

BABBLER

BirdLife Zimbabwe

A PARTNER DESIGNATE OF BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL

Member of IUCN, The World Conservation Union

ISSUE #48 – MAY/JUNE 2002

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ACTIVITIES

MASHONALAND BRANCH

OUTINGS HAVE BEEN ARRANGED ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT THERE WILL BE NO SECURITY PROBLEMS. PLEASE CONTACT A COMMITTEE MEMBER IF IN DOUBT.

Regular outings **Please note change of times**

Mukuvisi Woodlands: Sundays, 5 May and 2 June 2002. Meet at the Paget Road entrance at 7.00 a.m. There will be a vehicle guard available.

Sunday 5 May is World Dawn Chorus Day: please try to attend the outing at Mukuvisi so that our special birds can be added to the World list of species seen and heard that day. Take the opportunity to set aside life's challenges and enjoy and celebrate nature's daily miracle — the Dawn Chorus!

Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary: Sundays, 12 May and 9 June 2002. Meet at 7.30 a.m. at Marimba Shopping Centre, Samora Machel Avenue West. Bring chairs and tea. Beginners are most welcome and spare binoculars will be available. We encourage members with children to attend.

Saturday afternoon outings

18 May 2002: Afdis, Stapleford. Meet at 2.30 p.m. at 2 Helena Road, Marlborough where cars can be left and arrangements made to share transport. Bring chairs and refreshments.

15 June 2002: Mhowani Hills [Willesden Farm] Ostrich Farm (Ken and Sue Worsley), Glen Forest area. Meet at Wingate Golf Club at 2.00 p.m. Bring chairs and refreshments.

Sunday outings

26 May 2002: Double Ro Ranch, Nyabira. Meet at 7.30 a.m. at 2 Helena Road, Marlborough. Bring chairs and refreshments.

23 June 2002: Mbizi Game Park (near Harare Airport). Meet at 7.30 a.m. at the offices of BirdLife Zimbabwe, 35 Clyde Road, Eastlea where cars can be left in secure parking. Bring chairs and refreshments or take advantage of the restaurant at the Game Park.

Thursday evening meetings

16 May 2002: A video on a bird related topic will be shown.

20 June 2002: Dr Glyn Vale – Dung Beetle Research. Dr Vale has been researching the biology of coprophilic insects, particularly dung beetles, with a view to assessing the effects of chemicals used in/on cattle for the control of internal and external parasites on the mortality of this fauna. If the population of these insects, which recycle organic matter, is depleted how will the ecology of the whole region be affected? Dr Vale is a noted world-wide expert in the biology and control of tsetse fly. His unique, non-polluting method of stationary traps has received world-wide acclaim and is regarded as the most effective way of eradicating tsetse fly and opening up new areas to cattle production.

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.

Thursday outings to Marlborough Vlei

These are held on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of the month at 4.00 p.m. provided Ian is available. Dates are: 9 and 23 May, 13 and 27 June 2002. Bring cash to pay for security. For confirmation contact Ian Riddell on 339716, or gemsaf@mango.zw Directions: drive to the end of Princess Margaret Rd, turn left, continue to the new houses – parking is in a cul-de-sac where a caretaker lives in a fenced off area.

Raffle to raise funds for Mashonaland Branch

There was virtually no response to the invitation to participate in a 100 Club to raise funds for Mashonaland Branch. A generous donation has been received from Wendy Bourne of a hamper which is being raffled. Tickets are sold at the Thursday evening meetings and the draw will be held later in the year. The Committee will be collecting other items to make up a Christmas hamper and donations of items such as bottles, tinned goods or cash will be much appreciated. These can be brought along to an evening meeting or contact a Committee member to make arrangements for collection.

Rifa Educational Camp

A booking has been made for the camp over the period 21 to 25 September 2002 (4 nights). Cost is \$9 000 per person for the weekend. If you would like to go please complete the booking slip included.

MATABELELAND BRANCH

Monthly Outings

Saturday/Sunday, 11/12 May – Verreaux's Eagle Outing. We are aiming to establish accurate figures for occupied territories early in the breeding cycle and are planning a day-long kopjie watch on Sunday 12 May. In order to allow an early start and provide an opportunity for briefing we are camping at Matopos Yacht Club on the Saturday night with the survey commencing early on Sunday. The pre-count briefing will take place at the Yacht Club at 4.00 p.m. on Saturday 11 May. Contact Martin for further details.

