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African Mourning Dove *Streptopelia decipiens*
Photo: © Chris Cragg

TABLE OF CONTENTS

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Honeyguide **69**(1): 1-4, 2023

Harare Garden Birds: An Update, 2016-2017

Deborah Wiggins

The first major survey of garden birds in Harare was carried out from 1968-70 and it recorded a total of 208 species (Woodall *et al*. 1997). The next survey took place from 1999-2000 when a total of 235 species were recorded (Riddell 2021), and this was followed by surveys in 2011-12 and 2016-17; the latter recorded 215 species, with a monthly average of 29.1 species per garden, a minimum of 24.5 species in June and a maximum of 32.0 species in November (Figure 1). This compares with an average of 29.2 species in 1968-70 and 34.2 species in 1999-2000 (Riddell 2021). The number of species increased as the weather warmed up and many species began breeding, possibly becoming more conspicuous as they called and established territories. There were only a few migrants in the top 50 species (Table 1) but there may have been some local influxes or resident species into gardens

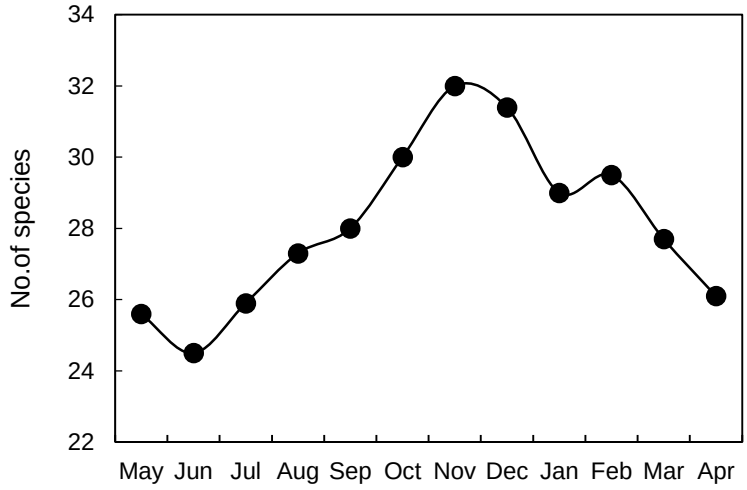

Figure 1. The average number of species recorded in each month, Harare Garden Bird Survey, May 2016 to April 2017

As noted by earlier authors, data from garden bird surveys can be very variable, since gardens are not standardised and differences in the skill and enthusiasm of observers can introduce biased results. The most useful value is probably the frequency of occurrence, which is expressed as the percentage of the cards on which a species is recorded. [**Comment**: Riddell 2021, Riddell & Marshall 2021a; 2021b; 2022 calculate percentage frequency on the total number of records. Woodall *et. al*, 1997 Table 2 presents percentage frequencies by locality/cards and total records, the difference explained in Methods. These give different rankings. It is unclear which method has been used in this survey]. Each species is then ranked in descending order, according to its frequency. A change in the rank does not necessarily indicate the change in the abundance of any species since the more conspicuous species are likely to have a higher ranking than a less obvious one. For example, Pied Crows will probably be recorded more frequently than Red-billed Firefinches, even though the latter may be garden regulars. Also, a decreased species ranking does not necessarily indicate a decrease in abundance but might simply reflect an increase in the frequency of some other species.

The frequency of occurrence varied widely but most species were infrequently recorded. In the 2016-17 survey, for example, 184 species (83.6% of the total) had a frequency of occurrence of less than 20% with 93 species (42.3% of the total) having a frequency of less than 1% (Figure 2).

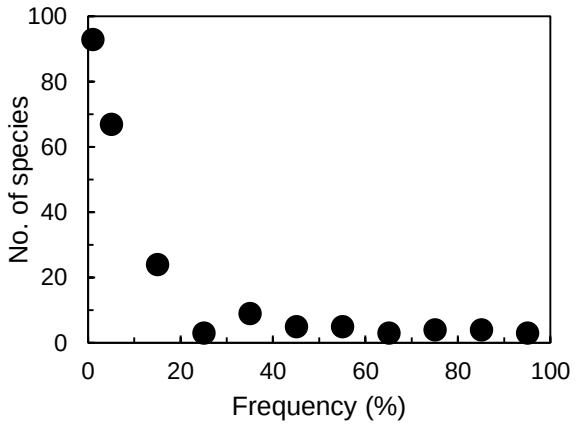

Figure 2. The number of species recorded in relation to their frequency of occurrence, Harare Garden Bird survey, 2016-17.

Most such species are either scarce or occasional vagrants, and some notable examples from the 2016-17 survey include the Saddle-billed Stork *Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis*, Martial Eagle *Polemaetus bellicosus*, African Crowned Eagle *Stephanoaetus coronatus*, Bat Hawk *Macheiramphus alcinus* and Lilian's Lovebird *Agapornis lilianae* (possibly an escaped captive). Others are habitat specialists that may have drifted into gardens that had miombo or acacia trees; these include species such as the African Grey Hornbill *Lophoceros nasutus*, Miombo Tit *Melaniparus griseiventris*, Miombo Blue-eared Starling *Lamprotornis elisabeth*, Brubru *Nilaus afer*, Chin-spot Batis

Batis molitor and Magpie Shrike *Urolestes melanoleucus*. A disturbing record was the Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis* (2% frequency), hopefully not the forerunner of a major invasion.

Given this frequency distribution, an analysis of the 50 most frequently recorded species is probably sufficient to indicate the main changes that have taken place over the years (Table 1). Note that this list does not include the White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*, Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis* or Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*, which are not true garden birds in that they would only have been overflying. Abdim's Stork visits school fields and parks, while the European Bee-eater frequents eucalyptus trees where bees can be taken and other tall trees for roosting, and so both species have been kept in the list even though their classification as garden birds could be questioned. Much the same applies to the Black-headed and Grey Herons, although they are known to nest in some gardens adjacent to water features.

Table 1. The rankings of the 50 most frequently recorded species in four Harare Garden Bird surveys. The 1968-70 rankings of some species are shown in brackets. 1968-70 data are from Woodall *et al*. (1997) while 1999-2000 data are from Riddell (2021), both ranked by total records.

	1968-1970	**1999-2000**	**2011-2012**	**2016-2017**
Dark-capped Bulbul *Pycnonotus tricolor*	1	3	3	2
Pied Crow *Corvus albus*	2	2	2	1
Southern Fiscal *Lanius collaris*	3	14		
Southern Masked Weaver *Ploceus velatus*	4	11	16	20
Laughing Dove *Stigmatopelia senegalensis*	5	1	1	3
Bronze Mannikin *Spermestes cucullata*	6	5	7	12
Red-faced Mousebird *Urocolius indicus*	7	21		
Arrow-marked Babbler *Turdoides jardineii*	8	7	13	7
Cape Turtle Dove *Streptopelia capicola*	9	40		
White-browed Robin-chat *Cossypha heuglini*	10	8	4	6
African Hoopoe *Upupa africana*	11	34	37	35
Fork-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus adsimilis*	12	19	21	16
African Yellow White-eye *Zosterops senegalensis*	13	31	22	21
Kurrichane Thrush *Turdus libonyana*	14	9	8	9
Red-eyed Dove *Streptopelia semitorquata*	15	12	11	11
Golden Weaver *Ploceus xanthops*	16	20	39	47
European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*	17	30	35	36
African Palm Swift *Cypsiurus parvus*	18	22	19	28
Blue Waxbill *Uraeginthus angolensis*	19	33	12	5
Eastern Miombo Sunbird *Cinnyris manoensis*	20	25	24	25
Abdim's Stork *Ciconia abdimii*	21	43	47	46
Streaky-headed Seedeater *Crithagra gularis*	22	38		
Black-headed Oriole *Oriolus larvatus*	23	55		
Red-billed Firefinch *Lagonosticta senegala*	24	16	15	15
Bar-throated Apalis *Apalis thoracica*	25	18	10	17
Amethyst Sunbird *Chalcomitra amethystina*	26	45	42	38
Tropical Boubou *Laniarius major*	27	27	25	26
Black-throated Canary *Crithagra atrogularis*	28			
House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*	29	29		
White-bellied Sunbird *Cinnyris talatala*	30	36	43	40
Jameson's Firefinch *Lagonosticta rhodopareia*	31	65		
Yellow-fronted Canary *Crithagra mozambica*	33	77		
Village Weaver *Ploceus cucullatus*	34	59		
Scarlet-chested Sunbird *Chalcomitra senegalensis*	35	63		
African Paradise-flycatcher *Terpsiphone viridis*	36	32	32	32
Spectacled Weaver *Ploceus ocularis*	37	28	17	22
Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*	38			
Pin-tailed Whydah *Vidua macroura*	39	64		
Diderick Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx caprius*	40	61		
Purple-crested Turaco *Gallirex porphyreolophus*	41	6	6	4
Black-backed Puffback *Dryoscopus cubla*	42	17	20	19
White-crested Helmet-shrike *Prionops plumatus*	43			
Tawny-flanked Prinia *Prinia subflava*	44	52	34	48
Southern Black Flycatcher *Melaenornis pammelaina*	45	62	40	49
Cape Crow *Corvus capensis*	46	67		
Cardinal Woodpecker *Dendropicos fuscescens*	47	42		
Common Waxbill *Estrilda astrild*	48	81		
Red-winged Starling *Onycognathus morio*	49	76	48	42

	1968-1970	1999-2000	2011-2012	2016-2017
Southern Grey-headed Sparrow *Passer diffusus*	50	15	14	13
Crested Barbet *Trachyphonus vaillantii*		4	9	8
Variable Sunbird *Cinnyris venustus*		10	5	10
Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*		13	26	29
Green Wood-hoopoe *Phoeniculus purpureus*		23	31	23
Black-collared Barbet *Lybius torquatus*	(55)	24	18	18
Speckled Mousebird *Colius striatus*		26	23	33
Grey Go-away-bird *Crinifer concolor*	(77)	35	27	14
Hamerkop *Scopus umbretta*	(89)	37	44	37
Gabar Goshawk *Micronisus gabar*		39	30	31
Black-headed Heron *Ardea melanocephala*		41	46	41
Fiery-necked Nightjar *Caprimulgus pectoralis*	(59)	44	33	27
Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*		46		
Barn Owl *Tyto alba*	(58)	47	38	34
Greater Blue-eared Starling *Lamprotornis chalybaeus**	(54)	48	29	24
Southern Red Bishop *Euplectes orix*	(61)	49		
Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus chrysoconus*		50	28	30
Whyte's Barbet *Stactolaema whytii*	(70)	66	36	39
Brown-hooded Kingfisher *Halcyon albiventris*	(93)	73	41	50
Long-crested Eagle *Lophaetus occipitalis*		93	50	45
Lizard Buzzard *Kaupifalco monogrammicus*		95	45	44
Grey-headed Bush-shrike *Malaconotus blanchoti*	(69)	99	49	43

*The two glossy starling species were not separated in 1968-70 so this record could include some Miombo Blue-eared Starlings.

The most significant change in garden birds occurred between 1968 and 1999 and probably reflects changes in the gardens themselves, notably the maturation of trees and a general increase in the density of vegetation. Among the top 10 species, the ranking of the Southern Fiscal and the Red-faced Mousebird decreased between 1968 and 1999, and they disappeared from the top 50 thereafter. The Southern Masked Weaver declined from 4th to 11th, while the African Hoopoe fell from 11th to 34th and European Bee-eater from 17th to 30th. The Bronze Mannikin rose from 6th to 5th but this probably reflected an increase in the species that replaced the other four. They were the Purple-crested Turaco (from 41st in 1968-70 to 4th in 2016-17), Blue Waxbill (from 19th to 5th), White-browed Robin-chat (from 10th to 6th), while the Crested Barbet and Variable Sunbird were not recorded in 1968-70 but were ranked 8th and 10th respectively in 2016-17.

Species that were not recorded in the top 50 after 1968-70 were mostly species typically found in miombo woodland, or in more rural situations (Riddell & Marshall 2022). Notable declines include the Southern Fiscal and Red-faced Mousebird, neither of which were recorded in the top 50 after 2000 despite the fact that they were ranked 3rd and 7th in 1968-70. It is possible that the vegetation in most gardens has become too dense for the fiscal while becoming more suitable for the Speckled Mousebird, which may have displaced the Red-faced. Another notable decline was the House Sparrow, which was not recorded after 2000; its decline as a garden bird was commented on by Irwin (1993, 2002) but it is likely to be more common in the industrial and high-density suburbs that were not surveyed.

Sixteen species appeared in the top 50 in the 1999-2000 survey and all but two (Grey Heron and Red Bishop) were in the top 50 in the next two surveys. The Barn Owl was absent in the 2016-17 survey. Several of these new entrants were hole-nesters, such as the Crested, Black-collared and Whyte's Barbets, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird and Green Wood-hoopoe, which probably reflects the maturation of trees over the 30 years between the first and second surveys. Irwin (2003) suggested that solitary Cattle Egrets were becoming regular garden birds, while the increase in the Hamerkop's ranking probably reflects an increase in the number of swimming pools and water features in gardens or were overflying. Other interesting species that appeared in the top 50 in the 1999-2000 survey and remained there in the two subsequent ones include the Gabar Goshawk and Black-headed Heron. The goshawk has since become the commonest raptor in Harare gardens while the heron has generally increased in numbers and now breeds in urban areas (Perrett 1989; Ginn 2002; Ewbank 2007, 2014). The Grey Go-away-bird was a common garden bird in smaller centres and rural areas (Riddell & Marshall 2021a; 2022) but it was scarce in Marondera and Harare in the 1960s (Vernon 1968; Woodall *et al*. 1997). It has since become established in both centres, being ranked 45th at Marondera (Riddell & Marshall 2021b) and rose from 35th in 1999-2000 to 14th in the 2016-17 survey (Table 1).

Other species that increased significantly by 2011-12 include the Brown-hooded Kingfisher, Whyte's Barbet, Southern Black Flycatcher and Grey-headed Bush-shrike. Two raptors reached the top 50 in 2011-12; the Long-crested Eagle was ranked 93rd and the Lizard Buzzard 95th in 1999-2000 (Riddell 2000) so they have become more established in Harare gardens. In East Africa, Long-crested Eagles seem to be tolerated by local villagers and can often be seen around settlements, even perching on houses (B. Marshall, pers. obs.), and as it also occurs in plantations of exotic trees so its appearance in gardens is not unexpected.

It is now clear that garden birds in Harare changed significantly between 1980 and 2000, indicated by the fact only 10 of the top 20 species in 1968-70 remained in the top 20 in 2016-17. Back in the 1960s the garden bird community of Harare was much closer to that of the rural areas around the city but by 2000 they had changed to what might called a more 'suburban' community. This term is used because the number of species appeared to be lower in gardens closer to the city centre, and is probably lower still in the high-density suburbs

and industrial areas. Unfortunately, little is known about birds in these areas.

Finally, it should be noted that these surveys are not a proper scientific investigation because gardens are not standardised but they are rather an awareness exercise that enables us to compare trends and changes in ranking. They also enable us to monitor diversity and movements, and the arrivals & departures of migratory species. Most importantly, they encourage awareness and love of birds by learning which birds live in and visit our gardens.

Acknowledgments

I thank the participants, without whom the survey could never have happened. I am grateful firstly to Patrick Shadwell for so competently creating the maps and graphs on Google Maps which I included in the presentation and which feature in this article. Secondly, Tony Alegria for his initiative to embark on a new survey and his encouragement to undertake the task of running it. Finally, Innes Louw for suggesting that the survey was worthy of submitting for inclusion in the *Honeyguide*.

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Appendix: Some interesting observations from the survey

A honeyguide was making a nuisance of itself. Dark-capped Bulbuls were nesting in a hanging basket, while [a] pair of them, along with Variable and Eastern Miombo Sunbirds, were tearing a washing line into shreds by collecting nesting material. Even the drongo joined in the fun sometimes.
Shadwell family, *Amby* (August-September).

An adult Southern Banded Snake-eagle *Circaetus fasciolatus*, was present on and around 25-29 December 2012. The first record for Harare and possibly for Zimbabwe outside of SE Lowveld. **Rhett Butler, *Highlands***.
[This record, with photographs, was published in *Honeyguide* **63**: 73 (2017).]

In the past, Abdim's Storks arrived on the Courtney Selous field on, or close to, 18 October like clockwork, but in recent years they have been later by two weeks or more. In early November, a lone stork arrived, remaining on and off for a week, but on 11 November we had 42 mm of rain and next day there were at least 29 of them on the field. A few days later (as I was walking past with the dog) a passing car backfired and the flock all flew to the far end of the field. It backfired twice more and the flock disappeared. It made me think that they encounter hunters on their migration.
Richard Collins, Greendale.

A large blue (Spider) Hunting Wasp, which had sedated a garden spider, defended its catch by chasing off a Tropical Boubou, which was obviously trying to rob the spider of its prey. The wasp actually chased the bird for several metres before returning to the spot where its unconscious prey had been left, and recovering its larder, made off to its lair.
Peter Munday & Desna Campbell, Mandara.

We rescued an African Paradise-flycatcher from drowning in our pool. They are usually adept at dipping down and then up and away, but as I watched he got caught, probably dragged down by his long tail, and flapped frantically as he tried to escape. I rushed to his rescue, and deposited a very wet and bedraggled bird on dry land. He was pretty stressed and lay spread-eagled, unable to move. After a while I picked him up and encouraged him onto a high creeper where he could dry out. I watched as he recovered and started preening, and finally flew away.
Rob & Mary Blair, Avenues (April).

Honeyguide **69**(1): 5-11, 2023

International Wetland Census, Zimbabwe – 2022

Ian C. Riddell

A total of 47 sites were counted on Zimbabwe's International Waterbird Census in 2022 (Appendix A), 35 in summer and 34 in winter. Summer counts were conducted in January and February, and winter counts in July and early August, with additional counts at Mandavu Dam, Hwange, in April and May. The status of the water at some sites in shown in the appendix with ten sites being over-flooded, some in winter. Rainfall was patchy, some areas being flooded whilst others were below average. The only Ramsar sites covered were Monavale Vlei and the Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary.

Participants were 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 69 participants, including those simply listed as BLZ members. Special thanks are due to those individuals who undertook extensive coverage in Hwange and other sites.

Results

A total 10 647 birds of 167 species were recorded, including four unidentified waders. Note that numbers may differ from the summer count report (*Honeyguide* **68**: 8-11) because of the addition of late submissions. Vultures are also included in this report. The results from counts made at more than one site are listed below; the values at the end of each represent the number of birds and the number of sites at which they were recorded, i.e., (8/2) means that 8 birds were counted at 2 sites. Species that were reported at only one site in one season are listed in Table 1, though some interesting species are detailed below.

Numididae

Helmeted Guineafowl *Numida meleagris*: Summer: 2 at Monavale vlei and 6 at Kent Estate dams (8/2).

Phasianidae

Swainson's Spurfowl *Pternistis swainsonii*: Summer: 2 each at Highacres Dam and Monavale Vlei (2/2).

Anatidae

White-faced Duck *Dendrocygna viduata*: Summer: ranged from 1-76 (average 11.4), then 128 from Mazvikadei Dam and 136 from Chinga Pan, Sango Ranch (503/23). Numbers from Mandavu Dam in April and May were 48 and 21, respectively.
Winter: 9-60 (average 33) from 5 sites, with 120, 200, 273 and 300 from Mandalay Dam, Suri Suri Dam, Claw Dam and Kent Estate dams, respectively (1058/9).

White-backed Duck *Thalassornis leuconotus*: Summer: 43 at Sandy Spruit dam (43/1).
Winter: 2 at Highacres Dam and 8 at Butler Dam (10/2).

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiaca*: Summer: ranged from 1-21 birds (average 7.6, 15 sites), with higher counts of 36 at Chipinda Pools and 67 and 76 at Mandavu Dam (293/17).
Winter: higher numbers occurred with 1-32 (average 7.1,16 sites) and 59 and 84 at Mandavu Dam in July and April, 97 at Muchaniwa Pan, and 104 at Mandavu Dam in May (465/18).

Spur-winged Goose *Plectopterus gambensis*: Summer: found in small numbers from 1-6 at 4 sites, then 16 at Chinga Pan and Kent Estate and 18 at Chipinda Pools (59/7).
Winter: 1-24 at 5 sites, then 71 at Dwarf Goose Pan and 102 at Reedbuck Vlei (220/7).

Comb Duck *Sarkidiornis melanotus*: Summer: from 1-8 at 16 sites (average 3.6) (58/16).
Winter: 1-2 at 5 sites, plus 34 at Martin Spur Dam and 35 at Kent Estate dams (91/7).

African Pygmy Goose *Nettapus auritus*: Summer: 2 each at Chinga Pan, Mpopoma Dam and Sandy Spruit dam, and 4 at Shumba pumped pan (10/4).
Winter: 2 at Claw Dam, 3 at Mandalay Dam, 4 at Kent Estate dams and 6 at Butler Dam (15/4).

Southern Pochard *Netta erythrophthalma*: Winter: 11 at Butler Dam and 16 at Kent Estate dams (27/2).

Hottentot Teal *Anas hottentota*: Summer: 4 at Camp Hwange (4/1).
Winter: 2 at Aisleby Farm (2/1).

Red-billed Teal *Anas erythrorhyncha*: Summer: 1-8 birds (average 3.4) from 10 sites, plus 17 at Shumba pumped pan and 25 at David Whitehead Ponds (76/12).
Winter: 1-42 (average 10.6) from 13 sites, plus 136 at Kent Estate dams and 160 at Martin Spur Dam (434/15).

Podicipedidae

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*: Summer: counts were low with 2-5 at 5 sites, then 11 each at Dwarf Goose Pan and Shumba pumped pan, Hwange (36/7).
Winter: 1-7 at 9 sites, plus 18 at Butler Dam and 25 at Martin Spur Dam (69/11).

Apodidae

African Palm Swift *Cypsiurus parvus*: 2 at Kent Estate dams and 5 at Monavale Vlei (7/2).
Winter: 5 and 7 on two dates in July at Victoria Falls Sewage Ponds, recount possible (12/1).

Little Swift *Tachybaptus ruficollis*: Summer: 2 at Monavale Vlei and 50 at David Whitehead Ponds (52/2).

Cuculidae

Senegal Coucal *Centropus senegalensis*: Summer: 1-3 (average 1.6) at 5 sites (8/5).
Winter: 1-4 (average 1.7) at 6 sites.

Black Coucal *Centropus grillii*: Summer: 1-4 at Mazvikadei Dam, Monavale Vlei and Kent Estate dams (7/3).

Diderick Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx caprius*: Summer: 1 at David Whitehead Ponds and 2 at Monavale Vlei (3/2).

Rallidae

African Crake *Crecopsis egregia*: Summer: 1 each at Camp Hwange and David Whitehead Ponds (2/2).
Winter: 1 at Mahwe Homestead Dam and 2 at Bernard Mizeki Dam (3/2).

Black Crake *Zapornia flavirostra*: Summer: from 1-8 (average 2.9) at 11 sites (32/11).
Winter: 2-6 (average 3.6) at 10 sites (36/10).

African Purple Swamphen *Porphyrio madagascariensis*: Summer: 1 each at Biri Dam Fishing Site and Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary (2/2).
Winter: 1 at Mvurachena Dam and 5 at Mandalay Dam (6/2).

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*: Summer: ranged from 1-9 (average 4) at 12 sites, then 11 at Biri Dam and 13 at Chinga Pan, Sango Ranch (75/14).
Winter: 1-4 at 7 sites, plus 10 at Biri Dam, 12 at Mandalay Dam, 29 at Biri Dam Fishing Site and 42 at Butler Dam (108/11).

Lesser Moorhen *Paragallinula angulata*: Summer: 1 each at Biri Dam and Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary and 5 at Camp Hwange (7/3).
Winter: 1 at Biri Dam Fishing Site (1/1).

Red-knobbed Coot *Fulica cristata*: Summer: 1-3 at 5 sites (8/5).
Winter: 2-6 at 3 sites (10/3).

