

BABBLER

The Newsletter of



BirdLife Zimbabwe
The BirdLife International Partner in Zimbabwe

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NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 30th Annual General Meeting of BirdLife Zimbabwe will be held at 10 a.m. on Saturday 4th June 2011 at The Hideaway, Lake Manyame.

Nomination of office bearers and proxy forms are available from Sylvia Muzavazi at BLZ Office sylvia@blz.co.zw

The Hideaway is a very attractive resort on the shores of Lake Manyame (Darwendale) Dam. There are modern camping facilities (US\$5pp/day) and self-catering thatched chalets and tented accommodation that sleep up to 5 people at US\$120 per night for the chalet or tented accommodation. Food that will be available to order at The Hideaway: Cold Meats and rolls for US\$5 each, Burgers or Boeri rolls for US\$3, Braai Pack US\$10 each, Steak Rolls US\$4 each. The Hideaway is only 45 minutes from Harare, so a day visit is easily possible (US\$5pp for day trippers). We are planning to make this a fun event to attract as many members from all over Zimbabwe as possible. There'll be the AGM but as the venue boasts a lake shore, grasslands and nearby woodlands, there will also be plenty of good birding from land and water. Please hurry and make your bookings by emailing me by 4 May 2011. – The Ed.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Honorary Membership Secretary

Carolyn Dennison submitted her resignation as Hon Membership Secretary with effect from 31st March 2011. We are most grateful for the invaluable and extraordinary effort Carolyn has put in over the years, bringing the List into the good order that it is in today, and for her persistent communications which have resulted in increased BLZ Membership. Thank you so much, Carolyn, from Council and the Office.

Sylvia Muzavazi has taken on the exacting task of maintaining the Membership List, so any communications should go to her regarding changes of details, renewals, field and other cards and general membership related queries sylvia@blz.co.zw. Carolyn would very much like to stay in communication with the Members so will work closely with Sylvia regarding any information she receives.

Bird Ringing

Professor Peter Mundy has stood down as BirdLife Zimbabwe Ringing Organizer due to pressure of work. I thank Peter on behalf of BLZ Council and Members for the work he has done over the years as Ringing Organizer. Dave Dalziel has offered to take over as BLZ Ringing Organizer. We are most grateful to him. The Committee is therefore: **BLZ Ringing Organizer**, Dave Dalziel davidd@oldmutual.co.zw, Peter Mundy and Tracey Couto. Watch the website for the new Ringing page!

Rarities Committee

Ian Riddell has agreed to chair the Rarities Committee, with Michael Irwin and Ferdi Couto as committee members. Rarities forms may be obtained from Ian Riddell gemsaf@mango.zw. Printed or email copies are available from the BLZ Office birds@zol.co.zw. The forms will be downloadable shortly off the new Rarities webpage!

Fundraising Event

A very big thank you goes to **Africa Albida Tourism** and **The Hide Safari Lodge** for their donation of such generous prizes to the fundraising benefit for BLZ which was held in January. It was arranged by **Experience Africa Safaris** (www.xafricasafaris.com). Celesta and Joerg von Chamier hosted the occasion. A lot of hard work went into organizing the evening which is much appreciated. Joerg very kindly donated the catering and Mark Oxley of **Latilla Wines** donated the wines for the evening. Very many thanks to Joerg and Mark for such generosity. Bruce McKinlay was the lucky winner of a weekend at The Hide Safari Lodge and Julia Pierini, a weekend at Bumi Hills Safari Lodge. Numerous other prizes were drawn. It was a fun

evening attended by more than 80 people with tempting displays and power point presentations of travel destinations around Zimbabwe. For BLZ it was a good promotional opportunity, too. Through our posters on display people were able to learn about the fascinating projects undertaken by the Office. US\$790.00 was raised through donations which will go towards survey write-ups and the Library. This is an incredible boost for BLZ for which we are most grateful, both the funding received and the exposure within the travel industry.

Other Fundraising Ideas

Tiered Corporate Membership Packages, Sponsorship of Surveys or Projects, advertising to cover printing costs of *Honeyguide* and *Babbler*, are being implemented to bring in much needed funding to support conservation and ornithological pursuits undertaken by BLZ. The upgrading of the BLZ website is underway. This is key to attracting corporate members, sponsors and advertisers who will have their logos and links placed on our website, which is linked to BLI, ABC, RSPB and many other sites, and they will benefit from the exposure received from of this promotion. Celesta has many dynamic fundraising and website ideas and we much appreciate her inspiration in this area. Julia Pierini also has bright ideas for upgrading *Babbler* and attracting advertisers. Members, your suggestions in this area are welcomed – advertise or suggest who may like to advertise!

Guy Gibbon New Edition of Roberts` CDROM

BLZ is considering supplying this resource in bulk against prepaid orders. Those interested in purchasing a copy please let Sylvia know as soon as possible. Price guide: it will be retailing at R900 in South Africa. A bulk order could very well reduce this price.

BLZ Library

Linda and Andy Fussell donated their dining room table, chairs and side table to the BLZ Library. The suite fits like a glove and now you can bring in your laptops or note books and get on researching your next paper for *Honeyguide*! Thank you Linda and Andy!!

Join the BLZ Library Mailing List and receive various publications such as the BLI Library Bulletin, the ZOS Newsletter, the BLZ Library list of books and reprints will be available shortly, online abstracts etc. Back issues of *Honeyguide* and *Ostrich* are available. Prices vary according to quantities in stock. Proceeds will go to the Library.

Allen Gandiwa, NUST Library Placement Student, will assist you with queries and add you to the mailing list. Contact library@blz.co.zw or phone 481496 or 490208

Loan Policy: some volumes are for reference only, others may be borrowed. Journals are for reference only, unless we have duplicates.

Grateful thanks to Innes Louw who donated books to the Library recently.

Dorothy Wakeling, President and Librarian

****SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL****

The new membership year 2011/12 is from April to March, so subscriptions are now due. Your membership is really important to BLZ, although you may not attend outings or meetings. Birds are indicators of the health of the environment and the fact that you are a member supports the ongoing conservation and ornithological efforts undertaken by BirdLife Zimbabwe members and staff. This in turn supports the preservation of Zimbabwe's biodiversity, its avifauna and natural habitats, which are becoming increasingly threatened. As a member you receive our world-recognised journal *Honeyguide* twice a year and our newsletter, *Babbler*, every two months. The more members we have, the more effective we can be at lobbying government, communities and local and international organisations.

