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African Pitta *Pitta angolensis*

Photo: © Derek Hinde

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GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

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Contributions can be sent to:

Brian Marshall (Editor) – brian.marshall01@gmail.com

and/or

Ian Riddell (Assistant Editor) – gemsaf@mango.zw

Written communications can be sent to Ian Riddell at 5 Leeds Close, Highlands, Harare, Zimbabwe.

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Are Burchell's and White-browed Coucals the Same Species?

Darryl Tiran, Brian Marshall & Kit Hustler

These two coucals have a somewhat chequered taxonomic history. Some of the earliest works on southern African birds, such as Stark & Sclater (1908), Gunning & Haagner (1910) and Roberts (1922, 1940) treated them as separate species, Burchell's Coucal *Centropus burchelli* and White-browed Coucal *C. superciliosus*. This changed in the second edition of Roberts (McLachlan & Liversidge, 1957), when they were lumped together as a single species (*C. superciliosus*) and remained so for almost 40 years, e.g. Irwin (1981) and Rowan (1983). By the time the southern African Bird Atlas (Harrison *et al.*, 1997) was published, they had again been separated but were simply listed as 'Burchell's and White-browed' because most observers did not distinguish between them. Today, these

two forms are generally recognised as separate species (Clements *et al.* 2024; Gill *et al.*, 2025).

According to Irwin (1981) *burchelli* occurs in the Limpopo Valley, the Save-Runde junction, and the eastern highlands from Chipinge to Nyanga. He noted that *superciliosus* occurs in the Zambezi Valley, from Kanyemba to Victoria Falls. The Senegal Coucal *C. senegalensis* was otherwise the most widespread coucal, being found over most of the country. However, the map in Irwin (p. 167) is rather misleading because it was based solely on collected specimens in the Natural History Museum in Bulawayo. A more realistic representation of the distribution of these two coucals comes from Hustler's analysis of the SABAP records from Zimbabwe (Figure 1).

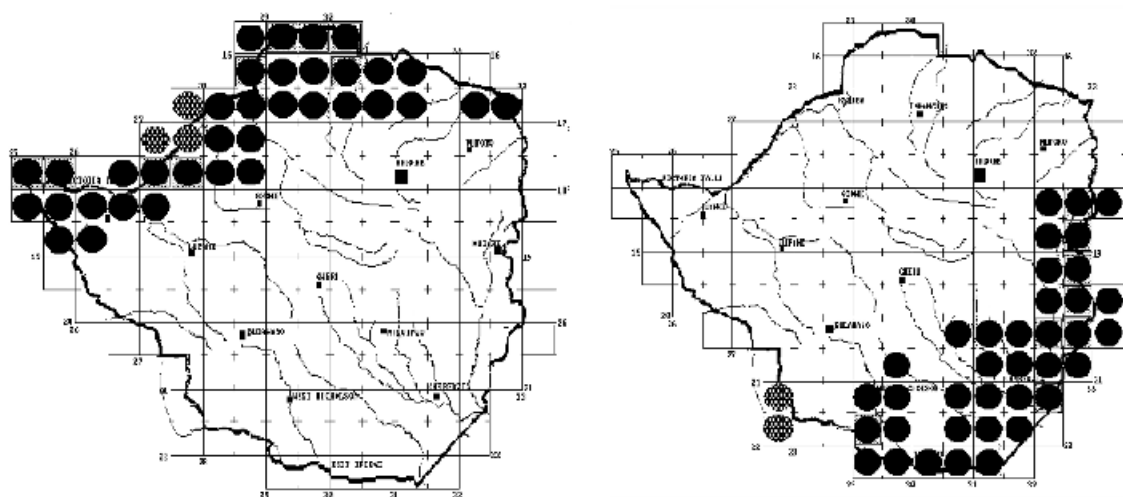


Figure 1. The distribution of *superciliosus* (left) and *burchelli* (right) in Zimbabwe. Points are plotted as half-degree squares; stippled points are records from outside Zimbabwe but in squares that include some Zimbabwean territory

In March 2025 Doug Smith photographed two coucals mating on a farm in Banket. One was a 'Burchell's' with a black head, and the other a 'White-browed' with its white eyebrow and streaked head and back (Figure 2). Both birds had a barred rump, clearly visible in the photographs, thus distinguishing them from the Senegal Coucal, which has a plain rump. This sighting raises a number of questions about both the distribution of these two species, and whether they really are separate species.

The first question then, is why were these two birds so far 'inland' as Banket, where we would only expect to find Senegal Coucals? It is quite possible that the White-browed Coucal

occurs along larger Zambezi tributaries, such as the Manyame River, but judging by the maps in Irwin (1981) little collecting was done along the river north of Chinhoyi, so they could have been missed. This possibility is supported by Howells (1985) who noted its presence along the Manyame River in the Dande Communal Land, although it was less frequent than the Senegal Coucal. Hustler's map indicates that it occurs further south than suggested by Irwin, who stated that it did not occur above the Zambezi escarpment. This would certainly explain its occurrence at Mazvikadei Dam, where it has apparently been present for several years, while Banket was said to be 'good' for Burchell's (both reports from Gary Douglas).



Figure 2. (Left) The two coucals photographed on the farm at Banket, *superciliosus* on the left and *burchelli* on the right. (Right) The two of them mating. Photos © Doug Smith.

The presence of Burchell's Coucal so far from the eastern highlands is more difficult to explain. Irwin's map indicates that a number of Senegal Coucals, but no Burchell's, were collected between Chinhoyi and Rusape. The possibility that Burchell's has extended its range along the Mashonaland Plateau from the eastern highlands, like other species, such as the Thick-billed Weaver *Amblyospiza albifrons*, cannot be discounted. If so, they have probably been overlooked with observers simply assuming them to be Senegal Coucals. Hustler's map shows Burchell's extending into the half-degree square that extends from about 20 km east of Rusape to Eagle's Nest, about 7 km west of Headlands. If this coucal was recorded in the western part of this square then it could well have spread beyond it, even as far as Banket.

Irwin recorded only the White-browed and Senegal Coucals in the Zambezi Valley, some collected at sites now drowned by Lake Kariba. Similarly, Donnelly & Donnelly (1983) recorded only White-browed and Senegal Coucals in their Kariba checklist, but it is unclear how far inland the Donnelly's checklist extends. When BEM worked on Lake Kariba (1978-1985) the White-browed was the only species he saw along the shoreline, with Senegal Coucals occurring inland along the rivers flowing into the lake. Or were they? Most birders have probably assumed that all black-crowned coucals in the Zambezi Valley were Senegal Coucals when, in fact, some may have been Burchell's and future observers should look more closely at such birds.

From his experience in Matusadona, Kariba and Victoria Falls since the mid-1980s, DT reported that the pairing of White-browed and Burchell's is a common occurrence and they frequently interbred, even though many suitable partners of the appropriate colour morph were available. They produced offspring that closely resemble one or the other parent, but it is not known if these offspring were themselves fertile. The Senegal Coucal was never seen to breed with either the White-browed or Burchell's.

So, does this mean these two forms are the same species? A search for these coucals on Google came up with an AI-generated answer which stated that 'based on a major DNA study in 2005 the two forms were not separate species.'

Unfortunately, it was impossible to find this 2005 study and the AI-generated statement has since disappeared. It was probably generated from the only account of coucal DNA that could be found, an Asian species, the Greater Coucal *C. sinensis* (Qu *et al.*, 2017). Consequently, the exact taxonomic status of *superciliosus* and *burchelli* cannot be settled on the basis of existing DNA knowledge.

The White-browed Coucal has a huge range, from south-western Saudi Arabia and Yemen, south through East Africa (except south-eastern Tanzania) to Zambia and Angola, with Zimbabwe at the extreme south of its range. Burchell's Coucal occurs throughout much of South Africa, southern and eastern Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Malawi and south-eastern Tanzania. The Bird Atlas of Tanzania (online) shows that Burchell's occurs south of a line more or less from Dar-es-Salaam southeast to just north of Lake Malawi. The notes on the map state there is a hybrid zone between the two forms, up to 100 km wide in some places, especially on either side of Dar-es-Salaam. A similar hybrid zone may occur along the Zambezi Valley and northern Zimbabwe, and local birders should look closely at black-headed coucals which would previously have been identified as Senegal Coucals.

Finally, Rowan (1983) stated that the White-browed Coucal retained the juvenile plumage of Burchell's Coucal. This could be an example of neoteny, where a species (or subspecies) retains juvenile characteristics into maturity. The fact that these two forms interbreed where they come into contact suggests that they are indeed the same species. Nevertheless, they could be in the process of becoming separate ones since they each occupy wide ranges where, presumably, they do not interbreed. It would be interesting to know if a *superciliosus* from, say, Ethiopia, could interbreed with a *burchelli* from South Africa.

An interesting question is why have these two forms at Kariba only been noticed quite recently. According to Irwin (1981) the White-browed form was only present in the Zambezi Valley while Burchell's was restricted to the eastern highlands and southern Zimbabwe. Has Burchell's spread to the Zambezi Valley, or has it just been overlooked?

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- Darryl Tiran**, Victoria Falls. ✉ ecolynx@zol.co.zw
- Brian Marshall**, Auckland, New Zealand. ✉ brian.marshall01@gmail.com
- Kit Hustler** Invercargill, New Zealand. ✉ kitvix@orcon.net.nz

Editor's note: Hybridisation is quite common amongst birds. For example, Ottenburghs (2023. *Journal of Ornithology* 164: 913–920) estimated that the incidence of hybridisation in bird species ranged from 9% to 19% depending on the number of species recognised in global checklists. The extent of hybridisation can be very high in some groups, e.g., 60% in the Anseriformes (ducks and geese), 40% in the Piciformes (woodpeckers, barbets, toucans) and 32% in Galliformes (pheasants, francolins, quail) (Aliabadian & Nijman, 2007. *Contributions to Zoology* 76: 59-61). It is to be expected that hybridisation might occur where closely related species (or

subspecies) meet and this may be the situation with these two coucals.

A recent paper (Smith *et al.* 2026. *Ibis* early view, 1 May 2026) examined hybrids between the African (Barbary) Collared dove *Streptopelia roseogrisea* and the European Collared Dove (*S. decaocto*) and found that they generally resembled the latter. They termed this 'extinction by hybridisation.' If these two coucal morphotypes are extensively hybridising, then it would be interesting to know whether one of them would become dominant and reduce the incidence of the other.

Group size stability in the White-crested Helmet-shrike across woodland habitats in Hwange National Park, Zimbabwe

Ngoni Chiweshe

Introduction

Cooperative breeding is widespread among Afrotropical passerines and is often associated with seasonally variable environments where ecological constraints favour delayed dispersal and helper retention (Emlen 1982; Brown 1987; Rubenstein & Lovette, 2007). In savannah ecosystems, social cohesion may buffer against fluctuations in resource availability and predation risk. Cooperative groups confer advantages including enhanced predator detection, improved foraging efficiency and increased reproductive success (du Plessis *et al.*, 1995; Koenig & Dickinson, 2004).

The White-crested Helmet-shrike *Prionops plumatus* is a conspicuous, group-living woodland species distributed across southern and eastern Africa (Hockey *et al.*, 2005). Groups typically comprise a dominant breeding pair assisted by retained offspring or related helpers and group sizes across the region generally range between four and ten individuals, with occasional larger aggregations outside the breeding season. Despite its widespread occurrence in Zimbabwe, quantitative descriptions of group size distribution within Zimbabwean woodland systems remain scarce.

Habitat structure can influence cooperative group size through its effects on resource dispersion, territory quality and predator detection (Emlen, 1982; Koenig & Dickinson, 2004; Rubenstein & Lovette, 2007). In Hwange National Park, woodland habitats vary structurally and floristically, and this paper investigates whether such habitat heterogeneity influences group size in this helmet-shrike. This study aimed to quantify its group size

distribution and test whether group size varies among dominant woodland habitat types during the dry season.

Methods

Field observations were carried out in Hwange National Park, north-western Zimbabwe. Its vegetation consists of semi-arid savannah woodland characterised by Teak *Baikiaea plurijuga* on the Kalahari sands, mopane *Colophospermum mopane* woodlands on basaltic soils, *Combretum*-dominated communities and mixed bushland habitats. Observations were made at Sinamatella and Main Camp inside the park, and in adjacent forestry areas. Data were collected during July 2015, the cool dry season, when primary productivity and arthropod abundance are likely to be reduced compared to the wet season (November to March). Group size was determined by direct counts of cohesive foraging units and only those individuals moving and foraging together as a clearly associated unit were included. Each observation was treated as an independent group encounter. Habitats were classified in the field and subsequently standardized into four categories: (1) teak-dominated woodland, (2) mopane woodland, (3) *Combretum*-dominated woodland, and (4) mixed bushland.

Results and Discussion

Twenty-nine groups were recorded, ranging in size from 3 to 14 individuals (mean $\pm$ SD = 8.4 ± 2.7 ; median = 8) and 53% of all observations fell between 7 and 9 individuals (Figure 1).

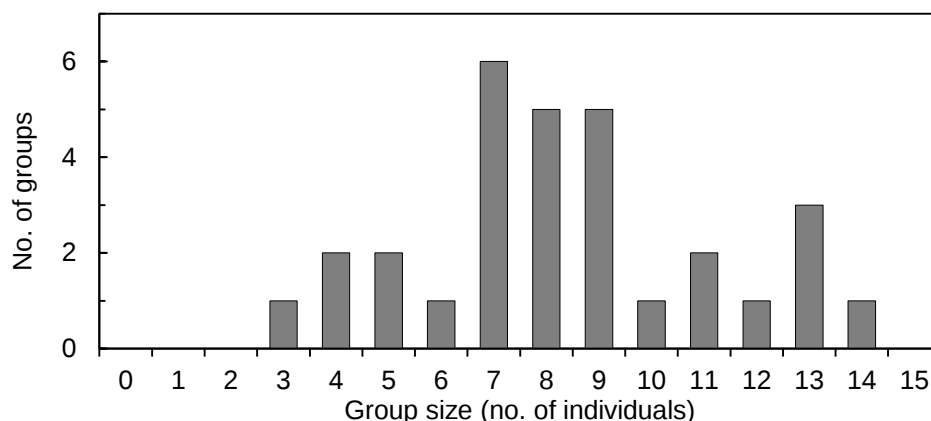


Figure 1. Frequency distribution of White-crested Helmet-shrike group sizes recorded in Hwange National Park, July 2015.

Most (57%) groups were counted in teak-dominated woodland (Table 1), but this may reflect effort, with more counts being made in this vegetation type, rather than any differences in productivity. The mean group size was 8.4 individuals and there was no significant difference between mean group sizes in each

habitat (Kruskal-Wallis analysis of variance, $p > 0.05$). The mean group size reported here aligns closely with previously reported ranges for this species elsewhere in southern Africa (Maclean 1993; Hockey *et al.* 2005).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of group size across woodland habitat types

Habitat	N	Mean $\pm$ SD	Median	Range
Teak-dominated woodland	21	8.4 $\pm$ 2.7	8	3–14
Mopane woodland	5	9.0 $\pm$ 3.7	9	4–13
Combretum-dominated woodland	5	7.8 $\pm$ 2.6	8	4–11
Mixed bushland	6	9.2 $\pm$ 3.1	8	6–13

Contrary to expectations that woodland structure might influence group size via variation in resource distribution or territory quality (Emlen 1982), no significant habitat effect was detected. Group sizes were remarkably consistent across teak, mopane, *Combretum* and mixed bushland habitats during the dry season. This suggests that demographic and social mechanisms such as helper retention and delayed dispersal may exert a stronger influence over group size than broad-scale habitat variation at this time of year. Woodland habitats sampled may not differ sufficiently in dry-season resource availability to alter group cohesion.

Stable cooperative group sizes across woodland types indicate a socially resilient population within Hwange National Park. Maintenance of medium-sized groups during the dry season suggests effective social buffering against ecological stress.

This study provides the first quantitative baseline for group size distributions in Zimbabwe and establishes a foundation for future research on seasonal dynamics, habitat modification and long-term population trends in savannah woodland systems.

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Ngoni Chiweshe, Harare, ✉ gweshe@yahoo.com

Changes in Waterbird Populations on Lake Manyame

Dianne Rushforth & Brian Marshall

Introduction

Lake Manyame (formerly Lake Robertson) is located on the Manyame River, downstream of Lake Chivero, and was created after completion of the Darwendale Dam in 1976. When full, it has a surface area of 8,100 ha (81 km²), a maximum depth of 22.6 m and a mean depth of 6.0 m (Marshall 1994). Its water level fluctuates quite considerably, exposing extensive areas of the lakebed, which attracts large numbers of waterbirds. Tree (1987) made some early bird counts along 2 km of shoreline in October-December 1986, reporting peak numbers of 640 Little

Grebes *Tachybaptus ruficollis*, 1,700 ducks and geese, 410 Red-knobbed Coots *Fulica cristata*, 1,300 waders, 390 gulls and terns, as well as cormorants, darters, herons, storks and ibises, and spoonbills. At its peak in December, he estimated that there may have been a total of 40,000 birds on the lake. Counts were made over the whole lake in October 1987 and November 1988 when an estimated total of 20,877 and 30,247 birds were present, respectively (Tree, 1988, 1989). This paper presents the results of additional waterbird counts made on Lake Manyame at various times between 1993 and 2018.

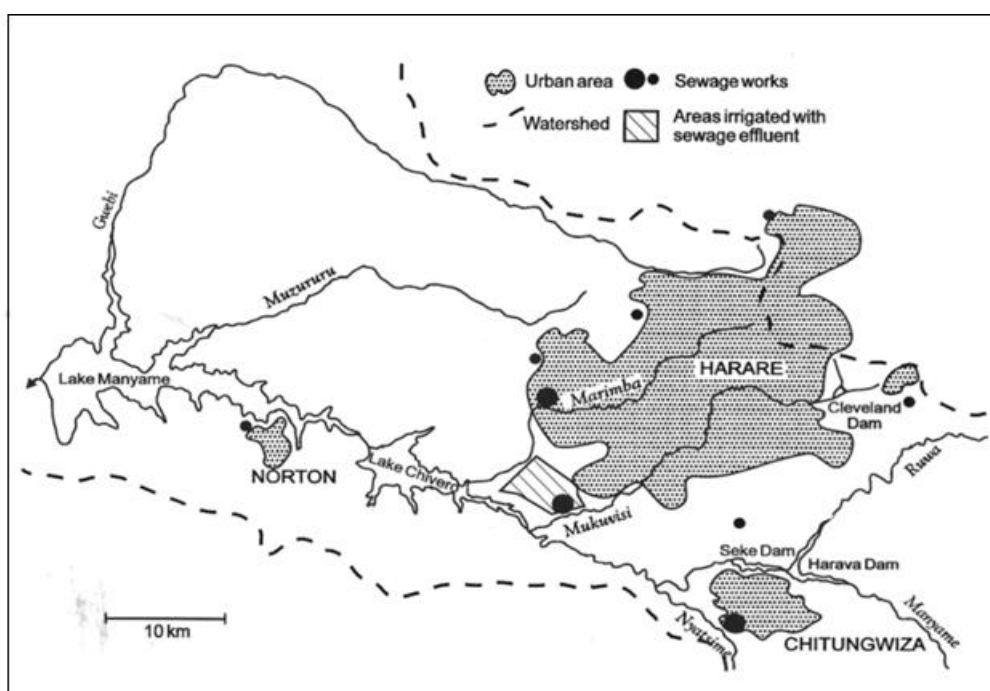


Figure 1. The location of Lake Manyame in relation to the City of Harare, Chitungwiza, and Norton. Note that Harare now extends almost to Lake Chivero, Chitungwiza and Ruwa, and the area once used to irrigate sewage effluent has now been converted to housing. From Marshall (1994).

Ecological conditions in Lake Manyame

Before discussing the waterbird counts, some of the factors that might affect their numbers could be considered. As a rule, lakes that are nutrient-poor (oligotrophic), have low productivity and might not support many birds, while nutrient-rich (eutrophic) lakes are productive and should have more birds. After its creation, Lake Manyame was oligotrophic and up to the mid-2000s its nutrient concentrations were similar to those in the other dams on the Manyame River, except for Lake Chivero (Figure 2).

Lake Chivero became eutrophic as a result of sewage effluents from Harare being discharged into the Mukwisi and Marimba rivers and dense blooms of potentially toxic blue-green algae became a serious problem (Marshall, 1997). There was some improvement in the 1970s, but since then the growth of the human population in the Harare-Chitungwiza-Ruwa area, and the failure to treat sewage adequately has worsened the situation in the lake, which is now hypertrophic with dense algal blooms.

These have produced cyanotoxins (Mhlanga *et al.*, 2006a) and periodic fish kills; severe ones were reported in 1996 (Moyo, 1997), and in 2003-05 (Mhlanga *et al.*, 2006b). In December 2024 algal toxins killed thousands of fish, as well as four white rhinoceroses, other game animals, cattle and goats that drank water from the lake, an event that made international news and drew attention to its severe environmental problems.