Gruidae

Grey Crowned Crane *Balearica regulorum*: Summer: 1 at School Dam, Shangani Ranch and 31 at Camp Hwange (32/2).
Winter: 1, 3 and 4 at Mandavu Dam, Reedbuck Vlei and Shumba pumped pan, respectively (8/3).

Ciconiidae

Marabou Stork *Leptoptilos crumenifer*: Summer: 6 and 7 in Hwange, 13 at Kent Estate dams and 38 at Victoria Falls Sewage Ponds (65/4).
Winter: 2, 5 and 12 at Chinga Pan, Tambahata Pan and Tambahata Pan, followed by 19 at Kent Estate dams, 24 at Victoria Falls Sewage Ponds on 21 July and 81 there on 7 July.

Yellow-billed Stork *Mycteria ibis*: Summer: 1-9 at 4 sites, then 14 at Mandavu Dam (35/5).
Winter: 1-6 at 5 sites, then 13 at Mandavu Dam in July (4 and 5 were here in April and May) and 14 at Tambahata Pan (47/6).

African Openbill *Anastomus lamelligerus*: Summer: 3-6 at 4 sites, then 18 at Camp Hwange and 58 at Chinga Pan, Sango Ranch (95/6).
Winter: 3-10 at 3 sites, 17 at Kent Estate dams and 70 at Suri Suri Dam (108/5).

Abdim's Stork *Ciconia abdimii*: Summer: very low numbers of 1-6 at 3 sites (9/3).

Woolly-necked Stork *Ciconia episcopus*: Summer: 2 and 3 at Camp Hwange and Shumba pumped pan, respectively (5/2).

Saddle-billed Stork *Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis*: Summer: 1-2 at 4 sites Chinga Pan, Chipinda Pools, Camp Hwange and Nantwich Camp & Dam (6/4).
Winter: 1 each at Kent Estate dams and Muchaniwa Pan, and 3 at Tambahata Pan (5/3).

Threskiornithidae

African Spoonbill *Platalea alba*: Summer: 1-9 (average 3.5) at 3 sites, Mandavu Dam having 1 & 2 in February and January (14/4).
Winter: 1-12 (average 5) at 7 sites, this including Mandavu counts of 5, 12 & 1 in April, May and July (45/7).

African Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus*: Summer: low numbers ranged from 3-11 (average 7.6) at 5 sites (38/5).
Winter: 1-11 (average 4.6) at 12 sites, then 24 at Suri Suri Dam and 71 at Aisleby Farm. Mandavu had 5, 3 & 5 in April, May and July, and Victoria Falls Sewage Ponds had 1 & 11 in two July counts (164/14).

Hadeda Ibis *Bostrychia hagedash*: Summer: 6 each at Chinga and Suni pans, Sango Ranch (12/2).
Winter: 3, 9 & 14 at Chinga Pan, Tambahata Pan and Muchaniwa Pan 26/3).

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*: Summer: 1 & 8 at Biri Dam and Kadoma Textiles Dye Ponds, 12 at Shumba pumped pan and 20 at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary (41/4).
Winter: 1-9 (average 3.9) at 8 sites, this including Mandavu counts of 3 in April and 1 in July (35/8).

Ardeidae

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*: Summer: 1 each at Hippo Pools camp and Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary (2/2).

Dwarf Bittern *Ixobrychus sturmii*: Summer: 1 each at Ballantyne Park South and Hippo Pools camp (2/2).

White-backed Night-heron *Gorsachius leuconotus*: Summer: 4 at Hippo Pools camp (4/1).
Winter: 1 at Hippo Pools camp (1/1).

Black-crowned Night-heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*: Summer: 1 at Mandavu Dam and 3 at Nantwich Camp & Dam (4/2).

Green-backed Heron *Butorides striata*: Summer: from 1-4 birds at 9 sites (19/9).
Winter: 1-3 at 5 sites (7/5).

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*: Summer: 1-6 (average 2.4) at 8 sites, followed by 11 at Mazvikadei Dam and *c*.40 at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary (70/10).
Winter: 1-4 (average 1.7) at 7 sites, plus 8 at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary (20/8).

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*: Summer: 1-22 (average 5.5) at 10 sites, followed by 35 at Kent Estate dams, 65 at Victoria Falls Sewage Ponds and 297 at Mazvikadei Dam (458/13).
Winter: 1-18 (average 7.8) at 15 sites, plus 104 at Victoria Falls Sewage Ponds, a previous July count at this site having 10 birds 221/15).

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*: Summer: from 1-15 (average 5.2) at 13 sites, the January count at Mandavu with 11 birds and the February count with 17 (73/13).
Winter: 1-20 (average 4.5) at 16 sites, Mandavu counts of 15 each in April and May, and 10 in July (81/16).

Black-headed Heron *Ardea melanocephala*: Summer: 1-6 (average 2) from 9 sites, Ballantyne Park South counted twice in January with 6 & 1 birds (20/9).
Winter: 1 & 2 at 2 sites, then 10 at Claw Dam and 19 at Kadoma Textiles Dye Ponds (32/4).

Goliath Heron *Ardea melanocephala*: Summer: 2 at Chinga Pan (2/1).
Winter: singles at 4 sites, Mandavu counted in May and July (5/4).

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*: Summer: 1-6 at 5 sites, the high of 6 from Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary (12/5).
Winter: 1-2 at 5 sites (6/5).

Great Egret *Ardea alba*: Summer: 1-10 (average 3.1) at 10 sites, then 62 at Chinga Pan, Sango Ranch. Mandavu had 8 & 7 in January and February (100/11).
Winter: 1-12 (average 3.3) at 10 sites, Mandavu with 12, 8 & 1 in April, May and July (39/10).

Yellow-billed Egret *Ardea intermedia*: Summer: 1-8 (average 3) at 9 sites, then 23 at Chinga Pan, Sango Ranch (50/10).
Winter: 1-2 at 3 sites (4/3).

Black Heron *Egretta ardesiaca*: Summer: 1 at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary and 19 at Mazvikadei Dam (20/2).

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*: Summer: from 1-17 (average 6.8) at 7 sites, Mandavu having 17 in January and 10 in February, followed by 46 at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary (100/8).
Winter: 1-6 (average 3.6) at 6 sites, Mandavu having 5 each in April and May (25/6).

Scopidae

Hamerkop *Scopus umbretta*: Summer: ranged from 1-5 at 10 sites (22/10).
Winter: singles at 6 sites, plus 17 at Biri Dam Fishing Site (23/7).

Phalacrocoracidae

Reed Cormorant *Microcarbo africanus*: Summer: 10 sites had a range of 1-23 birds (average 5.8), with high counts of 126 from Mazvikadei Dam and *c*.300 from Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary (484/12).
Winter: 1-12 (average 5.6) from 8 sites (45/8).

White-breasted Cormorant *Phalacrocorax lucidus*: Summer: low numbers of 1-13 (average 3.8) at 9 sites, Mandavu with 5 in January and 4 in February, then *c*.200 at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary (234/9).
Winter: 1-8 (average 3.5) at 3 sites, Mandavu having 3, 1 and 2 in April, May and July, respectively, then 30 at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary (44/3).

Anhingidae

African Darter *Anhinga rufa*: 1-4 at 7 sites, Mandavu with 3 in January and 2 in February, then 10 at Chinga Pan (27/8).
Winter: singles at Biri Dam Fishing Site and Mandavu Dam, the latter counted in April, May and July (4/2).

Burhinidae

Water Thick-knee *Burhinus vermiculatus*: Summer: 2-9 from 5 sites, Mandavu with 5 in January and 9 in February, and 9 from Masuma Pan/Dam, Hwange (32/5).
Winter: 1-11 at 5 sites, Mandavu with 8, 4 & 10 in April, May and July, plus 45 at Tambahata Pan (82/6).

Recurvirostridae

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*: Summer: low numbers of 2-8 from 7 sites, then 29 at Mandavu Dam in February, the January count there being 2 birds (55/7).
Winter: 1-47 (average 16.4) at 12 sites, Mandavu with 33, 45 & 19 in April, May and July, and Victoria Falls Sewage Ponds with 26 & 31 in two January counts (246/12).

Charadriidae

Kittlitz's Plover *Charadrius pecuarius*: Summer: only 2 each at Camp Hwange and David Whitehead Ponds (4/2).
Winter: 1-9 (average 5.4) at 3 sites, Mandavu counts being 1, 9 & 1 in April, May and July (27/3).

Three-banded Plover *Charadrius tricollaris*: Summer: 1-4 from 9 sites, Mandavu having singles in January and February (20/9).
Winter: 1-8 (average 3.8) at 10 sites, Mandavu with 1, 8 & 3 in April, May and July, and Victoria Falls Sewage Ponds with 2 & 3 in two January counts, plus 14 at Kadoma Textiles Dye Ponds (63/11).

White-fronted Plover *Charadrius marginatus*: Winter: 8 each at Muchaniwa Pan and Tambahata Pan (16/2).

Blacksmith Lapwing *Vanellus armatus*: Summer: 1-25 (average 8.8) from 17 sites, Mandavu with 14 & 15 in January and February (167/18).
Winter: 1-29 (average 7.2) from 24 sites, Mandavu 6, 21 & 29 in April, May and July, and Victoria Falls Sewage Ponds with 4 & 5 in two January counts (195/24).

White-crowned Lapwing *Vanellus albiceps*: Summer: 1 and 2 were at Chinga and Suni pans in the Save Valley, 2 at Camp Hwange (5/3).
Winter: 2-6 at 3 sites (14/3).

Crowned Lapwing *Vanellus coronatus*: Summer: 1 at Biri Dam (1/1).
Winter: 1-2 at 3 sites (5/3).

African Wattled Lapwing: Summer: 2 each at Hippo Pools camp and Monavale Vlei, with 12 at Kent Estate dams and 30 at Mazvikadei Dam (46/4).
Winter: 1-12 at 6 sites, plus 20 at Kent Estate dams (55/7).

Jacanidae

African Jacana: Summer: widespread with numbers ranging from 1-35 (average 7.3) at 22 sites, with 1 & 5 at Mandavu in January and February, plus 127 at Mazvikadei Dam (295/23).
Winter: 1-30 (average 7.5) at 21 sites. Mandavu had 5, 7 & 4 in April, May and July, and Victoria Falls Sewage Ponds had 3 on two January counts (180/21).

Scolopacidae

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*: Summer: only 11 at Camp Hwange, 21 at Mandavu Dam and 53 at Kadoma Textiles Dye Ponds (85/3).
Winter: 3 at Mandavu Dam in April (3/1).

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*: Summer: low numbers with 1-7 (average 3.2) at 5 sites (16/5).
Winter: 1 and 2 at Mandavu Dam and Aisleby Farm & Sewage Works in July (3/2).

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*: Summer: only 1-5 at 4 sites (10/4).
Winter: 2 at Kent Estate dams in July (2/1).

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*: Summer: 1-11 (average 4.1) at 10 sites, plus 20 at Kadoma Textiles Dye Ponds (61/11).
Winter: 1 at Suri Suri Dam in July (1/1).

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*: Summer: 2 at Camp Hwange (2/1).
Winter: 2 at Mandavu Dam (2/1).

Glareolidae

Three-banded Courser *Rhinoptilus cinctus*: Summer: 3 at Masuma Pan/Dam and 5 at Camp Hwange (8/3).

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola*: Summer: 1-4 at 3 sites (6/3).
Winter: 35 at Mandavu Dam in April (35/1).

Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni*: Summer: 2 at Suri Suri Dam, Chakari, is an interesting record (2/1).

Laridae

African Skimmer *Rynchops flavirostris*: Summer: 2 at Mandavu Dam in February (2/1).
Winter: Mandavu had 7, 2 & 10 in April, May and July, and Tambahata Pan had 5 in July (24/2).

Grey-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus cirrocephalus*: Summer: only 2 at Mazvikadei Dam but *c*.100 at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary (102/2).
Winter: 12 at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary in July (12/1).

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida*: Summer: 3-12 at 5 Hwange sites (31/5).
Winter: 7 at Mandavu Dam in April (7/1).

White-winged Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*: Summer: 7 at Nantwich Camp & Dam in February (7/1).
Winter: 1 at Mandavu Dam in May and 1 at Kent Estate dams in July 2/2).

Pandionidae

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*: Summer: 2 at Mazvikadei Dam in January (2/1).
Winter: 1 at Mandavu Dam in April (1/1).

Accipitridae

Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus*: Summer: singles at Kent Estate dams, Mazvikadei Dam and Suri Suri Dam (3/3).
Winter: singles and 4 sites, plus 3 at Aisleby Farm (7/5).

Long-crested Eagle *Lophaetus occipitalis*: Summer: 1 at Monavale Vlei and 2 at Mazvikadei Dam (3/2).

Lizard Buzzard *Kaupifalco monogrammicus*: Summer: 1 each at Kent Estate dams and Suri Suri Dam (2/2).

African Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus vocifer*: Summer: Ones and twos at 10 sites (Mandavu had 2 in January and 1 in February), then 8 each from Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary and Mazvikadei Dam (35/12).
Winter: Ones and twos at 12 sites, with Mandavu having 2, 1, & 2 in April, May and July, plus 6 at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary (26/13).

Yellow-billed Kite *Milvus aegyptius*: Summer: 2 each from Highacres Dam and Victoria Falls Sewage Ponds, then 12 at Camp Hwange (16/3).
Winter: 1 at Mvurachena Dam (1/1).

Meropidae

White-fronted Bee-eater *Merops bullockoides*: Summer: 6, 8 & 9 at 3 sites (23/3).
Winter: 2-6 at 5 sites (16/5).

Southern Carmine Bee-eater *Merops nubicoides*: Summer: 6 at Nantwich Camp & Dam and 60 at Camp Hwange (66/2).

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*: Summer: sparse this season with 3 at Chinga Pan, 20 at Monavale Vlei and 23 at Suni Pan (46/3).

Swallow-tailed Bee-eater *Merops hirundineus*: Summer: 1 at Suri Suri Dam (1/1).
Winter: 2 at Eiffel Flats Sewage Ponds (2/1).

Little Bee-eater *Merops pusillus*: Summer: 2-3 at 4 sites (9/4).
Winter: 1-8 (average 3.8) at 8 sites, Victoria Falls Sewage Ponds producing 3 and 4 in 2 July counts (34/8).

Alcedinidae

Malachite Kingfisher *Corythornis cristata*: Summer: only 1 at Hippo Pools and 39 at Mazvikadei Dam (40/2).
Winter: 1-2 at 3 sites (4/3).

Giant Kingfisher *Megaceryle maxima*: Summer: 1-2 at 4 sites and 6 at Mazvikadei Dam (12/5).
Winter: 1-2 at 7 sites (12/7).

Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis*: Summer: 1-6 birds (average 2.3) from 13 sites, Mandavu having 2 in January and 1 in February, and 23 at Mazvikadei Dam (55/14).
Winter: 1-4 at 14 sites, Mandavu with 3, 1 & 2 in April, May and July (32/14).

Brown-hooded Kingfisher *Halcyon albiventris*: Summer: singles at Biri Dam Fishing Site and Pongo Dam, Shangani Ranch (2/2).
Winter: 1-2 at 4 sites (6/4).

Woodland Kingfisher *Halcyon senegalensis*: Summer: 7 each at Chinga Pan and Suni Pan, Sango Ranch (14/2).

Alaudidae

Rufous-naped Lark *Mirafra africana*: Summer: 1 each at Kent Estate dams and Suri Suri Dam, Chakari (2/2).

Cisticolidae

Red-faced Cisticola *Cisticola erythrops*: Summer: 1-4 at 3 sites (7/3).
Winter: 1-3 at 2 sites (4/2).

Rattling Cisticola *Cisticola chiniana*: Summer: singles at 3 sites and 8 on Monavale Vlei (11/4).
Winter: 1 & 2 at 2 sites (3/2).

Levaillant's Cisticola *Cisticola tinniens*: Summer: 2 at Monavale Vlei (2/1).
Winter: 2 & 6 at 2 sites (8/2).

Croaking Cisticola *Cisticola natalensis*: Summer: singles at 2 sites and 4 on Monavale Vlei (6/3).

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis*: Summer: 2-4 at 6 sites (14/6).
Winter: 2 at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary (2/1).

Tawny-flanked Prinia *Prinia subflava*: Summer: 1-2 at 5 sites (7/5).
Winter: 2 & 3 at 2 sites (5/2).

Acrocephalidae

Dark-capped Yellow Warbler *Iduna natalensis*: Summer: 1-2 at 3 sites (4/3).
Winter: singles at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary and Mvurachena Dam 2/2).

African Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus baeticatus*: Summer: 2 at Ballantyne Park South and 5 at Monavale Vlei (7/2).

Lesser Swamp Warbler *Acrocephalus gracilirostris*: Summer: 2 at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary and 4 at Monavale Vlei (6/2).
Winter: 1-6 at 4 sites, plus 11 at Mvurachena Dam (26/5).

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*: Summer: 1-2 at 3 sites (4/3).

Locustellidae

Little Rush Warbler *Bradypterus baboecala*: Summer: 1 at Mazvikadei Dam and 2 at Monavale Vlei (3/2).
Winter: 2-4 at 2 sites, plus 14 at Mvurachena Dam (20/3).

Hirundinidae

Grey-rumped Swallow *Pseudhirundo griseopyga*: Summer: 5 at Monavale Vlei (5/1).
Winter: 10 at Mandalay Dam (10/1).

Lesser Striped Swallow *Cecropis abyssinica*: Winter: 3 at Victoria Falls Sewage Ponds and 4 at Eiffel Flats Sewage Ponds (7/2).

Wire-tailed Swallow *Hirundo smithii*: Summer: 2 at Monavale Vlei (2/1).
Winter: 1-6 at 5 sites, plus 14 & 16 at Victoria Falls Sewage Ponds over two July counts (49/6).

Rock Martin *Ptyonoprogne fuligula*: Winter: 2 & 5 at Victoria Falls Sewage Ponds on two July counts (7/1).

Brown-throated Martin *Riparia paludicola*: Winter: 15 at Butler Dam and 30 at Mvurachena Dam (45/2).

Muscicapidae

African Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*: Summer: 1 each at Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary and Monavale Vlei (2/2).
Winter: 2 at Butler Dam and 5 at Mvurachena Dam (7/2)

Ploceidae

Red-billed Quelea *Quelea quelea*: Summer: 2 on Monavale Vlei with *c*.20 & *c*.100 at Pongo Dam and Nantwich Camp and Dam (122/3).
Winter: 7-20 at 3 sites (39/3).

Note: Counting *Euplectes* spp. is difficult because breeding males are conspicuous but the females are not, and so their numbers are almost certainly underestimated and they may be altogether overlooked in winter.

Southern Red Bishop *Euplectes orix*: Summer counts from 3-52, the highest being from Monavale Vlei (141/7).

Red-collared Widowbird *Euplectes ardens*: Summer: surprisingly, only from Kent Estate dams and Monavale Vlei with counts of 7 and 41 (48/2).

Yellow Bishop *Euplectes capensis*: Summer: 1-20 from only 3 sites (27/3).

Yellow-mantled Widowbird *Euplectes macrourus*: Summer: only 2 from Kent Estate dams and 20 from Monavale Vlei (22/2).

White-winged Widowbird *Euplectes albonotatus*: Summer: more widely distributed with 4-20 (average 9.2) from 5 sites (46/5).

Spectacled Weaver *Ploceus ocularis*: Summer: 2 from Monavale Vlei (2/1).
Winter: 1 from Butler Dam (1/1).

Southern Masked Weaver *Ploceus velatus*: Summer: 1-4 from 3 sites and 18 at Monavale Vlei (26/4).
Winter: 9 from Mvurachena Dam and 30 from Butler Dam (39/2).

Village Weaver *Ploceus cucullatus*: Summer: 3 at Ballantyne Park South (3/1).
Winter: 3 & 4 from Kadoma Textiles Dye Ponds and Butler Dam 7/2).

Estrildidae

Common Waxbill *Estrilda astrild*: Summer: 1-3 from 2 sites and *c*.20 from Monavale Vlei (24/3).
Winter: 1-5 from 3 sites, plus 26 from Martin Spur Dam, Kadoma (34/4).

Orange-breasted Waxbill *Amandava subflava*: Summer: 9 at Kent Estate dams and 10 at Monavale Vlei (19/2).
Winter: 1 at Aisleby Farm and 8 at Mvurachena Dam (9/2).

Bronze Mannikin *Spermestes cucullata*: Summer: 10 at Kent Estate dams and 12 at Monavale Vlei (22/2).
Winter: 12 each at Martin Spur Dam and Aisleby Farm & Sewage Works (24/2).

Viduidae

Pin-tailed Whydah *Vidua macroura*: Summer: 1-3 from 5 sites (8/5).

Motacillidae

African Pipit *Anthus cinnamomeus*: Winter: 1 at Aisleby Farm and 2 at Mvurachena Dam (3/2).

Yellow-throated Longclaw *Macronyx croceus*: Summer: 1-6 from 5 sites (14/5).
Winter: 1-6 from 3 sites (9/3).

African Pied Wagtail *Motacilla aguimp*: Summer: 1-3 at 4 sites, which includes 2 at Mandavu in January and February, plus 16 at Mazvikadei Dam (27/5).

Fringillidae

Black-throated Canary *Crithagra atrogularis*: Summer: 2 at Monavale vlei (2/1).
Winter: 3 at Mvurachena Dam (3/1).

Brimstone Canary *Crithagra sulphuratus*: Summer: 1 at Monavale Vlei (1/1).
Winter: 1 at Butler Dam (1/1).

Table 1. Species recorded at only one site in in one season in 2022.

Species	Count	Date	Site
Harlequin Quail *Coturnix delegorguei*	2	22 Jan	Kent Estate dams
Natal Spurfowl *Pternistis natalensis*	5	22 Jan	Kent Estate dams
Shelley's Francolin *Scleroptila shelleyi*	2	22 Jan	Kent Estate dams
Fulvous Duck *Dendrocygna bicolor*	2	28 Jul	Hippo Pools camp
African Black Duck *Anas sparsa*	2	28 Jul	Highacres Dam
Cape Teal *Anas capensis*	8	23 Jul	Kadoma Textiles Dye Ponds
Lesser Flamingo *Phoeniconaias minor*	4	12 July	Tambahata Pan
White-rumped Swift *Apus caffer*	2	22 Jan	Kent Estate dams
Klaas's Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx klaas*	1	22 Jan	Kent Estate dams
African Finfoot *Podica senegalensis*	2	15 Feb	Hippo Pools camp
Streaky-breasted Flufftail *Sarothrura boehmi*	13	16 Jan	Monavale Vlei

Species	Count	Date	Site
African Rail *Rallus caerulescens*	1	9 Aug	Butler Dam
Corn Crake *Crex crex*	1	31 Jan	Camp Hwange
Baillon's Crake *Zapornia pusilla*	1	16 Feb	Biri Dam
Allen's Gallinule *Porphyrio alleni*	2	23 Jan	Chivero Bird Sanctuary
Great White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*	1	9 Jul	Kent Estate dams
Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*	4	23 Jul	Martin Spur Dam
Greater Painted-snipe *Rostratula benghalensis*	4	31 Jan	Camp Hwange
unidentified waders	4	9 Feb	Suni Pan
Temminck's Courser *Cursorius temminckii*	2	31 Jan	Camp Hwange
Marsh Owl *Otus capensis*	2	22 Jan	Kent Estate dams
Verreaux's Eagle-owl *Bubo lacteus*	1	9 Feb	Suni Pan
White-backed Vulture *Gyps africanus*	5	22 Jan	Kent Estate dams
Martial Eagle *Polemaetus bellicosus*	1	22 Jan	Kent Estate dams
Speckled Mousebird *Colius striatus*	1	9 Aug	Butler Dam
Half-collared Kingfisher *Alcedo semitorquaua*	2	9 Jul	Hippo Pools camp
Grey-headed Kingfisher *Halcyon leucocephala*	1	15 Feb	Mbonisa weir
Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis*	3	22 Jan	Kent Estate dams
Flappet Lark *Mirafra rufocinnamomea*	2	22 Jan	Kent Estate dams
Red-capped Lark *Calandrella cinerea*	1	22 Jan	Kent Estate dams
Pale-crowned Cisticola *Cisticola cinnamomeus*	2	16 Jan	Monavale Vlei
Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*	1	16 Jan	Monavale Vlei
Greater Striped Swallow *Cecropis cucullata*	1	16 Jan	Monavale Vlei
Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*	70	29 Jan	David Whitehead Ponds
Capped Wheatear *Oenanthe pileata*	1	23 Jul	Mandalay Dam
Yellow-crowned Bishop *Euplectes afer*	10	31 Jan	Reedbuck Vlei
Long-tailed Paradise-whydah *Vidua paradisea*	2	13 Feb	Nantwich Camp & Dam
Shaft-tailed Whydah *Vidua regia*	2	11 Feb	School Dam
Buffy Pipit *Anthus vaalensis*	2	21 Jul	Victoria Falls Sewage Ponds
Rosy-throated Longclaw *Macronyx ameliae*	2	22 Jan	Kent Estate dams
Yellow-fronted Canary *Crithagra mozambicus*	3	23 Jul	Eiffel Flats Sewage Ponds

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Appendix A

Sites covered in 2022 showing Month (1 = January, 2 = February, 4 = April, 5 =May, 7 = July, 8 = August). The symbol * indicates the site was over-flooded in the season indicated (s = summer, w = winter), while the symbol ** indicates a dry site. Ramsar sites are highlighted in bold font.