Subscription fees have not been increased and are, in USD:

Individual & Family members (Including children under 17)	\$20.00
Pensioners (65 and over), Students And Junior members	\$10.00

Schools (private)	\$50.00
Schools (high density)	\$20.00
Corporate members	\$50.00
Outside Zimbabwe	\$30.00

Donations of any amount are always very welcome.

Payment can be made to the BLZ national office at 35, Clyde Road, Eastlea in Harare or if preferred, dropped in (with all your details) to Michael Irwin's box at 30 Dandaro Village, Borrowdale. Matabeleland members can contact Jenny Brebner on 09-242634 or e-mail brebsj@gmail.com or Cecilia Hubbard at Woodlands Service Station, Old Esigodini Road, Bulawayo -09-287692 (Bus), 0772-433733, or e-mail woodlands@netconnect.co.zw. Subscriptions can also be given to any Committee member at BLZ events. Another option is to deposit your funds into the BLZ bank account – Barclays Bank Branch No. 2157; Account No. 6465998. It is very important that you please put your name on the deposit slip and give the details to Sylvia on e-mail sylvia@blz.co.zw or telephone her on 04-481496, or your payment may not be recorded.

FORTHCOMING ACTIVITIES

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 3rd 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 April *Changing Birds of Harare* Talk by Michael Irwin

Thursday 19 May: *Coastal Birding in Mozambique* Talk by Celesta Von Chamier

Saturday 9 April and 14 May 7a.m. Rainham Dam

Birders last month were rewarded with a sighting of African Grass-owl and African Snipe. They should still be around in April. Otherwise look out for Marsh Owls, African Rail, Chestnut-vented Tit-babbler in the acacia woodland and....maybe a Locust Finch? Meet in the Prince Edward School car park on Josiah Tongogara Ave.

Saturday 16 April 7.00 a.m. Haka Park, Msasa

Always an interesting venue with different habitats – miombo woodland and water birds. Purple Swamphen, Greater Honeyguide, Southern Black Tit and many more. Meet at the Park entrance. (NB There is a discount at the gate for paid-up BLZ members with proof of membership)

Saturday 21 May 7.00 a.m. Greystone Park Nature Preserve

The Preserve is an oasis for birds. Purple Heron, Tambourine Dove, various species of Sunbirds...Come see for yourself! Meet in the car park on Halford Rd.

Sunday 3 April and 1 May 6.30 a.m. Mukuvisi Woodland

The migrants are leaving...so look out for Lesser Grey and Red-backed Shrike and Southern Carmine Bee-eaters passing through in April. Otherwise the residents include Spotted Creepers and the Black Sparrowhawks should be around their nest etc. In May watch out for the Swallow-tailed Bee-eaters! 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 April and 8 May 6.30 a.m. Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary

The sanctuary often reserves delightful surprises. Retz's Helmet-shrikes were seen here recently. Meet at Marimba Shopping Centre, Samora Machel Avenue West.

Sunday 17 April and 15 May 7.00 a.m. Monavale Vlei

With the end of the rains, the Bishops, Cisticolas, Weavers will all still be there but will be changing out of their breeding plumage. Look out for Black Storks. Meet on the BS Leon side of Fenella Drive.

Sunday 24 April RIFA There will be no outing in Harare (as it'll be Easter)...but in Chirundu. See info below.

Sunday 22 May 6.30 a.m. Tavistock Farm

African Snipe, breeding Little Grebes on the dam. Chestnut-backed Sparrowlark a special there. Meet at BLZ office, 35 Clyde Rd.

(NB. Any members who have suitable birding venues within 100km of Harare and don't mind hosting us please write to the Editor)

BLZ Mashonaland Weekend Outing 1: 22 April – 25 April 2010 (i.e. the Easter Weekend) **Rifa, Chirundu** (Distance from Harare 355 km). The venue is a Hunter's Association Camp by the Zambezi River. The destination is generally self-catering. Lots of specials to look out for: Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters, Spotted & Striped Crake etc. For further information & to book contact: Tony Alegria: talegria@zol.co.zw or 04-490375.

Swee Waxbill (Black-faced Swees) on Hwedza Mountain A future visit to Hwedza Mountain is to be organised. Watch this space! The last word on Hwedza was by Jeremy Talbot in *Honeyguide*, 1980, No.103/104:18-21 while the sight records for the swees was around 1990 during the atlas years.

MATABELELAND BRANCH

Saturday 9 April Walk at Lakeside

We have had a number of productive walks at Lakeside over the last couple of years and hope to be able to continue to build on our bird list for the area. There should still be a little water around which always makes for more interesting birding. Meet at Lakeside at 06:30; take the Old Esigodini Road, about 500m beyond Hotel Rio turn left into Kabot Drive, then turn left onto a dirt track leading into Lakeside. The early start means if you have things you have to do on a Saturday there will still be time after the walk, else bring your chair and tea things and linger for a while as we compile our checklist.

For more information phone Adele Edwards (h) 882242 or 0712 366917

Friday 13 May Talk on Waterfowl

Following the success of our two presentations on birds of the night – owls and nightjars – Adele Edwards will be giving a presentation on waterfowl. At The Boma, Hillside Dams, starting at 6:30 p.m. Meals can be ordered in advance from Miriam – phone The Boma 242490 For more information phone Adele Edwards (h) 882242 or 0712 366917

Weekend 27-29 May: Dassie Survey

The Dassie Survey will take place at the crack of dawn (literally!) on the mornings of Saturday 28th and Sunday 29th May. We will be based at Nungu Guest House and teams should arrive on the evening of Friday 27th in preparation for an early start the following day. We are still short of teams to cover all the sites – particularly those more inaccessible sites which require more climbing or hiking to be reached. For more information, or to confirm your participation, phone Cecilia Hubbard on (w) 287692 or 0772433733 or John Brebner on (h) 242634.

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 pgggroup.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*

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RECENT REPORTS and SIGHTINGS

IBA monitoring project report

The National IBA Project Manager attended a two-day 4th and final Annual Planning and Review Meeting in Burundi from 2 -3 March 2011. The meeting was attended by representatives from the BirdLife Africa Partnership secretariat based in Kenya, Dr Chris Magin (RSPB) - the project supervisor, the EU delegate from Burundi, the Director of Wildlife Authority in Burundi (INECN), the Chairman of ABO (Burundi BirdLife partner), ABO staff and seven National Project Managers from Botswana, Burkina Faso, Kenya, Uganda, Burundi, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Tunisia could not send a representative due to political instability in the country. Country presentations were made focusing on project progress/achievements during 2010, outstanding project activities, and an overview of the financial situation, the intended outcomes for March-October 2011 and sustainability plans. Most countries reported significant progress although there were country-specific challenges encountered, including staff turnover. Zimbabwe and Uganda were the only two countries with the longest serving National Project Managers.

