

MATOBO



SOCIETY

PO Box FM 648, Famona. Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

Welfare No: W/0 30/94

NEWSLETTER 47 / MARCH 2005

1 – SOCIETY NEWS

Your committee continues to meet monthly. The society finances, managed by Barbara Mutchetere, are in a healthy situation. We are awaiting the completion of the audit.

Shelagh Adams is tackling the membership list, which is now recorded on a database. If you know of a member who we seem to have “lost” please let us know so that we can make any necessary corrections. Between e-mail and committee members delivering newsletters, we have been able to limit the number of newsletters requiring postage. This is a significant saving. If you can assist in delivering newsletters, please let us know.

New members continue to join, but sadly members continue to leave, so the total remains fairly constant. What is needed however, is greater participation by ALL the existing members. Did you attend the last outing? Would you offer to help with a project? Have you made a contribution to the Newsletter? This is your society, and we need to ensure that it remains meaningful in our ever-changing environment. Your committee alone cannot achieve this.

2 – SNAKES

In this issue we deal with the 2nd family of dangerous snakes found in the Matopos, and the treatment for these bites.

FAMILY - Cobras, Mambas & allies (Elapidae)

Egyptian Cobra, Mozambique Spitting Cobra, Shield Snake, Black Mamba.

General characteristics - This family consists generally of rather long, slender snakes and includes terrestrial, semi-aquatic, arboreal and burrowing species. Cobras can flatten their necks by raising the anterior ribs to form the characteristic ‘hood’; mambas and Shield Snakes can spread a narrow hood. The fangs are short in comparison with those of vipers. Although the fangs are fixed to the maxillary bone, due to the flexibility of the skull bones, the mamba can swing the fangs forward by raising the end of the snout.

The venom is of the elapid neurotoxic type (i.e. it affects the nervous system), with general systemic systems taking effect within 30 to 60 minutes (if within 60 minutes) severe symptoms may be expected to follow. **These bites are very serious.**

Treatment of bites - Remember that all the initial symptoms are due to shock and treat accordingly; for some bites this will be all that is necessary. Urgent hospitalisation is essential - phone ahead if possible. The patient should not walk, but must be immobilised.

Apply suction and immobilise the bitten part. Generally, do not apply a tourniquet. Competent first-aiders who are present at the time of the bite and who are certain that the snake was a cobra, may apply pressure to the medial aspect of the upper portion of the limb, first with the hands and then with a suitable constrictive bandage. Write down the time of application on the victim’s forehead or next to the bandage (lipstick, ball point or similar), and follow the rules for constrictive bandages. Obtain rapid transfer to hospital and stand by to administer artificial respiration on the way. Administer all available anti-venom if severe systemic symptoms develop and there will be undue delay in hospitalisation.

Cobra venom in the eye should be washed out with clean water or milk, and hospitalisation must follow.

3 – BOOK RAFFLE

The Book raffle was held during the last outing. An amount of \$500,000 was raised. The winner was Mr Roy Stephens, second Mr Desmond Stephens, and third Mrs Barbara Mutchetere. Whilst some

books have been sold, a few copies remain available for sale at \$50,000 for the books on Figs and Combretum & Terminalia. Please contact the Secretary.

4 – RAINFALL

The rains this year are well below average, and at the time of writing show little sign of improving. The veldt looks surprisingly good, but streams and rivers are dry. The Eastern Matopos, as at the 1 Feb 2005, had a seasonal total of 360mm. The western Matopos currently has a total of 275mm.

5 – SUBSCRIPTIONS

A reminder to all those who have not yet paid their supplementary subscriptions, that these are overdue (due date 31st January 2005). The next subscriptions will be due in July 2005, the amount still to be determined. A donor has offered to assist any member unable to meet the new subscriptions.

6 - NEXT EVENT

Date	10 April 2005
Venue	Cave of the White Leopard
Meet	8:15am to leave by 8:30am, Ascot Shopping Centre
Travel	All vehicles
Details	Provide own chairs, tables, meals and drinks. Don't forget your hat!

