Supporting this, or perhaps merely adding confusion, was the presence and sighting of Tropical Boubou with its own distinctive call. Would a single bird associate with other similar species or was it merely co-incidence? Any thoughts and suggestions would be most appreciated. **Martin Smith**

Happenings around KAROI

Kevlyn Farm – QDS 1629D2

The Barn Owl, incubating in the air duct in the barns, is rearing 5 chicks of varying sizes. Klaas's Cuckoo has been vocal of late and we were delighted to spot the Black-throated Wattle-eye again, in the garden this time! Sunbirds – Amethyst Sunbird, Scarlet-chested Sunbird, Miombo Double-collared Sunbird and White-bellied Sunbirds – have appeared in their numbers again to feed on the Aloe and Coffee Shade Tree flowers. Black-headed Oriole and African Golden Oriole also partake, together with the weavers, starlings and Dark-capped Bulbul. I see the African Golden Oriole also feeds on the halved oranges put out. We also had a lone Meves's Starling in the garden.

Caversham – QDS 1629D3

On the dam have been small numbers of White-faced Duck, White-backed Duck and Comb Duck and Southern Pochard, together with Black Crake and African Jacana. Two African Fish-eagles with a juvenile were also seen. Cut-throat Finch are around and African Scops-owl vocal. **Merle Mitchell**

Bird behaviour during partial eclipse in BULAWAYO

Inspired by Wildlife & Environment Zimbabwe (WEZ), who setup a camp at Mana Pools to study the reaction of animals and birds to the solar eclipse on 21 June 2001, I thought it might be of interest for me to study the reaction of birds in my small garden to the partial eclipse (estimated at approximately 85% in Bulawayo). In my garden, which has a very large Flamboyant and a Jacaranda, I have three feed trays and three bird baths. Consequently this attracts a fair number of a variety of birds, many of which I observed during the eclipse period (commenced at about 1355 hrs, peaked at 1515 hrs and ended at 1620 hrs. The effect of the partial eclipse, in Bulawayo, was rather like it being a little overcast with cloud, although, what there was of the sun, continued to cast shadows. I was disappointed to observe

that the partial eclipse appeared to have no effect on the birds whatsoever. They appeared to be completely unaware of the phenomenon and continued eating, drinking and behaving as they always do. The birds I watched during the approximately 2½ hr period are as follows:

<u>Seed eaters</u>	<u>Others</u>
Bronze Mannikin	Dark-capped Bulbul
House Sparrow	White-browed Robin-chat
Scaly-feathered Finch	Crested Barbet
Village Weaver	Black-collared Barbet
Laughing Dove	Tropical Boubou
Cape Turtle-dove	Kurrichane Thrush

It will be interesting to learn from WEZ whether the total eclipse experienced at Mana Pools had any effect on birds in that area. **W R L Stuttford, 65A Clark Road, Suburbs, Bulawayo**

Eclipse at RIFA Camp

A party guided by Hugh Maasdorp went up to the top of the Chipandaure Cliffs to view the total eclipse and also to watch the reaction of birds. As the sky darkened Meves's Starling flew back from their feeding haunts in Zambia and settled in the trees. When the sun re-appeared, they flew northwards into the Rifa Safari area with the sun behind them. White-fronted Bee-eaters also gathered on the trees above the cliffs and at the total eclipse phase several of them went into their nesting holes in the cliffs. **Leslee Maasdorp**

NOTICEBOARD

Buy-a-Brick Campaign

Thank you very much to the following for their generous donations to the building fund:

P Mavros	\$ 2 000	B Edwards	\$250
Mr & Mrs Rothen	\$ 150	S Fourie	\$ 77
Diana Dixon	\$ 75		

If you would like to contribute, please complete the form included.

Web site

For information about happenings at BirdLife Zimbabwe please visit our web site — see address on the front page. We are very grateful to MWeb for hosting our web site.

Merchandise for Sale

The following items are offered for sale and are available at the BLZ offices:

Embroidered badges	\$ 60
Hats	\$258
T-shirts	\$360
Sleeveless, hunting jackets	\$663
Golf shirts	\$740

Books for sale

The following are available from the BirdLife offices:

1 copy of <i>The Atlas of the Birds of Sul Do Save, Southern Mozambique</i> by Vincent Parker	\$ 500
Back issues of <i>Honeyguide</i>	\$ 5 - \$50 (Depending on issue)
Lake Chivero checklists	\$ 10

Urgently wanted

Can anyone assist with identifying a robust, low-mileage pick-up truck for purchase by BirdLife for use by the Zimbabwe Crane Working Group. Please contact the BirdLife offices

Keys Found

A set of keys on a key holder inscribed Standard Finance Limited was found at Lake Chivero on the June Sunday Walk. Owner please contact Alice Chamunorwa on 490208.

Old Hararians Bowls Section Open Day — Sunday, 16 September

The members of Old Hararians Bowls Section are having an open day on Sunday, 16 September to which members of BirdLife Zimbabwe are invited. This is very much a fun day when anyone can test their bowling skills. Catering and bar will be available. Please contact Ken Uzzell — 335563 if you are interested in joining in.

Joint outing with Zambian Ornithological Society (ZOS)

Members of ZOS have reserved the Tamarind camp on the Zambian side in the environs of the Kariba gorge outlet for birders between 24 and 28 October 2001. Anyone wishing to join them there should book through:

Andy Anderson at Sobek Canoe Adventures Ltd, Fax 260-1-222433, e-mail Anderson@zamnet.zm

Sobek permanent tents are priced at US\$20 per night but there is also a beautiful camp site for own tents charged at US\$6.5 per night. When booking mention that you are a birder joining the ZOS outing and they will fax you maps and all other details. Tamarind is about 45 minutes drive from the dam wall and you'll be pleased to hear that there is fuel available on the Zambian side of the wall. Customs and immigration at Kariba are very simple being a non-commercial border post.

For those of you who might be a little more adventurous, ZOS are arranging a joint meeting with our Malawian counterparts on the Nyika Plateau between 20 and 28 October 2001. Chelinda Camp on the Nyika has a very wide range of facilities to suit all pockets ranging from luxury log cabins to camp sites and a lot of options in between. Bookings and all other information from:

nyika-safaries@malawi.net

Again, mention that you are joining the ZOS outing to get any perks that are on offer. There is a serviceable airstrip on the Nyika and Avgas is available in Mzuzu. For any further information please contact Paddy Fleming on:

fleming@zamnet.zm

Kalabi Farm, P O Box 36281, Lusaka, Zambia

Phone/Fax: + 260 1 264810 or +260 1 233357 (Radio phone. Try when 264810 is not working)

Symposium about succulent plants and how to grow them

The symposium will be held at the National Botanic Garden Interpretation Centre, Fifth Street Extension, Harare on Sunday 25 November 2001 from 8.30 a.m., to 4.00 p.m. The cost is \$100 per person and those interested should telephone 497586 or 494187 for information and registration form. There will also be a sale of aloes, cacti, succulents, cycads, palms, bromeliads, tillandsias and bonsai on Sunday, 2 December 2001 from 9.30 a.m. to 3.00 p.m. also at the National Botanic Garden.

Projects

BirdLife Zimbabwe runs various projects which entail the collection of data. If you would like further information on these please contact the Executive Officer at BirdLife Zimbabwe's offices.

Sightings or recoveries of ringed birds

Please would members be on the look out for ringed birds, either dead or alive, the details of which should be given to your local BirdLife Zimbabwe branch offices or Museum.

New Members

We welcome:

Diana Dixon, Dr C J Lewis, Ernest Machengete, Clemence Muzenda and Mr & Mrs Rothen