Zimbabwe was on track in terms of achieving results/outcomes of the project. The contribution of BLZ to the compilation of the 4th National Report to CBD was highly appreciated. The only outstanding activities for Zimbabwe were to train Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (PWMA) on data management and data analysis using World Biodiversity Database to influence the government to set up the national CBD clearing house mechanism so that we can link it to our website and to facilitate the setting up of a National Biodiversity Committee to harmonize IBA monitoring with other national monitoring programmes. One of the key outputs of the project was to institutionalize IBA monitoring as a core activity of Protected Areas authorities. This has been achieved in PAs and PWMA will continue to monitor IBAs using the standard approach. Meanwhile there are plans to conduct a data management workshop in May with appropriate personnel from PWMA. The project is officially ending in October 2011 and a sustainability strategy has been developed to sustain monitoring activities beyond the period funded by EU. BLZ will continue to work with PWMA in national coordination of the project and production of the status and trends reports.

Kanisios Mukwashi, National IBA Project Manager

Barberspan Bird Ringing and Atlasing Workshop March 2011

A Zimbabwean team comprising Julia Pierini, her mother Carla, Tendai Wachi from National Parks and Innocent Magunje joined a bird ringing and atlasing workshop held between 9 and 14 March 2011 at Barberspan, RSA. The two day journey took us through Botswana into South Africa. Woodland Kingfishers greeted us on arrival at Francistown's Marang Lodge's campsite but it was only at the Ramatlabana border that Common Mynas were common. Botsalano National Park in South Africa rewarded us with a couple of lifers for me namely Dusky Indigobird [Black Widowfinch] and Acacia Pied Barbet. Other bird species that lit up the way include Long-tailed Paradise-whydah and Chin-spot Batis amongst the more popular species.

As a welcoming gesture at the workshop venue, Julia and Innocent were given a Crimson-breasted Shrike and a Willow Warbler, respectively, to ring. One of the conveners, Dieter Oschadleus, is very interested in weaver birds as a result of which the team ringed a lot of Weavers, Bishops and Queleas save for Carla who had been appointed as the meal planner for the tour. Julia got the opportunity to ring a number of Southern Red Bishop nestlings at two of the Bishop colonies at Barberspan.

Whilst the other team members went out to ring Sociable Weavers at a nest site, I went out with Lia Steen, an atlaser, to learn how to atlas pentads around the Barberspan area. It was during

atlasing that a number of lifers including South African Cliff-swallows and Short-clawed Larks were seen and heard. Doug Harebottle latter gave an “eye opening “presentation on the findings of South African Bird Atlas Project 2 (SABAP 2) to date and showed evidence of recent changes in bird species assemblages and distributions within South Africa. Professor Les Underhill presented on the migration patterns of Barn Swallows in relation to climate change based on findings from SABAP 2. Zimbabwe is covered in SABAP 2 in as much as mapping is concerned but the initiative to map Zimbabwean birds has to come from within Zimbabwe. Birder watchers in Zimbabwe are therefore challenged to make worth of their birding knowledge in spearheading mapping of Zimbabwean biodiversity. Officials from Animal Demographic Unit (ADU) are willing to assist us in directing Zimbabweans interested in atlasing and are consulting on the way forward in as much as assigning observer numbers to Zimbabweans is concerned. Members who are keen to atlas Zimbabwean avifauna and need further information can visit the SABAP 2 website www.sabap2.org.za and may contact me. The Zimbabwean party were presented with a wader net for their efforts.

An opportunity to tour wildlife areas around Vanderbijl Park arose as the team waited to go ringing with the Raijmakers brothers. On 15th March, the party went to a National Park where not many species of birds were seen save for Ant-eating Chats and African Stonechats amongst other bird species. Antelope species like Black Wildebeest, Springbok and Bontebok were seen. 16th March was spent at Marievale Bird Sanctuary where a Ruff was seen along with a Wood Sandpiper, Red-knobbed Coots with young and sitting on eggs were everywhere whilst White-winged Terns just coming into full breeding plumage strained our bird identification skills. African Purple Swamphen presented itself for the second time, some had missed it the first, and the party marvelled at the sight of Great Crested Grebes and male Long-tailed Widowbird. Goliath Heron and a close up sighting of Greater Striped Swallows and wader species namely Three-banded Plover and Common Ringed Plovers were some of the major highlights at the bird sanctuary.

Bird ringing with the Raijmakers at Boschendaal had each of the Zimbabwean ringers ringing at least 19 different bird species, 159 individuals of 35 species were caught. Bird species such as Cape White-eyes, Sedge Warblers, Marsh Warblers, Speckled Mousebird, African Red-eyed Bulbul, Cape Robin-chat, Chestnut-vented Tit-babbler, Cape Wagtail, Levillant`s Cisticola, Fiscal Flycatcher, White-bellied Sunbird and Amethyst Sunbirds, Cape Sparrow, Southern Grey-headed Sparrow and House Sparrow were handled by the Zimbabwean trainees. The last day of ringing took us to Bronkhorstfontein where Diderick Cuckoo, Brown-crowned Tchagra and Neddicky were caught and ringed amongst other bird species such as Kalahari Scrub-robin, Common Whitethroat, Black-chested Prinia, Red-backed Shrike and Green-winged Pytilia. We had lots of ringing exposure and experience with Kobie, Tony and Sean Raijmakers not forgetting their wives who spoilt us to a wonderful dinner. Our heartfelt thanks to the Raijmakers family for all their assistance, kindness and hospitality.

Our sincere gratitude also goes to Zephne` and Hermann Bernitz for organizing the ringing and atlasing workshop, Lia Steen, Doug Harebottle, Dieter Oschadleus, Barberspan management and staff and to all the bird ringers and trainees. Last but definitely not least to Carla for taking care of our dietary requirements throughout the excursions. Thank you all for your priceless efforts.

Innocent Magunje, Conservation Field Officer, intern@blz.co.zw

Is the Masked ‘House Sparrow’ Weaver the new kid on the block?

