

MATOBO



SOCIETY

PO Box FM 648, Famona. Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

Welfare No: W/O 30/94

NEWSLETTER 40 / JULY 2003

1 – MATOBO HILLS INSCRIBED AS A WORLD HERITAGE SITE

Paris, France – The World Heritage Convention has accepted, and inscribed, the Matobo Hills, Zimbabwe, on the World Heritage List following the 27th Session of the Convention, on 3rd July 2003.

However, the report on the Matobo Hills application requires an immediate review of the management structure that was put in place during the application process. The Zimbabwe National Commission for UNESCO has already started work to ensure that this aspect is addressed by 2004, and the Matobo Conservation Society will play an important role in this final aspect. Those members with access to the Internet can access the World Heritage Bureau on <http://whc.unesco.org/nwhc/pages/sites/main.htm>

This marks the culmination of ten years of determined lobbying and campaigning by the Matobo Conservation Society to have the Matobo Hills recognised internationally, and reverses a decision made in 1982 that prevented the Hills being inscribed along with the Victoria Falls, Mana Pools, Great Zimbabwe and Khampe Ruins. The City of Bulawayo can celebrate two World Heritage Sites on its doorstep!

The Society records its appreciation to all individuals and associations involved in the project, with special mention of the Natural History Museum (National Museum and Monuments), the Department of National Parks, the Zimbabwe Commission for UNESCO, and especially the members of the technical committee tasked with preparing the submission. The contribution of the Traditional Leadership, the Rural District Councils, the Matobo Committee, the Bulawayo Publicity Association, and the late Governor Stephen Nkomo is acknowledged. We also thank all those who gave direct support towards the Society - including Osprey Productions for their superb video, which can now be made public - and those many typists, secretaries and others who drafted various documents, collected maps and ran various errands. They all made it possible.

2 – PARKS NEWS

Your committee continues to receive numerous reports and complaints from visitors to the National Park in respect of cattle grazing within the Park. Visitors are more likely to see domestic cattle than wildlife. Whilst in severe drought years the Park's management has allowed communally owned cattle grazing in discreet parts of the Park, today there are cattle grazing uncontrolled right in the heart of the Park. Furthermore, these cattle originate from commercial farms surrounding the park, so it is clearly not just the communal farmer who is at fault. We understand that theft of fencing materials is part of the problem. Whilst efforts have been made to control the situation, the results to date are not convincing. Your committee has, and will continue, to take up the issue with the authorities. If you would like to assist, please write to the Warden, Matobo National Park and copy the letter to The Secretary.

3 – SUBSCRIPTIONS

Yes, it is the time of the year again. Subscriptions are due once more, and following the mandate of our members at the last AGM, subscriptions will be increased in line with inflation. However, members who need time to settle, or may have difficulty in meeting these costs, should contact the Secretary.

| | |
|---------------------|----------|
| FAMILY / INDIVIDUAL | \$ 2,000 |
| SPECIAL / PENSION | \$ 600 |
| CORPORATE | \$20,000 |

Please see overleaf for a remittance advice, which you asked to complete and submit with your subscriptions.

4- NEXT EVENT

| | |
|---------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Date | Sunday 3 August 2003 |
| Venue | Nkantolo battle site and Lobengula's Office (Tuli River) |
| Meet | Cresta Churchill at 9:00am |
| Travel | All vehicles |
| Details | Provide own chairs, tables, meals and drinks. Don't forget your hat! |

Mindful of the chronic fuel situation, we have again arranged a field trip into the northern edges of the hills. We expect the round trip to be about 100km's. The Nkantolo battle was the first major engagement with the Ndebele forces within the Hills in 1896. The site is within the Golati Communal Lands, with impressive scenery around. Thereafter, we shall proceed to the Tuli river, and the site of King Lobengula's Office, one of the earliest brick buildings in the country, built for him by a British hunter / trader in 1872. Not much is left of the actual structure as the bricks were removed to build parts of the Native Commissioners Office at Fort Usher in 1897. A picnic lunch will be held, and the afternoon's activities will be determined subject to the weather and members choice!

Whilst all vehicles will make it 90% of the way (and possibly further) we would ask those with trucks to assist on the day, if and where necessary.