Saturday/Sunday, 15/16 June — Plumtree. We were forced to postpone our March outing to Plumtree and hope this can now take place. The weekend will be as planned before, making use of the Calvert's kind offer of accommodation. All interested to contact Martin, closer to the date.

Aisleby

Being our "cold" winter months, we have reverted to outings on Saturday afternoons, dates being as follows:

Saturday 25 May Saturday 29 June

For both contact Martin for details and the possibility of shared transport.

Hillside Dams

Dates for our monthly rambles are as follows:

Friday 31 May Saturday 28 June

Meet at the Lower Hillside Dam Car Park at 4.00 p.m. or contact Martin.

EASTERN DISTRICTS BIRD CLUB

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

Sunday, 2 June 2002 Old Mutare 6.30 a.m. K Dixon 65819

Sunday, 30 June 2002 Hot Springs area 6.30 a.m. T Peatling 62999

The Museum is the departure point and, PROVIDED PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS ARE MADE, transport and binoculars may be arranged.

Karoi Bird Club

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

E-mail: mitch@africaonline.co.zw

Secretary: Merle 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 at 6.30 a.m.

Other Outings – to be arranged.

MIDLANDS BRANCH

Masvingo: Contact Lynne Wilkins ☎ 039-63657

Kadoma: Outings will be held at 7 a.m. on the 3rd Saturday of each month. Contact Margaret Parrock ☎ 068-22005 for details

REPORTS**NATIONAL**Bird Awareness Programme

The Education Committee is pleased to announce the appointment of an Education Manager, Mr Cryton Zazu who will be taking his post on 1 May 2002.

Many schools have begun tree planting to improve habitats for people and birds. Some shrubs to attract sunbirds were put in last year and are already bringing in these birds. Trainers and the Education Officer, Abasi Jana provided some plants and Noah Dun has established a nursery among the approaching hills to Honde Valley and is supplying lucky-bean and snot-apple trees for this season and many more species for November 2002.

Bird clubs have formed in several schools and some pupils have become good birders. A few clubs want to expand now to include all wild life. These clubs need wild life magazines while Grade 1-3 at Gatsi Primary School appreciate receiving South African Home and Garden magazines as the young pupils grow flowers in borders and make posters of these activities.

Medicinal and wild fruit tree seedlings are much sought after. Have you any plants to give away?? Thank you all for your donations of books, pictures, calendars and binoculars. We have recently received a very welcome donation of binoculars for schools from Germany. The RSPB has sent boxes of kits for children. The items are water bottles, bags and organisers. These will make very useful prizes and awards to participating children and clubs. Our supplies can hardly run to one pair of binoculars per school and it is an exciting moment when a school is presented with a pair.

The Wamba Bird or Anchieta's Tchagra has been carefully monitored by Abasi Jana and it is good to report that last year the pair produced two offspring who have moved downstream in the small Wamba vlei. This year two breeding attempts were made by the parents with two chicks but their nest was destroyed by the wind and a single immature from the second attempt is flourishing.

At the request of Tanganda and Southdown Estates, Chipinge and Rio Tinto Patchway Mine, our Committee members have held a workshop to train teachers in their schools. These initiatives add ten more institutions becoming involved in the programme.

Early in April, the Committee held a very successful workshop for 24 Chitungwiza teachers from 11 schools. Details of this event will appear in the next *Babbler*. **Leslee Maasdorp – Co-ordinator**

MASHONALAND BRANCH

GREYSTONE PARK Nature Preserve — Saturday, 16 February 2002

When a clap of thunder greeted our arrival at the Greystone Park Nature Preserve the members thought they were in for a fairly short walk but, although rain clouds were close by, we managed to have a dry but very hot and humid, two hour walk through this small but interesting area.

Mr Zachariah Chipendo brought with him three teachers from Chitungwiza to participate in the walk and they became fully involved in the observation and identification of species in the Preserve.