Name	District	Months	Name	District	Months
Aisleby Farm & Sewage Works	Bulawayo	7	Mandalay Dam	Kadoma	7
Ballantyne Park South (2 counts)**s	Harare	1	Mandavu Dam	Hwange	1, 2, 4, 5, 7
Bernard Mizeki Dam*s	Marondera	1, 7	Martin Spur Dam	Kadoma	7
Biri Dam*sw	Makonde	2, 7	Masuma Pan and Dam	Hwange	1, 7
Biri Dam Fishing Site*sw	Makonde	2, 7	Mazvikadei Dam	Zvimba	1
Butler Dam	Harare	8	Mbonisa Weir, Falcon College	Esigodini	2, 7
Camp Hwange	Hwange	1, 7	**Monavale Vlei**	Harare	1
Chinga Pan*w	Bikita	2, 7	Mpopoma Dam	Matobo	2
Chipinda Pools*s	Chiredzi	1	Muchaniwa Pan	Masvingo	7

Name	District	Months	Name	District	Months
Chitampa Dam	Matopos	2	Mvurachena Dam	Harare	8
Claw Dam	Kadoma	7	Nantwich Camp and Dam	Hwange	2
David Whitehead Ponds	Chegutu	1	Pasi Dam	Kadoma	7
Devon Dam	Kadoma	1, 7	Pongo Dam	Insiza	2, 7
Dwarf Goose Pan	Hwange	1, 7	Reedbuck Vlei*s	Hwange	1, 7
Eiffel Flats Sewage Ponds	Kadoma	7	Sandy Spruit Dam	Matobo	2
Greystone Park Nature Reserve	Harare	7	School Dam	Insiza	2
Highacres Dam	Esigodini	2, 7	Shumba Pans*s	Hwange	1, 7
Hippo Pools	Shamva	2, 7	Shumba pumped pan*s	Hwange	1, 7
Kadoma Textiles Dye Ponds	Kadoma	1, 7	Suni Pan**sw	Bikita	2, 7
Kent Estate dams	Norton	1, 7	Suri Suri Dam	Chegutu	1, 7
Lake Chivero Bird Sanctuary*	Zvimba	1, 7	Tambahata Pan	Masvingo	7
Lily Dam	Insiza	2	Victoria Falls Sewage Ponds (2 July counts)	Hwange	1, 7
Mahwe Homestead Dam	Insiza	7	Whitewaters Dam	Matobo	2
Maleme Dam	Matobo	2			

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On the History and Current Status of the South African Cliff Swallow in Zimbabwe

Ian C. Riddell

The South African Cliff Swallow *Petrochelidon spilodera* is an intra-African migrant that breeds in South Africa and winters in Gabon, Congo Republic and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The map in the Southern African Bird Atlas (Harrison *et al*. 1997) suggests that most birds migrate northwards through Botswana and Namibia. This species was not listed in early works on Zimbabwean birds (Priest 1935; Smithers *et al*. 1957) although the earliest record dates from 1954 (Collins 1954). Since then, there have been a number of reports from Zimbabwe, most presumably of birds on passage, but with one significant breeding colony being discovered at Headlands.

The Headlands Colony

This swallow is a colonial breeder and the Headlands colony was first mentioned by Hustler (1989) when a flock of between 50-60 was seen on 10 October 1987 by E. Urquhart. Williams (1991) visited in early November 1989 and reported breeding and confirmed that there was another colony at a second, smaller, bridge along the same road. Heavy rains after Christmas washed out the colony and human disturbance was recorded whilst they were breeding. On 23 December 1990 between 80 and 100 birds were present and breeding, which continued into February 1991 when about 40 nests remained occupied and many immatures were noted. On 12 February 1991 an estimated five birds were at one bridge and about 20 at the other. Some 80-100 were found on 30 October 1991 but only about 40 birds were present on 12 January 1992, by which time many nests had been destroyed (pers. obs.). Solomon *et al*. (1992) ringed six birds on this occasion and counted about 60 completed nests over the deepest water, which varied from mid-thigh to waist deep. The small bridge was also visited but virtually all the nests had been vandalised and no birds were present. Of interest is an extract from the journals of the late Alex Masterson, from December 1991, included after this note.

Some 50+ birds were found on 6 September 1993 (Tree, 1994) and about 150 birds on 13 November 1994, though destruction of nests by humans was also noted (pers. obs.). However, breeding numbers had reached an all-time high of 300-400 birds by 29 December 1994 (Tree, 1995).

Further records in Recent Reports documents the population in 1995-1997, where numbers reached about 80+**.** On 24 August 1997 about a dozen were found at the second bridge, but no birds were at the first one, which had been cleaned out, presumably by floodwater in the previous rainy season (pers. obs.). There were still no birds when the site was visited on 12 January 1998, and there were no remains of nests that might have been destroyed, and the underside of the bridge held only one small cluster of nests (Irwin & Tree, 1998).

There were no further reports until 18 September 2003, when no nests were found. The main site apparently suffered severe flooding in 1997 and it was not known whether birds have utilised this site since then. The stream was choked with reeds that reached the underside of the bridge, prohibiting a clear flight path. However, at least 50 were flying to and from nests under the smaller bridge (Baker, 2004).

The report of 120 birds at a bridge 9 km south of Headlands on 20 February 2004 presumably refers to the small bridge but nests were not checked as the water level was high (Baker, 2005). This trend continued in 2006 when birds were seen at the second bridge on 19 March, but none at the first one (Baker, 2007), but they returned to the main bridge in 2008, when about 35 were seen on 17 November (pers. obs.). Then, in early October 2009, at least 40 birds were at the first bridge (Baker, 2010). A solitary bird was seen near the second bridge on 13 October 2013, but none were found three days later (pers. obs.). There are no further reports from the site until our visit in 2022.

Although not measured, from memory the bridge itself was low level, perhaps 2.5m above the streambed, with vertical abutments forming two rectangular open tunnels separated by a solid pier wall. The swallows used to nest under the roof of the culverts. I use the past tense because the site no longer exists and a new bridge of the same design has been built 480m downstream. There is now a dam wall where the bridge stood; it is not known when this dam was built but it appears to be at least a number of years old.

I noticed this change on Google Earth in November 2022 and it was with much trepidation that we visited the site on 3 December. As mentioned above, the new bridge is of the same design. One culvert has bedrock of flat granite with some water flow around the pier, making it very accessible to human disturbance and predation, whilst the main water flow is through the other culvert. Although the latter is the safest option for nesting, we found no evidence of old or new nests under either culvert, though there appeared to have been a few nests of other swallows over the water in the inaccessible culvert.

We proceeded to the second bridge, 2.3 km further along the same road. This bridge is a single span over a smaller stream, thus much lower and one has to crouch down to look under it. There were no signs of old nests and the site is readily accessible to predators.

Other areas

Cliff Swallows have been recorded at a number of localities elsewhere in Zimbabwe (Figure 1) with the earliest being at a bird at Kasondi Drift, Umniati (Munyati) River, over the period 9-13 August 1954 (Collins 1954). Vernon (1962) reported on "a small breeding colony under a road bridge, 19 miles northeast of Bulawayo, out on the open Bembezi Flats, on 26 March 1961. This is the first breeding record and referred to in Anon. (1962). At least 18 birds were hawking around the site; and there were 10 complete nests under the bridge along the side of one wall, with a main cluster of 7 nests. Six nests were empty, but showed signs of having been used fairly recently but four were still occupied (1Y, 2Y, 2Y, all well fledged, and a clutch of two infertile eggs measuring 19 x 13.5 mm). There were several broken nest shells indicating that the species had built here last season, 1959-60, but they had not used this site before then as extensive swallow ringing operations, radiating out along all main roads from Bulawayo, had never encountered this species. Thus, one wonders for how long *H. spilodera* has been in the area." This site was abandoned after a few years and Brooke

(1974) probably refers to this record when he describes a bridge with "a gap beneath of less than 3 m".

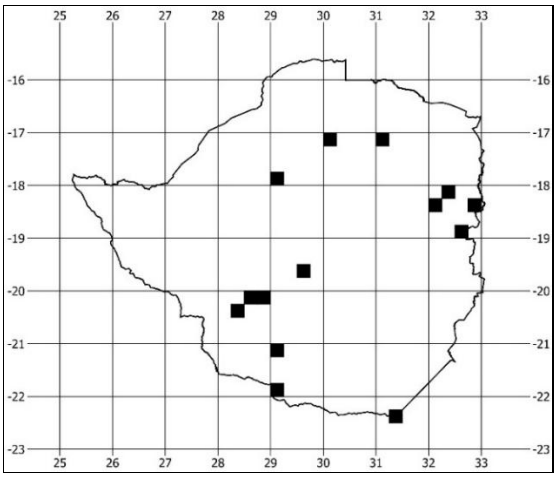

Figure 1. Past and present distribution of the South African Cliff Swallow in Zimbabwe, at quarter degree scale, from sources mentioned in the text

Earlé (1987) shows six localities in his Figure 1, all in south-western Matabeleland. These are probably reflected in Irwin (1981) who mentioned a colony on a small bridge 28 km west of Bulawayo on the Plumtree road, a small flock at the Khami railway dam in 1961 (though these could have been on migrants on southward passage), a flock of about eight birds at a bridge on the Bulawayo-Beitbridge road between Gwanda and West Nicholson on 15 February 1966, and one with other swallows and swifts at the Umgusa River bridge on the Victoria Falls road in October 1971 and 4 at Aisleby on 12 November 1977 (Webb & Gargett 1978). Donnelly (1985) included a January record for Matobo National Park, from data accumulated between 1970-78, but without the actual date or locality.

Relatively recent records are two sightings from south of Nyangani at Nyazengu (1832B4) with an unspecified number on 10 October 2000 and eight on 20 October 2000, accompanying Blue Swallows *Hirundo atrocaerulea* on both occasions (Childes, 2001). A juvenile was photographed at Mutare (1832D3) on 18 January 2021 (Baker, 2021). The most recent record is of *ca* 6 at the Vungu River bridge south of Gweru (1929D1) on 18 January 2023 (R. Dennison pers. comm.). This is a relatively low-level bridge with permanent water below.

Data from the Zimbabwe Bird Atlas (unpublished) shows birds occurring in quarter degree squares 1731A1, 1730A1, 1832A3, 1832A2 and 2129C3. This is at odds with SABAP1, which only shows two QDS, 1832A3 and 1832A2. The SABAP2 data includes a record in pentad 2220_3115 (2231A4) dated 29 August 2020. These records are summarised in Figure 1.

Discussion

The South African Cliff Swallow has occurred sporadically at a number of localities in Zimbabwe, possibly in the course of migration. In the few places it has bred the sites have at best only been used for a few years before being abandoned. The exception to this is, or was, the Headlands site which was used since about 1987 until it was destroyed. This is a sad loss indeed and it is not known if that population will adapt to the new bridge, and it is important that the site is monitored more diligently. We can't say for certain that this was the only long-term breeding site as local birdwatchers are thin on the ground and seldom venture into new or remote areas. There are many bridges around the country that are seldom or never visited by people able to identify this swallow, which also raises the question, why was the Headlands site the only one used continuously for over 30 years; what made it unique?

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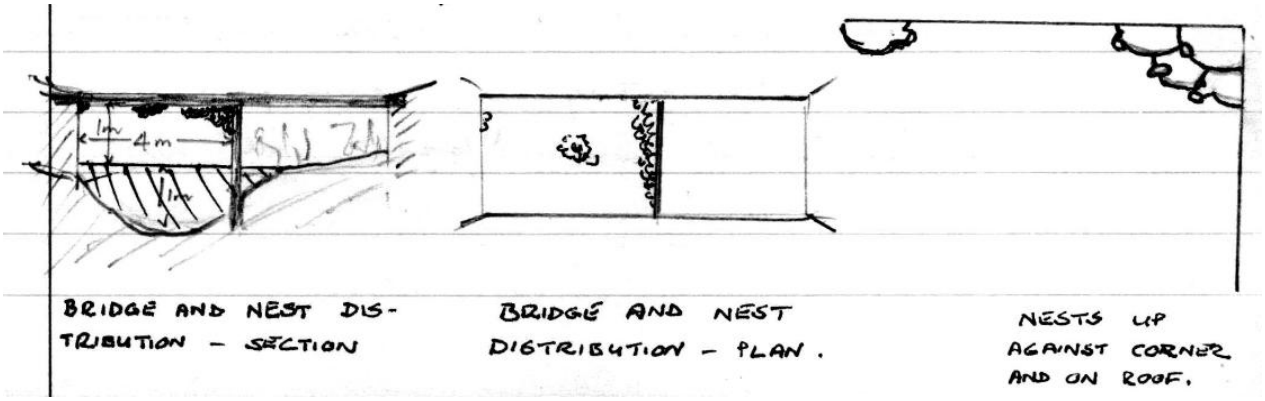
Appendix: A nest record of the South African Cliff Swallow, from the journals of Alex Masterson

Date: 17 December 1991
Clutch: 2 x 3: Incubation: fresh
Locality: *c*. 4 km south of Headlands
Collector: K Barry

Nests: Hemispheres of mud-pellets attached to underside of concrete road bridge (sketched below). Entrances encased in mud all around rather than up against concrete roof of underside of bridge. Some entrances restricted to an aperture in side of nest but many without short spouts. Very scanty lining of a few bits of what looked like shreds of hessian rather than dry grass and a few feathers – otherwise just a bit of sand.

Colony of 79 nests – at this time – under one of two spans of a low-level bridge/culvert over a stream in fairly open country with extensive areas of open grassland in the vicinity. Culvert dimensions and nest distribution as shown in sketches below. About 30 of the nests had chicks in various stages of growth, about 20 with eggs – mostly C2 + a few C1 (?incomplete).



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Whyte's Francolin and Others: More "New" Zimbabwean Species?

Brian Marshall

Hustler & Marshall (2022) drew attention to Stuhlmann's Francolin *Campocolinus stuhlmanni*, which had rather controversially been raised to a full species by Mandiwana-Neudani *et al*. (2019). Had this change been accepted it would have meant that most of the Coqui Francolins *C. coqui* in Zimbabwe would, in fact, have been Stuhlmann's Francolin and therefore a new species for the country. The reasons for rejecting it centred around the small number of specimens that were examined, the inadequate description of morphology and unreliable molecular analyses.

Further examination of the paper by Mandiwana-Neudani *et al*. (2019) has revealed other francolin species which, if accepted, would become yet more new species for the Zimbabwean list. The most important of these is the Zambian subspecies of Shelley's Francolin *Scleroptila shelleyi*, which Mandiwana-Neudani *et al*. (2019) recognised as a distinct species, Whyte's Francolin *S. whytei*. In this regard, they were following BirdLife International and the IOC World List (Gill *et al*. 2023). However, Dowsett *et al*. (2008) did not recognise it as a separate species but only as a subspecies of *shelleyi*.

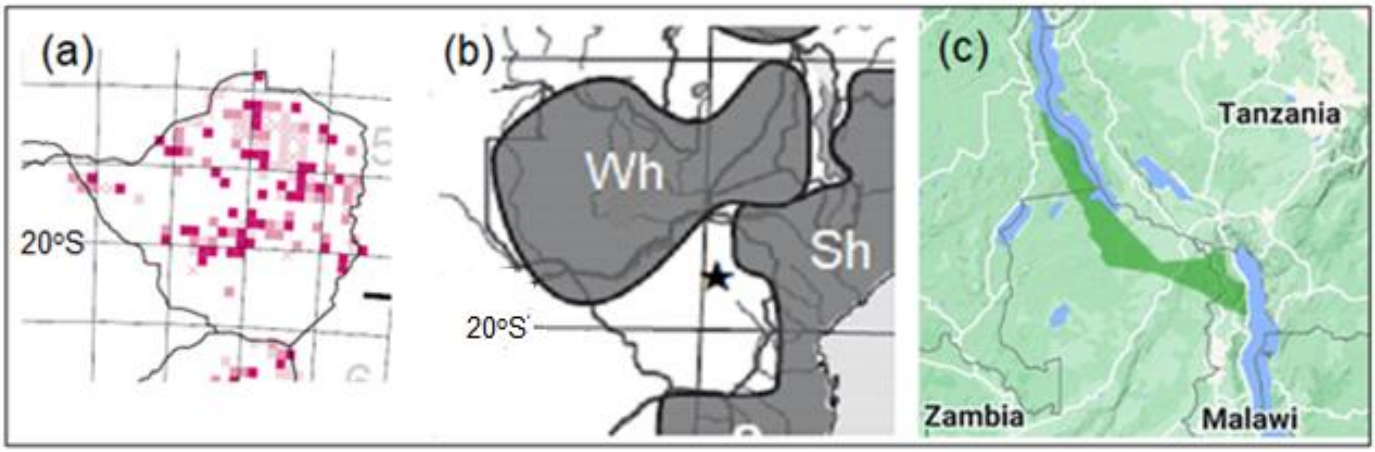

Figure 1. (a) The distribution of Shelley's Francolin in Zimbabwe according to SABAP; (b) the distribution of Shelley's and Whyte's Francolins in Zimbabwe and Zambia, according to Mandiwana-Neudani *et al*. (2019), Wh = *whytei*, Sh = *shelleyi*, ★ denotes the location of the type specimen of *shelleyi*; and (c) the distribution of Whyte's Francolin (dark green), according to BirdLife International (2023).

Shelley's Francolin was described by Ogilvie-Grant (1890) on the basis of a specimen collected by Thomas Ayres near the Umfuli (now Mupfure) River, with the type locality being restricted to Hartley Hills by Brooke (1975). It is widespread in Zimbabwe, mostly north of 20°S, as clearly shown by SABAP, the Southern African Bird Atlas (Figure 1a). It is largely absent from the Limpopo and Save valleys below 900 m (Irwin 1981).

The Zimbabwean distribution map of this species in Mandiwana-Neudani *et al*. (2019) is therefore wildly inaccurate, as it implies that this species is absent from most of the country above 20°S (Figure 1b) including even the type locality (18°11' S, 30°15'E). They also placed all Zambian birds into *whytei* which they raised to species level, naming it the Rufous-throated Francolin (they were evidently unaware of its older name, Whyte's Francolin). They extended its distribution to the north-western corner of Zimbabwe and the Zambezi Valley, which if accepted would mean that a new species should be added to the Zimbabwean list.

Its distribution in Zambia is also inaccurate because Dowsett *et al*. (2008) showed that Shelley' Francolin (not Whyte's Francolin) occurred throughout the country except on the Kalahari Sands along the Zambezi River in the Western Province. It is similarly absent from Kalahari Sand in the Hwange National Park, Zimbabwe (Hustler 1986).

Mandiwana-Neudani *et al*. (2019) relied heavily on the maps in Hall (1963) even though these were often imprecise and are now rather outdated, having been superseded by Snow (1978) and various regional atlases (see Hunter *et al*. 2021). Hall indicated that *whytei* occurred in north-western Zambia along the Zambian-DRC border but this is not indicated in more recent maps. The distribution map in BirdLife International (Data Zone, online) indicates that its range extends from northern Malawi, along a narrow strip of north-eastern Zambia and into the DRC along the western shore of Lake Tanganyika (Figure 1c). This is nowhere near Zimbabwe and there can be no justification for extending the range of Whyte's Francolin across Zambia and into Zimbabwe.

Mandiwana-Neudani *et al*. (2019) also included two other, less significant, additions to the Zimbabwean list. The first is Kirk's Francolin *Ortygornis rovuma*. This bird was formerly considered to be a subspecies of the Crested Francolin *O. sephaena* (e.g. Peters 1934; Hall 1963) but it was treated as a separate species by Roberts (1940) and McLachlan & Liversidge (1957). It reverted to a subspecies in later editions of "Roberts" and other works (e.g. McGowan 1994; Gill *et al*. 2023). Whatever the case, it occurs in the coastal lowlands of East Africa, down to central Mozambique. Mandiwana-Neudani *et al*. (2019) treated it as a distinct species and extended its range into the Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe, an area of unsuitable habitat where even the Crested Francolin does not occur. There are no records of Kirk's Francolin in Zimbabwe (Irwin 1981).

The second species is the Orange River Francolin *Scleroptila levaillantoides*, which was shown by Mandiwana-Neudani *et al.* (2019) to occur in central Matabeleland. It is widespread in Botswana, and there are some records from near the international border (SABAP) but, again, there are no records of this species in Zimbabwe (Irwin 1981).

It is disappointing to find such errors in a paper that should have been a significant revision of francolin taxonomy, especially as the authors claim that they used SABAP as a basis for their southern African distributions. They clearly misinterpreted SABAP as far as Shelley's Francolin is concerned, and there are several other mistakes, involving other francolin distributions, where SABAP has been misinterpreted. The errors, as far as the Crested and Orange River Francolins are concerned, could easily have been avoided had the authors consulted Irwin (1981).

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Some Observations of the African Mourning Dove in the Zambezi Valley

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Introduction

In the late 1980s to mid-1990s observations were carried out on the African Mourning Dove *Streptopelia decipiens* in and around Ruckomechi Camp (15º 50'S 29º 09'E) on the western boundary of Mana Pools National Park in the Zambezi Valley, Zimbabwe. Most of the findings presented here are from that area, though I have also drawn from observations throughout the valley and Lake Kariba after that period. The results of notes and recordings made of 2636 calls are presented here.

The Study Site

Ruckomechi Camp is situated on the northern edge of the floodplain of the Zambezi River under a mature stand of Apple-ring Acacia *Faidherbia albida* trees (Figure 1a). The stand sits on higher ground that was previously an island and seeds were probably deposited there in the droppings of visiting Savannah Elephants *Loxodonta africana* and after local flooding. These trees present a closed canopy woodland of some 2 ha with a bare sandy area of about ¼ ha in the middle (Figure 1b). Elephant feeding created a browse-line at around 10.5 m and through competition for light the trees reach to some 30 m in height.

The closing of the Kariba dam in December 1958 significantly altered the flood regime (Attwell, 1970; Guy 1981; Dunham 1989). One local effect was the drying up of the floodplain south of the camp and the establishment of an area of approximately 6 hectares of widely spaced mature, though younger trees, in a fringe from the east to south of the camp. Annual flooding now comes from the Rukomechi River, which enters the floodplain about 1 km southeast of the camp, though its extent varies according to the amount of rainfall in the river catchment in the Zambezi escarpment and settled area further south. Mature trees grow on the floodplain at the 'mouth' of the Rukomechi River just off the right edge of Figure 1(a), along the southern edge of the floodplain and scattered on the floodplain itself on higher spots of land.

