

MATOBO



SOCIETY

PO Box FM 648, Famona. Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

Welfare No: W/0 30/94

NEWSLETTER 42 / DECEMBER 2003

1 – THE NEW COMMITTEE.

The Annual General Meeting held at Maleme Rest Camp on 16th November returned the committee to office. Two new members were subsequently co-opted, Mr Craig Friend and Mr Norman Scott. At the first Committee meeting, Mr Iain Sheasby was elected Chairman, Mr Gavin Stephens Vice-Chairman, Allison Moon as Secretary and Mrs Barbara Muchechetere as Treasurer. Other members are Miss Bobby Hogan, Mr Roy Stephens and Mr Mike Phillipson. A busy year awaits the new committee with challenges including the World Heritage Management Plan, the status of the National Park, particularly poaching, and the need to address the ongoing needs of education, projects and research.

2 – BOOK RAFFLE

The Book raffles held during the AGM, and won by Craig Friend and Mike Phillips, raised \$60,000 for the Society. Appreciation is expressed to all members for their support, and especially to our donor Brian Kalshoven.

3 – THE HILLS ARE ALIVE WITH BEAUTY!

It seemed that Mother Nature sensed a need to cheer us all up as the end of the year approached – a year that had been marked by decay, hopelessness, and little to cheer about. However, for those who lifted their eyes from the depth of depression, the trees and flowers during the dry spring months were a gift from heaven. Every species flowered to their utmost ability, creating explosions of colour from scarlet to lemon yellow, but all in dense abundance. Within Bulawayo, the streets were converted into parkland, whilst in the Hills trees that are hardly noticed suddenly challenged the more obvious and well-known flowering species. Fresh green foliage soon followed, so that the Hills took on an appearance of abundance and beauty.

4 – RAINFALL

The rains to date have been sporadic, with November, the usual start of the wet season actually being quite dry until the last few days. Good rains had been recorded in October, and again at the end of December, so whilst the Hills look magnificent, there has been no real run-off into the valleys as yet. We hope that the New Year will usher in the real wet season. To date the following has been recorded (as at 31st December) Eastern Matopos at 340mm (13,6”), the Western Hills at 215mm (8,6”), and Toghwana Dam 220mm (8,8”)

5 – MATOPOS ADVENTURE CHALLENGE

The annual Matopos Adventure Challenge, run in the Mtshabezi region of the Hills, is scheduled for the 1st February 2004. Members wishing to compete (and teams are permitted) in the 15Km hike, 8Km canoe, and 56Km cycle, can contact Des Stephens on 091 211156 for details. Members are also welcome to support, or watch the event and can obtain course details from the same source. (The closest point to Bulawayo would be the Matopos Mission Primary School, on the Old Gwanda Road.) In 2003 competitors travelled from South Africa, Botswana, Mutare, and Harare to participate.

A three-day event will be run over the last weekend of February.

6 – CONDOLENCES

We extend our sympathy to past committee member Ella Fawcett on the sad loss of husband Ray

7 – HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND BEST WISHES FOR THE NEW YEAR

We wish all our members a new year that will be better than the last, and look forward to meeting again at the next field trip.

8 - NEXT EVENT

Date	8 February 2004
Venue	Merino Walk Farm
Meet	8:15am to leave by 8:30am, Churchill Arms
Travel	All vehicles (subject to final weather status)
Details	Provide own chairs, tables, meals and drinks. Don't forget your hat!

We will be picnicking on the banks of a large dam on the Mtshabezi River, just off the Old Gwanda Road. This is not far from the former Royal Kingdom Lodge and the previously visited Fort Mtshabezi. Walks in the adjacent area will be arranged.

9 – REPORT BACK

The Annual General Meeting, which celebrated the Society's tenth anniversary, and the attainment of World Heritage Status for the Matobo Hills, was a resounding success. Maleme Rest Camp was fully booked, and members started arriving from late Saturday morning. The AGM itself was held at 4pm, and was followed by our guest speaker Dr Peter Mundy, now from NUST, but formerly of the Ornithological Research Unit of the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management. Dr Mundy also served on the World Heritage Technical Committee, chairing the body in the final stages. His address covered research and the World Heritage Status that now opens various opportunities for study in the Matopos in various fields. The address underlined the importance of the Hills. At short notice Mr Viv Wilson agreed to update members on the current carnivore (principally Leopard) study in the Matopos and we look forward to the final conclusions later next year. During the evening the World Heritage promotional video was played and most members had an opportunity to see the 20-minute video that was used during the World Heritage Convention to promote the Matobo bid. A Trio Combrío played during the evening, a lovely backdrop to the candle lit tables and full moon that rose above Pomongwe. All in all, a successful event enjoyed by members and friends present.

On the Sunday morning Jonathan Timberlake, Roy Stephens and Ian MaCausland led walks that focused on the rich botanic heritage of the area. Though the walks were leisurely, they were full of detail and interest.

10 – WORLD HERITAGE

We have reproduced below the UNESCO inscription of the Matobo Hills as a World Heritage Site:

Matobo Hills

Zimbabwe

Inscribed: 2003 **Criteria** C (iii) (v) (vi)

Justification for Inscription

Criterion (iii): The Matobo Hills has one of the highest concentrations of rock art in Southern Africa. The rich evidence from archaeology and from the rock art paintings at Matobo provide a very full picture of the lives of foraging societies in the Stone Age and the way agricultural societies came to replace them.

Criterion (v): The interaction between communities and the landscape, manifest in the rock art and also in the long-standing religious traditions still associated with the rocks, are community responses to a landscape.

Criterion (vi): The Mwari religion, centred on Matobo, which may date back to the Iron Age, is the most powerful oracular tradition in Southern Africa.

Brief Description:

The area exhibits a profusion of distinctive rock landforms rising above the granite shield that covers much of Zimbabwe. The large boulders provide abundant natural shelters and have been associated with human occupation from the early Stone Age right through to early historical times, and intermittently since. They also feature an outstanding collection of rock paintings. The Matobo Hills continue to provide a strong focus for the local community, which still uses shrines and sacred places, closely linked to traditional, social and economic activities.