

**MATOBO**



**SOCIETY**

PO Box FM 648, Famona. Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

Welfare No: W/O 30/94

## **NEWSLETTER 58 / JULY 2007**

### **1 – EDITORIAL**

Autumn is upon us, and with the warmer days, a hint of summer and the prospect of rain. Visiting the Park recently one is very much aware of the dry conditions, and fires have already been apparent in the Hills. Parks have done their utmost to prevent wild fires, with the grading, and burning of firebreaks. We hope this effort pays dividends. However, outside of the Park, large veld fires have been burning, and thousands of hectares have already gone up in smoke. Years ago, commercial farmers, like the Parks Authority today, maintained their firebreaks and protected their valuable grazing lands. They would also assist one another to fight off veldt fires. Today, the whole system has broken down, and year after year the fires burn uncontrolled at this season. Over time this will change the environment of the Hills. Already, driving north of Bulawayo to Victoria Falls one can see that the nature of the previously magnificent hard wood forests is changing, as persistent fires consume the under story. There is simply no chance for the forest to recover from one year to the next. Added to this is the slash and burn practice also evident in the same area. It is probable that the open grasslands of the Matopos are in fact the result of past fires, and that control has in recent years allowed such valleys as the Mtshelili to become more wooded. Perhaps this is as it should be – but this has an impact on biodiversity as well! Whilst occasional fires are healthy, the present uncontrolled situation is shocking. We boast a comprehensive Environmental Act – but it is only ever enforced when it can be used to raise levies and fines from the business community – it is never used to protect the rural environment. So much for our much-vaunted carbon tax and Environmental Act. But, the community should not need laws to make them act to protect their lifestyles, their resources and their future! Perhaps the challenge we face is to provide real environmental education to our rural folk.

### **2 - NATIONAL PARKS FEES**

National Parks fees were increased again, and we detail charges below:

Entry \$200,000 Resident, non-Zimbabwean \$5,000 Non resident US\$15 (\$12 regional)

Children under 12 half price

Car \$40,000

Eagle \$3,000,000 ; Regional US\$64 Tourist US\$128 per lodge per night (4 persons)

Lodge \$2,400,000 ; Regional US\$55 Tourist US\$110 per lodge per night (Standard)

Chalet \$900,000 ; Regional US\$37 Tourist US\$73 per lodge per night (2 persons)

Camping \$150,000 Regional US\$5 Tourist US\$10 per person per night

All figures quoted above are Inclusive of VAT

It would appear that Park fees are going to be increased regularly (price freeze notwithstanding) and whilst we will endeavour to keep our members updated, we are unable to get advance warning, so please check ahead of any visit

The National Museums and Monuments have not increased their entry charges to Rhodes grave and the San painted caves which remain at \$20 000 (\$12,000 children). Non resident fees remain at US\$10 or R70

### **3 – WORLD HERITAGE SIGN**

A suitable signpost has been obtained, and it has been prepared for sign writing. We hope to have this completed before the AGM so that members will be able to comment at that meeting. It will be erected on the World Heritage Boundary, on the Matopos / Kezi road, opposite REPS and just across the Maleme River.

#### **4 – BAMBATA ROAD REPAIRS**

Big Cave Camp and Camp Amalinda have undertaken road repairs on the Bambata road, and consequently, with care, the road is accessible once more to ordinary vehicles. We thank the two lodges for their effort.

#### **5 – CONDOLENCES**

We record our sympathy to Margaret McCausland and family on the loss of Ian, after a long battle with cancer. Ian not only had a formidable botanical knowledge, but also the rare gift of sharing that knowledge (as only a teacher can) so that his audience were left enthralled and wanting to learn more. He was always willing to identify plant species - and to provide more than just the name. We shall miss his knowledge and contribution. May he rest in Peace.

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

Date	26 <sup>th</sup> August 2007
Venue	Gordon Park, Matobo National Park
Meet	8:15am to leave by 8:30am, Churchill Arms
Travel	All vehicles, but trucks preferred
Details	Provide own chairs, tables, meals and drinks. Don't forget your hat!

