

MATOBO



SOCIETY

PO Box FM 648, Famaona. Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

Welfare No: W/O 30/94

NEWSLETTER 61 / MARCH 2008

1 – EDITORIAL

Apologies for the delay in issuing the March Newsletter. We hope this has not inconvenienced any of our members.

As March draws to a close, we can feel winter creeping in with the cooler evenings. There is still plenty of water in the streams and rivers, and the grass is turning from the brilliant green to a rich golden colour as the grass seeds mature. Underneath this golden haze, the grass itself remains green and vibrant. Any further rain looks unlikely, so it will be a long dry spell until the start of the next rainy season. However, Easter is always a special period in the Matopos - temperatures are just right, and water abounds. Enjoy this autumn period!

2 – RAINFALL

The wet spell enjoyed before Christmas continued through January, but came to an end in February. After such a wonderful start, and a seasonal average in excess of average, the dry February was of some concern. Let's hope for a few more showers before the season finally comes to an end. As at 10th March the rainfall was measured at 992mm in the Eastern Matopos, and 560mm in the Western Matopos.

3 - NATIONAL PARKS FEES

National Parks fees have increased yet again, and we detail the new charges below.

Entry	\$8,000,000	Non resident US\$15 (\$12 regional)	Children under 12 half price	
Vehicle	\$2,000,000	Non resident US \$5		
Eagle	\$160,000,000 ;	Regional US\$64	Tourist US\$128	per lodge per night (4 persons)
Lodge	\$120,000,000 ;	Regional US\$55	Tourist US\$110	per lodge per night (4 persons)
Chalet	\$60,000,000 ;	Regional US\$37	Tourist US\$73	per lodge per night (2 persons)
Camping	\$10,000,000.	Regional US\$5	Tourist US\$10	per person per night

All figures quoted above are Inclusive of VAT

Park fees are increasing almost monthly and we are unable to get advance warning, so please check ahead of any visit.

The National Museums and Monuments entry charges to Rhodes Grave and the San painted caves are \$10,000 000 (\$5,000,000 children). Non-resident fees remain at US\$10, GBP6, Pula55 or ZAR70 (children half price)

4 – WORLD HERITAGE SIGN

The Matobo Hills World Heritage sign has been completed and we look forward to erecting it in the near future, near the Maleme river bridge opposite REPS.

5 – ADVENTURE CYCLING

Whilst the Matopos Grand Challenge held on 29 February to 2 March had slightly fewer participants this year (and still managed to lose two participants on the first night), around 25 cyclists descended on Matopo Mission on the 1 March for a Mountain Bike Race. The route took them around Mwazi - through muddy bogs, swiftly running rivers, across spilling dams and over Mwazi Hill. Whilst the route was taxing – all enjoyed the challenges thrown at them, and retired to nearby Camp Dwala for a lunch time braai (and night!). Meanwhile the Adventure racers continued with their cycling and hiking the next day, with a spectacular route around Sotcha, and a short hike over Shumbashaba Hill.

6 – SUBSCRIPTIONS 2008

Have you paid your supplementary subs?

FAMILY / INDIVIDUAL	\$ 5,000,000
SPECIAL / PENSION	\$ 1,000,000
CORPORATE	\$ 50,000,000

If any member needs to discuss a payment programme for these fees, please approach the Chairman.

7 - NEXT EVENT

Date	13 th April 2008
Venue	Mazhowe River
Meet	8:15am to leave by 8:30am, Churchill Arms
Travel	All vehicles, but will need to assess road conditions closer to the time
Details	Provide own chairs, tables, meals and drinks. Don't forget your hat!

We will be travelling down the Old Gwanda Rd, and then along the Sotcha loop. Sections of the Old Gwanda Rd have been damaged by the rain, but it is quite passable in most vehicles. We will picnic on the Mazhowe river near where the Sotcha Loop road crosses the river, and enjoy walks up the river valley. We will be picnicking amongst the Mountain Acacias and enjoying the rivers of the area.

Judy Ross will be giving us a talk on bees, and we hope that we will be able to see them busy at work in the vicinity of the picnic site!

8 – REPORT BACK

The outing to Mtshashasha falls was planned to make the most of the exceptional wet weather the Matopos had enjoyed and we were not disappointed. Non-stop rain, and overcast conditions gave way during the morning to blue sky and the occasional cloud. Of course, the heat brought out the humidity - but you can't have it all your own way. Members on the outing had a taste that the falls would be good as the usual parking area was under a film of water, and the first crossing of the river showed that the Mtshashasha was flowing strongly. We were not disappointed - the falls were spectacular, with sheets of water flowing over a large area, and pouring down the falls. It was remarked that outside of a thunderstorm, some members had never seen so much water - and it sparkled in the bright light. The Falls themselves lived up to the onomatopoeic origins of the name - Mtshashasha! Some members ventured down the far bank to swim in the pools at the bottom of the falls, where the current was quite strong - others enjoyed the sights from above.

Four members of the Society planning to participate in this year's Ironwill Adventure race (in Nyanga) rode out from Bulawayo, taking various back routes and paths, and they too had to cross whole valleys that were covered in water! Despite arriving later than planned at the destination, they endeavoured to catch the main party up at the falls.

9 – CALENDAR 2008

Herewith the draft Calendar for 2008:

06 April	Mazhowe River
15 June	Anglesey Farm
19 October	Venue tba
30 November	AGM

10 - CONDOLENCES

Derek Darby passed away at the end of December 2007. Derek had served on the Executive Committee for many years, contributing from his experience of serving on similar committees, and frequently generously hosting meetings.

Dudley Hubbard passed away unexpectedly in March, and will be most sorely missed by the Matopos Black Eagle Survey, and Birdlife Matabeleland.

We extend our sympathy and condolences to both families on the sad loss of both men.

WE WISH ALL OUR MEMBERS A BLESSED EASTER

STOP PRESS – We have an unconfirmed report that National Park fees have been increased beyond the levels advised above. We have been unable to get confirmation from National Parks, and do not want to delay this newsletter, so please confirm rates before travelling out to any National Park.