

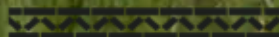
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The Babbler

December 2022/January 2023 No. 169



BirdLife
ZIMBABWE



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Partner In Zimbabwe*

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Recent Observations



Lesser Frigatebird by David Beadle

Lesser Frigatebird

No doubt the extraordinary sighting of a Lesser Frigatebird in Harare is going to be hard to beat. It was a female roosting in a gum tree in Chisipite on 5th October. Unfortunately, the next morning it had gone!

This is our first record of this species, there being two of the Greater Frigatebird – in November 1996 in the lowveld and August 2001 on Lake Kariba.

The weather had been clear but windy and we can assume these winds from Mozambique were strong enough to blow the bird inland.



Lesser Frigatebird by Piet Zwanikken



Birding Big Day (BBD) will take place on Saturday 3 December 2022. Below is the information one needs to participate (please read the instructions carefully).

- Select a Birding Big Team, you can have as many members as you like. However, only teams with 2-4 members will be considered for national records.
- Give your team a name – please limit the length of the name to 25 characters.
- Select the category your team will participate in, either the 50km or 6km radius area.
- On BBD, record all the bird species seen or heard during a 24-hour period from midnight on Friday 2 December to midnight on Saturday 3 December 2022. You can bird all 24 hours or just a few hours, up to you!
- You can record your list on paper, but we prefer that you use the BirdLasser mobile app. Email your excel or other list to gemsaf@mango.zw
- Only free-flying birds may be recorded (i.e. no caged birds).
- The majority (for example 2 out of three

- or 3 out of four) of the team members have to agree on a call or sighting.
- Teams are requested to limit the use of callback to attract birds to an absolute minimum (preferably avoiding using call back at all). This is especially true when birding in a nature reserve or national park or targeting threatened bird species.
- Most importantly have fun and enjoy the day out in the field!

Categories

You can participate in one of two categories:

50km Radius Category

- The rules for this category are:
- Please note this is a RADIUS of 50km – so from boundary to boundary it is 100km.
 - Teams in this category will automatically be entered into the national challenge if using BirdLasser.

6km Radius Category

- Note this is a RADIUS of 6km – from boundary to boundary the distance is 12km.

Play along by entering your data on BirdLasser!

Teams are invited to log their sightings on the mobile app BirdLasser. The sightings will automatically be displayed on a dedicated BirdLasser Birding Big Day event page. In order to participate, one member of the team must enter the data on BirdLasser while birding. The following information must be sent to gemsaf@mango.zw :

- The name and email address of the person in the team who will log the sightings on BirdLasser. Please make sure you enter the correct email address, you can find it under the settings menu on the BirdLasser App.
- Team name which will appear on the BirdLasser events page (maximum 25 characters), link will be emailed once the page has been created.

- Names of team members.

During the day, the challenge page will automatically update as teams record their sightings, thus adding to the excitement of the day. For more information about BirdLasser, visit www.birdlasser.com or email support@birdlasser.com.

Results

If BirdLasser is used, each team needs to verify its species list on their phone and the website within 48 hours of the event. The species list at 24:00 5 December 2022 will be considered as final. To resolve any issues, please email: support@birdlasser.com.

If you are **not using** BirdLasser, please email your results to gemsaf@mango.zw before 6 December 2022.



A BIRDING BLUE CROSS

by Peter and Frances Morris



The Zimbabwe Blue Cross annual event is a 500km route from the lowest point in Zimbabwe, Mahenye on the Save River as it joins the Runde River and exits Zimbabwe, to the summit of Nyangani. Participants can walk, run, cycle ride or cover the distance on motorbike or quad bikes, and depending on the discipline selected, can take from 3 days to 3 weeks to complete. The event happens in late July/early August.

2022 was the 27th anniversary, and over the years the route finders have established routes and overnight stopovers following the roads less travelled. The Blue Cross route offers a unique opportunity to observe geological, flora and fauna transition and diversity and seasonal change. The timing coincides with the last days of winter and the beginning of spring, thus new leaves and birds during the day, and nippy temperatures at night.

