

# BABBLER

The Newsletter of



**BirdLife Zimbabwe**  
The BirdLife International Partner in Zimbabwe

**ISSUE # 96 – OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2010**

COMMITTEE	MASHONALAND (Code 04)		MATABELELAND (Code 09)	
<b>Chairperson</b>	Tony Alegria	490375 (h) 0772-438697	Cecilia Hubbard	285666 (h) 0772- 433733
<b>Secretary</b>	Ken Dixon	793063 (h)	Adele Edwards	882242 (h)
<b>Treasurer</b>	Sally Britten	308400 (w)	Jenny Brebner	242634 (h)
<b>Members</b>	Ian Riddell	492452 (h)	Julia Duprée	246269 (h)
	David Rockingham-Gill	882412 (h)	Bill Lewis	242285 (h)
	Julia Pierini	303178(h)	Judy Ross	242943 (h)
<b>Babbler Editor</b>	Julia Pierini	0772-894562	juliapierini@yahoo.com	
<b>Membership Secretary</b>	Carolyn Dennison	747567(h) 0772-210240	e-mail: <a href="mailto:rolly@zol.co.zw">rolly@zol.co.zw</a>	

National Office:

**35 Clyde Road, Eastlea, P O Box RVL100, Runiville, Harare, Zimbabwe**  
**Telephone:** 04- 481496/490208 (& fax) **e-mail:** [birds@zol.co.zw](mailto:birds@zol.co.zw)  
**website:** [www.birdlifezimbabwe.co.zw](http://www.birdlifezimbabwe.co.zw)

<b>Director:</b>	Dr. Chip Chirara
<b>Finance/Administration Manager:</b>	Sylvia Muzavazi
<b>IBA National Project Manager:</b>	Kanisios Mukwashi
<b>Conservation Officer:</b>	Fadzai Matsvimbo
<b>Projects Officer:</b>	Togarasei Fakarayi
<b>Education Officer:</b>	Rueben Njolomole
<b>Administration Officer:</b>	Sabina Mapika
<b>Messenger:</b>	Vengai Dengu

Office hours: Monday to Friday 8.30 – 4.30

## OBITUARY

Sadly, Irralie Howland passed away recently. She was a long standing member of BirdLife Zimbabwe and a great support to the organization over the decades. Irralie and her husband Anton, who passed away some years ago, facilitated BLZ's early trips to Rifa Education Camp – in the late 80's and 90's. Their hospitality and generosity will be well remembered by those of us who attended those camps. We had exciting times – Irralie survived an encounter with a buffalo in front of Camp, getting away lightly with instant and alarming bruising on her leg, and on another trip BLZ members were roared off by a lioness and her cubs, who were a few feet away from us in the adrenalin grass on the flood plain below Chirundu Hill! Irralie was a great contributor to the Garden Bird Survey, *Babbler* and *Honeyguide*, sending in records for many years from their Mvurwi farm. She will be missed by those BLZ members who knew her. We extend our deepest sympathy to her family on the loss of their beloved mother and grandmother.

**Dorothy Wakeling**

## ERRATA CORRIGE

The previous edition of *Babbler*, issue #95, included '**A Brief summary of deliberations of the 29<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of BirdLife Zimbabwe held at Inunqu Guest House, Matopos, Bulawayo on Sat 5 June 2010 at 10 a.m.**'. Under the section **Any other business** it was incorrectly stated that Gavin Blair had said that helicopter flights over the gorge at Victoria Falls must be banned. In fact Mr Blair said that helicopter flights over the Falls and the gorges should NOT be banned, but that **the emphasis should be on banning flights down INTO the gorges**. The minutes of the AGM have been amended accordingly. We apologise to Gavin for any inconvenience caused by this error.

## BABBLER EDITOR

Hello! Please feel free to write to me with your contributions, ideas, suggestions, etc for the next issue by mid November!

## \*\*SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL\*\*

Our membership year runs from April to March and **all** 2010/11 subscriptions were therefore due on 1 April. ALL MEMBERS WHO ARE STILL TO RENEW THEIR SUBSCRIPTIONS have until the end of October. Any not received by the office at close of business on Friday 29 October will be removed from the membership list. Please make an effort and get your payments in. Donations are also very welcome!

Individual or Family members (including children under 17)	US\$ 20.00
Pensioners, Students and Juniors	US\$ 10.00
Schools (high density)	US\$ 20.00
Schools (private)	US\$ 50.00
Corporate members	US\$ 50.00
Rest of Africa	US\$ 30.00
Rest of World	US\$ 30.00

Please renew your subscriptions promptly to the office, a branch committee member at an outing or you can deposit it into the BLZ bank account – Barclays Bank NGO Centre, Branch no: 2157; Account no: 6465998. It is very important that with all direct deposits you include your name on the deposit, so that it appears on the bank statement and please also advise the office and Carolyn (rolly@zol.co.zw), either by faxing the copy deposit slip or by e-mail.

## FORTHCOMING ACTIVITIES

### **BIG BIRDING DAY 2010**

**24 hr Sponsored Birdwatch 27/28 November**

#### **AIMS**

To identify as many birds as possible in a continuous 24 hour period within an area with a radius of 50 km.

To raise money by sponsorship for Branch activities.

To have fun – enjoy ourselves – and increase awareness of our wonderful bird life.

#### **RULES**

1. Teams are limited to a maximum of four and team members must stay together as a unit and may not split into groups. At least 2 people in a team must be paid-up members of BirdLife Zimbabwe.
2. Each bird must be seen or heard by at least 2 members of each team.
3. Only free flying, wild or feral birds will count.
4. The birding area must be within a radius of 50 km from the start point.
5. The Judges' decision is final.
6. Branches may retain the funds they raise for their own projects.

*Completed forms should be sent to the Organisers*

C/o Julia Duprée, 12 Ilanda Gardens, Catherine Berry Drive, Ilanda, Bulawayo

*Or to the following for onward transmission to Bulawayo*

Administrative Officer, BLZ, 35 Clyde Road, Eastlea, Harare

Or your nearest Branch Chairman

Organised by

Matabeleland Branch

For entry forms please contact Julia Dupree

[dalia@netconnect.co.zw](mailto:dalia@netconnect.co.zw) or (09) 246269

Contact a committee member if you need transport to any of the events. **Members, non-members and beginners are welcome** – don't worry if you do not have a pair of binos – there is usually an extra pair at most outings. There are no BLZ charges for any bird walk or evening presentation. However there may be entry fees (e.g. National Parks) or a tip required depending on the location. Remember to always bring chairs and refreshments.

