



Please reply to:

PO Box FM 648, Famona. Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

### NEWSLETTER 1 / 1993

You will doubtless recall the two exploratory meetings held recently to discuss the formation of an Interest Group for the Matobo Hills and Matobo National Park. The second meeting elected the Interim Executive Committee, whose members are: Mr Gavin Stephens (Chairman); Mr Richard Mirtle (Vice Chairman/Treasurer); Mrs Val Fielder (Secretary); Mrs Gail Amyot; Mr Ken Blake; Mr Peter Dunjey; Mr Trevor Hemans; Mr John Moger. The committee resolved on the above name, and co-opted the Regional Directors of Museums and Monuments, and National Archives, Mr A. Kumirai and Mr M. Ncube. Three meetings have been held with a fourth planned for 15<sup>th</sup> April 1993. Sub-committees have been formed for various projects.

#### CONSTITUTION

This is being drafted. When completed, a further general meeting will be called to approve it.

#### FINANCES

\$500 was donated by a committee member to cover initial formation expenses. The Society will also receive one third of the proceeds of a Slide Show to be held on 30<sup>th</sup> April 1993 - see below.

#### COMMUNAL LANDS REPRESENTATION

Successful contacts have been made with Bulawayo-Esigodini and Matobo Rural Councils, and a school in the Matobo area, and interest has been expressed by them in income generating and conservation projects. The Chairmen of the Councils will be invited to Committee Meetings, and the new Governor of Matabeleland South, Mr Stephen Nkomo, will be informed of the formation of the Society, as will the Minister of Tourism and Environment, Dr Herbert Murerwa.

#### CONSERVATION EDUCATION

An exploratory meeting by some members was held with the Education Audio-Visual Department, and useful contacts were made. A fairly simple entry into this field could be through organising a Schools Poster Competition, and we are actively pursuing this project.

#### ZIMBABWE WILDLIFE SUPPLEMENT IN SUNDAY NEWS OF 21<sup>ST</sup> MARCH

This contained a 400-word article on the Society, a copy of which is printed on the back of this Newsletter.

#### PROTECTION OF MHLAHLANDHLELA, NTUMBANE AND OTHER NDEBELE SACRED AND HISTORICAL SITES

The Society has offered to assist those involved, if they wish, and a further meeting will be sought. We have offered to replace the Indaba Tree at the site of Mzilikazi's capital Mhlahlandhlela, and a suitable planting date will be announced.

### **ROCK ART**

Your committee has arranged that there will shortly be custodians at seven caves in the Matobo area. Efforts have been made for more sites to be protected by custodians, and sponsorship is being sought to enable them to become self-supporting.

### **TOUR OPERATORS**

The Society has requested a list of the registered Tour Operators in the area, from the Zimbabwe National Tourist Board so that illegal operators can be reported. We feel that the adjoining communal lands should benefit more from the tourist industry.

### **GOLD PANNING**

The government intends to impose stricter controls under the Mines and Minerals Act.

### **MTSHABEZI DAM**

The Society will seek a meeting with the Bulawayo-Esigodini Rural Council to offer its help in the conservation of the area surrounding this lovely new dam.

There has been very encouraging response from government and non-government organisations to the formation of the Society and the way in which it will work, and a great deal of interest from members of the public.

### **SLIDE SHOW: "THE MAGNIFICENT MATOBO HILLS"**

This has been organised by the Society's Vice-Chairman, Mr R Mirtle, and will be held in the President Room, Bulawayo Sun Hotel, on Friday 30<sup>th</sup> April at 7.00pm. There will also be an exhibition of wildlife paintings (not for sale), other interest displays, lots of prizes and excellent snacks, as well as a cash bar. The Matobo Conservation Society will be publicly launched on this night, and invitations have been extended to VIP's connected with the Matobo area. Tickets are \$10 each (\$2 for scholars in uniform) and can be obtained through the Vice Chairman on telephone 64106, or the Secretary on 62831. Total proceeds will be shared between this Society, The Wildlife Society of Zimbabwe (Matabeleland Branch) and Chipangali Wildlife Orphanage. Please join us - it should be a very good evening! All committee members will wear name tags for purposes of easy identification by interested persons.

**MATOBO**



**SOCIETY**

P.O. Box FM 648  
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BULAWAYO  
ZIMBABWE

A POSITIVE step to assist in the conservation of the Matobo Hills and the Matobo National Park has been taken by the recent formation of the Matobo Conservation Society, following two meetings which were attended by many people with a knowledge of and love for the area and its unique cultural, biological and historical heritage.

At these meetings it was agreed that there was a need for a community-based body capable of taking a well-informed and objective view of the needs of the area. It would be committed to a supportive role to official bodies, but independent of them, to help preserve the integrity of the Matobo National Park and limit the degradation of the surrounding areas.

A spokesman for the Matobo Conservation Society said that it was in-

tended that the whole area of the hills should be included in the society's supportive role, but that a first priority would be to endeavour to have a special area, including the area of the Matobo National Park declared a World Heritage Site, for which national and international support would be sought.

This would ensure the long-term protection of the fauna and flora and the many special and revered places within that area, and thus its long-term benefit for the people of Zimbabwe.

For example, a large number of people are still unaware that the Matobo National Park contains the world's largest concentration of both black eagles and leopards.

He said: "There there have been, and still are, many pressures on the Matobo national Park to

allow cattle in to graze; to relinquish areas for settlement and farming; from illegal hunting; from poaching; from tourism and from gold panning.

Elsewhere within the hills natural habitat and cultural sites are threatened by agricultural, residential and commercial development, and wildlife is additionally threatened by hunting, illegal or otherwise.

"Permanent damage could be caused if these pressures are not relieved or resisted. It is therefore essential that all legitimate interests should be represented when seeking solutions.

The Matobo Hills are also a most suitable place in which to establish a conservation, extension and environmental project for the youth of Zimbabwe.