This year we walked the route, and added some extra deviations and variations to cover ground we wanted to see, including a walk up to and through Tilbury, 2 nights at Chimanimani Base camp and our "day off" climbing Peza Mountain. We also walked the old scenic road from Pungwe Drift to the base of Nyangani.

Each day had an ornithological excitement, and opportunity to observe bird behaviour, distribution and frequency and habitat. Walking along the Eastern Highlands border meant that many localised specials were seen and heard. Throughout the entire walk, the only time Dark-capped Bulbuls were not part of the scenery was after dark, climbing Peza and along the Pungwe scenic drive, otherwise they were reassuringly always visible. Sunbirds were almost as ubiquitous, for most of the walk, Variable Sunbirds and White-bellied

Sunbirds could be seen and heard, and then interspersed were the Miombo Double-collared Sunbird, the Collared Sunbird, the Scarlet-chested Sunbird, and then on the final day, a Gurney's Sugarbird on the slopes of Nyangani, in the Protea grove.

The invasive *Vernonanthura polyanthes* or "Bee Bush" is prominent for much of the walk and was in full flower, and interestingly although Hymenoptera were observed foraging in the flowers at certain times of the day, sunbirds and other birds were not observed in the foliage.

The Jamanda Conservancy is wild and beautiful, and we were privileged to camp at the old Tsetse camp, arriving at dusk

after passing through a large herd of elephants that then remained around the camp for most of the night. The bird list was elevated when an Eastern Nicator just hopped around on the ground and leaves and low branches next to my feet while walking. Red-billed Hornbills and Yellow-billed Hornbills were eclipsed by the Crowned Hornbills, playing in a large *Colophospermum mopane*. Red-billed Buffalo-weavers, Southern White-crowned Shrikes and Retz's Helmet-shrikes fluttered up and down from their observation trees, and a Brown-headed Parrot posed beautifully for photos.

Over the course of the walk, 3 Southern Ground-hornbills were observed flying near White Waters, numerous Silvery-cheeked Hornbills were visible all



Variable Sunbird by Dave Dell



Silvery-cheeked Hornbill

afternoon at Fiddlers on the Green at Chipinge, and Trumpeter Hornbills were photographed at the Bazeley Bridge camp. All 7 species of hornbill occurring in the eastern border region were recorded.

Barbets included the Acacia Pied Barbet in Jamanda, Black-collared Barbet and Crested Barbet throughout the walk, the White-eared Barbet on Hillside Golf Course, and Whyte's Barbet in the *Brachystegia* woodlands near White Waters.

The White-necked Ravens were a joy to watch as we traversed the Chimanimani area, and of course our day in the mountains was punctuated with their acrobatics, and an Augur Buzzard

patrolling the Bundi floodplain and the wonderful sight of a Peregrine Falcon.

Flocks of Grey Waxbills and Yellow-bellied Waxbills with their stunning colours added brightness to the morning parade of seed eaters while walking through the lower slopes of the Tank Nek ascent. Firefinches, both Jameson's Firefinch and Red-billed Firefinch were frequently recorded, but my skills could not differentiate whether any African Firefinches could be added to the list.

Magpie Mannikin, Red-backed Mannikin and Bronze Mannikins, along with Green-winged Pytilias and Cut-throat Finches added to the morning chatter.

The skies were periodically punctuated with the flight of Little Swifts, Lesser Striped Swallows, Wire-tailed Swallows and Red-breasted Swallows, with a few occasionally perching to allow closer observation.