### ***MASHONALAND BRANCH***

**Evening Meetings are on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday** of each month at 5.30 for 6.00 p.m. The venue is the Avondale Sports Club on Brighton Road between Sam Nujoma Street Extension and Upper East Road. There is a cash bar and a security guard.

#### **Thursday 21 October – Travels in southern Africa by Tony Wood**

Tony will be taking us on a journey through southern Africa – mainly Botswana and Namibia relating about the birds he has observed along the way with photos and entertaining anecdotes on their behaviour etc.

**Thursday 18 November – Binoculars by Mike Begbie**

All you've ever wanted to know about Binos! Thinking of buying a new pair and needing advice? Or perhaps you just want to know how yours compare to others? Mike will clarify a subject a lot of us have mused over considerably (I know I have!)

**Saturday 16 October – 7.00 a.m.: Domboshawa**

There are always plenty of specials to see at this venue. Cinnamon-breasted & Cape Bunting, Augur Buzzard, Striped Pipit, Lazy Cisticola, Boulder Chat and often Lanner Falcons can be spotted hunting along the rock faces. Meet at CABS Head Office, Northend Rd. Remember to bring USD4 entrance fee.

**Saturday 20 November – 7.00 a.m.: Botanic Gardens**

All the migrants are back! Whyte's Barbet is almost a fixture. Tambourine Dove, Red-throated Twinspot, Black-throated Wattled-eye and Red-backed Mannikin are seen quite frequently too. Meet in the car park.

**Sunday 3 October and 7 November – 6.30 a.m.: Mukuvisi Woodland**

The migrants are back in Mukuvisi too! European Bee-eater, Diderick, Klaas's & Red-chested Cuckoos. Black Sparrowhawk & Spotted Creeper seen regularly. In November, look out for European Hobby & Pennant-winged Nightjars! Village Weavers nesting in their thousands this year – an awesome sight! Turn off the Chiremba Road into Ford Road (opposite Queensdale shops) and continue down to Blatherwick Road (T- junction). Turn right and the gate is about 150 metres on the left. Bring a reasonable tip for the guard, taking into account the value of your vehicle! Don't forget refreshments for after the walk when we record the number of species.

**Sunday 10 October and 14 November – 6.30 a.m.: Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary**

Always an interesting venue with water, grassland & woodland birds to see! African Fish-eagle, Little Sparrowhawk, Purple Heron, Little Bittern, Black Cuckooshrike, Dark-capped Yellow Warbler, Orange-breasted Bush-shrike among the regulars. In Sept, Croaking Cisticola & Marsh Owl among others. Come & see them and others for yourself! Meet at Marimba Shopping Centre, Samora Machel Avenue West.

**Sunday 17 October and 21 November – 7.00 a.m.: Monavale Vlei**

The Widows and Bishops are out flaunting their breeding finery: Yellow Bishop, Yellow-mantled & Red-collared Widowbird, Southern Red Bishop. And the weavers are in a frenzy of nest building in their colonies. Meet on the BS Leon side of Fenella Drive

**Sunday 24 October 6.30 a.m.: Double Ro Ranch**

This promises to be an exciting venue thanks to the wide range of habitats we will be walking through during the bird walk: grassland, acacia woodland, a dam, cattle pens and a garden. Among other birds, we'll be on the look out for Locustfinch and Vultures...White-backed, perhaps Hooded...and... Well, come & see for yourselves!

**Sunday 28 November: Big Birding Day**

Get together with three other friends, make up a team & join in the fun on Big Birding Day! For more info see above or contact Julia Dupree [dalia@netconnect.co.zw](mailto:dalia@netconnect.co.zw) or (09) 246269

**BirdLife Zimbabwe – Mashonaland have also organised another two away outings to**

which all BLZ members are invited. If at any venue only limited numbers can be accommodated, it will be a case of first come first serve – paying the required deposit will secure a place!

**Outing 1:** (1 – 8 October 2010) **Vilancoulos, Mozambique** (Distance from Harare approx 780 km and there is a border to cross). The venue is the Archipelago Resort near the town of Vilancoulos! There is a reasonably priced restaurant on site but you can self-cater. Leave very early on Friday 1<sup>st</sup>, bird on Sat, Sun & Mon – return home on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> or come back to Casa Msika (approx 470 km) on Chicamba Dam, bird on Wed & Thurs – return home on Friday 8<sup>th</sup>. This venue has no self-catering facilities, but has a reasonably priced restaurant on site. A winter bird count was conducted last year and now a summer count is required at Casa Msika.

**Outing 2:** (23 – 31 October 2010) **Gorongosa and Katapu, Mozambique.** (Distance from Harare to Gorongosa approx 465 km and there is a border to cross)

The first venue is Chitengo Safari Camp where there are thatched rooms (no self catering facilities) or camping where you can self-cater or eat at the Chitengo Restaurant on site. Leave Harare early on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup>, bird in Gorongosa (including Mount Gorongosa) on Sun, Mon & Tues.

Leave on Wednesday for the second venue (Katapu on the Zambezi River, some 220 km further on) and bird on Thurs, Fri & Sat – leave for home on Sunday 31<sup>st</sup>.

The birding “holiday” destinations above are simply booked by a \$50.00 deposit per person. 4x4 or 4x2 vehicles are the first choice although standard bakkies will suffice for Mozambique. Depending on availability of vehicles, some juggling may have to be done re: who goes with whom. When booking, kindly advise if you have a suitable vehicle which you are willing to use. **To book or for more information, contact Tony Alegria on: [talegria@zol.co.zw](mailto:talegria@zol.co.zw)**

## **MATABELELAND BRANCH**

### **Sunday 10 October: Scavenger Hunt**

A scavenger hunt with a birding theme. For more information ring Cecilia on 287692 or 0912433733.

### **Weekend 29-31 October: Cawston Block**

We will once again be spending a weekend at Cawston Block, Nyamandhlovu, and updating the bird list for this area. Accommodation in tented camp or own tents, central catering. For further details on costs and arrangements ring Julia on 246269.

### **Friday 12 November: Birds of the Night – Owls**

This is the first of three excellent DVDs put together by Tony Alegria, of the Mashonaland Branch. Venue The Boma at Hillside Dams, starting time 6:30 p.m. Bar and catering available; to avoid delays we suggest you book your meal in advance – phone The Boma on 242490. For more information ring Adele on 280030 or 0712366917.

### **Weekend 27/28 November: Birding Big Day**

Our annual 24-hour sponsored bird count, open to all branches. While we encourage everyone to try and find sponsorship (all the money you raise is kept by your branch to fund branch activities) this is secondary to enjoying a weekend of birding with congenial company. For further details on entry categories and entry forms contact Julia after 17 October on 246269.

