

BABBLER

The Newsletter of -

BirdLife Zimbabwe

The BirdLife International Partner in Zimbabwe

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ACTIVITIES NATIONAL

BIG BIRDING DAY

26/27 November 2005

National fund-raising event organised by Matabeleland Branch. Planned to deliberately coincide with that for BirdLife SA to economise on fuel for members who compete in both events.

Entry forms and sponsorship forms will be available as of 10 September from all branches – Matabeleland (Julia), Eastern Districts (Carl Beel), Midlands (Jon Barry), Mashonaland (Dave Rockingham-Gill), Karoi (Merle), Mashonaland South (Margaret), BLZ office Harare (Alice). See *Babbler* for contact details.

Branches may retain the funds they raise. For further information telephone: Penny on 09-237777; or Dudley 09-76781-4 (o) and 09-240127 (h); or email Julia on dalia@netconnect.co.zw

MASHONALAND LONG WEEKEND AT Hippo Pools 23RD-26TH SEPTEMBER. See outings

MASHONALAND BRANCH

Regular outings

Sundays September 4th & October 2nd: Mukuvisi Woodlands. NOTE TIME CHANGE 6:30 A.M.
Directions: Turn off Chiremba Road into Ford Rd. (opposite Queensdale Shops) and continue down to Blatherwick Rd (T Junction). Turn right and the gate is about 150 meters on the left. Bring cash for the guard who will be on hand to unlock the gate to let cars in and out and chairs and refreshments.

ANNUAL BREAKFAST WILL BE AT Mukuvisi ON SUNDAY 6TH NOVEMBER.

BACON & EGG ROLLS \$25 000 per roll + tea. Contact Jennifer Carter to order by Wednesday 2nd November. Bring your own plates, cutlery, mugs and chairs. Guaranteed 100+ species on the walks.

Chivero IS ON AGAIN

Sundays September 11th & October 9th: Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary.

NOTE TIME CHANGE 6:30 A.M.

Meet at 06.30 am at Marimba Shopping Centre, Samora Machel Avenue West. Bring chairs and refreshments. Beginners are most welcome and spare binoculars will be available.

September Trip: Hippo Pools from Friday 23rd to Monday 26th:

Hippo Pools camp is only 150km from Harare, north of Shamva (only 30km of dirt road). Accommodation: 4 Chalets for max 24 people + camping. Bring own food and drink. Bedding, crockery and cutlery, water on tap and gas stoves and fridges are provided but you are advised to bring your own gas and lighting as these may not be available at the time due to current national shortages! Chalet \$200 000.00 pppn; camping \$50 000.00 pppn plus National Parks entry fees!

Activities: Walking, game drives, fishing, canoeing all free of charge! Good birds to be seen include African Crowned Eagle and Verreaux's Eagles, Pel's Fishing-owl, Livingstone's Flycatcher and many others! Transport will be shared where possible. Contact Jennifer Carter, Geoff Lowe designedirrig@mango.zw or Richard Dennison richardd@agrifoods.co.zw asap as chalets are only held for us until 31st August.

Sunday, October 23rd: Goshu Park with Marondera Natural History Society. Meet at 6:00 at BLZ offices where vehicles can be left safely and transport shared. Bring refreshments.

Thursday evening meetings

September 15th: Clare Davies, Director of BirdLife Zimbabwe will talk about Birdlife Council for the African Partnership Meeting (Cap) in Kribi, Cameroon in July 2005.

October 20th: Michael P. Stuart Irwin will talk on a subject of his choice. Michael is the author of the authoritative "The Birds of Zimbabwe" and is the Editor of *Honeyguide*, Journal of BirdLife Zimbabwe. No one who has heard him talk before will miss this one!

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

2nd and 4th Thursdays (14th & 28th July & 11th & 25th August). Meet at 4:00 p.m. provided Ian Riddell is available. For confirmation contact Ian on 339716 or gemsaf@mango.zw Bring cash to pay for security.

MATABELELAND BRANCH

Monthly Outings

3rd September: Slides by Professor Peter Mundy on "*François Levaillant's Birds of Africa*". Peter was co-author of this magnificent book and you will be fascinated by some of the facts and pictures that he will reveal! At 3.00 pm at 12 Ilanda Gardens, Catherine Berry Drive followed by bring-and-share tea. Tel: Julia 09-246269.

22nd/23rd October: World Birdwatch – Matabeleland Event. (Date to be confirmed). Public event involving Matabeleland schools and prize giving for quiz currently running. Full details will be published in *Matland Musings*. Telephone: Penny on 09-237777 or Julia.

