

**MATOBO**



**SOCIETY**

PO Box FM 648, Famona. Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

Welfare No: W/O 30/94

## NEWSLETTER 48 / JUNE 2005

### **1 – SOCIETY NEWS**

Our vice-chairman Bobby Hogan continues to play an important role within the society, attending to a range of duties and projects, and also acting as postman for the delivery of the quarterly newsletters! Allison Moon, our secretary, attends to all secretarial matters, other than membership, and has kept our administration on an even keel.

We need to attract new members to the Society. Invite a friend (or family) to the next outing! Encourage them to join. Have you served on the committee yet? Perhaps it's time to contribute more than just your subscription. The society has cut back on projects due to a reduced number of "workers" but the demands continue to grow.

If you feel we are not meeting your needs, please write to the secretary. Are our outings meaningful? What do you want from your society?

### **2 – SNAKES**

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

#### **FAMILY - Back-fanged snakes (Colubridae)**

##### **Boomslang, Savanna Vine Snake.**

**General characteristics** - Mostly slender snakes, including very fast-moving diurnal species, less active nocturnal ones and a large group of secretive burrowing forms. These snakes do not strike and recoil, but hang on and chew. Only bites from the Boomslang and Vine Snake are dangerous to man and the venoms and treatment are discussed under these species headings. Bites from other back-fanged snakes usually produce no symptoms at all. Treat by rest, reassurance and suction; seek medical assistance just in case.

The venom is slow acting affecting blood and blood vessels. It is very potent venom but the yield is low.

**Treatment of bites** - It is not easy for a back-fanged snake to make an efficient bite, and when it does, only a few result in systemic symptoms. Rest, reassurance, aspirin type drugs if necessary, suction and immobilisation are all that are necessary before medical assistance is obtained. Although symptoms are much delayed, do not be slow to obtain medical help. Tourniquets and any tight clothing or equipment, or trauma during transport, must be avoided.

This is one instance where it is of particular assistance to the doctor to examine the snake which inflicted the bite, and where you can afford to spend a few minutes looking for it. A positive identification in this way facilitates the ordering of the specific anti-venom from the South African Institute for Medical Research. Remember ordinary polyvalent anti-venom is NOT effective against Boomslang venom, whilst there is no anti-venom in Zimbabwe for the Vine Snake.

### **3 – WORLD HERITAGE MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The World Heritage Management Plan was submitted to ICOMOS (International Convention on Monuments and Sites) and a report back meeting was held in May. The plan was not only approved by ICOMOS, but has been adopted as a model for use by other World Heritage Sites. The MCS has congratulated the Chairman of the Matobo Hills World Heritage Management Committee, but notes that the implementation will determine its success.

#### **4 – MATOPOS VIDEO FOR SALE**

The World Heritage Video has proved to be very popular with over 120 copies sold to date. We are endeavouring to keep up with demand, and more tapes have been made available. We again acknowledge the considerable support given to us by Osprey Productions and thank them for their support. Please contact the secretary, or visit the WEZ shop.

#### **5 – SUBSCRIPTIONS**

Subscriptions are now due for ALL members. The committee has taken into account the high cost of postage and the general rise in inflation in setting the new rates. We hope that members will be understanding

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	\$ 50,000
SPECIAL / PENSION	\$ 10,000

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

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

Date	3 July 2005
Venue	Dornock Estates, Figtree
Meet	8:30am to leave by 8:45am, Churchill Arms
Travel	All vehicles
Details	Provide own chairs, tables, meals and drinks. Don't forget your hat!

Dornock Estates is situated south of Figtree, lying just outside the Matobo World Heritage area. However, it offers lovely views of the northern hills, and we will be visiting a rock art site. Our hosts, John and Jill Dudman will have tea ready for us on arrival, and a braai area will be available at lunch time (bring your own meat etc). We will be taken on a walk on the property. We hope that Figtree is not considered too far a drive in these times of chronic fuel shortages, and we ask members who are able to assist to please offer lifts to those who may not have fuel available at the time.

#### **7 – REPORT BACK**

Forty-five members ventured out to the cave of the White Leopard. The outing proved to be most successful, and reports received have been positive. Perhaps in the next rainy season the Society can visit the Cave of the Stork in the same area. En route to our picnic site, the convoy stopped at Rhodes Indaba Site. Whilst still protected, it is very much neglected and overgrown. We proceeded into the Lumane Valley and visited the famous, and rare, tree ferns there (*Cyathia dregeii*). This was a most pleasant surprise as detailed in the separate article below. We were also able to check on the status of the trees planted by the Society in this area some years ago. A number have done well. Finally arriving at the picnic site by late morning, tea was enjoyed, and this was followed by a short walk encompassing cave paintings and grain bins. After lunch the team climbed to the cave, (with emphasis on the word climb as the party had to scramble over a few obstacles!) enjoying the fine views across the Matopos, the lovely mountain acacia (*Brachystegia glaucescens*) forests and the wonderful cave paintings themselves. A single specimen of *Cussonia spicata* (another of the more rare trees of the Matobo Hills) was found during the walk back from the cave. Later in the afternoon, the more adventurous members proceeded home via the Zhilo (Bedzha) Pass, which was breathtaking in its beauty – and challenging to drivers and trucks alike.

#### **8 - LUMANE TREE FERNS**

The local community, under guidance of the Umzingwane Rural District Council, had established a Tree Fern Committee to protect the ferns. The east bank has been fenced, (first proposed by this Society some 6 years ago), a gate installed along with visitor toilets, and a paved path constructed into the gully in which the Lumane river (a stream at this stage) flows. The path down is well below the actual tree fern site, so that it does not interfere with the ferns themselves. Based on counts done over the years, it was noted that more tree ferns were recorded than during the last count, and that a large number of small plants were thriving. The rare Wild Holly tree (*Ilex mitus*) was noted, and for the first time the club

moss *Lycopodium senera* was located in this area. Previously this small plant had only been recorded on Besna Kobila Farm, adjacent to the Matopo Mission.

The local Tree Fern Committee was shown a second colony of tree ferns that they were not aware of, and have promised to include them in the protected area.

The Society applauds both the URDC and the local community for the steps taken to preserve these rare plants, and is greatly encouraged by the effort taken to date.

### 9 – RAINFALL

The rainy season has come to an end - and is the second worst season on record. The good late rains from the year before carried the veldt through this dry summer, but streams have dried up, and no rivers are flowing. None of the dams in the Matopos spilt this year, and they are losing water due to evaporation. It certainly points to a very dry winter and spring - so let's hope that the 2005 / 2006 season is better. Veldt fires have already been recorded. The Eastern Matopos, as at the 1 June 2005, had a seasonal total of 405mm. The western Matopos ended the season with 337mm.

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### 10 – SUBSCRIPTIONS 2005/6

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

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

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