### **Saturday 4 December: Annual Christmas dinner**

Our final gathering for the year! Enjoy a meal with friends and fellow birders. To be hosted by Cecilia Hubbard at her home. For more information ring Cecilia on 287692 or 0912433733.

### **January 2011: Waterfowl census**

As usual we plan to cover Aisleby, SAST, Cowdray Park, Hwange and Matobo National Parks. Details to follow.

### **19 February 2011: Matabeleland Branch Annual General Meeting**

Please keep this date free so you can attend our AGM

## **COUNTRY DISTRICTS**

**Mashonaland South (Kadoma)** – Contact Margaret Parrock on 068-22005 or her daughter, Coralee on 0912-739370.

**Eastern Districts** – Monthly outings are on the last Sunday of the month and depart at 7.30 a.m. from the Mutare Museum. Spare binoculars and field guides are available. Members with a vehicle are encouraged to attend and fuel can be provided. Contact Peter Gwidibira 0913-524844 or [pggroup.gwidibira38@gmail.com](mailto:pggroup.gwidibira38@gmail.com) for details.

**Other Areas** – Those members in other areas – we are always interested to hear what is happening in your bit of the country. Please send in what you have seen. *Ed*

.....

## RECENT REPORTS and SIGHTINGS

### **2010 Conservation Leadership Programme International Training Course and the 24<sup>th</sup> International Congress for Conservation Biology; 17 June- 8 July: Calgary and Edmonton, Canada**

In June 2010, I attended a two week-long Conservation Leadership Programme (CLP) International Training Course in Calgary, Canada. This came after being awarded a 2010 Future Conservation Leadership Programme Award early this year. The CLP is a partnership of four organisations working to promote the development of future leaders and ensure they have the skills and knowledge to address the most pressing issues of our time. The partner organisations are BirdLife International, Conservation International, Fauna and Flora International, and Wildlife Conservation Society. Since 1985, when the programme started, the CLP has supported thousands of young individuals aiming to address global conservation priorities at a local level. The award won by my team is the first CLP Award granted to Zimbabwe.

The CLP goes beyond grant-giving as it provides training, ongoing support and access to networks that help awardees gain skills and move up the conservation career ladder. This year, the CLP International Training Course in Canada was attended by 24 participants from Central and South America, Africa, Russia, China, Asia and the Middle East. It was an intensive course that focused on methodologies for project planning, behaviour change, media and messaging. The Project Planning subject looked at essential tools that can be used to move from the actual situation (situation with the problem) to the ideal situation (situation without the problem). The Behaviour Change through education and outreach session looked at approaching conservation education and outreach in a strategic way. This subject equipped participants with skills on how to design an education and outreach strategy by focusing on threats, audiences, behaviour, knowledge and attitude targets, and values. The Media and Messaging subject explored various ways of communicating the conservation message to audiences using different media.

The CLP course exposed me to different tools that can be applied to a wide range of situations. My participation to this training course has reinforced my knowledge of multi-disciplinary conservation approaches, and the training has introduced me to new ideas geared towards people-oriented research, created a link to a strong, professional network of practitioners and facilitated future collaboration. During the training, a foundation that promotes cooperation and shared learning was created. With a diverse group of people came diverse interests and opportunities for learning. I had an opportunity to work with instructors and other participants on my project. By the end of the course, I had the tools necessary to integrate and apply these methods to my unique situations at home.

The CLP training courses are linked with the International Congress for Conservation Biology (ICCB), which maximises opportunities for networking with the widest possible range of expertise. After completing the 2010 CLP training course on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2010, the winners travelled to Edmonton to attend the 24<sup>th</sup> ICCB. International experts presented practical sessions on a variety of subjects covering different species at this congress. I got the opportunity to share ideas and experiences with other CLP Alumni and professionals who attended the congress. Generally the course has proven highly motivating for me and other team members. Meanwhile, the CLP team at BirdLife Zimbabwe is now part of the CLP Alumni Network and networking with other CLP teams from all over the globe is on-going.

**By Togarasei Fakarayi**

### **IBA monitoring project report**

The Parks and Wildlife Management Authority has finally reviewed the draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). There were a few changes to the draft that were suggested by the Authority. The final version of the draft with adjustments was re-submitted to the Authority for their final review. Meanwhile, we are expecting to sign the MoU with the Authority once the

final review process is completed. The draft 2009 National IBA Status and Trends Report for Zimbabwe was reviewed by the BirdLife African Partnership Secretariat and we are now waiting for comments from the Parks and Wildlife Management Authority before the report is printed for publication. The Executive Director of BirdLife Zimbabwe will raise the profile of the IBA monitoring project at the 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of Parties on the Convention on Biological Diversity taking place from 10 – 24 October 2010 in Nagoya, Japan. The wildlife assessment report for the Chirundu area that was visited in August amid transportation developments by the Chirundu Local Board is being finalized for submission to the Physical Planning Officer in Chinhoyi by the end of September 2010. This is being done in collaboration with Geoff Lowe, Leslee Maasdorp and the Physical Planning Officer from the Parks and Wildlife Management Authority. We are expecting the major stakeholders to develop a concept plan that will conserve wildlife sensitive areas in that part of the Middle Zambezi Valley IBA.

**Kanisios Mukwashi**

National IBA Project Manager

## **WorldBirds**

The WorldBirds Programme ([www.worldbirds.org](http://www.worldbirds.org)) is an online bird data collection system that has been made available by BirdLife International, RSPB and Audubon. The programme hopes to create a network of internet systems that provides a platform for the collection, storage and retrieval of bird observations worldwide. WorldBirds has been running since 2005. In Africa, it has been active in Botswana and Kenya until last year when other African countries became part of the programme.

### **Aims of the WorldBirds**

- Capturing birdwatcher records that would otherwise not be available to conservation organizations
- Influence the quality of observations made by amateur watchers
- Computerizing paper-bound data and making them available to the public and conservation bodies
- Increasing the participation of the public in practical conservation/building capacity for BirdLife Partners
- Providing partners with various tools such as data capture screens for common bird monitoring projects
- Increasing collaboration between conservation organizations

### **How to use WorldBirds**

It's a very simple, user-friendly system. The first thing to do is go the website [www.worldbirds.org](http://www.worldbirds.org). Once this page comes up, click on the map of Africa that comes up and then click either on the map of Zimbabwe or on the list of countries. First time users will be required to register and after that subsequent uses only require username and password. If anybody is interested in getting their sightings onto WorldBirds, do not hesitate to get in touch with me and I can take you through the process.