This field trip will take us into the eastern Matopos. We will revisit the Rhodes Indaba Site and the Lumane Treeferns en route. The cave is situated high above the Lumane falls valley, and contains some interesting paintings. After lunch we will have a choice of activities, including golf for those missing their regular Sunday on the green. It may be possible to visit the upper Lumane Falls, but sadly given the poor rainfall there is not much water flow at this time. Persons in high clearance vehicles may elect to proceed home down the Zhilo Pass - ordinary vehicles will reach the lunch point but will not be able to proceed down the pass, and will return to Bulawayo along the same route taken to get to lunch. The scenery in this part of the hills is breath taking, with the hills dominated by the mountain acacia (*Brachystegia glaucescens*) and some wonderful forest remaining relatively untouched.

7 – REPORT BACK

We had another well-attended outing in January when we travelled to the Shashani Fishing Camp. The heavy rains that built up during the morning stayed just to the east of the dam, until we were packing up after lunch, but the earlier rains had brought the rivers and streams down, and it was simply lovely to splash through them. Whilst the dam was still low, we enjoyed a good walk along the banks. After lunch, an adventurous spirit prevailed, and despite the rains the majority of the members chose to follow their leader around the back of the dam wall, and into the western Matopos - and into the teeth of the storm that had just lifted. The scenery was spectacular, water streamed off the dwalas, the rivers were in flood - and yes we did get stuck and had to pull some vehicles through. An attempt was made to travel back to Figtree, but the 30m wide flooded Mpopoma River put paid to that, and we all got home via the Kezi road - enjoying a spectacular sunset. For many the outing was longer than usual, but the beauty of the evening, and a chance to traverse an area little visited by many, was worth the delay. We thank Mr and Mrs Sparrow for hosting the Society at Shashani Fishing Camp. After the drive home few members wondered if we were changing our name from MCS to Matopos Adventure Society!

8 – MATOPOS VIDEO FOR SALE

Whilst the World Heritage Video was sold out by Christmas, limited new stock is available. Unfortunately, prices have risen. Please contact the secretary, or visit the WEZ shop.

9 – PARK FEES

We understand that the only change to the Park entry fees has been that of the individual charge, increasing from \$9,500 to \$20,000. The vehicle charge is \$20,000, camping and fishing \$10,000, and the lodge's range from \$600,000 per night (Mabila) to \$250,000 (Eagles) to \$80,000 for the 2 bedded chalet. However, further hikes may yet be in store.

Recent visitors to the National Park reported that there was no water at either Mselume or Mtshелеlei Dams. It seems that increased fees do not translate into improved service! The MCS has written to the authorities on this matter.

10 – ANTI-POACHING DONATION

Collection boxes have been placed at a number of lodges in the Matopos and in selected hotels in Bulawayo. These are routinely cleared and the funds administered by the MCS. As a result, we have been able to make a donation of equipment to the Matobo National Park of one million dollars. This equipment will be used by the rangers and staff in the park who are involved in anti-poaching activities.

11 – ADVENTURE RACES

The Matopos Adventure Challenge was held at the beginning of February. This one-day event is held annually in the Eastern Matopos. A number of members came out to cheer the teams home and enjoy the braai at Camp Dwala. Whilst the winners were back in 5hrs 16mins, the last team arrived after 9hrs 28 mins.

12 – CROCODILE ATTACK

It is reported that visitors to the Matobo Game Park, whilst swimming in Mpopoma Dam, were attacked by a crocodile. It is understood that whilst the injuries suffered were serious, they are not critical. The MCS is astounded that visitors would even consider swimming in the dam that has both crocodiles and hippo, and is concerned that no National Park staff were on duty at the dam to prevent such foolish behaviour. Visitors are not allowed out of their cars in the Game Park, so one would have thought that visitors were therefore be aware of the danger from wild animals in the park. Apart from the wildlife, all the dams in the Matopos are infected with bilharzias, and for this reason alone, visitors should not swim in any of the major rivers or dams of the Matopos.