

MATOBO



SOCIETY

PO Box FM 648, Famona. Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

Welfare No: W/O 30/94

NEWSLETTER 31 / APRIL 2001

1 - MEET THE NEW CHAIRMAN

Iain Sheasby was elected Chairman of our Society following the AGM last year. Whilst Iain has been a member of the committee, and previously served as Treasurer, it is a good time to give our members some more information on our new Chairman. Iain was born in Bulawayo, in 1970, and was educated at CBC. He went onto Cape Town University and then returned to Bulawayo to serve articles, which he completed under Deloitte and Touche. Iain is a Chartered Accountant by profession, and is presently Financial Manager with Acol Chemicals. Iain is presently studying part time for a Degree in Environmental Management. He is married, to Isla, and has a three-month old son Joshua. He can be contacted at home on 280062, or at work on 540481.

2 - NEW COMMITTEE MEMBER

Mrs Ella Fawcett has been co-opted onto the Committee with effect from 23 April. We welcome her to the team. Mr Gordon Geddes has offered to assist with legal affairs, which is much appreciated. Any other members offering to assist, specifically with project work, will be more than welcome.

3 - MCS HATS AND SHIRTS

We have been advised to expect receipt of the long-awaited hats and shirts by early May so here's hoping!

4 - RAINS

In our last newsletter we reported on the very poor rainfall over the Matopos in January. But February and March proved to be much better, the heavens opened, the streams and rivers began to flow, and the hills are now looking fantastic. Whilst the western Matopos is on average at 600mm (24"), the eastern hills are slightly below average (avge is 850mm, 34"), but have still enjoyed good rains at 725mm (29") to date.

5 - NEXT EVENT

Date	Sunday 3 June 2001
Venue	Toghwana Dam and Inange Cave
Meet	8:30am, Churchill Arms
Travel	Trucks preferred, but not essential
Details	Provide own chairs, tables, meals and drinks, and rucksacks for those walking. Don't forget your hat!

Please note that entry fees will be payable at the Park gate.

The visit to Toghwana dam will encompass a walk to Inange Cave. The walk, of approximately 6km, must rank as one of the finest walks in the Hills, whilst Inange Cave is recognised as containing the finest rock art, to be found anywhere. For those walking, you need to bring a packed lunch, and water. Those members that do not feel up to the walk will be able to picnic at the dam, which is presently spilling.

6 - REPORT BACK

We apologise for the confusion that arose from the last newsletter. However, it meant that the outing was a surprise for all who attended. We are thankful to the Stephens family who stepped in at the last minute and allowed us to visit their ShumbaShaba Mkulu farm in the eastern Matopos after our original

plans went astray. 30 members travelled out and enjoyed two good walks, one before lunch and the second after lunch.

7 -MAMMAL SURVEY

A study of mammals is presently under way in the National Park. The last time that this was done was in 1969, and so this review will provide a useful assessment of the animal populations over the past thirty years. Mr Viv Wilson has been retained by the DNPWM to conduct the survey.

8 - E-MAIL

A number of members responded to our appeal for e-mail addresses. If you did not respond but have an email, please advise the Secretary.

9 - WORLD HERITAGE

After nearly eight years of lobbying, the effort to have the Matobo Hills listed as a World Heritage Site looks likely to reach a conclusion by the end of this year. A major step has been taken towards the successful completion of this objective.

The Chairman and Secretary attended a World Heritage Workshop hosted by UNESCO and held at the Ingwe Hotel in the Matopos on 21 February. There were three main parties invited to the event, National Museums and Monuments (who co-ordinated the workshop on behalf of UNESCO), National Parks and the MCS. Other important stakeholders were also invited, such as the traditional Leaders, Spiritual Leaders, Matobo Committee, Bulawayo Publicity, and others. It was the decision of the workshop that every effort to attain the WH Status by December should be made, and to this end a Technical Committee was established. The MCS is represented on this body, and so will be involved in the whole exercise through to completion.

Of particular satisfaction was the commitment of National Parks to throw their weight behind the application, thereby ensuring that the application will be for a mixed site, that is, not just a cultural site, but also one of natural history. The Hills could easily qualify under either category, but its unique status is that it will be the first such mixed site in Zimbabwe. The merit of the application is constantly measured against the requirement that such site represent "outstanding universal significance"

Arising from this development, it has been remarkable to see how much scientific work is actually available right here in Bulawayo. The Natural History Museum is a gold mine of information, whilst bodies such as the Biodiversity Foundation for Africa have also been able to contribute significantly. National Parks, particularly the Ornithological Research Unit, have invaluable records as well. Consequently, the Technical Committee is confident that it will meet the stiff reporting deadlines, though some fieldwork will be required in certain areas. In the long term, management of the World Heritage Site (essentially the whole Hills) will require a formal body that will oversee all government departments and administration — but this is perhaps what is needed if we are going to make a meaningful contribution to environmental management in the Hills.

The Technical Committee has decided to use the granite structure in determining the boundaries of the World Heritage Site. Whilst this means that the definition of the northern, western and southern boundaries are quite distinct, it still not clear how far west the area will extend. Computerised mapping facilities, combining topographical and geological information will be used in this exercise.

UNESCO has made available US\$25,000 towards the completion and submission of the dossier. The first draft will be completed by the Technical Committee by 30 June, approved by UNESCO Zimbabwe by 31 July, and audited by the IUCN and ICOMOS in September. The final decision will be made at the meeting of the World Heritage Bureau in December - a body on which Zimbabwe is presently well represented!

10 - APPEALS

The Chairman is appealing for volunteers to assist the Society with a number of predetermined projects. The committee is also looking to co-opt a member who is prepared to act as a liaison officer between the MCS and National Parks / Matobo Committee. The committee is also appealing to corporate members for sponsorship of the various information brochures produced by the Society.

11 - CONDOLENCES

The Society was saddened to learn of the tragic loss of Jeremy Philipson, son of Mike and Judy Phillipson. Our sympathy, thoughts and prayers are extended to the family.