Between the riverine and the woodlands, the Pied Kingfishers and Giant Kingfishers, and Brown-hooded Kingfisher were regularly observed and heard, and the African Hoopoe and Green Wood-hoopoe made their presence known fairly regularly. The Southern Black Flycatcher was spotted while walking along the shore of Osborne Dam, and the linguistic skills of the Fork-tailed Drongo ensured that the binoculars were regularly held up to identify a "new sound". The fluttering of

the various flycatchers, the African Dusky Flycatcher, the Pale Flycatcher and the Southern Black Flycatcher ensured the pace quickened to catch a glimpse (and a photograph). Both the Speckled Mousebird and Red-faced Mousebirds were seen most days. The Mountain Wagtail, spotted early one morning on a river crossing raised the hope of seeing a Grey Wagtail, but sadly, not yet my time to see this one. But of course the African Pied Wagtail was a regular companion, along with the Chin-spot Batis. The Cape Batis was observed a few times in the more forested areas.

The delight of seeing a Lemon Dove, closely followed by a Livingstone's Turaco, added excitement to the "Dove list" which includes Cape Turtle-dove, Laughing Dove,



Yellow-bellied Waxbill

Emerald-spotted Wood-dove, Red-eyed Dove and Tambourine Dove. The Tropical Boubou, Black-backed Puffback, Brubru, Common Fiscal, Retz's Helmet-shrike, White-crested Helmet-shrike, Magpie Shrike and Grey-headed Bush-shrike were regular sightings (and calls). The eremomelas (Green-capped Eremomela and Yellow-bellied Eremomela), apalises (Yellow-breasted Apalis and Bar-throated Apalis) and Dark-capped Yellow Warbler tested the powers of observation, along with the greenbuls (Yellow-bellied Greenbul, Sombre Greenbul, Stripe-cheeked Greenbul) and canaries (Yellow-fronted Canary and Cape Canary).

The Neddicky, cisticolas (Rattling Cisticola and Zitting Cisticola) and Grey-backed Camaroptera, interspersed with the cheerful scolding Tawny-flanked Prinia. Streaky-headed Seedeater and Black-eared Seedeater, the Golden-breasted Bunting and Cinnamon-breasted Buntings, all helped add to the list and the pure pleasure of walking and listening to bird call.

Weavers included Red-headed Weaver, Village Weaver and Spectacled Weaver, and in the early mornings, the Helmeted Guineafowl and Red-necked Spurfowl scuttled down the road in front.



Red-necked Spurfowl by Dave Dell

The migratory waders had not yet arrived, so the brief times spent walking past water courses and dams were not productive, bar the Egyptian Goose, Black-headed Heron, Blacksmith Lapwing and African Fish-eagle. Birds of prey included Augur Buzzard, Lizard Buzzard, and many frustrated pictures of birds in flight trying to capture enough detail to identify

confidently! Walking all day through variable vegetation highlighted the territorial and habitat dependant behaviour of birds, the transition from dense, relatively untouched Miombo woodland near White Waters, into agricultural fields and homesteads one morning was quite remarkable in the change in birdlife.



Crowned Hornbill

The change in behaviour during the course of the day was also remarkable for me, the early morning darting and feeding parties changed to more sedentary and silent birds as the day progressed (easier to photograph)!

In the course of 13 days walking we were able to confidently identify (and photograph) over 120 different species, with, of course, many more frustrating moments where a bit more knowledge and confidence would have increased the

list. But it was a wonderful way to stretch and improve both auditory and visual skills. Sadly, the difference in vegetation and habitat due to deforestation between 2021 and 2022 was noticeable and the lovely rain forests and Miombo forests are shrinking. The Blue Cross is a worthwhile event for keen birdwatchers, a unique opportunity to walk and record and enjoy all day bird viewing.

Photos by the authors, unless otherwise credited.

MASHONALAND BRANCH

Hippo Pools Weekend, 7-8 September 2022

Abigail Karimanzira



Hippo Pools Wilderness is located in Umfurudzi National Park with the camping site right on the banks of Mazowe River within the riverine vegetation. 15 birders gathered for the weekend expedition. I and my friend Lyn arrived earlier than everyone and on our way in a Double-banded Sandgrouse stood at the corner of the road bidding us welcome. At the camp, whilst waiting for others to arrive,

we explored the riverine vegetation and the river, lots of Scarlet-chested Sunbirds, pairs of Livingstone's Flycatchers, Narina Trogon, Giant Kingfisher, Black-throated Wattle-eye and African Broadbill. Rodrick, one of the wilderness guides, had given us highlights upon arrival and gave us assurance of sighting an African Finfoot. He said it usually swims from downstream, coming to the banks of the pools.