By **Fadzai Matsvimbo** [fadzai@blz.co.zw](mailto:fadzai@blz.co.zw)

## **MASHONALAND**

### **Visit to Christon Bank, Mazowe River Valley, 1731C1. 25th July 2010**

Nearly 30 of us braved the winter cold, to go to Christon Bank where we had not been since 2002. Some of the birds seen were African Goshawk, Swallow-tailed Bee-eater, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird, Lesser Honeyguide and Brown-backed Honeybird, Golden-tailed Woodpecker &

Cardinal Woodpeckers, Black Cuckooshrike & White-breasted Cuckooshrike, Miombo Tit and Southern Black Tit as well as Cape Penduline-tit, Yellow-bellied Greenbul, Familiar Chat & Boulder Chat, Southern Hylia, Yellow-breasted Apalis, Green-capped Eremomela & Burnt-necked Eremomelas, Striped Pipit, Grey-headed Bush-shrike & White-crested Helmet-shrike, Violet-backed Starling & Red-winged Starling, Miombo Double-collared Sunbird & White-bellied Sunbird, Thick-billed Weaver & Red-headed Weaver, Bronze Mannikin & Red-backed Mannikin, Streaky-headed Seedeater & Black-eared Seedeater.

My little party struggled though the thick bush along the Mazowe River dodging old gold panning diggings and we saw very little there but we did come across a gold panning camp on Thetford Estate. From the above list of birds you can see we should visit the area regularly.

Past visits were reported in *Babbler* 1, 27, 43, 48, 49, 51, 56 & 72. We all looked out for the yellow headed morph of the Black-collared Barbet which we saw here in 2002, and if still alive would now be over 8 years old. They are excessively rare in this country, and the only other recorded Zimbabwean case was seen by Warren Goodwin in the Matopos in 1965.

**D.V. Rockingham-Gill**, 4 Fernleigh Road, P.O. Borrowdale. [rgill@zol.co.zw](mailto:rgill@zol.co.zw)

### **Sightings from Chitove Camp, Gonarezhou National Park, and surrounds: August 2010**

The author, family and friends spent a fabulous three nights camped out along the Runde River in Chitove camp, one of the remoter sites in Gonarezhou National Park in its far eastern section. Chitove has certainly preserved its wild heritage, with two harrowing river crossings to endure (firstly at Mahenya, then immediately prior to Chitove itself) and a generally difficult road in this region of the Park, a canopy of stately trees above the camp site and a clear view of the river ahead. The camp consists only of a clearing and Blair toilet, but the advantages of its location and a comforting rocky fortress effect around the back make all the ruggedness well worth it.

Once again, the Zimbabwean lowveld area did not fail to disappoint. River specials included Woolly-necked Stork and its ever-present and ever-lovely Saddle-billed Stork cousin, vast flocks of Egyptian Goose with goslings, three African Skimmers, Goliath Heron (the subject of a vicious attack from a territorial African Fish-eagle on one occasion), plentiful White-crowned Lapwings, Green-backed Herons and more. While the mopane woodland did not produce the usual Racquet-tailed Roller, Arnot's Chat, Stierling's Wren-warbler and typical others, acacia scrub and riverine bush revealed healthy populations of Lemon-breasted Canary (adjacent to camp), Pearl-spotted Owlet, Golden-tailed Woodpecker and Bearded Woodpeckers, Cut-throat Finch and Wattled Starlings, with ground-dwelling species such as Double-banded Sandgrouse and Black-bellied Bustard. A visit to Machiniwa Pan, both at sunset and sunrise, wowed all with its vast array and number of waterbirds, from Squacco Heron, Spur-winged Goose, Comb Duck, Yellow-billed Stork and African Spoonbill to White-faced Duck, African Jacana and Black-winged Stilts galore. The variety of duck and geese species was surprisingly low, with no evidence of the shy and more elusive varieties and clear dominance by Egyptian Goose and Spur-winged Goose and White-faced Ducks. Hilarity was caused by the vision of a spectral Great Egret seemingly surfing across the pan surface. It was in fact riding on the back of a submerged hippo.

From the top of Chilojo Cliffs, a resident pair of Black Storks soared past, while a regal Verreaux's Eagle generously perched on the edge of the "Pinnacle", providing winning views of its white "V" back. Dickinson's Kestrel was another localised species ticked off, found in its favourite habitat of Ilala palm clearings. In general, however, encounters with raptors other than the Bateleur, vultures, African Fish-eagles and the aforementioned were scarce.

As an aside, game populations appeared to be in very healthy proportions, from elephants and buffalo to antelope and smaller mammalian types. Lions were heard calling one night but were not seen. A very special, untouched corner of the country that deserves more attention from all bush-lovers.



**Emma Holland**

### **Kruger & environs August 2010**

Instead of that well-travelled route from Jo'burg to Beit Bridge, we decided when we were driving back from SA in August to take a detour through Kruger, and enjoy a couple of relaxing days of game & bird watching instead. So that's just what we did, and had a wonderful time, with excellent viewing.

Our Kruger experience started at a charming self-catering chalet situated just outside Orpen Gate, about a third of the way up the park, with excellent viewing right outside our chalet, and a magnificent setting at the base of the Klein Drakensberg. Specials seen here were Green-backed Camaroptera, Collared Sunbirds, Yellow-breasted Apalis & Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird.

We entered by Orpen Gate, & travelled up to Punda Maria, which covers a fair number of habitats, and yielded for us over a hundred species of birds. There were the usual favourites, such as starlings (Burchell's Starling in the southern part, and Greater Blue-eared Starling further north), Fork-tailed Drongos, Lilac-breasted Rollers, Double-banded Sandgrouse & three types of francolin, and of course, what visit to Kruger is complete without the comic Southern Yellow-billed Hornbills & noisy Hadeda Ibises to name a couple. More exciting finds for us were Black-crowned Tchagra, Red-billed Buffalo-weaver, Southern White-crowned Shrike, Saddle-billed Stork, a flock of Brown-headed Parrots, Black-winged Stilt, African Pygmy-goose & Little Grebe. We were also thrilled to spot a couple of Pearl-spotted Owlets, and a Little Sparrowhawk. We had good viewing at dams with African Fish-eagle, Comb Duck and many more including an African Jacana & chicks, and a Blacksmith Lapwing with chicks. We saw a number of Purple Rollers, which seemed to dominate over the Lilac-breasted Roller around Bateleur Bush Camp. Raptor viewing was good too, with many different species, but the best one was of a Martial Eagle perched within easy viewing distance, and what we identified as a juvenile Martial, also perched, not too far away from the adult. One camp where we stayed had lovely huge sycamore figs, with a variety of familiar species, like Grey-headed Bush-shrike, Brubru and Black-backed Puffback, Black-headed Oriole & Chin-spot Batis.

