



THE BABBLER

Newsletter of BirdLife Zimbabwe

June-July 2019
No. 148

Hi everyone,

The results of the summer waterbird counts are presented here, so this issue of *The Babbler* is a little longer than usual. Thanks to all who took part under trying circumstances.

How many of you use the BLZ Calendar of Events on your computer or phone? Or, perhaps more pertinently, how many even know there *is* such a thing? It isn't something new... and it is a useful feature, especially when you are on the move and need to remind yourself or check what's on. I have given some instructions under [Tail Feathers](#) and hopefully those will work or guide you in the right direction - smart phones have different menus and ways of doing things so some people may have to fiddle around a bit - or ask a friend!

Winter is taking a grip but it is usually pleasantly warm in the sun by mid-morning and worthwhile getting out there. Happy birding everyone!

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BLZ National AGM

The BirdLife Zimbabwe Annual General Meeting will take place on the 15th June 2019 at 10 a.m. at the Rondavel, Mukuvisi Woodlands, Harare.

There will be a bird walk from 7-9 a.m. followed by tea and the meeting. Stay afterwards for a braai – BirdLife will provide salads but please bring your meat and drinks.

International Waterbird Census, Zimbabwe, January 2019

Ian Riddell

38 sites were counted, a low coverage this season (Table 1) and this report is based on returns received by early May. The International Waterbird Census preferred count day was in the middle of January but our counts ranged a month either side of this date, though there were no December 2018 counts this year. Clifton farm dam, Chegutu, was also counted in April.

The water status of sites is shown in Table 1 with a number of Hwange and Matopos sites dry.

Our Ramsar sites coverage is shown in Table 1. Chivero Bird Sanctuary (as part of Lake Chivero) and Aberdeen, as a part of Lake Manyame, were covered. The dams themselves were not counted.

Participants are encouraged to count any sudden and significant influx that occurs at any time of the year.

Coverage of our wetland sites relies on the voluntary services of our members and their often-limited resources so grateful thanks are due to the 45 who participated, plus those simply listed as BLZ. Big thanks to those individuals who undertook extensive coverage in Hwange and other sites.

6660 birds of 134 species were recorded; this total includes estimates and two unidentified coucals and one unidentified rallid (Table 2).

Note: A summary of most species is given below though single site records (1 record for the year) are only listed in Table 2.

Anseriformes (Anatidae): ducks and geese

White-faced Duck *Dendrocygna viduata*

The highest count of 279 from Suni Pan far exceeded the range of 2-65 (av. 15.5) at 19 other sites, the high of 65 from Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary. Aberdeen Farm had a count of 50.

White-backed Duck *Thalassornis leuconotus*

These ranged from 9-300. The high count of 300 came from Clifton farm dam in April, where 46 were counted in January. Excluding the April count, numbers ranged from 9-4 (av. 31), with 9 at Mandalay Dam, 20 at Gletwyn Dam, 46 at Clifton and 48 at Sandy Spruit dam.

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiaca*

Generally ranged from 1-10 birds (Av. 5.3, 12 sites), and then numbers rose with 24 at Shumba pumped pan, 38 at Crowborough Farm, 44 at Masuma Pan/Dam, and a high of 101 at Mandavu Dam.

Spur-winged Goose *Plectropterus gambensis*

From 1-9 at 6 sites and then 20 at Suni Pan.

African Comb Duck *Sarkidiornis melanotos*

From 1- at 9 sites, followed by 16 at Camp Hwange and 2 at Kriedermann's dam.

African Pygmy-goose *Nettapus auritus*

Low numbers of 1 at Gletwyn Dam, 2 each at Kriedermann's dam and Mandalay Dam, 9 at Sandy Spruit dam, then 10 at Clifton farm dam in January and 49 at this site in April.

Southern Pochard *Netta erythrophthalma*

Low counts were of 10 at Gletwyn Dam and 16 at Clifton farm dam in April. At Clifton, 114 were counted in January and 123 at Kriedermann's dam.

Hottentot Teal *Spatula hottentota*

Numbers were low with 2-7 at 4 sites and 10 at Camp Hwange.

Cape Teal *Anas capensis*

Recorded only at David Whitehead Ponds with 2 & 1 in February and July, respectively.



African Black Duck *Anas sparsa*

Only found at two sites, 2 at Knoll Farm Dam and 5 at Hippo Pools camp.

Red-billed Teal *Anas erythrorhyncha*

1-30 birds (Av. 10) at 16 sites plus a high of 112 at Eiffel Flats Sewage Ponds. Clifton had in January and 22 in April.

Podicipediformes (Podicipedidae) grebes

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Counts were very low, from 1-6 at 6 sites. At Aberdeen Farm, where high numbers are expected,

only 3 were counted. This apparent decline could be the result of excessive gillnetting.

Cuculiformes (Cuculidae) coucals

Senegal Coucal *Centropus senegalensis*

A single from Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary and two each from Gletwyn Dam and Monavale Vlei.

Coucal *unidentified*

At least two were calling at Mazvikadei Ponds where White-browed Coucal also occurs.

Diderick Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx caprius*

Twos at Eiffel Flats Sewage Ponds, Kadoma Textiles Dye Ponds and Monavale Vlei.



Gruiformes (Heliornithidae-Gruidae) finfoots, flufftails, rails, crakes, cranes

Black Crake *Zapornia flavirostra*

From 1-20 (av. 5.) at 14 sites, Gletwyn Dam having the high count.

African Purple Swamphen *Porphyrio madagascariensis*

From 1-3 at 2 sites, plus 10 at Gletwyn Dam and 16 at Aberdeen Farm.

Allen's Gallinule *Porphyrio alleni*

Summer: singles at Tambahata Pan and Greengrove Nature Reserve, plus 3 at Muchaniwa Pan.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Ranged from 2-12 (av. 4.7) with higher counts of 40 (Clifton farm dam, January) and 60 each at

Aberdeen Farm and Gletwyn Dam. The April count at Clifton had 5 birds.

Lesser Moorhen *Gallinula angulata*

From 2-6 at 5 sites, plus 35 at Clifton farm dam in January.

Red-knobbed Coot *Fulica cristata*

32-88 (av. 65.4) at 47 sites, the high of 88 from Clifton farm dam in January, where 32 were counted in April.

Grey Crowned Crane *Balearica regulorum*

All recorded from Hwange, with 1 at Camp Hwange, 2 at Dwarf Goose Pan and 4 Masuma Pan/Dam.

Ciconiiformes (Ciconiidae) storks

African Openbill *Anastomus lamelligerus*

2 at Chinga Pan and 77 at Suni Pan, both sites at Sango Ranch, Save Valley Conservancy.

Abdim's Stork *Ciconia abdimii*

1-23 (av. 8.8) at 5 sites, plus 121 at Kriedermann's dam.

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*

Low numbers of 1 at Camp Hwange, 2 at Kriedermann's dam and 6 at Suni Pan.

Pelecaniformes (Threskiornithidae-Pelecanidae) ibises, spoonbills, herons, Hamerkop, pelicans

African Spoonbill *Platalea alba*

2 each at Camp Hwange and Marlborough Vlei, and each at Chinga Pan and Mandavu Dam.

African Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus*

Ranged from 1-30 (av. 9.7) with the 30 from Kriedermann's dam.

Hadedda Ibis *Bostrychia hagedash*

1 at Chinga Pan and 17 at Suni Pan, both sites at Sango Ranch, Save Valley Conservancy.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*

2-5 at 3 sites and 15 at Aberdeen Farm.