When the House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* first arrived in Zimbabwe in the early 1960s, its spread was rapid in towns and villages so that within a decade or so it had occupied most urban areas and even further afield, and in places became common. The situation however in greater Harare was always a bit less certain and perhaps more tenuous and the last few decades have witnessed a slow but steady decline in urban areas and markedly so in the more leafy northern suburbs, where it has almost disappeared. There it at best can be described as being either rare or simply not featuring at all. In the case of Dandaro where I have lived for most of the last ten years, it became extremely common in the earlier stages of construction and occupation and it became one of the few places where one could be guaranteed a sighting! But as I have remarked elsewhere, once an area develops where the shrubs and trees grow and the lawns are regularly watered and the grass cut, then the sparrows seem to disappear. And after that if you want to see the bird, the prime habitat would seem to be in the central

business district where there is concrete, bricks and tarmac and a good deal of uncollected rubbish as well. And that is where the House Sparrow, against whatever other odds, seems to be maintaining its status of doing well if not quite respectable or even worthy of note. But there nevertheless it survives opportunistically in surroundings that can sustain little else but can still be regarded as a success within such surroundings. If there is a competitor perhaps it is the Pied Crow *Corvus albus*, which are equally capable of looking after themselves without troubling about other small fry such as mere sparrows.

But what is it then about suburbia where most of us reside and what really has gone wrong there so far as sparrows are concerned? Well, as already stressed, once one's plot or whatever becomes respectable and the shrubs take over and the tress canopy and the lawn is forever green and freshly cut, it is then for some unknown reason that the sparrows opt out and disappear completely – but why really, especially if food is provided and much else seems to be available as well? Yet a sparrow is nowhere to be seen! Well, like you probably, I do feed the birds at Dandaro with stale (and not so stale) bread more or less generously and just to see what might come along anyway. And while certainly in years gone by the sparrows took advantage of such generosity and were among the first to arrive and sample such offerings, there has indeed been a change. For a number of years now I have come to notice that it is not so much the sparrows that are first to arrive but rather the Southern Masked-weavers *Ploceus velatus*. Dark-capped Bulbuls *Pycnonotus tricolor* are of course soon on the scene as well, but being larger birds can well look after their own interests without being interfered with. But certainly now it is the Masked-weavers that have been the first to appear and become increasingly dominant and as much a commensal as any sparrow which first did the same thing several thousand years ago when mankind decided to settle down and grow things. But with the situation that exists now, it seems to be the more aggressive weaver and not the sparrow that has the advantage and comes out tops. It should also be remarked that in every garden bird survey that it is the weaver that is amongst the top four species, whereas originally it must have been much less common and confined to streamside cover and the like before we decided to change everything and much less common than today, where it is literally everywhere that it can weave its nest. I strongly believe therefore that it is the weaver that has gained the upper hand and become the sparrow in ecological terms. It follows therefore that the weaver as an opportunist needs a new identity and that it might well be renamed the Masked 'House Sparrow' Weaver in acknowledging that it has completely supplanted its competitor, now forced to retire to the concrete jungle where no self respecting weaver would be expected to occur.

This story therefore becomes a tale of adaptation to a new and wholly anthropogenic situation and where as everywhere, there are winners and losers. But what I would like to know now, do you agree with the story so far or is there some other alternative? And of course there is the problem elsewhere in the world where the House Sparrow may be in decline but for probably different reasons as our own habitats have changed and the world with it. But the situation here I am sure is rather simple and I would very much appreciate ideas and feedback from others who have witnessed changes over the years. I can't really say that I am much of an ecologist but like to look at what seems to be going on and to arrive at some reasonable conclusion that appears logical. So let us put the question to a wider public in the hope that there will be feedback, of course, so that then I can perhaps take the issue a bit further and write up the situation in our journal that will be acceptable to a wider audience and particularly within the more critical scientific community at large. And it must be treated as a fun situation and a challenge that can be enjoyed with a sense of satisfaction too. And that is why I asked from the very beginning – has the Masked 'House Sparrow' Weaver now very much become the new kid on the block?!

M.P.S. Irwin 30 Dandaro Village, Borrowdale. Harare

hilarym@yoafrica.com

Some of you may be wondering why I've included the last article as it has already appeared in the Babler no.97 of 2010. Well, I got a note from Michael Irwin expressing his disappointment that he has received no response from the readership for it. Anyone feel chastised? I do! - Ed

MASHONALAND

African Waterbird Census January 2011, Lake Manyame 1730D3

Tony Alegria, Dorothy Wakeling, Penny and I went out to Lake Manyame on 15 January 2011 to contribute to the African Waterfowl Census. Well, we had boat trouble and were very fortunate to get back to the slipway in very short time. We managed to walk some shoreline, in the grass, and thereafter the view was aquatic weeds and open water. The birds we saw that we did not see on the next visit were 14 Collared Pratincole, 4 Common Sandpiper, 10 Curlew Sandpiper, 3 Ruff and 2 Marsh Owls. We were only out for 1½ hours.

The next week, 22 January, Tony said we must try again and this time we hit the jackpot. We were out on the lake for 4½ hours and managed to survey 8 kilometres, 6.5 being shoreline, never moving very far from the slipway. The dam was 75% full, and this time our view was from the open water, onto the aquatic weed and into the inundated grassland. Some of the birds we saw* were 30 Grey Herons, 12 Goliath Herons, 23 Little Egret, [125] 144 Squacco Herons, 72 African Openbills (the only stork seen). [17] 15 Glossy Ibis were noted. 189 Red-billed Teal, 100 Fulvous Ducks (one family with 9 young of year, and another with 12). [70] 72 Hottentot Teals were seen, and 8 White-backed Duck, but not a single African Pygmy-goose. 105 Common Moorhen were there and 37 African Purple Swamphen, a staggering [768] 955 African Jacana, (1 pair with clutch 4, and 1 with c/3) and 4 Lesser Jacana.

Four Long-toed Lapwings were seen and a good survey of the whole lake might reveal more. I assume they came from the Zambezi River, because three gates were open at Kariba and the Zambezi is running too fast for water weed to stick at one point. [38] 59 Blacksmith Lapwing were noted and one was obviously sitting on a nest on aquatic weed. They seem to have adapted to it better than other waders.

111 Grey-headed Gull (2 brown young birds) were counted, but only one White-winged Tern. An Osprey was seen with a fish, and 11 African Fish-eagles. The harrier was most probably a Western Marsh-harrier. Other birds of interest were 7 Brown-throated Martin, only 200 Barn Swallows, 4 Grey-rumped Swallows, which surprised me, as there was no short grassland nearby. There was one Yellow Wagtail seen in the aquatic weed near the shoreline, and only 2 Southern Red Bishops (though their habitat was inadequately covered).