Not only did we see lots of interesting birds, but managed to see all Big Five as well as a cheetah, a couple of jackal, some hyaenas and an abundance of antelope. So, well worth the detour, and probably fortunate that we just missed a long weekend, when viewing and driving around could have been rather crowded.

**Debbie Wiggins**

### **Visit to Victoria Falls and Chobe River**

In mid-August I joined 4 friends to spend 6 days at Victoria Falls, Lokuthula Lodges, and included one day at the Chobe River at Kasane. The Falls were as breathtaking as always, thundering over Devil's Cataract and sending up swirls of rainbow tinted mist in the afternoon sun. We spent a day fishing on the Zambezi (totally unsuccessfully) and saw lots of birds but not much game. We were fortunate to have Alex Masterson guiding us and we saw a Purple Roller, a Collared Palm-thrush, Squacco Heron, Purple Heron and Green-backed Herons, Southern Carmine Bee-eater and White-fronted Bee-eaters, Hamerkop, Hadeda Ibis and two Pearl-spotted Owlets calling to each other in the acacias overhead.

Early on Tuesday we drove to Kazungula and were very lucky to see five wild dogs crossing the road, what a treat!

On arrival at the Garden Lodge, Kasane, we were taken on a three hour boat trip on the beautiful Chobe River. Birdlife was plentiful as was the game grazing on the lush grass on the many islands. We saw buffalo, elephant, hippo, crocs and a first for me, lechwe antelope. Our guide was very enthusiastic and in spite of having no binoculars increased our bird list hugely, including African Skimmers, Collared Pratincoles, Black-crowned Night-heron, Long-toed Lapwing, Kittlitz's Plover, Banded Martin and a Coppery-tailed Coucal. Back for lunch to the

Lodge, set in a well-treed garden on the banks of the river, then after lunch we went on a three hour game drive into the Chobe National Park. There we saw many herds of elephant going to the river for their afternoon drink, two beautiful sable bulls clashing horns, giraffe, kudu, impala, warthog, bushbuck and another first for me, puku antelope. We were almost out of the Park when we saw three wild dogs trotting along in the bush and then, amazingly, a big leopard lying by a termite mound. He totally ignored us and Alex was sure he was stuffed as he didn't move a muscle! It was a most fruitful and enjoyable day and night and I thoroughly recommend the Garden Lodge.

One morning Alex took us across the bridge to Livingstone to visit his friend, Bob the Birder who took us to see Lanner Falcon sitting on her nest on a pylon, and she obligingly flew to her mate, collected something from him and went back to feed her two babies .

One afternoon we were watching Bungi jumpers from the Falls Hotel gardens when two brilliant flashes of green flew past us to a fig tree. It was a pair of Schalow's Turacos, another fantastic first for me! We really had a great time and our final total was one hundred and eleven birds.

**Teig Howson**

### **Chedgelow Farm: 22 August 2010 (1731C3)**

Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> August saw us back at Chedgelow Farm after a break of 10 years (plus a few months). Not having been here in the 'old days', it was nice to tramp around a new area. We split into two groups and ours set off up the side on Harava Dam, through the very attractive rocky *Brachystegia glaucescens* abounding with aloes, 'til we met a small stream that we eventually ended up crossing after hearing more bird calls from the burnt gum plantation on the other side. Swallow-tailed Bee-eaters were a good find in this area. Following the path, we eventually debouched into some open miombo woodland, and following our ears, were led to a nice little bird party that gave us noisy African Yellow White-eyes, Green-capped Eremomelas and Southern Black Tit, resplendent Black-headed Orioles, the usual Black-backed Puffbacks, Brubru, Chin-spot Batis and others. A Black Cuckooshrike and Red-headed Weaver flew past and a Brown-backed Honeybird sat on the top of an acacia for good views. Grey Penduline-tits and Long-billed Crombec chatted away so we didn't bother looking for them.

We made our way back to the small dam via disked tobacco lands, hoping in vain for some pipits or Temminck's Coursers but only a Three-banded Plover obliged, looking out of place in the dry lands. The dam was quiet compared to my brief recce two weeks earlier when it was busy with a good sixty Comb Ducks but perhaps they prefer the evenings? Apart from the Red-billed Teal and a few Little Grebes, the Groundscraper Thrush and a Common Greenshank were good to see.

On the way back to the quarry, an airborne African Cuckoo Hawk called to another in the tall gums and eventually both did a fly-by and high above two Marabou Storks were spotted by some of the group. Near the cars, we met the other group and were lucky to see two White-breasted Cuckooshrikes fly passed. By following these, we were led to a Shikra and the calls of some White-crested Helmet-shrikes and a Lesser Honeyguide at the picnic site.

Interesting birds seen by Richard's group included four Mocking Cliff-chats, a Black-chested Snake-eagle, White-throated Robin-chat and Southern Hyliota and our total count was eighty-seven species. Many thanks to Mary Lovemore for taking me around on the recce and arranging our outing and to Mr. Danckwerts for having us back after such a long time.

**I.C. Riddell**

### **Mashonaland BLZ Branch Trip to Tuli Circle 10<sup>TH</sup>-14<sup>TH</sup> Sept 2010 (2129C3 & 2229A1)**

10 BLZ members have now joined that exclusive band of those who qualify to wear the "I have been to Tuli Circle" t-shirt. And it was well worth the 700+kms long drive to experience life without any power at all, not just load-shedding. I'd always been intrigued by that round bruise-shaped enclave at the bottom of Zimbabwe but never took the trouble to find an explanation for it. In fact, as you would expect, it was once part of Bechuanaland until an outbreak of rindepest necessitated the establishment of a circular exclusion zone for cattle to prevent the further spread of the disease. The Khama family, then as now ruling Bech/Bots, kindly ceded a little of their territory to the Tuli BSA Co. garrison. The semi-circular limits of the zone were decided by a row of holes made by cannonballs fired from Fort Tuli.

But I'm digressing... let's get back to the birding! In the end, none of our friends from Bulawayo were able to accompany us due to a prior commitment to a game count, so we had to sort it out for ourselves which we did with signal success. It took from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. to reach the Tuli ZRP quarters where Lesser Masked-weavers were nesting and where we handed over loaves of bread and bags of sugar and signed in before proceeding to Shashe Wilderness Camp (WEZ). Not only were we relieved to arrive there but the beauty of the riverside setting immediately made us forget the hard day's driving in no time at all. Tents were erected by some, others selected their beds in the large, airy dormitories. Our supplies were carried into the kitchen and we were soon looking forward to the braai organised by Betwen. As darkness fell, the Chairman amazed us with a pyrotechnic show which rivalled his subsequent star lessons as evening entertainment. Even an African Scops-owl popped in to see what was happening while the Verreaux's Eagle-owl wisely stayed on the far bank.