Dwarf Bittern *Ixobrychus sturmii*

1 at Biri Dam and 2 at Masuma Pan/Dam.

Black-crowned Night-heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

2 at Mandavu Dam and 9 at Suni Pan.

Green-backed Heron *Butorides striata*

From 1-8 birds (av. 2.5), the 8 from Hippo Pools camp.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*

1-7 (av. 2.2) from 10 sites, plus 23 from Aberdeen Farm.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

Numbers ranged from 1-57 (av. 12.8) followed by 129 at Clifton farm dam in April, where 40 were counted in January.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

From 1-4 (av. 1.8) at 14 sites, plus 17 at Mandavu Dam.

Black-headed Heron *Ardea melanocephala*

1-3 from 12 sites, plus 9 from Mazvikadei Ponds and 21 from Suni Pan.

Goliath Heron *Ardea goliath*

1 was at Aberdeen Farm and 2 at Mandavu Dam.



Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

From 1-3 birds at 8 sites.

Great Egret *Ardea alba*

1-8 (av. 2.9) from 8, the 8 at Mandavu Dam.

Yellow-billed Egret *Ardea brachyrhyncha*

1 at Aberdeen Farm, 8 at Chinga Pan and 11 at Suni Pan.

Black Heron *Egretta ardesiaca*

1 at Clifton farm dam and 8 at Aberdeen Farm.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

From 1-5 (av. 3) plus 27 at Mandavu Dam.



Hamerkop *Scopus umbretta*

Ranged from 1-7 (av. 2.2), the 7 from Hippo Pools camp. Marlborough Vlei (ponds) had 2 in January and February and were probably the same birds.

Suliformes (Phalacrocoracidae-Anhingidae) cormorants and darters

Reed Cormorant *Microcarbo africanus*

From 1-20 (av. 5.4), the 20 from Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary.

White-breasted Cormorant *Phalacrocorax lucidus*

From 1-4 plus 10 at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary.

African Darter *Anhinga rufa*

1 each from 4 sites (Esigodini, Hwange, Matopos and Save Valley). None recorded from the plateau.

Charadriiformes: thick-knees, avocets & stilts, plovers, jacanas, sandpipers & snipes, coursers, pratincoles, gulls, terns & skimmers

Water Thick-knee *Burhinus vermiculatus*

1, 3 and 5 from Mazvikadei Ponds, Mandavu Dam and Masuma Pan/Dam, 12 from Hippo Pools camp.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

1-6 (av. 3) from 7 sites, 41 and 42 from Mandavu Dam and Kadoma Textiles Dye Ponds, and a high of 115 from Crowborough Farm.

Kittlitz's Plover *Charadrius pecuarius*

Only in Hwange with 3 at Masuma Pan/Dam and 6 at Mandavu Dam.

Three-banded Plover *Charadrius tricollaris*

1-12 (av. 4.2) from 11 sites, the two Marlborough Vlei (ponds) having 2 and 4 birds.

Blacksmith Lapwing *Vanellus armatus*

12 sites had 1-2 birds, followed by 10-18 at 4 sites, then 37-52 (av. 46) at 3 Hwange sites and Kriedermann's Dam, the latter with 50 birds. Marlborough Vlei (ponds) had 2 on both counts.



Crowned Lapwing *Vanellus coronatus*

1 at Highacres Dam, 3 at Big Shumba Pan and 11 at Shumba pumped pan.

African Wattled Lapwing *Vanellus senegallus*

1-12 (av. 5.2) at 6 sites, the 12 from Rakodzi Farm Dam.

Greater Painted-snipe *Rostratula benghalensis*

2 each at Clifton farm dam and Eiffel Flats Sewage Ponds, all in the Kadoma area.

African Jacana *Actophilornis africanus*

One of the more widespread species found at 22 sites. Numbers ranged from 1-20 (av. 7.5) at 20 sites, with 77 (April) and 88 (January) at Clifton farm dam and 100 at Aberdeen Farm. 2 were at both Marlborough Vlei counts.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

From 2-61 (av. 22.9) at 7 sites. High numbers of 59 and 61 were from Kadoma Textiles Dye Ponds and Mandavu Dam.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

Low numbers with 1-2 at 5 sites.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

1-30 (av. 7.9) at 15 sites. Two counts at Marlborough Vlei were of 11 & 20 birds, and the high of 30 came from Kadoma Textiles Dye Ponds.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*

Low counts of 1-5 with the 5 from Suni Pan.

Grey-headed Gull *Larus cirrocephalus*

Only from the Manyame lakes with 3 at Aberdeen Farm and 50 at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary.

Accipitriformes (Pandionidae-Accipitridae) osprey, kites, hawks, eagles

Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus*

One each at Aberdeen Farm, Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary and Crowborough Farm.

African Fish-eagle *Haliaeetus vocifer*

1-6 (av. 2.3) with highest counts of 5 and 6 from Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary and Aberdeen Farm.

Coraciiformes (Meropidae-Alcedinidae) bee-eaters, kingfishers

White-fronted Bee-eater *Merops bullockoides*

4 at Chinga Pan and 5 at Highacres Dam.

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*

2 and 6 at Suni Pan and Gletwyn Dam, and 20 each at Mazvikadei Ponds and Monavale Vlei.

Little Bee-eater *Merops pusillus*

1-8 (av. 4) with the 8 from Gletwyn Dam.

Malachite Kingfisher *Corythornis cristatus*

1-4 (av. 1.8) at 6 sites with a high 4 at Mazvikadei Ponds.

Giant Kingfisher *Megaceryle maxima*

1-4 (av. 2) at 4 sites, the 4 from Hippo Pools camp.

Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis*

1-6 birds (av. 2.1), most counts 1-3 with 6 each from Hippo Pools camp and Mazvikadei Ponds.

Woodland Kingfisher *Halcyon senegalensis*

3 each at Chinga Pan and Suni Pan.

Cisticolas and allies (Cisticolidae)

Red-faced Cisticola *Cisticola erythrops*

3-6 at 4 sites, the high counts from Mazvikadei Ponds and Monavale Vlei.

Rattling Cisticola *Cisticola chiniana*

2-4 at 5 sites.

Croaking Cisticola *Cisticola natalensis*

Summer: 1-4 plus 10 at Monavale Vlei.

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis*

1 each at Eiffel Flats Sewage Ponds and Kadoma Textiles Dye Ponds, and 5 at Monavale Vlei.

Tawny-flanked Prinia *Prinia subflava*

Possibly undercounted, singles and 2 at 3 sites.

Reed-warblers (Acrocephalidae)

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

5 at Eiffel Flats Sewage Ponds and 12 at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary.

Lesser Swamp-warbler *Acrocephalus gracilirostris*

2-13 (av. 5.5) from 6 sites. The high count was from Mazvikadei Ponds.

Great Reed-warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*

1 each at Aberdeen Farm, Mazvikadei Ponds and Monavale Vlei.

Grasshopper-warblers and Grassbirds (Locustellidae)

Little Rush-warbler *Bradypterus baboecala*

1-4 (av. 2.3) from 6 sites.

Swallows and Martins (Hirundinidae)

Wire-tailed Swallow *Hirundo smithii*

1-5 at Monavale Vlei, Mazvikadei Ponds and Gletwyn Dam.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

2 at Monavale Vlei and some 100 at Crowborough Farm.

Weavers (Ploceidae)

Thick-billed Weaver *Amblyospiza albifrons*

2 at Gletwyn Dam, 8 at Monavale Vlei and 10 at Mazvikadei Ponds.

Southern Red Bishop *Euplectes orix*

The counts of low numbers in the Euplectes spp. below probably reflect the visible males, with variable effort to count females.