Thanks must go to Tony Alegria for the boat, and Ian Riddell as spotter.

No African Darters were recorded. Is this because of the fishing nets which were everywhere?

The Long-toed Lapwing had not been reported here since 1992 (twenty years ago). The 955 African Jacanas were more than I saw the whole of last year, and the 37 African Purple Swamphen is more than I have seen in the last 50 years.

Lake Manyame must hold of the most outstanding waterbird concentrations in Zimbabwe today, and is a fitting place to have our next AGM.

David Rockingham-Gill rgill@zol.co.zw

* Revised numbers here may differ from are those on the official return, in [], sent to BLZ

Cisticolas: Little Birds of Lots of Grass 17 February 2011

There was a power outage at the Avondale Sports Club, but hardly anyone noticed. Tony Alegria hooked up the little generator and Alex Masterson got down to details with his presentation on the ultimate in LBJ's, the group of Cisticolas. Alex is the co-author of LBJ's Made Easy by Ken Newman, so he would know more about these little birds than most people on our planet. It was a unique opportunity for all of us present to prick our ears and absorb. Incidentally there is a new book LBJs Made Simple by another Newman, Doug, and Gordon King which I can order for you if ordered and paid for (Rand 140.00) before 1 April. Contact me: vonchamier@gmail.com.

The first thing to do is to establish that your LBJ is a cisticola. Larks are bigger birds that spend a lot of time running on the ground. Pipits walk about on the ground and wag their tails like wagtails. The wives and families of bishop and widowbirds have short thick conical beaks and tend to move in flocks. Cisticolas are essentially grass birds, though many perch and call from the top of bushes. They move singly or in pairs and many have striped backs whereas the reed and rush warblers are plain brown.

Although we were shown lots of pictures of cisticolas, Alex said it was not much use looking at the pictures because you will tell them apart by what habitat they are in and what they have to

say. One has to get to know the signature tunes of each species and then they are much easier. There are about 60 species in Africa but only 17 occur in Zimbabwe. They vary from about sparrow/Scarlet-chested Sunbird size down to that of the little firefinches.

Six of the Zimbabwean species can usually be eliminated because they are confined to small areas of the country. These are three (3) Eastern District specials: **Singing Cisticola**, **Wailing Cisticola** and **Short-winged Cisticola**. The pans in the Save/Runde swampy areas sometimes have **Rufous-winged Cisticola** and the **Luapula Cisticola** and **Chirping Cisticolas** occur along the Zambezi just down from Kazungula. **Levaillant's Cisticola** is also a waterside bird and is never more than 50m away from the water in short open vegetation along stream banks. Levaillant's occurs all along the watershed from Harare to Matopos. Around Harare, Bulawayo and the areas between, the cisticolas are best divided into those that live in open grassland and have aerial displays and those of bushy to wooded parts which call from trees and bushes.

The common grassland species are the little **Zitting Cisticola** and the much bigger **Croaking Cisticola**. The Zitting flies about 50m up and rises and falls with each 'zit'. The Croaking cruises around in circles about 30 metres up uttering a repetitive croak. Then there are two tiny birds, Wing-snapping and Pale-crowned which display so high up that you can hardly see them against the clouds. **Wing-snapping Cisticola** likes very short dryish grassland and is common in the mountain grassland of Nyanga. It should also occur between Gweru and Shangani and was recorded years ago from Matopos. The **Pale-crowned Cisticola** is a bird of short wet grassland. Wing-snapping's song is a mixture of 'see see' calls followed by lots of clicks and it makes loud wing snaps as it dives back to the ground. The Pale-crowned makes a monotonous 'sweepy, sweepy' call with no wing snaps or clicks. Flying in a very erratic up, down and off to the side flight only 5-15m over the grass, is the **Desert Cisticola** which lives alongside the Zitting but on drier ground.

In the woodlands the **Lazy Cisticola** likes rocks under big trees as in the Matopos and its signature tune is a clear 'wheat, wheat' call slowly repeated and with a clipped ending. The **Rattling Cisticola** is the most common bushveld bird in many parts, its call beginning with 'cheer, cheer cheer' followed by a variety of short endings. **Tinkling Cisticolas** occur in drier more sparsely grassed parts with a preference for sandy areas where you also find springhares. It has a very red head and a pretty tinkling call. These birds all have striped backs.

This leaves two plain backed birds being the little **Neddicky** which has a call like a tinkerbird but which is repeated monotonously from a tree top. The loud mouthed bigger **Red-faced Cisticola** is a bird of rank grass mixed with bushes as along streams and around anthills. Its call is a series of loud notes that often go up the scale and then down down down.

Celesta von Chamier

Domboshawa: Saturday 19 February 2011

After a bit of a late start, a small group of us arrived at Domboshawa on a fairly chilly grey morning. Sightings started well with Chin-spot Batis & Black-backed Puffbacks in the trees by the car park as well as a couple of Yellow-throated Longclaws a little way off. A couple of Lazy Cisticolas were seen on the way to the top, where there were a few White-necked Ravens. We then wandered down over the back amongst the trees near the cave where we saw Brown-crowned Tchagra, Tropical Boubou, African Paradise-flycatcher, and heard a Black-crowned Tchagra. The real treat was when a Spotted Eagle-owl was flushed and flew right over our heads. The walk back didn't yield much more until we were by the entrance when we had good viewing of a Cinnamon-breasted Bunting and a Striped Pipit.

Other birds that were seen or heard were Golden-breasted Bunting, Common Waxbill, Bar-throated Apalis, Senegal Coucal, European Bee-eater, Tawny-flanked Prinia, Rock Martin, Miombo Double-collared Sunbird and White-bellied Sunbirds and Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird. The final count was not large, but a good morning was had by all.

Debbie Wiggins

Bally Vaughn Game Park, QDS: 1730D1, 27 February 2011

This day started off as overcast and dull but we did get some odd patches of sunshine later on during our walk. There was a good turnout of 27 people that set out from the CABS car park at about 6.40 a.m. and I must commend the members for good support on our outings in recent

months. We entered the game park at a gate just after the entrance to the animal sanctuary and were at Mwanga Lodge by about 7.30 a.m. Here we were greeted by our host Gordon Putterill, filled in the indemnity form and split up into 3 groups to cover as much of the approximately 400ha park as possible. One group included a drive to the dam outside the park on the other side of the Shamva road in its tour.