I was eager, so when everybody arrived I excused myself around sunset and went to sit on the platform for a good view of the river. We sat for almost 2 hours with no sign of the bird, just 2 hippos, a crocodile, Giant Kingfisher and Pied Kingfisher and Helmeted Guinea-fowls across the river. Just when I stood up to retire for the day I heard, "there goes your Finfoot", that was Rodrick yelling. This became my greatest achievement for the day. Led by Neil Deacon, Saturday was planned for a Wahlberg's Eagle survey. We woke up early, had a cup of tea and jumped onto the back of Geoff's truck. This was the most interesting and educative part of the trip for me. Reason why I always hang around the old people during birding trips? They have knowledge, some you don't get in books. Wahlberg's utilize the same nest over many years, more than 10. If they

move due to some disturbance, it's within 100 meters and nests are built closer to a stream or a water source. Heading to previously recorded nests sites along Ruanga River we drove in the dusty and bumpy road, enjoying the scenic view of the park. The terrain is rugged and when you are at an elevated point you get a good view of the mountainous region. We parked and Simba, who was guiding us, led us on a river trail to a nest downstream. After hiking for about 2km, we found the abandoned nest. With an assurance that there was a new nest nearby we walked a few meters down and found it on top of a sausage tree with the bird sitting on it.

Apart from the Wahlberg's, others spotted along the banks of the river included Wattled Starlings, Southern Yellow-billed Hornbills, Black-eared Seedeater,



Golden-breasted Bunting, Swallow-tailed Bee-eaters, and Retz's Helmet-shrikes.

We drove to another site along an upstream tributary and again saw a sitting bird. On our way back to the camp, there were lots of interesting species in the miombo woodland: Miombo Rock-thrush, Spotted Creeper, Dark Chanting-goshawk and a pair of Racquet-tailed Rollers. In

the late afternoon I explored downstream alone, fearing an encounter with a black mamba; I was told there were plenty of them. There were lots of Terrestrial Brownbuls, Yellow-bellied Greenbuls, Klaas's Cuckoo and Grey-headed Parrots. During the night, calls from African Wood-owls, Fiery-necked Nightjars and bush babies echoed.

Come Sunday I was eager to walk up the Mazowe River. Whilst others drove to look for African Crowned Eagle nests in the mountains, I set out following a very rugged trail with steep ascents and descents that cut across tributary streams. I did not see much of the water birds except a flock of Egyptian Goose and a lone Hamerkop. There were many flocks of Red-throated Twinspots and pairs of Trumpeter Hornbills. A Verreaux's Eagle-owl flushed from its resting place, landing on another tree and poked its head out

through the leaves. We played a bit of hide and seek until it flew across the river. I continued walking until I reached the end of the trail, returning on the yellow trail just to experience a diversity of vegetation and birds. I arrived at the camp late and found everyone already packed to leave. We quickly gathered for our checklist and a total of 135 birds were recorded during the weekend. Hippo Pools Wilderness is truly home to special species and a great place for birding. Many thanks to Geoff for organizing such a lovely trip.



Verreaux's Eagle-owl by Dave Dell



Racquet-tailed Rollers by Dave Dell

Monthly talk – B. Launder, Avondale Sports Club, Thursday 15th September

Report by G. Lowe

This photo presentation attracted a large audience made up of Mashonaland birders, photographers and even some bass fishermen! It was particularly pleasant to see some younger people and some members who usually do not attend our meetings! We were treated to some stunning photographs of birds with many captured in flight.

The large screen used for the occasion further enhanced the photographs. Barry explained the requirements to get a good photo. Clearly a good understanding of bird behaviour, patience and perseverance play a major part!

This was a very successful event.