From 3-44, though some under counting is likely, especially of females. Mazvikadei Ponds had 36 and Monavale Vlei had 44.

Red-collared Widowbird *Euplectes ardens*

3 at Gletwyn Dam and 21 at Monavale Vlei.

Yellow Bishop *Euplectes capensis*

2 each at Gletwyn Dam and Monavale Vlei.

Southern Masked-weaver *Ploceus velatus*

3 at Monavale Vlei and 4 at Mazvikadei Ponds.

Village Weaver *Ploceus cucullatus*

80 at Kadoma Textiles Dye Ponds and 93 at Mazvikadei Ponds.



Waxbills (Estrildidae)

Common Waxbill *Estrilda astrild*

4-23 at 4 sites with the high count of 23 from Monavale Vlei.

Orange-breasted Waxbill *Amandava subflava*

3 at Monavale Vlei and 100 at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary.

Pipits and Wagtails (Motacillidae)

Yellow-throated Longclaw *Macronyx croceus*
1-2 at 4 sites.

African Pied Wagtail *Motacilla aguimp*
1-4 at 4 sites plus 8 at Hippo Pools camp.

Rosy-throated Longclaw *Macronyx ameliae*
1 at Aberdeen Farm and 2 each at Crowborough
Farm and Monavale Vlei.

Finches (Fringillidae)

Yellow-fronted Canary *Crithagra mozambica*
1 at Eiffel Flats Sewage Ponds and 6 at Kadoma Textiles Dye Ponds.

Table 1. Sites covered in summer 2019 showing Month (number) and number of counts in brackets (if >1 in same month). Water status: D=dry, O=over-flooded. Coverage of Ramsar sites and sites within their confines are highlighted.

Site name	District	Summer	Water
Aberdeen Farm (Hideaway)	Zvimba	1	
Ballantyne Park South	Harare	2	D
Big Shumba Pan	Hwange	1	D
Biri Dam	Makonde	2	
Biri Dam Fishing Site	Makonde	2	
Camp Hwange	Hwange	1	
Chinga Pan, Sango Ranch, Save Valley Conservancy	Bikita	2	
Chitampa Dam	Matopos	1	D
Clifton farm dam	Chegutu	1, 4	O (Apr)
Country Club Golf course	Harare	1	
Crowborough Farm	Harare	1	O
Dwarf Goose Pan	Hwange	1	D
Eiffel Flats Sewage Ponds	Kadoma	1	
Gletwyn Dam	Harare	1	
Highacres Dam, Esigodini	Insiza	2	
Hippo Pools camp	Shamva	1	
Kadoma Textiles Dye Ponds	Kadoma	2	
Knoll Farm Dam	Goromonzi	1	
Kriedermann's Dam	Bulawayo	1	
Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary	Zvimba	1	
Madingazulu Dam	Matopos	1	D
Maleme Dam	Matopos	1	
Mandalay Dam	Kadoma	2	
Mandavu Dam	Hwange	1	
Marlborough Vlei (ponds only)	Harare	1, 2	
Masuma Pan/Dam	Hwange	1	
Mazvikadei Ponds	Zvimba	1	
Mesilume Dam	Matopos	1	
Monavale Vlei	Harare	1	
Mpopoma Dam	Matopos	1	
Nswatugi Dam	Matopos	1	D
Rakodzi Farm Dam	Marondera	2	
Reedbuck Vlei	Hwange	1	D
Sandy Spruit dam	Matopos	1	
Shumba Pans	Hwange	1	D
Shumba pumped pan	Hwange	1	

Site name	District	Summer	Water
Suni Pan, Sango Ranch, Save Valley Conservancy	Bikita	2	
Whitewaters Dam	Matopos	1	D

Table 2. Species totals, including recounts, in the summer season of 2019. The number of sites (including sub-sites) in brackets. Single site records, not mentioned above, are given here.

Species	Summer	Single site
White-faced Duck	289 (20)	
White-backed Duck	423 (4)	
Egyptian Goose	271 (16)	
Spur-winged Goose	43 (7)	
African Comb Duck	124 (11)	
African Pygmy-goose	73 (5)	
Southern Pochard	263 (3)	
Hottentot Teal	28 (5)	
African Black Duck	7 (2)	
Red-billed Teal	281 (17)	
Little Grebe	17 (6)	
Senegal Coucal	5 (3)	
Coucal, unidentified	2 (1)	Mazvikadei Ponds
Black Coucal	2 (1)	Monavale Vlei
Diderick Cuckoo	6 (3)	
White-rumped Swift	3 (1)	Mazvikadei Ponds
African Finfoot	2 (1)	Hippo Pools camp
Streaky-breasted Flufftail	1 (1)	Monavale Vlei
African Rail	1 (1)	Aberdeen Farm (Hideaway)
African Crake	1 (1)	Masuma Pan/Dam, Hwange
Spotted Crake	1 (1)	Ballantyne Park South
Black Crake	82 (14)	
African Purple Swamphen	32 (4)	
Allen's Gallinule	5 (1)	Clifton farm dam
Common Moorhen	216 (14)	
Lesser Moorhen	51 (6)	
Red-knobbed Coot	327 (4)	
Grey Crowned Crane	7 (3)	
Yellow-billed Stork	5 (1)	Mandavu Dam
African Openbill	79 (2)	
Black Stork	2 (1)	Hippo Pools camp
Abdim's Stork	165 (6)	
White Stork	9 (3)	
African Spoonbill	20 (4)	
African Sacred Ibis	87 (9)	
Hadedda Ibis	18 (2)	
Glossy Ibis	26 (4)	
Little Bittern	1 (1)	Gletwyn Dam
Dwarf Bittern	3 (2)	
White-backed Night-heron	3 (1)	Hippo Pools camp
Black-crowned Night-heron	11 (2)	
Green-backed Heron	20 (8)	
Squacco Heron	47 (11)	
Cattle Egret	296 (12)	
Grey Heron	42 (15)	
Black-headed Heron	52 (14)	
Goliath Heron	3 (2)	
Purple Heron	14 (8)	
Great Egret	23 (8)	

