

Training BirdLife Bindura University of Science Education Youth Club Members on Bird Identification and Monitoring of the Mavhuradonha Wilderness Important Bird and Biodiversity Area.

In October 2022, Ronnie Chirimuta (Mash Creepers Member) was awarded funding by the African Bird Club to conduct a project titled “Training BirdLife Bindura University of Science Education Youth Club Members on Bird Identification and Monitoring Mavhuradonha Wilderness Important Bird and Biodiversity Area.”

The project aims to:

1. Capacitate members of the BirdLife Bindura University of Science Education (BUSE) Youth Club on bird identification and monitoring bird species present in Mavhuradonha Wilderness.
2. Update the Mavhuradonha bird checklist, this last took place in 2008.
3. Enhance research activities by BirdLife BUSE students on bird species found in the Mavhuradonha Wilderness.

The Mavhuradonha Wilderness Area is located in the north of Zimbabwe, near the towns of Guruve and Centenary. It covers approximately 600 km² of wild and rugged country along the Zambezi Escarpment.



BirdLife Zimbabwe has not been able to adequately monitor this IBA due to funding constraints therefore this project is contributing to improved monitoring of the bird species in Mavhuradonha IBA. Data collected and projects that BirdLife BUSE students will undertake over time will also be used to advocate the importance of the IBA and the need to conserve its biological diversity. The

Environmental Management Authority will be lobbied to desist from issuing Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) permits to miners. The impact of continued mining in the area will be catastrophic as the resulting air, noise and water pollution, the disturbance from infrastructure development is totally incompatible with any efforts to conserve this significant biodiversity. A decision that favours short term gain through single use destructive abstraction over conserving vital ecological processes that have evolved over millennia is fundamentally flawed and consequently the decision to allow mining in the area must be stopped. Monitoring of the IBA will assist in gathering data related to bird species listed on the IUCN Red Data List, this will be crucial in determining conservation actions to be taken to protect the bird species.

Through this project, members of the BirdLife BUSE Youth Club are being trained on bird identification using the Birds of Africa App (an application developed by the African Bird Club) and on how to monitor the bird species in Mavhuradonha. In addition to this, BirdLife BUSE will be capacitated to use Birdlasser and eBird for their bird data collection. BirdLife BUSE members will benefit from monitoring Mavhuradonha Wilderness as it will increase their understanding of birds and other biodiversity. Students will be capacitated in applying theory into practice. BirdLife BUSE members will become equipped to become better environmental scientists and conservationists by the time they complete their university studies.

From the start of the project, rangers from the Mavhuradonha Wilderness Eco-camp will be interviewed on the birds that they have observed in the area. The rangers are not experts on all bird species and generally know how to identify only a few species. They however do encounter bird nests including raptors and will be able to report back on large species like the Southern Ground Hornbill within the Wilderness.

From the 20th to the 23rd of February 2023, 3 Mash Creepers (Ronnie Chirimuta, Jimmy Muropa and Karen Chiro), 3 BirdLife BUSE students (Chido Tawonezvi, Paidamoyo Chitake and Tanyaradzwa) and 2 Rangers (Nomsa and Cliff) from Mavhuradonha Wilderness Eco-lodge conducted a bird survey of the Mavhuradonha Wilderness IBA. The ABC Birding App was used to identify bird species present. A total of 91 species were recorded. Interesting birds that were recorded include Bat Hawk, Narina Trogon, African Crowned Eagle, Kurrichane Buttonquail, African Wood-owl, Common Swift, Trumpeter Hornbill, Flappet Lark, Red-throated Twinspot and Golden-breasted Bunting.





From 8 – 12 April 2023, 3 Mash Creepers (Ronnie Chirimuta, Abigail Karimanzira and Karen Chiro) and 2 BirdLife Bindura University of Science Education (BUSE) members (Chido Tawonezvi and Felix Kupara) visited Mavhuradonha Wilderness IBA. The purpose of the trip was to train BirdLife BUSE members on bird identification and monitoring the Mavhuradonha Wilderness IBA. A total of 102 bird species were observed. Interesting species observed include Pel's Fishing Owl, Boulder Chats, Black Cuckoo, African Hawk Eagles, Bat Hawks, Meyer's Parrot, White-breasted Cuckoo-shrike, Black Cuckoo-shrike, Red-throated Twinspot, Lazy Cisticola, Retz's Helmetshrike and Black-eared Seedeater.





To celebrate World Migratory Bird Day, BirdLife Zimbabwe and the Mash Creepers organised a talk at Bindura University with members of BirdLife BUSE. Topics discussed during the day are:

1. Why are Migratory Birds Important,
2. The Importance of wetland ecosystems as water sources that sustain birdlife,
3. Bird Identification Techniques
4. Introduction to Bat Conservation

The talk at Bindura University presented an opportunity for members of BirdLife BUSE to be introduced to the Birds of Africa App that was developed by the African Bird Club. The Birds of Africa App is essentially a field guide that can be downloaded for free on Playstore or the Appstore.