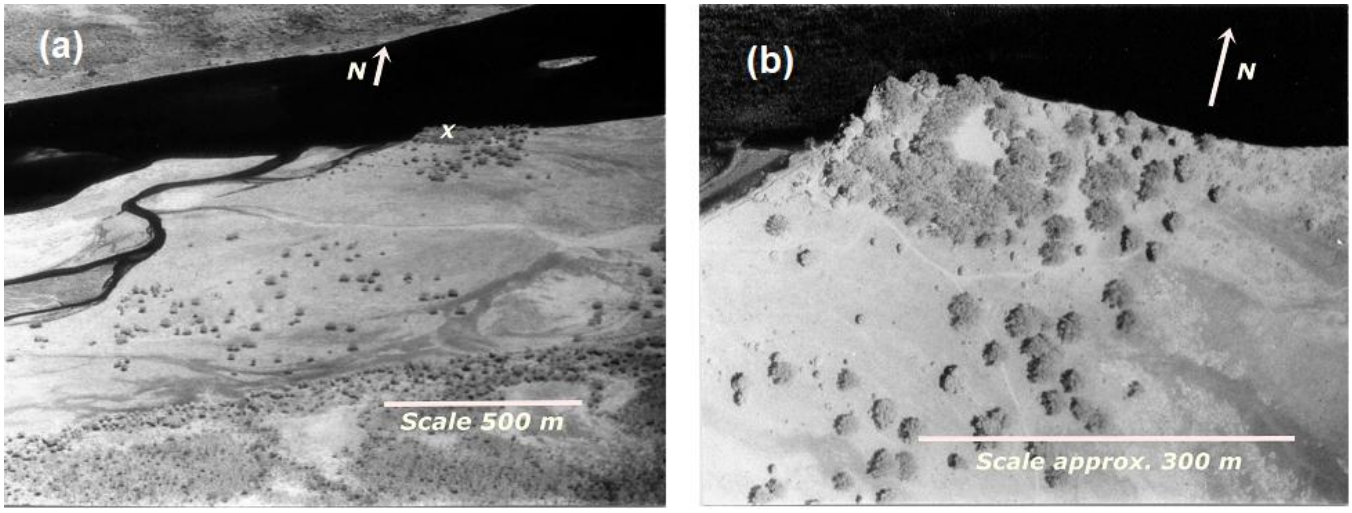

Figure 1. (a). Situation of Ruckomechi Camp (X) on the floodplain of the Zambezi River; (b) The *Faidherbia albida* woodland of Ruckomechi Camp. The main study area was centred around the clearing and north of the track, with scattered trees on lower ground to the south. Note: the scales in these figures are variable because of the perspective.

A small island 750 m northeast of the camp (top right in Figure 1a) was visited by elephants that left seeds in their droppings, which led to the development of a stand of young Apple-ring trees that came to be used by Mourning Doves from the camp. Although effectively created by elephants, this habitat was subsequently modified by their browsing. On the floodplains, elephants are also shrinking mature acacia stands by ring-barking, while the burgeoning Impala *Aepyceros melampus* and baboon *Papio ursinus* populations were largely responsible for seedling mortality. The annual Rukomechi River flood washes tens of thousands of seeds onto the floodplain channels but these new 'sprouts' are highly attractive to these animals and are systematically devoured within a month or two. Established saplings about.1 m high are able to survive on their root-stock for an extended period, being kept at a low height by the impala population, and are easily overlooked by the casual human observer. Later in the 1990s the impala population on the Ruckomechi floodplain dropped significantly over one rainy season, allowing saplings to make a growth spurt. Although the impala population returned to its high level the next year these saplings were now above browse height and two dense stands quickly established, one south of the camp and another a few kilometres downstream. These were later thinned by elephant browsing.

Status, Frequency and Movements

The African Mourning Dove is a localised breeding resident in the Zambezi Valley and probably has no far-reaching regular seasonal movements. However, during the rainy season there is a noticeable dispersal into other habitats that are, however, still essentially riparian, but not into pure *Colophospermum mopane* woodland where its presence may only be transitory. Its occurrence depends very much on favourable habitat and it favours developing or mature apple-ring acacia stands on the

floodplains. It appears to be localised in such areas downstream of the Kariba Gorge, even where trees are sparse or scattered and it will colonise sandy islands in the Zambezi River which support developing, bushy (*c*.2+ m) apple-ring acacias. Such dynamic islands are threatened by river erosion or clearing for subsistence agriculture in the Zambian sections of the river, and there is often disturbance from elephants that browse these developing areas, though they were partly responsible for introducing seeds to these islands in the first place. There was a considerable population of these doves at the Ruckomechi site with mature trees, but there were fewer of them 2 km upstream, where the new Ruckomechi Camp has subsequently been built, but there were none, or very few, at similar sites such as Nyamepi Camp at the time of this study, perhaps because trees were older. This changed later and in April 2001, there was a strong presence on newly developing islands with young acacia trees off Nyamepi Camp and midstream north of Chessa Camp, with many calls from the Zambian bank. This new habitat has kept birds in the area and they are now more readily found in Nyamepi Camp.

In the late 1980s to early 1990s birds were found in the A Camp area, upstream of Chirundu, and associated with developing trees on Nyamuomba Island and downstream to C Camp, and in March 1991 birds were in *albida* trees on the mainland *c*.800 m upstream of Vundu Point, where they persisted and were recorded again in 2004. In July 2007, birds were again found from Vundu Camp to *c*.3 km upstream and on midstream islands with young *albida* trees.

In August 1993, they occurred on Chikwenya Island in small, developing *Faidherbia* woodland with far fewer numbers on the mainland in mature woodland. In the area of Chikwenya Camp they were only found in mature woodland near the viewing platform. In October 2004, a population was noted in newly developed woodland upstream of and at the flood-regenerated tip of Chikwenya Island. They were recorded again in these upper island woodlands in June 2007.

In April 1994 many moved onto the large island opposite the Nyakasanga River mouth, which had bushy, developing trees. In that month birds were found on the Zambian side of the river, particularly on an island opposite Kakomomarara Island, which is just downstream of Kanyemba's Island, and at this time a population was also present in old trees just downstream of Chirundu itself.

Around 1997 the Ruckomechi Camp population was noticeably declining and in September 1999, when birds were uncommon in the camp, an assessment of the situation was carried out. At a site 2.73 km downstream a dense 7.3 ha stand of *Vachellia tortilis-F. albida* tree-bush savannah about 2-6 m high had developed on the floodplain, the vegetation being bushy from ground level. Trees were touching or very close at the northeast corner, more open further back from the river with *Chrysopogon nigritana* grassland and open bare ground. The population was not counted but alighting cries, series of single emphatics and normal calls heard from all parts indicated that many birds were present, along with Cape Turtle *Streptopelia capicola* and Laughing Doves *Spilopelia senegalensis*. The island was not checked. At the mouth of the Little Rukomechi (the name given to the stretch of river that crosses the floodplain, Figure 1a) a stand of about .6.6 ha was similar to that downstream, but with perhaps more *tortilis*, thicker in the southwest quadrant, with 2-12 m trees.

It is unclear what makes a site undesirable or why long-occupied habitat can suddenly become almost deserted but, at least in the Zambezi Valley, their attraction to newly developing island habitats may be a major contributing factor to its movements. After this study, the Nyamepi population increased in response to developing stands on adjacent islands, lending support to this theory. This attraction to young trees partly contradicts Tree (2015), who thought that the doves were not attracted to *albida* "in its early stages of growth nor later when it becomes fully mature and senescent." However, while there is likely some truth in the notion that fully mature and senescent stands are unattractive, it appears that younger stands are more attractive, leading to eruptive movements. At Rifa Camp, a small number of birds have occasionally been found in old trees on the floodplain, but a stretch of newer trees on the riverbank just downstream of Chirundu and on Bwarambwa Island was favoured once a stand developed. The high population at Ruckomechi may have been linked to the presence of human habitation combined with *F. albida*, hence their low population at the site 2 km upstream before the new camp was built there. Hubbard (2014) comments that F. Junor found that these doves were common at Mana Pools in the 1950s when people still lived there but disappeared after they were moved out.

Similarly, Howells (1985) found Mourning Doves to be exceptionally abundant in the Dande Communal Lands along the Manyame River where there were human settlements. They were also found in that area in February and April 2001 in open cotton fields and mixed *V. tortilis* woodland along the Manyame River and at Mushumbi Pools, and generally in that area in *V. tortilis* mixed open woodland (Riddell, 2009).

Over the period 1996-1999, Mourning Doves were found in *Combretum*/*V. tortilis*/*V. nilotica* mixed savannah and tree-bush habitat where the Sibilobilo River enters Lake Kariba. The acacias were emergent trees above the dense *Combretum* understorey, with the *nilotica* usually being flooded, dead tree crowns in the estuary and used by the doves for perching. They were occasionally found in *tortilis/Colophospermum mopane* tree savannah and, once, in short, open mopane scrub/*tortilis* on fairly bare soil, where they may have been moving through the area. There was some association with villages and the Sibilobilo fishing camp in the Omay Communal Land on the west side of the river and with a safari camp on the east side. This habitat was quite different to the *albiba* habitat in the Zambezi Valley below Kariba. In the mid-1980s Mourning Doves could be found at a mature stand of *F. albida* on the Manyoni River in the Sengwa Wildlife Research Area, Gokwe, a tributary of the Sengwa River that flows into Lake Kariba (pers. obs.), an area from which it was absent twenty year earlier (Jacobsen 1979). Birds were recorded in the Busi River floodplain area of Chizarira National Park in July 1996. The floodplain has extensive tracts of mature *albida* woodland but their status there is not known.

Description

The African Mourning Dove is described in detail in various publications (Rowan 1983, Urban *et al*. 1986, Hockey 2005). The adult male is larger and darker than the female. In the juvenile the bare skin around the eye is yellow with no contrast with the yellow eye. Body size is slightly smaller than adults. One adult had a broad grey stripe from behind the eye to the back of the head; the other side showed only a large blotch behind the eye.

Social organisation

Dispersion within the species

Though only reported as occurring singly and in pairs in Zimbabwe (Plowes, Smithers & Tree: in Rowan, 1983) group gatherings were found to be not unusual at Ruckomechi. As in East Africa, apart from roosting concentrations, these

congregations only appear to be food related. Groups of up to 20 birds congregated at artificial food sources such as the Ruckomechi rubbish pit and smaller groups on open ground such as the dirt road on the edge of camp and under the *albiba* stand where not induced by artificial supplies. In November 1990 two groups of 16 and 12 were noted on consecutive days, both feeding on the short *Cynodon dactylon* lawn.

Birds are known to roost alone or in pairs, and whilst this is certainly the case with breeding pairs or territorial holders, in November 1990 a semi-gregarious roost was observed on the small island some 800m NNE of the camp with bushy 4-6 m high *F. albida* where 20-25 birds were within a few feet of each other. At that time the population in Ruckomechi Camp was much reduced and many of the birds were seen to come from there; no nesting was observed during that period. By December numbers in the camp had increased again, as had breeding activity.

Similarly, in the early morning of 21 August 1992, there was very little calling in camp, with most of the population calling on the island.

Local population size

The population in the Ruckomechi area could only be roughly appraised from feeding aggregations, then adding on an estimate of other birds calling and seen flying about the camp and surrounding trees. In August 1990 the camp population was thus calculated to slightly exceed 40 birds, this being considered a fairly accurate assessment, giving a population density of *c.* 6.5 birds per hectare.

Relations with other species

Mourning Doves associated freely with Laughing Doves in feeding parties, while Cape Turtle and Red-eyed Doves *Streptopelia semitorquata* used the same nesting and roosting areas, although in both these activities the other species were in the minority. In one instance a Mourning Dove was calling on a branch when a Cape Turtle-dove flew in and hopped to the branch with an agonistic call. This caused the Mourning Dove to fly off. Certainly all four of these species occurred together and may have been competing at some level.

Daily cycle

Birds began calling with the 'dawn chorus' and were most active up to mid-morning and again in the late afternoon and evening when temperatures were cooler. They were most aggregated whilst in feeding groups that formed in the period leading up to mid-morning, such as the rubbish pit around mid-morning. Dispersal to other areas occurred thereafter with some remaining in camp calling intermittently through midday. Though bowing displays and conspecific interactions occurred at all times there was a noticeable lull during the hottest period of the day.

Behaviour

Allopreening

Allopreening, i.e., mutual preening by two individuals, can have a hygienic function, but more often strengthens pair bond formation and reinforcement, and also has an appeasement, courtship and reproductive function. In some cases, reciprocal allopreening by Mourning Doves lasted for up to five minutes, interspersed with bouts of autopreening (i.e. individuals preening themselves) and usually ending with more autopreening. There were occasional changes of branches during the period. A lot of calling came from adjacent trees, including bowing displays/calls.

In another example a pair came together with alighting calls (also preceding observation) and engaged in reciprocal allopreening. Size difference was pronounced, male the larger; male preened female the most, but she did reciprocate to a noticeably lesser degree. The interaction period was *c.*4 minutes. Both flew away afterwards. These were examples of pair-bond reinforcement, not mating.

Allopreening frequently occurs before and after mating as pair-bond reinforcement. In one instance, observation of a pair had just started, the male preening the female. Preening may have been reciprocal before this but was not seen. The female hopped along a branch in a bowing-like posture, the male pursuing her, then returned. Male moved further out along the branch shortly afterwards.

In a January observation involving towering and mating, a female landed in the tree and the male approached, giving the bowing call. He landed close and approached the female, who accepted his advances. A little hopping around branches was followed by reciprocal allopreening. Within one minute the male mounted and mated, both giving excitement/alighting calls. Some auto & allopreening followed with both moving along the branch quite a lot. Female flew off within 3 minutes of mating.

Voice

Three types of songs and calls are generally recognised; the advertising song, the bowing call and the alighting or excitement call. The advertising song differs from other calls in being more elaborate in structure and in functioning in the processes of territoriality, advertising and stimulating a mate. Other calls tend to be simpler and of short duration, functioning in contexts such as signalling danger, contact, aggression or solicitation of feeding (del Hoyo *et al*. 1997).

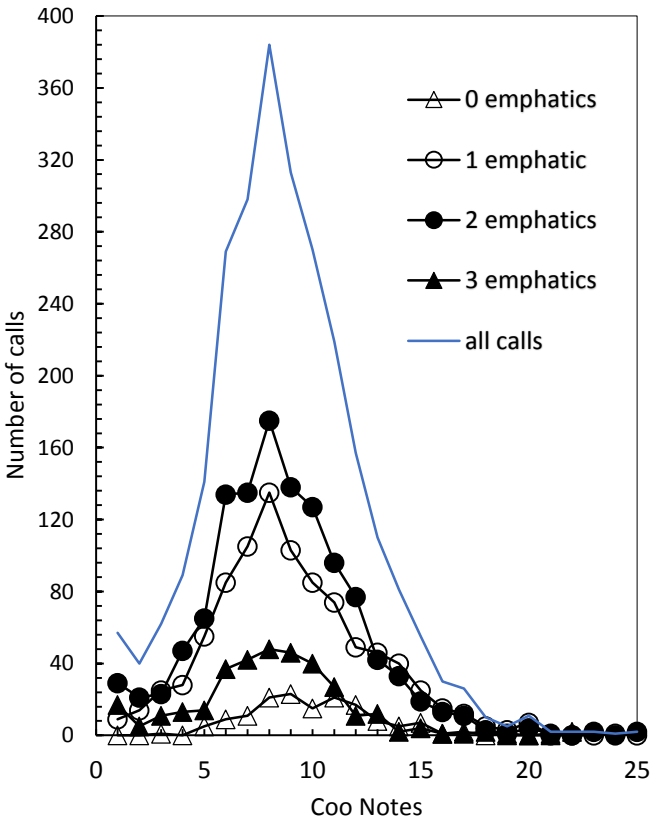

Figure 2. The frequency distribution of advertising calls in relation to the number of emphatics, range from 0 to 3; calls with 4-5 emphatics are not shown since their frequency was too low (maximum = 5).

1. Advertising call

This usually starts with a double emphatic note, *OO-KROOOO*, given from 1 to 5 times. Often the first double emphatic was preceded by a soft double coo which is not heard from a distance, thus '*oo-oo OO-KROOOO*' etc. The first double emphatic may be more emphasized than the second when given only once or when preceding a longer series, e.g. *O-OO KROOOO, OO KROOOO*, etc., or vice versa when only two double emphatics are given, *OO KROOOO, O-OO KROOOO.* This is followed by 1 to 25 double or treble *COO OOO-OO* notes.

On average, emphatics preceded eight *coo* notes (Figure 2). No emphatics were recorded in 5.6% of the calls, while calls with four and five double emphatics accounted for only 1.1% and 0.2% of calls respectively. Thus, 93.1% of calls were preceded by one to three double emphatics. Furthermore, a particular individual has no set composition though there is a tendency towards a particular number of double emphatics followed by either a high or low number of coos (Table 1). Note the short call before towering, which was a *forced abbreviation* caused by the necessity to display at that moment.

Table 1. Extract of successive advertising call sequences from five Mourning Doves. The first number represents the number of Double Emphatics followed by coo notes. ♦ call sequence interrupted to perform Towering Display, the bird landing back in the same tree.

⇐	1:13	2.13	2:90	1:4	1:14	1:11	0:14	1:13	1:13	1:14	1:15	1:15	1:10	1:14	1:18	1:17	2:8	1:1	♦	2:13	3:13	⇒
⇐	2:9	2:9	2:10	2:2	2:12	1:9	1:6	1:12	1:10	1:12	1:11	1:12	1:12	1:10	1:4	1:12	1:11	1:15	1:6	1:12	1:11	
⇐	2:7	1:6	2:9	2:7	1:6	2:9	2:7	2:9	1:8	1:10	2:6	2:8	4:0	3:0	3:8	3:8	1:8	1:8	2:11	1:9	⇒	
⇐	1:9	2:1	1:7	2:1	1:0	1:0	1:0	1:0	3:1	4:?	3:0	1:0	6:0	5:0	erratic emphatics thereafter							
⇐	3:0	1:0	1:0	1:0	1:0	1:8	1:6	2:8	4:5	2:10												

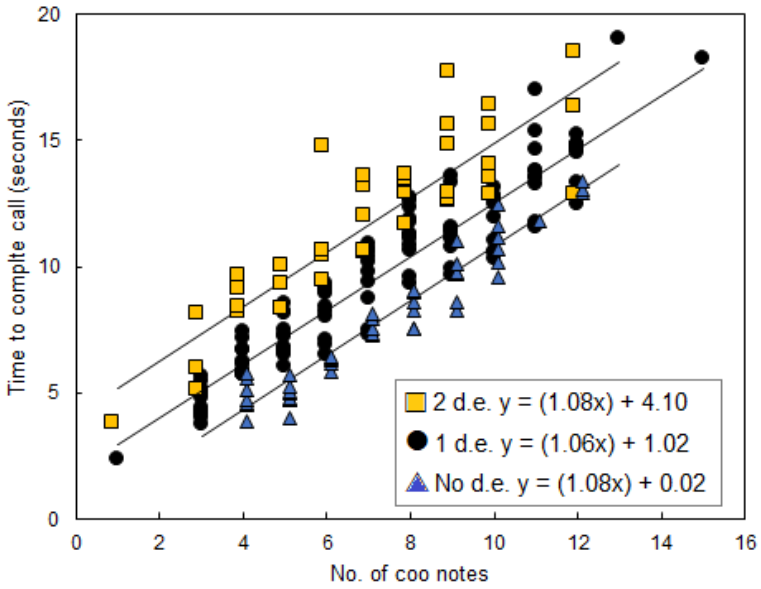

Figure 3. Variation in the time taken to complete calls with two double emphatics ('d.e.'), one double emphatic or no double emphatics. The trend lines are all highly significant ($P < 0.001$).

Clearly defined double coos are also relatively uncommon as many apparent double coos have a diminished 3rd component that may be inaudible from a distance. There is also a noticeable individual variation in the tempo of comparative calls: one caller completed 2 double emphatics within 1.5 s, considered a fast tempo, sometimes followed by a third at a more normal tempo or he continued with the rest of his call. Variation also exists in the pitch of calls, this being more readily detectable to the human ear in birds with a 'high voice.'

One bird gave a good example of variation. Some calls began with the soft double coo (a relatively usual feature), and then 1-2, sometimes 3, double emphatics followed by 9-14 *coo ooo-oo* notes. He was also noted for launching straight into a series of coos without emphatics in response to neighbouring callers (January 1990).

The call rate is variable and influenced by conspecific presence and activity of both other males and females, and also by the time of day, i.e. there is generally less calling around midday. Males may be need to perform bowing calls and displays and engage in mating activities.

The intervals between calls was used to illustrate call intensity. A male calling for just over 5 minutes from 08h36 to 08h41 (7 September 1991) had a consistent call rate with 23 calls with an average interval of 5.1 s, broken after 117 s with a pause of 50.4 s, then continuing with 4 more calls with an average interval of 8 s. He then paused again at 297.4 s for 98.2 s, continuing with 5 more calls with an average interval of 8.2s. He flew to another part of the tree at the end of the observation.

Another male called for 17 minutes 57 s from 17h25 to 17h57 (25 September 1991) starting with an average interval of 4.3 s for 28 calls. This was interrupted by a rapid confusion of calls involving another dove, during which time the male was suspected to perform a towering display, causing a pause of 45.8 s. This disruption was followed by longer intervals averaging 19.8 s over 4 calls followed by some loss of data until 7 minutes 12 s, when the male gave an alighting call. For the remainder of

the observation the intervals were significantly longer than the beginning sequence, averaging 21.7s, ending when the male chased the intruder that had been calling in the next tree since *c*. 4 minutes into the observation.

In a longer sequence of 35 minutes from 08h47 to 09h22 (7 September 1991) involving 143 calls the bird called at a steady rate with 24 calls with an average interval of 3.3 s in the first 1 minute 16.8 s. He then paused for 217.8 s, resuming with 12 calls with an average interval of 7.3 s. A pause of 15.9 s was followed by 15 calls with an average interval of 5.8 s, then a pause of 22.9 s followed by 13 calls with an average interval of 8.3 s. Following a pause of 38.5 s the rate increased with 17 calls with an average interval of 3.5 s. A pause of 11.1 s was followed with 4 calls with an average interval of 3.3 s, another pause of 10.1 s followed with one call and then a longer pause of 43.9 s. Thirty-five calls followed with an average interval of 4.5 s, then 5 more widely spaced calls with an average interval of 11 s and a pause of 27.4 s. Four more widely spaced calls, average interval 9.6 s, followed by a pause of 23 s showed a significantly slower call rate and the interval steadily increased with the last four calls separated by 45.7, 70.4, 141.2 and 103.2 s, respectively.

The advertising call is also given at night, especially when there is a bright moon. One calling bird can stimulate the whole surrounding population into responding, though calling usually dies down fairly quickly.

The time taken to complete calls varies with both the number of *coo* notes and the number of double emphatics (Figure 3). Thus, with no double emphatics a 4-note call would take about 4 seconds while a 12-note call would take about 13 seconds. With one double emphatic the same calls would take about 6 and 15 seconds, respectively, and with two double emphatics these calls would take about 8 and 17 seconds. The general trend for the three types of call are almost identical, with a one-second difference between none and one double emphatic and a two-second gap between one and two double emphatics.

However, there is considerable variation in the times taken to complete calls, with some overlap of the different categories (Figure 3). A single male (Figure 4) tended towards the double emphatic trend in short calls (*c*. 4-5 seconds) but single emphatics for longer ones (*c*. 11-12 seconds).