Species	Summer	Single site
Yellow-billed Egret	20 (3)	
Black Heron	9 (2)	
Little Egret	45 (7)	
Hamerkop	26 (11)	
Reed Cormorant	70 (12)	
White-breasted Cormorant	192 (7)	
African Darter	4 (4)	
Water Thick-knee	21 (4)	
Pied Avocet	1 (1)	Marlborough Vlei
Black-winged Stilt	219 (10)	
Kittlitz's Plover	9 (2)	
Three-banded Plover	50 (11)	
White-fronted Plover	4 (2)	
Long-toed Lapwing	1 (1)	Aberdeen Farm (Hideaway)
Blacksmith Lapwing	265 (20)	
Crowned Lapwing	15 (3)	
African Wattled Lapwing	31 (6)	
Greater Painted-snipe	4 (2)	
African Jacana	422 (22)	
Lesser Jacana	2 (1)	Aberdeen Farm (Hideaway)
Ruff	160 (7)	
Common Sandpiper	7 (5)	
Common Greenshank	1 (1)	Shumba pumped pan
Wood Sandpiper	126 (15)	
Marsh Sandpiper	11 (4)	
Temminck's Courser	4 (1)	Shumba pumped pan
Collared Pratincole	46 (1)	Mandavu Dam
African Skimmer	5 (1)	Mandavu Dam
Grey-headed Gull	53 (2)	
White-winged Tern	2 (1)	Mandavu Dam
Marsh Owl	1 (1)	Monavale vlei
Osprey	1 (1)	Mandavu Dam
Black-shouldered Kite	3 (3)	
Black-chested Snake-eagle	1 (1)	Eiffel Flats Sewage Ponds
African Marsh-harrier	1 (1)	Aberdeen Farm (Hideaway)
African Fish-eagle	21 (9)	
Yellow-billed Kite	1 (1)	Highacres Dam
White-fronted Bee-eater	9 (2)	
Southern Carmine Bee-eater	4 (1)	Highacres Dam
European Bee-eater	48 (4)	
Little Bee-eater	20 (5)	
Malachite Kingfisher	11 (6)	
Half-collared Kingfisher	1 (1)	Hippo Pools camp
Giant Kingfisher	8 (4)	
Pied Kingfisher	31 (15)	
Brown-hooded Kingfisher	1 (1)	Mazvikadei Ponds
Striped Kingfisher	1 (1)	Biri Dam
Woodland Kingfisher	6 (2)	
Red-faced Cisticola	19 (4)	
Rattling Cisticola	13 (5)	
Levaillant's Cisticola	3 (1)	Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary
Croaking Cisticola	8 (1)	Monavale Vlei
Zitting Cisticola	7 (3)	
Pale-crowned Cisticola	1 (1)	Monavale Vlei
Tawny-flanked Prinia	4 (3)	
Dark-capped Yellow Warbler	1 (1)	Monavale Vlei
Sedge Warbler	17 (2)	
African Reed-warbler	1 (1)	Monavale Vlei

Species	Summer	Single site
Lesser Swamp-warbler	33 (6)	
Great Reed-warbler	3 (3)	
Little Rush-warbler	14 (6)	
Red-breasted Swallow	1 (1)	Monavale Vlei
White-throated Swallow	4 (1)	Crowborough Farm
Wire-tailed Swallow	8 (3)	
Barn Swallow	102 (2)	
African Stonechat	2 (1)	Gletwyn Dam
Thick-billed Weaver	20 (3)	
Southern Red Bishop	160 (7)	
Red-collared Widowbird	24 (2)	
Yellow Bishop	4 (2)	
Yellow-mantled Widowbird	21 (1)	Monavale Vlei
White-winged Widowbird	18 (1)	Eiffel Flats Sewage Ponds
Spectacled Weaver	4 (1)	Mazvikadei Ponds
Southern Masked-weaver	7 (2)	
Village Weaver	173 (2)	
Common Waxbill	47 (4)	
Orange-breasted Waxbill	103 (2)	
Bronze Mannikin	8 (1)	Monavale Vlei
Red-backed Mannikin	3 (1)	Gletwyn Dam
Pin-tailed Whydah	5 (1)	Monavale Vlei
Cuckoo Finch	1 (1)	Monavale Vlei
Yellow-throated Longclaw	6 (4)	
Rosy-throated Longclaw	5 (3)	
African Pied Wagtail	17 (5)	
Yellow-fronted Canary	7 (2)	
Brimstone Canary	1 (1)	Monavale Vlei

Participants

T Alegria, D Allison, J Ball, P.A. Banks, P.E. Banks, Jenny Brebner, John Brebner, G Calvert, R Chirimuta, A Cooper, D Dell, P Dell, J Delorie, R Dennison, A Jeke, L King, M Langton, K Learmonth, H Lewis, Stephen Long, Sue Long, I Louw, A Masterson, H Matthews, J Matthews, J Milne, J Muropa, T Ndadziira, R Paice, M Parrock, C Pierini, J Pierini, M Piki, A Randell, B Randell, I Riddell, S Stone, T Tarakini, Mark & one other of US Embassy, J Varden, D Wakeling, D Wiggins, P Wiggins, S Wood, Moses, Shelter.

Branch News

Mashonaland

Branch visit to Mzuri Sana Farm, Goromonzi, Sunday 24th March 2019

If you have ever eaten a blueberry or a pepperdew/cherry pepper in South Africa, Holland, Germany or from Waitrose or Tesco in the UK it probably came from this impressive, ultramodern, computer-controlled farm. And what is more there are also at least 109 species of bird on the property as 25 BLZ members discovered.

After a rather late arrival due to the failure of our guides to measure 4km, we were warmly welcomed at the squash court with tea and coffee by our hosts, Clive and Sue Moore-Gordon. The resident Spotted Eagle-owl pair was also present in the garden *Acacia sieberiana* and seen by the more attentive of us before they silently flying over the fence into the woodland. Our visit began with a wander through the mainly secondary growth miombo woodland adjoining the farmhouse, the party soon splintering off in various directions. This was rather quiet apart from the usual barbets, waxbill, bulbul, sunbird, etc., but brightened by the many *Spermacoce* and butterflies under the trees.



One splinter of our party followed the ruckus of bird calls to find Black-headed Orioles, an African Golden Oriole, Fork-tailed Drongos, African Grey Hornbills, Black-backed Puffbacks, Black Cuckooshrike, Cardinal Woodpecker, and others, cussing at one of the eagle-owls.



A Steppe Buzzard circled overhead and African Fish-eagle and Jameson's Firefinch were heard in the understorey. Further to the west along the fence, a scolding group of Lazy Cisticolas were in a jungle of thick grass and Mexican sunflowers *Tithonia rotundifolia* adjacent to some staff housing, instead of in the rocks where they should have been!



We emerged from the woodland into huge fields of young blueberries and ripe pepperdews. The most interesting species flying above the plants or sitting on the poles supporting them were both Purple Widowfinch and Steel-blue Widowfinch and their hosts, Jameson's and Red-billed Firefinch, but there were also Yellow-fronted Canary and Black-throated Canary, Pin-tailed Whydah and Streaky-headed Seedeater. A Spotted Flycatcher sallied forth now and again from a small acacia, unconcerned with our presence.

At 10 a.m. we found ourselves back again at a second assault on the tea and coffee at the squash court where we listened in awe to details

of the farming methods employed to produce the fruit. Although there is much automation, 1,300 workers are needed to complete the operation as well as a few 100,000 bees when pollination time comes round. Fascinating stuff.



From the farm we then drove to the dam and the wetland Clive was developing. Here we found African Wattled Lapwing and Blacksmith Lapwing, Malachite Kingfisher, Wood Sandpiper, Croaking Cisticola, Levillant's Cisticola, Zitting Cisticola and Rattling Cisticola, Orange-breasted Waxbill and a Cinnamon-breasted Bunting. Along with the bunting, and seemingly out-of-habitat, was a noisy party of Green-capped Eremomelas in an isolated stand of small gums surrounded by grass and fields. African Palm-swift, Wire-tailed Swallow and Barn Swallows, along with Common House-martins, hawked insects over the water. A few Amur Falcons dotted the powerlines on the far side of the dam and a pair of Lanner Falcons

sallied high over the water, and even higher still, almost invisible under the lofty clouds, a solitary White Stork drifted over. In the dry grass adjacent to an inlet a gorgeous Swynnerton's Reed-frog clambered out of the way of the oblivious passers-by. In addition, a few late leaving Abdim's Stork, European Bee-eater and an African Paradise-flycatcher were recorded.

The count was a rather hurried last-minute affair off the vleis and we were all pleasantly surprised to find 109 species had been positively identified.



Grateful thanks to our hosts and apologies that many of us had to leave without expressing our gratitude for an excellent and educational morning.

Ken Dixon & Ian Riddell

HARARE BOTANIC GARDEN, Bird walk – Saturday 9 March 2019

The 9th of March 2019, was a regular Saturday Bird walk in Harare Botanic Garden. As a first time birder, filled with great passion and interest, I was very keen to know how birds are identified and named and also craved to broaden my knowledge on bird names.

