

MATOBO



SOCIETY

PO Box FM 648, Fomona. Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

Welfare No: W/0 30/94

NEWSLETTER 23 / AUGUST 1999

1 - COMMENT

This will be the last newsletter before the Annual General Meeting. We are holding the AGM at Gordon Park. Somehow, it seems to be more appropriate to be in the hills - and we hope that it will be a good social event too. Don't forget that your subscriptions must be paid up by this date, and we look forward to your attendance at our AGM. It would be great to have new committee members so we trust that all our members are giving this some consideration!

2 - NATIONAL PARKS FEES

There has been little media coverage of the massive, and unfortunate, increase in fees for our National Parks. With effect from 1 August, entry fees soared a massive 500% for Zimbabweans and 400% for visitors and are as follows (previous fees shown in brackets):

Entry	Zim	\$50 (\$10)	Foreign	USD20 (USD5)	weekly rate - double
Cars	All	\$20 (\$10)	4x4 / Trucks	\$40 (\$20)	Fishing \$20 (\$10)
Camping	All	\$300 per site, 6 pers	Picnic	\$10	Firewood \$60 (\$40)

Whilst acknowledging the need to charge an entry fee, the Society is greatly concerned with the negative impact that this will have on tourism, which presently accounts for a significant portion of the estates' income, and that local visitors will now find it increasingly difficult to enjoy their heritage. Furthermore, the increases were effected without consultation, or sufficient warning.

3 - MATOBO NATIONAL PARK UPDATE

Your society has received a lengthy document entitled "Rhodes Matopos National Park, Management Plan, 2000-2004" and was invited to send a representative to the stakeholders meeting held at Maleme, 5-6 August. This initiative is part of the World Bank funding of the reconstruction and commercialization of the DNPWM, and is a major, and very positive step forward for the future success of our Parks. The involvement of outside stakeholders is also a first, and the exercise has already commenced at Hwange National Park. The World bank project became effective on 15 March, and ultimately should result in considerable decentralisation of decision making from DNPWM HO, Harare to a local "management team". This will require, in due course, the employment of professional administrative staff, such as an accountant.

A consultative committee will be formed to further details of the management plan, and additional reports back to the stakeholders is expected. All the various interest bodies (e.g. Wildlife, Ornithological, Tree Societies etc) shall, from amongst them, elect a representative onto the consultative committee. Further details will be discussed in future newsletters.

4 - DASSIE SURVEY

The Matobo Conservation Society supports the Dassie Research Programme that is conducted by the Ornithological Unit of the DNPWM within the hills each year. This programme obviously runs in conjunction with the Black Eagle Survey, as the Dassie constitutes such an important part of the prey for not only the black eagle, but for almost all the raptures of the hills.

We received the results of the latest survey, which showed a dramatic reduction in numbers; 30% down in the National Park, 20% down in the communal areas and a fall of 16% on commercial farms. Whilst the decline is serious, and further investigation is taking place into this, we believe that it is likely to be part of a normal cycle. If so, then the rapture population should be able to take this in its stride, even if reproduction is affected this coming year.

5 - NEXT EVENT

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Date Saturday 6 November 1999
Venue Gordon Park Scout Ground
Meet 2:00 am for 2:15am, at the Churchill Arms Hotel.
Details Evening braais available, bring your own food and drink, chairs and tables.

There will be an introduction to Gordon Park during the afternoon, followed by the AGM at 5:00pm. Entry into the park is free – advise that you are travelling to Gordon Park.

FIELD TRIP

Date Sunday 12 December 1999
Venue Masiye Training Camp
Meet 8:45 am for 9:00am, at the Churchill Arms Hotel.
Details The Masiye Training Camp, opened on 18 August 1999, is run by the Salvation Army. It caters to the needs of the ever-growing numbers of orphans, but is not an orphanage itself. It aims to train these young people so that they can manage for themselves, and at least have an understanding of their duties, rights and obligations to, and within, society.

The camp is situated on the Toghwana river, along the Tovi road, beyond Mtshelili dam, in the Khumalo Communal Land. This is a rarely visited part of the hills, and its remoteness is certainly one of the attractions of the day. We will be shown around the camp, and will picnic on the banks of the newly constructed dam on the river. Don't forget your hats and water!

6 - REPORT BACK

Mr. David Erwee gave a fine presentation to our members, and guests, on Thursday 24 June, at BAC. David spoke on the topic of rock art, and the evening included slides to both illustrate his examples and share with us the many wonderful sites that he has visited. Almost fifty members attended the function, our first to have been held in the evening, in town. We hope that it gave those who not always able to join in on the field trips the chance to meet up with the society.

7 - UMZINGWANE RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL

The MCS was asked to present a paper at an URDC Tourism workshop, which was held in July. Whilst ecotourism certainly offers some hope to the residents of the hills, the society was also able to advise the meeting on the serious affects that the changes in demographics is having on the area. The UN-DP reports that population pressure in Matabeleland South has meant that from 1975, insufficient food can be produced to

support the population without some form of agricultural input. The area has faced a firewood deficit since 1985. By 2000 over 50% of the land is expected to be unable to support the population due to erosion. As this scenario unfolds, the wet, forested areas of the Matobo hills will come under increasing pressure - which will have a further serious impact on the province as almost all its major rivers rise within the hills. Consequently, tourism must develop with strong conservation policies that will protect both the environment and the people of the hills.

8 -WOOD CARVING IN THE HILLS

The Chronicle recently carried, as its headline, the serious situation of wood poaching within the National Park. At particular risk is the *Kirkia acuminata*, (grey mukwa / Umvumira) which is particularly favoured by wood carvers. We are confident that the DNPWM will be able to control the situation within the park.

However, outside the park, the species is virtually extinct, and efforts by your society to motivate the Matobo Rural District Council to prevent this practice in the vicinity of Manyoni farm, has met with little success. The society will persevere, and advise you of our progress in due course.

9 - RHINO UPDATE

Whilst black rhino have been translocated into the Matopos, this year it was the chance of the white rhino to travel. A number of rhino were moved from the Game Park section to Hwange National Park. Those that have been released in the Main camp area are being seen on a regular basis by visitors - Matobo rhino were also released at Sinametella - and all are doing well.