Not represented in this sample (Figure 2) is the single *OO KROOOO* note. This is heard as a general background call given intermittently by a large percentage of the population and is taken to represent a low intensity advertising/contact call by resting birds or to a mate. This call tends to pass unnoticed by the observer in amongst the other calls and can elevate to full advertising calls in response to increased conspecific activity. On 9 April 1994, 226 advertising calls and 610 *O-KROO* notes were recorded in one session.

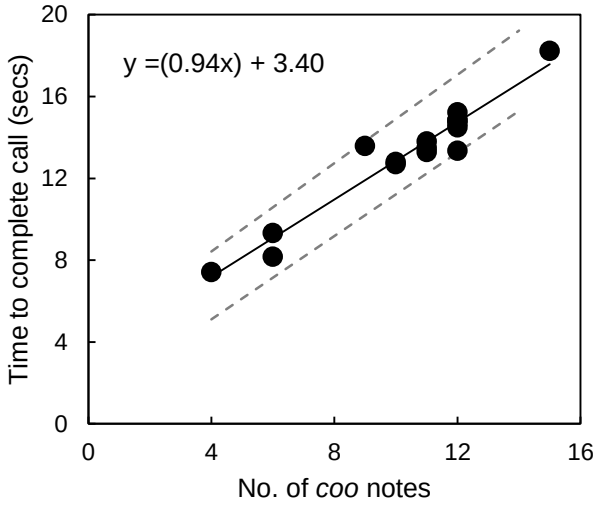

Figure 4. The time taken by a single male to complete its calls beginning with one emphatic, 25 September 1991. The grey broken lines represent the trend lines for the double (upper) and single emphatics (below) and the individual trend line is significant ($p < 0.01$).

The variation in calls can be compared with a recording from East Africa (Table 2). This call consisted of two emphatics followed by seven coo notes, the whole lasting about 13 seconds. In this sample such a call took under 12 seconds. As recorded by North & McChesney (1964), the song or 'advertising call' has two parts: the first, repeated twice, consists of two emphatic notes, the second a growling trill rather than a coo; and it is followed by a rapid series of seven double or treble coos. The whole phrase lasts about 13 seconds, and is pitched between G sharp and C (above middle C), as under.

Table 2. Reproduced from Rowan (1983), based on a recording from North & McChesney (1964).

OO	*KRROOOOOO*	*OO*	*KRROOOOOO*	*oo*	*oo-o*	*oo*	*oo-o*	
/	/	/	/	/		/		/
1	2	3	4	5		6		7 secs
B	G to F	B	G to F	B	C-B	B	C-B	

2. Bowing call

The bowing call is the same double emphatic which precedes the advertising call, repeated up to seven times. As described by North (1964), it is a *coo* followed by a purring note, repeated at intervals of just under one second (Rowan, 1983). The interval between notes is variable, even during the same call, sometimes making it difficult to decide what constitutes one sequence. One bird had an average of 15 s between calls over a 3-minute period but latter intervals of up to 30 s were also recorded. Goodwin (1967) also found considerable variation in bowing calls (Rowan, 1983).

A bird giving the bowing call can be influenced by a close neighbour giving an advertising call into responding likewise, indicating that the switch from a bowing to an advertising call can be determined by external aural (and probably visual) stimuli; in this case, a response to competition. Better understanding is required to decide if one or a number of double emphatics is a bowing call or an advertising call cut short, though there is a difference in posture.

However, the bowing call is recorded as being made by the male in most species, though female Mourning Doves also perform it. The basic posture adopted by the caller separates the bowing call, which has one function, from the bowing display, which serves another (see displays below). In the bowing call the bird remains stationary and does not bob or bow whilst calling, the body is held at an angle (which varies) and the head and bill point downwards; the whole throat and neck are inflated when calling. At the same time the tail is flicked forwards and

the wings are flicked or fluttered slightly between the double notes, this being more pronounced when calling to a nearby mate than when alone.

In one instance the male flicked his wing tips almost continuously, even when calling, probably because of proximity of the female about 25 cm away. When she moved about the male's excitement increased and the call interval decreased. Such body movements are a physiological feature of many birds during their calls, caused by the force of expelled air.

Bowing calls may serve to bring the female to the male's side and in one case she sat against the male and gave five bowing calls, two simultaneously, the remainder antiphonally (November 1990).

In another instance a male, female and an immature were resting in a tree with very little activity, although the female was preening more than the others. The immature was about 40-50 cm from the female while the male was about 2-3 m away, mainly resting and sleeping. After 40 minutes into the observation he flew to within 1 m of the female and gave a bowing call, but was ignored, then returned back to near his original position, without an alighting call. He then flew up into the canopy where he moved around giving bowing calls in response to another bird in the tree that was also giving occasional bowing calls.

A caller may turn to face a nearby dove, thereby directing his call specifically to the other.

3. Alighting call

This is a pleasant-sounding growling note such as one might make from the back of the throat, described by Rowan (1983) as trilling from about D sharp down to B above middle C. Also called the excitement call, these two terms can be separated by circumstances, i.e. whether the bird is alone or interacting with a conspecific. What would be better described as an excitement call was once heard from a bird in flight as he descended from towering, when another flew past at a distance of some 5 m (January 1990). The alighting call is almost always given on landing, though a male carrying nesting material only gave the call once at the nest. In agonistic encounters the excitement cry is particularly strong and prevalent, particularly from the dominant male, whilst the subordinate male will occasionally leave it out.

Once when six ground-feeding birds on the lawn were disturbed by a human, they flew up but none gave alighting calls.

Calling cycles

In April 1994, an apparent calling cycle was observed. From quiet, birds rapidly built up to maximum participation; this then died down gradually to quiet again. Cycles appear to be stimulated by: (1) a change in general man-made noise levels, a sudden increase of which could disturb birds or make them move. This movement causes interactions and calling but apparently without displacing the birds, although the noise itself appears to rouse neighbouring ones. (2) Dispersal from tree areas. A general movement away from the trees leaves fewer birds to interact or invade territories and the remaining birds settle and quieten. Daily movements to feeding and watering areas are an example of such movements. (3) The return of large numbers to the trees, such as disturbance from feeding areas, for example, is a significant releaser and causes sudden calling throughout the trees. Often a single bird starting to advertise causes others nearby to advertise, and so on throughout in a chain reaction.

Fighting and aggression

Fighting takes place on a branch or on the ground and does not always lead to serious contact. Lateral postures are often adopted with the wings and shoulders hunched up, the feathers along the back, particularly the upper tail coverts, being raised and the tail spread. The collar may be erected. From this position the defender may then hop sideways, which will often cause the intruder to move or fly away. If the intruder remains he may jump at the opponent and the encounter escalates into a fight with wing-flailing.

In one such ground-based contest both birds were silent throughout; the interloper eventually fled with the other in pursuit. In a similar encounter two males on the ground were fighting as a female stood close by. This involved bowing displays, hopping and excitement calls; the female flew up into a tree, but the males continued fighting on the ground with wing flailing. The female gave an advertising call from the lower branches of the tree. The fight was short and after about 30 seconds one male flew off.

In trees the territorial male may actively chase the other around the canopy, occasionally landing on him for up to 3-6 seconds if he is slow to take off, and engaging in wing-flailing. The excitement cry is customarily given by the territory holder and usually, but not always, by the intruder. The bowing call, with or without the bowing display, is interspersed in these engagements.

Occasionally males (?) in feeding groups act aggressively, usually when another bird approaches too closely. Reactions vary from subtle and mild (slight posture with hunched back) to forceful with raised back feathers, hopping and bowing with or without bowing calls and short chases.

Alighting or excitement calls may be used against other bird species and on one occasion were very forcefully used to drive away a White-browed Coucal *Centropus superciliosus*, a potential predator of eggs and chicks, from a tree.

Breeding

Breeding records were kept from Ruckomechi from 1988 to 1991. Eggs and chicks were recorded from March to December and mating in January 1989, with suspected breeding in January 1990 and 1991. No records were obtained from any February because the camp was empty during this part of the rainy season, but breeding was likely to have continued. The African Mourning Dove can thus be said to breed in all months, but most records were recorded from April to September (1988-90) with a peak in June (all years).

Displays and Mating

Bowing Display

The display is variable, depending on the degree of excitement or agitation and to whom it is directed. It can be *high* or *low intensity* in an agonistic context towards intruding males (and females?) and *high* or *low intensity* in an epigamic context towards a mate preliminary to mating. Thus the display is used to exclude conspecifics from the breeding area at any stage during the breeding cycle, or as part of the reproductive behaviour to indicate the male's readiness to mate.

This display occurs in a perched Mourning Dove as follows: at the top of his rise the male stands with the body held vertically with the chin tucked in and the head and beak pointing downwards. The whole neck and throat are inflated and the hind collar may be fully everted and standing proud of the general neck contour. It is believed the more intense breast colour of the male is used to accentuate the display. During this inflating he is either silent if the bowing display is low intensity, or makes a

fairly soft stress/intensity related *kwork* by sharply inhaling if *high intensity*. He rises to the full stretch of his legs and bows down to the near horizontal (*high intensity*) or with only the forepart of his body and more shallowly (*low intensity*), then makes the bowing call. There is no vocalisation during the raising or lowering of the body.

The male may walk or hop in an exaggerated fashion towards the intruder or he may display from a stationary position; more data are needed on the degree to which the collar is erected in these displays. Bowing is usually done in a tree but when collecting nesting material on the ground about 40 m from the nest one individual gave a full bowing display to an intruder, advancing with hops. Once the intruder moved away the male resumed collecting material. In another instance, both doves with a newly started nest were in a neighbouring tree about 28 m from the nest. An intruder who landed in this tree was chased with a bowing call and approach from one of the pair.

His advance may be silent or he may stop occasionally to give the bowing call or display. In agonistic encounters the dominant bird may not be satisfied with a show of submission (posture?) if the other bird remains close and will often continue bowing in an attempt to force the latter's departure. Instead of flying off the intruder may only move off a short distance, say a little further along the branch, or may not move at all. The refusal of the intruder to withdraw usually causes the dominant bird to perform displacement activities or leads to fighting.

Towering Display

The towering display is a characteristic of *Streptopelia* spp. and serves a territorial and epigamic function. In unpaired males it may indicate reproductive condition and help to attract a mate. Towering has previously not been described in the African Mourning Dove. The height attained before descent appears to be less than that described for the Cape Turtle and Red-eyed Doves, which is given as a 'considerable height' in Rowan (1983). Towering in the African Mourning Dove is usually below 10-15 m above the canopy before a descending glide with wings and tail rigidly outspread. The glide is usually fairly shallow and in an arc to land in a nearby (within 50 m) or sometimes the same tree, and in these respects it closely resembles the towering flight typical of its genus.

In one flight a bird executed a 90° turn when about to land and continued for 60-80 m to a further tree, the last part of the flight necessarily almost horizontal. In another low ascent to about 5 m the dove literally parachuted in order to land on the same branches. He hopped to the female and mated, giving the excitement call when hopping off, and the pair separated within 30s. Another bird flying between trees decided halfway across the open to tower, flapping up very half-heartedly to not more than 2 m above his flight path, which was slightly concave. This shallow rise resulted in a slightly convex path in the middle of his flight.

Whilst descending from towering another dove gave the excitement cry as another male flew close by. Instead of landing he flew in pursuit. The alighting call is always uttered on landing.

The towering display sometimes precedes mating and in these cases its purpose may be to reinforce the pair-bond and for territorial advertising rather than for pair-formation. It is Page: 23
not known if Mourning Doves are monogamous, in which case towering would be used to reinforce the pair-bond. It is also not known whether the male breaks close contact with his mate to tower, or flies up from another part of the breeding area. Both situations probably occur.

The male is often kept very busy having to perform consecutive towering displays in close succession when other males enter his breeding area, which may be followed by bowing displays if they don't leave and mating if the female is present. An example of such activity involved a relatively low towering display after which the male flew 50 m to another tree, landing with the alighting call. When, after a few minutes, a second dove landed on the original tree with an alighting call, the first male towered again and landed back on the original tree about 2 m from the 'intruder', giving the alighting call. He performed a bowing display with a half bob, indicating that his level of agitation may not have been great. The second dove did not react but flew off after about 30s to another tree 60 m away. The first followed and landed on the other side of the tree but there was no further interaction, perhaps indicating that the distance between them was sufficient. About 5 minutes later a female landed in the tree and the principal male approached, giving the bowing call. He landed close and approached the female, who accepted his advances. A little hopping around branches was followed by reciprocal allopreening; within one minute the male mounted and mated, both giving the excitement/alighting call. Some auto- and allopreening followed whilst were moving along the branch quite a lot. The female flew off within 3 minutes of mating.

Mating

Towering may be the only preliminary to mating or there may be none at all. In one instance a pair landed on a dead tree in the river and copulation followed immediately, though what activity had occurred beforehand was not seen. Bowing is sometimes performed as a preliminary to mating. As towering sometimes precedes mating, so may allopreening, with the male preening his mate or with reciprocal allopreening.

Mounting may follow within one minute of allopreening though occasionally there were no preliminaries. Either or both birds may give the excitement cry when dismounting; alternatively, both may remain silent. In one case the female hopped away with a bowing posture (an appeasement display) then returned, the male moving further away shortly afterwards. This is usually followed with auto- and/or allopreening. The pair can be quite active following mating and move around their branch or to those nearby during preening. On the other hand, they quite often separate shortly after mating, within as short a time as 30 seconds not being unusual and typically within 3 minutes. Either one or both may fly off and the male may 'chase' the female through the tree afterwards.

Reciprocal allopreening certainly occurs at other times divorced from mating but whenever it occurs it no doubt serves to reinforce the pair bond. Bouts went on for as long as 5 minutes and autopreening always followed.

Nesting

All nests in Ruckomechi Camp all nests were in mature *Faidherbia albida* trees, usually situated on the outer and lower branches, but above the elephant browse line at an average of *c*.10.5 m. The majority were a typical *Streptopelia*-type platform of twigs, usually rather flimsily constructed so that the contents were almost visible from below. The female remains on the nest positioning and repositioning material and in one case was seen to reposition about10% of the material placed by the male.

The material used for nest construction consisted of fruit stalks, small to medium length twigs up to 40 cm long, leaf and bare leaf petioles from *F. albida*, and dried weeds and grass. The proportion of these materials was variable, though most

nests were constructed of a mixture of twigs and stalks, then petioles followed by finer material such as weeds and fine grass as lining. Details of a nest constructed in June 1990 are given in Riddell (1998), where the proportion of material was; stalks 63.9%, twigs 21.7%, unidentified material 0.3%, dry leaves 2.1%, and petioles 2.1%. One nest was unusual in that it was made completely from grass.

Most nesting material was collected from trees with some from the ground. In one case a male collected all material from open ground, never from trees. The male is responsible for the selection of material. In trees he breaks off small twigs and petioles and if suitable carries it back to the female for placement. The delivery of material usually entails no delays, but a male was seen to perch for up to 7 minutes 54 seconds with a stalk in his beak before passing it to the female (Riddell, 1998). On the ground his selectivity is quite noticeable as he tests for suitability by tugging at, and handling, pieces by passing them back and forth through the bill. Many are rejected, apparently being too large or unwieldy or, in the case of grass, because it was too firmly attached to the ground. On return to the nest the alighting call was not usually given.

Egg shells were usually not removed from the nest area and were more frequently simply pushed out of the nest; many nests were located this way.

The incubation period was not established. Both sexes incubate the eggs. In one infrequently monitored nest an egg shell was found on the ground beneath a nest on the morning of 24 May 1988, indicating hatching on 23-24th. The hatching date of the second chick was not recorded but on 5 June the difference in size of their protruding tails was obvious and the first chick was more active and at midday it was perched on the edge of the nest and wing-flapping. Both were preening by this stage. Feeding was silent. On 7 June the larger chick was out of the nest standing on the branch and moving about, the other occasionally standing up in the nest. On the morning of 8 June there was no sign of the chicks and predation was assumed. At 16 days the larger chick must have been close to fledging.

Food

The diet was presumed to be grass and weed seeds. No items could be readily identified from the birds feeding on the lawns, bare dirt road or rubbish pit area, but weed seeds are likely from the last two sites. Large seeds of the fever-berry croton *Croton megalobotrys* were fed to chicks in June-July 1987 (Riddell, 1992). It was not recorded if they ate *F. albida* seeds, but they ate the seeds of the castor oil bush *Ricinus communis* in the Dande Communal Lands (Howells 1985).

In December 1992, 16-20 were on the lawn in Ruckomechi Camp for over an hour where the attraction was wingless *Hodotermes* termites. A few Cape Turtle and one Red-eyed Dove were in the feeding party. In April 1994, birds on the dirt road south of Ruckomechi breaking up turreted soil dumps brought up by *Hodotermes* termites may have been eating termites or something else in the soil.

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SHORT COMMUNICATIONS

A Green Wood-hoopoe with an Exceptional Bill

In recent months a small flock of Green Wood-hoopoes *Phoeniculus purpureus*, usually 4-6 birds, have regularly visited my garden in Mandara, Harare. They perform their backwards and forwards rocking dance in various trees making their raucous calls. One bird, in particular, regularly visits the tree on which I hang my bird feeders. It has an unusually long beak compared to the others, and I wondered if this was useful when delving into cracks to find items of food that might be out of reach for birds with normal bills.

Its long bill is clearly shown in the photographs below.

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Editor's note: The bill of birds is covered by a horny sheath, the ramphotheca. It is made of keratin, which, like our fingernails, grows continuously and is worn down while feeding. The bill of the wood-hoopoe described above had obviously not been worn down, but it was clearly able to find food and also preen its plumage.

This was probably not the case for a male Common Scimitarbill *Rhinopomastus cyanomelas* collected by Richard Brooke in April 1971 at Crowborough, Harare. Its upper mandible was deformed and had grown around to penetrate the face just below the left eye, which had probably been blinded by it (Brooke, R.K. 1975. *Honeyguide* No. 82: 39). It was in active moult and weighed 28 g, which Brooke thought was well within the range for this species and concluded that it had no problems in feeding. However, according to Maclean (1984. *Roberts' birds of southern Africa*, 5th edition, p.39) the weight of this species ranged from 28-41.5 g, so it must have had problems in feeding since its weight was at the lower end of the range.

Brooke also noted that it was very dishevelled, probably because it was unable to preen. It is possible that this deformation was the result of an injury and it is difficult to see how this individual could have survived for long.

Field Observations

June to November 2022

C.T. Baker

The severe 2022 European summer drought seems to have forced some Palearctic migrants to leave for their southern wintering grounds earlier than usual. Birds noted here well ahead of normal arrival dates included a **Common Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus*, **Common House Martins** *Delichon urbicum* and a **Eurasian Golden Oriole** *Oriolus oriolus* (see below).

There were few reports of significant early rainfall. Up to 23 mm fell on Harare on the evening of 24 October and heavy storms dropped over 80 mm on Victoria Falls on both the 1st and 11th of November. Vulpro South Africa reported the poisoning of about 150 **vultures** in August in separate incidents at Chobe, Botswana, and Kruger NP, South Africa. According to their records over 2000 vultures have been killed in the last 10 years in Botswana alone. There are far-reaching repercussions to these staggering losses as breeding pairs are being lost and orphaned chicks do not survive. Whilst flocks of over 100 **White-backed Vultures** *Gyps africanus* continue to be recorded here, there is no room for complacency. The 2000 or more deaths in Botswana cannot be assumed to relate only to 'Botswana' birds. Our vultures are regional and travel vast distances. All southern African countries share populations and so are all affected.

A technical problem caused the omission of the following paragraph from Field Observations for the December 2021 to May 2022 period in the last edition of *Honeyguide*.

Flocks of early-departing **European Bee-eaters** *Merops apiaster* flew north at altitude over Mount Hampden in the last week of February (JWh). A **Madagascar Bee-eater** *M. superciliosus* was seen on six consecutive days during December at Simwenge Lodge, Deka (1826 B1) (CC). During the same month four **Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters** *M. persicus* were just outside Harare on the Mazowe road on the 12th (JeF) and three were on the Matetsi River Lodge concession (1725 C4) on the 19th (CB). A huge flock of **Southern Carmine Bee-eaters** *M. nubicoides* at Msampa Bay, Bumi (1628 C4) on 29 April is interesting, not least because they were breeding in vertical holes in the bank (SE). Whilst only horizontal hole nesting is mentioned by Hockey *et al*. 2005. *Roberts' birds of southern Africa*, VIIth ed., p. 196, they nested on flat ground in Chizarira in December 1994 (Solomon, D. & Alexander, S. 1995. Carmine Bee-eaters breeding on flat ground in Chizarira National Park. *Honeyguide* **41(3)**: 173). An unseasonal **Swallow-tailed Bee-eater** *M. hirudineus* record came from Masoka on 17 January (MZ).

Where reference is made in the text to the Atlas it refers to Harrison *et al*. 1997. *The atlas of southern African birds* and not to the current SABAP2 exercise. Records submitted by Ian Riddell from input to SABAP2 are identified with the observers' initials. Reports have also been obtained from BirdLife Zimbabwe's WhatsApp sites and other social media.

The symbol † denotes a Quarter Degree Square in which the relevant species was not recorded in the Atlas nor subsequently in *Honeyguide*.

New Zimbabwean Record

A female **Lesser Frigatebird** *Fregata ariel* photographed at dusk in Chisipite, Harare (1731 C3†), on 5 October (PZ) was probably driven from the coast by strong easterly winds. This is the first record of this species in Zimbabwe.

Rarities

A **Palm-nut Vulture** *Gypohierax angolensis* was found in the Bubye Valley Conservancy (2130 C1†) on 24 September (MBr). There is only one other record from the Beitbridge area, that being at Sentinel Ranch (2229 B1) in 1990 which, incidentally, is the only record in the Atlas for the country as a whole. Elsewhere one was at Mteri Dam, Chiredzi (2131 B3†), on 17 October (CS) and a sub-adult at Sango, Save Valley Conservancy (2032 A4†), on 24 November (J-MB). Two **Red-necked Falcons** *Falco ruficollis* were on Ilala Palms at Chikwenya, Mana Pools (1529 D1), on 27 June (CJ) and they were recorded again at Katiyo, Honde Valley (1833 A3), in October (PZ) and twice in November (MS, PZ). Singles were at Kavinga Safari Camp, Mana Pools (1629 A2), on 14 November (DB) and on Chamabonda vlei, Victoria Falls NP (1725 D3), on the 22nd (CB).

A **Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea* at Hornbill House, Aberfoyle Tea Estates, Honde Valley (1832 B4), on 30 November was most unusual, both for its scarcity and for being found well out of expected habitat on a powerline over the tea plantation (IR).

Waterbirds and Allied Species

Fifty or more **Great White Pelicans** *Pelecanus onocrotalus* were on a pan near Bomani Lodge, Ngamo Forest (1927 A2), from 8 to 12 June (GT). Three were in Mana Pools NP (1529 C2) on 25-26 June (BL), up to 60 were at Kariba Bream Farm (1628 D2) on 10 July (CN) and about 44, a quarter of which were juveniles, were at Sian Simba Camp, Zambezi NP (1725 D3), on 16 September (CB, JB). Numbers on the top dam on Kent Estate, south of Norton (1730 D3), ranged from three to 14 between 27 July and 18 November (GT). At Tambahata Pan, Gonarezhou (2132 A4), six on 9 August (TM) increased to 16 on 27 August and 36 by 25 September (NM). Breeding by **Pink-backed Pelicans** *P. rufescens* in Zambezi NP this year was suspected but not confirmed. On 15 October at least six were close to their 2019 and 2020 nesting sites near Victoria Falls River Lodge (1725 D4) (BMa).

A **White-breasted Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax lucidus* at Ngweshla Pans (1927 A1†) on 22 September (JV) was a scarce record from southeast Hwange NP, and 20 or more were at Mteri Dam, Chiredzi, on 17 October (CS). **Goliath Herons** *Ardea goliath* are solitary in nature so six together at Musango, Lake Kariba (1628 C4), on 3 October was unusual (SE). One was at Lake Chivero (1730 D4) on 13 November (RD). Two **White-backed Night-herons** *Gorsachius leuconotus* on the Save River at Sango (2032 A2†) on 30 November (J-MB) were slightly north of previous records. The first **Dwarf Bittern** *Ixobrychus*

sturmii of the season was at Monavale vlei, Harare (1731 C3), on 29 November (JM).