Harare Botanic Garden is situated about 4 km north of the City Centre, off Sandringham Drive next to the National Park offices. The garden boasts approximately 215 recorded bird species. As we drove along 5th Street passed Alexandra Park, we were welcomed by a flock of Abdim's Storks, slackly waving their stretched necks as we passed by. These were spotted again later on flying past the National Botanic Garden in search of their prey, I guess!

It was a calm and pleasant morning with a few clouds scattered across the sky in the east as we stood in the car park waiting for others. Glorious sounds and majestic songs of Dark-capped Bulbul and Variable Sunbirds could be

heard from the nearby thickets and Miombo woodlands. Of greater interest, filtering through a thicket behind the car park is a neglected pond, which seemingly used to be a haven for water birds. The pond is said to have leaked and dried up years back. However, despite some traits of neglect and lack of maintenance, the Botanic Garden is still a wonderful amenity and a pleasure that cheers even a depressed soul through enjoying bird watching, twisted tree shapes and the fragrance of the summer grasses.

Satisfied by the attendance and having exchanged pleasantries, we divided into sub-groups and set off in different directions. My group's attention was first attracted by an assortment of sunbirds – Variable Sunbird, Miombo Double-collared Sunbird and Amethyst Sunbird – feeding from an array of beautiful Mexican Marigold flowers that have taken advantage of the derelict pond. As a newcomer, I was gripped with impatience as my fellow

group members could easily identify and name birds.

There were plenty of birds in certain spots of the garden. In the nearby Miombo we found Willow Warbler, Fork-tailed Drongo, Brubru, Whyte's Barbet, Streaky-headed Seedeater, Common Waxbill, Jameson's Firefinch, Yellow-fronted Canary, Spectacled Weavers, Cardinal Woodpecker and lots of Southern Masked-weavers. A dense thicket at the foot of the reservoir was another haven for a variety of birds which heightened the fascination of the adventurous walk. Tawny-flanked Prinia, African Fish-eagle, Red-eyed Doves, Crested

Barbet, Tambourine Dove, Purple-crested Turaco, among others, could be seen or heard going ahead with their daily activities.

The tour was worthwhile and to everyone's surprise a walk that had been scheduled to last for 2 hours lasted for more than had been anticipated as members greatly enjoyed the adventure. The sun had journeyed miles through the sky and with facial expressions craving for incessant adventures in the garden, we gathered in the car park again for the listing. The outcome was remarkable; a total of 63 bird species were recorded in two and half hours.

Shingirai Sakarombe

Visit to National Parks Resort at LAKE MANYAME, QDS 1730D3, Saturday, 30/3/19

The last time I visited the National Parks camping ground and boat-launching site near the dam wall at Lake Manyame was about 25 years ago and on that occasion I saw my first White-throated Robin-chat. So I was interested to see how the place had changed when Jourdan Delorie and I went there on Saturday, 30/3/19. The first thing I noticed was that the forest was much bigger and there was plenty of bird activity in the camping ground. We also saw where National Parks had been burning confiscated fishing nets from fish poachers and the previous weekend Jourdan did not see any nets at the bottom end of the dam while bass fishing.

The first birds we saw were Scarlet-chested Sunbird and moving on we found a flowering tree that was with which Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird, Ashy Flycatcher, Chin-spot Batis and African Yellow White-eye were associated. Later we heard Yellow-breasted Apalis and found a family group of 5 Ashy Flycatchers. An acacia tree attracted several species of birds including Grey Penduline-tit, Willow Warbler, Long-billed Crombec, Grey-backed Camaroptera, Tropical Boubou, Orange-breasted Bush-shrike and Black-backed Puffback.

Moving on we encountered a flock of Retz's Helmet-shrike and saw our first Stierling's Wren-warbler. While still in the camping area close to the water's edge we found a bird party

that included several Southern Black Tits, Miombo Tits, Cardinal Woodpecker, Black Cuckooshrike and Spectacled Weaver. For Jourdan the Miombo Tit and Stierling's Wren-warbler were lifers and he was keen to get photos of them so we spent the next hour or so following this bird party to try to get these photos. In doing so we added a Familiar Chat and heard White-throated Robin-chat and White-browed Scrub-robin.

We then drove about 2km up a hill to the 2 lodges with a grand vista of the lake. Here we found a White-crested Helmet-shrike with another flock of Retz's Helmet-shrike. There is a lot of miombo woodland to explore in the area by simply walking along the roads and we only covered a small part of it.

We were impressed by the high counts of 6 Yellow-fronted Tinkerbirds, 10 Willow Warblers, 4 Long-billed Crombecs, 4 Stierling's Wren-warblers, 6 Chin-spot Batis and 16 Retz's Helmet-shrikes. I recommend this venue as an option for a BLZ outing.

On the journey in from Norton and continuing on towards Darwendale Village on the way home, in the same QDS, we found Amur Falcon, Namaqua Dove, Barn Swallow and Red-backed Shrike. Our species count within the Parks Resort was 39 and we added another 16 in the QDS outside the resort.

Richard Dennison



Crowborough Farm, Harare, Saturday 11th May 2019

A small party of 11 birders partook, and interestingly only 3 members had been to this particular sight previously. The last 4 km of broken road to this farm is atrocious, with maize fields either side, piles of refuse and general decay. Near the entrance three dogs were harassing two cattle.

Once 'on the property' the road runs through the centre, fenced on either side. Being of sandveld the driving surface was in reasonable shape. The cattle kraals still held a large herd, packed like bellowing sardines, until after 8 a.m. Who was more relieved when the poor beasts were finally released to graze, them or us...?

First stop was at the two overnight storage dams that were dry (nearly 2 years now, the pipes feeding them being 'blocked'). A pair of Rufous-naped Larks and 3 Red-capped Larks were seen there, but no Capped Wheatears yet.

The fields to the west were generally drier, compared to those on the eastern side, where sewage water was flowing in 'channels' until it burst free to spread over a fair area, ideal for waders - they had all departed northwards, except for various intrepid bird-waders who ended up with distastefully soggy shoes and socks! But at least good views were had of the birds and Magpie Shrikes called from the trees. Quite astounding, for anyone who had been here in years gone by, was the vistas beyond the fields - what used to be woodlands and bush replaced by chock-a-block development!

Flocks of Cattle Egrets (c.125), African Sacred Ibis (c.150) and Egyptian Goose (c.50) were seen

in small numbers but scattered all over the farm as the 'water-food nutrients' dissipated. Someone spotted Kittlitz's Plover there, and we soon noticed in excess 20 scurrying about.



We saw Blacksmith Lapwings, African Wattled Lapwings and about +6 Crowned Lapwings, the latter quite separate from the other two species on the drier western side of the road to the compound. Here the group split, some walking through the fields to view a small pan to see what was of interest whilst others explored the acacias.

The third group drove to the Crowborough water works, but entry was forbidden and they could only walk around the perimeter with an employee. Of interest here was 8 Marabou Storks, one definitely a sub adult.



The 'acacia groups' came across many sunbirds, the best being a Marico Sunbird

feeding on acacia gum, Green-backed Honeybird, Speckled Mousebird and Brimstone Canary. A Barn Swallow was suspected, and Wire-tailed Swallows, Grey-rumped Swallows and Brown-throated Martins were also seen. No longclaws were to be seen! Some 50 species were recorded, an ideal location for a quick, leisurely Saturday morning bird outing.