5 – REPORT BACK

Our outing of 1 May was remarkably well attended given the various constraints that we face - and acknowledging that due to the National Stay-away, many newsletters were served late. Forty-five members attended the outing, which visited Rhodes Stables, Rhodes Summerhouse, Fort Usher and the Tuli River. A delightful picnic lunch was held at the Tuli-Tendele dam, built in the mid-1980's, and an afternoon walk in the area was well received. There was a surprisingly good range of birdlife at the dam, and the lovely autumn weather was perfect the outing. We were privileged to have with us our Hon Member, Fr Odilo Weeger.

6 – DASSIE RESEARCH REACHES TEN-YEAR MILESTONE

The Dassie (Hyrax) Research Programme (undertaken by R Barry, N Chiweshe and P Mundy) turned ten this year. This was the first research project supported by your society, and the results have been impressive. The Dassie is critical to the Matopos eco-system, particularly the large birds of prey. In fact, it came about due to the findings of the Black eagle Survey, which recorded a decline in the number of Black Eagle pairs from 1978 (54 pairs) to 1992 (36 pairs).

The main results of the study after the first ten years are as follows:

- The yellow spotted dassie (*H.brucei*) outnumbered the rock dassie (*P.capensis*) in 7 out of 10 years of the study.
- Populations recovered from 1996 (particularly of *H.brucei*)
- Increases due to successful breeding, following good rainy seasons
- Black eagle populations responded to dassie population, with a 2-year delay
- Reduced rainfall, increased Black eagle population and a possible outbreak of mange at high-density sites were likely causes of reduced dassie population beginning in 1999.
- Populations have been adversely affected on resettled farms since 2000.

-----✂-----

7 – SUBSCRIPTIONS 2003/2004

Due by 31 July 2003. Changed Address? Please update our records

| | |
|---------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| NAME | ADDRESS |
| MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY | |
| AMOUNT Cheque / Cash | |
| EMAIL | |

-----✂-----

8 – MCS GEAR

Don't forget to purchase your MCS hat and shirt. Enquire from the Secretary, or attend the next field trip!

9 - MEMBERSHIP

The Committee has reviewed the list of members. Given the high cost of postage, and rising expense in printing, we cannot afford to distribute newsletters to "members" who are in arrears. At the same time, we are aware of a number of members who have left the country in recent years, but who did not advise us of their changed circumstances. Consequently, all members who have arrears exceeding two years will no longer receive newsletters, and will be struck off the membership roll with immediate effect. Members who are in arrears for a year will receive this newsletter as a final reminder, and thereafter be struck-off. Members who have immigrated but would like to keep in touch, can on request, receive newsletters by e-mail only. We also encourage members to please forward their own e-mail addresses to the Secretary, as this will greatly reduce costs for the Society.

Within this newsletter are details in connection with the current subscriptions. These fall due at the end of July. All members' subscriptions are due and payable at this time, so this newsletter serves as your statement. Please see the notes at the foot of this page, and the tear-off slip. Please pay now, as the sooner this is done the less chance of you forgetting. Again, members in arrears for the current subscriptions will cease to receive the newsletter after the AGM.

The setting of subscriptions has been given careful thought by your committee, within the mandate given it at the last AGM. We are particularly mindful of the dire straights faced by our pensioners. Consequently, pensioner's rates, which were set at 50% of a normal member, will now be set at 30% of a normal member, whilst normal membership rates increase by 500% to keep up with current and anticipated inflation. The cost of postage alone has increased by over 300% in the past year.

Pensioner members who may have problems meeting these new costs should contact the Secretary so that alternatives can be discussed.

This exercise will no doubt result in a marked reduction in the number of members. However, this can only be for the better as we will be left with active members, is critical to ensure cost containment, and compliance with our constitution. It would be a good time for us all to focus on trying to attract new members – go on, invite some one new to the next event!

Whilst we are about it, the Annual General Meeting is not too far off. We have a dedicated and hard-working committee, but will always welcome more members. This is a serious appeal - please consider it seriously. The committee meets once a month, so we are not asking too much of your time! But without devoted leadership, our Society will face a grim future.

10 - TREE & GRASSES IDENTIFICATION WEEK-END 13th - 14th SEPTEMBER

What Tree is that? How do you tell *Lonchocarpus capassa* from *Lonchocarpus nelsii*? What does the bark of a Teak tree look like? How do you use the Camelthorn to cure ear infections and headaches? Which grasses do Buffalo prefer?