Wintering **White Storks** *Ciconia ciconia* included 14 at Cawston Block Wildlife Ranch (1928 C2) (SN) and two over the Chegutu rubbish dump (1830 A1), both on 7 July (DK), and one at Mandara, Harare (1731 C3), on 22 August (JBa). Single **Black Storks** *C. nigra* were at Hippo Creek, Zambezi NP (1725 D4), on 12 June (CB), at Chenje Camp, Chewore South (1629 B2), on 26 August (NN) and at Henderson Research Station, Mazowe (1730 D2), on 28 August (JP); two near Norton (1730 D3) were heading towards Harare on 28 September (SGH). A pair is resident in the Bally Vaughan Game Park, north of Harare (1731 C2), and probably nests in the gorge above Mermaid's Pool (GP).

An **Abdim's Stork** *C. abdimii* was overwintering at Kariba Airport on 2 June (DK). Somewhat unusual was a **Woolly-necked Stork** *C. episcopus* on Art Farm, Teviotdale (1731 C1), on 30 November (DS). There is a December 2017 record of one nearby at Wild Geese Lodge. About 80 **African Openbill** *Anastomus lamelligerus* were at Suri Suri Dam, between Chegutu and Chakari (1829 A2), on 20 August (*The Babbler*). Two **Saddle-billed Storks** *Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis* in the Deka Camp area, Hwange NP (1825 D2†), on 31 August (JV) were further south than expected in the park. An adult and a juvenile were at Widgeon Pan, Felixburg (1930 B4), on 6 September (J-MB) and an adult male was at Sian Simba Camp (1725 D3) on 16 September (CB).

Eighty-one **Marabou Storks** *Leptoptilos crumenifer* were at Victoria Falls sewage ponds (1725 D4) on 7 July (CB). Among *c.* 150 at Irvine's Game Farm, Harare South (1830 B2) on 11 August, some had illegible pale yellow wing tags (PT) and a similar number on Kent Estate on 29 October remained overnight (GT). 64 on Sable Park Farm, Chegutu (1830 A1), on 23 October were the most seen there for four years (DK). 70 overwintering **Yellow-billed Storks** *Mycteria ibis* were at Chirundu (1628 B2) on 12 June (TN).

African Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus* were some distance out of range in the Masoka area, Zambezi Valley (1630 A1†), at the end of November (EN). A **Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* also seemed in new territory at Makwa Pan, Hwange NP (1827 C3†), on 19 September (SA) although they are known from adjoining squares. **Hadeda Ibis** *Bostrychia hagedash* were reported from southeast of Bulawayo near Esigodini (2028 B4†) in August (HM) and three scratched in the sand at the dry Chitampa Dam, Matopos (2028 C2†), in October (JBr). Apart from Aisleby Farm in years gone by, there have been very few records from the wider Bulawayo area.

Four **Lesser Flamingos** *Phoeniconaias minor* were at Tambahata Pans on 9 August (TM). Two **African Spoonbills** *Platalea alba* were in the atypical habitat of a pool on the Pomona refuse dump, Harare (1731 C1), on 19 June (DS). As many as 20 plus a fledgling were on the upper reaches of Claw Dam, Kadoma (1829 B4), on 13 August, where thousands of **White-faced Ducks** *Dendrocygna viduata* were also seen (*The Babbler*). These ducks have a regular flight path over the Ballantyne Park area, Harare (1731 C3), and on 19 July about 200 were counted (DWi). **Fulvous Ducks** *D. bicolor* were well out of range in the Kennedy area of Hwange NP (1827 C3†) in mid-November (NH).

A huge gathering of about 700 **Egyptian Geese** *Alopochen aegyptiaca* was at Kazuma Pan NP (1825 B3) on 16 September (DS) and in mid-October (RB). Around this time, they and other waterfowl were active on Country Club Golf Course, Harare (1731 C3), moving between whatever wet patches still remained (IR). Two **Cape Teal** *Anas capensis* were at Mbiza Pan, Hwange NP (1827 C3), on 18 July (DSm). Two **Hottentot Teal** *A. hottentota* pairs were on Mandalay Dam, Kadoma (1829 B4), on 6 August (*The Babbler*), four were at Mteri Dam, Chiredzi, on 17 October (CS), and in Hwange NP singles were at Kennedy 2 Pan (1827 C3) and Ngweshla (1927 A1) on 7 November (CB).

Six **African Pygmy Geese** *Nettapus auritus* were at J.H. Butler Farm dam, Harare South (1731 C3), on 9 August (IR). Flocks of **Spur-winged Geese** *Plectropterus gambensis* numbering at least 275 flew along the river in Zambezi NP, Victoria Falls (1725 D4), on 8 October, about 125 of them settling on one sandbank (CB, JB).

Raptors

Two **Secretarybirds** *Sagittarius serpentarius* were at the Vungu River, near Gweru (1929 D1), on 6 September (SGH).

Jabulani Safaris, Shangani (1929 C4), has become an important refuge for **Cape Vultures** *Gyps coprotheres*. One was there on 28 July, a juvenile on 2 August, two adults and three juveniles on 16 and 26 August respectively, and another juvenile on 30 November (LT). An adult was near Mbiza Pan on 12 September (SA). 112 **White-backed Vultures** *G. africanus* were on a giraffe carcass at Cawston Block on 12 August (SN) and one bearing tag A724 was on a lion kill at Malilangwe, southeast lowveld (2131 B2), on 20 August (AH). 88 at a Rifa Camp, Chirundu (1628 B2), vulture watch on 6 November (NG, IR) was the largest number reported from there for several months. On 13 November, 120 plus another 50 about 700 metres away were on eland carcasses on the Bubi section of Nuanetsi Ranch (2130 D3) and ten were on a kudu a few kilometres north in QDS 2130 D1 (CS).

Lappet-faced *Torgos tracheliotos* and **White-headed Vultures** *Trigonoceps occipitalis* reported together were 12 and three at Jabulani Safaris on 8 July (LT), four and two at Rifa on 2 August (NG) and four and six at Cawston Block the following day (SN). In November, two **Lappet-faced** were at Rifa on the 6th (IR) and at Kent Estate (1830 B1) on the 18th (GT), and a **White-headed** female flew over Kennedy 1 Pan, Hwange NP (1827 C3), on the 8th (JB).

The only reports of **Yellow-billed Kite** *Milvus aegyptius* breeding activity were of one carrying sticks about 60 km from Victoria Falls on the Kazungula road (1725 C4) on 22 September (CB) and two mating at Masuma Dam, Hwange NP (1826 C2), on 29 September (NN). A **Bat Hawk** *Macheiramphus alcinus* at the Nyamuni River, Matusadona NP (1628 D3†), on 23 October (AJ) indicates a slight extension of range on Lake Kariba. The Collins Avenue, Chisipite, pair produced their first chick for many years in November (JBa).

A pair of **Wahlberg's Eagles** *Hieraaetus wahlbergi* took over a **Black Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter melanoleucus* nest at Hogerty Hill, Borrowdale (1731 C1), in the second half of August (BL), interesting breeding behaviour not mentioned by Hockey *et al*. 2005. *Roberts' birds of southern Africa*, VIIth ed., p. 537. Four **Booted Eagles** *H. pennatus* were reported, three of which were outside known areas. Pale morph birds were near Iganyana Tented Camp, Dete vlei (1826 D2†), on 6 October, at Balu ARDA Estate, Bulawayo (1928 D3), on 15 November (JV) and at Kavinga (1629 A2†) a day later (DB), this being a scarce Zambezi Valley record. An unclassified bird was at Sentinel Ranch, Beitbridge West (2229 A2†), on 6 November (VB). Single **Ayres's Hawk-eagles** *H. ayresii* were on Katiyo Estate on 28 October (PZ) and at Cecil Kop on 16 November (GD). A **Long-crested Eagle** *Lophaetus occipitalis* at Gayiseni Campsite (2132 A4) on 12 August (TM) was an infrequent Gonarezhou record.

Normally only single **Southern Banded Snake-eagles** *Circaetus fasciolatus* are reported, so of significance was a pair displaying around Aberfoyle Golf Course on 15 October (MS). **Western Banded Snake-eagles** *C. cinerascens* in new or unusual areas were a pair on the Umfuli River, Chegutu (1830 A1†) on 11 June (JWh), singles on the Zambezi between Little Kariba and Devil's Gorge (1726 D4†) on 19 June (CB) and at Kanyemba (1530 C2†) on 22 November (GD), and two at Kavinga (1629 A2) on 23 November (DB).

Eight **Bateleurs** *Terathopius ecaudatus* soared above Mabalauta, Gonarezhou (2131 C4), on 24 August (DMacD) and one was at Musango (1628 C4) on 20 October where rarely seen these days (SE). Numbers were low during a 4-6 November visit to Rifa Camp with an unclassified bird over Marongora (1629 A1), an adult male near Chirundu at the 342 km peg (1628 B2) and two different immatures over camp during the vulture watch (IR). Five at Kavinga on 23 November included a cream morph and a juvenile (DB).

At the Mukuvisi Woodlands **Black Sparrowhawk** nest site, one was on the nest on 24 July (JP) and by September two youngsters had been seen, one of which was eating prey on the nest on the 8th. Cattle Egret and Rock Dove feathers were below a plucking tree (IR). Two **African Marsh Harriers** *Circus ranivorus* were at Marlborough Ponds, Harare (1730 D4), on 27 November (BL) and nearby at Komani Farm (1730 D2) on the same day an adult **Montagu's Harrier** *C. pygargus* flew over the vlei (IR).

Four **Ospreys** *Pandion haliaetus* circled together over Musango on 10 October (SE), individuals with red rings numbered 8G0 and 732 were in Zambezi NP on 4 August and 8 October respectively (GC), and one at Kanyemba (1530 C2†) in mid-October (AT) denoted movement downstream. Three circled over Mazvikadei Dam, Banket (1730 A2), on 10 November, calling as they did so (BM). Ospreys are usually silent in southern Africa according to Hockey *et al*. 2005. *Roberts' birds of southern Africa*, VIIth ed., p. 473.

A **Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus* was seen on Odzi Farm (1832 C4) on 7 October (MBr). A breeding pair of **Lanner Falcons** *F. biarmicus* was at Gosho Park on 20 August. In Harare, pairs on communication towers at Country Club on 29 September and 4 October and in Borrowdale (1731 C3) on 15 October may have nested on those structures (IR) and one hunted in the Mount Pleasant area (1730 D4) on 18 November (TC). A **Taita Falcon** *F. fasciinucha* in the gorge at Danger Point, Victoria Falls rain forest, on 6 November (SC) follows 2018 and 2021 records from the Falls gorges.

Small numbers of **Greater Kestrels** *F. rupicoloides* are known to move into the north-western edges of Harare in the dry months but it is many years since they were last recorded. One at Stapleford Farm, Mount Hampden (1730 D2), on 6 July (JWh) is therefore worth noting. Single **Dickinson's Kestrels** *F. dickinsoni* were at Mbiza Pan, Hwange NP, on 18 July (DSm) and in the Masoka Camp area on 23 November (GD).

Gamebirds, Rails and Cranes

A **Crested Francolin** *Dendroperdix sephaena* was a surprising visitor to the Ruwa-Goromonzi area (1731 C4†) in September (MBf). Also unusual were **Natal Spurfowl** *Pternistis natalensis* in Newlands in October and November (IR). An extraordinary **Blue Quail** *Synoicus adansonii* record from Mana Pools National Park (1529 C4†) at the end of September (BH) is almost certainly the first Zambezi Valley record. These seldom-reported summer migrants normally occur during the rains so this early individual was moving south. A small flock of **Crested Guineafowl** *Guttera pucherani* was at Chizarira NP entrance gate (1727 D2) on 17 August (SH).

A nice **Kurrichane Buttonquail** *Turnix sylvaticus* sighting was a noisy chick following a parent on Borrowdale vlei (1731 C3) on 18 August, and one was on a marshy area at Wamba Dam, Aberfoyle (1832 B4), on 30 November (IR). A **Wattled Crane** *Grus carunculatus* at the Kent Estates dam from 25 August to 14 November was seen by various observers.

Burst water pipes on Monavale vlei continued to provide suitable habitat through the dry months for **African Rail** *Rallus caerulescens* that were noted on 24 August and 3 September. Some also persisted through to November in the centre of a wet area on Borrowdale vlei (IR). An **African Finfoot** *Podica senegalensis* on Tokwe-Mukosi Dam (2030 D4†) on 24 August (BE via BL) may be the first record from there. A **Kori Bustard** *Ardeotis kori* south of the Runde River at Chipinda Pools (2131 B4) on 9 September (KvL) was an uncommon Gonarezhou record.

Waders, Gulls and Terns

The only **Lesser Jacana** *Microparra capensis* reported was at Widgeon Pan on 21 November (J-MB). At Nyamandhlovu Pan, Hwange NP (1826 D4) on 17 July, a male **Greater Painted Snipe** *Rostratula benghalensis* was unusual in short grass that offered little cover (JV) and one was on Chamabonda vlei, Victoria Falls, on 16 November (SC).

Palearctic migrants on Lake Kariba were two **Common Ringed Plovers** *Charadrius hiaticula* on mudflats at Musango on 4 October (SE) and a small flock of **Caspian Plovers** *C. asiaticus* at Fothergill Island (1628 D1) on 14 November (DC). On the Zambezi, single **Long-toed Lapwings** *Vanellus crassirostris* were at Mana Pools on 25-26 June (BL) and Chirundu on 13 August (TN), and two were at Lake Manyame on 7 August (AD). A **Ruddy Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres* was seen at Fothergill on 28 September and 27 November (AJ) and one at Massasanya Dam (2131 B4†) on 9 November (DMacD) was a scarce Gonarezhou record.

A **Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus* was at a muddy pool on Hippo River, Zambezi NP, on 13 October (CBr). A **Common Greenshank** *T. nebularia* at Smallbridge Dam, Sheba Estates (1832 D3), on 27 August is believed to be the first record from there since the Atlas years (GD). **Little Stints** *Calidris minuta* are under-reported so 16 at Kadoma Textiles Dye Ponds (1829 B4) on 26 November is a nice record. Thirty-five **Ruff** *Philomachus pugnax* were at these ponds on 8 October and following overnight drizzle about 60 were at Eiffel Flats sewage ponds (1829 B4) on the 29th (*The Babbler*). A **Sanderling** *C. alba* was at Musango on 23 October (SE) and two were on the Masuwe River at Elephant Camp, Victoria Falls, on 4 November (SC).

Lone **African Snipe** *Gallinago nigripennis* were on Redhill Farm, Banket (1730 A4†) on 21 October (DSm) and at Gosho Park, Marondera (1831 B1), on 24 November (GD). A **Pied Avocet** *Recurvirostra avosetta* was at Kent Estate on 5 November (GT); two were at Kadoma Textiles Dye Ponds on 6 August and four on 26 November when 72 **Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus* were also present (*The Babbler*).

Most unusual was a **Spotted Thick-knee** *Burhinus capensis* calling at 03h10 on 14 July as it flew east over Newlands (IR). A pair took up residence for a while during July in the Bally Vaughan Game Park where not recorded for several years (GP). Two were at Sable Park Farm, Chegutu (1830 A1), on 18 September (DK). A group of eight **Bronze-winged Coursers**

Rhinoptilus chalcopterus at Rhino Safari Camp, Matusadona (1628 C4), on 14 June (PTe) was an unusually high number together. Two were at the Mukuvisi Woodlands on 16 July (IR).

At least 30 **Collared Pratincoles** *Glareola pratincola* on Kent Estate's bottom dam on 22 October appeared to be nesting (GT). A **Grey-headed Gull** *Chroicocephalus cirrocephalus* was at Connemara, Troutbeck (1832 B2), on 5 November (NMa). These gulls visit these high-altitude lakes occasionally. Three **African Skimmers** *Rynchops flavirostris* were at Mandavu Dam, Hwange NP (1826 C2), on 13 August (MG via GT), up to four were in the Chirundu area from 4 to 6 November (IR) and three were on the Save River at Chilo (2132 A2) on 29 November (BHo).

Other non-Passerines

Yellow-throated Sandgrouse *Pterocles gutturalis* were recorded in the Nyamandhlovu Pan area of Hwange NP (1826 D4†) in June (YS) where no records have been posted since 1988. It is also a long time since they were reported from Kazuma Pan, where about 120 were counted on 16 September (DS). **Rock Doves (Feral Pigeons)** *Columba livia* were found in the Nyamhara area of Mutoko district (1732 A3†) in October (JM). A **Speckled Pigeon** *C. guinea* was unusual in Highlands on 30 August (DT). Previous Harare records have come from Pomona Quarry and Workington.

African Mourning Doves *Streptopelia decipiens* visited Umguza again this winter with ones and twos noted from mid-June. A juvenile was seen in September and an adult and a juvenile on 24 October (JV, AR). At Rifa there were calls from Bwarambwa Island on 5 November and on the floodplain in the Jecha Point area the next day (IR, *The Babbler*). Following the first **Tambourine Dove** *Turtur tympanistria* record from Redhill Farm in 2020, a pair with a juvenile was seen on 24 August (DSm). Two in the Victoria Falls rain forest (1725 D4†) on 15 October (CB) and one a few days later (SC) were far to the west of their normal territory. The western edges of their range in this country and in Zambia extend as far as Lake Kariba so where this pair had come from is not clear. One was in the Nyamhara area, Mutoko (1732 A3†), in October (JM).

Up to 40 **African Green Pigeons** *Treron calvus* frequented *Duranta* bushes at Stapleford, Mount Hampden, towards the end of July (JWh). Less usual **Grey-headed Parrot** *Poicephalus fuscicollis* records were two at Dokwe Dam, Sango (2032 A3), on 16 June (J-MB) and two at Mhara River Bush Camp, Chitake-Mhara confluence (1629 B1), on 12 November (DH). From one to four often flew over Kent Estate from the last week of September to 30 November and about 20 **Meyer's Parrots** *P. meyeri* were on sunflowers on this estate on 27 July (GT). One, possibly more, was noted several times at Newlands from September to November (IR).

Lilian's Lovebirds *Agapornis lilianae* were in their thousands at Mana Pools on 25-26 June (BL) and flocks of between 25 to 46 were at Chirundu Safari Lodge (1628 B2) from 29 August to 25 September (TN). Two **Schalow's Turaco** *Turaco schalowi* at Elephant Camp on 28 October (SC) were wanderers from the Victoria Falls rain forest.

A **Common Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus* at Aberfoyle on 22 September (KW) was the first recorded in that month for many years and had probably departed early from the European summer drought. A **Red-chested Cuckoo** *C. solitarius* heard calling at night at Monavale at the end of August (DW) may have been in transit. One was found some distance east of known range along the eastern border on the Mazowe River (1632 D1†) in November (TD). **Levaillant's Cuckoos** *Clamator levaillantii* arrived at Harare on 29 September but were only heard from 25 October after the first rains (IR). September arrivals are uncommon and it will be noted from the Arrivals below that their presence is often only detected once calling begins. A scarce black morph **Jacobin Cuckoo** *C. jacobinus* was seen at Kavinga on 15 November (DB).

A **Thick-billed Cuckoo** *Pachycoccyx audeberti* was heard on the full moon night of 9 October in Victoria Falls suburbs (DT). Singles were at Masoka on 9 and 11 November (MZ) and in the Dande Safari Area on the 20th and 23rd (GD). **African Emerald Cuckoos** *Chrysococcyx cupreus* remained on the Vumba during the winter and began calling towards the end of August (KW). **Klaas's Cuckoos** *C. klaas* of the South African population were at Lomagundi College, Chinhoyi (1730 A3), in June and July (JMk). Our returning birds were early and widespread by the second week of August (see Arrivals below).

A **Green Malkoha** *Ceuthmochares australis* in the Kanyemba area on 18 October (LTa) and 22 November follow the first record from there in November 2021, and two were in the Dande Safari Area on 20 November (GD).

An **African Grass Owl** *Tyto capensis* at Katiyo (1833 A3†) on 22 November (MS, PZ) was in new territory although there is a 2016 record from nearby at Aberfoyle. A large gathering of 18 **Marsh Owls** *Asio capensis* was on Marlborough vlei on 16 September (RC). **Southern White-faced Scops-owls** *Ptilopsis granti* nested on top of an old raptor nest at Redhill Farm, Banket (1730 A4†), in July with youngsters about to fledge early in August (DSm). Some moved into the Newlands area on 6 August and were heard regularly up to 10 November (IR). One was some distance out of range in the Masoka area (1630 A1†) at the end of November (EN).

A **Verreaux's Eagle Owl** *Bubo lacteus* in a Hillside garden (1731 C3) on 29 July (LW) follows a 2016 record from Harare's suburbs. A **Pel's Fishing Owl** *Scotopelia peli* was at the Hippo Pools Camp lily pond (1731 B2) on 29 November (KD), and as commented by ND, it is good news they are still in the area despite disturbance and degraded water quality in the river from mining activity.

A **Rufous-cheeked Nightjar** *Caprimulgus rufigena* was on Shangani Ranch (1929 C2†) on 21 October (LMcD); they are of fragmented occurrence in that part of Matabeleland. Of interest was a **Square-tailed Nightjar** *C. fossii* at Haka Park, Harare (1731 C3), on 7 June and five there two days later (BL). Irwin (1981. *The Birds of Zimbabwe*, p. 178) described their occurrence on the central plateau as 'very scarce' in the winter months.

On 5 November a mixed flock of swifts flying around the base of Chirundu hill included about 150 **Horus Swifts** *Apus horus*, a good number for this time of the year when it has been suggested they should have migrated (IR). **Speckled Mousebirds** *Colius striatus* were first reported in QDS 1732 A3 at Chitora Dam in 2018 and were noted again in the same area at Nyamhara in October (JM). Flowering *Acrocarpus* trees enticed **Red-faced Mousebirds** *C. indicus* into a Newlands garden from the end of July to 4 September. Thereafter two or more were in a fruiting fig on 11 and 12 October (IR).

A **Narina Trogon** *Apaloderma narina* in hills about 20 km south of Shamva (1731 B3†) on 9 October (BSt) was most probably from the Hippo Pools population. An **African Pygmy Kingfisher** *Ispidina picta* that flew into a Mutare window (and survived) on the early date of 25 September (DCx) provided a scarce record for that month. In Highlands on 16 November, a **Woodland Kingfisher** *Halcyon senegalensis* was presumably in transit to lower altitude (NN). A **Grey-headed Kingfisher** *H. leucocephala* was wintering at Chirundu on 1 June (TN).

On 9 September, **European Bee-eaters** *Merops apiaster* over Harare (various observers) and roosting in Bulawayo (TF) were almost certainly South African birds returning south. In November **Madagascar Bee-eaters** *M. superciliosus* were in the Main Camp area of Hwange NP (1826 D2†) (UO) and at Kanyemba (1530 C2†) (GD) where far downstream from previous Zambezi Valley records. A **Blue-cheeked Bee-eater** *M. persicus* was at Sango (2032 A4†) on 24 November (J-MB). Arrival of **Southern Carmine Bee-eaters** *M. nubicoides* was noted in August at Kavinga on the 7th (DB), Bumi Hills on the 12th (PMu), Chirundu (26th) (EB) and Masoka (30th) (MZ). Hundreds were at three colonies in the Mhara Bush Camp area (1629 B1) in September (DH). Two flew over the Victoria Falls bridge on 10 September (SC).