Innes Louw & Ian Riddell

Matabeleland

A bit of birding in Matobo National Park – 24 February 2019

Hoping to restore some sanity and dispel the gloom, we took a quick trip out to Matopos one Sunday morning and, as we weren't dashing around checking Verreaux's Eagle nests, we would have more time to see what other birds were about for a change. We also wanted to check on some of the small dams we visited in January during the waterfowl count to see if they had caught any water since the last bit of rain. Sadly, they hadn't!

As we were driving into the Whovi, the game park side, two very handsome young waterbuck crossed the road in front of us, and as they turned to stare at us briefly before making off, they disturbed a cloud of small birds in the long grass. Definitely not behaving like Red-billed Quelea but too far off to identify. A group of Red-winged Starlings gathered on a great granite boulder as a surprisingly large flock of Violet-backed Starlings flew along the road.

Chitamba was the first dam and although it seemed it had caught an inch or two, inflow hadn't been significant. Two Blacksmith Lapwings and four Egyptian Goose that we suspected were the same birds counted when we were there in January, were hugging the shoreline. While watching the pod of hippo cavorting in the little water available, an African Fish-eagle flew in to perch on a rock near the water's edge, its haunting cry echoing around the kopjes making it sound like more than one. We managed to pick up three Water Thick-knees camouflaged amongst the stones by the wall and a Wood Sandpiper, in the company of a Common Greenshank, was on the far side. The Greenshank was having a great time fishing, behaving in the manner of a spoonbill while

dashing along in the shallows, its bill in the water, spooning back and forth before swinging around and starting back the way it had come.

After passing a couple of giraffe, heads sticking out of the top of the bushes, and noting a Brown Snake-eagle atop a high boulder, we stopped briefly at the entrance gate to check out a gnarled, old fig tree where a Red-eyed Dove was feeding on ripe fruit. Also fossicking around were two Streaky-headed Seedeaters and a few African Yellow White-eyes. An Orange-breasted Bush-shrike was calling somewhere and as a Black-collared Barbet started firing up, an Emerald-spotted Wood-dove added its melancholy call to the mix.

While crossing a small, dry stream on the way to Mesilume, another flock of Violet-backed Starlings gathered on a bush with a Black-headed Oriole, its bright yellow plumage and coral beak stunning in the sunlight, and several European Bee-eaters flew about or adorned various bushes. We had our breakfast in the company of a Spotted Flycatcher, hawking insects close to our picnic spot as we watched an African Fish-eagle, perched in a tall tree on the opposite side of the dam, motionlessly glaring down into the water. It was quite unperturbed by the Grey Go-away-bird sitting higher up shouting at it. A Pied Kingfisher tentatively perched on the top of tall reeds before taking off to hover and try its luck at fishing. The raucous clatter of a Natal Spurfowl echoed back from the kopje in front of us, again, making it sound as if there was more than one of its kind calling. Before carrying on, we stopped off at the bottom of the dam where four elderly local fisherwomen were trying their luck. It was nice

to see several other waterbirds there, quite unconcerned with the chatter and disturbance. A very handsome Comb Duck drake swanned about showing off in front of three lady friends while three Black Crakes dashed in and out of the reeds picking up morsels on the lily pads. Two White-faced Ducks kept popping their muddy heads up through the reeds on one side, two White-winged Widowbirds landed briefly in the reeds and three African Jacanas sauntered about the lily pads too.

Leaving behind a Rufous-naped Lark's endless call along with a couple of Zitting Cisticolas "zitting" above the tall grass in the Nswatugi vlei, a Black-backed Puffback followed us through the gorge, chatting all the way as we made our way to Madingazulu, which in January was a muddy puddle and now completely dry. Before getting to Maleme, a Gabar Goshawk flew past the car and a Steel-blue Widowfinch shouted from the top of a dead tree. Several Blue Waxbills and Yellow-fronted Canary fossicked along the edges of the road. There was nothing to report at Maleme except for one Pied Kingfisher and one Blacksmith's Lapwing - again, we suspect, probably the same ones counted in January!

On then to our final stop, we paused along the way to note a magnificent pair of Verreaux's Eagles, perched on a high point, majestically glaring around, surveying their domain. A little further on, slowing down to allow a dainty klipspringer to complete its dash along the narrow tar before disappearing into a rocky outcrop, a Black-shouldered Kite swooped low over the car to hover in the vlei to our left. Arriving at Sandyspruit, a boisterous bunch of

Vervet monkeys greeted us, having just been chased off by a family of campers that they'd obviously been harassing. Sadly, we didn't see any African Pygmy-goose this time and only twelve White-backed Ducks, one Comb Duck drake, six African Jacanas and a couple of Black Crakes. A Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird "tinked" continuously despite there only being a solitary small cloud in the sky and a Chin-spot Batis and a Black-crowned Tchagra joined in too. Having just commented to each other that it had been quite a while since we'd last noted an African Hawk-eagle, there was one flying above the dam! As we left the dam, over a narrow bridge with tall reeds on both sides, Yellow Bishops, Common House-martins and Barn Swallows flew about as an African Grey Hornbill mewed overhead and a Pin-tailed Whydah male with two lady whydahs perched on a broken down fence line.

Surprisingly, we didn't get to see one Yellow-billed Kite, which usually frequent both Sandyspruit and Maleme, that we almost always, at this time of the year, see swanning along the road on our way to or from the park. They must have got fed up waiting for the rains and left already. Other birds seen or heard were Pied Crow, Dark-capped Bulbuls, Yellow-bellied Greenbul, Laughing Doves, Cape Turtle-dove, Fork-tailed Drongo, Rattling Cisticolas, Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill, Tawny-flanked Prinia, Southern Black Tits and Arrow-marked Babbler (56 species.)

John and Jenny Brebner

Outing to Greyville stables, 23rd March 2019 - -20.235500, 28.609833

Text and photos by **John and Jenny Brebner**

A rather blustery morning out at the Greyville stables greeted 12 birders. An early arrival was waiting at the gate observing a Southern Grey-headed Sparrow seemingly feeding young down the hole in one of the gate posts, out of which had also emerged a Cut-throat Finch! On the way down to park the vehicles by the dam, there was much activity at one of several White-browed Sparrow-weaver colonies - a male bringing in long stems of grass

as a female within the nest was busily crafting the entrance. A Black-collared Barbet and a Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird were tuning up as the grinding croak of a Croaking Cisticola came from some long grass near the stables. Several Cape Turtle-doves and Laughing Doves flew about and a Lilac-breasted Roller was perched on one of the horse-jump poles, flying down every now and again to nab something on the ground while displaying its gorgeous plumage.



Across the dam, a Reed Cormorant was drying out on an old stump while a Pied Kingfisher, perched on the end of a thorn bush leaning over the water, gazed motionlessly into the water below. Two Common Moorhens and a couple of Little Grebes swanned along the edge of a tall reedbed and later a White-backed Duck emerged briefly to be added to the list. Several Southern Red Bishops were about balancing in the waving reeds, with the exception of one of them perched high in a thorn tree, his magnificent red-orange brilliant in the sunlight breaking through the scudding clouds. Two pairs of African Wattled Lapwings noisily made their presence known as they flew in to land near the water. An African Jacana was striding amongst the lily pads.

A Spotted Flycatcher was busy flitting about the acacias where two Willow Warblers were

eventually identified as they, too, flitted agilely amongst the thorny branches and an African Paradise-flycatcher couple kept a close eye on their youngster who didn't seem too perturbed at the birders trying to take photos of it. Wire tailed Swallows and Little Swifts flew overhead and a bit later a Lesser Striped Swallow was spotted. A Brown-hooded Kingfisher, heard calling earlier, obligingly sat for ages for a photo shoot. An elusive Brubru was "pruiting" close by and also heard calling was a Black-headed Oriole and a Kurrichane Thrush.



