

**MATOBO**



**SOCIETY**

PO Box FM 648, Famona. Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

Welfare No: W/O 30/94

### **NEWSLETTER 46 / DECEMBER 2004**

#### **1 – ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

The Annual General Meeting was held on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2004 at Camp Dwala. At the meeting a new committee was elected, with the following members:

Chairman	Gavin Stephens
Vice-Chairman	Bobby Hogan
Secretary	Allison Moon
Treasurer	Barbara Muchetere
Members	Roy Stephens Norman Scott
Co-Opted Member	Shelagh Adams

There is still room for more co-opted members so please, if you would like to assist, please contact the Chairman or Secretary.

#### **2 – SNAKES**

In this issue we deal with the first family of dangerous snakes to be found in the Matopos, and the treatment for these bites

##### **FAMILY - Adders & Vipers (Viperidae)**

**Puffadder, Horned Adder, Rhombic Night Adder, Snouted Night Adder and Bibron's Burrowing Adder.**

**General characteristics** – These are mostly heavily built sluggish snakes. They generally hunt during the evening, but bask in the sun during the day. When disturbed, vipers coil with the head raised slightly above the body, from which position they can strike fast in any direction; bites on humans are usually inflicted on the foot or ankle. The long fangs, fold back into the roof of the mouth when not in use, but are directed forwards to 'stab' the victim in a strike. The Puffadder accounts for an estimated 75% of serious snake bites in Zimbabwe.

The venom is a typical viperine venom attacking tissue and blood and causes immediate shock systems with the poison resulting in swelling over a period of 5 or 6 hours.

**Treatment of bites** - Venom spreads through the lymphatics and lymph flow is markedly increased by muscle movement. Therefore, rest and immobilisation are of prime importance. Shock symptoms, accentuated by pain and visible swelling, and by toxins released by damaged cells, may be severe and may be treated by reassurance, rest and aspirin and/or Codeine type painkillers. Cold compresses will also help alleviate the pain. Constrictive bandages or tourniquets must **NEVER** be used for adder bites. Anti-venom should be used only if there will be extensive delay in obtaining medical help and only if major local or some systemic signs have developed. Remember that not all bites from Puffadders result in signs of poisoning.

#### **3 – BOOK RAFFLE**

The Society has been given a set of books on trees by Marthinus Steyn to raffle. The tickets were sold at the AGM, and will continue to be sold at the next outing at \$10,000 each. The books are all signed by the author, and include lovely clear pictures, which makes tree identification very much easier. Additional copies are available for sale at \$100,000 for the book on Commiphora's and \$50,000 for the books on Figs and Combretum & Terminalia. Please contact the Secretary.

#### **4 – RAINFALL**

After a long and very dry start to the season, the rains have finally arrived. The Eastern Matopos, as at the 12 Dec 2004, had a seasonal total of 206mm, of which over 175mm fell in the second week of December. The western Matopos currently has a total of 100mm, again with the bulk falling in December.

#### **5 – SUBSCRIPTIONS**

Subscriptions have simply not kept up with inflation, and following much discussion at the AGM, your committee has resolved to charge a supplementary subscription due on 31st January 2005. This increase will double the subscriptions charged this year. If your Subscriptions are outstanding from July, then you now owe \$20,000 (normal membership) or \$5,000 (special membership). However if you are already paid up, then the following rates apply for the Supplementary Subscriptions.

Subscriptions due 31 July 2004	\$10,000
Subscriptions due 31 January 2005	\$10,000

After January 2005, the next Subscriptions due will be July 2005.

Members who need time to settle, or may have difficulty in meeting these costs, should contact the Secretary. A number of donors have offered to assist our members on fixed incomes, so please don't cancel!

FAMILY / INDIVIDUAL	\$ 10,000
SPECIAL / PENSION	\$ 2,500

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

#### **WE WISH YOU ALL A MERY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR FOR 2005**

#### **6 - NEXT EVENT**

Date	23 January 2005
Venue	Shashani Fishing Camp
Meet	8:15am to leave by 8:30am, Churchill Arms
Travel	All vehicles
Details	Provide own chairs, tables, meals and drinks. Don't forget your hat!

