

MATOBO



SOCIETY

PO Box FM 648, Famona. Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

Welfare No: W/O 30/94

NEWSLETTER 49 / OCTOBER 2005

1 – ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Society will be held at 2:30pm on 13th November at Big Cave Camp (see details below). This is an important event for our members, as we find ourselves, as a country, in the most difficult of circumstances. We hope that members will show their support, contribute to the debate, and stand for positions on the committee.

2 – SNAKES

We have come to the end of the articles on Dangerous Snakes of the Matopos. We hope that members have found this to be both interesting and useful.

However, as a conservation society it is important that we do not lose sight of the important role that snakes play in our environment. The old adage that the only good snake is a dead one is a statement not supported by us. Whilst the articles may have highlighted the dangers of some of our snakes, they did not go on to emphasise how rarely a snake is seen, and a sighting of a mamba or other of the great snakes is as rare, and special, as that of a leopard sighting.

3 - STANBIC BANK WAIVES BANK CHARGES

Stanbic Bank has agreed to waive all bank charges on the Society's Bank account. With rising bank costs, this is a considerable "donation" to the Society, for which we are most appreciative.

4 – RAINFALL

The early weather reports suggest that the Matopos will enjoy a normal rainy season in 2005 / 2006. We certainly hope so, as the hills are particularly dry.

5 – NATIONAL PARKS

We continue to receive conflicting reports from visitors to the Matobo National Park. On the positive side, there have been very favourable comments made in respect of staff serving at some of the dam sites, and a considerable effort was made to improve all the firebreaks. Regrettably fires did break out, and, sadly, large sections of the park were damaged as a result. Facilities are clean, and repair has been carried out within the Maleme Rest Camp. Exotic eucalyptus trees have been cut down in the Arboretum area, and new fencing has been erected along

On the negative side, a number of ablution blocks at camping and caravanning sites have been found to be without water, cattle intrusions into the park appear to be worse than ever, parts of the Park are heavily overgrazed, and fencing wire continues to be stolen.

The park itself is very dry, and visitors are urged to take particular attention to avoid starting fires.

There are plans to capture and sell up to 20 sable. Whilst the proceeds will be used to fund costs associated with the World Heritage Site, we are concerned about the impact of this proposal on the sable herds in the Matopos, which have not recovered since the last major relocation in the early 1990's. Sable antelope were previously seen with every visit to the park - today sightings are rare and the removal of a further 20 animals will only make this situation worse.

6 – TREE, ORCHID AND ALOE BROCHURE

The long awaited Matobo Hills checklist for trees, orchids and aloes has finally been completed, and will be on sale at the Main gate into the Matobo National Park. Brochures will also be available at the AGM, all at a cost of \$10,000 each. This brings to four the number of Matobo Hills brochures that have

been produced by the society. We acknowledge the considerable input of the contributors and proof-readers, and artist.

7 – SUBSCRIPTIONS

All members' subscriptions are now overdue. Please make your payment to the Treasurer as soon as possible, and in any event not later than our Annual General Meeting.

Corporate Subs

In our notice advising of the new subscriptions, we omitted to include the CORPORATE category, which is now due. We apologise to our loyal corporate members and hope that they will assist the Society by retaining their membership.

CORPORATE \$ 500,000

8 - NEXT EVENT

Date	13th November 2005
Venue	Big Cave 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!

Our Annual General Meeting will be hosted at Big Cave Camp. This well known, and up-market camp will host us for the day. There will be a walk over the hills on the private wilderness estate, followed by a picnic lunch. The AGM will be held at 2:30pm. Mike and Yvonne Waddy will join us at the AGM, and Mike will be happy to speak to us about the farm and camp. Members will be given an opportunity to look around Big Cave Camp - subject to any guests being in residence.

Members who wish to spend Saturday evening at Big Cave Camp are invited to contact the booking office on 09 256843 / 257176 and make their own personal arrangements.

9 – REPORT BACK

Forty members joined the society on 3rd July for the visit to Dornoch Estates. Whilst a chilly south-easter blew in Bulawayo, members enjoyed a warm day at the farm, which whilst not in the Matopos, is situated in lovely granite countryside. Of particular interest were the impressive Aloe excelsa to be found on the kopjes. Members were welcomed with a cup of tea by John and Jill Dudman, and then taken to the picnic site for a braai.

We apologise to those members who found the drive longer than we had expected, but hope that you found the visit worthwhile in any event. We record our appreciation to John and Jill for their kind hospitality.

10 – BIRDLIFE WEEKEND

A handful of MCS members joined Birdlife Zimbabwe (Matabeleland Branch) on their now annual weekend at Maleme Rest Camp. Saturday 20th August proved to be most interesting with visits to two black eagle nests with chicks, and a view of the rare black eagle nest located in a tree at Arboretum. We also saw a Fish Eagle with a chick, a Crowned Eagle on the nest, an Ovambo Sparrow Hawk and numerous other birds of prey – all in the company of expert birders! The afternoon was concluded with a most informative update by Viv Wilson on the Matopos Leopard Research, and then an evening braai.

11– MCS EVENING

Prof Hyland presented a number of points for discussion during his presentation of "*The Matobo Hills - Place, Tradition and Memory: tangible aspects of the intangible heritage of Zimbabwe: a case study of the Matopos*" on 19th August 2005. We appreciate the use of the Lions Club of Matopos Den, and the assistance of WEZ, in arranging the evening, which was well attended. Regretfully Prof Hyland has left Zimbabwe, but he has promised to make available to the Society a copy of the paper. The debate that followed during question time was positive and interesting.

12 – RHODES SUMMER HOUSE

In early July a fire destroyed the Rhodes Summer House, near REPS School. It is understood from National Museums that this 110-year-old National Monument, all that remained of Rhodes House at his Matopos Estates, was burnt down as an act of arson, and is being investigated. Rhodes' Coffin rested

here the night before his burial in April 1902 and was visited by the Society a few years ago. The Society has approached National Museums for details, and the prospects of a restoration programme.

12 – MATOPOS VIDEO FOR SALE

The World Heritage video on the Matopos has proven to be a huge success, with 150 copies sold to date. Whilst stocks are currently depleted, an effort will be made to have new stock well in advance of the Christmas period. The WEZ shop (Fife Ave) will carry a limited quantity of this stock. Once again, we record the generous support received from OSPREY productions in making this video available for sale.

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13 – SUBSCRIPTIONS 2005/6

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

NAME	ADDRESS
MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY	
AMOUNT Cheque / Cash	
EMAIL	

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