



Please reply to:

PO Box FM 648, Famona. Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

NEWSLETTER No. 3 / JUNE 1994

This newsletter is the first to be sent to our members since the general meeting held in the Natural History Museum on October 13 last year, when the Interim Committee stood down. The Society Constitution was formally adopted and the following persons were elected to the Executive Committee:

Mr Gavin Stephens (Chairman); Mr Richard Mirtle (Vice-Chairman); Mr Iain Sheasby (Treasurer); Mrs D Mirtle (Secretary); Mrs Gail Amyot; Mr Peter Dunjey; Mr Trevor Hemans; Mr John Moger; Mr Mark Ncube; Mr Malcolm Ross.

Since then, seven meetings have been held. Invitations to join the Society were sent in February to all who had attended one or both of the exploratory meetings early in 1993, as well as the October meeting. To date 40 members have joined.

FINANCES

The Interim Committee produced audited accounts until its demise, when the Society took over an amount of \$6,514. Since that time \$16,993 has been received. made up of subscriptions \$3,925 and donations and fund-raising \$13,068. The following projects have been financed or approved for financial assistance:

- \$1,440 Azolla Fern Project Maleme Dam;
- \$ 560 Pre-impoundment Study, Mtshabezi Dam;
- \$2,500 Dry Rations for 30 individual scouts for anti-poaching operations;
- \$ 100 National Parks and Wildlife Management Bulawayo, towards the Dassie Count expenses to follow up research of Dr Ron Barry and Tom Auman who had both done valuable work as part of the raptor research programme (without the one, the other will decline);
- \$4,500 towards the cost of housing and fencing at Mpopoma Dam for National Parks staff.

The Society has applied for registration as a Welfare Organisation, which will assist it in fund-raising if necessary. A reply is awaited. Mr M. Paul ex Bulawayo and now in Natal RSA, has been given permission to form a Chapter of MCS in Natal, subject to certain financial and other requirements.

ENTRANCE FEES TO MATOBO NATIONAL PARK

The Society is aware of the considerable and increasing costs of maintaining and protecting the Park, and is deeply concerned about the inadequate funding by Government of the Department of National Parks and Wildlife in general and the Matobo National Park in particular. In view of this, the MCS supports the increase in accommodation and associated rates, but NOT what it believes to be an excessive entrance fee for individuals. It believes

that reasonable charge per vehicle and a small charge per head would be more acceptable than a high charge per head, which effectually eliminates many family outings in this area "left to the people of Bulawayo" by Cecil John Rhodes. The MCS also believes that no additional charge should be made for picnic sites. It agrees that charges for firewood and fishing etc. are reasonable. The Society wrote in February to the Minister of Tourism; the Chairman of the National Parks board, the Director DNPWLM; the Chairman of the Matobo Committee and the Provincial Warden Matabeleland South in connection with this and associated matters. suggesting changes and improvements, and awaits a reply.

RHINO PROTECTION

A committee member of the Society was present during the Radio Collaring of 10 White and 10 Black Rhino in the Mpopoma section of the Park. The task was undertaken by a team of Parks and Wildlife Officers and Veterinarians during May, with the use of the helicopter financed by the Heli copter Operating Trust and local NGO's. Photographs of the operation have been taken, and be shown to Society members shortly.

MTSHABEZI VALLEY

The Mtshabezi Dam wall is now complete - a miniature Kariba! When maximum water storage is achieved it will contain about 50 million cubic metres, in a length of approximately 9 kilometres. Cost was \$35 million. The National Museums and Monuments' Pre-impoundment study of the area, funded by the Society, was successfully completed with the assistance of Mr D. Paul of Zindele Safaris. A draft report has been received; the final report is awaited. The Society remains in touch the local Rural Council and will gladly assist in an advisory capacity if asked, but believes it should not be involved with the resettlement of the local community. The dam will provide a source of income for the local people and a recreational area for the public.

CONSERVATION EDUCATION

5 000 copies of an 8-page Conservation booklet have been produced in Ndebele and English. They are intended for- distribution to children in schools in Mzingwane and Matobo areas. 3 000 copies were handed to headmasters of many of the schools at a special meeting. The brochure has been endorsed by Agritex, National Museums and Monuments. National Parks and Wildlife Management. Natural Resources Board and the Regional Director of Education. It was sponsored by United Touring Company and Edgars Stores limited, to whom the Society's thanks are extended. A school in Denmark has sent KR 870 to Rotary in Bulawayo to be used for 'Grow a Tree' and Rhino protection. It was sent on to the Society and has been used for the two projects. The Society is liaising with Rotary in planting indigenous trees at Matopos Mission, and has also suggested a pilot educational project there. It funded the first 15 days' cost of removing the obnoxious Azolla fern from Maleme dam, when employment was given to 15 local women. It also assisted with the feeding, for a limited period, of 30 additional Scouts recruited for anti-poaching Rhino operations in the Matobo area. An additional grant was given for Raptor Research.

PROTECTION OF HISTORICAL AND SACRED SITES

At present, due to staff wastage, only two custodians are available for seven of the main rock art sites visited by tourists. The matter has been discussed with the Director of National Museums and Monuments, who has asked Government for more money to pay additional custodians. It is essential to try and ensure that these special sites are protected, and the Society will assist where necessary. In the meantime, it has been suggested that signs should be erected at each site appealing to all visitors to appreciate their historical significance, and to report any cases of maltreatment, as it is impossible for these sites to be protected 24 hours a day at the present time.

HERITAGE SITE

The Society is still very interested in this matter, and the Chairman has written to the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation for up-to-date information regarding the submission of an application.

TOURISM

A regional branch of the National Council for Tourism was formed in Bulawayo at the end of 1993. The Society was represented at the inaugural meeting and subsequently invited to join a sub-committee dealing with the environment. This sub-committee suggested Terms of Reference; Information Exchange and liaison; Education Awareness; Resource Persons and Activities. No further information has been received from the main committee.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

The Society realises the importance of this subject, and will endeavour to keep its work in the public eye to encourage and maintain support for its objects. "Honeyguide" and "Wildlife Zimbabwe" magazines have published information about the Society. A number of articles have appeared in the local press after interviews with the Chairman; the ZBC also carried a story. A committee member spoke at a school's conservation meeting. 3 members of the local media were invited and accompanied to Maleme Rest Camp on 22 May to see improvements which had been carried out with money provided from the entrance fees to the Park since they were introduced in September 1993, all of which have been retained for use within the Matobo National Park.

The District Administrator, Matobo, has welcomed the Society.

To date, the Committee has confined itself to the practical aspects of the Matobo region; however, plans are afoot to involve members both practically and socially, if they so wish.

The Society's Secretary is:

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