A Red-eyed Dove was sipping water from a pool below the dam wall as the Reed Cormorant set off on a fish hunt. Arrow-marked Babbler chattered away and a Yellow-bellied Greenbul grumbled somewhere nearby. A few members of the party were surprised and delighted at the sudden appearance of a Black-chested Snake-

eagle as it dived into the long grass only a few yards ahead of them, where it picked up what looked like a small snake, devouring it in no time before taking to the air again. The other birders had great sightings of the same magnificent bird as it continued its hunt over the area. Near the stables on another thorny bush a Red-backed Shrike was happily preening itself while a noisy Grey Go-away-bird made an entrance and a Chin-spot Batis was added to the list. As the party moved on to a private home in Munda Drive for tea, just a few hundred metres away round the corner from the stables property, a Cattle Egret was noted sauntering amongst the horses in one of the paddocks and a bunch of Bronze Mannikins flew out of the long grass along the road. A Dark-capped Bulbul

was eventually spotted and a few European Bee-eaters flew overhead. A House Sparrow perched on the house roof and a Grey-backed Camaroptera joined the list. Also seen or heard were Black-backed Puffback, Pied Crow, Hamerkop, Crested Barbet, Marico Flycatcher, Grey-rumped Swallow, Rattling Cisticola (47 species). Several more birds could have been added but we realised it was just the two Grey Parrots on the verandah having a chat!

Many thanks to Kitty of Greyville, Cheryl and Clare for organising the venue and the Nels for hosting the impromptu tea break. And of course, to all those who turned up!

John and Jenny Brebner

Birding part of the Bulawayo Golf Club Course, 7 April 2019

It was amazing doing a quick birding ramble and managing to find 65 species in about two hours while covering around a third of the Bulawayo Golf club course. Driving in to the club, a small flock of White-crested Helmet-shrikes flew into a fir tree and got the list going.

Setting off down the dirt road towards Winnie's Way, there has been some bush clearing but there was still much bustle of avian species flitting backwards and forwards. A Pied Crow appeared to be chasing after a Grey Heron that was languidly flapping off to its daily hunting grounds as Laughing Doves, Southern Grey-headed Sparrows and Cut-throat Finches flew down on to the verges to peck about. A noisy troop of Green Wood-hoopoes fossicked about in some of the remaining tall thorn trees, while on the other side of the road, a voracious bunch of around thirty Common Mynas stalked rapidly along the side of one of the golf greens disturbed by a Fork-tailed Drongo as it dropped down amongst them to pinch a morsel, and a Crested Barbet darted in and out of the party too, much to their consternation. Lots of White-browed Sparrow-weavers flew hither and yon, some obviously refurbishing nests as they flew by with long stems of dry grass trailing behind them and others sat about noisily chatting. A Lesser Grey Shrike perched on the fence, its breast blindingly white in the sun and a few Scaly-feathered Finches took their turn on the wire too – a bird that used to be so common and now is sometimes difficult to find. Before crossing Winnie's Way to continue on the course, a Chin-spot Batis, Greater Blue-eared

Starlings, Dark-capped Bultuls, a Tawny-flanked Prinia and a Grey-backed Camaroptera were added to the list.

It seemed pretty quiet on the other side to start off with until the chill wind let up suddenly and the sun came out – then everything seemed to get going again! We could hear a Swainson's Spurfowl shouting from the donkey sanctuary, Magpie Shrikes yodelled, an Orange-breasted Bush-shrike called and a Black-crowned Tchagra could be heard. The thorn scrub along the side of the fence yielded several avians – Black-throated Canary, Blue Waxbills, a lone Violet-eared Waxbill, a delightful little Brubru, Green-winged Pytilia, White-bellied Sunbird, as well as a surprising number of Marico Flycatchers. A Miombo Double-collared Sunbird was getting fed up with a lady Scarlet-chested Sunbird interfering with his patch of parasitic foliage. Dipping down onto a little bridge over a dried out stream bed, several shy Terrestrial Brownbuls were grumbling away in the undergrowth as we tried, unsuccessfully, to find another feathered body that was persistently calling. Emerging back into the open, a magnificent Black-chested Snake-eagle flew over to hover way above our heads, giving us a marvellous view of its underside and although the resident Wahlberg's Eagle had been seen earlier, we didn't get to see it on our walk. A Red-eyed Dove called from its perch in a fir tree, close to a Common Fiscal, below which sat a male Red-backed Shrike, perched on a tee box sign and a Black-backed Puffback fossicked around in a small duiker berry tree. It took us a

while to identify a female Bearded Woodpecker industriously hammering away before we entered a quiet bushed-in caddy track where several small bird parties flitted about. A flock of Bronze Mannikins with a few fluffy youngsters, demanding to be fed, intermingled with Blue Waxbills and Red-billed Firefinches while in another thornbush, an African Paradise-flycatcher played tag with a gorgeous Marico Sunbird. Secreted inside the bushed-up area we watched several Streaky-headed Seedeaters, delighting in a late breakfast as they busily plucked seeds out of the dead heads of the *Tithonia rotundifolia* flowers. An African Harrier-hawk flew out of a tree just ahead of us as we followed a Hamerkop flying in to land amongst the dry, rustling reeds, in what should be a picturesque water hazard on the course, but which is sadly fast drying out. In a small fenced off area we picked up two Acacia Pied Barbets fossicking around in a dead tree trunk - picking them up in almost the same place as several previous bird outings there. A motley Long-tailed Paradise-whydah, obviously in the process of losing its breeding plumage, kept harassing a couple of Laughing Doves by

bobbing aggressively above their heads as they tried to perch.

Back again across to the main part of the course, an African Hoopoe in the company of two Groundscraper Thrushes joined the list and so did the Southern Black Flycatcher - a pair seen looking after a youngster as they flitted about a thorn bush in front of us. A few Red-faced Mousebirds flew by and as we settled on a Qalisa verandah for a welcome cup of tea, a Yellow-bellied Greenbul together with a Tropical Boubou skulked in the shrubs near one birdbath as two Black-collared Barbets, heard several times earlier, perched at the top of a tall thorn tree. The Brown-hooded Kingfisher, often seen in the garden, popped down several times for a morsel and the ever-present White-browed Robin-chat made its presence known too. All in all, a delightful couple of hours.

Also seen or heard were Grey Go-away-bird, Arrow-marked Babbler, Yellow Bishop, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird, Little Swift, African Palm-swift, Golden Weaver, Red-winged Starling and Kurrichane Thrush.

Marina Jackson and Jenny Brebner



For Sale

Mark Shaw has a beautifully bound set of *Ostrich* covering the period 1959 to 1980. Please contact him with offers.

Mark Shaw SAS Security P/L, mobile 0772343485

Are you using the BLZ Mashonaland Calendar of Events on your smartphone?

On your Google account on your computer, click the Google Apps icon (9-dot square) and click **Calendar**. Under My calendars, on the left, tick the box for BLZ Mashonaland Calendar of Events, or try this [link](#).

On your phone go to your calendar – mine is called S Planner – and tap on *More* (yours might say something else but it is your calendar menu) and then *Manage calendars* or whatever yours says. Under Device, the phone, my Samsung has *My calendars* – make sure that is on/ticked, further down it has my Google account – turn on all relevant items and the BLZ Mashonaland Calendar of course. There may be a box/switch to sync your phone with your Google account and this must obviously be on.