4th-7th November: Camp at Tuli. A bird and archaeological weekend, including a visit to the Sentinel Ranch dinosaur on Saturday or Sunday. Cost is approximately \$40,000 per head per night (check nearer the time), plus share of camp fee of \$100,000. Self-catering, only beds and mosquito nets supplied. Tel: Julia or Dudley 09-76781-4 (o) and 09-240127 (h).

EASTERN DISTRICTS BIRD CLUB

Contacts: Carl Beel ☎ 023- 416249 Jane Clegg ☎ 020-65610

Sunday 25 September: Mutare Heights 07:00 a.m. Carl Beel 63058 or

Sunday 30 October: Big Day (fuel permitting), 07:00 a.m. Ken Dixon 65819
otherwise restricted to Vumba

The Museum is the departure point and PROVIDED PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS ARE MADE, binoculars may be arranged. It is essential to check with the organiser shortly before the event as all visits are subject to last minute changes due to weather or local conditions. Generally return will be in time for lunch. Please contact during the day or email: cbeel@zol.co.zw

Karoi Bird Club

Co-ordinator: Merle Mitchell P O Box 398, Karoi ☎ 064-6436

ACTIVITIES

Rydings School Walks are conducted the first Saturday each month at 6.30 a.m.

MIDLANDS BRANCH

Gweru: Contact Jon Barry ☎ 055-20021

Masvingo: Contact Lynne Wilkins ☎ 039-63657

Outings first Saturday of the month. Please contact Jon Barry for details.

MASHONALAND SOUTH

Kadoma: Outings will be held at 7.00 a.m. on the 3rd Saturday of each month.

Contact Margaret Parrock ☎ 068-22005 for details.

REPORTS

NATIONAL

CONDOLENCES

BirdLife Zimbabwe and its Education Programme express their deep sympathy to all those who perished in the recent bus accident and to Nyatsanza School in their great loss. We wish those injured a speedy recovery.

BIRDLIFE COUNCIL FOR THE AFRICAN PARTNERSHIP MEETING (CAP) IN KRIBI, CAMEROON – 25th to 29th JULY 2005.

Chip Chirara (Conservation Manager, BirdLife Zimbabwe) and I attended the BirdLife International Council for the Africa Partnership (CAP) meeting in Kribi, Cameroon, from 25th-29th July 2005. The meeting was hosted by the Cameroon Biodiversity Conservation Society (CBCS), the BirdLife partner in Cameroon.

It was an extremely interesting, informative and tiring trip. It took 2 days to get there and 3 to get back! The conference was held at 'Paradise Hotel' in Kribi on the West African coast of Cameroon, south of Douala. The beach was a one-minute walk from our hotel. We saw miles and miles of tropical

rainforest, lots of palm trees and plantations, heaps of banana trees and experienced hot humid weather (several drizzly days, though we were very lucky in that we had coolish weather while we were there). Not far from where we were, was a place that has the second highest annual rainfall total in the world.

There were 63 delegates from 24 countries at the meeting. These comprised BirdLife Partners, Partner Designates and Affiliates from the 18 countries in the BirdLife Network in Africa (only one country was not there), BirdLife International (BLI) Secretariat staff, supporting partners from RSBP (UK), VBN (Netherlands) and NABU (Germany), programme and project country delegates from Madagascar, Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea, Cameroon Government officials, Site Support Group leaders from local communities in Cameroon, project portfolio managers from UNDP-GEF and UNOPS, and representatives from collaborating institutions such as ICRAF.

Chip presented a paper on 'Wattled Crane conservation in the Driefontein grasslands of Zimbabwe'. Many delegates commented after the talk that BirdLife Zimbabwe had done some flagship work and overcome some extremely difficult circumstances. I chaired a plenary session and Chip and I were both involved in numerous discussion groups and Chip in presenting the results of some of those discussion groups.

BirdLife presently operates in 104 countries globally, has 69 partners, 35 affiliates, 9 country programs, and 12 secretariat offices. In Africa, 18 countries out of 58 countries have BirdLife organizations (34% of the countries in Africa). BirdLife's global vision is 'to conserve wild birds and global diversity by working with people towards sustainability in using natural resources'. Their strategy is to work through BirdLife's partners in the different countries throughout the world. BirdLife's emphasis is on four issues: species, habitats, sites and people. BirdLife recognizes that conservation will not survive unless it is people driven (the bottom-top approach rather than the top-bottom approach).