In contrast to what we had expected, uncomfortably hot nights and even hotter days, the night got colder and windier as it progressed. My sheet sleeping bag had to be augmented by my jumper, fleece and towel and I was still cold. But we survived and were all up earlyish for a day's local birding, exploring the riverine bush both up- and down- stream of the camp. To our surprise the day was overcast, drizzly and cold with little hint of change. Had we travelled 720 km to freeze in the far south?

The Shashe bed itself had a few pools with Blacksmith Lapwing, White-fronted Plover, Wood Sandpiper and a solitary Green Sandpiper, many Three-banded Plover, Grey Heron, Hamerkop, Hadedda Ibis and Egyptian Goose. In the evening, a few Double-banded Sandgrouse came down to drink, though Ian also heard a flock of Namaqua Sandgrouse. The huge figs on the bank proved very attractive to hundreds of African Green-pigeons although they were never easy to spot. By the lunchtime count we had forty-eight different species; Meyer's Parrot, hundreds of Red-eyed Dove, Cape Turtle-dove, Emerald-spotted Wood-dove, Laughing Dove and Namaqua Dove, Southern Black Tit, Brown-hooded Kingfisher, Cinnamon-breasted Bunting, Red-billed Firefinch and Jameson's Firefinch, Grey-backed Camaroptera, Black-headed Oriole, Tropical Boubou, Cardinal Woodpecker and Golden-tailed Woodpecker being the most numerous. While the Chairman and I went to make arrangements with National Parks for our next day's activities others relaxed, read, chatted or wandered around the camp. The huge, ancient baobab inscribed with initials dating back to 1904 was visited by all on its hilltop location from where we could see the area beyond the river we would be exploring the next day. Ian and Carla explored further upstream and found a Lark-like Bunting and, unexpectedly, the first of several flocks of Speckled Mousebirds, Tuli being the western limit of their range in the south of the country.

Saturday evening, our second evening, was still pretty cool and completely overcast encouraging us to have our first fire in the pit. We had a braai followed by an early night – too cold to stay up and the gusty wind really didn't help!

The sun had us out of bed early on Sunday and we were soon negotiating with Parks who supplied us with an armed escort and guide, Mvelo, an unassuming young man, extremely fluent in English and knowledgeable about the area, its history and its flora and fauna. To enter the Circle required us to drive about 400m across a river of sand, quite an intimidating prospect for the three drivers but we all reached the safety of the other bank without mishap. This was not the only time 4WD was called upon in the course of the next two days. We visited various birding spots along the bank of the Shashe and other smaller rivers gradually improving our species list. Crested Francolin, Natal Spurfowl and Swainson's Spurfowl were abundant as were African Grey Hornbill, Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill and Red-billed Hornbill. Lilac-breasted Roller cackled overhead and one Purple Roller was spotted. Both Black-crowned Tchagra and Brown-crowned Tchagra appeared and White-crested Helmet-shrike and Retz's Helmet-shrike. The stunning flash of red in a bird party proved to be a pair of Crimson-breasted Shrikes but they disappeared before most of the group could appreciate them. Of the weaver, family we saw Southern Masked-weaver, Spectacled Weaver and Red-headed Weaver. It was now getting really hot so we halted for a picnic lunch. The afternoon was spent in a similar fashion to the morning experiencing lots of mopani scrub, open grassland which we scoured for bustards and korhaans, and large patches of acacia, but only a number of Red-crested Korhaans were spotted. One Secretarybird came quite close but there were few raptors apart from White-backed Vulture and Lappet-faced Vultures, a pair of African Hawk-eagles and a melanistic Gabar Goshawk. There were occasional sightings of mammals like Impala, Kudu

and Steenbok. As it was now getting late, we decided to save the historic sites for the next morning and returned to camp for another braai and some star-gazing.

Monday was sunny and bright so we opted for a second crossing of the riverbed, birding along the banks culminating in an inspection of the Pioneer Cemetery and the Fort. Our first stop was a spot known for Pel's Fishing-owl but we saw only a Pearl-spotted Owlet and Crimson-breasted Shrike. Further on at a tranquil deep pool on a tributary of the Shashe we surprised a Grey Heron and two Yellow-billed Storks and a Green-backed Heron in the company of a Pied Kingfisher. At 11 a.m. we drove inland to visit the Baobab, meeting-place of the BSA Co. police with the Suthu and the Venda in around 1890 when Tuli was part of Bechuanaland. Between here and the Pioneer Cemetery we met a group of Giraffe and some spied a Kori Bustard and two quails that might have been Common Quail at this time of the year. The cemetery was well-maintained and contained the graves of pioneers, mainly Scots who had died from malaria in the early 1890s. Not far away was the Fort commanding a 360 degree view of the surrounding countryside. It was here that Mvelo explained to us the history of the Tuli Circle which he had researched as a project during his training. Once again we negotiated the river crossing safely and returned to Shashe for lunch. Mid way across the sand river we came across a Saddle-billed Stork.

Our final afternoon was spent close to the camp with most people opting to scour the airfield for Sabota Lark, African Pipit and perhaps coursers. The fit and able walked expecting to be given a lift back by the other group. However, they were disappointed as the President, as is her prerogative, abandoned them to their fate in their successful search for the Black-chested Prinias found there in the morning. The final count that evening was short of the one hundred and fifty we had hoped for. Total count for Tuli was one hundred and forty one (141) species. But what a fantastic experience it had been!

One species on our wanted list was the Namaqua Sandgrouse – at this point in time only Ian Riddell had given it the big tick. Happily four sandgrouse awaited us 12kms along our return route and gave many another 'lifer'.

We are grateful to Tony for his persistence in pursuing information about the camp and area and his meticulous planning. We were all agreed it was a once in a lifetime experience we would never forget.

**Ken Dixon**

### **Hamerkops in Sentosa garden**

We have been living at No 32 Trafalgar Avenue in Sentosa for 40 years, and have only had Hamerkops visit our one acre property on a very few occasions during the past 10 years or so. This species has been known to nest in Monavale for decades, where there are a bigger number of larger properties, and no eyebrows are raised when 'P.O. Mabelreign' appears in one's postal address.

Late in March this year I became aware of the attention some Hamerkops were giving to our hill, as I often heard them call in our vicinity in the early mornings. Then one day three of them arrived and perched in an *Acacia sieberana* which we had transplanted as a very small seedling (the little tree was 18 inches high and its tap-root two feet long) a good thirty-five years ago from a farm near Harare airport.