Since Lake Manyame receives most of its water from Lake Chivero it is also experiencing similar problems, although perhaps less severe at present. In the 1990's the water in Lake Manyame was very clear with healthy beds of oxygen weed around the shoreline, although Tendaupenyu (2012) attributed these to early eutrophication. During the 2000's the Norton sewage works broke down and raw sewage from the town was pumped directly into the Lake. The water clarity soon deteriorated, and oxygen weed was no longer visible. There is relatively little data on present conditions in this lake, but satellite imagery suggests that chlorophyll *a* (a measure of algal

abundance), turbidity and total phosphorus increased substantially between 1986 and 2018 (Muchini *et al.*, 2018). Images on Google Earth frequently show that the five dams on

the Manyame are now bright green, suggesting that all have become eutrophic.

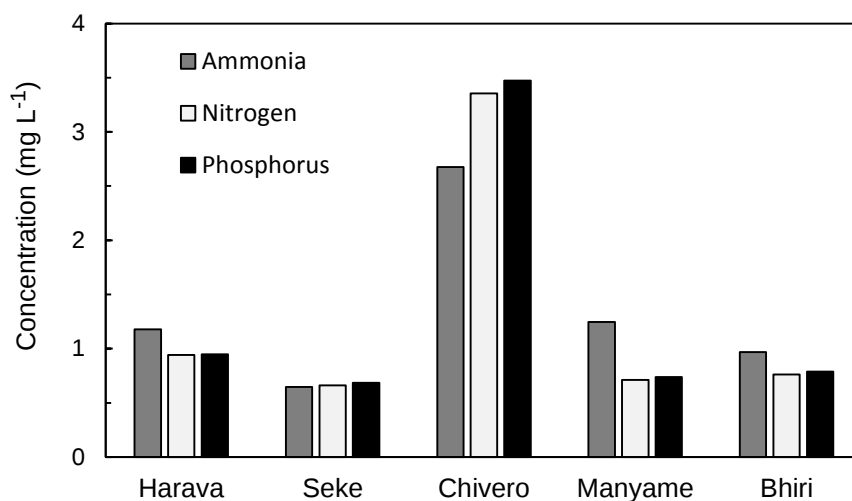


Figure 2. The mean concentrations of nitrogen and phosphorus in the five Manyame dams, 2004-2005. Lake Chivero was significantly different from the others. From Tendaupenyu (2012).

Higher plants can also flourish in eutrophic systems, and these provide habitat and cover for both fish and birds. Water hyacinth *Pontederia crassipes* was carried into the lake after a major outbreak on Lake Chivero, which was brought under control by chemical methods in 1992 (Marshall, 1993), followed by biological control (Chikwenhere, 2001). This plant formed such dense mats in sheltered areas such as creeks and inlets that Grey-headed Gulls *Chroicocephalus cirrocephalus* were able to breed on them. It is not known if chemical control was used on Lake Manyame, but biological control is effective and could account for the rapid decline in plant coverage after 1994.

Several other invasive plants reported in Lake Chivero may also have become established in Lake Manyame. They include Floating pennywort (spaghetti weed) *Hydrocotyle ranunculoides*, which grows on long horizontal stems and can form a tangled mass along the shoreline, and other rooted species such as Parrot's Feather *Myriophyllum spicatum*, oxygen weed *Lagarosiphon* sp., and Pickerel weed *Pontederia cordata*. In addition to Water Hyacinth, other floating invasives include Water Lettuce *Pistia stratiotes* and sponge plant *Limnobium* sp. While these plants provide a substrate for invertebrates that could be eaten by both birds and fish, these are often unavailable to birds because most live on the submerged roots (Brendonck *et al.*, 2003) and floating mats can be impenetrable.

Fish are, of course, an important resource for many waterbird species, but being close to rapidly growing urban areas there is also a large human demand for fish from Lake Manyame. A considerable fishery has developed on the lake, but the numbers of fishermen and their catches are poorly documented. However, there is some evidence that fish populations in the lake may have collapsed from 2006 onwards (Figure 3). While the catch values may not be entirely accurate, and are possibly overstated, these data suggest a real trend in the lake. Utete *et al.* (2018) implicated in a number of factors such as eutrophication, pollution and climate change that may have caused this collapse, but only mentioned overfishing in passing. If the lake really did yield about 5,400 t in 2004, this is equivalent to an astonishing 667 kg ha⁻¹, and it would require a

huge fishing effort to achieve such a yield. Human disturbance from the large number of fishermen that operate on the lake would also have an impact on the birds.

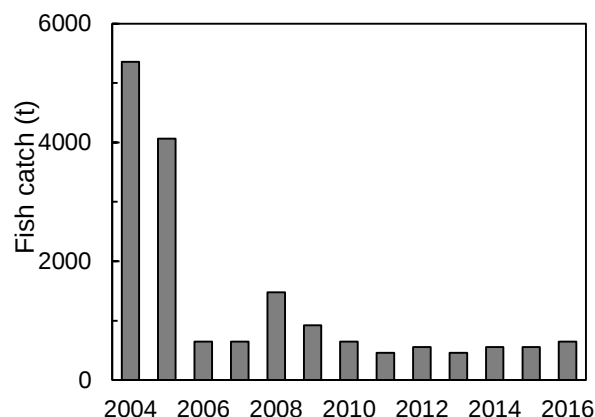


Figure 3. Estimated fish catches from Lake Manyame, 2004-2016. From Utete *et al.* (2018).

It is unclear how long the fish stocks could have sustained such an intensive fishery, especially when juvenile fish are likely to be caught in large numbers. Evidence for this comes from fishers who were arrested by National Parks for various infringements of the fishery regulations. For instance, in 2002 a total of 569 people were arrested, of which 326 (55%) were “spawn fishing”, which involves putting baited hooks onto the nests built by male tilapias, which are then caught when trying to remove them (Chigonda, 2006). While this is a large number, it is likely to underestimate the total because National Parks may not have the resources to patrol the lake adequately and, of course, the number of fishers must have increased considerably over the last 20 years.

Methods

The counts were made in accordance with the protocol set by Wetlands International, and the African Waterfowl Census was to be carried out annually during the months of January and July.

The Lake Manyame counts were carried out by Dianne Rushforth from 1993 to 2018 with most of them being done in January and July of each year. Observations were made from a boat and covered an area from Hunyani Pulp and Paper factory in Norton to the Muzururu River and included the upper reaches of the Lake. Each count was carried out in one day, usually from 0830 to 1500 hours. However, records were kept of observations made in other months of the year and these have been included.

Unfortunately, there are gaps in the records for various reasons. No counts were made January 2001 and January 2002 owing to the farm invasions, when it was thought to be too risky to be seen on the Lake. Fuel was in short supply from July 2005 to July 2008 and data from July 2009 to July 2013 cannot be found, possibly because it was lost when my computer was stolen in 2013.

Results and Discussion

Diving birds

Four waterbird species on the lake catch their prey by diving. The Reed Cormorant *Microcarbo africanus* was recorded on every survey but its numbers have declined since the first counts were made in 1987 (Figure 4a). Their numbers were high in the 1987-88 surveys but just 30 birds were counted in 1993, and they increased thereafter, with 506 and 517 being recorded in two counts made during 1998. Since then, however, their numbers have decreased with an average only 4.5 birds per count from 2014 to 2018. Plotting the counts on a logarithmic scale (Figure 4b) reveals a highly significant declining trend for this species.

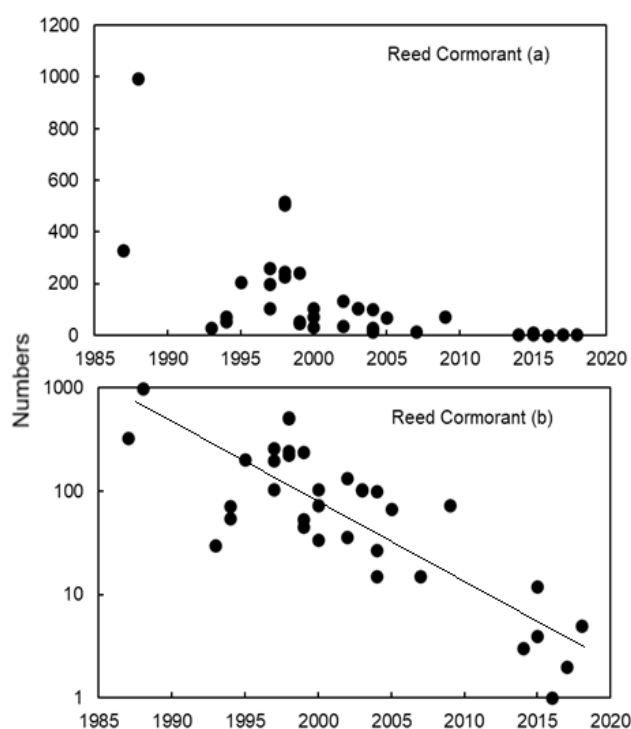


Figure 4. The number of Reed Cormorants counted on Lake Manyame, 1987-2018; Plotted as (a) arithmetic data, and (b) on a logarithmic scale. The trend in (b) is highly significant ($r = 0.824$, $p < 0.001$).

This species is vulnerable to gill nets, as shown by a photograph of one trapped by waste net material in Riddell (2015), and it is possible that gill netting has contributed to its decline. It also tends to feed in shallow water, and the growth

of aquatic plants may have reduced their accessibility to fish, while they may also have been subjected to excessive human disturbance, especially if fishers are using small-mesh beach seine nets.

In contrast, White-breasted Cormorants *Phalacrocorax lucidus* were much less numerous than Reed Cormorants and there was a less obvious declining trend (Figure 5). Nevertheless, the average count in the period 1987-1999 was 37.8 birds (31.4 if the high count of 172 in 1998 is excluded) compared to 19.1 for the period 2000-2018. This suggests that the latter half of the counting period was generally less favourable for these birds, possibly because of declining fish populations.

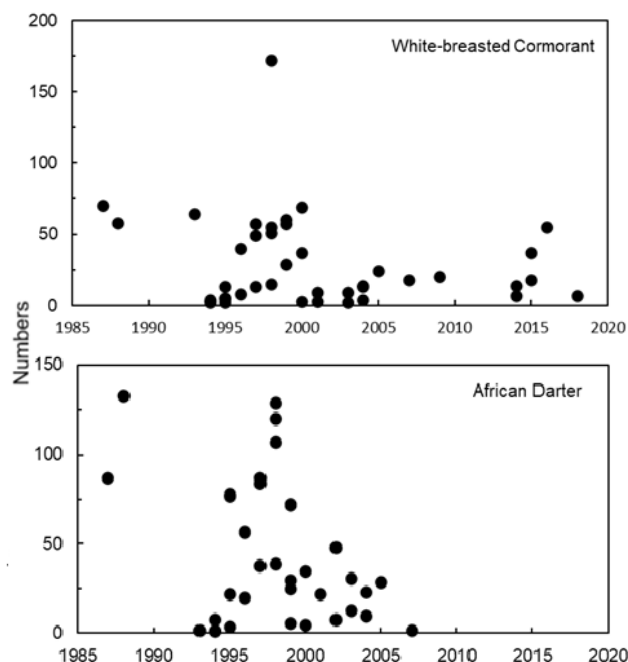


Figure 5. The number of White-breasted Cormorants and African Darters counted on Lake Manyame, 1987-2018.

African Darters *Anhinga rufa* were present in varying numbers, with the highest counts of around 120-130 birds being recorded in 1988 and 1998, but after that their numbers declined and none were recorded in counts after 2007, when just two birds were recorded (Figure 5). It is known that darters are very vulnerable to gill nets (Riddell, 2014; Marshall, 2025) and this may explain the collapse of this species in Lake Manyame.

There was no obvious trend in the numbers of Little Grebes on the lake, although numbers were high in 1987-88 and again in 2014 and 2015 (Figure 6). The average count on the lake was 38.4 in 1987-1999 and 34.4 in 2000-2016, or 16.3 and 15.3 if the four highest counts (1987-88 and 2014-15) are left out.

Hérons

The two commonest large herons were the Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* and the Great Egret *A. alba* (Figure 7). Both species were most numerous in the 1987-88 counts, with numbers ranging from 106 to 158 birds. Their numbers had fallen by 1993, when the next counts began, with the highest counts being 63 Grey Herons and 89 Great Egrets, both in 1998. The average count of Grey Herons in the 1993-1999 period was 27.8, falling to 11.1 in 2000-2018, while Great Egret counts were 25.5 and 10.0 birds respectively.

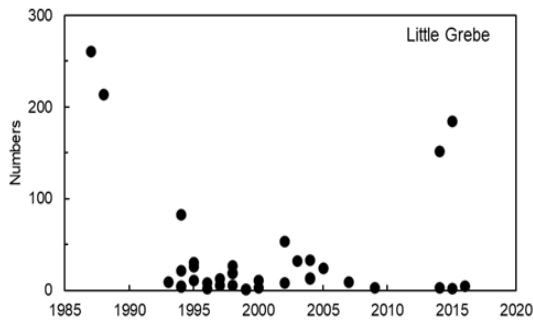


Figure 6. The number of Little Grebes counted on Lake Manyame, 1987-2018.

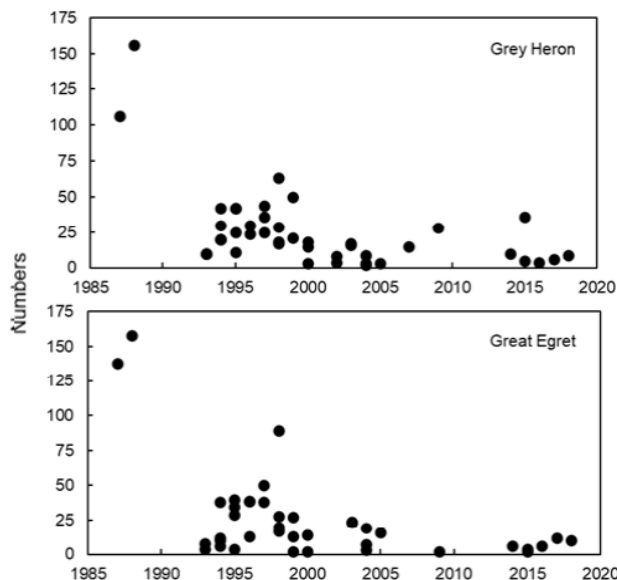


Figure 7. The number of Grey Herons and Great Egrets counted on Lake Manyame, 1987-2018.

The most numerous small herons were the Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* and Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* (Figure 8). The Little Egret followed the same pattern as the other species, being most numerous in the 1987-88 period with the highest count of 138 birds being recorded in 1988. Thereafter, the average numbers did not change, with values of 10.8 and 10.7 birds in 1993-99 and 2000-2018 respectively.

Squacco Heron numbers did not follow the same pattern and were relatively low in the 1987-88 counts, with the highest counts being recorded in 2003 (82 birds) and 2004 (112 birds). The average count in the 1987-1999 period was 15.6 birds, while in 200-2018 it was 31.7 birds, a reversal of the pattern for most other species. This may reflect the growth of aquatic vegetation around the lakeshore, which would favour this species, while being detrimental to the others.

Although not truly a waterbird, the Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* is often found near water and may feed on insects emerging from wet areas. They also breed over water, although it is unlikely that any were breeding at Lake Manyame where there are no suitable trees or islands. Tree (1988, 1989) did not include them in his counts, but they were recorded in the counts from 1993 onwards (Figure 8). Their numbers varied quite considerably, with some high counts of around 250 birds from 1995 to 1999, and an exceptional count of 490 birds in January 1999.

Ten other heron species were recorded during the counts on the lake, with the average count per five-year period (pentads) being shown in Table 1. Of the larger herons, only the Black-headed *Ardea melanocephala* and Goliath Herons *A. goliath*, were recorded in every pentad, while the Purple Heron *A. purpurea* did not occur after 2010. All three species were most numerous in 1987 and 1988, but counts were relatively low after that.

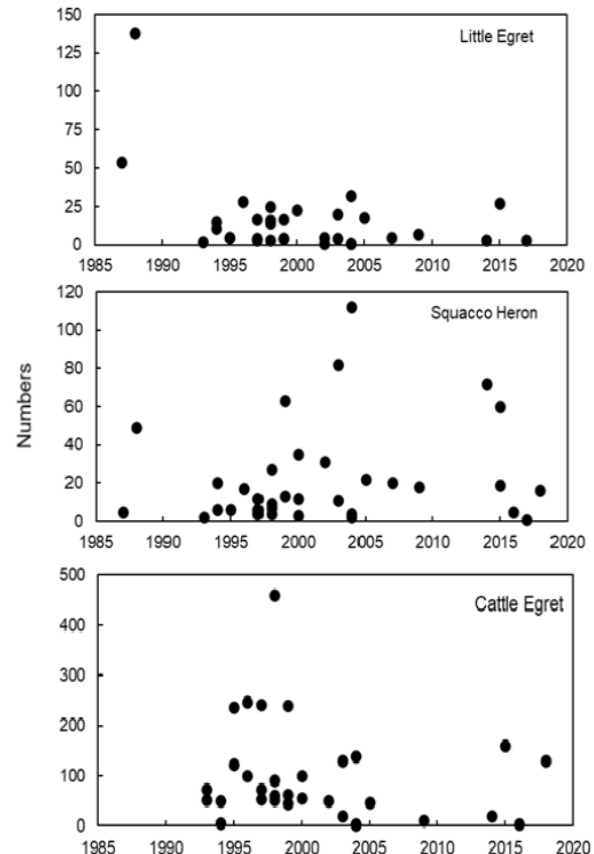


Figure 8. The number of Little Egrets, Squacco Herons and Cattle Egrets counted on Lake Manyame, 1987-2018.

Three egret species were recorded, with the Slaty Egret *Egretta vinaceigula* being recorded only five times between 1996 and 2010, with three counts of one and two counts of two birds. The Black Heron *E. ardesiaca* was recorded in every pentad, mostly in small numbers, except for an exceptional count of 110 birds in January 1996 and four counts of over 30 birds, as well as six records over 20 birds, but none as large as this after January 2004. The Intermediate Egret *E. intermedia* was recorded in small numbers with the highest count being 15 birds in 1988.

The other herons were all reported in small numbers. The Green-backed Heron *Butorides striatus* was counted only in the first three pentads, but in very small numbers, probably because large dams are not a suitable habitat; Irwin (1981) noted that it mostly occurs along rivers or streams with fringing forest or other woody vegetation. The remaining species, the Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* (only four seen in 1998); the Rufous-bellied Heron *Ardeola rufiventris* (seen twice), and Little Bittern *Ixobrychus sturmii* (seen once) were probably vagrants.

Table 1. The average number per count of less numerous herons on Lake Manyame, in each pentad, 1987-2018. All values in this and other tables are rounded to the nearest whole number.

	1985-90	1991-95	1996-00	2001-05	2006-10	2011-15	2016-20
Black-headed Heron	26	8	10	3	1	6	3
Goliath Heron	10	3	4	3	7	3	2
Purple Heron	61	6	8	11	3		
Slaty Egret			1	2	1		
Black Heron	5	32	23	12	3	5	1
Intermediate Egret	10	1	2	1	1	2	2
Rufous-bellied Heron			1				1
Green-backed Heron	1	1	1				
Black-crowned Night Heron	3		4				
Little Bittern			1				

Storks, Ibises and Hamerkop

Two large birds that feed in shallow water showed a very similar pattern of abundance (Figure 9). The Yellow-billed Stork *Mycteria ibis* is a fish-eater that wades in shallow water and was most numerous in the early years with counts of 80 and 60 birds in 1987-88. The largest number was of 116 birds in 1994, but numbers fell after that, never reaching more than 40 and none were counted after 2004.

The African Spoonbill *Platalea africana* also wades in shallow water where it feeds on small animals that it extracts from the mud. It was never very numerous, with the highest counts being 65 in 1987 and 58 in 1988. Their numbers were highly variable with maximum counts reaching about 50 birds up to 1998, then declining to nine birds in 2005 and none thereafter (Figure 9). Irwin (1981) stated that some of them bred on old African Darter nests on the lake in 1997-98 and 1979.

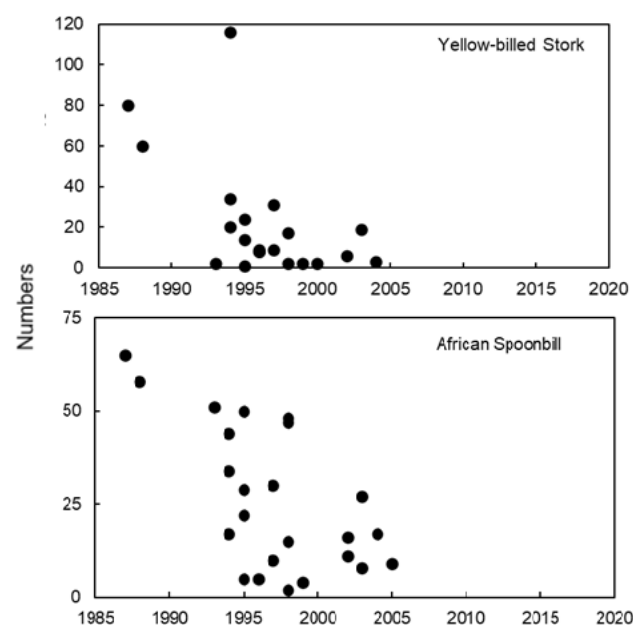


Figure 9. The number of Yellow-billed Storks and African Spoonbills counted on Lake Manyame, 1987-2018.