Mr Tony Conway gave the group a brief history of the 7 Ha Preserve and Mr Leo Passaportis guided the group. Around the dam, in the fringing reeds were 2 large, vigorous colonies of Village Weavers. Also in the reeds and the rank grass were large numbers of Southern Red Bishop, the plumage of some having already lost some of its original summer brilliance. Less abundant, but more scattered through the Preserve were numbers of highly visible male Red-collared Widowbirds and their less conspicuous "ladies". Single specimens of Black-headed Heron and Purple Heron, an adult and juvenile Reed Cormorant, a Red-knobbed Coot and 2 Common Moorhen were all that could be seen in and around the water. The absence of ducks was regarded as unusual. Overhead, for a time, circled a Wahlberg's Eagle and a Black-chested Snake-eagle and there was a small group of Abdim's Stork moving between feeding grounds. There was an abundance of aerial plankton feeders above the riverine vegetation, notably African Palm-swift, 3 White-rumped Swift, and 4 different Hirundinidae with an interesting sighting of an Eastern Saw-wing. Other species that have come over from the east of the country over the past 10 years (or more) were Speckled Mousebird, Variable Sunbird and Thick-billed Weaver. Weavers are particularly abundant in this Preserve and, in addition to those already mentioned, the group also saw Spectacled Weavers and Golden Weavers.

In the riverine bush below the dam, Bronze Mannikins were abundant and a mixed flock of adult and juvenile Common Waxbill were seen. Strident calls of Red-faced Cisticola and Tawny-flanked Prinia came from the rank grass and one member caught a fleeting glimpse of a White-browed Robin-chat. In one of the few mature Acacias, the group came across the only bird party of the walk indicating the importance of large trees to the bird life in this restricted area. The Preserve has a good bird list of 127 species and the group's low tally of 47 birds may have been due to the high temperature and humidity that characterised most of the outing; and the gaggle of hopeful fisher folk strung out around the periphery of the dam. The Greystone Park Nature Preserve is well maintained and is an interesting microcosm of a small old farm dam with mixed regenerating riverine bush downstream. **Ken Wilson**

Sue Frost — Thursday, 21 February 2002

Understandably many people at this time, particularly women, did not want to be out driving at night but nevertheless there was a fairly good turn out for this excellent talk.

Sue Frost is a very good, experienced speaker and I don't think anyone would have found the evening anything but fascinating. The clear message which came across to me is not to merely "tick" the bird but to study its habits and think about the "bigger picture".

Some years ago Sue had undertaken research into the foraging and breeding behaviour of Marico Flycatchers and Pale Flycatchers. The area of research was at Nylsvlei Nature Reserve in South Africa where there is a mosaic of broadleaved *Burkea* and *Acacia* woodlands. The *Acacia* grow on nutrient rich soils whilst the *Burkea* prefer poorer soils. *Acacia* woodland has bare ground whilst *Burkea* woodland has long grass. Animal, insect and bird densities consequently are different in each of the woodland types. The number of insects present in the wet season in the *Acacia* woodland is more than double that occurring in the *Burkea* woodland. Much research of different types is done in the area by university students and one

study which Sue was involved in was with the use of tame Kudu and Impala which they were able to follow and record their feeding preferences.

In her research on birds of the woodlands she studied the biomass and number of species in each of the woodlands. She found that there were three sets of congeneric bird species (congeneric meaning two species which are very similar in appearance and behaviour occurring in the same genus) in the two woodlands. These were Marico Flycatcher and Pale Flycatcher, Ashy Tit and Southern Black Tits, Burnt-necked Eremomela and Green-capped Eremomela. The former of each genus occurred only in Acacia woodland whilst the latter were found only in the Burkea.

Sue's area of focus was on the Flycatchers and why each species was confined to its own type of woodland. Interesting results were obtained from her research and it was apparent during the study period that the Marico Flycatcher aggressively chased away other bird species, including the Pale Flycatcher, which competed for food.

Sue's conclusion therefore was that at Nylsvlei it appeared that the Marico Flycatcher's niche was included inside that of the Pale Flycatcher's niche and that therefore whilst the Pale Flycatchers would like to move into the richer area the aggressive behaviour of the Marico Flycatcher would not allow such intrusion. **Di Rushforth**

Thursday, 21 March 2002 — John Bissett

John Bissett gave us an entertaining and informative look into the habits of Harvester Termites, first impressing upon us the fact that all termites are a necessary part of nature's cycle.