If you are interested in learning the answers to any of the above questions then this exciting and informative week-end planned by National Parks at Hwange Main Camp is for you. Come along and join one of the many walks and lectures planned for the week-end 13th and 14th September 2003.

Leading the walks will be a number of well-known and expert Botanists from private enterprise, the Zimbabwe Bio-diversity Foundation, Forestry Commission, the National Herbarium and Botanical Gardens, including Ms Nozipho Nobanda, Head of the National Herbarium and Dr Jonathon Timberlake, Botanist with the Bio-diversity Foundation. Morning and afternoon walks, of around 2 hours duration, will be conducted to show visitors the grasses and trees of such habitats as Teak forests, Acacia scrub, Mopane bush and open grasslands. In the evening we will have a number of speakers who will open up the world of Kalahari-sand trees and grasses, make tree identification easy and talk on the history of Forestry in the Park. We are also hoping to secure the services of a local botanist who will explain the many traditional and medicinal uses of local tree species. This will be a fun but informative week-end and walks will be graded to cater for those who are only just beginning to appreciate trees up to those who already have a good knowledge of our vegetation – everyone is welcome.

No visit to Hwange would be complete without a drive into the Park and apart from daytime drives, as this is a Full-Moon week-end, there is also the option of driving in the Park at night and stopping at Nyamandhlovu Platform to experience exciting nocturnal wildlife activities. There will also be time to socialise and during the evening there will be a performance by the Main Camp Primary School Marimba and Dance group, plus the very talented new conservation drama group, Miombo. This group performs plays written to spread the conservation message by means of mime, song and dance. Please note there are no extra costs for this entertainment, although both dance groups would appreciate donations. It is suggested that visitors drive to Hwange Main Camp on Friday so they are in place for Saturday morning activities.

| | |
|----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Date | From 08:00 Saturday 13 th and Sunday 14 th September |
| Venue | Main Camp, Hwange National Park |
| Bookings | Telephone: (018) 686 or (04) 707624-9, 706077-8 Fax: (04) 726089 Email: natparks@africaonline.co.zw |
| Costs | Walks are Z\$500 per hour per group of 6 persons and a moonlight drive is Z\$500 per person if staying at Main Camp plus Z\$500 per vehicle. Normal National Parks accommodation, vehicle and Park entry fees apply. |
| Fuel | Will be available at Main Camp |
| Meals | Waterbucks Head Restaurant and Bar open all week-end |

Note: Another special week-end is planned; Art In The Park 11th & 12th October. Please contact direct for full details: Tel: (018) 371/374/685/654

11 – FAREWELL

We bid farewell to Mr Ngoni Chiweshe, Ornithological Research Unit, Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management. Ngoni is leaving the service of National Parks to take up at a post with Birdlife Zimbabwe, which will see him relocating to Harare. We are sure however that he will maintain a close link with the Hills, and the Society, and earnestly hope that his programmes in the Communal lands will be taken up just as enthusiastically by his replacement. We have enjoyed a mutually beneficial relationship, and wish Ngoni well in his new career. In doing so we acknowledge the tremendous contribution made by him to a deeper understanding of our heritage, and a real commitment to sustainable conservation and development in the Matobo Hills.

12 – NEWSLETTERS

We acknowledge that some members received the last newsletter late. This was due in part by our late printing, but also due to delays in postage occasioned by the closure of the Post Office due to strikes

and stay-aways. We will endeavour to do better in future. Printing of this newsletter was delayed slightly as we awaited confirmation on the World Heritage Application, but we hope it will still reach members in time to join us on the next outing. We hope that this bumper two-page issue will compensate!

We have also received notice that some members have not received Newsletters. We do investigate these incidences, but ask members who become aware of these failures to please notify us. We will be happy to send out any missing Newsletters to paid up members. Please remember to send in information for inclusion in the newsletter. It makes the task of the editor that much easier - and provides interest for the members. Don't forget to send in your e-mail address for future Newsletter editions!

We acknowledge the kind assistance rendered by Mrs Val Fielder in maintaining the address list, and kindly donating the labels for each issue.