The Yellow-billed Stork was thought to be migratory, while the spoonbill was described as a sparse non-breeding visitor (Irwin, 1981), so the variability in their numbers is not unexpected. The disappearance of both species from 2005 onwards may be connected to the growth of dense vegetation

along the shoreline that could interfere with their feeding behaviour.

Two Zimbabwean ibis species were recorded but their trends differed significantly (Figure 10). The numbers of African Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus* were generally low, seldom exceeding about 30 birds, apart from a high count of 66 in 2003. There was little variation in the counts from 1987-1999 (10.7 birds) and 2000-2018 (13.8 birds). Glossy Ibises *Plegadis falcinellus* were fairly numerous in the early years, with 39 and 96 being counted in 1987 and 1988 respectively, but they were present in low numbers until 2000. Their numbers remained relatively low thereafter, although exceptional counts of 181 and 182 birds were reported in February 2003 and July 2016. Irwin (1981) noted that this species had once been scarce in Zimbabwe, but noted that its numbers had increased, and it could now be seen groups of a dozen or more. He thought that most birds came into Zimbabwe from South Africa or other neighbouring countries, which may explain the occasionally large influxes such as those reported from Lake Manyame.



Figure 10. The number of Sacred and Glossy Ibises counted on Lake Manyame, 1987-2018.

Other species included the Saddle-billed Stork *Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis*, White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*, Abdim's Stork *C. abdimii*, and Hamerkop *Scopus umbretta*, all

in small numbers and none after 2005 (Table 2). The Saddle-billed is a piscivore, but the other two storks are not, and they may have been feeding on insects or frogs along the shoreline. In 1973, when the lake was filling, large numbers of White Storks were seen wading in water up to their bellies in order to strip insects from grass stalks where they were trying to escape the rising water (Brian Marshall, unpublished) but these were exceptional circumstances.

African Openbills *Anastomus lamelligerus* were generally absent from the highveld until the 1970s (Irwin 1981), but began breeding on Seke Dam in 1973 when the exceptionally low level of Lake Chivero exposed large numbers of freshwater mussels (van der Heiden, 1973, 1974). This breeding attempt failed after the lake level rose in 1974 and covered the mussels in deep water. Openbills were initially scarce on Lake Manyame, with only two being counted in 1987 and one in 1988, but their

numbers rose to an average of 30 per count in the 1991-95 pentad; this was the result of high counts in 1994 when the average count was 66 birds (range 48-97). Numbers fell to an average of 17 in 1996-2000, with a high count of 51 in October 1998. Finally, in the 2001-2005 pentad there were only two counts, in July and October 2002, with 52 and 93 birds, respectively (mean = 72.5). None were counted after that, possibly because marginal vegetation prevented them from reaching snails and mussels.

It is not clear why so few Hamerkops were seen; they can take fish and frogs from open water (Marshall, 1972; Cooper, 2025), but there may have been few opportunities for them to do so on Lake Manyame. It is also possible that dense vegetation along the shoreline prevents them from feeding, while the lack of large trees around the shore means they were unable to breed near the lake.

Table 2. The average number per count of some storks and the Hamerkop on Lake Manyame, in each pentad, 1987-2018.

Pentad	1985-90	1991-95	1996-00	2001-05	2006-10	2011-16	2018-20
Abdim's Stork			12	24			
White Stork		8	10	6			
Saddle-billed Stork	3	6	3				
Openbill	2	30	17	73			
Hamerkop	1	2	1				

Ducks and Geese

Six species of ducks and geese were recorded during these counts, compared to 10 in 1987 and 11 in 1988 (Tree, 1988, 1989). The numbers of Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiaca* and Knob-billed Duck *Sarkidiornis melanotos* were very similar, with both species experiencing a decline from 2000 onwards (Figure 11). The average number of Egyptian Geese from 1987 to 1999 was 147.4, compared to only 19.6 for 2000-2017, while the average numbers of Knob-billed Ducks were 118.9 and 2.3 over the same period.

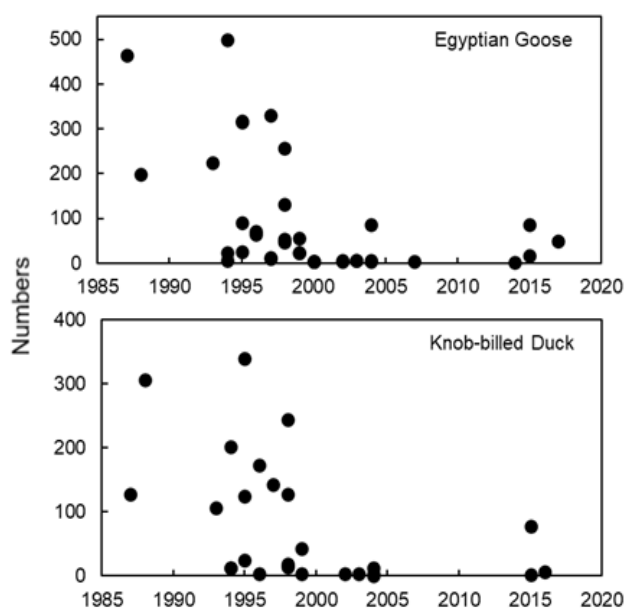


Figure 11. The number of Egyptian Geese and Knob-billed Ducks counted on Lake Manyame, 1987-2018.

White-faced Ducks *Dendrocygna viduata* were abundant in the early years of the lake, with 1565 being counted in 1987 and

4781 in 1988 with the highest count after that being 573 in 2015 (Figure 12). Their numbers fell in later counts, with the highest being 573 in 2015; the average for 1993-99 was 87.4 compared to 128.3 for 2000 to 2018. The Fulvous Duck *Dendrocygna bicolor* was less abundant but was occasionally present in considerable numbers. For instance, only one was recorded in 1987 but there were 447 in 1988, while other significant counts were 198 in 1996 and 240 in 2014. Otherwise, there were rarely more than 100 of these birds on the lake.

The Red-billed Teal *Anas erythrorhynchos* was abundant in the early years of the lake, with numbers exceeding 3000 birds in 1987 and 5000 in 1988 (Figure 13). Their numbers declined after that with the highest count being only 1300 birds in 1994, with an average of only 57.6 birds from 2000 to 2018. The Southern Pochard *Netta erythrophthalma* followed a similar trend, but their numbers were generally lower than those of the Red-billed Teal, with only 1540 being counted in 1987 and 2681 in 1988. The next highest count was 1300 in 1994, while the average count for 1995 to 2005 was 233.4 birds. Numbers collapsed after 2005 with only eight birds being recorded during one count in 2015.

Another nine duck species were recorded, of which three, the White-backed Duck *Thalassornis leuconotus*, Hottentot Teal *Spatula hottentota*, and Spur-winged Goose *Plectropterus gambensis* were the most frequent and all were most numerous in the 1985-90 pentad, with their numbers falling in later ones (Table 3). The remaining species were infrequently recorded, usually in small numbers, especially after 2005. The Cape Shoveler *Spatula smithii* and the Pygmy Goose *Nettapus auritus* were both reported in four pentads, while the African Black Duck *Anas sparsa* was reported in only two. Pygmy Geese were generally found in small numbers, apart from an extraordinary count of 121 birds in October 2002, hence the high average count in the 2001-2005 pentad. The Yellow-billed Duck *Anas undulata*, Cape Teal *Anas capensis* and Maccoa Duck *Oxyura maccoa* were only counted once. A male Red-crested Pochard

Netta rufina was seen on the lake in October 1986, and again in October 1987 (Tree, 1987, 1988) and it was assumed to have escaped from a collection.

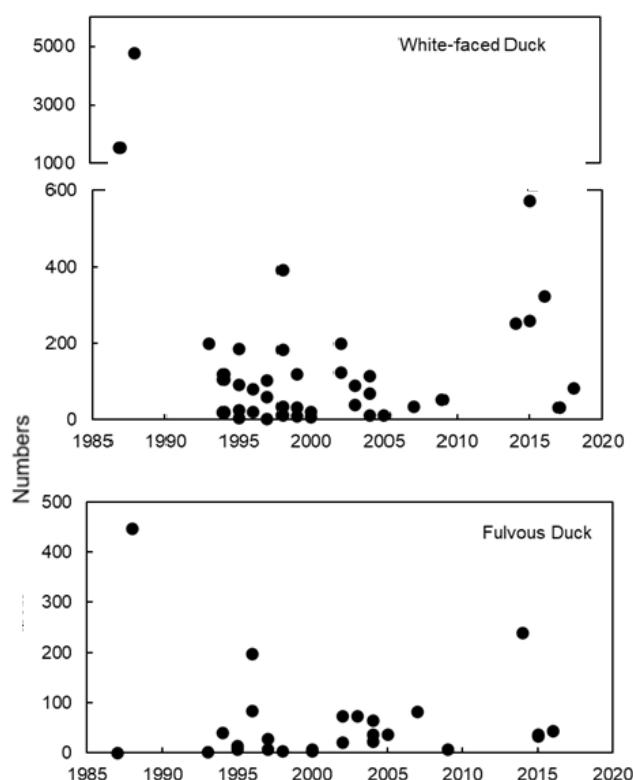


Figure 12. The number of White-faced and Fulvous Ducks counted on Lake Manyame, 1987-2018.

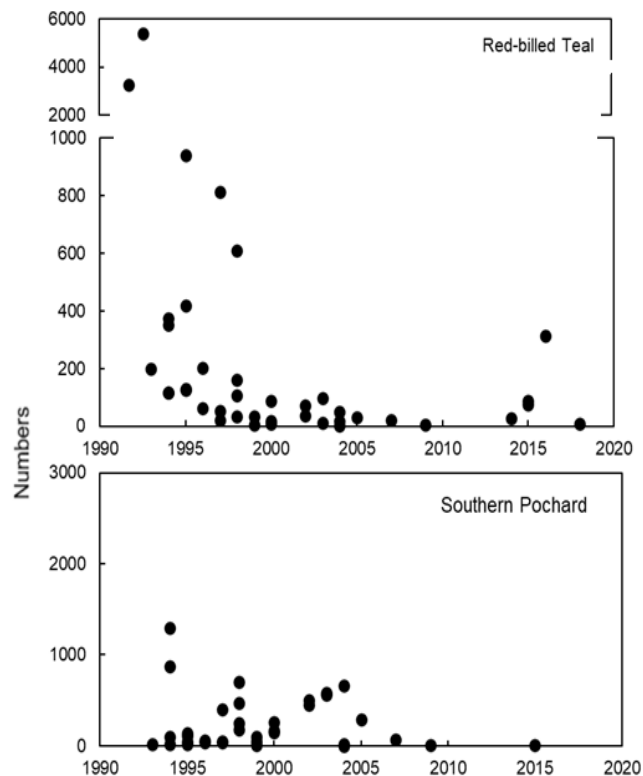


Figure 13. The number of Red-billed Teal and Southern Pochard counted on Lake Manyame, 1987-2018.

Table 3. The average number per count of some ducks and geese on Lake Manyame, in each pentad, 1987-2018.

Pentad	1986-90	1991-95	1996-00	2001-05	2006-10	2011-15	2016-20
White-backed Duck	142	2	36	40	39	2	14
Hottentot Teal	66	17	9	19	10	18	12
Spur-winged Goose	194	9	20	2		21	30
Cape Shoveler	5	8	4	3			
Pygmy Goose	4		7	44			3
Black Duck	3			2			
Yellow-billed Duck		1					
Cape Teal		2					
Maccoa Duck			1				

Rallidae

There were three rail species that occurred regularly on the lake (Figure 14). The Red-knobbed Coot was the most numerous, with nearly 2000 being counted in 1987. Although their numbers fluctuated, counts of around 1000 birds were obtained up to 2004, but such large numbers were not recorded after that. The average number of coots per count from 1987 to 1999 was 515.6 (or 415.6 if the 1987-88 data are excluded), compared to 261.6 for 2000-2018, which is consistent with the pattern noted for most other species.

Common Moorhens *Gallinula chloropus* were scarce in the early years with only one being counted in both 1987 and 1988. Their numbers remained relatively low until 2009, with the

highest count being 49 birds in 2002, but some high counts were made in January 2014 (241 birds) and July 2015 (230 birds). The average number of moorhens per count from 1987 to 1999 was 7.8 compared to 46.6 for 2000-2018, but this number was influenced by the high counts recorded from 2014 to 2018, where the average was 122.5 per count. The numbers of Black Crakes *Zapornia flavirostra* were always rather low and variable, with the highest counts being 44 in September 2003 and 48 in January 2014. The average number per count in 1987 to 1999 was 6.9 birds, compared to 15.7 for 2000 to 2018. These two species may have benefitted from the growth of aquatic plants around the lake shore.

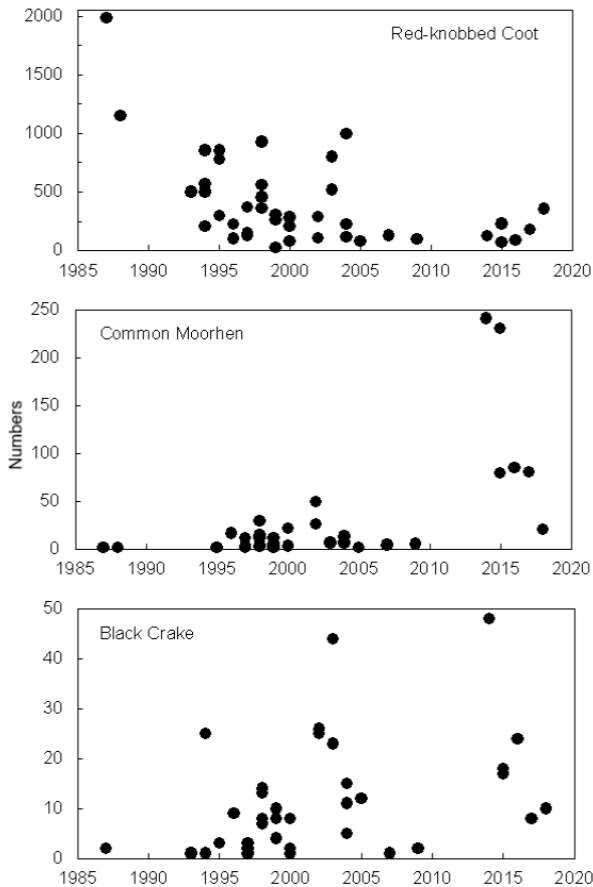


Figure 14. The number of Red-knobbed Coots, Common Moorhens and Black Crakes counted on Lake Manyame, 1987-2018.

Table 4. The number of African Purple Swampheens recorded during the counts on Lake Manyame.

Date	Count
November 1988	2
January 1997	1
October 2002	4
February 2003	4
January 2004	1
January 2005	2
January 2007	1
January 2014	76
January 2015	14
July 2015	14
July 2016	6
February 2018	3

The only other rallid reported in significant numbers was the African Purple Swamphean *Porphyrio madagascariensis* (Table 4). They were generally scarce on the lake, apart from a high count of 76 birds in January 2014, the same month in which the highest number of Common Moorhens was also reported, while Black Crakes were also quite numerous around this time. The only other rallids counted were the African Rail *Rallus caerulescens* (three in November 1988, one in July 2002 and two in February 2003), Lesser Moorhen *Gallinula angulata* (one in October 2002) and Allen's Gallinule *Porphyrio alleni* (one in January 1998).

Charadriiformes

Tree (1988, 1989) estimated a total of 11,255 Charadriiformes in 28 species on the lake in 1987, and 10,999 in 27 species in 1988. This partly reflects his personal interest in these species, which meant he specifically searched for them, but more importantly the counts were made in October and November, respectively. The lake level had probably fallen by then, exposing large areas of bare mud that would have favoured some of these birds, especially the smaller migrant waders.

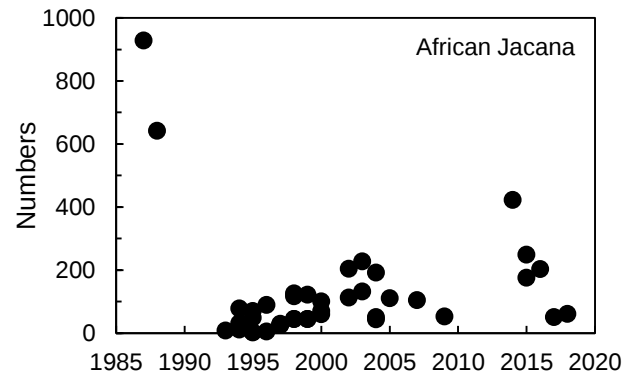


Figure 15. The number of African Jacanas counted on Lake Manyame, 1987-2018.

Jacanas

The African Jacana *Actophilornis africanus* is an adaptable species that was abundant in 1987 and 1988 (Figure 15). Its numbers were very low by the time counts began again in 1993, possibly because this was the period when Lake Chivero was heavily infested with water hyacinth, much of which had reached Lake Manyame. Their numbers were low in the mid-1990s, possibly because of dense beds of water hyacinth, but they increased once biological control reduced these beds. Counts increased until 2004 but fluctuated after that, with an apparent decrease from a peak of 423 in January 2014. This relationship between vegetation and jacana numbers seems counterintuitive, but it likely that water hyacinth and Floating pennywort are not favoured by them since few invertebrates live on the aerial portions of these plants, and those that live amongst their roots (Brendonck *et al.*, 2003) are probably inaccessible to them. Lesser Jacanas *Microparra capensis* were occasionally recorded in 1987 (12 birds), 1988 (9), 1994 (2), 1995 (1), 1996 (1), 2003 (1), 2014 (1) and 2015 (1). It is possible that these birds were vagrants since the lake does not offer much suitable habitat for them.

Gulls and Terns

Grey-headed Gulls were present in most counts and were most numerous in 1987-88 (Figure 16). Their numbers fluctuated thereafter with numbers being close to 200 birds between 1998 and 2004, with a high count of 300 birds in September 2003. There is one record of the Lesser Black-backed Gull, two birds in October 1987.

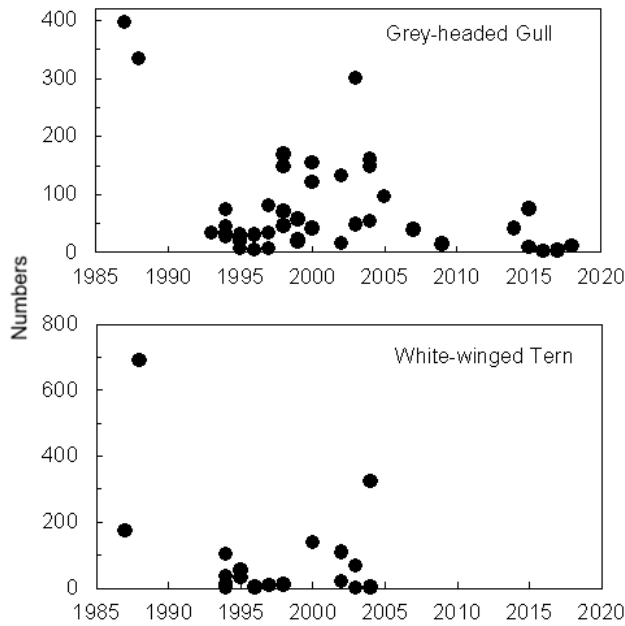


Figure 16. The number of Grey-headed Gulls and White-winged Terns counted on Lake Manyame, 1987-2018.

White-winged Terns *Chlidonias leucopterus* were present in small numbers with high counts >200 birds being recorded in 1988 and 2004 (Figure 16). The reasons for this decline are not obvious but is possible that deteriorating condition of the lake may have reduced water clarity, making it harder for the birds to detect small fish. Small fish may also shelter amongst the vegetation where the terns would be unable to capture them. On Lake Kariba the terns have been seen to fish at night around the bright lights of the kapenta boats, of which there are now around 2,000 on the lake (Marshall, 1984, 2024). This may have encouraged more of these terns to remain there rather than travelling further south. Whiskered Terns *C. hybridus* were counted a few times, as follows: 10 birds in October 1987, 13 in November 1988, 10 in 1987 and two in July 1995. Caspian Terns *Hydroprogne caspia* were recorded on two occasions, one bird in February 2003 and 19 in April 2004.

African Skimmers *Rynchops flavirostris* are vagrants to the Mashonaland highveld (Irwin, 1981) but they were recorded five times; 13 birds in January 1998, seven in April 1998, seven in July 1998, six in January 2000, and 21 in July 2015.