The main objectives of the meeting were: to provide an opportunity for south-south exchange of experience, skills and learning in relation to bird and biodiversity conservation in Africa; to explore new means of funding, monitoring and facilitating implementation of the Regional BirdLife Programme for Africa for the four years from 2005 - 2008, especially in 2005/2006; and to convene and advance the work of key technical committees of the Africa Network (the Africa Policy and Advocacy Working Group, the Africa Species Working Group, and the Technical Advisory Committee).

The theme of the meeting was 'People-centred Conservation'. The agenda comprised: a Panel Discussion on 'what have we saved'; plenary case studies from Burundi, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Madagascar, Sierra Leone, and Zimbabwe; regional and global plenary updates and presentations on Global Science and policy, BirdLife's conservation activity in Africa on 2004/2005, new regional initiatives such as 'World Birds' and 'Remote Sensing of African IBAs (Important Bird Areas)', and NGO presentations from new countries intending to join the Africa Network (Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire); workshop sessions on each of the main sections of the BirdLife Programme (people, sites, habitats and species); and a business meeting of the Africa partnership to discuss recommendations from CAP, review governance, Network development and fund-raising strategies and various other issues. Other sessions included working group and technical committee meetings. There were also country poster displays and Africa markets from all the participating countries. There was also a CEOs informal dinner where every-day problems faced by CEOs were discussed.

The main outputs were: a regional IBA Conservation Strategy for Africa (this will guide the IBA programme until 2015); a Regional Site Support Group manual; the Regional Fundraising Strategy for Africa; a draft concept for a Trust Fund for the Africa Programme; Network Strengthening Plans for Botswana, Egypt, Rwanda and Zambia; and an outline of a 'People' strategy.

The main outcomes of CAP 2005 were numerous and were:

- The information available on the status of the IBA programme in Africa was updated (there are 341 IBA sites being monitored in the Africa Network and 11 Site Support Groups (SSGs) are in operation).
- Targets were agreed for IBA monitoring in 2005/2006 and by the end of 2008 (BirdLife NGOs will monitor 365 IBA sites in 2005 and 500 IBAs by 2008).

- Guidance was provided on how to proceed with regional initiatives e.g. World Birds, Remote Sensing of African IBAs, the Species Action Plan project and ‘enhancing local capacities for sustainable biodiversity action in Africa’.
- A regional project (Swedbio funded) was launched to strengthen SSG networks in the Africa programme: ‘Improving the livelihoods of local communities in Africa by promoting sustainable use of renewable natural resources through increased participation in biodiversity policy making and implementation’.
- Recommendations were made for overcoming challenges in implementation of the BirdLife Africa species programme.
- A clear vision for BirdLife in Cameroon was outlined and presented.
- Steps were agreed to strengthen policy and advocacy work in the region including immediate recruitment of a regional coordinator and volunteers to fill key gaps in the network of Africa Policy and Advocacy Sectoral Focal Points.
- The development of a Trust Fund to support conservation work in the Africa Partnership was strongly recommended and the Africa Secretariat was given the mandate to set this up in consultation with the partnership (they received two pledges of funds from two individuals in the Africa Partnership).
- Strengthening Plans for development of selected NGOs in the Network were reviewed and the following recommendations approved for forwarding to Global Council: Tunisia (recommended for an upgrade from Partner Designate to Full Partner status), Botswana (view to upgrade from Affiliate to Partner Designate in 2005/2006), Egypt (received Affiliate status to be reviewed after 24 months), Rwanda (view to upgrade from Affiliate to Partner Designate in 2007), Zambia (view to upgrade from Affiliate to Partner Designate in 2007), Liberia (received Affiliate status for 24 months, to be re-assessed), and Cote d’Ivoire (applied for Affiliate status, will be assessed after report received at CAP 2006). All these recommendations on the Network development are subject to final approval or rejection by the BirdLife Global Council.

Important recommendations were made at this meeting that will be used to guide the Africa programme in 2005/2006. The key recommendations from CAP were: the partnership should be innovative and imaginative in their fundraising (i.e. non-traditional); BirdLife should no longer be ‘the biggest conservation secret in Africa’ (we need to brand our BirdLife activities through vigorous marketing etc.); and we need to document and understand better the impact and links between our work and the big human issues such as poverty, HIV/AIDS and climate change, to ensure that our actions are complementary with them. We need to remain focused on our core objectives and we will only have succeeded if we have saved species, sites, and habitats for people.