Their morning visits became a regular event. Sometimes there were two birds, sometime three and occasionally four. After a couple of weeks, when I was lying in bed one Sunday morning enjoying the awakening of a new day, I noticed an unusual object in the Acacia which stands not more than 6 metres from the bedroom window. And there were the beginnings of a Hamerkop nest in a main fork, about 6 metres above ground level! The two builders were in attendance, and one of them kept bringing sticks which its mate arranged busily to complete the foundations of the nest. The birds did not roost on or near the nest, and I could hear them approaching our property at first light, calling excitedly. They spent most mornings adding to the large nest structure, and we started cutting what we thought were suitable dry sticks from the garden to provide suitable material. Soon we had one of the birds collecting these within a few paces from us when we had breakfast on the verandah at half past six in the morning, taking a beakful of sticks to its mate at about two minute intervals. Nest building ceased around mid-morning and the birds then disappeared. They spent most of the day away from our property, no doubt feeding in the adjacent area. Twice they mated on the nest, calling

excitedly.

What with the free supply of building material, the nest grew rapidly, and in less than three weeks the base or platform had been completed and the pair started building up the sides (from the inside) and then the roof. Then one morning I noticed that the Hamerkops did not settle on the nearly completed nest, but perched a metre or so above it, looking down onto it with an air of inquisitiveness, and then moved off. I wondered what was going on and when a Pied Crow joined them the next morning, perched on a nearby branch, I suspected intruders. I climbed onto the roof of our house trying to see what was going on, but my elevation was insufficient to enable me to look onto the nest. When I threw a small stone at it, my suspicion was confirmed, as a Barn Owl flew off with rapid wing beats. The Hamerkops did not return and, much to our disappointment, left their large and laboriously constructed nest to a pair of Barn Owls, who kept me amused for hours on end during the next few weeks in the late evenings and very early mornings with their incredible repertoire of whistles, grunts, trills, barks, hisses and coughs. Their vocal activity then diminished and I can enjoy the call of the Fiery-necked Nightjars again, but the invaders are now firmly ensconced in their ill-begotten residence.

**Rolf Chenaux-Repond**

## **MATABELELAND**

### **Waterfowl census – July**

Please note that a formal report for 2010, combining results from January & July, will be available at a later stage.

Waterfowl counts are undertaken twice a year, in January and July. Once again each weekend throughout the month of July, stalwart Matland members were out there doing their thing. Five locations were covered: Bulawayo's three sewerage treatment works, at Aisleby, Cowdray Park and Khami (SAST), as well as Matobo and Hwange National Parks. The highest count was at Aisleby where 1,352 birds were counted including 418 Little Grebes (compared to 2,515 birds in January of which 698 were Red-billed Teal). Below is a summary of the results from the 3 sewerage treatment works.

	January	January	July	July
Location	No. of birds	No. of species	No. of birds	No. of species
Aisleby	2,515	34	1,352	25
Cowdray Park	787	26	432	21
SAST	210	17	367	19

**Yvonne Steinbach & Adele Edwards**

### **Mtsheli Dam, Matobo National Park; joint outing with Matobo Conservation Society – 15 August**

15th August saw 30 people leave from the Churchill Arms for a combined MCS and Birdlife outing. Our destination was Mtsheli dam in the Matopos. As MCS's usual intrepid leader was unable to co-ordinate the outing (due to business demanding him to be in Johannesburg that morning (very rude of them!!) we were handed over to Craig Friend. There are two routes to this dam and depending on your nerve and vehicle's ability you chose which ever one suited you. On arrival we found that there was water in the toilets which were spotless and after a brief stop we split up into 2 groups – one going towards the dam wall, the other walking down the river end. The walks although only about 1.5 km each way were taken at a birding pace (walk 20m, stop, binos up, much discussion, binos down, walk 10m, stop, binos up, etc., etc. – you get the picture; birding is a very slow walk). I mention this as with MCS outings, we have a certain leader who says we are going on a short walk which is like about 10 km and the pace is brisk to say the least! Those members who have difficulty with the

brisk pace were much appreciative of our "birding" pace and much was learned by members of the group. The lunchtime final tally was 43 species seen with African Green-pigeon and African Pygmy-geese being the 'unusuals' for most members. There was much bantering between the two groups as to who saw what and whose count was greater – the non-birders were a little aghast at this at first then joined in the fun realising that we were pulling each others' leg. An overview was then given by Celia Hubbard on the Verreaux's Eagles of Matopos. By this stage it was late in the afternoon and the group broke up to return home along some of the lesser known routes, several taking the back route to Togwana Dam, others via Maleme and Circular drive. Another wonderful day shared by like minded people.

**Judy Ross**

### **Walk at Lakeside – 4 September**

This was our third walk at this location in the last year and it continues to be a very productive and worthwhile area. We chalked up 48 species, but on this occasion it was the raptors that made it special. Lakeside today is a far cry from Lakeside in its heyday when there was a large pretty stretch of water, big enough for a flotilla of rowing boats, and a busy tea room. Now the 'lake' is dry and the lake bed full of grasses and weeds; only a few small muddy puddles remain, left over from the rains. No water birds were seen on our walk, though one Hamerkop was seen peering into a puddle on a recce one evening earlier in the week. One side of the lake is bordered by a stand of tall gum trees. Along the other side and below the dam wall acacia scrub is to be found.

As we clambered out of our vehicles, our first sighting was of a Black-shouldered Kite, perched on top of a low thorn tree, waiting to be admired. We set off along the road but were soon drawn in to the acacia by the tantalizing sight and sound of bird activity. Unfortunately, most of these birds were uncooperative and illusive, refusing to stay still long enough for us to identify them, but we did see a number of seed-eaters – Blue Waxbill, Jameson's Firefinch, Green-winged Pytilia – and sunbirds – White-bellied Sunbird and Scarlet-chested Sunbird – busy feeding off the flowering parasitic plants on the trees. Making our way back out to the edge of the dam we saw a large raptor fly across and settle in a tall gum tree. The most conspicuous thing about it was the large white patches on the upper wing – but of course all our bird books only showed the under wing. Luckily the bird remained in the area for some time, both sitting and flying, giving us ample opportunity to note its yellow cere and distinctive long crest, its white windows in the under wing and barring on the tail, allowing us to confirm it as a Long-crested Eagle. As soon as the eagle landed another smaller raptor flew passed, this one at a much lower height, almost darting through the trees, rusty colour below – but as we only got this one glimpse and couldn't identify the bird, we had to look away and pretend we had never seen it!