Plovers

The most numerous plover on the lake was the Blacksmith Lapwing *Vanellus armatus*, and it was recorded in every count, with very high numbers in 1987-88 (Figure 17) but its numbers were much lower after that. The average number per count was 23.8 for the period 1993-1999, but only 11.9 per count for 2000-2018. Counts of the African Wattled Lapwing *V. senegallus* were similar in that they were present in quite large numbers in 1987-88, but their numbers were much lower when counts began in 1993 (Figure 17). If these early high counts were omitted, the average number per count was 6.8 birds for the entire period. If the high count of 29 birds in 2000 is excluded then the average for the period 2000-2018 is only 5.0 birds, a smaller decrease in this period when compared to other species.

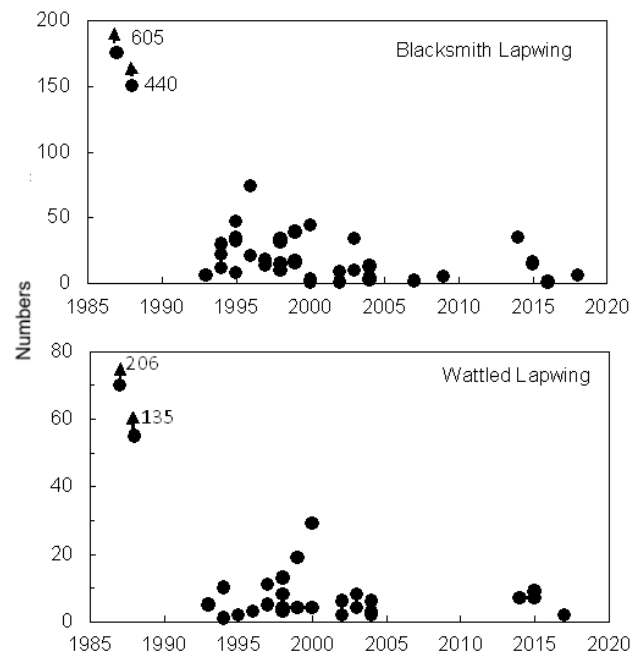


Figure 17. The number of Blacksmith and Wattled Lapwings, counted on Lake Manyame, 1987-2018.

The only other lapwing to be recorded in the counts was the Crowned Lapwing *V. coronatus*, which is not strictly a waterbird but was occasionally recorded on drier areas of the exposed shoreline (Table 5). The two highest counts of over 30 birds, were both recorded in October at the height of the dry season, suggesting that there may have been some movement to the exposed bed of the lake.

Only two smaller plovers, Kittlitz's *Anarhynchus pecuarius* and Three-banded *Charadrius tricollaris* were regularly reported on the lake (Figure 18). Both species were numerous in 1987 and 1988 but were only present in small numbers thereafter. The average number of Kittlitz's Plover, excluding the 1987-88 counts, was 28.7 birds, but this was raised by a high count of 75 birds in 2003. This species was not recorded after 2004. The Three-banded Plover was present in much smaller numbers, with the average, again excluding the 1987-88 values, being only 2.8 birds per count with the highest count being nine birds in 2003.

Table 5. Counts of the Crowned Lapwing at Lake Manyame.

Date	Count
October 1987	34
November 1988	6
April 1995	3
July 1995	1
October 1996	32
July 1997	2
July 1999	4
January 2000	15
September 2000	7
January 2009	10

Palearctic migrant plovers included a single Common Ringed Plover *C. hiaticula* in October 1995, while four were present in 1987 and 62 in 1988. Other species recorded by Tree included 108 Caspian Plovers *A. asiaticus* in 1987, and one Tibetan (Mongolian) Plover *A. atrifrons* and four Grey Plovers *Pluvialis squatarola* in 1988.

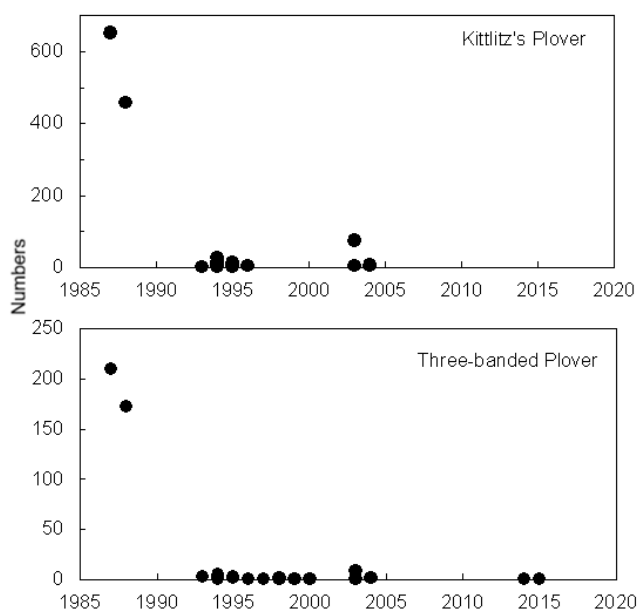


Figure 18. The number of Kittlitz's and Three-banded Plovers counted on Lake Manyame, 1987-2018.

Sandpipers

The commonest species was the Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*, which was particularly abundant in 1987 and 1988 with 1113 and 1251 birds counted respectively. Its numbers were much lower in the later counts, with the highest count being 46 birds in October 1995 (Figure 19). In the 1993-2018 counts, its numbers fluctuated with low counts in winter since this species is a migrant. The average number per count was 11.9 birds in 1993-1999 and 11.8 in 2000-2018 so there was no obvious decline over these years.



Figure 19. The number of Wood Sandpipers counted on Lake Manyame, 1987-2018.

Another 10 sandpiper species were recorded during these counts, but none were counted after 2005. The most frequent was the Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* (Table 6). Like all the other species it was most numerous in 1987-88 but numbers were low from 1993-2005, apart from an unusual count of 140 birds in January 2004. The numbers of Common Greenshanks *Tringa nebularia* followed a similar pattern and although some were counted up to 2005, their numbers were very low, rarely more than one bird.

Table 6. The numbers of some waders reported on Lake Manyame, 1987-2005. Cells with more than one value indicate the number of records in that year.

	Common Greenshank	Common Sandpiper	Ruff	Black-winged Stilt	Collared Pratincole
1987	136	295	2003	144	103
1988	155	119	2395	176	133
1993	1			11	32
1994	13, 1	11	28, 2, 11	17, 25	92, 7, 4
1995	12	1	6, 47	6, 5	4
1996			1, 12		12, 2, 5
1997	2		19	3	1, 1
1998	1	1	18	10	1
1999		1	5		102
2000				3, 12	30, 2
2001					
2002			2	12	2
2003	3	1	25	30, 20	10
2004	3	1	104	127, 2	
2005	5	1	2		
2015					15
2016					71
2017					4

The Marsh Sandpiper *T. stagnatilis* was recorded on 1987 (153 birds), 1988 (218), 1995 (2) and 2003 (2). Counts of African Snipe *Gallinago nigripennis* followed a similar pattern, being fairly numerous in 1987 (170 birds) and 1988 (213), but only two in 1994 and one in 1995. Little Stints *Calidris minuta* were numerous in 1987 and 1988 (562 and 915 birds respectively), but their numbers fell and by 1994, 77 and 19 were reported, followed by two and 13 in 1995 and only six in 2003. The same pattern applied to Curlew Sandpipers *C. ferruginea* which were also abundant in 1987-88 (964 and 1352 respectively) with two and 16 counted in 1994, 40 and 51 in 1995, but none thereafter.

Four Palaearctic vagrants were also recorded. The first was a Common Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* in 1987, followed by two Sanderlings *Calidris alba* in 1988, two counts of two and six Black-tailed Godwits *Limosa limosa* in July and November 1995 respectively, and four Ruddy Turnstones *Arenaria interpres* in 1988. Some of these birds may have been overwintering on the lake.

Other Charadriiformes

The Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* was the most frequently encountered species in this group and was counted in most years (Table 6). Like the others, it was most numerous in 1987-88, but some high counts were recorded in 1994 and 1999. Irwin (1981) stated that it wanders sporadically to the central

plateau and that it bred successfully on Lake Manyame in 1978. In 1987 it was reported that these birds were in groups of one to three, which Tree (1988) suggesting might indicate breeding activity.

Black-winged Stilts *Himantopus himantopus* were also more numerous in 1987-88 (Table 6). Tree (1988) suggested their numbers would be highest when the lake level was high and marshy areas were found along the lakeshore. Their numbers were generally low during this survey, although numbers were a little higher in 2003-04, with a high count of 127 birds on 4 January 2004. The Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* was briefly present, in small numbers, in 1995-96, but as Irwin (1981) noted that it prefers saline waters it is clear that Lake Manyame is not a suitable habitat for this species.

Tree recorded 11 and 22 Greater Painted Snipe *Rostratula benghalensis* in 1987 and 1988 respectively, but only two were noted during this survey, one in April 1994 and one in July 1998. The Water Thick-knee *Burhinus vermiculatus* occurred sporadically in small numbers until 1999, while Tree recorded a single Spotted Thick-knee *B. capensis* in 1988, a species not usually associated with water.

Other species

Some other species were recorded in this survey but the only one seen regularly was the African Fish Eagle *Ichthyophaga vocifer*. Inexplicably, none were reported in the 1987-88 surveys, but they were always present in the later ones (Figure 20). While its numbers were generally rather low there seemed to be an increasing trend, in contrast to most other species. The average numbers per count were 3.3 for 1993-99 and 5.8 for 2000-18, excluding an exceptional count in July 2017. This aggregation of 31 eagles was unusual but similar aggregations have been noted elsewhere, notably on Lake Chivero (see Cooper, *this issue*, pp. 21-22).

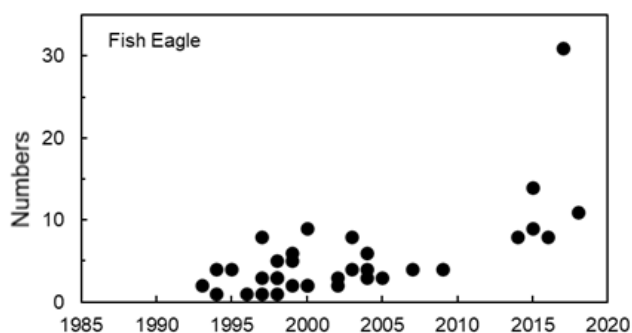


Figure 20. The number of Fish Eagles counted on Lake Manyame, 1987-2018

Other raptors reported in this survey included Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* (two in January 1994), Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* (one in January 1996 and one in January 1999) and Western Marsh Harrier *C. aeruginosus* (two in January 1994, one in January 1998, one in November 2000). The African Marsh Harrier *C. ranivorus* was counted more frequently, as follows: January 1994 (2 birds), October 2002 (1), February 2003 (5), January 2004 (1), January 2005 (1), January 2007 (1), January 2014 (1) and January 2015 (1).

Grey Crowned Cranes *Balearica regulorum* were reported in the 1987 (10 birds) and 1988 (4) surveys, and in July 1994 (5), July 1995 (7), July 1998 (1) and October 1998 (1). Greater Flamingos *Phoenicopterus roseus* were counted twice, with seven birds in January 1993 and two in December 1998. The

Lesser Flamingo *Phoeniconaias minor* was recorded only once, with 24 birds seen in December 1993.

Great White Pelicans *Pelecanus onocrotalus* were more numerous, with 11 being present in 1987. In January 1994 a total of 35 of them were counted, followed by 25 in October 1994 and 15 in January 1995. This reflects a great influx of these birds around this time, with 67 birds being present on 6 and 14 November 1992, 90 on 28 November (Tree 1993a) and 132 by 2 January 1993, falling to six by 17 January (Tree 1993b). In October-November 1993 their numbers rose from 14 to 29 birds (Tree, 1994a) reaching 35 by 2 December 1993 but falling to one by 3 January (Tree, 1993b). This number rose to 128 in 1994 with 13 being present on 5 September, 35 on 9 October, 100+ on 26 October with a 'quite a few' until Christmas 1995, after which they disappeared (Tree 1995a, 1995b).

Conclusions

There are numerous reports and papers on Zimbabwean waterbirds, but very few long-term studies, apart from Campbell & Miles (1956) who counted birds on Rainham dam over several years, while Macdonald *et al.* (1983) counted them on a small dam in Matabeleland from 1971 to 1976. Maasdorp & Cotton (2019) reported observations of waterbirds at Chirundu over a 27-year period which, although not systematic counts, gave some indication of changes in various species. Mundava *et al.* (2012) counted birds on lakes Chivero and Manyame over 11 years (1993-2003) but they did not give data on individual species, only grouping them into categories, such as 'ducks' or 'herons.' Their main objective was to determine the impact of changes in water level on bird numbers, but they found that it had no impact on bird numbers on Lake Manyame.

The investigation described here recorded all bird species on the lake and found that their numbers were highly variable. These variations in the number of birds reflect the fact that most waterbird species are highly mobile, with their movements being generally determined by rainfall and the availability of water (Dodman & Diagana, 2007). This partly explains the considerable variation in the counts of birds on Lake Manyame, both seasonally and from one year to the next.

Nevertheless, there seemed to be three main periods. The first was in the first decade or so after the dam was completed in 1976. Man-made lakes tend to be highly productive in their early years owing to nutrients being leached from the drowned soil, and bird numbers on Lake Manyame were extraordinarily high, as reported by Tree (1988, 1989), with the average number from his two surveys being about 25600 birds. This was followed by a marked reduction in the bird population, with the average number on the lake during this survey falling to about 1500 birds. This reduction may to some extent reflect counting effort since Tree's counts were made by a large team of observers, while this survey was carried out by a single family. Nevertheless, the data give an adequate baseline against which future changes could be assessed.

The third phase saw the disappearance of some species and a pronounced reduction in others from about 2000 onwards. As discussed in the species accounts these declines seem to reflect changes in the lake's ecosystem resulting from excessive vegetation, pollution, overfishing and human disturbance. These factors have almost certainly increased in severity since 2018 and further surveys would be highly desirable in order to follow the changes that may be occurring in this lake.

Acknowledgments

Dianne is grateful to her late husband, Basil, for being her boat driver and whose sharp eyesight assisted in finding birds. She is also grateful to her daughter, Nikki, for the time she spent updating her records.

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Dianne Rushforth, Kariba, ✉ diannerushforth@gmail.com
Brian Marshall, Auckland, NZ, ✉ brian.marshall01@gmail.com

Observations at an African Pitta Nest

Derek Hinde

I live in the Zambezi Valley at Mhara River Camp at the Chitake-Mhara confluence (16° 08'S, 29° 34'E; QDS 1629 B1). During November and December 2025, I and some staff members were able to confirm that eight African Pitta *Pitta angolensis* pairs occupied territories on the concession. Calls were heard in different areas and although only two nests were found, we assumed that all pairs were breeding.

At Mhara it appears that pittas prefer to feed along the rivers wherever stands of rich riverine vegetation occur, consisting mostly of Spiny Bushwillow *Combretum obovatum*, Natal Mahogany *Trichilia emetica* and Sausage Trees *Kigelia africana* with a thick layer of leaf litter. Termite hills are abundant, so insect life is prolific. However, the areas where the pittas were nesting was more open and situated on the second tier away from the riverine vegetation, possibly because this enables them to spot potential predators more easily. This woodland consists mainly of Spiny jackal-berry *Diospyros senensis*, Flame Thorn *Acacia ataxacantha*, Rain Tree *Philenoptera violacea* and Wing Pod *Xeroderris stuhlmannii*. Although it was thick in places the Pittas used more open areas for their nest sites.

Hockey *et al.* (2005. *Roberts' birds of southern Africa*, VIIth ed., p. 677-678) do not give a time period for African Pitta nest construction and incubation, so we began recording our observations.

The first nest we noticed was situated about three metres above ground and had already been completed. The nest looked like an untidy bunch of leaves, grass and twigs and was not easy to recognize at first glance. But once noticed, the opening into the nest was unmistakable with a 'porch' of leaves making an overhang over the entrance.

Nest building of the second nest commenced on 2 December and was completed by the 7th, thus taking about five or six days to complete. It was about 150 m from the first nest and about two metres above ground level. The nest was placed about 30 cm below the top of a tangled thicket consisting of Mozambique

Bushwillow, also known as Shaving Brush *Combretum mossambicense*, and shortish *Diospyros senensis* trees.

Although this nest was situated at a lower height than the first one it was not easy to see or recognise. We actually sat under it for a day before realizing the birds were building above us. The nest was built very quickly with both birds carting nesting material continuously, especially in the early part of the day. During the five days of its construction, the male bird would fly to the same perch every hour or so, situated only about a metre from the ground. Here he displayed by leaping up about 30 cm, whirring his wings and giving one single call at the same time. This would be repeated about four times and then, seemingly satisfied there were no rivals in the area, he would resume nest building.

I think the female started laying a day or so before final completion of the nest as we did not see her on the last day.

On 21 December feeding was observed at the nest, suggesting an incubation period of 14 days. During this period the birds were silent and obviously more secretive and so we were unable to be sure if the incubation was shared between them. On 1 January a chick was seen being fed on the ground and on low vegetation. This indicated a fledging period of approximately 11 days. On 4 January two chicks were observed being fed by two adults, presumably the parents, and on 15 January one chick is still being fed although the other may have still been around.

Although the pair were secretive during the nesting period, at times they became very confiding. At no time did we resort to 'calling' the birds as it was productive just to sit with bird-watching clients in likely spots. The pittas would usually appear and fly down to hop and feed on the ground, sometimes only about five to ten metres away from us.

I hope this will add to what we already know about African Pitta breeding behaviour. My thanks to Colin Baker for his assistance with this note.

Derek Hinde. Mhara Bush Camp, Zambezi Valley. ✉ melara@zol.co.zw



African Pitta nest in the Zambezi Valley © Alex Masterson

On Movements of Miombo Blue-eared Starlings, Coffee Shade Trees and the Importance of the Mukuvisi Woodlands

Ian Riddell

The starling in Harare

The Miombo Blue-eared Starling *Lamprotornis elisabeth* is a bird of miombo woodlands and occurs over much of central Zimbabwe, being absent from the moist east and the arid lowveld areas of the rest of the country. It has not been definitively mapped in Harare at a small scale, apart from the current SABAP2 atlas project at a pentad scale of approximately 8 x 8 km, and there is still the possibility of some misidentification with the more common Greater Blue-eared Starling *L. chalybaeus*.

The garden bird surveys from 1968 to 2017 do not give a clear indication of its status in Harare as the glossy starlings were lumped, apart from the 1999-2000 survey (Riddell, 2021) where the Greater Blue-eared was ranked 48th (22% frequency) and the Miombo Blue-eared Starling 80th place (10%). The 2016-2017 survey (Wiggins, 2023) showed starlings (lumped) were increasing, but this likely applies to the widely distributed and commoner Greater Blue-eared and the status of the miombo Blue-eared is still poorly known. Data from SABAP2 show that it occurs most frequently in the northern, eastern and southern suburbs, with a low reporting rate in the city centre/Mt. Pleasant pentad. The western suburbs have been atlased less often and in them this starling occurs infrequently or is absent.

The growth of housing in and around the city is destroying the miombo woodlands and this destruction is a threat to this species. Two areas of conserved woodland, the Mukuvisi Woodlands and Haka Park, are habitat strongholds on the eastern fringe of the city, but becoming isolated as the development of new suburbs up to 15 km to beyond Ruwa has resulted in a massive loss of miombo woodland. Consequently, the ‘miombo specials,’ i.e. those species restricted to this woodland, have declined and many are now locally extinct. Suburbs to the north and northeast retain varying amounts of miombo (chiefly Msasa *Brachystegia spiciformis*) in the streets and gardens, but it is too sparse to support most of the miombo specials.

In this note I concentrate on movements from Mukuvisi Woodlands and the area’s conservation importance for the Miombo Blue-eared Starling. The same probably applies to Haka Park, but I am less familiar with recent movements of the starling into the adjoining Greendale suburb, apart from a Greendale garden where movements to and from Haka Park, 2 km away, were recorded from approximately 2009 to November 2012. In this garden the starlings were somewhat seasonal with few birds being present during the breeding season from approximately August to November, when they bred in Haka Park and returned to the garden with juveniles post-breeding. A pair nested in the garden in 2011 and Gabar Goshawks *Micronisus gabar* attempted to raid the nest in October. Since then, I occasionally encounter this starling in the streets of Greendale, Highlands and Chisipite, and Haka Park could be a core roosting area for some of these birds.

I have been resident in Newlands from December 2012. This suburb is some 3.5 km northeast of the city centre and 3.8 km north-northwest of the miombo in Mukuvisi. The Miombo Blue-eared did not occur in Newlands at the time and only the

Greater Blue-eared was regularly found in gardens. There is an error in Field Observations (Baker 2023) where I reported the Miombo Blue-eared in August 2022 as a new species to local gardens. I overlooked a vagrant record in October 2014 (Baker 2015), but no birds, apart from a single on 1 June 2020, were recorded in the eight years between these dates (Table 1).