We have been invited to join the Black Eagle Survey on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> August 2007. The Black Eagle Survey was scheduled for earlier in August, but has been moved back and so coincides with our scheduled outing on 26<sup>th</sup> August. As a result, we have merged the two events, and those who wish to join the survey team for the whole weekend should contact Julia DuPree on 246269. The survey team will be camping at Gordon Park.

On the Sunday we will join the team visiting occupied nests and observing the chicks. The Black Eagles really are one of the Hill's great treasures, so don't miss this opportunity to learn more about them.

#### **7 – REPORT BACK**

On Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> July, a clear warm winter's day, the MCS travelled out to the Worlds View for a visit to the various National Monuments. Unfortunately, our guide for the day was required elsewhere at short notice, so our Chairman, Mr Gavin Stephens, stepped in and provided a detailed commentary on the site, the people and the events associated with the Worlds View. The more energetic members continued on across Malindidzumu hill to visit the impressive potholes located south of Worlds View, before returning to the car park for the traditional refreshments! Thereafter some members continued down the original wagon trail to the Lower Outspan, where a picnic lunch was held. In the afternoon a further walk was arranged up Efefi Enclyeni, for those not yet worn out! An interesting day for all!

#### **8 – CLEAN UP DAY**

A handful of MCS members joined with Rotary and the Boy Scouts to clean up picnic sites around the Circular Drive on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> June. Whilst much rubbish was removed, the sites were much cleaner than during the last clean-up, two years ago. We hope to complete the exercise by visiting a few remaining sites later in the year. We thank all those who assisted, and especially our vice-chairman, Bobby Hogan for organising the event.

#### **9 – VICTORIA FALLS WORLD HERITAGE STATUS**

Victoria Falls has been removed from possible listing as an endangered world heritage site following joint presentations made by Zambia and Zimbabwe at a recent World Heritage Commission meeting in New Zealand, Environment and Tourism Minister Francis Nhema has said - (*Herald*, Saturday July 7)

#### **10 – TRANS MATOPOS ADVENTURE RACE**

This premier three-day hiking event was held on 13 to 15 July and took participants past some of the Hill's major rock art sites, as well as through some breath taking scenery - well perhaps it was more breathless for the teams! The MCS provided an information pack for the competitors giving information about sites en route. The number of participants was reduced this year, but included two all-female teams that did well. This was a training weekend for them ahead of their climb of Kilimanjaro later in the year.

## **11 – ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2007**

Our AGM will be held on 25 November at Gordon Park. This year is the centenary of the World Scouting Movement, and to mark this special event we will hold our AGM at the cradle of Zimbabwe scouting. Baden Powell developed much of his thoughts on scouting during his time spent in Bulawayo and the Matobo Hills in 1896, so it is fitting that we join the Boy Scouts and mark the Scouting Centenary at Gordon Park.

## **12 – MCS OUTINGS**

A number of questions have been asked regarding MCS field trips. Some of these field trips are to archaeologically sensitive sites, some to areas of botanic importance, and many into communal lands. Your committee felt it necessary to pencil in a CODE OF ETHICS for member's behaviour on field trips. We hope this does not offend any members:

- Do not litter – we leave only footprints and take only photos.
- Do not pick plants or flowers.
- Frequently we visit rare rock art sites; it is a privilege to see this art. Please respect National Museums policy that aims to keep sites closed and out of the public arena by not revisiting the sites after our field trips.
- Do not disturb archaeological deposits and sites. They are of enormous value to future researchers.
- The location of special sites, such as Black Eagle nests, must be kept confidential to protect the flora and fauna.
- Respect the local inhabitants, avoid walking through kraals and fields, and where possible seek permission.

## **13 - SUBSCRIPTIONS**

Subscriptions, detailed in earlier newsletters, are now overdue. Please settle with our treasurer, or secretary.

## **14 – BULAWAYO LECTURE SERIES**

Your Chairman has been invited to speak on Thursday 13th September on the topic of the Matobo Hills and the future of its World Heritage Status. There will also be a slide show on the Matobo Hills. The lecture will be given at the Newman Hall, Natural History Museum at 5pm. A generator is available should ZESA fail, and entrance is free.