The lodge looks out onto an open grassy plain surrounded by miombo woodland and granite kopjes. There is a river that comes from Mermaids Pool and flows along the western border and a stream that is a tributary of this river and flows from east to west through the middle of the park. Gordon told us to look out for Black-throated Wattle-eye in the evergreen trees lining the deep gorge through which the stream flows, as it had been seen there. Apart from birds we saw giraffe, blesbok, wildebeest, zebra, impala and two lion cubs that joined us while we compiled our birdlist after our walk.

My group went east along the side of a kopje, then down to the stream as far as the river and back through the grassy plain to the lodge. Altogether we probably covered about 6km in 3 hours in pleasant walking weather. Unfortunately the visibility was impaired by the overcast weather and we would probably have seen more birds if the sun was shining. We managed to pick up Familiar Chat on the sides of the kopjes but could not find the mahobohobo specials in the form of Rufous-bellied Tit, Eastern Violet-backed Sunbird and Cabanis's Bunting. However we did see a lot of Helmeted Guineafowl with brown, half grown chicks and a Spotted Eagle-owl. Although 2 groups searched for the wattle-eye in the riverine forest we failed to find it and in the grassland it was good to see Flappet Lark with the more common Rufous-naped Lark and various cisticolas.

Back at the lodge when we did the birdlist we discovered that each group had picked up some birds that had not been identified by other groups. 7 raptors were recorded and included African Cuckoo Hawk, African Hawk-eagle and Martial Eagle. Other highlights included African Wood-owl, White-necked Raven, Broad-tailed Warbler, Lazy Cisticola, Neddicky, Striped Pipit and Red-backed Mannikin. The total species count was a pleasing 90 considering that many of us were lucky if we got 50.

Thank you Gordon and the staff at Mwanga Lodge for hosting us and we would very much like to return...possibly in September?!

Richard Dennison

Renewed Rainham Dam Outing 12 March 2011

The first of what are to be monthly visits to this venue took place on Saturday 12 March. It was the first organized visit to this venue since about 2001 though bird records from Rainham go back to 1950 (*Ostrich* April 1956 Vol XXVII p56) The way to these regular outings were organized by Dr Chip Chirara of BLZ and the National Parks and Wildlife Authority to whom we are most grateful. From a birding point of view it was not a great success but March is a time when the dams are very full and there are so many other places with water throughout the country that the water bird population is very dispersed. Nevertheless three carloads x4 people went out and were pleased to find Fadzai Matsvimbo, our BLZ Conservation Officer and Maculate Shoko, a NUST student, already there. Maculate is doing a project on the birds of Rainham.

The morning was cool, grey and damp, the access road a bit sloshy and the grass was very wet and rather long even along the side of the paths on the tops of the two dam walls. The link area between the two dams was flooded to just over knee deep but the three bakkies all got across onto the walls without trouble.

Birds were noticeable by their absence which is worth recording anyway. No Red-knobbed Coots, no Little Grebes, no more than about 20 ducks – all on the big dam: Red-billed Teal and White-backed Duck. Only a couple of pairs of African Jacana, one Purple Heron and half a dozen Cattle Egrets. Over-flyers gave a few more. Nor did we try to bird the acacia woodland which should support Tit-babblers, Marico Sunbird, Burnt-necked Eremomela's and Magpie Shrikes. But we actually clocked up 63 species tops of which were probably an African Grass-owl, two African Snipe – (most of the winter population must have moved away) – one of two African Marsh-harriers that have been about (with extensive pale areas on the front of the wing-tops), four Broad-tailed Warblers and a Black-shouldered Kite on its nest low down in a little thorn bush. There were also various thicket birds that would not have been there in the past:

White-browed Robin-chat, Speckled Mousebirds, Tropical Boubous and various unidentified warbling warblers from Europe though we did recognize Great Reed-warbler.

The vlei below the dam wall has changed dramatically from ten years ago. It is now dominated by extensive areas of bullrush/typha and it is no longer grazed by a lot of cattle making it all very heavy going to walk through. But there will be some surprises there yet – European Bittern!?? As the water levels recede and other water sources dry out, bird numbers and varieties will increase. April will be a bit better and May-June through to the next rains could be spectacular at times.

Alex Masterson

Kafue, Zambia March 2011

Earlier this month, I had the good fortune to visit the Kafue National Park in Zambia. I stayed at a small comfortable, tented camp called Mayukuyuku, `place of water` 250km west of Lusaka. It took 4 hours of solid driving on a dead straight road built by the Chinese 35 years ago to get there. At this point in time, the Chinese are hauling out nine trucks a day, laden with hard wood from the western forests ... 'Nough said! Our Air Zim flight was cancelled so we flew later, and arrived at the camp at midnight. I had been told the river was only metres from my tent. I could hear the rapids higher up but it was too dark to see anything. Next morning, there was the river, flowing wide and strong.

I was amazed at what a majestic river the Kafue is, in those reaches of it. They had had average rains and the river was still in spate. The waterberries, laden with fruit were inundated and leaning into the water with dark secret backwaters below the steep banks under them, where the hippos snorted and puffed.

I had forgotten my binos! They are the first thing I pack as a rule! Fortunately, I was lent a huge pair of good Ziess glasses but they were heavy and I was not quick with them. However, I saw 86 bird species and 22 mammals. Three of the birds were 'lifers' for me - the Pel's Fishing-owl, and the African Finfoot, also Red-chested Flufftails. I know they are in Monavale vlei but I have never seen them there yet. There was Hadeda Ibis on the river and several different kingfishers, as well as African Darters. White-fronted Bee-eaters were nesting in the river bank, and lots more. Again, I saw the silhouetted shapes of a pair of Narina Trogons. I seem fated never to see their beautiful colours.

Of the mammals, I saw lifers of Lichtenstein's Hartebeest, Yellow Baboon, Defassa Waterbuck and Plains Zebra – with no shadow stripe. There are no Giraffe in Kafue – never have been. It rained a lot. The sides of the roads were swampy all the way. There were drifts of white `Snow sedge'- like stiff dandelions in the marshy places. The Miombo Woodland is especially fine, with huge trees, as I remember it was on the Copperbelt during my childhood in Northern Rhodesia. There was also open grassland dotted with trees and big vlies/dambos and thick riverine forest. We saw no breeding herds of elephant, only loan bulls, lots of puku and impala, some bush buck, reedbuck, bush babies and civet and a lovely young female leopard. No lion only spoor and roars!