Unusual around Harare were six **White-fronted Bee-eaters** *M. bullockoides* at Butler Dam on 9 August, a **Lilac-breasted Roller** *Coracias caudatus* on Borrowdale vlei on 18 August and a **Trumpeter Hornbill** *Bycanistes bucinator* at Christon Bank on 27 November (IR). Several **Silvery-cheeked Hornbill** *B. brevis* pairs were on Leopard's vlei, Chipinge (2032 B3), on 11 November and 20 or more roosted in one tree overnight (RK). A **Southern Red-billed Hornbill** *Tockus rufirostris* was reported frequently for several weeks from 1 August at Borrowdale Brooke, and another or the same was at Mazowe Springs, Teviotdale (1731 C1†), on 12 September (ATh). This was a probable wanderer from the Bindura-Shamva area. A leucistic individual was seen at Mana Mouth (1529 C4) in June (JWh) and September (BL). Another wanderer was reported near Murombedzi, Zvimba Communal Lands (1730 C3†), in September (MBf). **Southern Yellow-billed Hornbills** *T. leucomelas* were first noted at Masoka in 2016 and about six are now resident there (MZ). They were found in the same general area in the Dande Safari Area in November (GD).

An itinerant **Scaly-throated Honeyguide** *Indicator variegatus* was seen and heard in the Elephant Hills area of Victoria Falls (1725 D4) between 22-28 November (GC). There is an old sight record from west of Victoria Falls (Irwin 1981. *The Birds of Zimbabwe*, page 215) and an adult and a juvenile were seen separately in the town in October 2005 (Tiran, 2021. *Honeyguide* **67**: 28). With the onset of the spring breeding period, **Brown-backed Honeybirds** *Prodotiscus regulus* were active in a Newlands garden from 19 August to mid-October (IR). Singles recorded elsewhere were at Banket on 24 September (DSm), Seldomseen, Vumba (1932 B2), on 2 October (BMb) and Victoria Falls on 10 November (CB). Single **Green-backed Honeybirds** *P. zambesiae* were at Mukuvisi Woodlands on 17 July, 4 September and 28 November and at Newlands on 3 and 4 September; two were noted at Gosho Park on 20 August (IR).

A **Green-backed Woodpecker** *Campethera cailliautii* at Fiddlers Green, Chipinge (2032 B1†), on 2 August (RD) was slightly northwest of known range.

Passerines

An **African Broadbill** *Smithornis capensis* calling and displaying as early as 4 July in a Bindura (1731 A4†) garden (RK) adds another isolated record to its fragmented distribution map, as does one on the lower Vumba (1932 B1†) on 11 July (BL). Some were on Kent Estate on 3 October (GT). The first **African Pittas** *Pitta angolensis* of the season were noted between 9 and 11 November at Mhara River Bush Camp (1629 B1†) (DH), in the Mkanga Camp area (1630 A1) (JC) and at Masoka (MZ) where, by 20 November, four nests were found (GD). Exceptional Lake Kariba records were two on the Kaingwe River, Matusadona NP (1628 D3†), on 17 November (AJ) and an unspecified number at Fothergill Island (1628 D1†) around the same time (AMacD). There are only three previously documented Lake Kariba records, from 2018 to 2020, all of which were east of these latest sightings. Subsequently coming to light, however, are records of singles in the Omay hunting area on the south-western side of Matusadona NP (1728 A2) in November 1985 (KW) and behind Tiger Bay, Ume River (1628 C4), in 1983 (EB). As dated as they might be, they are significant records regarding the historical status of this Pitta in the wider Lake Kariba area.

A **Melodious Lark** *Mirafra chiniana* was photographed near Widgeon Pan (1930 B4) on 21 November. This individual, or perhaps another, perfectly mimicked an **African Quailfinch** *Ortygospiza fuscocrissa* in an aerial display (J-MB). The Melodious is one of our scarcest residents that inhabited a few isolated spots around Bulawayo and at Daisyfield near Somabhula (Irwin 1981. *The Birds of Zimbabwe*, p. 223). During the Atlas years it was found only at Daisyfield, but since then the only records have come from the Widgeon Pan area and an unconfirmed Hwange NP sighting. [**Editor's note**: see Hustler, K. & Frost, P.H. 2002. *Honeyguide* **48**: 28-40, for more on this species.]

Figure 1. Melodious Lark at Widgeon Pan. Photo © Jean-Michel Blake

Only two migratory **Dusky Larks** *Pinarocorys nigricans* were noted; a north-bound individual at Victoria Falls on 3 June (CB) and a juvenile north of Banket (1730 A4†) heading south on 26 October (DSm). A **Red-capped Lark** *Calandrella cinerea* record from Sango (2032 A1†) in November (J-MB) is an expansion of range from the eastern border. **Chestnut-backed Sparrowlarks** *Eremopterix leucotis* were on Redhill Farm, Banket, on 16 August (DSm). They occasionally move this far east during the dry season.

Four wintering **Barn Swallows** *Hirundo rustica* were at Mutare on 21 June (GD). **Blue Swallows** *H. atrocaerulea* arrived back at Connemara on 10 September and up to ten were in the Kwaraguza-Troutbeck area on 11 November when nests were found (NMa). This swallow is now ranked among Africa's rarest and most threatened birds (GD). **Mosque Swallows** *Cecropis senegalensis* to the southeast of Main Camp (1827

C3†) in November (UO) were further east in Hwange NP than usual.

Common House Martins *Delichon urbicum* at Victoria Falls Safari Lodge on 18 September were early, probably driven south by the European drought. Some were at Ngweshla Pans (1927 A1†) on 6-7 November (CB) where unrecorded during the Atlas years. In Harare South (1731 C3) on 9 August *c*. 30 **Brown-throated Martins** *Riparia paludicola* at Mvurachena Dam and *c*. 15 nearby at Butler Dam (IR) were part of the dry season influx into the Harare area.

Another Palearctic migrant to arrive early was a **Eurasian Golden Oriole** *Oriolus oriolus* at Aberfoyle on 22 September (KW). One was near Sango HQ (2032 A1) on 6 November (J-MB), a normal arrival date, and another was at Kavinga (1629 A2†) on the 23rd (DB). Wintering **African Golden Orioles** *O. auratus* were at Beitbridge (2229 B2) at the end of June (GD), at Bindura (1731 A4) on 4 July (RK), Victoria Falls on 5 July (CB), Nyamepi, Mana Pools (1529 C2), on 17 August (DMacD) and in Hillside, Harare, on 19 August (RD).

An adult **Cinnamon-breasted Tit** *Melaniparus pallidiventris* with immature youngsters was at Cecil Kop, Mutare (1832 D3), on 16 November (GD) and one was at the Burma Valley turnoff on the way to the Vumba on the 28th (BMb). Three **Spotted Creepers** *Salpornis salvadori* were at Gosho Park, Marondera, on 17 September, and some were seen on 2 October and 28 November at Mukuvisi Woodlands where it now appears to be in decline (IR).

After first being found in a Newlands garden in November 2021, about three **Terrestrial Brownbuls** *Phyllastrephus terrestris* re-appeared towards the end of August (IR). The **Sombre Greenbuls** *Andropadus importunus* that were first noted in Emerald Hill, Harare (1730 D4), in 2021 are now well established, being seen and heard regularly (LS). Others on the move and far out of range were one seen and heard on 29 October on Bemba Farm, Marondera North (1731 B1†), and a pair the following day. They were still present on 11 November (AD). [**Editor's note**: Masterson (2010. *Honeyguide* **58**: 25-26) discussed the spread of the Sombre Greenbul from the Zambezi Valley onto the Mashonaland highveld. These records suggest that this trend is continuing.]

Continuing the theme, a wandering **Yellow-bellied Greenbul** *Chlorocichla flaviventris* was an extraordinary sighting at Mukuvisi Woodlands (1731 C3†) on 2 and 11 November (DD, IR). **Eastern Nicators** *Nicator gularis* seen in less usual places were at Rhino Safari Camp (1628 C4) on 4 October (PTe), Mteri Dam, Chiredzi (2131 B3†), on 17 October (CS) and at Masoka (1630 A1) on 13 November (MZ).

A **Miombo Rock Thrush** *Monticola angolensis* was at Mukuvisi Woodlands on 4 September, but there were few, if any, subsequent reports from there. **Familiar Chats** *Oenanthe familiaris* now seem a permanent feature at Borrowdale Race Course, ones and twos being seen on 25 August and 4 September. Singles were around houses at the top end of Newlands vlei on 11 and 14 October (IR). A male **Arnot's Chat** *Myrmecocichla arnoti* at a birdbath in the Sublime area of Lake Chivero (1730 D4) on 13 October (MT) was probably the first record from the lake since the 1990s.

A **Red-capped Robin Chat** *Cossypha natalensis* in Matusadona NP (1628 D4†) on 24 November (AJ) was way out of range. The Atlas shows a small presence elsewhere on Lake Kariba in the Bumi (1628 C4) and Kariba town/Charara (1628 D2) areas. **White-throated Robin Chats** *C. humeralis* continue to be scarce at Mukuvisi Woodlands so a nice sighting was two in thickets in the southwest corner on 8 September. A **Collared Palm Thrush** *Cichladusa arquata* at Jecha Point on 6 November was an infrequent Chirundu record (IR). In August **Boulder Chats** *Pinarornis plumosus* were near Unki Mine, Shurugwe (1930 C1†) (SW), an under-reported area. A **Kalahari Scrub Robin** *Cercotrichas paena* at Victoria Falls (1725 D4†) in August (CSa) was unusual there. They have been sparsely recorded in Hwange NP and across the Botswana border at Kasane.

A **Chestnut-vented Tit-babbler** *Sylvia subcaerulea* record at Sango (2032 A1†) in August marked an eastward extension known range. Another new Sango record, from QDS 2032 A4†, were **Lesser Swamp Warblers** *Acrocephalus gracilirostris* in November (J-MB); they are only sparsely represented in the southeast. The first **Broad-tailed Warblers** *Schoenicola brevirostris* of the season were at Haka Park on 16 November (PZ) and slightly out of range at Gosho Park, Marondera (1831 B1†), on the 24th (GD). **Willow Warblers** *Phylloscopus trochilus* seldom over-winter so one heard in a Harare garden on 24 August (JeF) was unusual.

Bar-throated Apalises *Apalis thoracica* were found east of known range at Nyamhara, Mutoko district (1732 A3†), in October (JM). **Green-backed Camaropteras** *Camaroptera brachyura* in the Chirinda Forest (2032 B3) in August (KN) are worth noting as this protected area is one of the few places they can be found in Zimbabwe. A **Zitting Cisticola** *Cisticola juncidis* was on a small patch of rank grass within the Victoria Falls rain forest enclosure on 7 August; ideal habitat but some distance from other suitable grassland (CB). **Pale-crowned Cisticolas** *C. cinnamomeus* were reported from Gosho Park (1831 B1†) on 24 November (GD). A **Lazy Cisticola** *C. aberrans* record from Sango (2032 A1†) in July (JMk) indicates movement across the Save River from the west.

The first **Spotted Flycatcher** *Muscicapa striata* of the season was at Musango as early as 18 September (SE). Thereafter their arrival was scarcely noticed with 25 October at Victoria Falls (CB) and 28 November at Mukuvisi (IR) the only reports. In November **Collared Flycatchers** *Ficedula albicollis* were at the usual sites of Gosho Park, a male on the 24th, and Cecil Kop, a first year male or female on the 16th (GD) and a pair on the 28th (BMb). Single **Grey Tit Flycatchers** *Myioparus plumbeus* were at Charama Lodge near Kadoma (1829 B4), on 4 June (*The Babbler*) and at Gosho Park on 20 August (IR). A June **Marico Flycatcher** *Melaenornis mariquensis* record from Sango (2032 A1†) (J-MB) represents a south-easterly expansion of range into the Save Valley Conservancy.

Although the **Chin-spot Batis** *Batis molitor* occurs countrywide it was found in October at the base of the Zambezi escarpment in the Mangaingai QDS 1629 B1† (AT) where not recorded in the Atlas. A **Black-throated Wattle-eye** *Platysteira peltata* appeared again in a Mandara garden on 22 August (JBa) and a breeding record from Mukuvisi Woodlands was one at a nest on 6 November (RD). Wintering **African Paradise Flycatchers** *Terpsiphone viridis* were reported in June from Lake Kariba at Rhino Safari Camp (PTe) and Musango (SE), on the Zambezi at Msuna (1826 B2) (CB) and Chirundu (TN), and at Mandara (JBa) and Mutare (GD). One at Chisipite on 15 August (TB) was either over-wintering or had arrived extremely early.

A juvenile **African Pied Wagtail** *Motacilla aguimp* at Somalisa Pan (1927 A1†) on 6 November was further south in Hwange NP than expected (CB). Not among the more frequently spotted birds on Seldomseen was a **Mountain Wagtail** *Motacilla clara* on 13-14 June and 29 July (KW). A pair of **Cape Wagtails** *M. capensis* of the *simplicissima* race showed up again at Victoria Falls on the Lookout Café road on 10 July (CB) and another was on a marshy area in the rain forest on 18

November (SC). A **Wood Pipit** *Anthus nyassae* was at Gosho Park on 24 November (GD) and a **Rosy-throated Longclaw** *Macronyx ameliae* appeared at Haka Park on 8 November (DD).

Common Fiscals *Lanius collaris* making a comeback in Harare were noted during the period at Borrowdale Race Course, on Newlands and Monavale vleis and at Hillside Park (IR). **Red-backed Shrikes** *L. collurio* rarely, if ever, over-winter so one on Shangani Ranch on 21 September (LMcD) was exceptional. A leucistic **Magpie Shrike** *Urolestes melanoleucus* was seen near Nengo Camp, Bubye Valley Conservancy (2129 B4), on 13 July (UL). A **Crimson-breasted Shrike** *Laniarius atrococcineus* on Chamabonda vlei (1725 D3†) on 30 July (GC) appears to be the first record from that area of Victoria Falls.

Following the first **Common Myna** *Acridotheres tristis* at Monavale vlei in February, four were there on 3 September (IR). In November they were found at Marongora (1629 A1†) (IR, BM), north of Guruve (1630 D1†) (RH) and at Sango (2032 A1†) (J-MB). A flock of 27 **Wattled Starlings** *Creatophora cinerea* drank at the Ngweshla Camp birdbath on 5 November (CB). **Miombo Blue-eared Starlings** *Lamprotornis elisabeth* were attracted to a flowering *Acrocarpus* in Newlands on 25 and 28 August to become a new species for the area (IR). A pair of **Red-billed Oxpeckers** *Buphagus erythrorynchus* appeared in a Victoria Falls garden on 29 November (CM).

A sub-adult male **Marico Sunbird** *Cinnyris mariquensis* was unusual at Haka Park on 29 July (BL), there being only a couple of Harare records in the last ten years or so. A **Variable Sunbird** *C. venustus* record just north of Kwekwe (1829 D4†) at the end of October (JM) was further west in the Midlands than recorded previously. Also unusual was a **Western Violet-backed Sunbird** *Anthreptes longuemarei* at the Burma Valley turnoff (1932B1) on 24 July (BMb).

House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* continue to decline in number so worth recording were some near Harare Railway Station in September, and in Chirundu and at Halfway House, Headlands (1832 A3), in November (IR). They are sparse at Victoria Falls but can be found in high density areas (CB). **Scaly-feathered Finches** *Sporopipes squamifrons* were first noted in the southeast lowveld during 2015 and some at Checheche town (2132 A3) in November (DMacD) is the fifth record since then.

Two female **Thick-billed Weavers** *Amblyospiza albifrons* at Chirundu (1628 B2†) on 5 June (TN) is a significant record as they were not listed in Maasdorp *et al*, 2019. The Birds of Rifa Camp, Chirundu, Zimbabwe, 1987 – 2014. *Honeyguide* **65**: 3. They are recorded regularly in the Makonde district as far north as the Lion's Den area (JMk) but this is far south of the Zambezi Valley. **Village Weavers** *Ploceus cucullatus* commenced nest-building in mid-June at Umguza Farms with males coming into breeding plumage and displaying (JV). Although the **Lesser Masked Weaver** *P. intermedius* is listed as a breeding resident along rivers in Hwange NP (Hustler, 1986. *Honeyguide* **32**: 80) it was not recorded there during the Atlas years. A November record in the Main Camp area (1826 D2†) (UO) is therefore of interest.

The first **Cuckoo Finch** *Anomalospiza imberbis* of the season was at Greystone Park, Harare (1731 C1), on 13 November (DWi) and one was slightly out of range at Gosho Park, Marondera (1831 B1†), on 24 November (GD). Following a December 2019 record, **Orange-winged Pytilias** *Pytilia afra* were reported again from Masoka in November (MZ). Nice eastern districts sightings were a **Lesser Seedcracker** *Pyrenestes minor* at Aberfoyle on 9 July (MS) and **Green Twinspots** *Mandingoa nitidula* at Seldomseen on 28 November (BMb).

Two separate **Red-throated Twinspot** *Hypargos niveoguttatus* pairs and as many as six together in the Victoria Falls rain forest on 14 September (BMa) were followed by a male on 3 October (VS) and a pair on 24 November (CB). This Twinspot has been considered a scarce visitor from the Zambian side of the river but recent records suggest it may now be resident in the rain forest. A pair was at Kuimba Shiri on 26 November where only seen at that time of year (TC). **Orange-breasted Waxbills** *Amandava subflava* on Reedbuck vlei near Deka Camp, Hwange NP (1826 C4†), on 26 October (SWm) provided a scarce Hwange NP record. **Red-backed Mannikins** *Lonchura nigriceps* returned to Redhill Farm (1730 A4) in November where they breed during the summer and then disperse (DSm). A record from upstream of Victoria Falls (1725 D4) in November (PR) follows a 2005 sighting of six in the same area.

Two fledged **Village Indigobird** *Vidua chalybeata* youngsters being fed by a pair of **Red-billed Firefinches** *Lagonosticta senegala* at Victoria Falls on 10 July (CB) could represent a mid to late May laying, a little later than the main March-April period. **Black-throated Canaries** *Crithagra atrogularis* are reasonably common around Victoria Falls but some found in the adjoining 1726 C3† square in July (YS) represent movement downstream. **Cabanis's Buntings** *Emberiza cabanisi* were found at Gosho Park on 20 August and Christon Bank on 27 November (IR).

Arrivals

White Stork 8 November Chinhoyi (SB), 15 November Banket (DSm); **Abdim's Stork** 2nd week October Mutare (KH), 16 October Harare South (1831 A2) (JBe), 20 October Ruwa (JW), 22 November Umguza (AR); **Black Kite** *Milvus migrans* 6 November Ngweshla (CB); **Yellow-billed Kite** 26 July Harare (JM) and Bulawayo (PD), 30 July Chinhoyi (DSm), 6 August Nyakasanga (LMcD), 11 August Matusadona NP (PTe), 12 August Lake Manyame (BT), 15 August Victoria Falls (SE), 18 August Malapati Safari Area, Gonarezhou (2131 C4) (GS); **Steppe Eagle** *Aquila nipalensis* 26 October west of Lion's Den (1729 B4) (JMk), 5 November Chirundu (IR); **Lesser Spotted Eagle** *Clanga pomarina* 26 October west of Lion's Den (JMk), 5 November Gonarezhou (CS), 6 November Chirundu (IR), 13 November Sango (2032 A1) (J-MB); **Wahlberg's Eagle** 9 August Harare (IR), 18 August Malapati Safari Area (GS), 26 August Shangani (LT), 28 August Victoria Falls (CB); **Common Buzzard** *Buteo buteo* 15 October Mana Pools (1529 C4) (J-MB), 17 October Vumba (KW), 20 October Chamabonda vlei (CB), 24 October Harare (PZ), 27 October Banket (DSm); **Eurasian Hobby** *Falco subbuteo* 26 October near Big Toms, Hwange NP (1825 D2) (SWm), 5 November Chirundu (IR) and Ngweshla (CB), 23 November Kavinga (DB), 27 November Harare (BL) and Komani Farm (IR); **Amur Falcon** *F. amurensis* 26 November Hwange NP (PM), 28 November Cawston Block (SN) and Harare (PZ).

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* 15 July Kanyemba (CC), 17 July Victoria Falls (SC), 24 July Bizhi River near Tashinga (PTe), 7 August Kavinga (RMacD), 14 August Mazvikadei (BM), 17-19 August Gonarezhou (CS); **Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola* 24 July near Tashinga (PTe), 30 July Victoria Falls (CB), 14 August Harare (DS), 16 August Mcheni Camp, Rukomechi (1529 C4) (DMacD), 17-19 August Gonarezhou (CS), 20 August Mazvikadei (AMacD); **Common Greenshank** 30 July Musango (SE), 20 August Chete Safari Area (SH), 30 August Victoria Falls (SC); **Curlew Sandpiper** *Calidris ferruginea* 15 October Long Pool, Mana Pools (1529

C2); **Little Stint** 15 October Long Pool (J-MB), 23 October Musango (SE); **Ruff** 18 August Chikwenya (DMacD), 30 August Victoria Falls (SC), 6 September Widgeon Pan (J-MB); **Collared Pratincole** 3 August Odzi (MBr), 4 August Kent Estate (GT), 13 August Mteri Dam (BL), 18 August Chikwenya (DMacD); **African Skimmer** 26 July Chirundu (TN), 4 September Rhino Safari Camp (PTe).

African Cuckoo *Cuculus gularis* 22 September Ngweshla area (JV), 16 October Harare South (1831 A2) (JBe) and Harare (IR), 21 October Senuko, Save Valley Conservancy (2031 D2) (CS); **Red-chested Cuckoo** 24 September Shangani (LT), 25 September Vumba (PM), 27 September Nyanga (CC), 28 September Aberfoyle (KW), 5 October Harare (RD), 6 October Kavinga (DB), 12 October Umguza (AR), 18 October Victoria Falls (DT), 20 October Mazvikadei (BM) and Chinhoyi (JMk), 25 October Senuko (CS); **Black Cuckoo** *C. clamosus* 28 October Balu Estate (JV), 5 November Masoka (MZ), 8 November Nuanetsi Ranch (2130 D1) (CCn), 11 November Sango (J-MB), 13 November Malilangwe (AH), 23 November Chirundu (EB); **Great Spotted Cuckoo** *Clamator glandarius* 23 October Victoria Falls (BMa), 30 October Mazvikadei (BM), 1 November Massasanya Dam, Gonarezhou (KH), 7 November Kennedy 2 Pan (CB); **Levaillant's Cuckoo** 29 September Harare (IR), 30 October Umguza (AR), 1 November Banket (DSm), 5 November Masoka (MZ), 9 November Nuanetsi Ranch (CCn), 11 November Sango (J-MB); **Jacobin Cuckoo** 19 October Harare (JBa), 25 October Victoria Falls (CB), 7 November Masoka (MZ), 11 November Sango (J-MB), 22 November Mongwe Camp, Nyakasanga (1528 D4) (LMcD); **African Emerald Cuckoo** 4 September Aberfoyle (MS), 18 October Chimanimani (1932 D4) (JWh), 10 November Chinhoyi (JMk), 12 November Victoria Falls (JB), 13 November Masoka (MZ), 15 November Mongwe Camp (LMcD), 20 November Balu Estate (JV); **Klaas's Cuckoo** 7 August Harare (DWi), 10 August Malilangwe (AH), 11 August Victoria Falls (CB), 12 August Banket (DSm), 20 August Masoka (MZ), 1 September Burma Valley (PM), 7 September near Chirundu (JWh), 11 September Shangani (LMcD); **Diderick Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx caprius* 1 November Victoria Falls (CB), 2 November Umguza (AR), 3 November Harare (JM), 9 November Banket (DSm) and Chirundu (TN), 11 November Sango (J-MB), 14 November Bulawayo (UL); **Black Coucal** *Centropus grillii* 11 November Lion's Den (JMk), 27 November Harare (BL).