All termites feed on plant material and their prime role is to recycle dead plant matter. The ingested material passes through the termite and is defecated in a form which makes the soil more nutritious. Specifically, Harvester Termites like clay soil and do not build above ground, preferring to build their nests in areas where there is little or no grass as the soil in such areas is more impervious to rain. They are very often found near stock watering points as the ground has been trampled hard and there is little vegetation. Harvesters are not found where there is bush encroachment. Where there is a nine to ten year wet and dry cycle, as is the case in Zimbabwe, the termite population explodes in the drought years and there is greater damage to the veld grass as they take everything produced thus depriving stock of their much needed grazing.

Unlike other termites that cannot stand the sun, harvesters have a pigmentation that enables them to emerge in the daylight as well as at night and gather dry grass stalks to take back to the nest. This they do over a period of several days with intervals whilst the food is taken down and sorted.

When the young termites emerge from underground to fly and reproduce they only shed their wings when landing on bare ground. If they happen to land in grassy areas they keep their wings, climb up the grass stem and fly again. They are a valuable item in the food chain. Swallows flock to where they are emerging from the ground and Steppe Eagles and Lesser Spotted Eagles feed on them as well as many other bird species. **Kitty Glennie**

MATABELELAND

From the Chairman

Sadly, predictions of a drought came true and rainfall in Matabeleland was negligible from late December onwards. February proved to be particularly desperate, with the rainfall total failing to make double figures. This, in combination with high midday temperatures, "burnt off" most of the grass and a steady flow of leaves into our pool has indicated the substantial stress felt by the trees. Drought must obviously affect bird life and we might expect considerable local movement with urban areas offering more food than the dry bush surrounding them. Ringing at BULAWAYO CBC has certainly emphasised this – in December, the bush was in full leaf with shrubs in fruit and plenty of insect life present. Mist nets yielded a pleasing haul of warblers including Garden Warbler, Willow Warbler and Marsh Warbler and a single Thrush Nightingale made its presence known by calling. By March, a substantial number of shrubs had lost their leaves and most migrants appeared to have moved on. Willow Warblers were still present, although I failed to catch any, and a single Red-backed Shrike was the only palaeartic migrant to be processed. Spotted Flycatchers were also still around and particularly visible with at least three individuals being seen on a regular basis on my 600m trip to school. All appeared to have their own territories with specific perch points and it will be interesting to see how long they remain. A suggestion of rain in mid March produced good conditions for thermals and a flock of about 50 White Stork passed

over Hillside. Their direction appeared to be a little confused and, with their departure towards the south, it will be a rather long time before they reach Europe!

Verreaux's Eagle Survey work has commenced with a new breeding season about to begin. Past drought years have usually led to a particularly successful reproductive rate and it will be interesting to see if this pattern is repeated. We look forward to your support in these troubled times. **Martin Smith**

AISLEBY – Sunday 24th February

A combination of rumours and general uncertainty reduced numbers to a mere two for the month end outing but fortunately bird life was more prolific. We began with an inspection of some extremely smelly storage dams which had obviously missed out on treatment – the thick black ooze was high in organic matter and alive with insect life. Waders were a little disappointing with no 'specials' to be seen – flocks of Ruff and Little Stint were present, but no Curlew Sandpiper or Common Greenshank. The solid waste disposal area yielded plenty of Kittlitz's Plover and three sparring Yellow Wagtails, one of which was almost entirely yellow. A novel form of weed management had led to a firing of some of the pastures and several of the fence posts. This had attracted a number of raptors and these caught our interest and had us puzzling over a number of strange plumages. We eventually added Tawny Eagle, Yellow-billed Kite and Steppe Buzzard to the list. We then moved on to the main dam and found the south-easterly breeze made viewing difficult. The dam was still full and surrounded by an appreciable fringe of vegetation which restricted visibility. Bird Dam and the lands were more rewarding – at the former a small group of waders foraged close to the road affording excellent views of Ruff and Black-winged Stilt. Within the lands a fresh application of black slime had attracted insect life and thousands of Barn Swallows flitted quietly above. Adults appeared smart in fresh plumage, whilst first year birds still looked a little ragged. At the extreme north of the property we searched the mixed bush surrounding the old dam site and found it productive with Icterine Warblers and Great Reed-warblers being added to the list. A few distant kestrels proved hard to see and we left with a tentative Lesser Kestrel. We ended the morning at the Ibis Dam and found a group of 80 Pied Avocets foraging in the remaining pool close to the platform. Also present were 3 Cape Teal – a species we hadn't seen for sometime. Despite a lengthy wait we failed to see any harriers, although a Black-chested Snake-eagle puzzled us for a substantial time, heavily barred remiges, with an attractive streaking on the coverts, produced a very smart bird which failed to 'hover'. Upperparts were a uniform grey-black and we were forced to conclude that it was just another snake-eagle with an interesting plumage. Finally, we were able to converse with an African Rail, which responded perfectly to the tape answering with its nasal hooting call. **Martin Smith**