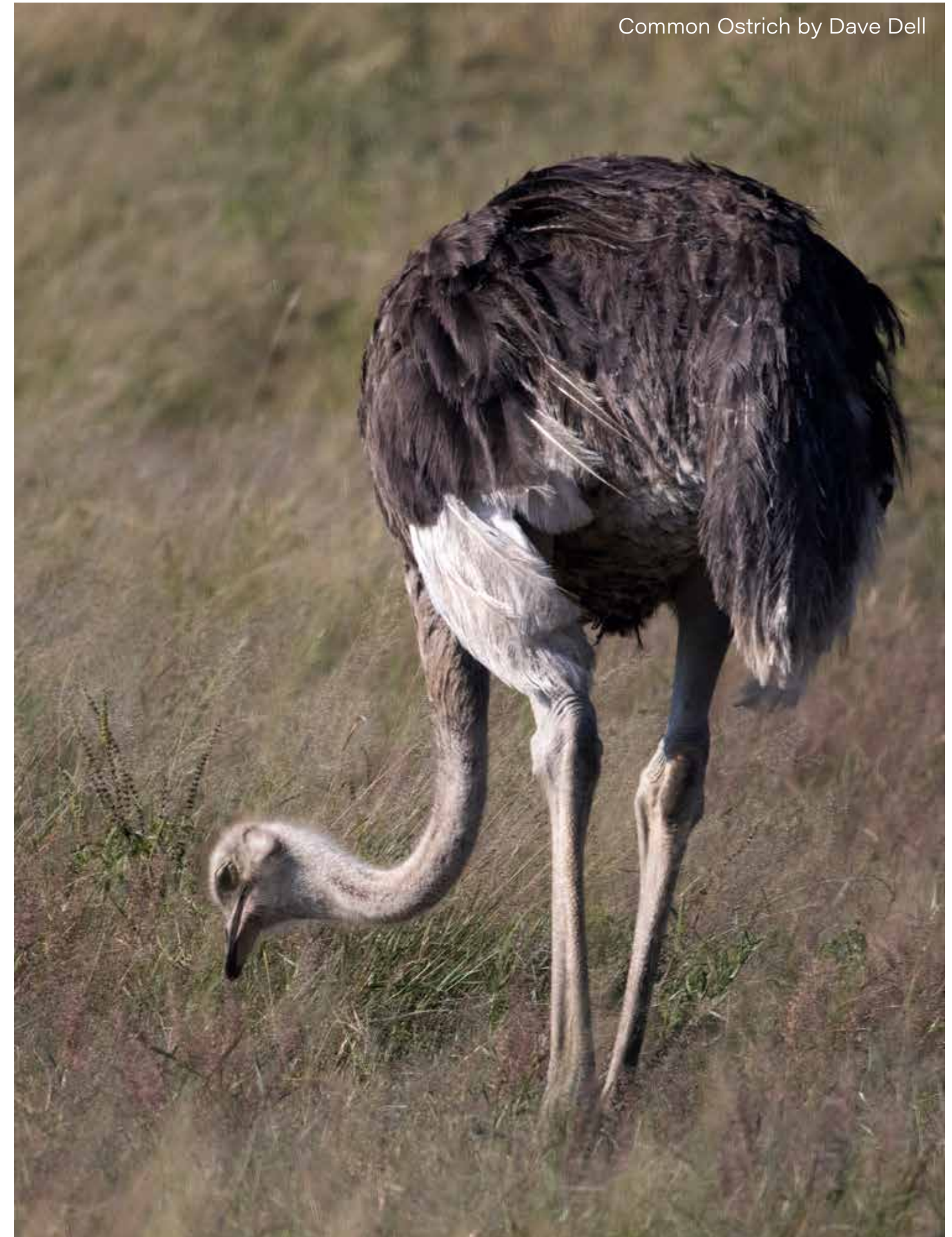
Emerald-spotted Wood-dove by Dave Dell

Our day started off eventfully as Prince Edward School, our meeting place, was holding a big sporting event and cars were parked all the way into the main sports fields by 6.20 a.m. So we could not enter at gate one and had to go to gate three to leave a car on a playing field behind the hostels. Only 4 people attended this outing as many of our regular supporters were away.