It was a good trip and an easy venue to reach. We were met at the airport and returned there by the Camp personnel. No, I don't know about the cost as I was treated to it! Lucky me, hey?!

Aileen Robinson

MATABELELAND

Outing to NUST – 12 February

Eight members and guests met at the main NUST gate at 6.45 a.m. on a bright and clear Saturday morning. Professor Peter Mundy, of the Department of Forest Resources and Wildlife Management at the university, was there to guide us on a walk through parts of the 160 hectare campus. The walk took place on a clear morning, and the vegetation on the campus was dense and well-leaved after several weeks of heavy rainfall.

We drove in and parked alongside one of the study blocks, and there started observing the various birds which were flying about and perching comfortably on the building. These included House Sparrows, Red-winged Starlings and Speckled Pigeons. In evidence around the car park at the start of the walk were Laughing Doves and Blue Waxbills, while Prof Mundy spotted a Namaqua Dove flying off and told us that they are often seen there.

Flying overhead there was sightings of a Hamerkop, Black-headed Heron, Pied Crows, Rock Doves and a Red-eyed Dove.

Four different swallow species were seen, these being the Barn Swallow, Wire-tailed Swallow, Red-breasted Swallow, and Lesser Striped Swallow. Flying overhead for most of the morning were some Little Swifts and African Palm-swifts.

The walk took place mostly along a straight road with natural bush on both sides, and with some rain-filled puddles here and there. Of the barbet and tinkerbird family, a Black-collared Barbet, Crested Barbet, and Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird were seen, and the call of the Acacia Pied Barbet was heard.

There was a pleasing population of birds seen in the bush and these included:-

African Hoopoe, Common Scimitarbill, Dark-capped Bulbul, Terrestrial Brownbul, Yellow-bellied Greenbul (heard), Icterine Warbler (prolific), Yellow-bellied Eremomela, Burnt-necked Eremomela, Rattling Cisticola, Black-throated Canary, Brubru, Black-crowned Tchagra, and White-throated Robin-chat.

A Wahlberg's Eagle and Steppe Buzzard soared lazily (not together!), giving us ample time to identify them, under Prof Mundy's direction for the less-knowledgeable. The only other raptor seen was a Black-shouldered Kite.

Continuing, we identified the Spotted Flycatcher and the Marico Flycatcher, the Red-backed Shrike, Crimson-breasted Shrike, Tropical Boubou, Grey Go-away-bird, Senegal Coucal, White-winged Widowbird, Red-faced Mousebirds, and the Southern Red Bishops and Yellow Bishops. The Southern Grey-headed Sparrows were plentiful, and there was some discussion about the difference between the Southern and Northern species. Also living on campus are the White-browed Sparrow-weavers.

The only sunbird seen was the Marico Sunbird. In the vicinity of the quarry, which was holding some water, there were European Bee-eaters swooping around, and some White-faced Duck. A Crested Francolin was heard, and elsewhere we saw Swainson's Spurfowl.

On the return walk we stopped for a short while to watch a couple of Chin-spot Batis; also seen were Common Waxbill, Pin-tailed Whydah and Long-tailed Paradise-whydah.

After arriving back at our cars, we took a short drive to the football field, and there we found Crowned Lapwing and African Pipit.

All in all, 61 species were identified, and the walk ended at a warm 10 o'clock. It is hoped that we will be able to get Prof Mundy to give us more of his valuable time to guide us on another bird-walk in the not too distant future.

Karen Learmonth

BLZ Matabeleland Branch AGM: 20 February 2011

The AGM of the Matabeleland Branch of Birdlife Zimbabwe was held at the home of Helen and Bill Lewis on Saturday 19th February 2011.

Twenty nine members were present with a total of thirty-one apologies received.

After the Chairman's and Treasurer's reports, which were both well received, various reports were given on the Branch's projects before moving on to National projects. The election of office bearers was short and sweet with the current chairman (Cecilia Hubbard), vice chairman (Bill Lewis) and treasurer (Jenny Brebner) being unanimously voted back in for a further year while Betty van der Merwe was elected as secretary. The Chairman thanked for their services the three members of the out-going committee who were not standing for re-election, i.e. Julia Duprée, Adele Edwards and Judy Ross. In particular she paid tribute to Julia for the tremendous amount of work she has done for Birdlife Matabeleland Branch both as chairman and as a committee member. After many years of service on the committee Julia has chosen to stand down to allow herself more time to focus on her areas of special interest. We wish her a happy 'retirement'. Several items under any other business engendered lively discussion before the meeting closed.

Most of those attending the meeting stayed on for a bring-your-own lunch and the Lewises had kindly provided braai fires for those who wished to cook. More lively discussion ensued and it was a good opportunity for folks to move around and catch up on the chat. Our thanks go to Bill and Helen for the use of their lovely home.

Jenny Brebner

Birding in the Matopos: 12/13 March 2011

The occasion was the briefing for the start of the 2011 Verreaux's Eagle Breeding Survey but several of us took the opportunity of making it a weekend out in the Matopos, taking advantage of Cecilia's generous hospitality at Nungu Guest House, and enjoying a weekend of good birding and good company. The briefing itself was business-like, well run and well attended. We were pleased to welcome several new teams and/or team members. There was a general air of excitement and anticipation as nests were allocated and people started wondering whether a particular territory would be occupied, whether a favourite pair would successfully fledge a chick, or whether one of our several mysteries would be resolved this year. The lunch following the briefing, and all the other meals for those who stayed overnight, was the usual enjoyable mix of banter and serious conversation and companionable sharing of food and drink. Cecilia's fiancé, Tony Wharam, passed all the tests and was given the seal of approval. The clear night skies were magnificent and Cecilia attempted to share some of her knowledge of the stars with us. The short shower of rain on Saturday night was enough to be invigorating but not enough to dampen our spirits.

And the Verreaux's Eagles didn't let us down; by the end of weekend several teams were able to confirm that at least one of their allocated territories was occupied. One pair was seen circling directly above Nungu Guest House, another pair was seen in an area where birds have not been observed before, while in a third territory one bird was observed carrying a stick, watched by her mate – not only do this pair appear to have already started nesting but they also appear to be using an alternate nest site which has not been used for several years. An interesting interaction between a pair of Verreaux's Eagles and an African Hawk-eagle was watched in awe by a few members who were fascinated by all three birds' aerodynamic skills as the African Hawk-eagle repeatedly dive bombed the other two.