EASTERN DISTRICTS BIRD CLUB

BURMA VALLEY — 4 March 2002

A high-powered delegation of about 19 birdwatchers thronged to Burma Valley Country Club to spend a morning of excellent birding and everyone expectant of a good number of sightings and indeed we did see many species.

We split into two groups and went around the farm which is made up of broad-leaved woodland. First to be seen were Scarlet-chested Sunbird, Barn Swallow, Striped Kingfisher and as we progressed on our way our list was already becoming very respectable despite the already sweltering heat. Later on, we spotted an Orange-breasted Bush-shrike, Purple-banded Sunbird, Red-eyed Dove but unfortunately our "famous" mango tree in which we saw the amazing sighting of the Western Violet-backed Sunbird last year did not have something special to offer.

We made our way through grass and bush under the leadership of Mrs MacGregor with sightings of Golden-tailed Woodpecker, Red-capped Lark, Little Bee-eater, Chin-spot Batis and Pale Batis. We also learnt a great deal about indigenous trees through our seasoned colleagues, Mr. D. Plowes, Mr. N. Dhori and Mrs. Holland who all have a wealth of information on indigenous trees.

Special thanks to Mrs MacGregor who prepared for us some tantalising sandwiches to add splendour to our excellent morning in which we recorded over 90 bird species to make it another successful Eastern Districts Bird Outing. **Trust Manyuni**

MIDLANDS BRANCH

Fritz's Dam – KADOMA — Saturday, 16 March 2001

A small farm dam halfway between Kadoma and Rio Tinto Mine at Eiffel Flats, a bright morning at 7.00 a.m. which turned windy and cloudy within an hour but the water birds were still abundant. At present the dam is shallow as there is no new inflow of water this season so the muddy shoreline is full of food for the waders. A total of 40 birds were recorded between the four of us by the dam and bush around. Some of those seen were Purple Heron, Grey Heron, Black-headed Heron and Squacco Herons, pairs of both African Wattled Lapwings and Blacksmith Lapwings, Black Heron, Yellow-billed Egret and Great Egrets, pairs of Giant Kingfisher and Pied Kingfishers, White-breasted Cormorant, numerous Black Crake, Three-banded Plover, 2 Marsh Sandpiper, 15 Little Stint, 12 Red-billed Teal, White Stork and a Yellow-billed Kite flew overhead. Local fishermen were along parts of the shoreline but the birds carried on regardless. **Margaret Parrock**

TAIL FEATHERS

Birding at Mana Pools

An interesting trip was recently had by a couple of us at MANA POOLS. Being the rainy season, Jonathan, Lia and John and Tish Francis and I were expecting to have a right trying time negotiating the roads in the Toyota twin cab.

Mubvee Lodge provided a spectacular setting and refuge from the early morning rains that descended off the verdant Zambian escarpment. The first skeins of Cattle Egrets wended their way to a small cow herd of buffalo opposite the lodge on an island where, like a snowstorm, they dropped excitedly and noisily on the benign bovines. Rufous-bellied Heron, always a great sight of Mana, worked along beds of hyacinth, whilst a lone Osprey flew off with its prey held lengthwise into a solitary *Faidherbia albida* on a sand spit.

A Peregrine Falcon used the expanse of the gauntlet between both distant banks to harry and chase a Crowned Lapwing and Red-eyed Dove at different times. The agitated birds managed to fly onto the swirling waters in a bid to escape their relentless pursuer, thereupon floundering and making off at a tangent as the helpless predator overshot – obviously a known mode of defence. Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters, White-fronted Bee-eaters and Southern Carmine Bee-eaters called loudly on the still morning air whilst large, congregating flocks of Red-billed Quelea on the flowering *Vetiveria* grass-beds allowed Eurasian Hobby similar hunting opportunities.