The park has apparently suffered from the Covid pandemic because we were told by headquarters that the entrance fees were US\$5 but had to pay only US\$3, and rubbish removal and maintenance of roads was poor. However, it is still a good place to see mature miombo woodland and several game species. We stopped at a couple of picnic sites and the lodges on our way to Bushman's Point where we had lunch and some of us had a braai.

The weather was warm and sunny, so perfect for an outing. A total of 64 species was recorded, which does not seem very high, but because one can only walk in the designated sites a lot of species are missed that could possibly be found by covering more ground. It was interesting to record Purple-banded Sunbird at all stops but no Blue Waxbill. Other bird highlights included a Yellow-billed Kite, a group of 4 Saddle-billed Storks, of which 2 were juveniles, many African Fish-eagles, Emerald-spotted Wood-dove, Village Weaver and African Paradise-flycatcher, Ashy Flycatcher, Scarlet-chested Sunbird and Red-headed Weaver.

On the game drive along the lake shore in the afternoon we managed to see most of the grazers in the burnt vleis, including 2 adult white rhino. We also saw many rhino dung middens and several Common Ostrich.



Common Ostrich by Dave Dell

Only 3 of us attended this outing on a hot and windy day. It was good to see that there was still water in the dam, which was about 20% full, and here we saw a Little Grebe and a Grey Heron and heard Black Crane and Common Moorhen. There has been massive clearing of exotic trees such as Privet and Ornamental Cherry and holes have been dug to transplant, presumably, indigenous trees. This is obviously a long term action that has resulted in the temporary loss of a lot of shade below the dam wall. This loss of shade may explain why we did not find

any Red-throated Twinspot and had a low count of forest birds. The area upstream of the dam wall has not been disturbed in this way and gave us most of our species.

A pair of Black-shouldered Kites was interacting in flight and the other raptors were Lizard Buzzard and Little Sparrowhawk. It was also nice to see 3 Natal Spurfowl at fairly close range. Other highlights included Copper Sunbird and the very large colony of hundreds of nesting Village Weavers. Our species tally was 52.



Black-shouldered Kite by Dave Dell

Toga is the Conservation Officer employed by BirdLife Zimbabwe at the Harare Office. Much of his work is linked to the Important Bird Areas of Zimbabwe (IBAs).

In an interesting and informative slide presentation we were shown the location of the various IBAs in Zimbabwe, the key species found in some of the IBAs and the criteria used to identify them. The need to monitor IBAs was also discussed.



Village Weaver by Dave Dell

It was a fantastic day with lots of game and birds and a good braai afterwards. Michael the caretaker was very helpful, seeing to our braai needs, having the fire burning when we returned from our walk. There was a huge flock of White-

headed Duck on the dam plus Spur-winged Goose, Abdim's Storks and African Jacanas. The highlight was a pair of Barn Owls flushed from a Hamerkop nest in the woodlands. A total of 63 species were seen. All in all a great Sunday!

MASHONALAND WEST

Margaret Parrock



African Jacana by Dave Dell

How wonderful to have the change of seasons every year but our October heat and Kadoma was stifling and oppressive. With the first rains of 3rd November life changed; we felt refreshed and revived, as did the animal life. The environment transformed dramatically, birds began singing cheerfully and loudly with the washed atmosphere. All activities increased.

September was an empty month for bird outings in our Kadoma district as too many spring functions were taking place.

October 8th - Global Big Day was a very hot lazy windy day, even at 6:30 a.m. Ruth

and I set forth along the Air Force Road at Chigwell, halfway to Chegutu. We had a full, exhausting day with a total count of 70 species. Some notables were Black-chested Snake-eagle, African Grey Hornbill, Lesser Striped Swallow, Long-tailed Paradise-whydah, Golden-breasted Bunting, Klaas's Cuckoo and Greater Honeyguide. At Lowein Dam, along the same road, were one Purple Heron, two Squacco Heron, Common Moorhen, African Jacana, Black Crake and African Wattled Lapwing.