Table 1. Records of the Miombo Blue-eared Starling in Newlands; dates in italics are itinerants not associated with regular annual movement

Year	Arrival Date	Departure Date	No. days recorded
2014	<i>17 Oct</i>		
2020	<i>1 Jun</i>		
2022	25 Aug	28 Aug	2
2023	12 Aug	4 Sep	12
2024	<i>18 May</i>		
	31 Jul	9 Sep	10
	<i>1 Nov</i>		
2025	<i>26 Jan</i>		
	25 Jul	13 Sep	14
	<i>14 Nov</i>		

Coffee shade trees

Annual local movements of the Miombo Blue-eared have only occurred since August 2022, when they are attracted to flowering *Acrocarpus fraxinifolius* (Kenya Coffee shade) trees. This is a large deciduous caesalpinoid tree growing up to 50 m tall, native to the moist, tropical forests of South and Southeast Asia but introduced to Africa and tropical regions around the world. In Harare it is planted in large gardens, streets, parks and open land. In early spring, from around August, it produces reddish flowers in racemes before the trees come into leaf. They are an important nectar source for many birds and insects, and significantly, are responsible for the local movement of these starlings. Red-winged Starlings *Onychognathus morio* are also attracted to the trees at this time and are sporadic at other times of the year.

Seasonal movements into Newlands have occurred annually between August and September since 2022 (Table 1). The starlings can be found at other *Acrocarpus* trees between the garden and Mukuvisi, and tend to visit these trees earlier. The record on 31 July 2024 was 200 m to the south and birds were only recorded in the garden from 5 August. The record on 25 July 2025 was to an isolated tree 650 m to the south and they reached the garden on 4 August. Admiral Tait school has large trees around the perimeter. It is about 2 km north of Mukuvisi and larger numbers of starlings can be found there some weeks before they reach our garden, e.g. 21 July 2019 was one date recorded but not all instances were documented.

Other records include: 7 February 2025, when a group was in Eastlea suburb 300 m north of Admiral Tait school and moving north to the south boundary of Country Club golf course; 9 February 2025 when seen 370 m southeast of the garden.

Mukuvisi Woodlands

The miombo component of these woodlands has an area of c.150 ha and Miombo Blue-eared can be found there all year round and they nest in holes in both indigenous and exotic trees. The Greater Blue-eared is relatively uncommon to rare, but can occur on the edges of the area, such as the gardens around the car park and viewing platform, the mixed woodland and savannah along the Mukuvisi River and Glenara Avenue, the open powerline strip on the western boundary and rarely in the degraded old quarry area (pers. obs.). In these areas it overlaps with the Miombo Starlings.

At certain times of the year the Miombo Blue-eared can be difficult to find in the woodlands as they fly into the surrounding suburbs to the west and south in the early morning and return in the late afternoon. Queensdale on the south boundary of Mukuvisi, for example, is a good place to find them in gardens in the late afternoon, and along the boundary fence as they gather before flying into the woodlands to roost. The same applies in Haka Park and flocks can be found in gardens adjacent to that woodland pre-roosting. There are still many msasa trees in parts of Prospect and Hatfield to the west and south and the birds do move into these suburbs but their status has not been regularly monitored.

The population size at Mukuvisi has not been regularly monitored but a flock of about 60 was seen on 8 March 2018. Randall (1969) recorded over 1000 coming to roost at Chishawasha in 1968, the largest number on record, but the continuing deforestation of miombo woodlands around Harare and elsewhere means that such large flocks would not be recorded nowadays. This highlights the importance of the Mukuvisi Woodlands and Haka Park as important habitats for

maintaining present populations of this bird in the eastern side of Harare.

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I.C. Riddell, Harare. ✉ gemsaf@mango.zw

Editor's note: Several large Kenya coffee shade trees were planted outside the University of Zimbabwe library. During my time there (1985-2005) Red-winged Starlings *Onycognathus morio* were the only ones that came to these trees when they were flowering, except for one year when the trees were visited by a large flock of Wattled Starlings *Creatophora cinerea* that remained there until the flowering ended. They clearly dominated the Red-wings, which were completely absent during this period. Regrettably, I did not record the dates, a missed opportunity because noting the relationships between different starling species at these trees would be an interesting project.



Miombo Blue-eared Starling at *Acrocarpus* flowers © Kuda



Juvenile Miombo Blue-eared Starling, Mukuvisi © I. Riddell

A White-faced Whistling Duck Breeding in an Urban Wetland

In December 2007 we spotted a nesting White-faced Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna viduata* on the vegetated bank of a tributary of the Gwebi River in Vainona, Harare (Cooper & Tennett, 2008. *Zimbabwe Wildlife Journal* October: p. 4-5). The tributary was suitable for the duck, being less than a metre in depth and 1-2 m in width. Although this species is often found in large flocks, we only noted a single nesting duck over an extensive stretch of the tributary. On our approach, it took flight slowly and heavily, uttered a high-pitched whistle and settled in a cultivated maize patch. Its nest was observed through

binoculars and was constructed of reeds and grass; we did not approach it so we did not know how many eggs may have been in it.

The contrast between the wetland then (in 2008) and its present state is stark, with significant pollution, garbage and discarded elements of construction causing significant damage to the ecosystem. Such unwelcome urban habits definitely threaten this duck's nesting and feeding habitats, pushing it out of the city's wetlands and settling it at distant farm dams or beyond.

Ross G. Cooper, Harare ✉ rgcooperuk@yahoo.com

Unusual Crab-eaters: Southern Ground Hornbill and Helmeted Guineafowl

River crabs *Potamonautes unispinus* are fairly common but usually inconspicuous in Zimbabwean rivers and streams. Once the rains begin, females carrying eggs or young crabs migrate from permanent streams into vleis where juvenile crabs can avoid most predators by hiding amongst the vegetation (Brian Gratwicke, unpublished). Their main predators are clawless otters *Aonyx capensis* and eels *Anguilla* spp. (Butler & Marshall, 1996. *Journal of Tropical Ecology* 12: 475-490), but other species could prey on them during this migration. This note reports predation on crabs by two bird species that have not previously been seen to feed on crabs.

Southern Ground Hornbills *Bucorvus leadbeateri* feed on a variety of small animals such as insects, frogs, reptiles and rodents (Kemp & Kemp, 1980. *Annals of the Transvaal Museum*

32: 65-100), but there seems to be no records of them feeding on crabs. However, in October 2024 they were seen feeding on them along the banks of Chipinge Stream and Dam, where they suddenly dashed forward to catch a crab, either swallowing it whole, or crushing it in their beaks and then extracting the flesh.

More surprisingly perhaps, Helmeted Guineafowl *Numida meleagris* were seen to feed on crabs in the Avondale and Chipinge streams in the late 1970s and early 1980s. They despatched the crabs by violently pecking and striking them with their claws, while making a grating sound at the same time. The empty crab carapaces were left behind after they had consumed the flesh. It is well known that guineafowl eat a wide variety of invertebrates, but this may be the first record of them feeding on crabs.

Ross G. Cooper, Vainona, Harare. ✉ rgcooperuk@yahoo.com

An Unusual Assemblage of African Fish Eagles in Nyanga, Zimbabwe

During a three-day stay at Udu Dam, Nyanga, in about August 1988, I observed about 15-25 mature African Fish Eagles *Ichthyophaga vocifer* around the dam. This was highly unusual because these birds are scarce in the Nyanga area; there is only one record in 'Recent Reports/Field Observations' in *Honeyguide* – a single adult at Connemara Dam on 31 December 2005 and 2 January 2006. It was also surprising given the small size of the dam and the cold ambient temperatures (c. 7°C in the day). They tolerated each other's presence and were not seen mobbing around catches of fish. While they preyed upon trout stocked into the dam, they also took frogs and various insects

including beetles and locusts in the surrounding grass and shrubbery. This was very unusual behaviour because although these eagles feed mostly on fish, they also take waterbirds, small mammals, reptiles such as monitor lizards, and carrion, but there seem to be no records of them eating insects. They perched in trees on the far edge of the dam but were never seen gathering around dead or stranded fish, some of which had probably been gill hooked by fly-fishermen. Adult Fish Eagles are strongly territorial so such a large number of them is highly unusual; perhaps they were moving from one river system to another.

Ross G. Cooper, Vainona, Harare. ✉ rgcooperuk@yahoo.com

Editor's note: Some unusual Fish Eagle aggregations have been reported from lakes Chivero and Manyame. These came from Ferdie and Tracy Couto and were published in 'Recent Reports/Field Observations' in *Honeyguide*. Not all records

were broken down by age. The symbol ★ denotes a record from Riddell (2015). Di Rushforth counted 31 on Lake Manyame in July 2017.

Locality	Date	Numbers	Honeyguide volume: page
L. Chivero	April 1995	18 (juveniles/immatures)	41:246
	18 July 1995	21	42:44
	10 October 1995	14	42:116
	9 January 1996	23 (2 adults)	42:175
	9 April 1996	23 (1 adult)	42:231
	16 July 1996	10 (3 adults, 7 immatures)	43:53
	27 January 1997	31 (6 adults, 25 immatures)	43:123
	14 March 2004	13+ (mostly juveniles & immatures)	51(1):59
	11 April 2004	c.10	51(1): 67
	12 September 2004	10 (2 adults, 8 immatures)	51(2): 52
	11 July 2005	64 (20 adults, 44 juveniles)	52:77
	8 March 2009	26	55:150
	19 March 2015★	126	61:30
L. Manyame	10 January 1996	13 (11 adults)	42:175
	15 July 1996	7 (4 adults, 3 juveniles)	43:53
	11 October 1996	8 (6 adults + 2 chicks)	43:113
	July 2017	31	This issue, p. 16

An Unusual Blue Swallow Nest

On 8 January 2026 I was on Claremont Golf Course, Juliasdale (1832 B3), when I noticed Blue Swallows *Hirundo atrocaerulea* flying into a small derelict one-room building that was formerly a kiosk. When I looked inside I saw a nest in a corner just below the asbestos roof where two wooden beams met at right angles to one another. The nest rested on top of one of the beams and was supported on one side by the other beam. The nest was mainly composed of dry grass with a few dry leaves and was rather untidy (Figure 1). I did not see or hear any sound from the nest and did not attempt to see if it contained eggs.

I returned the following day accompanied by Julia Pierini, CEO of BirdLife Zimbabwe, and other BirdLife members. I noted that two adult and two juvenile Blue Swallows were active around the area. The adults flew into the building a number of times so it is probable that a second brood was in progress. We did not wish to disturb them so did not go inside. This appears to be a very unusual Blue Swallow nest site. Hockey *et al.* (2005. *Roberts' birds of southern Africa*, VIIth ed., p. 252-254) state their nests are normally attached to the side or sloping roof of a pothole, riverbank, donga, burrow or mine shaft, not supported from below and always under an overhang. Mine workings are also mentioned and there are only four known instances of nests being built on buildings. In this case, the nest was built on top of a wooden beam and not attached to an overhang and was inside – not on – a building.

Subsequent sightings in February included the female entering the nest on the 7th while a male flew outside the building, and the female sitting on the nest on the 23rd.



Figure 1. The Blue Swallow nest in an abandoned building.
Photo © Paddington Aidini

My thanks to Colin Baker for assistance and encouragement with this note.

Paddington Aidini. *Ruparara Valley Lodge, Juliasdale.* ✉ paddingtonaidini9@gmail.com

The Current Status of the Blue Swallow near Penhalonga

Arrivals and departures

The last report on the status of Blue Swallows (*Hirundo atrocaerulea*) in this area was by Meikle (2018. *Honeyguide* 64: 14-15) and this note is an update to the present season. The arrival and departure dates of these birds is summarised below (dashes indicate no record):

Season	Arrival	Departure
2010-11	31 Aug	-
2011-12	31 Aug	-
2012-13	-	-
2013-14	2 Sep	-
2014-15	1 Sep	-
2015-16	1 Sep	-
2016-17	4 Sep	-
2017-18	31 Aug	-
2018-19	1 Sep	15 Apr
2019-20	6 Sep	13 Apr
2020-21	-	-
2021-22	14 Sep	23 Apr
2022-23	10 Sep	-
2023-24	29 Aug	10 Apr
2024-25	10 Oct	3 Apr
2025-06	22 Sep	-

There appears to be a fairly consistent pattern of arrivals until the 2023-24 season with the first birds being recorded between the end of August to the first 10 days of September. However, in the 2024-25 season the birds arrived much later, being first recorded on 10 October. Similarly, the birds arrived rather late, on 22 September, in the 2025-26 season. One possible

explanation could be below average rainfall. The average rainfall is 1800 mm to the end of September. However, the rainfall to the end of September 2004 was 1250 mm and 1800 mm by September 2025. The other possible cause was the prevalence in both 2024 and 2025 of late cool south-easterly winds well into October. These winds usually abate by October. Previous observations showed arrival coinciding with warm north-westerly winds.

There are fewer records of departure dates, but they are mostly around mid-April. It is noteworthy that in 2025 the birds left in early April, having arrived much later than usual.

Changes in the population

Over the past 16 years, the montane grassland and montane forest have been maintained in balance with invasive shrubs, and exotics such as wattle have been largely controlled by judicious early burning in autumn on a rotational basis. Each year the nest sites have been cleared of vegetation to allow easy access by the birds. About 20 of these sites have been cleared and footholds in the prospecting pits have been redone to allow the swallows to build nests in these recesses. Previously cooperative breeding has been recorded of 2-3 females per site and one male.

Previous reports have indicated that there was a population of 30 to 40 birds up to 2013. However, since then there has been a noticeable decrease in the population to the present estimate of 15 to 20 birds. At the same time, the number of occupied nest sites declined from twelve to six. The causes of this decline remain unclear.

The status of this species in the Nyanga area, and elsewhere, is unknown and there do not appear to be any counts from these areas.

John Meikle, Penhalonga. ✉ barbsandjohn@gmail.com

Editor's note: Climate change is beginning to have an impact on migratory birds (e.g. Martay, et al. 2023. Climate change and migratory species: a review of impacts, conservation actions, indicators and ecosystem services. Part 1 – Impacts of climate

change on migratory species. Joint Nature Conservation Commission, Peterborough, UK: 121 pp.) and reports such as this one are of critical importance for assessing how the migration of our birds might change in future.

Unusual Nesting Site for White-browed Sparrow-weavers

White-browed Sparrow-weavers *Plocepasser mahali* typically nest in trees but there some reports of them utilising man-made structures such as telephone poles in treeless areas (Maclean 1984. *Roberts birds of southern Africa*, 5th edition, pp. 707-708). In Bulawayo, abandoned outbuildings and the rusting remains

of old engines and carriages in the derelict railway yards provide nesting sites for weavers, doves and some raptors. In May 2016 approximately 35 White-browed Sparrow-weaver nests were seen clustered on train carriages. These records highlight the adaptability of this species.

Ross G. Cooper, Vainona, Harare, rgcooperuk@yahoo.com

June to November 2025

C.T. Baker

The somewhat confusing changes to many common and scientific names continues. There is some commonality between the main apps and authorities of course, but differences are significant and widespread. Particularly disturbing is the high number of changes to scientific names adopted by some and not by others. As a result, Latin names are no longer the indisputable point of reference they once were. Until such time as there is greater clarity and conformity, the common and scientific names appearing here will comply with the current nomenclature used by the Southern African Bird Atlas Project 2 (SABAP2). Where considered appropriate some old common names are shown in brackets alongside the updated name.

From 18 to 22 September, IR joined an expedition to the eastern border at Stapleford and Gurunguwe Mountain in the Stapleford Forest 1832 D2 Quarter Degree Square. Although the party did cross into Mozambique, their main focus was along the border area. This somewhat remote part of the country has been under-recorded previously so many records appear in the text below. Worth highlighting here, however, are infrequently reported – although not unexpected – eastern districts forest birds such as **Yellow-streaked Greenbul** *Phyllastrephus flavostriatus*, **White-starred Robin** *Pogonocichla stellata*, **Gorgeous Bush Shrike** *Telophorus viridis* and **Black-fronted Bush Shrike** *Chlorophoneus nigrifrons* that were ticked in the Gurunguwe Forest.

A **Taita Falcon** *Falco fasciinucha* photographed at Katiyo Estate in November (see below) sparked a useful but inconclusive debate on social media on the current status of this scarce raptor. The upshot of that discussion was that, sadly, we have little idea of its present status in any of its erstwhile strongholds such as Chizarira and the gorges below Victoria Falls. Or anywhere else for that matter.

Irwin (1981. *The Birds of Zimbabwe*, p. 87-88) summed up a large part of the problem by saying, “The amount of habitat suitable for it in Zimbabwe is very considerable, but most of it is in rugged terrain, difficult to explore ...” He went on to say that a conservative estimate would put the number of breeding pairs [at that time] at 50 or more. Confirmed records these days are scarce and are generally obtained by chance on field trips not aimed specifically at locating this bird. The truth of the matter is that we have lost touch with this elusive raptor and a realistic estimate of the number of individual birds, never mind breeding pairs, cannot possibly be made. That would only happen after carefully planned, co-ordinated and extensive fieldwork has been undertaken. That is the only way forward if we are to get to grips again with this iconic raptor.

References made in the text to the Atlas refer to Harrison *et al.* 1997. *The atlas of southern African birds* and not to the current SABAP2 exercise. This report contains records sent direct to the writer as well as records obtained from SABAP2, BLZ’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*.

Rarities

An adult **Palm-nut Vulture** *Gypohierax angolensis* was at Tambahata Pan, Gonarezhou (2132 A4), on 2 August (CS). In the third week of that month an immature was at Malilangwe Dam (2131 B2), southeast Lowveld, and possibly the same bird was photographed there on 14 September (BF). One in flight over a Burma Valley coffee farm (1932 B2) on 23 August (JO) was the first record from that part of the eastern border.

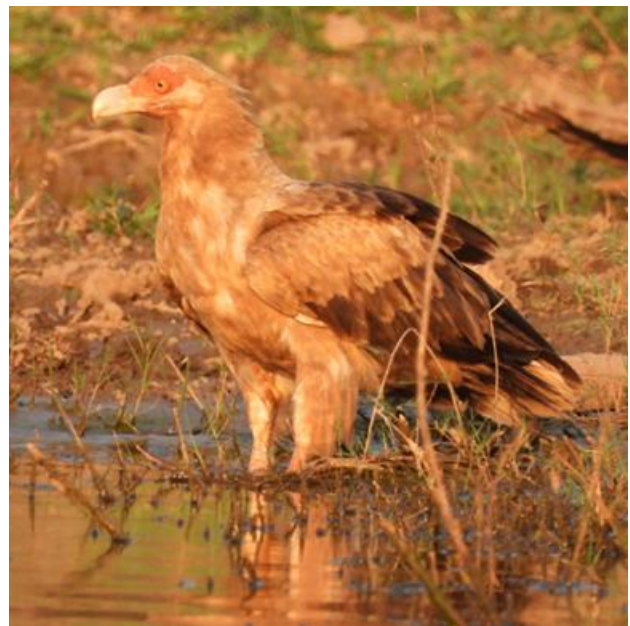


Figure 1. An immature Palm-nut Vulture at Malilangwe Dam. Photo © Brad Fouché.



Figure 2. Spur-winged Lapwing, Lake Chivero. Photo © Cecilia Engelbrecht.

Three **Spur-winged Lapwings** *Vanellus spinosus* were at Marimba Bay, Lake Chivero (1730 D4), on 26 September (DR) and from one to three were seen by others thereafter up to 8

December at least. It is believed they bred again this year, but by 11 January the grass had become too high and they had left (IR). This note runs beyond the end of the period to retain continuity.

A **Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius* was a major find at Ndungu Camps, Rukomechi (1529 C4†), on 28 November (GD). This is only the second record for this country and the fourth for southern Africa as a whole. One at Somavundhla Pan, Hwange NP, in January 2002 was the first record for both Zimbabwe and the sub-region.



Figure 3. Little Ringed Plover, Ndungu Camps, Rukomechi. Photo © Gary Douglas

A **Gull-billed Tern** *Gelochelidon nilotica* in Zambezi NP, Victoria Falls (1725 D4†), on 19 October (SABAP2) is only the second confirmed record from the upper Zambezi. The first was in September 1991.

Ostrich, Waterbirds and allied species

Two adult female **Common Ostriches** *Struthio camelus* were at Gorchwe Platform Pan, Gonarezhou (2131 D3†), on 8 June (IR).

Great White Pelicans *Pelecanus onocrotalus* reported from the northwest comprised two at Dom Pan, Hwange NP (1826 D4), on 23 June (PB) and one just outside the Park at Silwane Camp (1827 C3) in the second week of August (CM); singles were at a pan on Jafuta Game Park, south of Victoria Falls (1825 B2†), on 24 July (CB) and at Corner Pan, Kazuma NP (1825 B3), on 8-12 August (LA). Two were in the Nyamatusi area, Mana Pools NP (1529 C2), on 23 June (SH). Various observers reported up to three at Kent Estate, near Selous (1830 B1), between 29 June and 29 August and three again at the end of October. In the south, five flew over Luhwade Farm, north of Beitbridge on the Umzingwane River (2129 D3†) on 6 July (GTr) and two were at Tambahata Pan (2132 A4) on 12 September (TM).