Pennant-winged Nightjar *Macrodipteryx vexillarius* 28 September Troutbeck (1832 B2) (GP), 30 September Gonarezhou (JBe), 1 October Harare (DS), 9 October Chirundu (TN), 18 October Kennedy vlei (SA); **Common Swift** *Apus apus* 15 November Victoria Falls (CB); **White-rumped Swift** *A. caffer* 10 September Harare (BL), 27 September Victoria Falls (CB); **African Pygmy Kingfisher** 25 September Mutare (DCx), 9 October Harare (PM), 15 October Aberfoyle (MS), 28 October Fothergill (AJ); **Woodland Kingfisher** 9 November Gonarezhou (NM, MD), 10 November Malilangwe (AH), 11 November Sango (J-MB), 12 November Chirundu (TN), 16 November Gache Gache, Lake Kariba (1628 D2) (SD); **Grey-headed Kingfisher** 22 September Aberfoyle (KW) and Mhara Bush Camp (DH), 24 October Fothergill (AJ), 5 November Victoria Falls (SC), 15 November Mongwe Camp (LMcD); **European Bee-eater** 18 September Vumba (KW), 20 September Zambezi NP (DS), 22 September Shangani (LT) and Kavinga (DB), 3 October Umguza (JV); **European Roller** *Coracias garrulus* 25 November Fothergill (AJ) and Harare (DD), 30 November Masoka (DSm); **Broad-billed Roller** *Eurystomus glaucurus* 30 September Kavinga (DB), 1 October Cawston Block (SN), 2 October Banket (DSm) and Harare (BL), 4 October Tokwe-Mukosi Dam (2030 D4) (GS), 6 October Victoria Falls (CB), 7 October Chirundu (TN), 8 October Gonarezhou (EvdW), 13 October Umguza (AR), 17 October Makwa Pan (SA).

Barn Swallow 8 October Harare (DT) and Victoria Falls (CB), 14 October Chipinda Pools (DMacD), 15 October Nyamandhlovu Pan (PD), 19 October near Marondera (RC) and Fothergill (AJ); **Red-breasted Swallow** *Cecropis semirufa* 7 August Zambezi NP (CB); **Banded Martin** *Riparia cincta* 23 September Harare (DD); **Black Cuckooshrike** *Campephaga flava* 14 October Hippo Pools (ME), 22 October Banket (DSm), 25 October Victoria Falls (CB); **Willow Warbler** 30 September Victoria Falls (DT), 4 October Harare (IR), 12 October near Matopos NP (RD), 21 October Mazvikadei (BM); **African Paradise-flycatcher** 6 September Kuimba Shiri (TC), 17 September Chirundu (TN), 18 September Harare (BL), 24 September Victoria Falls (GC), 25 September Chinhoyi (JMk), 2 October Banket (DSm), 7 October Umguza (AR), 14 October Senuko (GS), 18 October Rhino Safari Camp (JN), 19 October Shangani (LMcD); **Tree Pipit** *Anthus trivialis* 24 November Seldomseen (BMb) and Gosho Park (GD); **Lesser Grey Shrike** *Lanius minor* 25 October near Deteema Dam, Hwange NP (1826 C1) (SWm), 7 November near Ngweshla (CB), 13 November Masoka (MZ), 15 November Victoria Falls (CB), 16 November Fothergill (DC), 21 November Bumi Hills, Lake Kariba (1628 C4) (TT); **Red-backed Shrike** 8 November Harare (DD), 11 November Sango (J-MB), 15 November Victoria Falls (CB) and Balu Estate (JV); **Violet-backed Starling** *Cinnyricinclus leucogaster* 2 September Victoria Falls (CB), 6 September Harare (JBa).

Departures

Swallow-tailed Bee-eater *Merops hirundineus* 16 October Hippo Pools (ME), 19 November Victoria Falls (CB); **Capped Wheatear** *Oenanthe pileata* 21 November near Widgeon Pan (J-MB), 22 November Chamabonda vlei (CB).

OBSERVERS

Steve Alexander (SA), Elspeth Baillie (EB), Colin Baker (CB), Julia Baker (JB), James Ball (JBa), Steve Barrie (SB), Jamin Bews (JBe), Jean-Michel Blake (J-MB), Jenny Brebner (JBr), Mark Brewer (MBr), Mike Bridgeford (MBf), Richard Bridges (RB), Charles Brightman (CBr), Vanessa Bristow (VB), Dylan Browne (DB), Terri Bruce (TB), James Charlton (JC), Stan Chizipi (SC), Ronnie Chirimuta (RC), Dave Christiansen (DC), Graham Cochrane (GC), Courtney Connear (CCn), Tracey Couto (TC), Douglas Cox (DCx), Chris Cragg (CC), Asher Dare (AD), David Dalziel (DD), Mo Davey (MD), Stephanie Davy (SD), Neil Deacon (ND), Richard Dennison (RD), Tom Dibb (TD), Peta Ditchburn (PD), Ken Dixon (KD), Gary Douglas (GD), Brandon Edwards (BE), Steve Edwards (SE), Murray Evans (ME), Terry Fenn (TF), Jen Francis (JeF), Malcolm Gemmill (NG), Nyasha Gomwe (NG), Beth Hackland (BH), Nicholas Hart (NH), Sean Hind (SH), Derek Hinde (DH), Bridget Holland (BHo), Rupert Horley (RH), April Hundermark (AH), Kerry Hundermark (KH), Courtney Johnson (CJ), Adam Jones (AJ), Doug Kew (DK), Rebecca Kilner (RK), Karl van Laeren (KvL), Barry Launder (BL), Ursula Lowe (UL), Jim Mackie (JMk), Ali MacDonald (AMacD), Doug MacDonald (DMacD), Luke McDonald (LMcD), Roger MacDonald (RMacD), Peter Magosvongwe (PM), Nyaradzai Mapara (NMa), Beks Masuku (BMa), Hennie Mathee (HM), Norman

Mellett (NM), Bev Morgan (BM), Power Mupunga (PMu), Buluwesi Murambiwa (BMb), Jimmy Muropa (JM), Thomas Mutombeni (TM), Chris Myers (CM), Neil Nativel (NN), Tadious Ndadziira (TN), Karin Nelson (KN), Evangelos Nichas (EN), Carl Nicholson (CN), Sean Nicolle (SN), Jenny Nobes (JN), Ulf Ottosson (UO), Julia Pierini (JP), Gordon Putterill (GP), Ali Randell (AR), Ian Riddell (IR), Portas Ruben (PR), Yakov Sabag (YS), Curt Sagell (CSa), Morgan Saineti (MS), Vusumuzi Sibanda (VS), Doug Smith (DSm), Clive Stockil (CS), Glenn Stockil (GS), Lowden Stoole (LS), Bolette Strandbygaard (BSt), Debbie Swales (DS), Tat Tainarufu (TT), Alan Taylor (AT), Lynne Taylor (LTa), Pete Taylor (PT), Luke Terblanche (LT), Peter Tetlow (PTe), Angela Thomas (ATh), Bradley Thornton (BT), Gilly Thornycroft (GT), Darryl Tiran (DT), Margaret Treadgold (MT), James Varden (JV), Dorothy Wakeling (DW), Lloyd Weber (LW), Elsabe van der Westhuizen (EvdW), Johnny Whitfield (JWh), Debbie Wiggins (DWi), Spike Williamson (SWm), Jan Wood (JW), Ken Worsley (KW), Sue Worsley (SW), MacKenzie Zirota (MZ), Piet Zwanikken (PZ).
The Babbler - Newsletter of BirdLife Zimbabwe
SGH - Southern Ground Hornbill Task Force.

Colin Baker, *Victoria Falls*. ✉ pratincole306@hotmail.com

OBITUARY

Peter John Mundy, 1941-2023

As a child in war-ravaged London, Peter Mundy would scramble across the rubble, scavenging anything of interest and imagining himself as a great vulture soaring over the vast African plains. His childhood fantasy led him to Africa in the early 1970s and within two decades he had established himself as the leading authority on African vultures with the publication of *The Vultures of Africa*. A group of American bibliographers wrote: "It will be on the shortlist of great books on birds of prey."

Born in 1941 in Somerset, where his mother had been evacuated from London's badly bombed East End, Peter grew up in Romford, Essex. There, he acquired the broad cockney accent that never left him and amplified his incisive sense of humour. He attended the Royal Liberty Grammar School, excelling in science subjects and participating in the British Schools Exploring Society's 6-week expedition to Iceland in 1960. After leaving school and working as a grave digger for a brief period, he took up a place at Worcester College, University of Oxford.

Peter was there to read Zoology, but opted instead to read the complete works of Dostoevsky and to learn to play the baritone saxophone. Inevitably, he was rusticated, and he spent the next few years playing the saxophone with various R 'n' B bands, ending up with Screaming Lord Sutch. His last gig with Sutch (known for his horror-themed stage show, and later founding the Official Monster Raving Loony Party) was in France in 1966. The band had expected No. 1 billing, but found themselves No. 2, the top spot going to a couple of folk singers from the US – Simon and Garfunkel.

Later that year Peter returned to academia, taking up a place at King's College, London, to read Zoology. This time he stuck to his chosen subject. By now he had married his first wife, Valerie Nice, and had joined the Communist Party, now and again taking time off from his studies to push Communist Party leaflets through letterboxes. It was at King's College that he took up birding, acquiring his first binoculars at the age of 27. After graduating, Peter got a job teaching English and Maths in a secondary school in Sokoto, north-western Nigeria, and there he made his first foray into studying vultures in the wild. He wrote (in 2022): "In Sokoto I met Allan Cook, and we bird-watched the place flat! We started working on the biology of the Hooded Vulture, estimating there were 1,500-2,000 of them in and around the town. A recent survey there found only one."

Dancing with vultures – 2004

In 1972, the University of Rhodesia offered Peter a DPhil place in its zoology department. With Valerie, he sailed from Southampton to Cape Town, bought a VW Combi and drove north to Johannesburg to meet vulture enthusiast, John Ledger, and then on to Salisbury. Just a year later Peter and John founded a group that was to make a huge contribution to the study and conservation of vultures in southern African – the Vulture Study Group (VSG). The VSG's core unit expanded to five when ornithologist Steve Piper, publisher/conservationist Russel Friedman and bird artist Duncan Butchart came on board. Peter mused later that "we admired, loved and respected each other, such that there was never an argument or fracture – which must have contributed to the VSG's success."

Valerie did not settle well in Rhodesia and returned to the UK. But Peter and his Combi stayed. Anyone hitching a ride with Peter in those days would have found that they were not his only passengers. Also taking a ride would be Adolf and Eva, two large Lappet-faced Vultures who often occupied the back of the Combi. It turned out later that Adolf was Eva and Eva was Adolf – most vultures are not sexually dimorphic, making it almost impossible to sex them, even for a vulture expert.

By 1977 Rhodesia was caught up in the turmoil of the liberation war and the conscription net was flung wide, taking in as many white men it could. Peter was conscripted that year and became a machine gunner. But the year had its bright side too. He met Verity Cubitt, a sociologist engaged in research at the University, and they married in 1982, two years after the war ended and Rhodesia became Zimbabwe.

In 1979, along with his VSG colleagues John and Russel, Peter attended the International Symposium on Vultures, held in Santa Barbara, California – a milestone in the evolution of the VSG. "Many of the early vulture researchers were there and it was a wonderful occasion," Peter wrote later, adding, "We noticed that the US had several female researchers, whereas all of us from the Old World were male!" In 1982, the VSG published Peter's DPhil thesis 'The Comparative Biology of Southern African Vultures'. The aforementioned American bibliographers said of it: "In terms of detailed quantitative field studies on Old World vultures, this volume has no equal."

In 1984, after a short stint with the Endangered Wildlife Trust in Johannesburg, Peter was appointed the Ornithologist with Zimbabwe's Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management (DNP), and he and Verity moved to their DNP home on the shores of Lake Chivero, some 35 km west of Harare – an idyllic place for a birder. Their son Matthew was born in 1984, and their daughter Emily in 1987. It was while living at the lake that Peter began to write the text for his major work, *The Vultures of Africa*, with co-authors Steven Piper and John Ledger, illustrator Duncan Butchart and editor Eleanor-Mary Cadell. Published by Acorn Books and Russel Friedman Books in South Africa in 1993, it was later bought by Academic Press in London, who sold the entire print run of 7,000 copies.

The family moved to Bulawayo in 1989, and the DNP's Ornithology team moved into a large building on Main Street that also housed Zimbabwe's Central Intelligence Organisation. This must have caused concern in some quarters. Peter's irreverence and outspokenness were characteristics he seldom attempted to hide, and were the stuff of the countless anecdotes attached to him. Nor did he shrink from peppering his speech with expletives if he felt no harm was done. A friend once remarked that he was the first person she'd met who could use the F-word in a single sentence as a noun, verb, adverb and adjective, and still make sense.

In 2003, after participating in many bird expeditions and attending many international symposia, Peter retired from the DNP. At the suggestion of Dr Yogi Naik, a researcher at the National University of Science and Technology (NUST) in Bulawayo that he join the university, he became a professor in the newly established Department of Forest Resources and Wildlife Management. His passion for working with his students, in the classroom and in the field, soon became clear to everyone and he would later describe his time at NUST as exhilarating. After graduation, many of his students went on to universities elsewhere in the world. "Zimbabwean students are welcomed everywhere," Peter wrote, "because they are hard-working, motivated, honest and smart." On retirement from NUST in his 80th year, in 2021, he was made a Professor Emeritus.

Before his retirement, however, Peter had been diagnosed with cancer of the jaw. Trips to and from Johannesburg for treatment ensued, despite the barriers erected by the Covid pandemic. In late 2022 his medical team moved him on to treatments he could take in Bulawayo, in the comfort of his home. His son Matthew and granddaughter Ashley flew from Australia to spend time with him in December. He died on 3rd February 2023, with Verity and his daughter Emily at his bedside.

Looking back on his life in 2022, Peter wrote: "I have sometimes wondered what good I did for the birds of Zimbabwe. Certainly, I wrote lots of papers about them, and I ringed thousands of them. But…" There are no 'buts'. The birds of Zimbabwe, of southern Africa and indeed of the whole continent, as well as the people who work to study and conserve them, could have had no better champion.

Kay Powell

Peter Mundy and *Honeyguide*

Peter Mundy took over as Editor of *Honeyguide* in 1980 after a period of instability, when the journal had had several short-term editors. As recorded in his first editorial (No. 102, May 1980) he had enjoyed reading it since he arrived in the country in 1972, but he thought the magazine was not as good as it could be. In that editorial, he expressed his hopes for the *Honeyguide* and for ornithology in the newly independent Zimbabwe. At that time the journal was managed by an editorial committee consisting of himself, Tony Tree and Anne Morris (an Englishman, Irishman and Scotswoman, as she put it). Throughout Peter's tenure, he was assisted in his editorial tasks by a number of others, not formally members of the editorial committee. They included Angus Anthony, Kay Sayce (now Kay Powell), Alex Masterson, and Michael Irwin. The final number to have been edited by Peter was No. 111/112 (September/December 1982).

During his tenure as Editor, *Honeyguide* did indeed become a much better publication, with some significant contributions, such as the paper on the little-known Forest Prinia (now Roberts's Warbler) by Manson & Manson (1980. *Honeyguide* No 102: 12-15), and many shorter articles on a variety of topics that greatly expanded our knowledge of Zimbabwe's birds.

And, of course, he was a major contributor to *Honeyguide*, with no fewer than 165 contributions over 50 years, with

something every year except five. Although Peter was widely recognised as a vulture specialist, his articles and short notes dealt with many other species, as can be seen from his list of contributions, excluding non-ornithological items such as editorials, reports, obituaries and book reviews, that follows.

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Mundy, P.J. 1986. Red-chested Cuckoo calling at night. **32**(2): 90-91.
Mundy, P.J. 1987. Little Egret and a fish. **33**(1): 13-14.
Mundy, P.J. 1987. Black-eyed Bulbul mimics Red-chested Cuckoo. **33**(1): 17-18.
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Mundy, P.J. 1988. Some recent bird strikes on aeroplanes in Zimbabwe. **34**(2): 66.
Mundy, P.J. 1988. Vultures and crows – who takes the eye? **34**(2): 69.
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Mundy, P.J. & Rockingham-Gill, D.V. 1989. Aberrant Swainson's Francolin at Mana Pools. **35**(2): 69-70.
Mundy, P.J. 1990. Bat Hawks in the hand. **36**(2): 89-90.
Mundy, P.J. & Feather, P.J. 1990. Storks and ibises along the Zambezi River. **36**(2): 88-89.
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Mundy, P.J. 1993. Large birds and powerlines – collisions and electrocution. **39**(1): 27-30.
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Brian Marshall

Leslee Maasdorp

Leslee Maasdorp passed away peacefully at her home in Harare on 6 February 2023 at the grand age of 97. She will be remembered fondly as a dedicated teacher and life-long conservationist, whose fervent passion for the wild had an extraordinary influence on several generations of young people in Zimbabwe.

She grew up on a farm near King William's Town in South Africa's Eastern Cape, excelling at school, passing her Matric with distinction, and winning The Royal Empire Society's Essay Competition in 1942. She went on to attain a BSc with distinction in Biology and Zoology at Rhodes University, followed by a Post-grad Certificate in Education (also with distinction) from the University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in 1957.

For 25 years, until 1982, Leslee taught Biology at Prince Edward – a boy's school in Harare. Known affectionately by the boys as MeeMee, she championed the school's Natural History Club, leading five field trips, including one to Mount Kenya. Many of her former pupils held her in high esteem and continued to visit her in her old age.

In 1981, Leslee achieved a Higher Diploma in Library Science from UNISA and, after retiring from teaching, went on to set up the Education Programme for The Zimbabwe Museum of Human Sciences. It was at this time that she also became involved in establishing the Zimbabwe Hunters Association Education Programme at Rifa near Chirundu in the Zambezi Valley. She and her husband Hugh subsequently went on to live at Rifa until 1995, expanding the Education Camp and overseeing the programme which, to this day, is an impactful wilderness and conservation experience for hundreds of schoolchildren.

She served for many years on Boards, successfully helping to prevent the Harare City Council from developing housing schemes on land at the Mukuvisi Woodlands and Ballantyne Park Nature Reserve.

In 1996, Leslee was awarded the Cresta Wildlife Oscar by Zimbabwe's Ministry of Environment and Tourism.

In her 70s, she turned her attentions to BirdLife Zimbabwe, creating their Bird Awareness Programme, helping develop publications including Enjoy the Birds of Zimbabwe, a Teachers' Resource Book and several articles in *Honeyguide*, including an issue dedicated to the Birds of Rifa Camp, Chirundu, Zimbabwe, 1998 – 2014, with Anne Cotton.

In her 80s, now working with The Zambezi Society, Leslee set about trying to influence development planning for Chirundu town to create corridors for wildlife movement through the area. She successfully achieved the designation of Mana Pools as one of Zimbabwe's RAMSAR wetland sites, facilitated funding to purchase desks for the school for rangers' children at ZimParks' Marongora station, and created conservation educational materials for distribution to schools in the areas surrounding the Zambezi Valley National Parks.

Leslee's long life was quite remarkable. She leaves behind an incredible legacy, not only for her own six grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren, but for generations of Zimbabweans for whom she set a shining example of selfless dedication.

With thanks to the Zambezi Society

Leslee Maasdorp (née Smyth)

4 November 2025 – 6 February 2023

Born in 1925, Leslee grew up in King William's Town in the Eastern Cape of South Africa, a daughter to Arthur Henry Smyth (b.1891) and Dorothy (Darmie) Gladys Smyth (nee Jessup, b.1900). Arthur was The Secretary for the Divisional Council and Darmie wrote matric, took a secretarial course and was a bank manager's secretary.

Leslee was the second born of four children. She had an elder sister and two younger brothers. They lived on a small holding called *Tandala* a few miles outside King William's Town, next to the Tshoxa River, and enjoyed a happy early childhood immersed in nature. Their father died suddenly in 1937 when Leslee was 11 years old, leaving her mother Darmie with four children between the ages of 7 and 13 to bring up alone. Darmie took up a senior post at the Revenue Office to support her growing family. She was very highly regarded throughout the "King" community. In hindsight, one can see that Leslee felt the weight her mother was carrying. She naturally responded by sharing the load with her mother in nurturing and guiding her siblings at that time and throughout their lives. She also excelled academically and on the sports field. Leslee was Head Girl in 1942. That year Leslee entered the international essay competition of The Royal Empire Society and won First Prize and a silver medal. The essay topic was titled "The Freedom of Mankind will depend on much closer collaboration between the British Commonwealth of Nations and the United States of America" … her win brought much acclaim to her school. Her prize, 6 guineas worth of books, sank on a ship during the war. We have yet to find a copy of the essay. Leslee also received a first class pass in all her Matric subjects with her school. Her school Principal certified that: "*she is an excellent scholar, widely read, and an independent thinker. She has a fine power of concentration and is a diligent worker. As Head Prefect of the School, she has shown excellent powers of leadership and discipline linked with good temper and courtesy. She has always been actively helpful in all school affairs and has won the respect and affection of both staff and girls. Whatever she undertakes she will do with intelligence and resourcefulness, and I can warmly recommend her for any position of responsibility*".

The tributes, which poured in locally and from all over the world from Prince Edward School pupils and others following her passing, reflected the words of her school Principal with an uncanny likeness and more.

Leslee graduated with Distinction with a BSc in Botany and Zoology from Rhodes University in 1945 and worked as demonstrator at the Herbarium in Pretoria and lectured at the Huguenot University in Wellington. She taught at her old school whilst caring for her mother who died of cancer aged 50 in 1950.

The loss of her mother left a profound gap in her life and that of her siblings and the community in King William's Town.

Leslee met Hugh in 1943 when she was 18, on the tennis court of the local parish priest, and they married in 1949. They moved to Rusape, Rhodesia, in 1950/1951 where Hugh had a land surveying post awaiting him. Five years were spent in Umtali with memorable surveying trips to Nyasaland and around the Eastern Districts of Rhodesia. The Kariba shoreline survey meant a move to Salisbury and a year at the University of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. Here she attained the post graduate teachers diploma, achieved with Distinction and received from the Queen Mother, who arrived to open Kariba Dam. A teaching post in Biology at Prince Edward School was to form the focus of the following 25 years. Following the Kariba years were two dramatic years farming in the Beatrice area. We moved 14 times during those 6 years with not a day missed at PE, with Highlands School, Oriel Girls and Plumtree being constant threads in our lives.

Much mention has already been made about Leslee's achievements in her working life at PE, the National Museum of Human Sciences, Rifa Education Camp, Chirundu, with the Zimbabwe Hunters Association, BirdLife Zimbabwe and the Zambezi Society. But what was always the driving force behind all these balls in the air? Her childhood experiences.

Leslee often spoke of the effect the First World War and The Wall Street Crash had on her father and the family. Then came the Second World War and her mother's death at the young age of 50. Looking back, these crises influenced her response to life in several ways. Leslee embraced family and friends first and foremost throughout her life and blended them into her working life whenever possible – she was a mentor to many.

She was intensely frugal but very astute financially. Educating was central to her being, particularly in biology and nature. She hoarded each journal, glossy or inflight magazine or calendar she could find and kept them for environmental awareness. She would cut out the photos, glue them onto pages with carefully constructed messages, and share them far and wide into the remotest spots of the country…nothing was wasted – ever.

She had an uncanny way of being able to assess situations and make suggestions which others would follow through as if they had thought of these themselves!

Leslee believed that a good education system underpinned good governance in the nation and she strove to instil this ethic in the students and teachers she crossed paths with at Prince Edward School, Rifa Conservation Camp and the Bird Awareness Programme, which she set up and managed for BirdLife Zimbabwe.

She often spoke of being the longest living family member of her generation and had hoped the Queen would send her a letter of congratulations on her 100th birthday! She is deeply missed by her children and their spouses Dorothy and John, Richard and Val and Adrian and Barbara, her grandchildren Angus, Jonathan, Julia, Paul, Shelley and Nicola, and her great grandchildren Juna, Cleo and Jasper, Gabriela, Lucas, Lexi and Sasha.

Her legacy lives on in her contribution to natural history in Zimbabwe, in those she taught and those she worked with.

Dorothy Wakeling

Leslee Maasdorp (seated left) and siblings on the Tshoxa River, 1935

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