Two birders, from our group of four, were confident about identifying birds from their call. This certainly opens up possibilities and makes an outing far more interesting and made me determine, once more, to make more effort in this regard. However we all agreed that we could hear Crested Barbet, Black-collared Barbet, White-browed Robin-chat, Brown-hooded Kingfisher and an oriole. Our next exciting sighting was a Yellow-billed Kite – for all of us our first Zimbabwean sighting for the season (though two of us had seen YBK in August in South Africa). Soon after this an African Harrier-hawk flew up from one of the gum trees ahead of us, caught a thermal, and rose higher and higher above us with no apparent wing movement. During the course of the next two hours, as we continued to potter around Lakeside, the African Harrier-hawk and the Long-crested Eagle were frequently observed flying overhead, usually apart, sometimes together and circling around each other though with no apparent sign of aggression, unlike when a couple of Pied Crows joined in, causing chaos and confusion.

Another call we had heard repeatedly since arriving was that of the Black-crowned Tchagra. As we entered the gum trees we saw fewer birds but we did see a tchagra. Our first thought was that it was a Brown-crowned Tchagra – the two species can be found together in the same area. But on consulting our bird books, we realized it was a Black-crowned; the streaking above the eye is more pronounced in the Black-crowned than in the Brown-crowned, and a better distinguishing feature is the colour of the crown, leading us to the conclusion that in this instance the 'new' names – of Black-crowned and Brown-crowned – are more appropriate than the old ones. Making our way back to the cars along the dam wall we picked

up a few more species including Swainson's Spurfowl, Magpie Shrike and our sixth raptor – a Wahlberg's Eagle.

**Adele Edwards**

### **Bird Ringing 3<sup>rd</sup> Session – 5 September**

For the third consecutive month Peter Mundy, and his family, generously allowed us to invade their garden early on a Sunday morning to trap and ring birds. While most of the group had taken part in the first two sessions it was the first time I was participating and I found it quite a challenge. Just learning the correct knots to use when putting up the net and not allowing the net to get hopelessly twisted was difficult enough. The mist net was placed across a known flight path, between two flowering trees and near a bird bath. With the first net in place we started trying to help Peter sort out another. This net was donated to Peter by someone who had left the country. It was badly tangled and contained a few large desiccated beetles, with long spiky legs, which made the task of unravelling the net harder than ever. But within 15 minutes we had trapped our first bird and happily abandoned the second net. The bird was an adult male Red-billed Firefinch. We then had to learn about discretion! In one breath, Peter was advising us that birds are really quite hardy and we needed to exert some force when removing the bird from the net; in the next he was cautioning us about not breaking its fragile leg when fitting the ring. In the case of the firefinch, the leg was less than half the thickness of a match stick and most of us were extremely nervous when undertaking this task. It is an amazing feeling to handle a bird like that. I had always known a firefinch was small but it is awesome to hold one in your hand and realize the body is smaller than the top section of your thumb! It also gives you a unique opportunity to identify a bird. Glancing out my office window later in the week I had no problem in identifying a female Yellow Bishop after having handled one on Sunday. Its white eyebrow and patch of yellow feathers at the shoulder were still quite clear in my mind.

In the course of the morning 14 birds were trapped, of 11 different species. One was a recapture – a Blue Waxbill first trapped by Peter in his garden in July 2006. Our thanks to Peter for sharing his knowledge with us.

**Adele Edwards**

### **Aisleby**

For the first time in a long time in September, I had the pleasure of accompanying Sandy MacAdam on her monthly survey at Aisleby. Unfortunately, conditions were not good for a really successful day. Neither set of sewerage treatment ponds was operational and consequently there was little reclaimed water being pumped around the farm. Very few of the channels were flowing and instead of there being lush green grass most of the paddocks were brown and dry. However, there were still lots of water birds on Umgusa dam including: over 200 Southern Pochard, Little Grebe, Red-billed Teal, Hottentot Teal and Cape Teal, White-faced Duck, Common Moorhen, Red-knobbed Coot, Egyptian Goose, 68 Pied Avocet, Black-winged Stilt, African Jacana, Black Crake, Blacksmith Lapwing, Crowned Lapwing and African Wattled Lapwing, Three-banded Plover, White-breasted Cormorant, Reed Cormorant and a solitary Cape Shoveler. We saw Brown-hooded Kingfisher, Malachite Kingfisher and Giant Kingfisher and one Cape Wagtail. The first of the waders are back and we counted Common Sandpiper and Wood Sandpiper. There were dozens of doves (Red-eyed Dove, Cape Turtle-dove, Laughing Dove, Namaqua Dove and Emerald-spotted Wood-dove). And lots more.

The table below shows details of some of the sightings recorded at Aisleby during the period January to June 2010.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
<b>Total species</b>	122	110	115	86	95	89
Southern Pochard	333	99	44	1	0	15
Comb Duck	0	48	52	9	2	0
Maccoa Duck	24	2	1	0	0	3
Cape Shoveler	1	3	4	0	0	9
Cape Teal	19	31	10	0	0	6
Pied Avocet	0	42	3	2	0	0
Reed Cormorant	0	2	5	0	0	0
White-breasted Cormorant	16	9	10	6	1	1
Common Sandpiper	2	2	3	3	0	0
Wood Sandpiper	6	11	4	3	0	0

**Adele Edwards**

\*\*\*\*\*

## TAIL FEATHERS

### Red-winged Starlings

At the end of June, my wife Ida together with our son Rodney and his son Adam were at the Blue Swallow Time Share at Troutbeck. On Monday 28<sup>th</sup> we were returning from World's View and about 3 km from the site we drove through a burnt out pine plantation and we noticed an estimated 200 – 300 Red-winged Starlings perched on the dead trees. I do not recall ever having seen a flock of that size.

### Southern Grey-headed Sparrows

There appears to be a large increase of Southern Grey-headed Sparrows in Harare over the last couple of years. I have seen between 15 and 20 of this species at a time at my feed station. Has anyone else had an influx of that size?

David Gray [IdaG@mcdiarmid.co.zw](mailto:IdaG@mcdiarmid.co.zw)

### Long-crested Eagle in clean-up campaign?

I was driving towards town at 2 p.m. on June 25th along West Road and had just about reached its intersection with Lawson Avenue when I saw a large bird descending onto the road verge on the frontage of the Old Hararians Club. This, to my amazement, proved to be a Long-crested Eagle which landed not more than 1 ½ metres from the edge of the tarmac amongst some household garbage, which has become such a common sight in many areas of our sunshine city. I pulled into Lawson Avenue and stopped to watch for further developments. A number of cars drove past the eagle, which was mantling, and it barely turned its head as they whizzed past. After a minute or so the eagle took off, carrying something thin and dangling in its talons, and flew low in a westerly direction. I was unable to identify what it had taken from the garbage, but believe it must have been an edible item rather than anything suitable for nest building, because of the mantling (which goes to prove that what's bad for some is good for others).

**Rolf Chenaux-Repond**