

# THE BABBLER

## ORNITHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION OF ZIMBABWE NEWSLETTER

ISSUE #8: September/October 1995

### Mashonaland Branch

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### MASHONALAND BRANCH ACTIVITIES

#### Regular Monthly Outings

1. Mukuvisi Woodlands: Sunday 3rd September and 1st October 1995. Meet at Paget Road entrance at 6.30 a.m. There will be a vehicle guard in attendance.
2. Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary: Sunday 10th September and 8th October 1995. Meet at Marimba Shopping Centre at 6.30 a.m. Beginners are especially catered for. Vehicles parked in a safe area. Bring your chairs and tea.

#### Saturday Afternoon Outings

1. 16th September 1995. Forrester Estates Mvurwi. See Verreaux's Eagles nesting, Lanner Falcons and Speckled Pigeons. Meet at Ashbrittle Shopping Centre at 2 p.m. Members from Mvurwi area meet at Msonedi at 2.45 p.m.
2. 21st October 1995. Lowdale Farm (Mr Mick Townsend) Meet at Ashbrittle Shopping Centre at 2 p.m. This is an old venue not visited for a number of years. Woodland and grassland birds.

#### Sunday Outings

1. No outing for September - Rifa Camp.
2. 20th October 1995. Imbwa Farm. A very good area for water birds - Acacia, Miombo woodland and grassland birds. Meet at GPO Inez Terrace at 6.30 a.m. Bring your tea and chairs.

#### Evening Meetings

No meeting in September - Rifa Camp.

19th October 1995. Richard Bell will speak on butterflies' mimicry and camouflage in relation to birds. Venue: Alexandra Sports Club 6.30 p.m.

N.B. The convoy on outings leaves sharp at the time stated. PLEASE DO NOT BE LATE.

**Hippo Pools Weekend**

Another Hippo Pools outing is planned for 1st - 3rd December 1995. The Narina Trogon should be back and with some luck the African Pitta will have arrived.

Accommodation is in chalets with 2 plate gas stove and oven and fridge. There are two communal ablution blocks. Breakfast and lunch will be self-catering. Dinner will be supplied by Sue and Mike Jarvis. Cost \$170 per person per night. Please complete the application tear off with your uncrossed cheque to Dave Gray made out to Ornithological Association of Zimbabwe.

**Rifa**

Geoff Lowe will take his hide so if you are a keen photographer bring your equipment.

**OPEN DAY**

Mashonaland Birdwatchers are holding an Open Day at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary on 8th October 1995 (Sunday). We do not know how many aspiring bird watchers will come along. If it is above 30 we will require members to act as guides or leaders allocated to just one or two newcomers. So please would all members come along to Lake Chivero on this special outing. Meet at Marimba Shopping Centre Car Park at 6.30 a.m. as usual. For your effort - beside the possibility of making new friends - you will be served with tea and biscuits FREE. Incentive enough. Further details if required contact Dave Gray or Keith Barrow.

**EASTERN DISTRICTS BIRD CLUB**

Chairman: Mr K Dixon 62882 Mutare  
 Secretary: Miss G Henning 4 Mimosa Court, 2nd St, Mutare  
 Recorder: Mr A B (Tony) Curtis 60181 Mutare

**Outings**

Saturday 9th September 1995	Old Mutare	2 p.m.
Sunday 24th September 1995	Hot Springs area	6 a.m.
Saturday 14th October 1995	Cynara	2 p.m.
Sunday 29th October 1995	Burma Valley	5.30 a.m.

The group assembles at the Museum in Aerodrome Road at the time stated. It is always advisable to check on arrangements by ringing Ken Dixon on 62882 or Tony Curtis on 60181.

**MATABELELAND BRANCH****Future Programme****Evening Meetings**

**Friday 1st September 1995.** Video evening. July's meeting had to be postponed. We will endeavour to show "He dances for his cormorants" and "The Mountains of the thunderer", both feature some beautiful photography and are well worth seeing. Venue: 3 Bouchier Wray Avenue, Hillside at 8 p.m. Contact Barbara Cromar 41983 for directions.