A slow and slippery drive to Sapi on the river road was punctuated by shrills of anger from the passengers as persistent tsetse flies managed to elude our attempts to swat them off. A pair of Thick-billed Cuckoo was a great sighting. The birds flew slowly and casually around tall mopane near riparian vegetation. This area always hosts the species over the rains and is a guarantee if bird watching there. In the distance African Emerald Cuckoo could be heard, with the 'hello Georgie' call often heard further in within the jesse component as well.

Crossing the slightly flowing Nyamatusi river a (Peter's) Red-throated Twinspot was noticed in the overhanging bushes on the opposite bank, affording excellent views to some members of the party. The best sighting of the trip came as we gingerly drove through a muddy patch in the road that was surrounded by a thin ribbon of green rank grass. Within the grass, on a flattened section Tish Francis noticed a small bird which we all had overlooked. Reversing to a mere 2 metres from it allowed an ample sight of the cowering crake. Up until then we had flushed numerous African Crake in the small puddles on the dirt roads, but this was an appreciably smaller and different coloured bird. The smaller bird had chestnut flanks, a red eye and striped back, and was confirmed in the book as a female Striped Crake, a great sighting made by all.

A group of 9 Grey-headed Parrots was considered a significant aggregation, particularly as the bird appears to be declining in recent years, whilst 9 Long-toed Lapwings were noted at Mana Mouth.

Gary Douglas, Guiding and Security Manager, The Malilangwe Trust, P Bag 7085, Chiredzi.

Marlborough vlei – 14 March 2002

Four Comb Duck flew over the ponds, but kept heading east, whilst a brown harrier was too distant at the bottom of the vlei and could not be identified.

Quite a few (at least 5) Red-chested Flufftails were heard and of interest on the East canal was a Greater Painted-snipe and a Malachite Kingfisher. Now that the slopes of this canal are being colonised by grass clumps and weeds, and having flowing, albeit green polluted water, this stretch has become attractive to the kingfisher.

Along the canals only 2 Wood Sandpiper were seen but in the distance, below the ponds, a single Black Coucal landed near the bulrushes.

Numerous Sedge Warblers are still active along the central canal.

Only 4 Marsh Owls were put to flight from the grass, although we never crossed to the east sector. The weather was rather strange – cloudy and threatening and this seemed to deter the swallows; only c.10 Grey-rumped Swallows were seen and no swifts. In fact there was little overhead.

In the grassland only 1 Croaking Cisticola was heard but about 7 Rosy-throated Longclaw were recorded and three Red-winged Starlings flew over — perhaps attracted there by all the new housing. Numerous small groups of Orange-breasted Waxbill were about, and 2 Black-throated Canary. **Ian Riddell**

Yellow-headed Black-collared Barbet

On our walk in the botanic reserve at CHRISTON BANK on 24 March 2002 a yellow-headed Black-collared Barbet was spotted. There was some discussion about the rarity, or otherwise, of this morph and I was able to recall a Bulawayo sighting. The talk seemed to go back and forth – it was very uncommon, it wasn't too uncommon. In fact, it is very uncommon and here are some records

1. The Bulawayo one was seen by Warren Goodwin in the Matobo CL MATOPOS in 1995.
2. A photo appears on the back cover of Bokmakierie 31 in 1979.
3. Peter Steyn saw one in Mkuzi, Natal in 1974.
4. Dale Hanmer saw a few in Malawi between August 1973 & August 1989 [her paper on measurement of barbets and woodpeckers in Honeyguide 43 (2)] and there were very few other records from around that country.

To provide some perspective, there are no records in the Bulawayo Museum (includes other countries), Clancey never saw one in examining 300-400 South African specimens, Irwin never saw one, and there is no mention of this form in *Birds of Africa*.

Handbook of the Birds of the World – covering barbets – is coming out next month so it would be interesting to see if there is any mention in that!

Sharp spotting! **Ian Riddell**

NOTICEBOARDBuy-a-Brick Campaign

Thank you very much to the following for your donations towards the building fund:

Theo 't Hart	-	\$2 000.00	E N Purdon	-	\$1325.00
Mrs S D Ford	-	\$ 875.00	J D Andrews	-	\$ 500.00
Mrs P Bellingan	-	\$ 500.00	Patricia O'Neill	-	\$ 500.00
B Staplekamp	-	\$ 44.00			

Merchandise for Sale

Embroidered badges	\$ 60	Hats	\$ 258	Caps	\$395
Two-tone caps	\$553	T-shirts	\$1 200	Golf shirts	\$740
Sleeveless, hunting jackets	\$663	Peter Ginn Calendars	\$ 50		

Field observations – Honeyguide

Please note that field cards are to be sent to either the Field Card Organiser, Mr C Baker, P O Box BW 168, Borrowdale, or to the BLZ offices.