Martin Ponds gave us 40 Black-headed Herons, 35 Ruff, 14 Black-winged Stilt, 62 Blacksmith Lapwings, 5 Yellow-billed Storks and 2 African Spoonbills.

15th October was another scorching hot day, at 11 a.m. it was 39 degrees.

We visited Lasting Impressions and had White-bellied Sunbirds and Scarlet-chested Sunbirds in abundance. We had a total of 53 species including Common Scimitarbill, Black-headed Oriole, Flappet Lark, Giant Kingfisher, Violet-backed Starling, Green-winged Pytilia and Namaqua Dove.

We came again on 22nd October and added a pair of Spotted Eagle-owls with 2 juveniles hiding in a Munondo tree. At the homestead we sat beside the Sausage Tree cooling off and watched a Trumpeter Hornbill pair that appears to be resident as they have been there since August. Hopefully a suitable tree is found for nesting!

29th October was a dull but refreshing morning after the night's drizzle. Eiffel Flats flooded sewerage ponds area gave us 55+ Wood Sandpipers, 60 Ruff, Black-winged Stilt and a pair of nesting Common Scimitarbills - we stopped and watched them carrying material to a hole in a tree.

At Pasi Dam were 80+ White-faced Duck, 10 Glossy Ibis and a pair of African Snipe. Along the dirt road we stopped at a puddle to watch the Red-breasted Swallows collecting mud for nest building under the culvert.

Last stop back at Lasting Impressions where we added a Water Thick-knee, Green Wood-hoopoe, Long-billed Crombec and Crested Francolin. A lovely, rewarding and relaxing day.



Water Thick-knee by Dave Dell

MATABELELAND BRANCH

An Outing To Matopos

Jenny Brebner

Hoping to beat the heat, we set off early for Matobo to, hopefully, do a penultimate check on the fledglings surviving this year's Verreaux's Eagle season. Large portions of the park, both the recreational side as well as in the Whovi game park, have been burnt out and everything is very dry and dusty, with cicadas everywhere noisily zinging.

At the first site, the fledgling was standing proudly on the edge of the nest and judging by its extraordinarily beautiful plumage with golden crown and pale pantaloons, it would not be long before it no longer needed the comfort of the nest. Skirting the edge of Maleme dam, we were surprised to see so much in the way of waterfowl – a couple of Egyptian Goose herded their five goslings into the water off an island where a trio of White-breasted Cormorants stood with wings out, enjoying the early morning sun. A Reed Cormorant fished close by and two Little Grebes could be seen bobbing about as well. A Giant Kingfisher stood motionlessly on the electricity lines crossing the dam, gazing intently down at the water as several baboons crossed the road and a Klipspringer bounded away from the water to bounce into the kopje on the side of the road.

There was still a good amount of water in Madingazulu where, again, a surprising number of waterfowl swam or dabbled about. Sixty-one Red-billed Teal topped the list with two Egyptian Goose, two Little Grebes and two African Wattled Lapwings. On our way through to Whovi, nine Green Wood-hoopoes flew out from a large bunch of leopard orchid wedged into a large mopane as several White-browed Scrub-robins and the odd Brown-crowned Tchagra flew off in front of the vehicle here and there. Black-capped Tchagras could be heard several times as were Black-collared Barbets and Laughing Doves, with the occasional Red-eyed Dove adding its voice.

The mournful call of the Emerald-spotted Wood-dove could be heard all over the place, as well as Black-backed Puffbacks which seemed to be most prevalent as they were heard wherever we went. The melodic, liquid notes of the Black-headed Oriole could also be heard in various places and we got to see that flash of brilliant yellow now and again. Plenty of African Grey Hornbills mewled overheard and once or twice, hearing the calls, we saw a few European Bee-eaters. We recorded one Yellow-billed Kite and two Brown Snake-eagles for the raptor list.