On Lake Kariba about 50 **White-breasted Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax lucidus* nests contained chicks of various ages along the tree-line between Musango and Tashinga (1628 C4) on 9 July (SE). Only 17 were counted from Lake Chivero Bird

Sanctuary (1730 D4) on 27 July (IR). Hundreds nesting all over Luhwade Farm dam (2229 B1) early in September is one of the largest breeding colonies reported for many years. At least 40 **African Darters** *Anhinga rufa* were also present (GTr). Given the threatened status of these two waterfowl on gill-netted dams these are highly significant numbers. Only two or three **Darters**, however, were noted at Rifa Camp, Chirundu (1628 B2), between 6 and 10 November (IR).

A **Black Heron** *Egretta ardesiaca* was at Malilangwe (2131 B2†) on 14 September, where seldom recorded (BF). **Squacco Herons** *Ardeola ralloides* in less usual areas were at Jozibanini, southwest Hwange NP (1926 B4†), in September and on the north-eastern arm of Lake Mutirikwe (2031 A1†) in October (SABAP2). **Black-crowned Night Herons** *Nycticorax nycticorax* could be found in Natal Mahogany trees upstream of Rifa in the canoeing days of the late 1900s. Not having been seen by the resident guide/hunter, they are perhaps less frequent nowadays. So three in flight upstream of Camp at a sundowner spot on 9 September is an exciting record (IR).

A **Little Bittern** *Ixobrychus minutus* was at Biri Dam, Portelet Farm, Chinhoyi (1730 A3), on 23 August (DSm), and a **Dwarf Bittern** *I. sturmii* that appeared in a Highlands, Harare garden (1731 C3), on 16 November (EC) was the first of the season.

Two wintering **White Storks** *Ciconia ciconia* were at Kariba Bream Farm (1628 D2) on 6 August (SE) and at least 150 **Abdim's Storks** *C. abdimii* there on 27 October (CN) were probably moving south. Single **Black Storks** *C. nigra* were in the Buby Valley Conservancy (2129 D4) on 10 July (DC) and flying along the Matetsi River, Victoria Falls-Robins Camp road (1826 A1) on 23 August and 20 September (CB). A pair was at a nest site at the Nyakasanga Cliffs, Makuti 2 Safari Area (1629 A1), on 2 September (MH) and four were at the Umguza River on Cawston Block Wildlife Ranch (1928 C2) on 13 September (SN).

The Atlas data contain very few **African Woolly-necked Stork** *C. microscelis* records away from the southeast in August and September. So one at La Mour Farm, Mutare (1832 D3†), on 6 August (GD) and about ten at a small pan on the Buby Valley Conservancy (2130 C1†) on 10 September (RT) are exceptional. Also unusual were three at Pan 1, Chamabonda vlei (1725 D3), on 23 November (CB).

About 100 **African Openbill** *Anastomus lamelligerus* were at Kent Estate on 14 June and at dusk on 2 July (GT). Two **Yellow-billed Storks** *Mycteria ibis* were wintering at Gorchwe Pan (2131 D1†) on 7 June (IR) where slightly out of range according to the Atlas. More winterers found in June were singles at Mazvikadei Dam, Banket (1730 A2), on the 14th (BM) and Victoria Falls (1725 D4) on the 19th and 26th (CB), and three at Banket (1730 A4) on the 29th (DSm). One on Monavale vlei, Harare (1731 C3), on 7 November was an unusual addition to that wetland's checklist (DW).

16 **Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* were at Chivero Bird Sanctuary on 27 July (IR). **Hadedda Ibis** *Bostrychia hagedash* in new areas were two seen by a number of people at Marondera (1831 B1†) on 12 October, one flying over the Headlands area (1832 A3†) a few weeks previously (GT) and near Bikita Mine (1931 C4†) in mid-November (SABAP2), where slightly northeast of Atlas records in the Lake Mutirikwe area. 18 **African Spoonbill** *Platalea alba* at Kent Estate on 14 June (GT) was a nice gathering. Two were at Chivero Sanctuary on 27 July (IR) and one was below an overflowing dam at Victoria Falls on 25 November (CB).

Most **Greater Flamingo** *Phoenicopterus roseus* records came from the northwest. A juvenile was unusual near Old Drift

Lodge, Zambezi NP (1725 D4†) on 12 June (BN). In Hwange NP in QDS 1827 C3† an ungiven number was at The Hide on 7 July (SABAP2) and two immatures were at Mbiza Pan on 21 August (JV). One was at Corner Pan, Kazuma NP (1825 B3†), on 8-12 and 26 August (LA) and a juvenile with an injured leg was noted at the end of the month (JWh). In Gonarezhou, a juvenile at Chipinda Pools (2131 B4) on 26 June (BF) was followed on 8 July by eight adults and three juveniles (CSi) and four were at Tambahata Pan on 1 and 5 November (TM, DWw). Elsewhere, groups of 13 were reported from Chivero Bird Sanctuary on 27 July (IR) and Tashinga (1628 C4) on 26 August (MP). A **Lesser Flamingo** *Phoeniconaias minor* was at Mazvikadei Dam (1732 A2†) on 4 October (AMacD).

Hundreds of **White-faced Whistling Ducks** *Dendrocygna viduata* flew around Kent Estate at dusk on 29 June and 2 July (GT). A **Fulvous Whistling Duck** *D. bicolor* was at Chisasiko Pool, Mana Pools (1529 C2), on 28 September (DMacD). The most notable Rifa (1628 B2†) bird on the November visit was an adult **Yellow-billed Duck** *Anas undulata* flying downstream past the sundowner spot on the 9th. They are rare on the Zambezi with just five previous records: in the Ruckomechi area in August 1992, July 1995 (two birds), August 1995 and September 1995 (two birds), and downstream of Chikwenya in July 1995 (IR).

Seven **Cape Teal** *A. capensis* pairs were at Guvalala Pan, Hwange NP (1826 D3), on 8 July (AR), with a similar number seen at the end of August (JWh). Singles were on Thompson's Pan, Chamabonda vle, on 18 June (CBr) and at Marlborough vle, Harare (1730 D4), on 31 August (BL). A **Red-billed Teal** *A. erythrorhyncha* appeared at Gorchwe Platform Pan (2131 D3†) on the early morning of 10 June after overnight rain (IR). They are uncommon in southern Gonarezhou. Three **Southern Pochard** *Netta erythrophthalma* were unusual at Mazvikadei on 1 November (DSm), as was a **Spur-winged Goose** *Plectropterus gambensis* record on Kalisori vle, Zambezi NP (1825 B1†), on 29 June (SABAP2).

Raptors

Single **Cape Vultures** *Gyps coprotheres* were at Malilangwe (2131 B2) on 19 July (GD) and at Fishans Camp, Gonarezhou (2132 A3), on 9 October (MD). Only one **White-backed Vulture** *G. africanus* was seen in Gonarezhou from 7-10 June, that being an adult at Gorchwe Platform Pan (IR). 85 were at Kent Estate on 23 June (PvL) and 17 flew high over Arden Estate (1730 D2) towards Mazowe on 9 July (ND), while 116 were at Thompson's Pan, Chamabonda vle, on 10 November (LA).

Various observers reported from four to eight **Lappet-faced Vultures** *Torgos tracheliotos* on Kent Estate between 23 June and 15 July and two on 28 November. Exciting news came from Cawston Block Wildlife Ranch (1928 C2) where three nests were active in June with a chick being fed on the 27th; a nearly fully grown chick was seen early in September (SN). Three were on Sililiyo Loop (2132 A2) and four adults and an immature were at Bopomela crossing on the Runde River (2132 A3) on 3 October (DS). Two were on Chamabonda vle on 8 November (RL). A pair of **White-headed Vultures** *Trigonoceps occipitalis* nested on Cawston Block in June for the first time in 15 years and successfully raised a chick (SN). Two were at Banyen Pan, Malilangwe, on 22 August (AH). One was south of Victoria Falls (1825 B1†), on 4 September (LA) and three were further south in the same QDS on 21 October (DS).

At a Rifa vulture watch on 17 June larger numbers than normal were counted, probably because a fresh hippo carcass was

nearby at the river. 130 **White-backed**, eight **Hooded Necrosyrtes monachus**, a **Lappet-faced** and two **White-headed** were present (EB).

Two active **Yellow-billed Kite** *Milvus aegyptius* nests were found in Victoria Falls in August and September, one in the residential area (WA) and the other near the Zambezi NP entrance (CB). The **African Cuckoo Hawk** *Aviceda cuculoides* is uncommon on Lake Kariba and an immature at Spurwing (1628 D1) on 20 August (PT) was an addition to that QDS. A pair pursued an **Ovambo Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter ovampensis* on Monavale vle on 16 November (IR). A **Bat Hawk** *Macheiramphus alcinus* was on Highfield Farm, Nyamandhlovu (1928 C3†), on 24 August (GGo). There is a small population in and around Bulawayo that was scarcely noticed during the Atlas years.

A **Tawny Eagle** *Aquila rapax* at a donkey carcass 10 km from Birchenough Bridge on the Tanganda road (1932 C4†) on 27 July was unusually close to the eastern highlands (GD). Single **Booted Eagles** *Hieraetus pennatus* were at Chitake, Mana Pools NP (1629 A2), a pale form, on 24 August (MP) and at the Salt Pan, Hwange NP (1826 C1†), on 2 November (SWm). A sub-adult **Ayres's Hawk-eagle** *H. ayresii* at Musango, Lake Kariba (1628 C4), on 4 September was the Camp's first record of this species (SE). An adult flew down the Chipandaure (1628 B2) into riverine near Rifa on 8 November (IR).

An immature **Martial Eagle** *Polemaetus bellicosus* unsuccessfully hunted **Helmeted Guinea fowl** *Numida meleagris* at Bally Vaughan Game Park (1731 C2) on 16 August (GP). One was over Seldomseen, Vumba (1932 B2), on 14 September (KW) where last reported in 2020. An interesting occurrence at Kent Estate on 28 November was a hovering juvenile that shared its airspace with a juvenile **Bateleur** *Terathopius ecaudatus*. Showing no respect for either bird, a **Lanner Falcon** *Falco biarmicus* pair attempted to bomb the Martial (IR). An **African Crowned Eagle** *Stephanoaetus coronatus* was seen for the first time on Cawston Block (1928 C2†) on 29 June (SN), where much closer to the northern fringe of Bulawayo than shown in the Atlas. One was displaying over Gurunguwe on the eastern border (1832 D2) on 20 September (IR).

Single **Western Banded Snake Eagles** *Circaetus cinerascens* were at Chikwenya Island (1529 D1) on 28-29 June (MH) and at Jecha Point, downstream of Chirundu (1628 B2), on 15 August (JMa). **Bateleurs** recorded in the southeast lowveld in June were an adult female and a juvenile on Malilangwe (2131 B2) on the 7th with another adult female there four days later, an adult male and a juvenile were seen separately at Gorchwe Platform Pan on the 8th and an adult male was over the Nyavasikana River road (2132 C1) on the 10th (IR). Four juveniles were seen in Mana Pools NP (1529 C2) on 8 September (DMacD).

A **Common [Steppe] Buzzard** *Buteo buteo* east of Mana Pools Camp (1529 D1†) on 12 October was further downstream than recorded in the Atlas. A **Lizard Buzzard** *Kaupifalco monogrammicus* was approximately 45 km south of Masvingo on the Beitbridge road (2030 B3†) in June and a September **Ovambo Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter ovampensis* record from the Chewore River (1529 D4†) was further south than Atlas records (all SABAP2). A **Dark Chanting Goshawk** *Melierax metabates* pair was at Banket (1730 A4) on 29 June (DSm).

A female **Western Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus* with very white leading edges to the wings was on a Mutare farm (1832 D3) on 10 November (GD). Single **African Marsh Harriers** *C. ranivorus* were in the Shawasha Hills (1731 C1) on

23 September (TCa), on Komani vlei, north of Harare (1730 D2), on 26 October (IR), and at Mazvikadei (1730 A2†) on 16 November (BL). Early-arriving **Montagu's Harriers** *C. pygargus* were near Rusape (1832 C1†) on 6 September (RH) and at Musango (1628 C4†) on the 17th (SE). September arrivals are scarce, the last being on the 29th at Aisleby in 2014. A **Pallid Harrier** *C. macrourus* in the Kavinga area (1629 B1†) in November (SABAP2) was an unusual Zambezi Valley record.

Many wintering **Ospreys** *Pandion haliaetus* were reported and were single birds unless stated otherwise. At Mazvikadei on 14 June (BM) and possibly the same bird was nearby on Redhill Farm, north of Banket (1730 A4), on 11 July (DSm). Along the Zambezi they were near the old B Camp, Chirundu (1628 B2), on 22 June (MH), in Zambezi NP on 29 June (CB) and two on 3 July (KS), less than 2 km upstream of Victoria Falls on 11 July (SC), and on Lake Kariba at Tashinga on 12 August (FM). And lastly at Wamba Dam, Aberfoyle (1832 B4), on 3 August (MS). Arrival appeared to occur early in October with two in Zambezi NP on the 4th (SC) and singles at Matusadona (1628 C4) on that date (SE) and the 8th (PT).



Figure 4. Taita Falcon, Katiyo Estate, Honde Valley. Photo (c) Morgan Saineti

Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus* were calling on the Dragon's tail, Gurunguwe (1832 D2), on 21 September (IR) and a **Lanner Falcon** *F. biarmicus* was downstream of Mana Pools Camp (1529 D2†) on 8 October (SABAP2). The **Taita Falcon** *F. fasciinucha* referred to at the beginning of this report was photographed at Katiyo Estate, Honde Valley (1833 A3), in the last week of November (MS).

Two **Red-necked Falcons** *F. chiquera* associating together on Chamabonda vlei on 12 June were almost certainly a pair (CB) and one was nearby in Zambezi NP on 22 July (SR). Singles were at Makondora Dam, southwest of Nyamaropa (1732 D4†), on 25 August, where breeding possibly occurs in *Borassus* palms (GD) and on the Ruckomechi Camp access road (1529 C3) on 27 November (GD).

Two **Greater Kestrels** *F. rupicoloides* near Zaka (2031 A4†) on 11 June (IR) is an important record as they are scarce south of 20°S in the southeast of the country. A **Dickinson's Kestrel**

F. dickinsoni on Marlborough vlei on 31 August (BL) was an uncommon Harare record.

Gamebirds and Rails

A **Shelley's Francolin** *Scleroptila shelleyi* was an unusual addition to the dawn chorus at Kent Estate (1830 B1†) on 2 September (GT). **Helmeted Guineafowl** *Numida meleagris* are so widespread they are seldom reported from new areas. A November record from the Tokwe River just above Tokwe-Mukosi Dam (2030 D1†) (SABAP2) is therefore of note. On 30 June **Crested Guineafowl** *Guttera pucherani* flocks were near Mongwe Camp, downstream of Chirundu (1528 D4†), and crossing the main road between Elephant Walk and Karoi (1629 C2†) (MH) where further south than expected. About 15 were near Mbizi, midway between Rutenga and Boli (2131 A3†), on 29 July (DS).

A **Common Buttonquail** *Turnix sylvaticus* was in the Nyamatongwe area, Gonarezhou (2131 D1†), on 10 June (IR). The Monavale **Red-chested Flufftail** *Sarothrura rufa* population that had thrived in a wet patch caused by a burst pipe had moved onto the old golf course by 16 November. The pipe had been repaired, thus causing this moist habitat to dry up (IR).

Two **African Purple Swampheens** *Porphyrio madagascariensis* were considered unusual at Malilangwe on 11 September (BF). An **Allen's Gallinule** *P. alleni* was on the Zambezi four kilometres upstream of Shamashanga, Sapi (1529 D1), on 22 July (RMaD). The **Common Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus* is sparse south of 30°S in the southeast so a November record south of Masvingo near Bondolfi Mission (2030 B1†) (SABAP2) is of significance. At Victoria Falls a **Lesser Moorhen** *Paragallinula angulata* was on the Masuwe River on 21 June (SC).

An **African Finfoot** *Podica senegalensis* was at Pamuzinda Safari Lodge, Selous (1830 A2), on 7 July (DS) where not reported since 2013. **Denham's Bustards** *Neotis denhami* are scarce summer visitors to the northwest so one on Chamabonda vlei (1725 D3) on 3 June (LA) was a rare winter record.

Waders, Gulls and Terns

Single **Lesser Jacanas** *Microparra capensis* were at Mazvikadei on 20 July (BL) and Biri Dam, Chinhoyi, on 23 August (DSm). A mating pair of **Greater Painted Snipe** *Rostratula benghalensis* was at Redhill Farm, Banket, on 14 June (DSm). At Victoria Falls one was at Elephant Camp on 24 August and 13 October, and three were on Chamabonda vlei on 1 November (SC). It is extraordinary how they arrive on vleys such as this as soon as pools appear with the first rains.

On Lake Kariba, four **Caspian Plovers** *Charadrius asiaticus* moving south at Musango on 30 August (SE) were very early and became only the fourth record in that month going back over 40 years. Three were nearby at Bumi Harbour (1628 C4) on 14 October (SE) and one was a scarce Hwange NP sighting at Kennedy 2 Pan (1827 C3) on the 6th (RW). Another early arrival and a rare Lake Kariba sighting was a **Grey Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola* that flew past Nyanzirawo Bay, Musango (1628 C4†), on 22 August (SE). There is only one other August record, that being two on Moyo Ranch, Kwekwe, in 1997.

A **Senegal Lapwing** *Vanellus lugubris* was on Malilangwe on 13 September (BF) where only infrequently reported. An **African Wattled Lapwing** *V. senegallus* on Sentinel Ranch, Beitbridge (2229 B1†), on 5 June became species number 409 for the farm (VB); they are rarely seen along the Limpopo.



Figure 5. Black-tailed Godwit, Zambezi National Park. Photo © Vusa Sibanda

A **Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos* was at the Matetsi River, on the Victoria Falls-Robins Camp road (1826 A1†), on 23 August (CB). Single **Green Sandpipers** *Tringa ochropus* were at Chipinda Causeway (2131 B4) on 1 October (DS), Mutare sewage ponds on 18 November (GD) and at a small pan on the eastern Chionja Platform, Gonarezhou (2132 A4), on the 24th (AC). About five over-wintering **Common Greenshank** *T. nebularia* were seen in June between Rifa and Mana Pools (MH).

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* rarely arrive as early as July but the first one noted this year was on the 27th at Lake Chivero (IR). An **African Snipe** *Gallinago nigripennis* at a permanent pool near the Mongwe turnoff from the Chirundu-Marongora road (1629 A1†) on 16 June (BM) is a scarce Valley record. A **Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa* photographed in Zambezi NP (1725 D4†) (VS) was the first record from the park since 1987.

Pied Avocets *Recurvirostra avosetta* in unusual areas in the south were at Chipinda Causeway (2131 B4†) with five on 8 June (BF) and one on the Limpopo near Beitbridge (2229 B2†) on 10 October (GTr). In Hwange NP, two were at Nehimba Camp Pan (1826 C4) on 10 June (MF per J-MB) and singles were at Ngweshla (1927 A1†) on 7 July (PL) and Deteema Dam (1826 C1) during August (CB, JWh). A record from just outside the Park came from Ngamo Forest Land (1927 A2†) on 27 August (SABAP2). Along the Zambezi, one or two were at Long Pool, Mana Pools (1529 C2), between 23 June and 9 July (SH, JV) and three were at Kariba Bream Farm (1628 D2†) on 21 August (CN). At Victoria Falls four were on the Masuwe River on 8 July, one at Elephant Camp between 16 and 24 August (SC) and an unknown number on Kalisori vle, Zambezi NP (1825 B1†) on 29 June (SABAP2). About 80 were at Lake Chivero Sanctuary on 27 July (IR) and one was unusual at Mazvikadei (1730 A2†) on 1 November.

A **Spotted Thick-knee** *Burhinus capensis* called after midnight on 9 June at the Gorhwe Platform (2131 D1†) (IR). A **Three-banded Courser** *Rhinoptilus cinctus* in the Save Valley just south of Chipangayi (2032 A4†) in October (SABAP2) was from the south-eastern border area population. Single **Bronze-winged Coursers** *R. chalcopertus* were at Hillside Dams,

Bulawayo (2028 B1), on 30 September (RW) and Haka Park, Harare (1731 C3), on 19 November (PZ). The following day four were in the National Botanic Gardens (1731 C3) (JoF). Five in two different groups were on the eastern Chionja Platform (2132 A4) on 26 November (AC).