**Friday 6th October.** Sentinel Ranch birds. Colin Bristow of Sentinel Ranch has kindly offered to come and talk about wildlife of this Limpopo area, plenty of 'specials' occur here and this will be well worth attending. Venue: 3A Holdengarde Avenue, Hillside at 8 p.m. Tel. 42474

**Monthly Outings**

**Sunday 17th September.** Verreaux's Eagle outing. This year our annual Verreaux's Eagle outing will be led by Warren Goodwin, as always there will be plenty of raptors to view. Meet Retreat Shopping Centre at 7.30 a.m. bringing morning tea and lunch or contact the Chairman for details.

Sunday 22nd October. Lumani Falls. This proved to be such an entrancing venue we are planning a return trip in the hot dry. Hopefully the msasa will be in leaf and we can find a number of miombo specials. Meet 7 a.m. at Ascot car park bringing morning tea and lunch. Tel. 42474 for details.

#### Aisleby

Monthly outings continue to our local birding Mecca, dates and co-ordinators being:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Co-ordinator</u>	<u>Tel.</u>
Saturday 30th September	T English	45688
Meet at 2.30 p.m. at the boom		
Sunday 29th October	M Smith	42474
Meet at 7.30 at the boom		

#### From the Chairman

Dry dusty conditions prevail, but within the suburbs bird life has recently become more noticeable. Sunbirds have appeared feeding on flowering Coffee Shade and Erythrina, a definite movement or are they merely more visible?

A short distance from our garden two pairs of Shikras spent a busy half hour calling and flying from perch to perch - territorial display or pair bonding? Does anyone have any answers?

At Aisleby two signs have now been erected proclaiming the area's status as a sanctuary and we thank Harry Erwee and Dudley Hubbard for materials and time. Entries for the 'Paint a Bird' competition have been received and will shortly be judged and displayed in the Museum courtyard. A prize giving ceremony will take place when schools re-open in September.

Please continue with your support. Good birding - Martin Smith

#### Outing Report

Saturday 10 June 1995 CECIL KOP Reserve

We have been aware for a long time that most of our excursions take us outside the city boundary. Most of the local watching takes place rather haphazardly although many of us keep records of our sightings. However that may be, it was decided that a small group of us would visit the Game Park. Rex Harrison, one of our regulars as well as being a Wildlife member, organised a lovely, varied walk for us. Meanwhile Tony Curtis set off for Mutare Heights which often yields good birds, quality rather than quantity, I always think.

Our walk took us in a large arc on the hillside overlooking the town. Most birds were seen in the earlier parts while the sun was still warm. In the steep valley we found Little Bee-eater, Yellow-bellied Greenbul and many Thick-billed Weavers. Further on, at a water point, we spotted a Red-throated Twinspot. Most of the time we were content to enjoy the walk and the changing views but birds turned up from time to time. Our 3 hour hike produced only 26 species but was enjoyed by us all.

Up on the Heights, Tony was lucky, or skilful, enough to find a pair of Spotted Creeper in a place where both Dave and myself have seen them. Southern Hyliota is also a regular in the vicinity. Ken Dixon

Sunday June 25th 1995

Amsterdam Farm, BURMA VALLEY

It was cool and overcast when we met and the situation hadn't changed by the end of the 40 min drive. Not very promising. However, as usual, the birding was fascinating and exciting.

Pi and his family met us at the farm and we were soon off to the forest along the river. The ravages of winter allowed us excellent views of the water usually obscured by dense vegetation. A noisy Green-backed Heron immediately identified by Pi from its call soon lead us to a superb view of the Half-collared Kingfisher, Purple-crested Turaco, Brown-hooded Kingfisher, Yellow-bellied Waxbill and others. Pi also drew our attention to the call of the African Crowned Eagle but we failed to pinpoint it.

