

**MATOBO**



**SOCIETY**

PO Box FM 648, Famona. Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

Welfare No: W/O 30/94

### NEWSLETTER 43 / MARCH 2004

#### **1 – WORLD HERITAGE**

At a special ceremony held at Maleme Rest Camp on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> February, the Chairman of the UNESCO Zimbabwe Commission presented the certificate of inscription of the Matopo Hills on the list of World Heritage Sites. The certificate was received by former Minister Mr Dumiso Dabengwa on behalf of the Governor of Matabeleland South.

At the same time the Matobo Hills World Heritage Management Committee was established. This committee will be responsible for the management of the World Heritage Site, and its first task is to revisit the Management Plan, which has to be resubmitted to UNESCO by July 2004. The committee includes representation of the National Museums, National Parks and the Matobo Conservation Society, amongst traditional leaders, Matobo and Umzingwane Rural District Councils, Matobo Committee, Commercial farmers, the tourism sector and others.

#### **2 – NATIONAL PARKS UPDATE**

Park fees for the Matobo National Park were changed in January to the following:

Entry	\$5,000 per person (includes picnic fees)
Motor vehicle	\$5,000 per car
Camping	\$5,000 per person per night
Eagles	\$60,000
Lodges	\$40,000 (4 persons)
Chalet	\$30,000 (4 persons)

For those wanting to stay at Maleme Rest Camp, the National Park Reservations telephone number is 65592

A meeting has been held with the Warden, and the issue of domestic animals within the Park was discussed. Action is now being taken by the DNPWM to keep the Park clear, with animals being impounded and fines being issued. A noticeable improvement is already evident. We appreciate the reports received from members, which are forwarded to the warden. The major problem is of course the collapse of about 25% of the National Park boundary fence, which the DNPWM is trying to tackle. However, the full cost of replacing stolen wire will run into tens of millions of dollars, and the funds are simply not there at present.

#### **3 – MATOPOS ALTITUDE**

Following our last field trip, a few members asked about the highest points in the Matopos. They are all located in the northeastern hills, around Matopo Mission. A recent private survey, coupled with the surveyor generals maps (both current and ancient!) resulted in the following details (altitude above mean sea level):

Mwazi	1564m	5131ft	adjacent to Matopo Mission
Sotcha	1560m	5117ft	south of Mwazi, in Matobo Communal Land
Ngomi	1552m	5093ft	west of Mwazi in Matobo Communal Land
Siloti	1550m	5085ft	on the west side of the Mtshabezi Gorge, it drops 370m (1214ft) on its eastern face to the river below
Chibizina	1548m	5078ft	north east of Mwazi, on Merino Walk / Gulati CL
Mquilembegwe	1546m	5075ft	on Besna Kobila farm, east of Chibizina

Other well-known sites, included for interest / reference:

Tandall	1520m	4985ft	Pomongwe	1472,5m	4830ft
Efifi	1499m	4917ft	Silozwe	1476m	4828ft
Inungu	1480m	4854ft	Worlds View	1455m	4772ft

#### **4 - NEXT EVENT**

Date	4 April 2004
Venue	Silozwane Area
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!

Mr Mike Gardiner will accompany us to give us an insight into the world of butterflies of the Matopo Hills. Mike is a recognised expert, and has selected the Silozwane area to demonstrate to us the amazing extent of the butterfly kingdom within the Matopos. This promises to be an interesting day (provided the sun shines!) and for most of us a chance to learn an entirely new subject. Please stay for the picnic lunch, and perhaps a walk in the afternoon (which may include a visit to the famous cave)

#### **5 – REPORT BACK**

Our last outing was attended by about 45 members and friends and was to Merino Walk farm. A picnic lunch was held under the spreading branches of a *Ficus glumosa* (Rock fig) and a walk down to the Mtshabezi River was arranged before lunch. Whilst the walk was an “aimless ramble” it was still a delight to walk alongside the pools of the Mtshabezi and past the occasional small waterfall. After lunch the group moved onto the northwestern edge of Gorfinga hill, called “horseshoe canyon” in 1896, and the sight of a skirmish in August of that year. The climb up the hill was an easy walk for all, and a few pushed onto the summit to enjoy the wide views of the northern hills. Some members were persuaded to swim in the rain filled dam below the hill. Members also had a chance to visit “Royal Kingdom Lodge”, which is regrettably closed at present. Large herds of zebra and wildebeest were also seen. Appreciation is extended to Mr John Glendenning for permission to visit.

#### **6 – MATOPOS ACTIVITIES**

The annual Matopos Adventure Challenge was held on the 1<sup>st</sup> February 2004. The winning team set a new record of 5hrs 27 minutes, with the last team in at 7hrs 48 mins. Members of your society took part in the event as both competitors and support personnel.

The three-day Matopos Grand Challenge was held on the 27<sup>th</sup> - 29<sup>th</sup> February, and like the earlier Matopos Adventure Challenge, enjoyed the spectacular scenery of the eastern hills, the forests, waterfalls and bubbling streams! The route included the Mtashabezi Lake and the Mshashasha waterfalls. Heavy rain during the event did not distract the teams, but resulted in flooded rivers and much excitement.

The annual Matopos 33 Miler road race will be held on 20<sup>th</sup> March. The course starts at the National Park gates, passes around the Circular Drive twice, before finishing at the Matopos Yacht Club.

#### **7 – MATOPOS CLEANUP**

World Environment day will be celebrated on 5<sup>th</sup> June and it is planned that the MCS and a number of schools will conduct a clean up in the National Park. Picnic sites will be visited, rubbish dumps cleared and the school that collects the most will obviously win the competition. A number of our corporate members will be asked to assist with the use of trucks, whilst National Parks will also be involved.

#### **8 – RAINFALL**

Since our last newsletter the rains have much improved, with reports of rivers flowing, and some of the dams filling fast (and probably spilling by the time this newsletter gets issued). To date the following has been recorded (as at 29<sup>th</sup> Feb) Eastern Matopos at 700mm (28”), and the Western Hills at 525mm (21”). February was a particularly good month. It is hoped that the season may yet end close to average - a prospect that did not look possible at the end of December 2003. Drought relief throughout the Matobo area is however ongoing. There are some areas where the fields indicate a reasonable harvest.

## **9 – MATOPOS VIDEO FOR SALE**

The Osprey Productions video for the World Heritage application, which was shown to members for the first time at the AGM in November 2003, will be made available to the public. More information will follow.