National Garden Bird Survey

The Research & Conservation Committee are planning to start the Garden Bird Survey again in July this year. Forms will be sent out to those interested. If you have not forwarded your name and address there is still time to do so. The Co-ordinator, P O Box RV 100 Runiville.

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.

Special Species Survey

Thanks to everyone who has continued to send in their sightings. At some stage I will notify you, through the *Babbler*, as to what birds are no longer required and also at some stage we hope to collate the data and publish an article in *Honeyguide*. Of course, if sightings are only erratically put onto the cards the information is biased and not too useful, so please try and be consistent! Even if you only concentrate on a few species, ensure that you record EVERY sighting. I know this can be tedious at times — I have a lot of Bateleur data and in some of the Parks there are a lot of sightings per day but one has to make the effort to put each and every one down. This can be difficult whilst driving, but nevertheless it can be done.

As regards the filling in of cards, again, please include as much information as you can. Some cards are received without a QDS and can be difficult to allocate to one if other information is lacking. Since not everyone has maps, and you don't know what QDS you are in, please specify exactly where you are. A useful single map is the Surveyor General sheetfall map, this having all the QDSs marked. Where you do have maps please include co-ordinates or a grid reference AND if you are on a national road the KM PEG WOULD BE MOST USEFUL. I have personally referenced a lot of the kilometre pegs in the north of the country, so if that is included we can fix your locality easily. This is particularly pertinent if you are on a long journey and are noting kites, for example. If you are at the 95 km peg on the Bulawayo-Gweru road working out the QDS is a simple matter. Assuming that the kilometre peg is still standing is another matter! Cards can then be returned to the BLZ offices in Harare. **Ian Riddell**

Birds on Communal Lands

I am currently looking at the patterns of distribution of birds in Zimbabwe using the data collected during the atlas period (1987-1993). One of the objectives is to see if the differences in land-use, population density etc. on communal land versus the former commercial farmland have affected the distribution of birds on a broad scale. It appears that some common, widespread and conspicuous non-passerines such as Meyer's Parrot and Swainson's Spurfowl are missing from the most densely populated CL's (in the southeast) and it would be interesting to see if there are any general differences in the composition of bird communities on the CL's and former commercial farmland. This is difficult, however, because of the differences in sampling effort on the two land-use types i.e. there were far fewer cards submitted from the CL's during the atlas period. Thus, is the lack of Red-chested Cuckoo from the CL's in the extreme northeast (in the vicinity of Nyamapanda) because they don't occur there or because this area was insufficiently sampled?

A solution is to get into the CL's and sample (although one introduces a time factor into the data...). Unfortunately, I have a rapidly approaching deadline to meet. Thus, DOES ANYONE KNOW OF ANY DATA FROM CL's, particularly from those in the southeast – Bikita, Save, Marange, Gutu, Ndanga – which are most densely populated, IN ADDITION TO THAT COLLECTED DURING THE ATLAS PERIOD? Importantly, it is the absence of common, widespread and conspicuous species which is most interesting. An understanding of how land-use, tenure etc. affect biological diversity and particular species/groups of species (e.g. gamebirds, raptors) will obviously have implications for land reform. The importance of the security of property rights is an example. **Anthony Cizek** — acizek@botzoo.uct.ac.za

New members

We welcome the following new members:

S & K Black	C Chizana	Dr R Davies	T Dhliwayo
D A Leclue	P Magosvongwe	A Masvikeni	N B Milward
Mrs J F Mitchell	M Msimbo	E Mubaira	D Mukozho
B Muzvidziwa	Mrs S V Pascall	S Peters	N Purdon
E Saruchera	M Snook	C Staplekamp	Cryton Zazu

Sponsored Members Fund – Response to the Sponsored Members Fund has been excellent. Some new members have now benefited from the Fund. Grateful thanks to the following.

Name	Amount (\$)	Name	Amount (\$)
A Cizek	350.00	Mrs D Ford	875.00
P J Lawrence	25.00	Mrs M A Mitchell	675.00
R R Musto	25.00		

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