But it wasn't all about Verreaux's Eagles. At the briefing, participants were reminded to take advantage of their time in the Matopos to record sightings for Matabeleland's Matobo Raptor Survey and also for the Special Species Survey – forms for which have recently been circulated to Matabeleland members. Amongst the raptors seen were Verreaux's Eagles (obviously), another pair of African Hawk-eagles, an African Fish-eagle (at Maleme Dam) and a Black-chested Snake-eagle. An African Black Duck was seen swimming right next to the dam wall at Maleme; it flew off as we drove across the wall giving us a good view of the lovely iridescent purple on its wings which few of us had seen so clearly before. (There were still a few centimetres of water spilling over the wall/road). A Purple-crested Turaco flew across the road in front of us; while people are quite ho-hum about these birds in Harare it is unusual to see them in Matabeleland, and especially to see them out in the open and in flight when one can appreciate the striking colours in the wings. And you didn't even have to drive around to see birds – the grounds around Nungu Guest House were a hive of activity: we heard Brown-hooded Kingfisher, Natal Spurfowl and Freckled Nightjars, whilst those seen included Black-capped Bulbuls, Arrow-marked Babblers, Groundscraper Thrush, Red-winged Starlings, Cape Turtle-dove, Red-eyed Dove and Emerald-spotted Wood-doves, White-necked Ravens and those ones that catch me every time – the elegant females with their brown-streaked fronts looking so unlike the flashy males – Violet-backed Starlings.

Adele Edwards

TAIL FEATHERS

Suspected sighting of female Collared Flycatcher

Date: 12 February 2011

Time: ~15:00

Location: S18 26.418 E32 02.369 (between Sondemara Farm & Rusape)

We were on our way from Sondemara Farm to Rusape, taking the 'shortcut' on farm roads, when, over halfway to Rusape, we noticed a bird flying around a small tree on the side of the road. Of course we stopped to investigate and this is what we saw...

The bird was moving around below the canopy of a small tree on the side of the road. The movement, size and shape of the bird were characteristic of a flycatcher. It settled a couple of

times on branches, giving us a good view of it, and the features that we noticed were that it had white under parts right up to the beak, and plain mushroom grey brown upperparts. The wing appeared darker (even black?), with bold white streaking on the upper edges of the wing and a distinct single white blotch towards the lower edge of the wing. The eyes, beak & legs all appeared black, and there was an area of paler feathers immediately around the eye, giving the appearance of an eye ring. Our conclusion was that it was a female Collared Flycatcher, without being aware that this was considered a rare species, but looking carefully through our books, we couldn't find anything else which better matched it. Although the identification may be considered debatable, we think it was our lucky day!

Debbie Wiggins

Male Variable Sunbird's display 'costume'

While visiting our cottage in Nyanga in February, I was treated to a most thrilling sight. I was watching the Variable Sunbirds cavorting around the garden when a pair landed on a branch of a florist's gum just above where I was standing. Next minute I noticed that the male looked different from normal, as he had bright orange tufts on either shoulder, quite separate from his yellow belly. I watched in awe as I realised he was displaying to his female, and the sight reminded me of a mini bird of paradise! I have since learned that I wasn't seeing things and that these tufts are called pectoral tufts, and are only visible when the bird displays. In all my years of bird watching, including watching plenty of Variable Sunbirds, I have never been lucky enough to witness this until now. I wonder how many people have had the pleasure of seeing this spectacle?!

Debbie Wiggins

Black Storks

On Sunday 6 March 2011, driving along Harare Drive between Borrowdale and Alpes Road where instant lawn is being grown, there were a number of Abdim's Storks and feeding in amongst them were 2 Adult and 3 Juvenile Black Storks.

David Gray

European Honey-buzzard

On 28 March 2011 at about 10 a.m. I saw, and photographed, a European Honey-buzzard flying over my house in Borrowdale Brooke. It circled overhead a few times before flying off, perhaps on its way back to Europe. Now is a good time to look for migrants that are uncommon in this area, such as the Honey-buzzard and Lesser Grey Shrike, as they pass through Harare on their way north.

Another one was also seen perched on a dead tree at EWANRIGG BOTANICAL GARDEN on Sunday 27 March 2011.

Nick Hart nick@hartofperth.com

NOTICEBOARD

Gache Gache Lodge, Lake Kariba are offering BLZ members (min 10 pax) a discounted rate of US\$60ppday (meals & accommodation included) to stay at the camp during week days. All activities also at half price. For info contact Bernie at bernie@chapungusafaris.co.zw or tel. 04-852 362/599

Missing Ostrich – Not the bird but a book!

In October the BLZ Mashonaland made a visit to Chikupo Caves in Masembura Communal Area south of Bindura. With me, I took a bound set of old OSTRICH journals which included a note on and pictures of the Mottled Swift breeding site at Chikupo. I left the area early but left the book behind asking that it be returned to the BLZ offices. I did not follow this up for some months and now it has gone missing. This book is in the old *Ostrich* format of approximately 210 x 140 mm (A5 rather than A4) and contains the two 1947 numbers and the three 1948 numbers of the journal which are bound into one book, covers and all. The binding is a maroon-red rexine cover with a large, gold, high-striding ostrich on the outside front cover. The

spine has three horizontal (across, not up and down) printed features which read from top downwards: "THE OSTRICH" at the top "VOLS, XVIII" – "XIX" in three lines in the middle and "A.N.B.M" at the bottom. The book is part of a set. It may have 'MADONGONDA TRUST 3/1' written in pencil facing the inside of the front cover. It must be sitting or lying around somewhere. Please return to me via BLZ offices. No questions: **\$50 reward.**

Alex Masterson

For Sale at the BLZ Office

We have beautiful T-shirts all sizes from size 12 for children to XXX- large on sale - US10.00 and Caps fit all sizes for US13.00.

Sylvia Muzavazi, Finance and Admin. Manager

Note from the Editor

Dear Members,

A new era is dawning. The next issue of The Babblers will be its 100th edition and to celebrate it has been decided that from now on a hard copy of the newsletter will be sent to ALL BLZ members (as well as the email version). The costs of this will be covered by advertising. This goes for both the Babblers and the Honeyguide. So here's an amazing opportunity handed to you on a silver platter to get exposure in publications that not only are distributed in Zimbabwe but are sent to RSA as well as overseas not to speak of the fact that both publications will soon be made available on our BLZ website and all the advertising that goes with them too, of course! So if you or anyone you know is interested in advertising in the next Babblers (or Honeyguide), please contact me (juliapierini@yahoo.com) or Dorothy (piumosso@zol.co.zw) for our very competitive rates! - Ed