## **15 – RHINO UPDATES**

Five white rhino were relocated by National Parks in July from the Matopos National Park to the Hwange National Park. Rhino density in the Matopos is high, hence the need to remove some of the animals. Wilderness Safaris assisted with the relocation, which was also monitored by Marwell Zimbabwe Trust. We are not able to advise where the animals were released. The report we received in August indicated that two of the animals had settled well, but the remaining three had proven difficult to trace after breaking out of their boma.

### ***From Reuters, 6 June***

#### ***Crime gangs, horns demand threaten African rhinos***

*By Anna Mudeva*

Amsterdam - The rise of organised criminal gangs trading in rhino horns has boosted poaching in some African countries, putting the endangered animals at risk, conservation groups and a UN wildlife pact said on Wednesday. Although international trade in rhino horns is banned to protect the species from extinction, many in Asia and the Middle East will pay high prices for the horns, considered a powerful medicine and aphrodisiac, as well as a status symbol. Increased demand for rhino horns from countries such as China and Yemen is driving the illegal trade in Africa, with Zimbabwe and Congo having the worst records in poaching and seizures of illegal shipments, wildlife trade monitor TRAFFIC and environmental group WWF said. "The situation in Congo and Zimbabwe is a particular concern," Steven Broad, executive director of TRAFFIC, said in a statement during a two-week meeting in The Hague of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). "It tallies with an increase in the organisation of criminal horn-trading networks operating in Africa," Broad said.

In Congo, 60 percent of the rhino population was illegally killed between 2003 and 2005, according to TRAFFIC data. In Zimbabwe, poaching accounted for two-thirds of all rhino deaths during the same

period, affecting one in eight animals. Official Zimbabwe media reported last month that the country had started dehorning its rhinos in an effort to deter poaching. To address the problem, the 171-nation CITES pact to regulate wildlife trade called on Wednesday for better cross-boarder collaboration between countries along rhino horn smuggling routes and tougher domestic controls. The CITES parties also urged better management of horn stocks to prevent horns leaking into illegal markets. Relentless poaching in the 1970s and 1980s nearly drove the rhino to extinction. Black rhino numbers declined by a staggering 98 percent between 1970 and 1992, largely supplying the Far East medicine trade. Rhino populations overall have now stabilised, and are increasing in Africa, but some species remain threatened. "CITES is concerned that some rhinoceros populations have continued to decline drastically and that four of the five species are threatened with extinction," the pact said. The biggest danger remains horn demand and TRAFFIC noted a rise in illegal trade in 2000-2006, which it attributed to the increased sophistication with which some Southeast Asian criminal trading networks operate in Africa. Some of the criminal syndicates have links with other lucrative illegal trades, including abalone, ivory, live game and diamond smuggling, the group said. China is one of the main destinations for illegal rhino horns. The Chinese have historically used horns for various medical purposes such as reducing fever, but also to make horn buttons, belt buckles, hair pins and talismans. In Yemen, another major market, rhino horn daggers convey the high status of the owner.

## **16 - FISHING SPIDERS**

*(with acknowledgement to Dennis Adams; Refs; Martin R Filmer; Astri & John Leroy)*

Common Genus:	Thalassius
Lifestyle:	Free-running, ground living.
Habitat:	Near fresh water; on water.
Size:	Large, 15 – 30 mm (leg span up to 60 mm).

Diurnal impressive looking spiders - the bright white borders to the body are prominent, and on the dorsal aspect of the abdomen, there are most often numerous colour patterns within a chocolate brown, to black background. Distinctively, the genera of this sub-family stand with their long legs spread out, equally spaced and encircling the whole body.

They move fast on water, dragging their hind legs as they run. Vibrations under and on the water alert them to the presence of prey, (small fish, frogs, tadpoles, aquatic insects and freshwater crustaceans). Females hold their egg sacs in their jaws and pedipalps under the cephalothorax. Before the young are ready to emerge, the mother attaches the sac to vegetation, spins a web around it and guards it. When the spiderlings emerge, they bunch together under the mother's protection until they are ready to disperse. At this stage, the mother dies.