One of the five conference days was spent going on a field trip. Chip went across a river in a dugout canoe into a forest to visit some pygmy people and then to Lobé Falls, a waterfall that goes into the sea (this apparently is the only known place on earth where a river flows into the ocean via a waterfall). I visited the Marine Turtles Project at Ebodjé, a 25km stretch of beach three species of turtle migrate to every year and breed. Unfortunately, the turtles were not there at the time though (they were somewhere in America), but we saw the site and evidence of their annual presence. The third party of field-trippers (VIPs only) went to a forest somewhere 70 km from Kribi and saw fresh spoor of gorilla, chimpanzee and leopard.

Though there was not too much time for bird watching, species seen include: Great Blue Turaco, Royal Tern, White-thighed Hornbill, Piping Hornbill, Village Weaver, Vieillot’s Black Weaver, Orange-cheeked Waxbill, Olive-bellied Sunbird, Reed Cormorant (Long-tailed Cormorant), Western Reef Cormorant [?], Little Egret, Palm-nut Vulture, White-fronted Plover, Common Sandpiper, African Palm-swift and Malachite Kingfisher. We did not see or hear any Picathartes – which Cameroon is apparently famous for!

The next CAP meeting (CAP 2006) will be held in May-July 2006 in Ethiopia. The BirdLife Global Council wants to meet in 2007 in Kenya, and there is a chance this will be combined with the 2007 CAP meeting. Otherwise CAP 2007 may take place in Botswana.

(Reference: BirdLife Council for the Africa Partnership Meeting CAP 2005, Paradis Hotel, Kribi, Cameroon, 25-29 July 2005. Summary Report. By Dr Hazell Shokellu Thompson, 4th August, 2005).

EDUCATION NEWS

Grateful thanks to CABS for their donation of \$1 500 000 to the Education Programme. The funds were used for a herb garden at Fumarera Primary and St Peters, Gudza, Chitungwiza quiz competitions and the Southern Ground-hornbill project questionnaire.

Success in Schools

Visits to many school clusters during the second term were rewarding as they showed teachers had become familiar with the programme. They now discussed birds and their conservation with confidence. This has stimulated the Manager to produce activity kits to keep clubs busy till next year. The Matabeleland education officers Mesdames Julia Dupree and Penny Feather have also kept in touch with their cluster of schools through kits.

At the Norton workshop hosted at Dudley Hall School, Mrs Enfreda Mudzengi of Norton 1 won the slide show. At the training workshop a year ago, she only knew one bird, the Ostrich but the course inspired her to learn to recognise different species of bird. She is now a sponsored member of BLZ. At Southerton school, Mrs Julliet Van Ongevalle found another teacher Mrs Maphosa doing well with her club. They had produced an excellent journal of their activities.

Just recently Mrs Van-Ongevalle and Mrs Leslee Maasdorp inaugurated the western suburbs Harare cluster, Yamuranayi School had for too long been out on a limb and through the initiative of their teacher Mr D Chitura, Makundano, Rusununguko, Mukurumbira from Mufakose and Mhofu from Highfield have linked up with his club.

Herb gardens

The newest garden to be established was at Furamera Primary in Chiota chosen because the grounds were fenced against endless marauding cattle and goats. Mrs Maasdorp and Mr Ngoni Chiweshe were well supported by staff and learners and to their surprise also Mr Zacharia Chipendo had returned to his homeland after the recent "clean-up" exercise. A rough start of a circular bed saw herbs planted which should flourish under the Chipendo Brothers, Zacharia and Elisha. Another surprise was in store for the trainers and teachers Nyamungai Pan had completely dried up for the first time in living memory. At Chemukute Secondary a garden with a promising start in October 2004 has not fared well. Eiffel flats water supply has almost shutdown. Plans are afoot to replant it soon. At about the same time a garden plus a fence was provided by BLZ within the Driefontein – CIDA funding at Taigara School near Gutu. This has become a showpiece of the district. Mrs Jennifer Mapfumo, other staff, pupils and an AREX officer have every right to be proud of this result. The herbs are being used by the schools and some sold to the community.

What's in it for birds?? All gardens have a backing of shrubs that bring in sunbirds and insectivorous birds eat bees and other insects attracted to the garden.

Southern Ground-hornbill Campaign

It would be greatly appreciated if members could send in items of interest and sighting records of this species. A grant has been given by CABS to send out questionnaires to schools in selected rural districts. This project will enable us to reach more schools than has been possible so far.

Mukuvisi 21st Anniversary Fair

BLZ education sector set up a small stand that attracted attention. A highlight of the day was the falconry display by Peterhouse and Kuimba Shiri. Two very young Shona boys had no qualms over letting a Barn Owl fly to their gloved hands.