Down at the little dam wall we found African Green-pigeon, Silvery-cheeked Hornbill and Trumpeter Hornbill, White-eared Barbet, Hamerkop etc. Then we were off to another small almost dry dam which was host to a lovely little bird party. Within a few minutes we saw Batis, a Narina Trogon, Black-throated Wattle-eye and Grey Tit-flycatcher, Orange-breasted Bush-shrike amongst others. In our attempts to relocate the party we came across many other birds before we moved on to the main dam via the farmhouse and a welcome cup of tea.

As expected water levels were disturbingly low and there were few waterbirds; only Three-banded Plover, African Wattled Lapwing and Blacksmith Lapwing, a Purple Heron, 2 Egyptian Goose and 11 White-faced Duck. While combing the reedbed along the river we managed to winkle out an Ashy Flycatcher and an African Dusky Flycatcher, some Crowned Hornbills, doves being harried by an Ovambo Sparrowhawk and 3 or 4 assorted hirundines.

By now the sky was clear, it was very warm and we were hungry so we repaired to the car grateful that we live so near to such an exciting birding area and that there are such knowledgeable naturalists to show us around. 74 species were heard or seen. Ken Dixon

25th June 1995.

EWANRIGG BOTANIC GARDENS

A relatively large group of about 20 turned out for this outing on a cold morning. Most of the talk was of the Springboks winning the World Cup. The visit was possibly too early as the aloes had not attracted the huge numbers of sunbirds we expected.

A Little Sparrowhawk flew at, but missed, a Blue Waxbill, making Red-billed Quelea and Southern Black Flycatchers vacate their tree quickly. A White-backed Vulture flew overhead and African Fish-eagle was heard. African Palm-swifts were seen but they seem to be very scarce this cold dry season. Four Pied Kingfishers visited the ponds obviously looking for unwary frogs. Several flocks of Speckled Mousebirds were seen - they appear to have taken over from the Red-faced Mousebird which was not recorded. Have they been displaced to the bushveld? A Lesser Honeyguide, the Bar-throated Apalis, both the Orange-breasted Bush-shrike and the Grey-headed Bush-shrike were recorded. The aloes that I watched held about 10 Scarlet-chested Sunbirds, 5 White-bellied Sunbirds and 3 Miombo Double-collared Sunbirds. A couple of Variable Sunbirds and an Amethyst Sunbird were seen in trees (only males were counted). Three canaries were seen - the Brimstone Canary, the Yellow-fronted Canary and the Streaky-headed Seedeater. Also a Golden-breasted Bunting.

As I remember it was the Pied Crow, White-backed Vulture and African Fish-eagle would have been unlikely records 15 years ago. The Speckled Mousebird, the Variable Sunbird and the Thick-billed Weaver have invaded Ewanrigg from the Eastern Highlands since 1980. No birds were seen on a walk in the Miombo woodland behind the Warden's house by the writer and a Braille Librarian!

D V Rockingham-Gill

June 1995 Lumani Falls

In June a good number of us met for a trip to Lumani Falls which is about 80 km from Bulawayo to the southwest of Umzingwane Dam. We had been provided with one of those hand-written maps that need a translator. Unfortunately the map was in the first car and the translator was in the last - which got left behind at one stage with a puncture - so we had a little difficulty finding the falls. We were eventually guided to a suitable parking area in a beautiful valley alongside a small stream from where we set out on foot. We were all struck by the beautiful scenery but disappointed by the apparent lack of birds until we met up with a large party in mixed scrub and trees above the stream. There were Purple-crested Turacos and Cape Batis and many commoner species such as Black-collared Barbets, African Yellow White-eyes and a host of Emerald-spotted Wood-doves and Dark-capped Bulbuls. Further on and in a stand of *Brachystegia* we were watching a Grey Tit-flycatcher and discussing the possibility of a Southern *Hyliota* when one hopped into view and obligingly foraged above us for some time. Soon after we reached the falls we were greeted by a noisy troop of baboons but few birds. The route to the top was hard work but well worth the effort. We met a number of Mocking Cliff-chats and then emerged into a small valley with beautiful flame acacias growing above the stream and an unusual flowering fern (*Osmunda regalis*) in the stream bed.

