

MATOBO



SOCIETY

PO Box FM 648, Famona. Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

Welfare No: W/O 30/94

NEWSLETTER 25 / JANUARY 2000

1 - ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The AGM was successfully held at Gordon Park on the 27 November, with a good number of members being present. It certainly seemed fitting that our AGM should have been held in the hills themselves, and we are most grateful to both the Boys Scouts for hosting us — and making their hall available in light of the rains — and to National Parks for allowing us entry into Gordon Park.

The AGM went off smoothly, and for those not present, the new committee is listed below. The Society is in a very healthy financial position, and it was resolved to increase subs later this year in line with inflation. We also hope to attract new members — especially corporate — so please help in this regard. Mrs Sunny Moyo, Warden of the Matobo National Park, was present as our guest of honour, and spoke about the Park. She also agreed to answer questions from the members present. This was a refreshing and positive presentation, which left all present with the feeling that our relationship with the Park is on the mend. We certainly appreciated Mrs Moyo giving us her time.

The event was concluded with an evening braai,

2 - COMMITTEE MEMBERS

A committee with many new faces and young blood — was elected at the AGM. We are grateful for, and encouraged by, the response to our appeal in the previous newsletter. There is a healthy blend of new and old. At the first committee meeting, held shortly after the AGM, the following portfolios were appointed:

Portfolio	Name	Home Telephone Number
Chairman	Gavin Stephens	45726
Vice-Chairman / Members	Derek Darby	4433 1
Treasurer	Barbara Muchechetere	41396
Secretary	Trevor Hemans	79728
Events	Mary Friend	42469
National Parks	Guy Ellman-Brown	61476
National Museums	Pam Birch	67049
	Mike Phillipson	43200
Education	Bobby Hogan	41701
RDC's	Flora Sibindi	49745
World Heritage	Iain Sheasby	01 1 611265

Respective projects will be allocated according to the most appropriate category; i.e. exotic plants will fall under National Parks, Rock Art under National Museums, Mtshabezi Valley under RDC's etc.

3- NATIONAL PARKS FEES

There have been no changes since our last newsletter, but we have been advised that changes can be expected in the New Year. We will advise on the debate, or on new fees, as information becomes available.

4 - VISIT TO GORDON PARK

Mr. Norman Scott, Provincial Scout Commissioner, took members around Gordon Park Scout Camping and Training Ground before the AGM. It was most interesting and appreciated. There is certainly a lot more to the Park than meets the eye, and it was encouraging to hear that scouting is back into a growth mode. However, like all such bodies assistance and volunteers are always needed. Contact us if you can help.

5 - NEXT EVENT

Date	Sunday 6 February
Venue	Mshashasha Falls
Meet	Churchill Arms 8:45 for 9:00 departure
Travel	All vehicles, trucks preferred. Old Gwanda Road will be used
Details	Fitter members will walk to the falls, bring costumes. Other members may prefer a shorter walk, with a lunch time picnic under the mountain acacias.

6- REPORT BACK

Forty-eight members took a chance with the weather, and were rewarded with a pleasant and interesting outing to both Masiye Training camp and the Cecil John Rhodes Ndebele Cultural Village. We were made most welcome at both centres, being treated to marimba music at the former and cultural dancing and recital at the latter. Both centres provided informative introductions to the sites, their operations and their future plans. The morning was spent at Masiye, which is nestled amongst the rocks with the accommodation units overlooking the newly constructed Masiye dam on the Toghwana river — it was great to see the dam spilling and hear the sound of flowing water! Lunch was had at the CJR NCV, and we were taken on a walk through relatively undisturbed countryside to a rock art site, as well as a viewpoint towards Tovi hill — a massive and sacred hill. The weather, which had rained constantly the week before, cleared, so the conditions were perfect — of course the rains had washed some of the roads a little, and filled all the level crossings with running streams, but the vehicles all got through with no trouble.

A note of concern was recorded over the extensive environmental degradation in the Silozwane Store area.

We record our appreciation to the National Parks for facilitating our passage through the Park — which after the rains was looking superb. We also thank our members for the very generous donations that were collected - \$ 1,500, and distributed to both centres.

7 - MATOBO COMMUNAL LANDS SURVEY

We have been asked by the URDC to conduct a survey of all National Monuments and places of interest in the Matobo and adjacent communal lands. This will take place on 21-23 January. Contact Miss Bobby Hogan for details if interested.

8 - NATIONAL PARKS UPDATE

After our AGM, Mrs Sunny Moyo, Warden, Matobo National Park, answered questions put to her by members. We are able to give you a summary of this discussion;

- i. Walking. This is permitted in the park along designated paths, or in the vicinity of designated picnic sites. Walking beyond these areas is permitted, but please advise the local Warden / Ranger.
- ii. Raptor Research. This programme will continue under the NP Ornithological Research Unit (currently headed by Dr Peter Mundy). There is no reason as to why this programme should be suspended provided the ORU is satisfied with certain conditions. Members of the RR will be allowed to walk in the Park subject to "i" above.
- iii. Lantana. A Terrestrial Ecologist has been appointed and takes up office on 1 Jan. The control of exotic plants will be his direct responsibility. It was noted that the MCS has offered to assist with a survey of the Park for this purpose.
- iv. Poaching. There is 24 hour protection of the Park, and this is not just for rhino. The N/Parks Scouts are better equipped than previously. The main threat is local poaching, timber and cattle encroachment.
- v. Fires. New equipment has been acquired, and new firebreaks, up to 9m wide, will be prepared after the current rainy season. Whilst these are necessary, concern was expressed as to the environmental impact of such wide breaks, particularly where tree species are concerned.
- vi. Roads. Again, new equipment has been acquired, and the roads will be improved following the rains.

YES. THIS NEWSLETTER IS PROOF THAT THE MCS IS Y2K COMPLIANT!
WE HOPE ALL OUR MEMBERS ENJOYED THEIR NEW YEAR CELEBRATIONS