Appeal

Chimanimani Primary is a boarding school that needs a few second-hand cricket bats. The lads play with planks. Donations for bats, racquets and balls would be appreciated.

Leslee Maasdorp, Education Programme Manager

MASHONALAND BRANCH

EWANRIGG BOTANIC GARDENS, Sunday 24th July 2005 (QDS 1731C2)

Only 10 people managed to attend this outing on a pleasant sunny morning. Perhaps the fuel shortage deterred more people! The aloes were in full flower, as is normal at this time of the year, and attracted a number of sunbirds – Copper Sunbird, Amethyst Sunbird, Scarlet-chested Sunbird, Miombo Double-collared Sunbird, Variable Sunbird and White-bellied Sunbird. A walk through the park revealed a number of bird species including African Green-pigeons, Purple-crested Turaco and Grey Go-away-bird, Crested Barbet, Whyte's Barbet and Black-collared Barbets and Yellow-fronted Tinkerbirds, Red-backed Mannikin and Bronze Mannikins, Speckled Mousebirds, Lesser Honeyguides, Golden Weaver, Village Weaver, Red-headed Weaver, Spectacled Weaver, Southern Masked-weaver and Thick-billed Weavers, Green-capped Eremomela, Long-billed Crombec, Blue Waxbills, Jameson's Firefinch, Village Indigobird (Steel-blue Widowfinch), Kurrichane Thrush, Terrestrial Brownbul, a Grey-headed Bush-shrike, Orange-breasted Bush-shrike, Tropical Boubou, a flock of White-crested Helmet-shrikes and various others. Two Familiar Chats were recorded and I do not recall having observed these birds on previous visits.

One of the focal points of our visit was the tall Kenyan Coffee Tree with freshly emerging flowers. This tree attracted a large number of birds including weavers, sunbirds, Black-headed Orioles, African Yellow White-eyes and about 30 Miombo Blue-eared Starlings. There were also about 120 Dark-capped Bulbuls present! The arrival of a Little Sparrowhawk that perched in the tree giving us a full view sent all the other birds rapidly into cover. One moment there were dozens of birds in the tree, the next moment only one! Other birds of prey seen were an African Harrier-hawk being mobbed in flight by a Pied Crow and a Lizard Buzzard.

Altogether 80 species were identified during the morning.

Geoff Lowe

MATABELELAND BRANCH

Talk on Birds of Gabon, 23rd July

Well, these mostly are unfamiliar to us as they don't occur down here, but nevertheless Mike Roberts' presentation gripped our large audience on Saturday afternoon. It was not just about birds, it was about their environment. How on earth he managed to get around and do his job (geological surveying) is unimaginable. His team travelled in 4x4 vehicles in terrain that required at least 8x8. It was typical tropical rainforest with virtually no roads, huge mud tracks churned up by logging vehicles which then became marooned and fallen trees over which they had to manoeuvre their trucks, one wheel at a time. And, how on earth did he manage to see and photograph little tropical species, some extremely rare, flitting around at the top of giant trees?

Well he achieved all of this, and his talk was fascinating – to the extent that questions and discussions went on non-stop, right through tea, into dusk and up to departure time. Mike is an experienced and knowledgeable bird-watcher and an interesting speaker who has the gift of gripping his audience from the moment he starts. We are indeed fortunate to have him as an active member of Matland.

Waterfowl Count, AISLEBY, 31st July (QDS: 2028B1)

Three teams undertook our July count at Aisleby, which resulted in sightings of 44 species of waterfowl totalling 3663 birds compared to 38 species and 2384 birds in July 2004 – and all our specials made an appearance on the day!

One of the least represented numerically, but perhaps the most interesting, was our one Spotted Crake, still pootling around in its holding pond, "as happy as a sand boy" (whatever that might mean). It obviously felt that Zimbabwe was a better bet than its winter alternative, with our warm winter, lovely pongy water and an oozing muddy shoreline providing continuous sustenance. It was still there on 10

August. Our other specials, two Hadedda Ibis, presented themselves in a noisy flypast. We have been seeing them here for the last 8 years, but never have they increased their number.

Most represented numerically were 2137 Egyptian Goose as compared to only 528 last year, Red-knobbed Coots were down to 121 from 797, Black-winged Stilts were up to 81 from 10, as were Southern Pochard totalling 101 as opposed to two in 2004.