Phones and their menus are different but hopefully you can work it out...

...and always have events easily available on your phone.

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Honeyguide production: vacant

BLZ MEMBERSHIP

BirdLife Zimbabwe's membership year is from April to March, but you can join any time.

Even if you don't attend meetings and outings, your membership is really important and supports our goal to protect biodiversity and conserve birds and their habitats through education, lobbying decision-makers and interaction with international organisations.

In addition, your involvement with data collection through atlassing and submission of records is invaluable. As a member you get the newsletter, *The Babbler*, every two months and two issues of *Honeyguide*, our internationally acclaimed journal, every membership year. All for a very reasonable annual fee.

Especially in these difficult economic times, donations towards any of our projects are always much appreciated and you may consider mentioning BLZ in your will!

Individual/Family members (incl. children under 17)	US\$ 25.00
Pensioners (65 & over), Students	15.00
Youth Club	5.00
Schools (high density)	25.00
Schools (private), Educational Institutions	50.00
Rest of Africa	40.00
Rest of World	50.00
Corporate members	*75.00

* If you would like recognition on our public forums, choose the \$200 Corporate Plan. To learn more about corporate sponsorship and BLZ projects, write to JuliaPierini@birdlifezimbabwe.org

Payment details. Please deposit into BirdLife Zimbabwe account at **NMB Bank, (Borrowdale Branch) Account No: 260092014** or BirdLife Zimbabwe Mashonaland Branch, CABS (Chisipite Branch) Account No: 1002399955 or **Ecocash** – Merchant Code No. **22084**. You can **also** pay your subscription online with **Paynow**. Look on the BLZ website on the membership page www.birdlifezimbabwe.org/joinus, and click on the Paynow tab at the bottom of the page. This is especially important for our members outside Zimbabwe. You could **also** come to our office at 35, Clyde Road, Eastlea in Harare.

Some members are not informing us when they pay their subscription and when members deposit into the banks, the name shown on the statement is often only the first name and therefore we may not know who you are.

Therefore, it is **ESSENTIAL** please that you advise us by e-mail of your transaction, or your payment will not be recorded. Please contact Sylvia sylvia@blz.co.zw or phone her on 024-2481496 for all membership-related issues – new, renewals, payments, change of details, queries.

And look on our Facebook page for great pictures and interesting birding news -

www.facebook.com/BirdLifeZimbabwe. You can find out about us and projects you as a member can get involved with, on our informative website www.birdlifezimbabwe.org

Branch Activities

Friends of the Vumba is a community initiative that employs 3 trained scouts to protect the wildlife – tracking for snares and arresting poachers of game, birds and wood. We also support an education outreach into the schools in the area, mostly focussed on birding but more recently extending into wider environmental issues such as WESSA's Water program, rubbish health awareness, alien tree harvesting and indigenous tree planting.

Directions to regular venues (Google Earth co-ordinates):

CABS Northridge Park -17.777494, 31.090782. From town drive along Borrowdale Road, turn right into Whitwell, next right into Ridgeway North, next right into Northend Road and first right into Northridge Close. Drive to the end of the road and go through a security boom into Northridge Park.

Marlborough Vlei -17.742715, 30.990416. Meet at the bottom of Princess Margaret Road, off Harare Drive and follow the road round to the left. Park on the short road midway along the bottom of Princess Margaret.

Mukuvisi Woodlands -17.851935, 31.092010. Turn off the Chiremba Road into Ford Road (opposite Queensdale shops) cross over Longford Avenue and bear left down to the T-junction on Blatherwick Road. Turn right and the gate is about 150 metres on the left. Bring a tip for the car guard. Don't forget refreshments for after the walk when we record the number of species. The **public car park** is off Hillside Road, -17.835393, 31.089111.

Prince Edward School car park -17.818721, 31.036462. Josiah Tongogara Ave.

Monavale Vlei -17.806770, 31.010579. From Quendon Road turn into Lyndhurst Road, at bottom follow right hand bend, take first left and second right to BS Leon roundabout. Second exit is Fenella Drive. Meet on Fenella Drive.

Haka Park -17.843391, 31.143369. From the traffic circle at the Mutare Road/Harare Drive intersection, continue 500m and turn left, follow the road (770m) to the Haka sign and boom on the left. If entering through the boom on Harare Drive (-17.828473, 31.140253; 1.9 km north of the circle) make your way to the meeting point. \$12 entrance fee for BLZ members, \$20 others.

Avondale Sports Club -17.785100, 31.041972. Brighton Road, Harare between Sam Nujoma Street Extension and Upper East Road. There is a cash bar and a security guard. A minimum charge of \$2 per person at the door please.

Mashonaland Branch

BirdLife Zimbabwe Mashonaland Calendar of Events: JUNE 2019

Saturday 1st	Marlborough Vlei walk	Meet at 07.00 a.m.
Sunday 2nd	Mukuvisi Woodlands walk	Meet at 07.00 a.m.
Saturday 8th	Greystone Park Nature Preserve Meet at the Preserve -17.746190, 31.127282	Meet at 07.00 a.m.
From Rolf Avenue/Harare Drive traffic circle, turn east onto Gaydon Road. After 2 km turn right into Halford Road and preserve is 200 m on left.		
Saturday 15th	National AGM Mukuvisi Woodlands	Meet at 09.00 a.m.
Sunday 16th	Monavale Vlei walk	Meet at 07.00 a.m.
Thursday 20th	The Distribution and Ecology of the African Crowned Eagle in Zimbabwe Presentation by Neil Deacon, Avondale Sports Club.	Meet 5.30 for 6.00 p.m.
Sunday 23rd	Ewanrigg Botanic Garden Meet at CABS, Northridge Close.	Meet at 07.00 a.m.

BirdLife Zimbabwe Mashonaland Calendar of Events: JULY 2019

Saturday 6th	Marlborough Vlei walk	Meet at 07.00 a.m.
Sunday 7th	Mukuvisi Woodlands walk	Meet at 07.00 a.m.
Saturday 13th	Umwinsidale – to be confirmed; update on Google Calendar Meet at CABS, Northridge Close.	Meet at 07.00 a.m.
Sunday 14th	Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary waterbird count Meet at Prince Edward School car park	Meet at 07.00 a.m.
Thursday 18th	To be advised; update on Google Calendar Presentation by Andrew Du Toit, Avondale Sports Club.	Meet 5.30 for 6.00 p.m.
Sunday 21st	Monavale Vlei walk Meet at Mukuvisi Woodlands car park.	Meet at 07.00 a.m.
Sunday 28th	Lake Manyame – Hideaway waterbird count Meet at Prince Edward School car park	Meet at 07.00 a.m.

For further information, please contact Innes Louw, innes.louw@ames.co.zw or hararebirdwalks@gmail.com 0776 190795

Other Areas

Mashonaland West – Margaret Parrock 068-22005 or 0773-263673

Eastern Districts – Second Saturday of every month **The Vumba Walk**. These vary from the Upper to Lower Vumba areas and occasionally may extend into Penhalonga, Burma Valley, and even Chimanimani. Many birding enthusiasts join us although it is not officially a birding walk. They are usually hosted by either a Vumba resident or a commercial venue such as Tony's Coffee Shop, Forest Hills Lodge, White Horse Inn or the Botanical Gardens and the walks will often traverse private properties not always accessible by the public. Contact Sue Fenwick 0779-408557 ingram.sue@gmail.com for more details.

Lowveld – contact Clive Stockil 0772-219204 or clive@chilogorge.com

*Please send contributions for The Babbler 149
Aug-Sept 2019 any time before the 15th July.*