After lunch we returned to the parking area and decided to investigate the Verreaux's Eagle nest. Reaching our chosen vantage point proved to be an almost impossible climb but we did get high enough to see an eagle standing on the nest, possibly feeding. The alarm calls of dassies drew our attention to a Verreaux's Eagle soaring along the edge of the hills - judging by the number of dassies calling there is still plenty of food available.

Sadly, throughout the day wherever we walked we noticed a great deal of tree-felling, plenty available for the local people's use and also for sale. Possibly in this drought stricken region there can't be many other sources of income. Unless a more sustainable use for the area (tourism?) is found the future for the Verreaux's Eagle and other wildlife must be anything but secure - a sad thought to take away with us at the end of the day. S Long

Saturday 8th July

VUMBA BOTANIC GARDENS

Only five of us turned out on this sunny but cool afternoon for a long-postponed visit to one of the area's best birding venues. We were, however, pleased to welcome Val Cameron from Brondesbury into our group.

How short these winter afternoons are! We were aware right from the start that the warmth and sun which stimulates bird activity was not going to be with us for long. Though there are fewer aloes than ever in the Gardens, sunbirds still abound. We managed to find Olive Sunbird, Variable Sunbird, Amethyst Sunbird, Scarlet-chested Sunbird, Malachite Sunbird, Collared Sunbird and Miombo Double-collared Sunbird. All these were preceded by an obliging Gurney's Sugarbird on a protea near the car park.

On the forest fringes, Stripe-cheeked Greenbul and Yellow-bellied Greenbuls were found and also two Olive Thrush. African Olive-pigeons gave us good views but we only glimpsed Tambourine Doves. One White-eared Barbet flew over.

In the lake area was Mountain Wagtails and Yellow-bellied Waxbills. On our second circuit of the rapidly diminishing sunny bits we found a nice little party which included Dark-backed Weaver and Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird.

As we returned to the car park the last of the sun left us and we were glad to be back in the warm with a bag of 36 species. Ken Dixon

AISLEBY NOTES

Recent outings and the bird count have produced a number of sightings worthy of note. The upper UMGUSA is about a third full and a considerable muddy fringe is available to feeding waders. Plenty of Kittlitz's Plovers were present including some strangely marked individuals - a light rufous above and below with no obvious white on the nape - perhaps juveniles.

Whilst walking along the shore a Ruff was flushed from a dry section of reeds. Closer inspection revealed a mass of termites harvesting the dead matter; presumably the Ruff was eating them.

The bird count took place on a bitterly cold morning and only a few braved the weather. Walking the dam shore produced a tally of 50 Red-knobbed Coots and some 1500 Egyptian Goose. An African Fish-eagle appeared and the dam became a swirling mass of birds - retracing our steps we found a juvenile fish-eagle consuming a Red-knobbed Coot at the water's edge, watched from 20 metres by an adult. We were unable to see which bird made the kill but both flew off together and were later seen circling and calling. Was this the previous year's offspring still associating with its parents? More unanswered questions. Martin Smith

BLACK STORK

A number of sightings have been reported:

AISLEBY, Upper UMGUSA Dam, 9/7/95. 2 adults and 1 juvenile. Martin Smith  
Chitamba Dam, Mpopoma Game Park MATOPOS, 25/6/95. 7 storks and 5 African Spoonbills. R & K Donnan

SOME UNUSUAL BIRD SIGHTINGS

25/3/95 LAKE CHIVERO - Osprey  
26/3/95 near RAINHAM DAMS - on the old Bulawayo road - Southern Carmine Bee-eater, hawking from roadside powerline and acacia.  
14/5/95 LAKE CHIVERO - single Marabou Stork flying. Approximately 350 African Openbills opposite bank to Bushman's Point.  
28/5/95 home garden - a flock of mixed-sex Violet-backed Starlings settled briefly then moved off in a vaguely easterly direction.  
9/6/95 HARARE BOTANIC GARDENS - another flock of about 25 Violet-backed Starlings (perhaps the same group but no females sighted)  
9/7/95 Collins Avenue, Chisipite - female Black-throated Wattle-eye in creek-side scrub.