Our totalling (with tea) was undertaken on the lovely shoreline of the Upper Umgusa Dam through the courtesy of the Umgusa Country Club management. We will leave it to Colin Baker to comment on aspects of interest in his excellent Field Observations published in *Honeyguide*.

Verreaux's Eagle Weekend, Maleme, MATOPOS 19th – 21st August (QDS: 2028C2-2028D1)

Just ended yesterday, this weekend was well supported by 28 members and visitors – 6 from Mashonaland, 2 from the Midlands, 3 from South Africa, 2 from Botswana, and the rest from here – and 8 day-visitors from Bulawayo including members of the Matobo Conservation Society. We were really chuffed at having been able to reunite Paul Tubb (SA), Vernon Tarr (Zim) and Rusty Hatton (Bots and Zim), all of whom had known each other in their youth and had worked with Val Gargett on her wonderful survey on Verreaux's Eagles.

From day one there was little pause for breath. Upcountry participants arrived throughout Friday, during which there was a certain amount of socialising and toing and froing from Black Eagle Lodge (where the Harare contingent were residing) at one end of the Maleme Rest Camp to Fish Eagle at the other.

But they came to Fish Eagle not just for socialising – it was really to come and look at the African Fish-eagle who had a young chick on her nest, the African Crowned Eagle who pretended she had an egg or two in hers (maybe), and the Ovambo Sparrowhawks who had nothing in theirs as they hadn't yet started proceedings. (As a matter of interest, we're not entirely convinced by Darryl's gut feeling on Friday that the African Crowned Eagle was going to lay an egg on Saturday, because on Sunday she was seen crashing about, doing nothing constructive, in the branches of a small Terminalia on the other side of the gorge).

Saturday morning saw us setting off earlyish on a round of Verreaux's Eagle nests and territories. First stop was John Sullivan's farm behind Inungu where tea, coffee, biscuits and a very friendly welcome awaited us. From his breakfast table and through a telescope John watches his eaglet's development – we also had a look. The group then headed off for a walk in the bush towards the nest dwala – where the brave amongst us were led on a climb up the back and then down the front of the dwala to look into the nest from above. The un-brave of us kept our eyes on the proceedings through binoculars from a clearing afar, at intervals waving encouragingly to our loved ones – except when our pet gecko, Gavin, slid down and then sat on a sheer rock face, undertaking a photo-taking service with everyone else's cameras, which none of us could bear to watch.

From the farm, we then gathered the flock which, with difficulty, we managed to keep together till we reached Efifi where the adult Verreaux's Eagle was lying firmly on her nest, presumably sheltering her chick from the sun and our view.

Onwards to a tree nest built out on a branch in a giant eucalyptus. Although currently inactive, it was considered of interest, as it's only the third Verreaux's Eagle tree nest ever recorded in the Matopos during the survey, the other two having disintegrated years ago. The birds had laid and started incubation earlier in the season, but sadly the nest had been attacked in recent weeks, possibly by honey hunters going for the large live bee nests in the bottom. It is believed that the disturbance had dislodged the eggs as broken shells and derelict honeycombs had been found on the ground below.

Off and out of the Park we proceeded on the Kezi road to one of our favourite territories where the nest is clearly visible from the top of a dwala, easy to climb at the end of a short walk. This houses one of this season's younger chicks estimated to be about 5 weeks old.

Then 'home' through depressing badly burned land, from Whitewaters almost to Maleme dam, due to fires that had raged on Thursday and Friday. After lunch and a short break everyone re-gathered at Fish Eagle for a talk by new member Viv Wilson on *Leopards and Bio-diversity of Matopos National Park*, which was interesting and informative. Thereafter we started on sundowners and a communal braai session.

Next day was an early bird walk – too early for the birds apparently, as we saw little – and by lunchtime we had all dispersed to our various homes.

This was an enjoyable and successful event from our point of view, and we much appreciate the support and encouragement of everyone who managed to join us (and some who didn't) despite having to go through hell and high water to acquire fuel and overcome other difficulties. **Julia Duprée**

EASTERN DISTRICTS BIRD CLUB

VUMBA: Sunday, 26th June 2004 (QDS: 1932B2)

It was cold, cloudy and drizzling earlier in the week, but on this morning the sky was blue. Seven of us started the day's birding at a lay-by along the Vumba road. Several African Olive-pigeons sat high up in the branches soaking up the morning sun. A Square-tailed Drongo was ringing in the forest. Bar-throated Apalis, as common up the Vumba as in town, performed. Chirinda Apalis called and also showed itself. After Cape Batis we decided to move on.