We will be visiting Shashani Fishng Camp, on the western banks of the Shashani Dam. The route out takes us via Marula. At the Lodge we will be taken to see places of interest, as well as enjoy the scenery on offer. For those who wish to braai, facilities will be available. The Shashani River marks the western limit of the World Heritage Site, whilst the dam was built about 12 years ago.

#### **7 – REPORT BACK**

A good number of members attended the Black Eagle Survey outing on 12<sup>th</sup> September, which started at Maleme Dam, visited Msilume Dam, and finished up at Gordon Park. A number of Black Eagle, and other birds of prey, were observed on the nests – in one the large brown fledgling black eagle was seen tearing away at a dassie just delivered by a parent. In another, the white chick could easily be seen with the use of the bird telescopes that were provided by the Black Eagle Survey. This proved to be another interesting day, and well worth the effort for all those who attended. We record our special thanks to the Black Eagle Survey group of Dudley, Penny and Julia who facilitated the visit.

Support for the Tree weekend held on 22<sup>nd</sup> October was disappointing, with only ten members participating. However, a new tree species was identified for the first time in the Matopos, and the trees themselves were in magnificent full fresh new leaf. It is incredible how well the trees responded to last year's good late rains as the flowers, and new foliage, this year has been striking. Following the tree weekend, the Society has been able to finalise a tree checklist for the Matobo Hills and this will be sent to the printers shortly.

The AGM, with about 35 members present, was held on a hot Saturday afternoon on 6<sup>th</sup> November, but the lovely shade and lawns of Camp Dwala ensured that members were kept in the cool! Following the AGM, members were able to enjoy an afternoon walk along the banks of the just trickling Mvuru stream, visit specimens of the orchid *Disa woodii* in flower, and game view. Most members stayed on

for a social braai in the evening – held under the starlit sky, and a number stayed overnight. On Sunday yet another walk was arranged, which visited rock art sites, tree species and viewpoints.

A special note of appreciation is recorded to Camp Dwala for hosting both the Tree Weekend and the AGM.

### **8 – MATOPOS VIDEO FOR SALE**

These will make ideal Christmas presents for family and friends no longer able to visit the old hills! The Society has limited stock at the WEZ shop, Fife Street, and this includes the format suitable for the USA / Canada. More copies are on order.

We also have hats and brochures for sale.

### **9 – PARK FEES**

Consultative meetings have been held to determine Park Fees for 2005. We will update you on the new fees in the next newsletter.

Whilst there were a few isolated fires this year in and around the Park, members will have noted that the efforts of the Parks staff to upgrade and improve firebreaks certainly paid off. This is most pleasing to see, for whilst occasional fires are beneficial, annual wide-ranging fires are destructive to the environment. Parks have also been endeavouring to grade many of the roads, and some progress has been made in this regard. However, cattle still roam in large areas of the Park, though they have been brought under control in the Circular Drive area. Should you wish to report matters regarding the Park, please write to The Warden, Matobo National Park, and copy any correspondence to the MCS.

### **10 – ADVENTURE RACES**

The three-day Grand Matopos Challenge was recently held. Starting at Maleme, the race moved east across the Matopos, and encompassed cycling, hiking (in the National Park, Mtshabezi gorge and Gulubachwe areas), and canoeing (on the Mtshabezi and Sotcha Dams). Once again the competitors enjoyed not only the challenge of the event, but also the magnificent scenery of the Matobo Hills. These regular events are attracting competitors from across the country, and even across the borders! The next event is the one day Matopos Adventure Challenge which involves a 56km cycle in the eastern Matopos, 9km canoeing on the Lake Mtshabezi, and a 15km hike up the Mtshabezi gorge (with a 200m climb out at the end!) The organizers are looking for helpers, so any members wanting to spend a day or so enjoying the Hills, with occasional duties, should contact Des Stephens on 091 211 156.

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### **11 – SUPPLEMENTARY SUBSCRIPTIONS 2005**

Due by 31 January 2005. Changed Address? Please update our records

NAME	ADDRESS
MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY	
AMOUNT <span style="float: right;">Cheque / Cash</span>	
EMAIL	

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