About 100 **Collared Pratincole** *Glareola pratincola* arrived at Tambahata Pan on 6 August but had gone by the following day (CS) and 50 or more were at Musango on the 16th (SE). An egg was found in a nest on Urundi Farm, Banket (1730 A3) on 10 November (SB) and chicks were noted nearby at Mazvikadei six days later (BL). A south-bound flock of **Black-winged Pratincole** *G. nordmanni* was at Dolilo Pan, Robins Camp area (1826 C1) on 2 November (SWm). A flock of about 20 **Rock Pratincole** *G. nuchalis* flew from the gorges and crossed over the Victoria Falls Rain Forest heading upstream on 7 June. Despite the Zambezi's high water level, they were probably moving out of the gorges in search of exposed rocks upstream (CB).

14 **Grey-headed Gulls** *Chroicocephalus cirrocephalus* were at the Chitove Causeway on the Runde River, Gonarezhou (2132 A4†), on 20 August (CS). This gull was first reported in the southeast in 2018 and with just a few records of vagrants since then, a flock of this number is exceptional. A juvenile was at the eastern end of Long Island, Zambezi NP, on 7 October (BMs) and one was at Somalisa, Hwange NP (1927 A1†), on 18 October (BN). About 70 **White-winged Terns** *Chlidonias leucopterus* at Lake Chivero Sanctuary on 27 July (IR) was a large mid-winter gathering.

On the Runde, **African Skimmers** *Rynchops flavirostris* were heard from Chipale Camp near Fishans crossing (2132 A3) on the evening of 10 June (IR) and about 20 were at Chipinda Causeway on 21 July (NM). Following last winter's unexpected sightings of up to 18 at Mazvikadei, four were seen there on 14 June (BM). A pair with two eggs was on a small sand island in Palm Bay, Lake Kariba (1628 D3), on 30 September (DSm).

Other non-Passerines

The sighting of a **Yellow-throated Sandgrouse** *Pterocles gutturalis* in the Davison's Camp area, southeast Hwange NP (1927 A2), on 28 September was confirmed with a photograph (eBird).

Rock Doves [Feral Pigeons] *Columba livia* were found in June in new areas in the south at Ngundu Halt (2030 D4†) and a few kilometres north of Beitbridge (2230 A1†) (SABAP2). The latest **Speckled Pigeon** *C. guinea* record from a new locality is of three that appear regularly at a seed tray on Eland Farm, Turk Mine (1928 D2†) (AE), where north of Atlas records. The two mentioned in the last period at Kinghaven, Esigodini, were accompanied on 11 October by a younger bird appearing to beg for food (LK) – an interesting potential breeding record from a new area.

Mourning Collared Doves *Streptopelia decipiens* were in Chipale Camp (2132 A3) on the night of 10 June (IR). **Blue-spotted Wood-Doves** *Turtur afer* were inside Gurunguwe montane forest (1832 D2) at 1576 m on 22 September, this perhaps being an odd habitat for them. Irwin (1981, page 150) indicates they prefer forest fringes rather than the interior, though in this case the edge was not far away. They were around Small Bridge Dam near Penhalonga (1832 D3) in mid-September along with **Emerald-spotted Wood-Doves** *T. chalcospilos* (IR).

Flocks of four **Brown-necked Parrots (Grey-headed Parrot)** *Poicephalus fuscicollis* were near Chilo Lodge (2132 A2) in mid-September (AMacD) and at Mount Hampden (1730

D2) on 18 November (JWh). A **Brown-headed Parrot** *P. cryptoxanthus* and a **Meyer's Parrot** *P. meyeri* perching close together at Chishakwe (2032 A1) in August 2025 gave the appearance they had paired up (ACh). This is by no means conclusive evidence of hybridisation but it is worth including here in light of this comment "Suggested extensive hybridisation [of Brown-headed] with Meyer's Parrot in south-eastern Zimbabwe, now considered doubtful or rare." (Hockey *et al.* 2005. *Roberts' birds of southern Africa*, VIIth ed., p. 224-226). This no doubt refers to the contention that the two species hybridise extensively in the southeast (Irwin, 1981. *The birds of Zimbabwe*, p. 154). **Meyer's Parrots** at Gorhwe Platform Pan (2131 D1†) on 8 and 9 June (IR) were surprisingly not noted in that square in the Atlas years.



Figure 6. A pair (?) of one Meyer's and one Brown-headed Parrots, Chishakwe. Photo © Alex Charitonos

About 300 **Lilian's Lovebirds** *Agapornis lilianae* at Rifa on 9 November (HL) was the largest count reported for about five years. Single **Rose-ringed Parakeets** *Psittacula krameri* seen in June in a Belvedere, Harare garden (1731 C3†) (Mhp) and in Matsheumhlope, Bulawayo (2028 B1†) (JV) must have escaped from nearby aviaries. A **Schalow's Turaco** *Tauraco schalowi* in the Kazungula area (1725 C4) on 27 November (KSt) could be the first record from there since the Atlas years when a small presence was noted.

A **Black Cuckoo** *Cuculus clamosus* was recorded at Rifa on 7 November where infrequently found and one was heard at Newlands before 5 a.m. on the 25th (IR). A very late **Great Spotted Cuckoo** *Clamator glandarius* was at Redhill Farm, Banket, on 4 June (DSm) and a newly-arrived **Jacobin Cuckoo** *C. jacobinus* was at the Matetsi River (1826 A1†) on 28 October (CB). Two **Thick-billed Cuckoos** *Pachycoccyx audeberti* were at Karunga Camp about 30 km east of Mushumbi Pools (1630 B2†) on 11 July (MZ) and one at Criterion Water Works (2028 B1†) on 22 October (RW) was a scarce Bulawayo area record.

Single **African Emerald Cuckoos** *Chrysococcyx cupreus* over-wintering on the Vumba were at Cloudlands (1932 B1) on 21 June (GL) and the Botanic Gardens (1932 B2) on 6 September (AMacD). Calling was heard at Seldomseen from the last week of August (KW). **Klaas's Cuckoos** *C. klaas* from the visiting South African population were reported between 10 June and 21 August from widespread localities. An immature **Black Coucal** *Centropus grillii* on Little Toms vlei in front of Robins Camp, Hwange NP (1825 D2), on 16 July (SWm) possibly fledged late in the season and failed to migrate.

On the evening of 18 November at Kent Estate, no less than eight owl species were heard during a termite hatch, namely **Western Barn Owl** *Tyto alba*, **African Wood Owl** *Strix*

woodfordii, **African Scops Owl** *Otus senegalensis*, **Southern White-faced Owl** *Ptilopsis granti*, **Pearl-spotted Owlet** *Glaucidium perlatus*, **African Barred Owlet** *G. capense*, **Spotted Eagle-Owl** *Bubo africanus* and **Verreaux's Eagle-Owl** *B. lacteus* (AvL).

A **Marsh Owl** *Asio capensis* was at the Tshabolisa vlei causeway, Matetsi 1 (1825 B4†) on 19 June (CJ). Five were seen on a couple of nights at the end of August on the Umguza farms irrigation road (2028 B1) (DSi) and 17 were counted on Komani vlei on 26 November (FW). **Southern White-faced Owls** found in unusual areas were near Kenmaur in August and on the southern border of Hwange NP (both 1927 A2†) in October, and at Jozibanini (1926 B4†) in September, when a **Pearl-spotted Owlet** was also a new entry in this QDS (all SABAP2). Two **Pel's Fishing Owls** *Scotopelia peli* were downstream of Rifa (1628 B4) on 19 August (AP per JP). One at Aberfoyle on 23 November (MS) was the first record from there since July 2014. A **European Nightjar** *Caprimulgus europaeus* was reported from Katiyo (1833 A3†) in mid-November (SABAP2).

Horus Swifts *Apus horus* were unusual on Kalisori vlei, Zambezi NP (1825 B1†) on 29 June (SABAP2). **Narina Trogon** *Apaloderma narina* was recorded in the Gurungwe area (1832 D2†) in September (IR). One at Far and Wide near Mtarazi Falls (1832 B4) on 21 October (CC) was unusual at the top of the Honde escarpment. Singles in Hwange NP in November were to the north of the Main Camp-Shumba road in the Bembezi/Shapi area (1826 D3†) on the 21st and just west of Dete (1826 D2) on the 25th (CMcG).

Very scarce mid-winter **African Pygmy Kingfishers** *Ispidina picta* were at Aberfoyle on 7 July (MS) and Imire Game Park (1831 B3) the following day (JT). No June or July records have appeared in Recent Reports or Field Observations previously. Another winterer or extremely early arriving bird was at Mandara, Harare (1731 C3), between 28 August and 8 September. (JBa). The vast majority arrive in October with only a very few September records in the last 40 years or so. A **Brown-hooded Kingfisher** *Halcyon albiventris* was at the Matetsi River (1826 A1†), on 23 August (CB). A **Striped Kingfisher** *H. helicuti* record came from the southern Hwange NP boundary along the Tshemhumi River (1927 A3†) in June (SABAP2).

European Bee-eaters *Merops apiaster* can be found countrywide but some just north of Rukomechi Research Station (1629 B1†) in mid-October (SABAP2) were not recorded there during the Atlas years. A nice flock of 11 **Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters** *M. persicus* was seen at Chirundu (1628 B2) on 14 November (TN). **Southern Carmine Bee-eaters** *M. nubicoides* arrived in the Zambezi Valley in August at Mongwe Mouth on the 14th (RT) and over Mhara River Camp, Chitake-Mhara confluence (1629 B1), on the 16th (TS). On the River they went unrecorded in the Atlas years in the Pfumbe QDS (1529 D4†) but were noted there in October (SABAP2) and the colony upstream of Rifa had c. 380 holes in November, the Chipandaure site being long defunct (IR).

For the second consecutive year a pair of **Little Bee-eaters** *M. pusillus* used a pile of pit sand in a Philadelphia, Harare (1731 C1) garden as a nest site (JMcC). In the Zambezi Valley, **Swallow-tailed Bee-eaters** *M. hirundineus* were recorded in September and October in the Chewore mouth (1529 D2†) and Sapi (1529 D3†) squares respectively (SABAP2). **White-fronted Bee-eaters** *M. bullockoides* and **African Hoopoes** *Upupa africana* were on the Ntiyabenzi River northeast of Shangani Mine (1929 C2†) in July (SABAP2). A pair of

Hoopoes fed a **Greater Honeyguide** *Indicator indicator* fledgling in a Newlands garden on 22 November (IR). A **Broad-billed Roller** *Eurystomus glaucurus* was at the Matetsi River (1826 A1†), on 28 October (CB) and **Green Wood-hoopoes** *Phoeniculus purpureus* were near Tjolotjo (1927 D1†) in September (SABAP2); both squares being under-reported in the Atlas years.

Trumpeter Hornbills *Bycanistes bucinator* at or near the Lion and Elephant Motel (2130 C2†) on 12 July (SABAP2) were west of Atlas records. Singles were at the Arabian Stud, Darwendale (1730 D3†), on 8 October (TSw) and at Christon Bank Botanic Reserve (1731 C1), on 5 September (AN), where now fairly common since first reported in the area in 2018. Six at Sable Park Farm, Chegutu (1830 A1), on 17 November (DK) are occasional visitors there. **Silvery-cheeked Hornbills** *B. brevis* heard in gum trees at Mountain Home, Penhalonga (1832 D3), on 19 September (IR) were perhaps unusual in an exotic plantation. Some were heard the following day on the south slopes of Gurunguwe (1832 D2) followed by two seen at the spring in the montane forest (IR). Three **Southern Ground Hornbills** *Bucorvus leadbeateri* were in the Gorhwana area of Gonarezhou (2131 D1†) on 7 June and they were heard in the early mornings of 8 and 9 June at Gorhwe Platform Pan (IR).

Bennett's Campethera *bennettii* and **Bearded Woodpeckers** *Chloropicus namaquus* were also noted at the Gorhwe Platform (2131 D1†) on 8 June (IR) and the **Bearded** was recorded in the Gurunguwe area (1832 D2†) in September (SABAP2). Early in June, two **Olive Woodpecker** *Dendropicos griseocephalus* pairs were on Kalunda Island, Zambezi NP (1725 D4) (DT). This stretch of the river upstream of Victoria Falls is seemingly the only area of the country in which to locate them.

Passerines

Single **African Broadbills** *Smithornis capensis* in under-reported areas were at Makuti on 19 June (MZ), at Rifa Spring, Makuti 2, on 1 September (MH) (both 1629 A3†) and heard near Arcturus (1731 C4†) on 18 November (RGo). A very scarce over-wintering record of an **African Pitta** *Pitta angolensis* was one at the Chiwuye River, Mana Pools NP (1629 A2), on 21 August. This individual was relatively close to a known nest site that was active last season and is suspected to be a first-year bird that failed to migrate (JoF).

Sabota Lark *Calendulauda sabota* was recorded in the Masvingo 2030 B2 QDS in the Atlas with a low reporting rate of less than 2%. This area is well to the northeast of its main range so a November report from there (SABAP2) consolidates this earlier record. **Grey-backed Sparrowlarks** *Eremopterix verticalis* were on the border road in the Insiza Pan area of Kazuma NP on 22 October (DS).

White-throated Swallows *Hirundo albigularis* are uncommon downstream of Mana Pools but were found in the Mbera River area (1529 D1†) in mid-June, when over-wintering, and at the end of August (SABAP2). A **Blue Swallow** *H. atrocaerulea* over-wintering in the Gairezi/Church Road area (NMa) was only the second eastern highlands winter record, the first being in July 2021. A most unusual Mutare record was a pair in upper Cecil Kop (1832 D3) below thick low cloud in mixed grassland and trees on 18 November. They were possibly in transit to an unknown destination (GD). At least 50 **South African Cliff Swallows** *Petrochelidon spilodera* were at the Vungu River bridge, near Gweru (1929 D1), on 18 October (LT) for the fourth consecutive season.

Three **Brown-throated Martins** *Riparia paludicola* were at Chivero Bird Sanctuary on 27 July (IR) and a **Banded Martin**

Neophedina cincta in Zambezi NP on 9 June may have been over-wintering (CBr). A **Black Saw-wing** *Psalidoprocne pristoptera holomelas* with dark under-wing coverts hawked insects over Gulugi Camp, near Chipinda (2131 B2), on 7 November. This was a late date for returning from Mozambique to breed, possibly at Great Zimbabwe (AC).

Many **African Golden Orioles** *Oriolus auratus* at Chikwenya Island, Mana Pools (1529 D1), on 17-18 June (MH) may well have been a very late migratory flock. Wintering records from Harare comprised two on Wingate Golf Course (1731 C1) on 16 July (PZ) and singles at Christon Bank the following day (AN) and Ballantyne Park (1731 C3) on 9 August (GB). A pair at Aberfoyle on 21 August (KW) had possibly just arrived. Two **Cape Crows** *Corvus capensis* in the Headlands area (1831 B4) on 20 October (SE) is a welcome record. These crows seemed to disappear completely from the Macheke/Headlands area many years ago after resettlement.

A pair of **Ashy Tits** *Melaniparus cinerascens* was in a stand of *Acacia* on Brunsgaard Farm, Somabhula (1929 D3†), on 17 November (ZC). This under-reported bird was noted in that square in the Atlas but probably not since then. An exceptional **Cinnamon-breasted Tit** *Melaniparus pallidiventris* record close to Harare comprised three at Christon Bank on 28 June (MS). They were occasionally recorded not too far away at Chinamora a few years ago and there is a 2005 record from Umwinsidale.

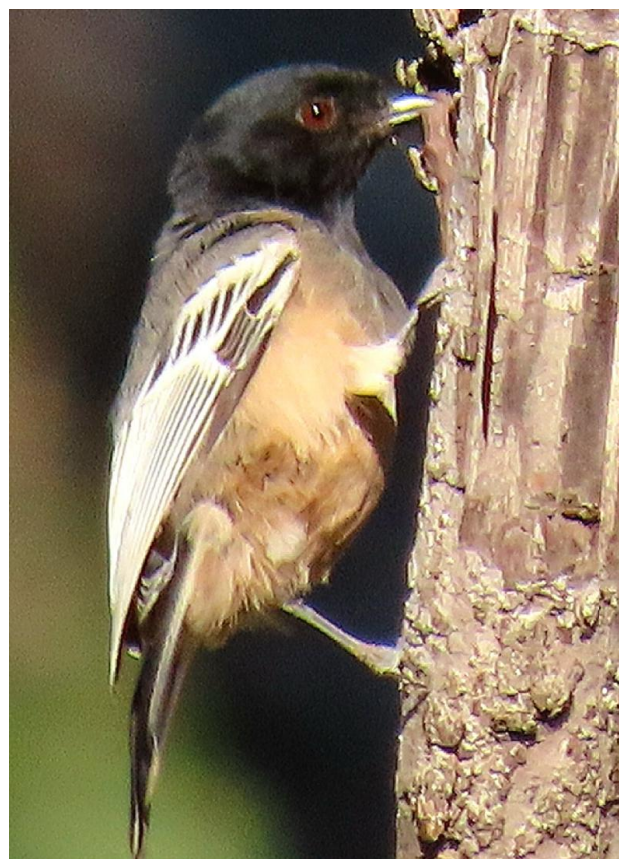


Figure 7. Cinnamon-breasted Tit, Christon Bank. Photo © Morgan Saineti.

Arrow-marked Babblers *Turdoides jardineii* were east of Jozibanini on Hwange NP's southern border (1926 B4†) in September (SABAP2). A **Sombre Greenbul** *Andropadus importunus* record at the Lion and Elephant (2130 C2†) in June (SABAP2) is a northward extension of range. They are occurring in new areas in the northern half of the country and

now in the south it seems. A **Yellow-bellied Greenbul** *Chlorocichla flaviventris* heard at Chivero Bird Sanctuary on 27 July (IR) was the first report from there for nearly four years. In October, this species, **Terrestrial Brownbul** *Phyllastrephus terrestris* and **Kurrichane Thrush** *Turdus libonyana* were all at the base of the escarpment in the Sapi 1529 D3† square (SABAP2) where not reported during the Atlas years. This is the first ever record of the rather sedentary and widespread **Kurrichane Thrush** to appear in Recent Reports or Field Observations!

Capped Wheatear *Oenanthe pileata* and **Arnot's Chat** *Myrmecocichla arnotti* were apparent newcomers in the Mangaingai area east of Chitake (1629 B1†) in November and October respectively (SABAP2). A **Familiar Chat** *O. familiaris* record from near Aberfoyle (1832 B4†) in November (SABAP2) was an extension of range towards the border. **Cape Robin-chat** *Cossypha caffra* was unexpected on the very peak of Gurunguwe (1832 D2) in open Protea grassland on 21 September (IR). A September **White-throated Robin-chat** *C. humeralis* record from south of Nkayi in the Gwampa Forest Land (1928 B2†) (SABAP2) pushes its Matabeleland range further north according to the Atlas.

A **Collared Palm Thrush** *Cichladusa arquata* at Robins Camp (1825 D2†) on 11 September (SWm) appears to be the first record for that area of Hwange NP. In October and November, one was at Mazowe River Camp (1731 B2), previously known as Hippo Pools, where only a scarce visitor (SCh). A wanderer on Redhill Farm, Banket (1730 A4†), 8 to 10 November (DSm) was well south of its Lomagundi range. A scarce Matabeleland South **Bearded Scrub-robin** *Cercotrichas quadrivirgata* record came from the Matopos (2028 A4†) in September (SABAP2).

On 26 August a **Southern Hylia** *Hylia australis* pair on Highfield Farm, Nyamandhlovu (1928 C3†), was in atypical habitat dominated by teak and mopane (GGo). This record was much further south in Matabeleland North than recorded in the Atlas. An over-wintering **African Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus baeticatus* was at Lake Chivero on 27 July (IR). **Willow Warblers** *Phylloscopus trochilus* were still active on 19 June in Shangani (1929 C2) (LT) where over-wintering occurred the previous year.

The Atlas data show **Long-billed Crombecs** *Sylvietta rufescens* as reasonably common along the Zambezi in the Mana and Sapi areas but less so away from the river. An October record from the Sapi QDS 1529 D3† on the Valley floor (SABAP2) is therefore of interest. In the same Sapi square **Grey-backed Camaropteras** *Camaroptera brachyura brevicaudata* were reported twice at different sites on 6 October (SABAP2) where within range but unrecorded during the Atlas years. **Wing-snapping Cisticolas** *Cisticola ayresii* were displaying over short grassland on the lower montane forest plateau of Gurunguwe on 20 September (IR).

A **Collared Flycatcher** *Ficedula albicollis* was reported at Kariba Town (1628 D2†) for the first time on 30 October (DRu). Once a rarity in this country, this flycatcher has become relatively common and only records from new areas will be reported in future. **Pale Batis** *Batis soror* at Treehouse, Chimanmani (1932 D4†), on 10 July (TMu) is a significant record. Irwin (1981, p. 325-6) mentions its presence in these mountains although it was not recorded in the Atlas period.

Single wintering **African Paradise Flycatchers** *Terpsiphone viridis* were in Harare at Glen Lorne (1731 C1) on 3 June (BB) and Mount Pleasant (1730 D4) at month end (DS), on Lake Kariba at Rhino Safari Camp (1628 C4) on 24 June (PT) and

Musango Camp on 8 July (SE), at the Pungwe Forest, Honde Valley (1832 B4), on 14 July (MS) and in the Sapi Safari Area (1529 D1) eight days later (RMacD). Two at Musango on 27 August (SE) and one the following day at Malilangwe (AH) were either over-wintering or new arrivals.