A stop near a bit of grassland was most productive in terms of invasive trees, but few birds were seen. The latest addition to the invasive species list is the Blackwood, which, after biding its time for a number of years, has started spreading rapidly. For biologists it does have some interest, as the leaves are phyllodes, seemingly simple leaves that are in fact fused compound leaves. The process was visible on the many young plants.

In the next patch of forest we slowly picked up a few more birds. The ever-active White-tailed Crested Flycatcher flitted through the trees, some Dark-backed Weavers and both mountain bulbuls, Yellow-streaked Greenbul and Stripe-streaked Greenbul, were seen. Some honeyguide was glimpsed high in the canopy and disappeared but Livingstone's Turaco showed off well. We heard some rustling of leaves in the undergrowth; expecting an Olive Thrush we were pleasantly surprised with Swynnerton's Robin instead. It seemed totally oblivious of our presence and kept on going about its business a few metres in front of us.

We now moved into some more open country. African Stonechat and Wailing Cisticola were soon on the list. There were also lots of Cape Canary around. More cisticolas further on caused some confusion as various people claimed Wailing Cisticola or Singing Cisticola. This was finally resolved when both species showed well side-by-side. There were also a few sunbirds around; Variable Sunbirds were most active around here.

Bart and Petra invited the group for tea at Ndundu. This is also a good place for sunbirds, and we added Malachite Sunbird, Bronzy Sunbird, Miombo Double-collared Sunbird and Collared Sunbirds to the list. The tea was wonderful and after a few Yellow-bellied Waxbills we called it a day.

Carl Beel

LA ROCHELLE, PENHALONGA, Sunday, 31st July 2005 (QDS: 1832D3)

The end must be near; last week I was at Ewanrigg with but 10 faithful Mashonas, this Sunday we were but 4 Manyikas, Carl, Peter, Herbert and myself. However, in both cases we made up for lack of numbers by the intensity of our observation. At La Rochelle we counted 61 species on a cool, breezy morning. In fact we got the first 20+ in the Acacia woodland just off the Penhalonga road and the last one, a Tawny-flanked Prinia on the same road.

For a change our very first birds were 2 Brubru, our second, heard but not seen, a Scaly-throated Honeyguide, which accompanied us throughout the morning. There was Singing Cisticola along the fence and Purple-crested Turaco, Crested Barbet, an African Hoopoe and Fork-tailed Drongos in the trees. Red-necked Spurfowl, White-browed Robin-chat and Kurrichane Thrush called from the rank grass. Overhead I was surprised to see 2 Lesser Striped Swallows, early for Mutare. Carl reported African Quailfinch above but we only have his word for it; even Peter and Herbert were sceptical.

A little further down the road, with eucalypts on one side and Mountain Acacia on the other, we saw African Dusky Flycatcher and Chin-spot Batis. At the gardens, we skirted the shadows to stay in the sun and found Bar-throated Apalis, Yellow-bellied Greenbuls of which there were many, Red-eyed Dove and Arrow-marked Babbler. There was a lone Little Grebe on the 'lake' but the Bottle Brush contained Ashy Flycatcher, Collared Sunbird, Variable Sunbird, Olive Sunbird, and Miombo Double-

collared Sunbird. Later I saw a single Malachite Sunbird but probably as we were too late for the best of the aloes. A Green-backed Heron was on sentry duty high above the water.

We then followed the furrow to its source, a longish pretty but pretty sterile walk for the most part but at the end in a patch of forest we discovered Dark-capped Bulbul, Yellow-streaked Greenbul and Stripe-cheeked Greenbul. On our way back we saw Livingstone's Turaco, heard Gorgeous Bush-shrike and Barratt's Warbler, at last saw some Red-throated Twinspot and a Tambourine Dove. Back in the main garden we found a party of 6 Red-throated Twinspot, Red-capped Robin-chat, Brown-crowned Tchagra, Streaky-headed Seedeater, Lesser Honeyguide and a Black-backed Puffback.

The dearth of raptors was to some extent remedied by a Lizard Buzzard on the wires on the ride home.

Ken Dixon

KAROI BIRD CLUB

RYDINGS School, Saturday 16th July 2005 (QDS: 1629D3)

We took a 2-hour birding drive around the farm on a lovely, balmy morning and had a most interesting time. We were keen to see what species we would find in the recently burnt area – a section that gets burnt every year for the game – of which we saw zebra, tsessebe, impala, kudu, oribi and wildebeest – the zebra picking something up in the freshly burnt area – no green sprouts yet?