Doug Laing

THE WHISPERING TREE

At a time when very little is going on in the MUKUVISI WOODLANDS, our Meyer's Parrots are a boon with their laid back and to us amusing manner. Their prime housing estate has been appropriated by a night-ape. The female parrot has acquired a new mate, its midcrown has very little yellow, his behaviour differs from his predecessor and he is wary of me. The pair tried very hard to shift the little night-ape and the male parrot sometimes cautiously climbed into the nest-chamber giving the poor night-ape probably a few knocks on the head. After half an hours watching, the female got bored, opened its beak and with half-closed eyes gave a big yawn. Later they took over the nest-hole of a Black-collared Barbet at the windswept 'msasa point' and the egg will have hatched by now. This particular female rears only one chick. I established that the male took turns at incubating and sometimes joined its partner in the hole.

One day a Lesser Honeyguide tried to interfere and was vigorously chased about by the male, at the same and only occasion a single bee seemed to check out the hole. Could there be some interaction between honeyguide and bee? The latter have high jacked an occupied parrot's nest in the past. Was it on a scouting mission?

Further downstream a *Syzygium cordatum* was host to a variety of sunbirds, while below a two metre beautifully marked water leguan lay in the sun. then came the frost, and on a Sunday morning, a loud tinkling, whispering sound emanated from the tree, as thousands of frosted flower buds trickled through the leaves earthbound.

The night-ape is still in its adopted hole and when the morning sun filtering through the leaves lights up the tree trunk, a little furry head with prominent eyes and big ears will appear to survey the surroundings.  
John Sievi

#### HAMERKOP (*Scopus umbretta*)

I have watched two nests in the area appear.

The first one, about mid-March in the fork of a large shady acacia thorn tree by No. 8 green at the KADOMA golf course. I don't know how long it took to construct and by whom, but suddenly it was noticed, the huge structure about 1m x 1m, entwined with twigs, grasses, old plastic, papers and rags, and probably bones and tins inside. The perfectly round opening, on the lower ½ of the nest facing the stream. The parent/s were seen at odd times having a bath, otherwise little activity or noise during the daytime. After about 2 months, 3 brand new shiny brown juveniles were seen on the water's edge. Of course the nest is no longer in use, still there though, and will probably be used again as the birds are in the vicinity.

The second nest is on my farm Cherrybank, securely anchored in the fork of a large mnondo tree, also with the same dimensions. The lovely round opening again, lower region of nest and facing the pond. The significance probably for the young to watch through the opening the shimmering water for any movement of food. Then 1st July saw two new Hamerkops on the edge of the small dam, preening themselves contentedly, happy to be free in the sunshine. These small observations might be of interest to others who have been lucky enough to watch this particular family of water birds. Margaret Parrock

#### TAIL FEATHERS

Members of the OAZ may be able to assist me in pursuing a collaborative project I am undertaking with an Australian researcher. The project is part of a much larger continuing program examining the global spread, for commercial plantation and afforestation purposes, of eucalyptus and Australian acacias, and avian responses to them. Zimbabwe presents a good subject for study with widespread commercial application of certain species of eucalypt and their use, in earlier years for drainage and roadside timber. The plantation use and uncontrolled spread of black wattle (*Acacia decurrens*) in the eastern districts is also of interest.