Wagtails in unusual places include an **African Pied Motacilla** *aguimp* on the roof of Newlands shops on 5 November (IR) and a **Cape M. capensis** at Mutare sewage ponds (1932 B1†) on 25 June (BF), where south of Atlas records. A sparse and seldom reported **Striped Pipit** *Anthus lineiventris* population exists south and east of Bulawayo, so a September record from the Matopos (2028 D1†) (SABAP2) is of interest. **Yellow-throated Longclaws** *Macronyx croceus* were in montane Protea grassland on Gurunguwe summit (1832 D2†) on 21 September (IR).

A very unusual **Lesser Grey Shrike** *Lanius minor* wintering record was one in the Headlands area on 9 and 11 August (DB). They are of patchy occurrence in the Zambezi Valley but were found in the Mangaingai area (1629 B1†) on 24 November (SABAP2) when probably still migrating southwards. **Black-backed Puffback** *Dryoscopus cubla* and **Brown-crowned Tchagra** *Tchagra australis* were both found east of Jozibanini on the southwest Hwange NP border (1926 B4†) in September (SABAP2).

Although a common Zambezi Valley resident, the **Grey-headed Bush Shrike** *Malaconotus blanchoti* was unrecorded in the Atlas in the Pfumbe (1529 D4†) square. It was found there, however, in September (SABAP2). **Retz's Helmet-shrikes** *Prionops retzii* in miombo woodland below Gurunguwe (1832 D2†) on 22 September (IR) were slightly out of range according to the Atlas. A **Southern White-crowned Shrike** *Eurocephalus anguitimens* record approximately 20 km south of Lion and Elephant on the Beitbridge road (2130 C4†) in June (SABAP2) was within range but seemingly absent from that square previously. Some were slightly northwest of Tjolutjo (1927 D1†) in September (SABAP2).

Red-winged Starlings *Onychognathus morio* have shown signs of moving onto Kalahari sand in Hwange NP and a record from east of Mandiseka Pan (1927 A2†) in June (SABAP2) is a further indication of this movement. About 15 **Yellow-billed Oxpeckers** *Buphagus africanus* were on buffalo at Gorhwe Platform Pan on 9 June (IR). **Red-billed Oxpeckers** *B. erythrorynchus* were reported at Antelope Park near Gweru (1929 C2†) in July (SABAP2).

A **Purple-banded Sunbird** *Cinnyris bifasciatus* record north of Rukomechi Research Station (1629 A2†) in November (SABAP2) indicates southward movement along the Valley floor. **Variable Sunbirds** *C. venustus* were first found on Redhill Farm, Banket, in January 2024 and a male on 25 July (DSm) is the latest record from there. **African Yellow White-eyes** *Zosterops anderssoni* were recorded along the Zambezi in QDS 1528 D4† in June (SABAP2). This square is under-reported as it sits almost entirely north of the Zambezi with only its extreme southeast corner touching this country. Some were found in *Brachystegia torrei* woodland in a remote area of central Gonarezhou (2131 D2†) in November (AC). They were recorded in adjoining squares to the north, south and east in the Atlas.

White-browed Sparrow-weavers *Plocepasser mahali* were northwest of Tjolutjo (1927 D1†) in September and some south of Malapati (2231 A2†) in October (SABAP2) were part of the expanding south-eastern population. **House Sparrows** *Passer domesticus* were breeding at Lion's Den butchery on 6 November (IR) and were found near Chivi (2030 B3†) in

November (SABAP2), where perhaps overlooked previously. A **Northern Grey-headed Sparrow** *P. griseus* was seen in Hwange Town (1826 A4†) on 26 November (AN). **Yellow-throated Petronia** *Gymnoris supercilialis* in Gwampa Forest Land, southwest of Nkayi (1928 B2†), in September (SABAP2) were within range but unreported there during the Atlas years.

A **Scaly-feathered Weaver [Finch]** *Sporopipes squamifrons* at Malilangwe (2131 B2†) on 9 September (BF) was another indication of range expansion in the southeast. Some were southwest of Mutare near the upper Save River (1932 A3†) on 20 November (GD). At Chivero Bird Sanctuary in May **Lesser Masked Weavers** *Ploceus intermedius* had moved further upstream to reedbeds on termitaria in Marimba Bay (IR). **Red-headed Weaver** *Anaplectes rubriceps* were on the Valley floor in the Sapi 1529 D3† square in October (SABAP2).

A small flock of **Southern Red Bishops** *Euplectes orix* was at the Matetsi River (1826 A1†) on 20 September (CB). A pair of **Orange-winged Pytilias** *Pytilia afra* was at Mazvikadei on 7 June (AMacD) and some were at Rifa Spring, Makuti 2 (1629 A3†), on 1 September (MH), with a number at Rifa on 8 November (IR). One was unusual in Teviotdale near the source of the Mazowe (1731 C1) on 11 October (IR). An exceptional **Green-winged Pytilia** *P. melba* record came from just north of Hauna, Honde Valley (1832 B4†), in June (SABAP2). This is not normally a bird of the wider Nyanga area. **Lesser Seedcrackers** *Pyrenestes minor* were nest building in a Waterberry *Syzygium cordatum* at Aberfoyle on 18 November and by month end two active nests were noted (MS). A **Red-throated Twinspot** *Hypargos niveoguttatus* on a Kwekwe farm (1829 D4†) on 25 November (YM) is a southward extension of range.

Violet-eared Waxbills *Uraeginthus granatinus* in the Gorchwe Pan area (2131 D1†) on 7 June (IR) were slightly north of the isolate south-eastern border population. In Juliasdale, **Swee Waxbills** *Coccygia melanotis* were bathing and feeding at Rupurara Valley Lodge between 18 July and 10 August (PA) and a large flock was on Claremont Estates on 3 August (GD). These are the first records of this elusive species for over three years. A small and seldom reported **Orange-breasted Waxbill** *Amandava subflava* population inhabits suitable marshy areas around Robins Camp. Some on Tshowe vlel (1825 D2) on 2 November (SWm) is the latest record.

Cut-throat Finches *Amadina fasciata* in the Chewore Mouth QDS (1529 D2†) in September (SABAP2) were further downstream than recorded in the Atlas. **Indigobirds** still in full breeding plumage at Victoria Falls in September were the **Purple** *Vidua purpurascens* on the 10th and **Village** *V. chalybeata* on the 30th (CB). There is only one later **Village** record on file, that being 12 October 1993 also at Victoria Falls.

Black-throated Canaries *Crithagra atrogularis* were found at Jozibanini, southwest Hwange NP (1926 B4†), in September (SABAP2). A nice **Black-eared Seedeater** *C. mennelli* record came from miombo woodland below Gurunguwe (1832 D2†) on 22 September (IR). A **Cape Bunting** *Emberiza capensis* was on Castle Beacon (1932 B1), on 9 November (KW). This seems to be the only place on the Vumba to find them. A **Cinnamon-breasted Bunting** *E. tahapisi* at Seldomseen (1932 B2) on 24 November was unusual there (KW).

Arrivals

White Stork 6 October Harare (DA per AMacD), 11 October Banket (DSm); **Abdim's Stork** 2 October Harare (BL), 9 October Kent Estates (PvL), 27 October Marondera (DTr) and Kariba (CN), 30 October Mazowe River Camp (SCh), 1

November Chamabonda vlel (SC); **Yellow-billed Kite** 27 July Chirundu (DCx), 29 July Mhara Bush Camp (DH), 2 August south of Kanyemba (1530 C2) (MZ), 3 August Juliasdale (GD), 5 August Shangani (LT), Marondera (AF) and Harare (NMn); **European Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus* 16 October Chegutu (DK), 30 October Mazvikadei (BM); **Steppe Eagle** *Aquila nipalensis* 1 November Chamabonda vlel (SC); **Lesser Spotted Eagle** *Clanga pomarina* 13 October Banket (DSm), 1 November Chamabonda vlel (50+) (SC); **Wahlberg's Eagle** *Hieraaetus wahlbergi* 26 August Mutare (GD) and Kazuma NP (DS), 29 August Umguza (AR), 30 August Harare (IR) and Victoria Falls (CB); **Common Buzzard** 11 October Banket (DSm), 12 October Mana Pools NP (1529 D1) (SABAP2), 13 October Mutare (GD) and Somabhula (ZC), 22 October Nyanga (PA) and Penhalonga (JWh), 25 October Vumba (SW); **Eurasian Hobby** *Falco subbuteo* 9 October Sapi (RR), 27 October Harare (BL); **Amur Falcon** *F. amurensis* 16 November Harare (BL) and near Regina Mundi (1927 B3) (TF); **Lesser Kestrel** *F. naumanni* 1 November Chamabonda vlel (SC), 5 November Nyamandhlovu (RGo); **Common Sandpiper** 9 July Musango (SE), 21 July Malilangwe (GD), 23 July Victoria Falls (DT, SC), 8 August Pampoenpoort Dam (1928 D3) (HLw); **Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola* 16 July Malilangwe (GD), 19 July Victoria Falls (SC), 27 July Lake Chivero (IR), 11 August Spurwing (PT), 12 August Gonarezhou (DMacD); **Marsh Sandpiper** *T. stagnatilis* 20 August Gonarezhou (CS); **Common Greenshank** 8 July Musango (SE), 16 July Victoria Falls (SC), 19 July Chiredzi area (GD); **Ruff** *Calidris pugnax* 27 July Lake Chivero (IR), 8 August Kazuma Pan (LA); **African Cuckoo** *Cuculus gularis* 10 September Harare (PZ), 5 October near Aisleby (JV) and Malilangwe (BF); **Red-chested Cuckoo** *C. solitarius* 24 September Dete vlel (JV), 25 September Victoria Falls (DT), 26 September Nyanga (NMa), 1 October Vumba (KW), 4 October Mutare (KH), 5 October Harare (RK, IR); **Black Cuckoo** 26 October Bulawayo (WC), 28 October Banket (DSm), 29 October Matendere Ranch, SVC (2032 A1) (CCo), 4 November Umguza (AR) and Nehimba (DP); **Great Spotted Cuckoo** 25 October Victoria Falls (DT); **Levaillant's Cuckoo** *Clamator levaillantii* 21 October Victoria Falls (SC), 28 October Hwange NP (DP) and Mana Pools (SH), 31 October Harare (JBa); **Jacobin Cuckoo** 23 October Harare (HL), 28 October Matetsi River (CB); **African Emerald Cuckoo** 24 October Penhalonga (JWh), 13 November Victoria Falls (DT); **Klaas's Cuckoo** 20 September Stapleford (1832 D2) (IR), 21 September Burma Valley (PM), 25 September Chamkoto Farm (2229 B2) (JCh); **Diderick Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx caprius* 23 October Banket (DSm), 27 October Bulawayo (WC) and Luhwade Farm (GTr), 28 October Kwekwe (YM), 30 October Nyanga (PA), 1 November Umguza (AR); **Black Coucal** 22 November Banket (DSm).

Pennant-winged Nightjar *Caprimulgus vexillarius* 26 September Gairezi River (AF), 1 October Macheke (GT), 8 October Harare (road casualty) (ND); **Common Swift** *Apus apus* 27 October Chamabonda vlel (RL); **White-rumped Swift** *A. caffer* 18 September Small Bridge Dam (*The Babbler* 187); **African Pygmy Kingfisher** 17 October Kwekwe (YM), 20 October Victoria Falls (LA); **Woodland Kingfisher** *Halcyon senegalensis* 25 September Chamkoto Farm (JCh), 15 October near Main Camp (JV); **Grey-headed Kingfisher** *H. leucocephala* 29 September Harare (JBa), 11 October Kadoma (*The Babbler* 187), 13 October Victoria Falls (SC); **European Bee-eater** 11 September Harare (IR), 20 September Victoria Falls (JB), 21 September Malilangwe (BF), 22 September Marondera South (SC), 26 September Bulawayo (WC), 27

September Luhwade Farm (GTr); **European Roller** *Coracias garrulus* 15 November Malilangwe (BF), 18 November Harare (HL), 21 November Chirundu (TN); **Broad-billed Roller** 27 September Save Valley Conservancy (DBo), 4 October Malilangwe (BF), 9 October Senuko (GS), 11 October Victoria Falls (KB); **African Pitta** 11 November Masoka (MZ), 12 November Mhara River Camp (DH); **Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica* 1 October near Mutare (GD) and Malilangwe (BF), 4 October Gonarezhou (DS), 15 October Harare (JoF), 17 October Buby Valley Conservancy (KvL); **White-throated Swallow** 18 August Harare (DD); **Blue Swallow** 16 September Rukotso (GD), 19 September Connemara (NMa), 22 September Mtarazi Falls (CC); **Red-breasted Swallow** *Cecropis semirufa* 9 July Umguza (DSi), 14 July Hwange Town (1826 B3) (DEu); **Banded Martin** 14 September Harare (PZ).

Eurasian Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* 14 November Chirundu (RGo); **Thrush Nightingale** *Luscinia luscinia* 12 October Victoria Falls (DT); **Garden Warbler** *Curruca borin* 2 December Harare (JoF); **Marsh Warbler** *Acrocephalus palustris* 26 October Komani (IR); **Willow Warbler** 16 September Harare (JoF), 19 September Bulawayo (JV), 28 September Victoria Falls (LA), 8 October Mazvikadei (BM); **Spotted Flycatcher** *Muscicapa striata* 5 October Harare (IR), 29 October Bulawayo (WC), 1 November Umguza (AR) and Chamabonda vlel (SC); **African Paradise Flycatcher** 3 September Banket (DSm), 18 September Mutare (CHo), 22 September Gurunguwe (IR), 24 September Harare (DD) and Mana Pools (DMacD), 28 September Chimanmani (JH), 29 September Nyanga (AMacD) and Matusadona (PT), 2 October Bulawayo (RW) and Rifa (EB); **Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava* 6 November Harare; **Lesser Grey Shrike** 1 November Chamabonda vlel (SC), 5 November Nyamandhlovu (RGo), 6 November Dolilo Pan (SWm), 23 November Musango (SE) and Bulawayo (DSi); **Red-backed Shrike** *Lanius collurio* 5 November Chinhoyi (DSm), 12 November Gonarezhou (BF), 13 November Chirundu (TN) and Harare (JM).

Departures

Capped Wheatear 23 November Victoria Falls (CB), 24 November Mangingai (SABAP2).

OBSERVERS

Derek Adams (DA), Leanne Agiotis (LA), Paddington Aidini (PA), Wade Armand (WA), Elspeth Baillie (EB), Colin Baker (CB), Julia Baker (JB), James Ball (JBa), Brian Berkhout (BB), Khumbulani Bhebhe (KB), Jean-Michel Blake (J-MB), Duwan Botha (DBo), Gary Brent (GB), Charles Brightman (CBr),

Vanessa Bristow (VB), Paul Brown (PB), Sian Brown (SB), Dylan Browne (DB), Tina Carson (TCa), Johane Chantler (JCh), Alex Charitonos (ACh), Simba Chibike (SCh), Stan Chizipi (SC), David Christiansen (DC), Zane Civerston (ZC), Anthony Cizek (AC), Emily Cohen (EC), Courtney Connear (CCo), Woody Cotterill (WC), Douglas Cox (DCx), Chris Cragg (CC), David Dalziel (DD), Mo Davy (MD), Neil Deacon (ND), Gary Douglas (GD), Steve Edwards (SE), Diane Eubanks (DEu), Alison Evans (AE), Terry Fenn (TF), Brad Fouche (BF), Jono Francis (JoF), Mark Friend (MF), Anthony Fynn (AF), Gary Godfrey (GGo), Robert Godfrey (RGo), Mark Hadingham (MH), Rod Hattingh (RH), Jane High (JH), Sean Hind (SH), Derek Hinde (DH), CK Holland (CHo), Marian Hopley (MHP), April Hundermark (AH), Kerry Hundermark (KH), Courtney Johnson (CJ), Rob Kelly (RK), Doug Kew (DK), Laraine King (LK), Karl van Laeren (KvL), Barry Launder (BL), Henry Laurie (HL), Alex van Leenhoff (AvL), Pam van Leenhoff (PvL), Helen Lewis (HLw), Peter Lindsey (PL), George Ingram Lock (GL), Richard Lusinga (RL), Judy McConnell (JMcC), Ali MacDonald (AMacD), Doug MacDonald (DMacD), Roger MacDonald (RMacD), Carmen McGregor (CMcG), Peter Magosvongwe (PM), Nyaradzai Mapara (NMa), Jacquie Marais (JMa), Neil Martin (NMn), Beks Masuku (BMs), Norman Mellett (NM), Yvette Mellett (YM), Craig Mirams (CM), Bev Morgan (BM), Frances Morris (FM), Timothy Mudhluvi (TMu), Jimmy Muropa (JM), Thomas Mutombeni (TM), Bhekizulu Ncube (BN), Tadius Ndadziira (TN), Carl Nicholson (CN), Sean Nicolle (SN), Abel Nzaka (AN), Josh Oates (JO), Daniel Pascoe (DP), Michael Pelham (MP), Julia Pierini (JP), Alistair Pole (AP), Gordon Putterill (GP), Shameer Ranchod (SR), Ali Randell (AR), Ro Rees (RR), Ian Riddell (IR), Di Rushforth (DRu), Donald Ruzungude (DR), Morgan Saineti (MS), Vusa Sibanda (VS), Dane Simmonds (DSi), Kevin Simons (KS), Tor Simonsen (TS), Claire Sirley (CSi), Doug Smith (DSm), Clive Stockil (CS), Glenn Stockil (GS), Karel Strydom (KSt), Debbie Swales (DS), Trish Swales (TSw), Richard Tennant (RT), Luke Terblanche (LT), Peter Tetlow (PT), Gilly Thornycroft (GT), Darryl Tiran (DT), Judy Travers (JT), Georgie Trethowan (GTr), Douglas Trewartha (DTr), James Varden (JV), Dorothy Wakeling (DW), Johnny Whitfield (JWh), Spike Williamson (SWm), Rogan Wolhuter (RW), Forest Worsley (FW), Ken Worsley (KW), Sue Worsley (SW), Dave Worswick (DWw), MacKenzie Zirota (MZ), Piet Zwanikken (PZ).

eBird – The Cornell Lab of Ornithology's eBird global platform.

SABAP2 – The second South African Bird Atlas Project.

The Babbler - Newsletter of BirdLife Zimbabwe.

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



BIRDLIFE ZIMBABWE COUNCIL 2025-2026

President	Duncan Kennaird	kennairdduncan@gmail.com	0775- 707099
Vice-President	Neil Deacon	neilrobindeacon@gmail.com	0772 - 363339
Hon. Secretary	Paula Dell	paula.dell@strachansphoto.com	0712-610746
Councillor	Dave Dell	david.dell@strachansphoto.com	0712-630152
Councillor	Richard Hoare	rhwildlife@gmail.com	0771-052888
Councillor, Mashonaland	Wendelin Zwanikken	birdlifemash@gmail.com	0712-219311
Councillor, Matabeleland	John Brebner	brebnerj@acolchem.co.zw	029-2242634
Councillor, Matabeleland	Peter Makhusa	peter.makhusa@gmail.com	0732-399651

BLZ Member Consultants

Library & Wetlands	Dorothy Wakeling	dorothywakeling@gmail.com	024-2304298 0772-376506
National Membership	Paula Dell	paula.dell@strachansphoto.com	0712-610746
Waterbirds, SABAP 2	Ian Riddell	gemsaf@mango.zw	0772-117054
Special Species Survey	Peta Ditchburn	specialspecies@blz.co.zw	029-244596 0775-940714

Publications

Editor, Honeyguide	Brian Marshall	brian.marshall01@gmail.com	
Honeyguide Design & Production	Ian Riddell	gemsaf@mango.zw	0772-117054
Editor, The Babbler	Ian Riddell	gemsaf@mango.zw	0772-117054

BLZ NATIONAL OFFICE

Chief Executive Officer	Julia Pierini	juliapierini@birdlifezimbabwe.org	0772-894562
Finance & Administration	Sylvia Muzavazi	sylvia@blz.co.zw	024-2481496
Vulture Conservation Officer	Leeroy Moyo	leeroy@blz.co.zw	024-2481496
Assistant PEP Officer	Benhildah Antonio	benhildah16@gmail.com	0771-935954
IBA/KBA Officer	Shingirai Sakarombe	shingirai.sakarombe@blz.co.zw	024-2481496
Avitourism	Ronnie Chirimuta	ronnie@blz.co.zw	024-2481496
Messenger/Caretaker	Vengai Dengu		024-2481496

35 Clyde Road, Eastlea, Harare – PO Box RVL 100, Runiville, Harare
Telephone: +263 (024) 2481496 – E-mail: birds@zol.co.zw
Web: www.birdlifezimbabwe.org – Facebook: www.Facebook.com/BirdLifeZimbabwe