We thought we might see some Dusky Larks but I fear we were 2 months too late as we saw them in May last year. There were many Fork-tailed Drongo and Crowned Lapwing. Lilac-breasted Roller was present, African Pipit, Rufous-naped Lark and 2 Temminck's Courser running through the black. Four Capped Wheatears appeared, chasing each other, and one coming very close to our parked pick-up. Suddenly there was a great noise of many 'kie-weets' from a group of 12 Crowned Lapwing overhead, harassing a Black-chested Snake-eagle. Driving on to the small dam – a quarter full now – only 30 Helmeted Guineafowl on the shoreline. Yellow Bishops in their off-season colour were along the fence line together with Blue Waxbill and Jameson's Firefinch. Dark-capped Bulbul galore – we saw 26 of them feeding off little brown berries on an almost leafless climber up a tree, one Black-collared Barbet sharing and a flock of Pin-tailed Whydahs with their pink bills rummaging in the dry, short grass below. A lot of White-crested Helmet-shrike – 2 flocks of 7 each and another of 13. A large flock of White-winged Widowbird with some Red-billed Quelea were moving fairly quickly across the grass.

But the crowning of the morning was seeing a Golden-breasted Bunting – not seen here before! At the larger dam were Grey Heron and Black-headed Heron, 4 Great Egrets, 4 Red-billed Teal, 5 White-faced Duck and a flock of Wattled Starlings down for a drink. Red-billed Oxpecker were heard and then seen on the mombies – only 2. In a flowering gum tree, Scarlet-chested Sunbird, Amethyst Sunbird and White-bellied Sunbird, with many females, African Yellow White-eye, 6 Swallow-tailed Bee-eaters, Dark-capped Bulbul, Fork-tailed Drongo and Black-headed Oriole. I think the birds think it is spring with the warm weather we are having here.

60 species in all the morning. During the month we saw a Purple Roller for the first time here.

Merle Mitchell

TAIL FEATHERS

In the garden at KAROI, White-crested Helmet-shrike, Klaas's Cuckoo, Grey-headed Bush-shrike and Orange-breasted Bush-shrike, an African Harrier-hawk, Swallow-tailed Bee-eaters, a cacophony of Green Wood-hoopoe, African Hoopoe on the lawn, 7 Purple-crested Turaco at the bird-bath. A couple of Black-headed Orioles helping themselves to a plentiful supply of bees in the flowers of the Kenya Croton. An escaped Rosy-faced Lovebird came for a bath and a quiet preen afterwards until 2 Grey-headed Parrots flew past, whereby the little fellow followed them with much chattering! I fear he was playing catch-up, they being bigger and faster.

Merle Mitchell

NOTICEBOARD

John Clarke in the UK is looking for information about the Spotted Flycatcher on its wintering grounds in Africa. He writes: "I am just coming to the end of the fourth year of a study of breeding [of the Spotted Flycatcher] in England and once the usual report is completed I hope to begin a small booklet about the project which heavily depends on local people around the villages to help me locate and monitor each pair. So the booklet would contain information about the birds but I would like to expand it to include the human side, which for me has been so interesting. I also want to learn more about what the birds do during our winter and to include something of that as well". He would like to contact any ornithologists in southern Africa who might have information about the species in southern Africa: e.g. earliest arrival and latest departure dates; food and feeding behaviour, especially how the species interacts with resident flycatcher species and with other Spotted Flycatchers; call and song; moult; and any other potentially interesting information. If you have any information you can contact him by e-mail at jclarkekem@btinternet.com or send the information to Peter Frost, Institute of Environmental Studies, University of Zimbabwe, PO Box MP 167, Mt Pleasant, Harare (pfrost@science.uz.ac.zw), who will pass the information on to him.

The following talks will be given at Mukuvisi Woodland Nature Reserve & Environmental Education Centre on Saturday 10th September 2005, 2:30-4:30 p.m.

"An overview of elephant numbers and management issues in Southern Africa"
By Dr David Cumming (approx. 35 mins)

Followed by

"Aerial censuses of elephants – with a hands-on session simulating aerial surveys"
By Dr Russell Taylor (approx 90 mins)

New Members

Shearwater Adventures

Portland Holdings

Cindi Mcvey Smith

Tim and Jena Cranston

Gwen and Garnett Attwell

Craig and Lesley Hundt

For Sale

There are some lovely bird books for sale at BLZ Office. Please contact Alice or Dorothy.

Lovely new bush hats, with the BLZ logo on the front, beautifully made, with air-conditioning panels on each side and medium verandahs. They come in small, medium and large. The hats are also available in white and no print.

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