

MATOBO



SOCIETY

PO Box FM 648, Famona. Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

Welfare No: W/O 30/94

NEWSLETTER 34 / DECEMBER 2001

1 – MEET THE NEW COMMITTEE

At our Annual General Meeting, held in the Matopos on 3 November, and following the first Committee meeting, the following committee and office bearers were elected:

Chairman	Iain Sheasby			
Vice-Chairman	Gavin Stephens			
Secretary	Allison Moon			
Treasurer	Barbara Muchechetere			
Members	Mary Friend	Ella Fawcett	Flora Sibindi	Bobby Hogan
	Carol Davies	Mike Philipson	Derek Darby	Roy Stephens

Our Secretary is a new member of the committee. Allison also brings some more young blood into the proceedings, and we wish her well in her office.

Mrs Pam Birch, Chairman of the Matabeleland Branch of WEZ stood down from the committee after giving valuable service to the Society. Her contribution over the past year is greatly appreciated.

2 – ECLIPSE

Most members will be aware that a total eclipse of the sun occurs on the morning of 4 December 2002. The zone of totality will pass just south of the Matopos itself, between Kezi and Whitewaters. For those who have never experienced a total eclipse, this is a natural phenomenon not to be missed. but it is essential that you place yourself in the line of totality. 99% is simply not good enough. Your society, in conjunction with WEZ will be managing parts of this event. If you want to volunteer your services, please contact the Secretary.

3 – WORLD HERITAGE UPDATE

The dossier has been well received by UNESCO, and we await further details. The Management Plan will be completed by the 15th January 2002, and will accompany the dossier. Physical inspection will follow. It is therefore our opinion that World Heritage Status will not be conferred on the Matopos at the meetings currently underway in Helsinki, contrary to information given to us earlier. However, it does not mean the application has failed, on the contrary we can further update the dossier, and remain committed and confident as to the final outcome.

4 – HATS AND SHIRTS

As promised, the hats and shirts were on sale at the AGM! Sales were particularly good, with over half the stock sold! Members who want to purchase any of the items can do so by contacting the Chairman, or by visiting the WEZ shop at TV Sales and Hire, 10th / 11th Avenues, Fife Street.

Pamphlets will also be on sale at the WEZ Shop, and shortly from the Sandy Spruit gate into the N/Park.

5 – RAINFALL

The Matobo Hills have received widespread good rains and presently are recording above average. The western hills have recorded above 425mm (17”), and the eastern hills are at the same level (as at 14 December). The dams in the NP are spilling, and all the rivers flowing. The countryside is looking fantastic – a Christmas present to us all in these troubled times!

6 – NEW FINDS

Up to three new orchid species have been found in the eastern Matopos, and a rare butterfly, *Mushonae mushonae*. Further details will be advised in the next newsletter.

7 - NEXT EVENT

- Date Sunday 17th February 2002
Venue Tshangula cave, Southern Matopos
Meet 9:00am, Churchill Arms
Travel All vehicles. Please check with Mary Friend closer to the time as rain may have affected the roads
Details Provide own chairs, tables, meals and drinks. Don't forget your hat!

Tshangula is one of the few caves in the Matopos that has been excavated. The work was carried out in the 1960's by the Rhodesian Schools Exploration Society, under the supervision of the National Museums. The reports from this work will be available at the outing. The hill itself is a rather low feature, situated on the southern edge of the Matopos, but it is surrounded by some of the largest hills. These include tallest, Silozwe, and Tedzi, Madombo and Hambushamba. In the afternoon those wishing to climb Madombo will be able to do so. The scenery is therefore spectacular and interesting.

8 – REPORT BACK

A total of sixty members and friends attended the Annual General Meeting of the Society on 3 November. About forty of these stayed on for the evening braai, and eighteen stayed over-night. The conditions were perfect - rain earlier in the week had brought the veldt alive, whilst the actual day itself was clear. Good shade provided by the magnificent trees at the venue provided ample cover for members seated on the lawn. After the AGM Gavin Stephens spoke on the World Heritage application, the process and the present status. (An update is included in this newsletter) Following this, members went on a short late afternoon walk in the vicinity of the Camp, before returning for drinks and the braai.

There were a number of guests who attended the AGM, representing National Museums and the local community. We appreciate their participation.

9 – MATABELELAND TREE SOCIETY

Every year the Tree Society has one or two longer trips to a particular place of botanical interest, usually for 4 to 5 days. Next year, the Harare and Matabeleland branches hope to visit the Eastern Matopos, probably over the Easter period. The Stephens family have kindly suggested we could stay on Besna Kobila, and perhaps adjacent properties, depending on numbers and whether a lodge is required. Although still early days, we would like to get an indication of interest (and numbers) from both Tree Society and MCS members.

Over this period we would probably visit the National Park as well as parts of the eastern Matobo communal lands (Lumene Falls, Diana's Pools), but I imagine that much of the time would be spent exploring the very floristically rich farms of Besna Kobila and Shumbashaba Mukulu. The permanently-wet dambos here are of great botanical interest, and it is hoped we could expand the existing plant checklists for the area. Please contact Jonathan Timbnerlake (tel: 09 286529 / 285761, email: timber@telconet.co.zw) if you are interested.

10 – NEW FORMAT

The presentation of the newsletter has been amended to facilitate e-mail transmission. We hope that members are not disappointed in any way.

11 - LOST

A member's wallet, containing personal identification, went missing during the AGM. Should anyone find a gentleman's wallet please notify the Chairman. Phone Deloitte and Touche, Bulawayo 72650 or 65942.

12 – ADDRESSES

Please let Mrs Mary Friend have your physical address for delivery of newsletters etc, as the latest postal increases will require us to use alternatives to the postal service.

**THE CHAIRMAN AND COMMITTEE WISH ALL OUR MEMBERS A
VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS, AND BEST WISHES FOR THE NEW YEAR.**