I would be very interested to receive written records of any observations of any age documenting the use of eucalypts or Australian acacias by southern African birds occurring in Zimbabwe (or elsewhere in the region). I include both resident and migrant species. By 'use' I mean any activity in which the bird engages to sustain itself - nesting, leaf gleaning and feeding, using the trees as hawking or roosting perches etc. I am also anxious to obtain access to academic papers or monographs which may have been written on the subject, either from experience in this country, South Africa or elsewhere in the region.

I can be contacted by mail c/o P O Box 4541 Harare or by phone after hours on Harare 490113. Doug Laing

MIDLANDS AREA

"A proposal has been made to form a Midland Branch of the OAZ. B W Beekes, of Shurugwi 152-6422 is organising a field day and meeting to form a steering committee at Princess Farm SHURUGWI on Sunday 10/09/95, commencing at 0800, meeting at 1200. Anyone interested in coming, please bring chairs, meat and whatever. Braai fires will be organised. To get to the farm, turn off the Gweru/Shurugwi road at the 33.5 km peg down the Hotel (or Gardens) road, proceed 30.5 km directly on to Farm"

B W Beekes

FIELD CARD ORGANISATION

Since 1963 the OAZ had a field card and a field card organiser. From 1987 - 1991 the rules changed and atlas cards were given away free to all participants in the programme. When that ended we had A.W.D.S. - Atlas Withdrawal Symptoms.

Now we have

1. The African Waterfowl Census - D V Rockingham-Gill, 4 Fernleigh Road, Borrowdale.
2. Field Card Organiser, OAZ. P O Box CY 161 Causeway
3. Nest Record Card Organiser, c/o Bulawayo Museum P O Box 240 Bulawayo
4. Rarities Committee, Dr C Hustler, P O Box 159, Victoria Falls
5. Special Species Survey, Mrs T Couto, c/o DNPWLM Box BE 60 Belvedere

Now we are getting a field card for which you will have to pay - \$1.00 (They cost more than this to produce). Send a stamped SAE to the Field Card Organiser, OAZ, P O Box CY 161, Causeway and you will get field cards, when they are published. Don't forget to support our sponsor.

The participant will now own the card, if s/he wishes they can be sent to the FCO for safe keeping and storage, in which case they will be given a number, which will follow on where the last field card left off, say 13501. The new card will indicate special species or rarities and so those cards will also have to be filled in by those who wish to do so. Unlike the Atlas cards we would like to see numbers seen and breeding. If anyone requires their card returned it can be vetted, some notes extracted for Recent Reports and then returned; the newer member may wish to learn bird identification this way.

It is always nice to complete the notes section of the card too. As in the past cards should be for a week maximum (a month is acceptable but too long to get meaningful arrival and departure dates.)

I always fill in the animals seen thus my last card will look like this:

8 - 9/7/95. 1630Cl. Binge Farm - Makonde District. Commercial farm

MIOMBO

Vervet Monkey 1. Bush Squirrel 3. Warthog 2+4 young of year.

Lion in the vicinity. Kudu 10, 3, 6. Sable 2. Duiker 1. Oribi 4.

2 Red-billed Oxpeckers on cattle. 2 6ft crocs in the Green Valley Farm dam.

Huge fire on Nirvana farm.

D V Rockingham-Gill

BINOCULARS FOR BIRDERS

You are a person who enjoys watching birds and this puts you in good company. Over sixty million North Americans alone have discovered the pleasure and challenge of birding. Chances are you already own a pair of binoculars - a pair you inherited or bought without much thought, a pair that has served but maybe did not excel.



But now you are ready to move up to quality optics - binoculars that will make it easy to get on to those hyperkinetic warblers and treetop eremomelas. You need binoculars that are sharp enough to resolve the details that separate look-alike flycatchers and bright enough to disclose the facial pattern of a 'brown-backed' robin stalking the shadows. In short you are ready to buy a pair of birding binoculars.

Why won't just any binoculars do?