Verreaux's Eagle by Richard Peek

Passing Chitamba, where usually we get no waterbirds to record during the designated January and July counts, a Black Crake strode off into cover as we arrived and two Blacksmith Lapwings tinked noisily. For the first time in the Matopos (for us), we saw Hadeda Ibis as three of them dug about with their curved beaks in the soft sand. There was another little family of Egyptian Goose, this time with four goslings, which took to the water as an African Fish-eagle flew over the resident pod of grunting, chortling hippo to perch in a tree on the far side of the dam.

As we were watching another of our Verreaux's Eagle fledglings, still on the nest but obviously intent on eating something, a noisy bunch of Arrow-marked Babblers rattled past and we could hear an

Orange-breasted Bush-shrike somewhere close by. Two Tropical Boubous skulking in the bush on the other side of the road, doing their rather harsh duetting as a Natal Spurfowl's alarm call echoed off the kopjies. We also heard Purple-crested Turaco a couple of times and had a noisy White-bellied Sunbird nearby when we were inspecting another of the nests. At three of the Verreaux's Eagle nest sites checked, Red-winged Starlings were seen flying around or perched close to the nests. On our way out of the game park, as we were dodging around mounds of rhino dung, a small crowd of Retz's Helmet-shrike zithered over the road in front of us. Just as we exited the park, a few Blue Waxbills flew off the road to take cover along with some firefinches but they disappeared too quickly for us to identify which species.

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 Babblers*, every two months and two issues of

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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

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!

Due to the instability of the local currency at present, subs are listed in USD, but may be paid in Zimbabwe Dollars at the Bank Rate on the day

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 notify Sylvia sylvia@blz.co.zw phone 024-2481496 and Paula Dell paula.dell@strachansphoto.com when you have made your payments – and 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

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.

Useful Contacts

Membership Branches

Mashonaland Branch Chairperson Geoff Lowe
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Matabeleland Branch Chairperson John Brebner
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Matabeleland Branch (Matland Chirpers)
 Chairperson Peter Makhusa

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. \$400 entrance fee for BLZ members, \$500 others.

Greystone Park -17.746184, 31.127215. 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.

MASHONALAND BRANCH

BirdLife Zimbabwe Mashonaland Calendar of Events
December 2022/January 2023

Sunday 4th December,

Mukuvisi Woodlands Walk – 6.30 a.m.

Saturday 10th December,

ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARTY AT THE MUKUVISI WOODLANDS – 2.30 p.m.

We will meet at the rondavel. Check in at the reception in the car park. There is an entrance fee of USD 2 or equivalent. We will have a guest speaker and thereafter draw for prizes for our annual Christmas raffle. Please bring meat and drinks and join in the Christmas braai.

Sunday 18th December,

Monavale Vlei Walk – 7.00 a.m.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Sunday 1st January,

Mukuvisi Woodlands Walk – 6.30 a.m.

Saturday 14th January,

Greengrove Nature Reserve – 6.30 a.m.

Take the Mutare Rd out of town and turn left into Wilson Drive just after Bathroom Boutique, Msasa. Continue for 1.2 km and turn right into St. Malo Ave, follow to the left turn where it changes to Latimer Dve. and the entrance to the nature reserve is on the right.

Greengrove Nature Reserve has a small dam where many birds breed. There are also vlei and grassland birds.

Sunday 15th January,

Monavale Vlei Walk – 7.00 a.m.

Thursday 19th January,

Team Quiz, Avondale Sports Club – 6:30 p.m. Brighton Road off Second Street Extension, Avondale. Bar facilities are available.

There will be prizes for the winning team! Entrance fee of US\$ 2 per person or equivalent on the day.

Sunday 22nd January,

Arden Estate – 6.30 a.m. departure.

Meet at Prince Edward School car park.

The venue is 20 km from Harare out on the Lomagundi Rd., turn right 3.5km after African Distillers and proceed to the dam at the end of the road. Stay for a braai lunch after the walk.

For further information contact

Geoff Lowe or birdlifemash@gmail.com

PHONE: 0778 090632

Please send contributions for *The Babbler 170*
February/March 2023 any time before the
15th January.

Thank you for reading!