Binoculars are the primary tools for bird watching. Different "User Groups" (hunters, yachtsmen, backpackers, Concert goers) use binoculars as an accessory to their activity or sport. But binoculars are not just an accessory to birding. Binoculars are the instruments that define birding - the functional equivalent of the first baseman's glove, the musicians instrument, the plough in the hands of the farmer.

Every user group has its own peculiar needs and constraints that binocular manufacturers translate into binocular makes and models. Hunters demand rugged durable, optically precise binoculars that perform well in the low light conditions of dawn and dusk. Yachtsmen require optics that are impervious to weather. Backpackers want optics that are light and portable. Birders demand all these attributes and more. For binoculars to be birder worthy they must not only be durable and precise, but also weatherproof and portable. They must focus fast and focus close. They must offer a generous field of view and provide exceptional depth of field even at close quarters.

Forewarned is forearmed

There are several things you should know before talking to a sales person.

1. as a birdwatcher you represent the largest "User group" - over 30% of all binoculars purchased are used for birding.
2. The needs and constraints of birding are well known to the manufacturers but might not be known to the sales person. Chances are, after reading this you will know much more than any non-birding sales person. Don't let them Confuse you
3. All equipment is designed to compensate for a human shortcoming. People should never be forced to compensate for their equipment. If the binocular you are considering is flawed in performance or design - (i.e. focus is not close enough - do not fit your hands) do not buy them. If you do you will regret them later.
4. There are cheap and expensive binoculars. There are binoculars that are good for birding and those that are not. There are no good cheap birding binoculars, expect to pay a commensurate price.

What are binoculars?

Binoculars are twin-barrelled telescopes which are aligned to fall on the same spot. They can be used with both eyes open making long term viewing easier and as they are hand held they are more portable and faster to use than telescopes.

Binoculars are divided into two basic design classes. Porro prism and roof prism. The first group are wide bodied and the latter group are longer and sleeker. Porro prisms have fewer internal elements, more generous tolerance specs, are generally brighter, less expensive to manufacture and less expensive to repair. Roof prisms though more expensive tend to be more rugged with elements more firmly anchored within the barrels. They are also easier to hold steady for extended periods.

### Binocular shape

The important thing is how they feel in your hands. Shape directly relates to how easily and steadily binoculars may be held and this directly affects image quality.

### Binocular weight

Binoculars are literally a weight around your neck. Generally 20-30 oz. is about as much as most people care to consider. High quality optics made of barium crown glass are denser and heavier than the cheaper boro-silicate glass and the quality of the image is directly related to the quality of the optics. To reduce overall weight quality bodies are cast out of aluminium or rugged space age synthetics and to protect internal elements they are covered with shock absorbing rubber or polyurethane shell.

### Focusing

Birding demands binoculars that focus quickly. A binocular that can go from close focus to infinity quickly and smoothly is invaluable. Birding binoculars should be centre focusing, which means that by moving a well-positioned wheel, both barrels of the binoculars are adjusted quickly and simultaneously. An individual eyepiece adjustment caters for the small differences that exist between individual's eyes. It is set once, then never again. Birding binoculars should be able to focus down to 15 feet. Those that offer a close focus down to 9 or 10 feet are prized. For woodland or watching birds at feeders close focussing binoculars are a must.

To be continued in November/December issue

By courtesy of SWAROVSKI OPTIK  
Obtainable from Strachan's Photo Pharmacy, 60 Baker Avenue, Harare

### World Birdwatch Day. 7th/8th October 1995

This gives us the opportunity to show the world what birds can be found in Zimbabwe and encourage birdwatchers to visit us. Cards available from Jacko Williams to be returned as soon as possible with name, venue and address filled in. 14 Harare Drive, Greystone Park, Borrowdale, Harare. Telephone 882206

P.S. this may be a Swarovski Optik sponsored event.

### Condolences

The President and all members of the OAZ wish to extend their deepest sympathies to John and Jeanette Shaw and families on the tragic loss of Andrew.

Also to the Mennie family of Mutare whose son Ryan, a junior member who loved his birding, died of cancer.